

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF-SIKHS AND CURRENT SIKH ISSUES

CHAPTER 1 (Part III)

MAKING OF SIKH NATION

The principle of Sikhism to secure justice (religious, political, social and economic) not only for one's own self but for all others, being victims of injustice. to assure the basic human rights, particularly the right of the freedom of religion for everyone; to uphold the dignity and equality of every individual, kept the Sikhs in conflict with the Mughal rulers who were determined to violate these human rights by force of gun. In fact Sikhs remained in conflict with every unjust power and authority as they are never to tolerate injustice. In Sept 1708, the Bairagi Turned Singh, Gurbakhash Singh, generally known as Banda Singh Bahadur, along with five Sikhs came from Nander to Punjab under the blessing of Guru Gobind Singh to settle the score with the tyrant Mughal governor of Sirhind and other guilty officials who had bricked alive the minor two sons of Guru Gobind Singh and to wipe out the cruel and tyrant Mughal rule in Punjab. They stayed for a few months at Village Saheri near Delhi and organized the Sikh army there. The Sikhs then left for Sirhind, occupying the territories on the way ousting the Mughal officials. In 1710, a fierce battle took place between the Sikhs and Mughals outside Sirhind. The Sikhs defeated the Mughal army and occupied Sirhind. The Governor of Sirhind Wazir Khan was arrested and mercilessly killed. Other guilty were also punished. One such was Sucha Nand, a Hindu Minister who instigated the governor that sons of a cobra should not be left alive was also punished and killed. Sikh flag was flown over Sirhind. Bhai Vinod Singh was appointed governor of Sirhind. Sikhs occupied the territories up to Lahore in Punjab and established the Sikh rule. Mughal currency was replaced by Sikh currency in the name of Guru Nanak. In December 1715 Banda Singh bahadur along with the Sikh warriors were arrested and were executed at Delhi. None of them agreed to change his religion. Such ups and downs came in Sikh struggle which was prolonged for about a century; ultimately the Sikhs uprooted the Mughals and Afghans invaders and established their own rule. By 1768 the Sikhs occupied Punjab under their confederacies rule which had been set up under the supervision of Akal Takhat. Mughals and Pathan did not dare to enter their areas. In 1799 Sikhs established their own independent sovereign state by unifying the confederacies under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and then occupied the entire Punjab by ousting the principalities which were under the Muslim rulers with allegiance to Afghanistan. The Sikh empire consisted of a very vast area of entire North India, spread over from one side and to the boundary of China on the other side. Sikh empire was exemplary secular. All the basic human rights were restored with full freedom of religion. Justice (religious, political, social and economic) was assured for everyone. Such powerful was the Sikh state that British who had established their rule in the rest of India, could not dare to enter it to come in conflict with the Sikh state and

rather entered into a treaty with it, not to interfere in each others' area. Ranjit Singh, who became Maharaja of the Sikh state in 1799 died in 1839. After his death his dynasty was finished under the conspiracies of the British with Brahaman and Dogras brothers, whom Ranjit Singh had brought at the helm of civil administration and who were not committed to Sikh rites. In 1849-1947, British dealt with Sikhs shrewdly employing them in the Army to the extent of about 30% of the entire Indian army, giving them the fertile lands located in Pakistan, as they had already their land to the eastern side and constructing the canals for the river waters for the irrigation purpose, not interfering in their religious affairs. The Sikhs started Singh Sabha movement to educate the Sikhs to make them adhering to the strict Sikh code of conduct and to follow the true tradition of their religion and to and to negate the conspiracies of the Brahmanical agents and Christian missionaries against their religion. This movement remained active from 1813-1920 and the Sikhs were awakened of the outside dangers to their religion. Sikh Gurdwaras, Sikh educational institutions – Khalsa schools and colleges were set up through out Punjab. Sikh journals and newspapers were started to advocate the cause of Sikhism. In 1920-1925 Akali movement came into existence in which the Sikh Mahants were managing Sikh Gurdwaras and had made their posts hereditary and indulging in anti Sikh practices, having been exploited by the Brahmanical and British agents. The Sikh gurdwara Act 1925 was framed at the instance of the British government which did not afford to remain in conflict with Sikhs, for the management of Sikh Gurdwaras by the elected representatives of Sikhs. Since then SGPC (Sharomni Gurdwara Prabandhak committee) is to be elected by the Sikhs. From 1926-1947 Sikhs remained active in political affairs through their representative body, Shiromni Akali Dal and took part in the Indian freedom movement, sacrificed much more than the entire Indian population. The Indian congress leaders of freedom movement Mahatma Gandhi, Jawahar Lal Nehru and others made the political promises with Sikhs in this period to give them their homeland in Punjab area with autonomous powers and constitutional guarantees. The Sikh leaders relying upon those promises and assurances rejected the offers of the British government and Muslim leagues for their separate Sikh and political powers insisting upon the freedom of India without partition and not to create Pakistan. In 1947, British created Pakistan a separate country for Muslim on the basis of their being in majority and granted freedom to India. After the achievement of freedom of India on august 15, 1947, the

