

CHAPTER 1 (Part II)

MAKING OF SIKH RELIGION

Guru Nanak Dev, founder of Sikh religion, was deputed by God, the Almighty, as a prophet to enlighten and protect the disturbed mankind with his message of Truth, the Name of God and pious deeds in this present age. The foundation of Sikh religion for an independent, universal Divine knowledge for the entire mankind was laid down by him. Under the direct communion with God, the Supreme Being, Guru Nanak, saw in his Divine vision, which he proclaimed in his Divine hymns: "The entire world burning with worldly desires and darkness everywhere; the rulers being like the ferocious tigers who were embarrassing the public; the rulers had their officials like mad dogs and were acting as butchers; righteousness having flown to wings; there being pitch darkness of falsehood everywhere and no hope for the light of truth to come again in the world; Qazis, the Muslim preachers being corrupt; Brahmins, the Hindu priests sucking the blood of the helpless; Yogis, the leaders of the Yogic cult knowing not the path of God and these three misguiding the masses and responsible for the miseries of the public at large. Greed, Sin, falsehood and lust, having become dominant in the social set up; as virtues having no place in it; while the public devoid of any Divine knowledge and moral strength, satisfying the official greed with bribe, the carrion." Guru Nanak declared that "He is neither Hindu nor Musalman." Allah of the Muslims and Aulakh of the Hindus is the same God, one creator of the entire creation. The same light the soul, the inner conscious is the light of only one God, shining in everyone, who are all made of the same five elements. God is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of all the human beings, who is one and only one. All the souls are to unite with Him. Then why are there disputes over the different paths, leading to the same goal? Guru Nanak advocated the meditation in the Name of the only one and one God (formless, unborn, and self-illuminated), discarding the theory of Hinduism of numerous Gods and Goddesses and incarnations of God, revealing the Divine message of Name of God, truth and pious deeds and the practical way of truthful living condemning the useless rites and rituals to be the handwork of fake religious leaders to exploit the innocent masses. Guru Nanak remained on missionary tours for more than twenty years, covering the distance of more than twenty thousand miles, not only from one corner to the other in India, but also in several adjoining countries to spread his revelation of truth and the Name of God to the entire humanity. He visited all the centers of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, Yogic cult, Islam and other faiths and systems, prevalent at that time, holding the discussion with the then religious leaders of those faiths and preaching his Divine message, who submitted to Him and His Divine enlightenment. Hundreds of thousands of persons became his followers, named as Sikhs, which means students and learners of Divine knowledge as it is not complete till one's soul unites with God, the Almighty. Guru Nanak spent the last about twenty years of his life at his village Kartarpur, preaching Sikh religion and exhibiting its practical, truthful living in the Sikh way of life, to meditate in the Name of God, to earn by hard labor by honest means and to share one's earning with the needy, performing the daily routine by every one of the holy congregations and community meals and co-operative farming, treating everyone equal to the other without any distinctions and discriminations on caste, creed or any

other ground whatsoever. Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of mankind were the dictums of Guru Nanak. Hundreds of thousands of devotees visited him to get his blessings and the Divine knowledge. He compiled his Divine compositions there containing his Divine hymns, as revealed by God through Him for the entire mankind, so considered the word of God Bhai Mardana, a Muslim, who used to play the Rebab, while singing the divine hymns in praise of God by the Guru and Bhai Bala, a Hindu, his attendant, were his childhood friends who mostly accompanied him, which itself exhibits that Guru Nanak did not discriminate between Hindus, Muslims, as he believed not in these nomenclatures. Everyone who came into contact with Guru Nanak's Godly personality was convinced that he is a Prophet deputed by God to enlighten and protect the mankind with His Divine message of truth, the Name of God and pious deeds. C.H.Pen in "Short History of Sikhs" rightly remarked "Guru Nanak had brought a practical religion. Guru Nanak had understood the basic knowledge which had not been understood by other reformers. Only that religion can survive which teaches practical way of life and not that how to fled from the worldly affairs." J.D. Cunningham in "History of Sikhs" stated: "Guru Nanak saved Sikhs from those blunders in which Indian society had been indulging for centuries. He instructed the Sikhs for the remembrance of God and truthful character and in this manner, he founded the religion; Simpler, clear cut, independent and beyond the false ritual and rites." According to Khuda Mohammed, " Buddha attained Buddhahood, while Guru Nanak was born Buddha." In the similar vein another eminent scholar, Mirza Ghulam Ahmed remarked: "Guru Nanak was at a higher place than the other prophets of the world." -p46

