

ESTABLISHMENT OF KHALSA RAJ

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Abstract -The pioneer of Sikhism 'Guru Nanak' founded a religion which led to awakening of people against false rituals and superstitions. Sikhism faced great transformation from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh. The prevailing circumstances resulted into development politics among Sikhism. Sikhism is life affirming and preaches participation in active life of service of humanity. The Sikhs were organized into large armies but they never fought to siege land or to show their power. Sikh community always struggled for their existence and fought battles against injustice. Punjab was invaded by Mughals and Afghans. For saving their motherland, Sikhs took swords. Sikhs are a community of brave, committed devotees which were always ready for sacrificing their life for their faith. They were against discrimination and injustice in the community. They suffered for long time for independence. At last they successfully established Sikh Empire.

Index Terms- Sikhism, Akal Takht, Khalsa, Mughals and Afghans.

Sikhism was founded by the peace-loving Nanak. He did not find any new religion or a new living pattern, but he tried to improve the living standards of the people of his country. He set the ideals of the life. In his time, superstitions and blind beliefs had engulfed the society. The poor were treated badly. He brought about a social revolution in the society. Sikhism was in favor of a religious and social change through peaceful means. Guru Nanak believed in unity of God. He considered all people as member of a same human family. He protested against empty rituals and blind superstitions. He was primarily a religious saint but he observed the functions of the Government and felt deeply about the condition of the common man.¹He described the sufferings of the people, during invasion of Babur, in his work with deep emotion.

In Sikhism there were ten successors of Guru Nanak. The first five Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Arjun Dev formed the first phase in the development of Sikhism. During that period, Sikhism developed organizationally and as a distinct community. Guru Angad Dev established *Gurmukhi* letters², which were used as script for the hymns of the Guru. Guru Amar Das established the *Manji* System to spread the teachings of Guru Nanak in far reaching areas of the country³ and to increase the number of his followers. Guru Ram Das situated a central seat of the Sikh faith. It was Amritsar which developed as a religious capital of the Sikhism.⁴

Sikhism became more popular in the period of Guru Arjun Dev. He collected the work of his predecessors and gave Sikhism its scripture, the *Granth Sahib*⁵ and completed the building of Harimander Sahib, which became main place of worship. He also founded two cities Kartarpur and Hargobindpura, which became the center of trade and preaching the Sikh doctrines. All it made the Sikhs a living community. Islam and Sikhism were the missionary creed of that time. Both creeds made no distinction between the high and low. But Sikhism was closer to the roots of the Hindu culture. Therefore, those who wanted to change their religion to improve their position in the society preferred Sikhism than Islam. All these trends naturally made the Muslim population progressively hostile to Sikhism. Jahangir felt jealous on the increasing popularity of Guru Arjun Dev. He arrested him in a false charge and sentenced him to death.

¹Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1950, p. 14.

²Bhagat Singh, *A History of the Sikh Misals*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1993, p.5.

³Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol-I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p. 50.

⁴T. S. Gill, *History of the Sikhs*, National Book Shop, Delhi, 1996, pp. 7-9.

⁵J..D. Cunningham, *A History of the Sikhs*, From the Origin of the Nation to the Battles of the Sutlej, John Murray, London, 1849, p.46.

Guru Arjun Dev sacrificed his life for his faith and set the example for his disciples,⁶ it increased the strength of Sikhism.

Guru Arjun Dev set an outstanding example of non-violent resistance to tyranny of the Mughals by his supreme sacrifice. He was the first who destined the crown of martyrdom.⁷ The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev was a turning point in Sikh history. It produced a sharp reaction in the growing community. It aroused a revolt against the Mughal Government in the mind of the Sikhs, but they were not enough able to put up an armed struggle against the Mughal Emperor. But their feelings gave a way to a new determination and purpose. All that created some new problems for the Sikhs. The relations between Sikhs and Muslims had changed. The Sikhs began to see a danger in the way of their movement and they became openly hostile to it.

Guru Hargobind succeeded his father. He framed a policy of militarizing the community. Under him the Sikhs assumed certain additional responsibilities. Instead of rosary and other saintly emblems of spiritual inheritance, the sixth Guru wore a warrior's equipment for the ceremonies of succession. He sanctified steel as a will to resistance of tyranny. He put on two swords, declaring one to be the symbol of his spiritual and the other that of his temporal investiture.⁸ He wore a turban with royal aigrette,⁹ this new shift in the emphases on keeping sword by Hargobind helped in transform the character of the Sikh movements. He also constructed *Akal Takht* (throne of God) in front of Harimander Sahib. *Akal Takht* was a sovereign seat¹⁰ and a symbol of freedom. It was first throne of the Sikhs.

