



Development of Sikh Institutions from Guru NanakDev to Guru Gobind Singh (1469-1708 A.D.)

Dr. Nisha Sharma

Associate Professor OPJS University, Churu, Rajasthan

Bladev Singh Cheema

Ph.D (Research Scholar)

INTRODUCTION :

The greatest achievement of *Guru Gobind Singh* was the creation of the Khalsa on the day of Baisakhi in 1699 A.D. With the creation of Khalsa such a brave and self-sacrificing community of Saint-soldiers was born, which completely uprooted the powerful empires of the Mughals and the Afghans in Punjab.¹ That is why the creation of Khalsa is considered as the beginning of a new era. It was a grand creative deed of history which brought revolutionary change in men's minds.²

Since the days of Jahangir, the cruelties of the Mughals had been increasing day-by-day. Jahangir had martyred *Guru Arjan Dev* in 1606 A.D. He had imprisoned *Guru Hargobind Sahib* in the fort of Gwalior for some time. *Guru Hargobind* had to fight battles against the Mughals during the reign of Shah Jahan. Aurangzeb crossed all the limits. He got many famous Hindu temples demolished in the country. He had imposed several restrictions on the performance of their religious ceremonies.³ Those Hindus who refused to accept Islam were ordered to be dismissed from Government service. The Mughal Emperor, Akbar had waived off the Jaziya tax, which had been imposed on the Hindus, but Aurangzeb reimposed this hateful tax. He issued orders to demolish the Sikh *Gurudwaras*. He butchered a large number of non-Muslims, who refused to embrace Islam. On top of all this, he got *Guru Tegh Bahadur* martyred on 11th November, 1675 A.D. *Guru Gobind Singh* created the Khalsa to put an end to the growing cruelties of the Mughals.⁴

Guru Gobind Singh wanted to put an end to the Mughal empire with the help of Hill chiefs. These Hill chiefs had sided with *Guru Sahib* initially simply to promote their selfish ends. Later on, they betrayed *Guru Sahib* and again went to the Mughals. *Guru Sahib* felt that the Hill Chiefs could not be trusted any more. Therefore, *Guru Gobind Singh*, decided to prepare such Soldiers who as might stoutly resist the Mughals. As a result, *Guru Sahib* brought the Khalsa into existence.

The caste system had been in vogue for centuries in the Indian society. The Indian society was divided

into several castes and sub-castes. The people belonging to one caste looked down upon the other castes. The higher-caste people treated the low-caste people no better than beasts. A man's assessment was made not on the basis of his personal qualities, but on the basis of his caste. Many restrictions were imposed on the interaction of those castes. He, who violated those caste rules was ostracized from his caste.⁵ This caste-system was, in fact, eating into the very vitals of the Indian society. All the Sikh *Gurus* before *Guru Gobind Singh* had dealt a severe blow at the caste-system through *Sangat* and *Pangat* institutions but it had not yet been totally mashed. *Guru Gobind Singh* wanted to organize the society which would be free from the shackles of caste system and socially well-knit. So *Guru Gobind Singh* decided to create the Khalsa.⁶

The defective *Masand* system proved an important factor responsible for the creation of the Khalsa. *Guru Ram Das* had started *Masand* system for the development of Sikhism. With the passage of time, they forgot their basic ideals, became corrupt and arrogant. Instead of leading the Sikhs, they started looting them. They grew so arrogant that they started defying even the orders of *Guru Sahib*. They began to say that they were the makers of *Gurus*. Many influential *Masand* had set up their separate *Gurugaddis*. In this way, they had become big hurdles in the development of Sikhism. In order to get rid of those *Masands*, *Guru Sahib* thought of organizing the Sikhs into a new form. So a drastic remedy was needed.⁷

Guru Amar Das had made *Guruship* hereditary. It created many problems. He, who did not get *Guruship*, formed his separate sect and started opposing the *Guru*. In a bid to get *Guruship*, *Prithi Chand*, *Dhir Mal* and *Ram Rai* not only created hurdles for the Sikh *Gurus*, but also hatched conspiracies with the Mughals against them. These anti-Sikh sects tried every possible method to woo the Sikh masses into their folds. It could mislead the Sikhs. So, *Guru Gobind Singh* wanted to set up a society, which had no place for *Minas*, *Dhirmalias* and *Ramraias*.