Guru Nanak Dev, appointed his successor Guru Angad Dev as the second Sikh Guru. Eight other Sikh Gurus succeeded one after the other, having been appointed by each of their predecessors to directly guide the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru before his heavenly departure in 1708, ordained the Sikhs to accept Guru Granth Sahib as the perpetual eternal Guru, being the living spirit of all the Sikh Gurus and the embodiment of Divine word, as revealed through them by God, the Almighty for the entire humanity. Guru Angad Dev, second Sikh Guru made Khadur Sahib, in Amritsar District of Punjab, the central place, where he resided. He spread the message of Guru Nanak as entrusted to him. He also developed the Punjabi language in which the Divine Hymns of Sikh Gurus were written. He appointed Guru Amar Dass as his successor. Guru Amar Dass, made Goindwal as the center of his activities, situated at the bank of River Beas in Amritsar District. He established twenty two Sikh centers, called Manjis, through out India to spread the teachings of Sikh religion. He made the `Langar" community Kitchen effective to take the meals, sitting in the same row, making it obligatory to first take the meals, so as to make everyone feel equal in status without any discrimination on any ground whatsoever. These instructions were so strictly implemented that Mughal Emperor Akbar who came to meet the Guru had to comply with it. It was an effective step to remove the inequality in mankind which had been crushed by Hinduism by dividing the society on caste and creed systems. He appointed Guru Ram Dass, hisson in law, as his successor to be the fourth Sikh Guru. Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Sikh Guru made Amritsar his central place and developed that town. He got the Amrit Sarovar dug which is now the attraction of the world. He spread the teachings of Sikhism far and wide. His divine guidance for the daily routine of Sikhs is followed till now. Sikhs follow it and get up early in the morning and meditate on the Name of God.

It requires taking bath early in the morning and cleanses the mind to sing the hymns of Sikh Gurus' Gurbani and practice through out the day consciously to live in the presence of God and constantly to remember God, the Lord to meditate in the Name of God and make others to do so. He appointed his son, Guru Arjan Dev as the fifth Sikh Guru. Guru Arjan Dev constructed the Sanctum Sanctorum, Harmandir Sahib, later on called the Golden Temple when Sikhs plated it with Gold, in the middle of Amrit Sarovar at Amritsar. Guru Arjan Dev compiled Guru Granth Sahib, containing the Divine Hymns of all the five Sikh Gurus, the revelation of God, the Almighty, to them being the Divine word to enlighten the humanity, besides the Divine Hymns of 30 saints Bhagats of other religions and installed it in Harmandir Sahib; wherein the singing of the Divine Hymns is being performed from the early hours of the morning to the late at night till now uninterrupted and will be for all times to come. Thousands of devotees come there daily to pay their obeisance to get peace of mind. The fanatic Muslim emperor Jahangir instigated by some Mullas close to him and his Hindu Minister Chandu, could not tolerate the widespread following of the Guru and himself recorded in his biography: "Either this Divine Guru be converted to Islam or get away with , because besides the Hindus, Muslims were also going to his fold." Guru Arjan Dev outrightly rejected his offer and voluntarily gave his supreme sacrifice for the basic human right of freedom of religion. He was martyred in June 1606. It was the first martyrdom for the freedom of religion in Sikhism which was followed by numerous martyrdoms by Sikhs for the basic human right of freedom of religion. Guru Arjan Dev appointed his son Guru Hargobind as the Sixth Sikh Guru. Guru Hargobind, wore two Kirpans of Miri and Piri, worldly and spiritual leadership. He constructed Akal Takht in front of Harmandir Sahib the height of which was more than the Mughal Takht of Delhi exhibiting the sovereignty of the Sikhs. He raised the Army of Sikhs to meet the Mughal force with force which had become necessary after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, the exponent of peace as the Mughals had come out to crush the freedom of religion by force. The history of Sikh flag and beating of Nagaras was started for the same cause of Sikh sovereignty. The message to the Mughal rule was clear that Sikhs would not submit to the Mughal rule and their interference in their religion. Jahangir, the Mughal emperor reversed his policy as he did not want to come into the armed conflict with Sikhs. He apologized to Guru Hargobind and sought forgiveness for the martyrdom of his father for which he placed the blame on Chandu, his Hindu Minister and handed him over to Sikhs. There was no conflict between Mughals and Sikhs during his life span. But after his son, Shah Jahan became the Mughal emperor, four battles took place between Sikh forces and Mughal army in which Sikhs remained victorious. Guru Harbobind appointed his grand son Guru Har Rai as seventh Sikh Guru. Guru Har Rai kept Kiratpur, his central place which is sub mountainous to Shivalik Hill, to which the sixth Guru had shifted to . He maintained the Sikh army in accordance with the directions of Guru Hargobind. But there was no armed conflict between Sikhs and Mughals during his life span. He had the time to preach Sikhism peacefully. He appointed his son Guru Harkishan as the eighth Sikh Guru. Guru Har Krishan was of young age of five years only. He went to Delhi at the request of the emperor, but refused to meet Aurangzeb, the Mughal emperor. He followed the advice of his predecessor who had advised him not to meet Aurangzeb if ever called by him as he was cruel to the people and denying their basic rights. He left for his heavenly abode at the age of 8