story of Sikhs in their own Indian Republic is woeful and beneath expectations. The Indian leaders betrayed the Sikhs and refused to implement the promises and assurances given to them to set up autonomous Sikh state in India and the constitutional safeguards. The Sikhs were rather mistrusted and discriminated against. Punjab state was excluded even from the reorganization of Indian states on linguistic basis fearing that Sikhs would form the majority in that state. The Sikhs carried in their peaceful agnation for over 16 years for the creation of that reorganized state from 1950-1966 courting the arrest of hundred thousands of Sikhs which was ultimately conceded in 1966. In the reorganization process grave discriminations were committed against Sikhs and Punjab usurping their rights. Even Capital of Punjab was made union territory under Indian government. River waters and dams were taken out from the management of Punjab. Later on River waters of Punjab were distributed amongst other states of Haryana, Rajsthan, Delhi and J&K who had no right over those waters in accordance

with Riparian laws. The Prime Minister Indira Gandhi made awards unilaterally in that regard without any authority as if to worsen the economic condition of Sikhs who are mainly agriculturists and owners of land of Punjab.

Sikhs were again forced to carry on the peaceful agitation from 1966 to remove these injustices until now but their just demands and that of Punjab had not been conceded to as if the Indian government wants them to continually remain in conflict. Sikhs continued the Dharm Yudh Morcha from 1982- May 1984, in which over 300,000 Sikhs courted their arrests and several hundred were killed. In June 1984 Indian government with Indira Gandhi as prime Minister, attacked the Sikhs and their holy shrines by Indian Army and its war tanks, demolished the Akal Takhat and killing thousands of Sikhs in the so called Operation Blue Star without any instigation. Sikh youth were made special targets to torture and murder them arbitrarily throughout Punjab. On Oct. 31, Indira Gandhi was murdered by her two Sikh bodyguards. Her son who became the Prime Minister got thousands of Sikhs massacred throughout India from October 31- Nov 4 burning alive most of them and their houses and business establishments and even the Sikh Gurdwaras were brought to ashes without any instigation whatsoever. Action against the offenders of such heinous crimes was to be hoping against hope. Persecution of Sikhs and particularly Sikh youth continued till 1996. Sikh militants also tried to take the revenge against the guilty police officials. They carried on the demand for Khalistan, a separate Sikh state as they felt the real danger to their security in the Indian republic. The demands contained in 1973 Anand Pur Sahib resolution of Akali Dal for more powers, only defense, foreign affairs, communication and currency was to remain with the central government and to remove the injustices of the reorganization of states were not even given the due considerations by Indian government. In 1997, Akali Dal formed the government in Punjab defeating congress. It restored peace in Punjab and stopped the practice of excesses on Sikh faith and brought the police under civil administration. The previous government of congress party and the president rule, had made Punjab, virtually, the police state to commit excesses especially on Sikh youths. However, the political demands of Akali Dal were not conceded though at the Center Akali Dal was a partner with B.J. P. The struggle of Sikhs for their political rights is still continuing though Punjab and Sikhs appear to be calm outwardly, but inwardly still inflammable with a little provocation until Sikh problem and their rights are justly solved to their satisfaction. The hostile attitude of Indian government and its leaders in the last half a century against Sikhs reflects the Machiavellian and Chankyan politics in the garb of pluralism, which sanctions deceitful and fraudulent planning in the name of state unity. It permits the deceptive politics to deal with minorities. The minority should not be allowed to become majority in any state of the country. If it so becomes, then it should not be allowed to set up its government in that state. If it sets up its government, it should be of the puppets of the central government. It was due to the obvious reason that Sikhs should not form a majority in Punjab and may not yield any political power that the promises for the autonomous Sikh state and reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis were refused and no Akali Government except of the puppets of Central government in Punjab was allowed to function. Regarding the religion of majority the Chankya and Machiavellian politics provides first assimilation if not possible, then elimination. Therefore the propaganda that Sikhism is a part of Hinduism and Sikhs are a sect of Hindus is in this direction,

though an exercise in futility. Such underhand politics is of the bygone days of autocratic rules and not successful ultimately in the present set up of the democratic world of today and rather proves to be anti national. The main political and religious events of Sikhs relate to their homeland Punjab as Sikhism was founded and developed under the direct divine guidance of Sikh Gurus; initiation with Amrit of double edged sword to enter Sikhism to turn them to Singhs was provided there, and the Sikh struggle to wipe out the Mughals and Afghan invaders was carried on there, leading to the formation of their independent sovereign Sikh state. The fights with the British were held there. The Singh Sabha movements and Akali movements were started to awaken the Sikhs to understand and follow the real tenets of Sikhism. Besides ousting Mughals and Afghans, Sikhs fought the battles to take control of Sikh Gurdwaras that were successful. All the historical