The construction of the *Akal Takht* opposite to the Harimander Sahib has great significance. Harimander Sahib was connected with religious ceremonies whereas *Akal Takht* became the seat of temporal authority, and the matters relating to Sikh politics were discussed there.¹¹ The establishment of *Akal Takht* was to provide a political center to the Sikh community and emphasize its sovereignty as a nation. After it, Guru Hargobind decided to create an army of saint-soldiers. The soldiers in the Sikh army were usually of high character. They were honest and true to the tenets of Sikhism. Guru Hargobind's marginalization of the Sikhs was purely for self-defense. The sword which was taken by him was also necessary for the protection of righteousness.¹²

Guru Hargobind issued a *Hukamnama* (letter) to his *Masands* (preachers) living in different parts of the country. In that *Hukamnama*, he announced his future program and those were referred to Sikh *Sangats*.¹³ Guru Hargobind called his followers to Amritsar. In the meeting, he declared to form an army to fight against the tyranny of the contemporary rulers. He also asked his followers to be fully armed because religion could not be saved without resorting to arms.¹⁴ At *Akal Takht* Guru Hargobind received the offerings of horses and weapons from his followers and particularly from *Masands*, who brought that offering from their *Sangats* for the Guru.¹⁵

The soldiers of Sikh army were of high character. They had selfless devotion for the sufferings of humanity. They always fought against the oppression and tyranny of the Government. Guru Hargobind fought for the defense of the helpless people. He took the sword against the injustice and Mughal tyranny. All his soldiers were honest and true towards Sikhism. They were always ready to sacrifice their life in the favor of their faith. Though, Guru Hargobind wore swords but he never used his sword in anger.¹⁶

⁶ Harbans Singh, *Heritage of the Sikhs*, Asia Publishing House, University of California, 1964, p. 41.

⁷ G. C. Narang, *Transition of Sikhism in to a Political Organization*, Tribune Press, Lahore, 1910, p. 46.

⁸ Ganda Singh, *The Sikhs*, Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar, 1956, p.8.

⁹ M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol-IV, S. Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi, rpt 1985, p.2.

¹⁰ Bhai Khan Singh, *Mahan Kosh*, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1960, p. 427.

¹¹ Pritam Singh Gill, *History of Sikh Nation*, New Academic Publishing Company, Jalandhar, 1978, p. 155.

¹² Bhai Gurdas, *Varan*, Var 26, Pauri 25.

¹³ Santokh Singh, *Gurupartap Suraj Granth*, ed. by Bhai Vir Singh, Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar, 1955, p. 2404.

¹⁴ Giani Gian Singh, *Panth Parkash*, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1987, p. 118.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹⁶ M. A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol-IV, S. Chand and Company Ltd., New Delhi, rpt 1985, p. 108, 112, 116.

Guru Hargobind fought four battles in his life. The Sikhs won all the battles, which left a deep remark upon the future course of the community's development.¹⁷ Though, Guru Hargobind won four battles, but he did not acquire even an inch of territory as his purpose was only defensive.¹⁸

Guru Hargobind was succeeded by Guru Har Rai. He was soft hearted and kind fellow. Though, he kept the army of 2200 horsemen but he always followed the policy of peace. But he used his force when it was necessary. When Prince Dara came to him for seeking help after being defeated by Aurangzeb, Guru Har Rai sent his army to hold the passage of river Beas against the large force of Aurangzeb for escape of the refugee prince.¹⁹ His younger son Har Krishan succeeded him. He was only five years old and had died at the age of eight years.