years. So his span was very short. He had given the indication that Guru Teg Bahadur would succeed him as the Ninth Sikh Guru, who was son of Guru Hargobind. Guru Teg Bahadur shifted his headquarters to Anandpur Sahib, a few miles away from Kirat Pur. He remained in his missionary tours for several years throughout India preaching Sikh religion. A deputation of 50 Kashmiri Pandits came to Anandpur Sahib for his Divine guidance and protection that Hindus were being forced to convert to Islam under the orders of Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb. They had no other place to approach. Guru Teg Bahadur gave his supreme sacrifice voluntarily at Delhi as he felt that without it the right of freedom of religion can not be protected. It is unparalleled in the world history that the head of a religion gave his supreme sacrifice for another religion, particularly when he was against the ideology, doctrines, rites and rituals of that religion. It was so done by the Guru to safeguard the basic human right of freedom of religion. He appointed his son Guru Gobind Singh as the tenth Sikh Guru. Guru Gobind Singh made Anandpur Sahib as the central place of Sikhism. He organized the Sikh army to meet the Mughal force with force. Guru Gobind Singh declared that he would preach the religion of truth, destroy the wicked, protect the saints, and secure the basic human rights particularly the right to freedom of religion. Guru Gobind Singh completed the last phase of Sikh evolution. He created Khalsa with baptism of Amrit of double edged sword, a distinct identity and code of conduct on the Baisakhi day of 1699 making it obligatory for the Sikhs to have the five emblems, uncut hair, bracelet of steel, comb, short dhoti up to knees and sword. All these symbols known as five Ks, Kesh, Kara, Kanga, Kachha, and Kirpan. He enjoined upon his Sikhs not to commit four violations: not to cut hair on any part of the body, not to consume tobacco, not to eat Kutha meat, not to commit adultery. The first five beloved ones (Panj Piarses) were chosen, who were ready to offer their heads for any supreme sacrifice. Sikh initiation was provided to enter Sikh religion, turning the Sikhs to Singhs and Kaurs or in other words lions and lionesses or saints and soldiers at the same time. Such a brave spirit and commitment was infused in Sikhs so as to challenge the Mughals to uphold the basic human rights and especially the right to freedom of religion, to which the Mughals were out to crush. Sikhs had dislodged the Mughal Army in several battlefields in so short a time. Mr Jeans Culter, an eminent British scholar rightly commented- "The five symbols had held the Sikhs in united Brotherhood. They serve to make a Sikh and act as a Sikh. They endow them with a courage to accomplish facts which otherwise would be impossible for an average man. To make a long story short, the five symbols have a psychological bearing on the men who wear them. They are manifestation of Guru, the eternal" Sir Charles Eliot, another British scholar commented: "Guru Gobind Singh's ordinances were successful in creating the Sikh nation." (Hindu and Buddhism P.267)

A Muslim Sufi poet of Punjab, Bulle Shah commented:

"Had Guru Gobind Singh not be on scene all the Hindus would have been circumcised – converted to Islam."