Right from the times of *Guru Hargobind*, the Jats in a large number had started adopting Sikh religion. The Jats were great fighters by nature. They were fearless, self-respecting and brave. *Guru Gobind Singh* wanted the co-operation of such warriors to face the powerful Mughal Empire. So, he created the Khalsa.

The tremendous success of the *Guru* in Bathinda area despite heavy odds was due to several causes. Among them the greatest importance may be attached to the *Guru's* decision to leave the hills and to come into the interior of the area which was the real base of his strength. Anandpur, notwithstanding its strong fortification, suffered from inherent weakness, for the population around, consisting mostly of the conservative and caste-ridden Rajputs, was hostile to the Sikhs and day in and day out caused harassment to them. On the other hand, when the *Guru* entered the Punjab plains, the people around were helpful and co-operative and were willing to rally under his banner, should the call come from him. This made all the difference. Closely allied to that was the second factor, the impact left by the previous *Gurus* on the people of these areas. The 6th, 7th and 9th *Gurus* had, one after the other,

conducted extensive tours across this area and left a deep imprint on the minds of the people.⁸

Guru Gobind Singh's route through this area was dotted with the places which had already been visited by his predecessors, as for instance, Bur Majra, Ghulal, Lall Kalan, Katana, Bassian, Chakkar, Takhtupura, Pattio Hira Singh, Bhagta Bhai Ka and Lambhawali, had all been sanctified by Sikh *Gurus'* visits previously. The third important factor was the valuable support provided by some of the influential Zamindars, prominent among them being Nihang Khan, Rai Kalla, Chaudhri Kapura, Chaudhri Dalla, Chaudhri Rama and Chaudhri Taloka. At that time the Mughal Empire was facing a serious agrarian crisis as a result of which Zamindars were asserting themselves. The next important factor was the difficult terrain of the Jungle Desh. Last but not the least was the *Guru's* charismatic personality which could turn adversity into a fortune and discomfiture into a triumph. But for his powerful and towering personality, even the best of circumstances would have yielded no fruit. The *Guru* left Damdama (Talwandi Sabo) for the Deccan on Kartik Sudi 5, 1763 Vikrami (October 30, 1706 A.D.). For some time he waited for Daya Singh's return at Talwandi Sabo whom he had sent to Aurangzeb at Ahmednagar to deliver his letter 'Zafar Nama' but he did not receive any communication from him or Dharam Singh. He, however, got wind that Daya Singh had to face a lot of difficulties caused by the obstructionist tactics of Subedar Wazir Khan's hired persons who were specially deputed to scuttle the attempts of Daya Singh to meet the Emperor to deliver the letter personally. The Subedar did so because he thought that if the *Guru's* letter and Daya Singh dialogue with the Emperor succeeded in arousing the moral conscience of the Emperor, a lot of harm was likely to accrue to him.

The *Guru* also got inkling that the letter had been delivered and its contents had moved the Emperor. The *Guru* sensing change in the mood of Aurangzeb decided to move towards the Deccan even before Daya Singh could reach Damdama. The most important factor that impelled the *Guru* to take this decision was the fast failing health of the Emperor who was about ninety-one in 1706 and had been overtaken by illness. The *Guru* deemed it appropriate to go to Deccan himself and settle the affairs with the Emperor for which purpose Daya Singh had been sent with the letter.⁹

The exact number of those who accompanied the *Guru* is not known, yet, on the basis of accounts available to us, it is not difficult to surmise that the number was quite large. Among them, a few notables were Man Singh, Ram Singh and Fateh Singh of Bhagtu Family, Dharam Singh and Param Singh, the sons of Bhai Rupa. Rai Dalla also accompanied the *Guru*. As the *Guru* proceeded further, some of them went back to their homes, but even then the hard core was quite large and included Mani Singh, Bhupat Singh from Amritsar, Sodhi Kanwal nain from Dhilwan, Udey Karan, Gurdas Singh from Sadhora, Ram Singh and Tilok Singh from Phul, Godaria Singh from Bhucho, Dan Singh with his son from Ablu, Ram Kaur from Ramdas.