After him Guru Tegh Bahadur took the responsibility of the Sikh community. He was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind. At in the age of 14, he participated in battle of Kirtarpur with his father in 1634.²⁰ But in the period of his Guruship, he followed the policy of peace and increased the strength of his followers by spreading the teachings of Guru Nanak. In his time, Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb was forcefully spreading his religion. Hindus were forced to change their religion. At that time, some Brahmins of Kashmir met Guru Tegh Bahadur and requested him to save their religion. Guru Tegh Bahadur went with them. In 1675, Aurangzeb arrested Guru with hundreds of Brahmins and executed them at Delhi, on their refusal of accepting Islam.²¹

The Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur filled the minds of Sikhs and Hindus with anger. They came to know about the necessity of holding arms against the Mughal Government. Then the next Guru, Guru Gobind Singh established a strong Sikh army to defeat the evils. He built a fort at Anandpur Sahib and started the military training of the Sikhs. He created *Khalsa Panth*, which created new energy and strength in the Sikh community. He introduced a new form of baptism and baptized Sikhs were called *Khalsa*. Guru Gobind Singh emerged himself into his *Khalsa*. He set a unique example before the world that a supreme head of the religious organization voluntarily surrendered his authority to his disciples and adopted the usual procedure of being baptized by the same disciples, who a short while ago, had been baptized by him.²²

His real aim was to build up a nation of purified people, who would fight against the evils of religion and society.²³ He encouraged common people for self-defense. Hindu rulers and Hill Chiefs were afraid because of the activities of Guru. Guru had fought many battles against them. They appealed Mughal Emperor to help them against the Sikhs. The Sikhs fought against the Hindu and Mughal forces for long time but they never accepted defeat. Guru Gobind Singh lost his whole family during that period. His two elder sons died in the battle of Chamakaur and his two younger sons with their grandmother were killed by the *Nawab* of Sirhind.²⁴ At all that he did not bend before his enemy. Guru Gobind Singh fought against the Mughal and other forces during his whole life.

The Sikh soldiers were strong enough. There are many examples in History, when few soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh fought against the large tanned forces of Mughals and collected forces of Hindu rulers, they sacrificed their life for their faith but never left the battlefield. Guru Gobind Singh worked as a saint soldier in his whole life. He introduced his followers to equality, freedom and self-respect. He trained his people for self-defense. All that made his *Khalsa* undefeatable warrior. Guru Gobind Singh had many strong commanders in his force. When he went to Nander in September, 1707, he sent Banda Singh Bahadur to Punjab as Commander of whole Sikh army.²⁵ He also sent his five great warriors with him.

Banda Singh Bahadur took the command of *Khalsa* force as the order of Guru. After Guru Gobind Singh, the leadership of the Sikhs came into the hands of Banda Singh Bahadur. Soon the Sikhs developed their

¹⁷ Indubhusan Banerjee, *op. cit.*, p.34.

¹⁸ Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, Their Origin Customs and Manners, Johan Murray, London, 1812, p. 44.

¹⁹ Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, Orient Longman, Bombay, 1950, p. 47.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

²¹ T.S. Gill, *History of the Sikhs*, National Book Shop, Delhi, 1996, pp. 15-16.

²² Senapat, *Gur Sobha*, (1711), Nanak Singh Kirpal Singh, Amritsar, 1925, Adhya 18, verses 806-807.

²³ Santokh Singh, *Suraj Prakash*, (1843) Khalsa college, Amritsar, Ill. xix. 44.

²⁴ C.H. Payne, *A Short History of The Sikhs*, Thomas Nelson and Sons, London, 1970, p. 40.

²⁵ James Browne, *History of the Origin and Progress of the Sicks*, (India Tract) The East India Company Logographic Press, London, p.9.

political power under his leadership.²⁶ As soon as he reached Punjab, a large number of people joined him from all quarters. It is said that in two or three months, five thousand horsemen and seven or eight thousand foot-soldiers joined him and soon their number rose to 40,000.²⁷ He captured many places in Punjab. Soon he attacked on Sirhind to punish Wazir Khan of Sirhind, who murdered the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh forces got victory on Sirhind and killed Wazir Khan. They destroyed Sirhind completely.²⁸ In that way, he plundered and destroyed many important places of Mughals. He destroyed Samana, which belonged to Jalal-ul-Din, who was employed to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur. The Sikh forces changed the city into a heap of ruins.²⁹ He punished the people who were responsible for the sufferings of Guru and the people of the country.

Having established his power, he assumed royal authority.³⁰ He occupied the imperial fort of Mukhlispur and fixed it as his headquarter. He also repaired the fort of Lohghar. He struck coin with the name of Guru.³¹ He also organized administration in the conquered areas. He snatched so many areas from the Mughal officers. He never failed in his mission on behalf of his strong force. He occupied a large part of Punjab. It was difficult for the Mughal Governor to stop him. Hearing of the alarming news of the Sikh conquests in Punjab, Mughal Emperor himself arrived at Sadhaura with a large force. But the imperial forces had failed to catch Banda Singh Bahadur. Many strong forces were sent against him but they all returned with great loss of soldiers. In April, 1715, he was captured by the joint forces of Mughals under Abdus Samad Khan.³² He was executed publically at Delhi.