Sikhs uprooted the Mughal and Afghans and established their Sovereign Sikh state in the entire North India with which even British empire had to compromise after the occupation of the rest of India. It was decided not to interfere in their territories. Guru Gobind Singh ordained the Sikhs, just before his heavenly departure in Oct 1708 that henceforth Guru Granth Sahib would be the eternal Sikh Guru perpetuating the Khalsa. Sikhs turned Singhs with Amrit of double edged sword, strictly adhering to the Sikh

code of conduct was to be the common wealth of Sikhs while taking divine guidance from Guru Granth Sahib. Rightly commented, the eminent British historian, M. A. Macauliff, "Guru Granth Sahib contains sublime truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally and socially. There is not the tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and purest principles that serve the believer with an ambition to serve his fellow men, to sacrifice all and to die for their sake." Pearls S. Buck, the American scholar and Nobel Prize winner stated: "I have studied the scriptures of the other great religions, but I do not find elsewhere the same power of appeal to the heart and mind as I find in Guru Granth Sahib. They are compact in spite of their length and are revelation of the vast reach of human heart varying from the noble concept of God to the recognition and indeed the insistence upon the practical needs of the human body. There is something modern about these scriptures." –p54

Political, Social and Economic Aspects

The preambles of the constitutions of the advanced civilized countries of today provide to secure to all of its citizens- justice (political, social and economic), liberty of faith and worship, equality of status and dignity of individuals. All these fundamental rights of humanity were advocated by Sikh religion as far back as five hundred years, when there was autocratic and tyrannical rule of Mughals in India and autocratic rules in other countries of the world. None else of any religion and faith had claimed, protected and ensured these rights. These fundamental rights were not only put forth ceremoniously in Sikhism but their implementation was assured by the supreme sacrifices of some of the Gurus, while by the excellent heroism by some of them in the battle fields and followed by thousands of their followers according to the situation whatever needed. Politics was made subordinate to religion and inseparable from it in Sikhism so that higher values in morals and ethics inculcated from the religion should reflect in politics. Politics was to be no more, the game of scoundrels. Social responsibility to society was emphasized in Sikhism with selfless service to the mankind which was lacking in most of the previous faiths and systems, which rather considered the salvation to be individualistic goal and involvement in the world affairs to be a hindrance to spiritual efforts with a negative attitude towards life to be a sort of suffering and illusion. In Sikhism the justice (religious, political, social and economic) is not to be secured for one's own self but for all others, being victims of injustice. The implementation of basic human fundamental rights are not to be assured for own self but for the entire humanity being of one race and brotherhood. The exploitation of the poor innocent masses with the power of wealth and aggression over the rights of others is forbidden. Sikhism believes in democracy, the government of the people, by the people and for the people; the administrators to be the servants of the people; to be guided by the higher values of life and equality and dignity of the individuals. Sikhism surpasses the modern socialism as it makes obligatory for every one to earn with his hard labor by honest means according to his capability and share with the needy out of his earnings. Rightly commented, Prof Arnold Toynbee eminent scholar of world history of USA- "The Sikh movement was forerunner of Lenin's socialism by about 200 years on ethical grounds."

J.D. Cunningham also supports such a view: "It was reserved for Guru Nanak to perceive the true principles of reforms and to lay those broad foundations, which enabled his successor Guru Gobind Singh to fire the minds of his country with a new nationality to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal to the highest

in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes." Aurobindo Ghosh, an eminent scholar stated, "The Sikh Khalsa was an astonishingly original and novel creation, a democratic institution."

MEWA SINGH

USA