En route to Deccan, the first halt of *Guru* Gobind Singh was at village Kewal. Shri *Guru* Gobind Singh Katak Sudi Panchami (1763 Bk) on October 30, 1706 AD on the way from Talwandi Sabo

(Damdama Sahib) to Nanded Sahib (Hazur Sahib) on the south side. When *Guru Gobind Singh* came to the village kewal,¹⁰ Jatt Bhai Kawela Singh was grazing buffaloes at that time. When he met *Guru Ji*, Bhai Kawela came home and told his wife Mata Punjabo Kaur that *Guru Ji* had come. Mother brought milk to *Guru Ji* and accompanied by Bhai Dalla Rao, Bhai Ram Singh, Bhai Fateh Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Tilok Singh, Bhai Man Singh, Bhai Param Gill, Bhai Gurdas Singh, Mata Ram Kaur etc. Milked. Then *Guru Ji* rested at this place for the night. Some of the forest trees with which *Guru Ji* tied his horses still exist today. The next day *Guru Sahib* performed the kirtan of Asa di War. When *Guru Ji* prepared for the south. The *Guru* told the Singhs to join the Paintra. Then *Guru Ji* went to the next stage towards village Jhorar Rohi. Nowadays *Gurudwara Pantra Sahib* is built on this place. The name of this village is only named after Bhai Kawela. In the field of Punjabi language, this village is known as keol. The river Saraswati used to flow at this place in ancient times. According to some historians, the river Ghaggar is considered to be the oldest form of the river Saraswati, but in time the river disappeared. In the time of Baba Deep Singh, rations were sent by the *Sangat* of Kewal, Dharampura, Takhtmal, Dadu, Tilokewala, Singhpura and Pakka Shaheeda for *Guru ka Langar* at Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib).

Today, the village is located in Tehsil Kalanwali, District Sirsa, Haryana. Then the *Guru* sojourned at village Jharori, wherefrom he proceeded to village Jhanda. When the night fell, Feteah Singh and his brother Ram Singh left the *Guru's* camp. Rai Dalla placed his offerings comprising two gold bangles and one double-edged sword and slipped out of the *Guru's* camp and betook himself to his native place. These people did so because they could not shed their attachment with their people. Some others left the *Guru* gearing the difficulties of the arduous journey.

The *Guru* expressed surprise at the doings of Dalla particularly because he wished him to prepare himself for certain other jobs. when at dawn, the *Guru* asked where Dalla was, someone from amongst this followers told "There is no Dalla-Malla, there is only Allah and the *Guru*; the theme being that at that point of time, the *Guru* was all alone, determined to carry out his mission in spite of high risks involved in the process. The *Guru* remained calm and continued to march towards his destination.

The *Guru* reached Sirsa now in the state of Haryana which was a small town then. People expressed their regards for the *Guru* by serving him and his Sikhs. In the course of his stay, he was told that open goldsmith named Gulab Singh had been imprisoned in an underground cell by Nabi Bakhsh, the Chaudhri of the village, Khural. The reason was that he did not honour the order of the Chaudhri to offer his daughter to cater to his carnal fits. The *Guru* mounted his steed and taking five Sikhs with him marched to the place. He freed Gulab Singh and chided the Chaudhri who out of fear prostrated at the *Guru's* feet. The *Guru* forgave him and instructed him to stop tyrannizing the people. The *Guru* having visited neighboring places such as Gobindpur came back to Sirsa. After this the *Guru* set out in the direction of Rajasthan reroute to Ahmadnagar where the Emperor was encamped.¹¹

Passing through Haripur (Bad Tirath) the *Guru* reached Nauhar. Here the people were the votaries of

Jainism. Instead of practicing the high ethical principles of their religion, their whole emphasis lay upon rejection of non-vegetarianism, which they thought was the only way to Bliss and social reconstruction. The *Guru* exposed the hollowness of their thinking and tried to make them understand the theory and practice and the ultimaticity of 'Non-violence'. Vegetarianism or non-vegetarianism is irrelevant to the process of building a good society as well as good individuals.