After the death of Banda Singh Bahadur, the Sikh had to face very hard situations. They were subjected to severe persecution. Moving troops were appointed to find out the Sikhs. The order of the Government was to arrest the Sikhs where ever they were found. Therefore, the Sikhs hid themselves in the jungle for five years. At that time, on the one hand the Mughals were making every effort to set their rule in Punjab properly and on the other hand the Afghans were trying to occupy it. Marathas also tried their luck in Punjab. But the Sikhs made it impossible to all. The main Sikh leaders organized themselves into armed unites and fought against all their opponents. They started plundering the Government treasure that passed through the jungle. They also plundered the returning forces of Nadir Shah and released a large part of booty from them.³³

When Ahmed Shah Abdali invaded India, he entered through the way of Punjab. In all his invasions, the inhabitants of Punjab suffered badly. A large number of people were murdered and all their wealth was plundered by soldiers of Abdali. The crops in the fields were destroyed by the invading troops. At that time, the Mughal Government paid no attention on the situation of Punjab. Then the Sikhs came forward to save their motherland from foreign invaders. They made it impossible for Abdali to rule in Punjab. Though he occupied so many areas of Punjab, but when he returned back, the Sikhs captured those areas from his appointed officers. Abdali failed against the Sikhs. Therefore, he left most parts of Punjab in the hands of the Sikhs.³⁴

The Sikhs got victory after a long struggle. The war of independence brought out internal strength of the community. Then the Sikhs established their unchallengeable authority and became the ruler of the major part of the Punjab.³⁵ The territory, in the possession of the Sikhs was under twelve Sikh leaders. They were fully independent to each other. Those were known as *Misals*. The *Sardars* of these *Misals* established well administration in their areas. They kept the welfare of their people. Above all *Misals* were based on

²⁶ Rattan Singh Bhangu, *PrachinPanth Parkash*, (1841), Wazir Hind Press, Amritsar, 1939, p. 68.

²⁷ Khafi Khan, *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab*, Vol. II (1722), Calcutta, 1874, p. 562.

²⁸ Irvin, *The Later Mughals*, M.C. Sarkar and Sons, Calcutta, 1922, p. 94.

²⁹ Rattan Singh Bhangu, op. cit., p. 102-103.

³⁰ Irvin, op. cit., p. 110.

³¹ Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p. 84.

³² *Ibid.*, pp.94-95.

³³ Khushwant Singh, *A History of the Sikhs*, Vol-I, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 1999, p.120.

³⁴ Bhagat Singh, *A History of the Sikh Misals*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1993, p. 57.

³⁵ George Forster, *A Journey from Bengal to England*, I, London, 1798, p. 324.

equality, independence and justice. In the Sikh community, the Supreme authority rested in the *Khalsa Panth* and the Sikh leaders always respected it. They set a political ideology which was different from the early rulers.³⁶

In 1805, Maharaja Ranjit Singh occupied all those *Misals* and established a strong Sikh kingdom in Punjab. He faced the opposition of Marathas, British, Afghan and Sikh Chiefs of various *Misals*. He gave an efficient administration to the people of Punjab. He made a wonderful grasp of political and military system. He got the Punjab liberated permanently from Afghans and British. He trained the *Khalsa* army as British army. During his kingdom, the Afghans could not dare to invade.³⁷ He also saved the *Khalsa Raj* from annexation in British rule till his death.

Thus, the earlier Sikh was devoted and peaceful follower of Guru Nanak who was only religious person. They had no interest in political activities. But the circumstances compelled them to take sword for defense, which developed the political interest among the community. At that time, the people suffered badly by the Mughal Government and by the Afghan invaders. Nobody came to protect them. Guru Gobind Singh encouraged the people to protect themselves and to fight against the tyranny of the Government. With the passage of time they organized undefeatable force of *Khalsa*. One day Maharaja Ranjit Singh established a strong *Khalsa Raj* in Punjab.



³⁶ Bhagat Singh, *A History of Sikh Misals*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1913, p. 218.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 381.