From Nauhar, the *Guru* proceeded to village Bhadra, where he was affectionately received by a Rajput family. The next halt of the *Guru* was at village Sahewa. During the course of travels, Dharam Singh and Param Singh carried the weapons and clothes of the *Guru*. they had taken a resolve to prepare a fresh cot for the *Guru* at his every halt.

Thencefrom the *Guru* proceeded to Bahaduran. There he gave horses, one each to Dharam Singh and Param Singh. Thereafter the *Guru* reached Sahena. From there he proceeded onwards to Madhu Singhnai. Bhai Ram Singh, a scion of Bhai Bhaktu, lost heart and beat a hasty retreat.

After this the *Guru* reached Pushkar Raj, a place of pilgrimage sacred to Brahma. The place earlier had been made hallowed by *Guru* Nanak. Pandit chetan Misar who was the in-charge of the place fell at the *Guru's* feet and received Pahul to join the Khalsa fellowship.

After this, he *Guru* reached Naraina also known as Dadudwara where the saint Dadu had lived. His shrine, by this time, had come under the charge of Mahant Jait Ram. One day the *Guru* saluted the sepulcher of Dadu by lifting an arrow to his head. The Khalsa took exception to it and demanded a tankhah (religious punishment). One of them, Man Singh quoted the *Guru's* own verse Gor Marhi Mat Bhul Na Mane (worship not even by mistake cemeteries). The *Guru* at once confessed guilt of religious misconduct and paid a sum of Rs.125/- part of which was spent on *Guru Ka Langar* and the rest on the purchase of a canopy to cover the place where food was served.

In the course of conversation, the Mahant raised certain pertinent question. Was the living-style the *Guru* had adopted appropriate especially when according to Dadu, attachment with material world was futile and in no way helpful in the process of spiritual ascent? Was it justifies to bear weapon? The *Guru* replied that materiality and spirituality are not exclusive to each other, rather they form the parts of the same whole. Both are to be developed if the individuals and world are to march ahead. God, man and the world are related to each other organically and certainly not antagonistically. God as the soul create or permeates everything, seen and unseen and hence material things are not to be discarded or looked down upon, rather utilised and harnessed properly. Resort to weapons is legitimate, if it is done to eliminate evil in emulation of God as a 'smasher of the wicked'. According to Dr. Hari Ram Gupta 'While sojourning at Naraqina, the *Guru* asked the Mahant that he could secure help from the Rajput princes to eliminate the Mughal government. The Mahant replied that it was not possible'. There seems to be no plausibility in the statement of learned historian, for the Mahant bring a recluse and indifferent to world affairs, had no worthwhile contracts with the Rajput princes. However, the *Guru* while traveling through Rajasthan, mist have been disappointed at the political

predilections of the Rajput princes. Except the Raja of Marwar, all other important princes such as Jai Singh of Mewar, Mokam Singh of Nagaor, Jai Singh of Jaipur, were openly on the side of Aurangzeb. From Naraina, the *Guru* reached Kalot via Lali and Maghroda. Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh on way back from Deccan met the *Guru* and related to him their experiences in the Deccan. The Emperor's Gurj-Bardar and Mansabdar had gone ahead towards Delhi with the royal farman for Munim Khan while Daya Singh and Dharam Singh came to the *Guru*. After this, the *Guru* reached Bhagaur, the headquarter of a parganah in the erstwhile Udaipur State about 70 miles north-east of Udaipur city. Here he heard the news of the death of Aurangzeb at Ahmednagar on February 20, 1707. The *Guru* decided to stop moving further towards the south. Aurangzeb being no more, March towards the South did not serve any purpose as now the *Guru* would not be able to build bridges of understanding between the Sikhs and the Mughal government nor could he arrange that the guilty Subedar Wazir Khan, was appropriately punished. He, therefore, decided to wait and watch and turn to Delhi where Revered Sundri and Sahib Kaur were living.

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