Sikh places are situated mostly there including the two prominent centers of Sikhism at Amritsar (Harmandir Sahib and Akal Takht) and at Anandpur Sahib. The struggles of Sikhs in the republic of India against the government to achieve their political power and against unjust excesses on Sikhs took place there and still continuing up till now even. However in the last century, Sikhs are now spread over throughout the world by means of migration. There would hardly be any big town in the world, where Sikhs are not residing and where there are no Sikh Gurdwaras. About three-million Sikhs are now living in foreign lands and in all the states of India outside Punjab. They have no political dominance at those places, being in minority but they have got their presence felt almost everywhere. . In India, two Sikh Takhts (prominent historical places) are situated at Patna in Bihar state and Nander Hazursahib in Maharashtra. The Sikhs outside Punjab and abroad are very well placed in all the upper vocations of life. They are dedicated to their religion. Due to the 1984 attacks against Sikhs and Sikh shrines with the direct instigation of the Congress led governments and the failure to catch criminals involved in heinous crimes against humanity, the Sikhs felt insecure in all the states out of Punjab. There is no feeling of insecurity in any of the countries outside. Sikhs have made a place for them in all the countries with their hard labor and sincerity of purpose, besides commitment to their religion. In the powerful countries of America, England and Canada and others, Sikhs' number there have crossed over few millions. All of the Sikhs have the legacy to their homeland, Punjab and show keen interest in Punjab and Sikh affairs.

Sikhism:

Separate Original Revealed Religion Sikhs: A Separate Nation The brief introductory description of Religion and History of the Sikhs, manifests that Sikh religion is a separate religion, just like other religions of the world with its own distinct doctrines, ideology and religious practices. That Sikh religion is a revealed religion emphasizing the name of God, Truth, and Pious deeds, not having taken any divine approach of any other religion, but its

independent divinity conveyed through mankind, God, the Almighty through Sikh Gurus in this present age. According to an eminent scholar, the Sikh religion is originally for the present age that satisfies the needs of the modern age. Max Arthur Macauliff, the author of Sikh Religion, published by the Oxford University London who deeply studied Sikh religion for several years in Punjab, the Sikh homeland. "The illustrious author of the " Jesus "

asks whether great originality will again arise or the world be content to follow the paths of opened by the daring creator of ancient ages. Now, there is here presented a religion totally unaffected by Semitic or Christian influences. Based on the concept of unity of God, it rejected Hindu formulations and adopted an independent ethical system, rituals and standards which were totally opposed to the theological beliefs of Guru Nanak's age and country. As we shall see hereafter, it would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system." Another noted scholar of religions, Duncan Green les in " Gospel of Guru Granth Sahib" at page xxxvii: "Sikhism is no disguised Hindu sect but an independent revelation of the one truth of all sects; it is no variant of Muslim teachings save in that it too proclaims the love of God and need for men to hold Him always in their heart. It too is a distinct religion like the other great religions of the world" It seems certain that those views (as contained in Guru Granth Sahib) welled up from the deeps of inspiration in their own heart (Sikh Gurus) and owed little or nothing to what they received from others, either through books and through their words." All the other eminent scholars of Sikh religion have recorded such views, Remarked Dorothy Field, the British scholar in Religion of Sikhs, London 1914, p 34 "Sikhism is a new world separate religion and not the reformed sect of Hinduism." The British scholar, Edward Britten Count in "Foreword Sikh way of life, "Sikhism is a wholly new, original and genuinely monotheistic religion. It is an independent religion. It is the only living faith that gives the healing outlook of life."Edward Geofry -----, scholar of world religions at page 251 "It is totally to be rejected that Sikhism is a mixture of Hinduism and Islam."John Clark Archer in " Hinduism and Buddhism, London Page 267 "Sikhism indeed itself reveals something of what in the last analysis, religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world needs its message of peace and love."Lepel Griffin remarks in "Rajas of Punjab" page 338: "Sikhism has altogether a new code and the Sikhs had abandoned the Hindu faith."The British historian, JD Cunningham in "History of Sikhs, London 1849 asserts "Sikhs are wholly different from other Indians in religious faith and worldly aspirations." Qazi Noor Mohammed who came to India in 1764 with Ahmad Shah Abdali as history recorded remarked: " Sikhs have a separate religion of their own. Religiously they are separate from Hindus as Guru Nanak founded a distinct religion." Sikhs: A Separate Nation It is also obvious that Sikhs form a separate nation, satisfying and having all the ingredients of a nation. Sikhs have their separate religion, separate scriptures, separate religious practices, separate initiation procedures to enter their religion, rather altogether different from all other religions, of taking Amrit of the double edged sword, separate identity and keeping hairs uncut, wearing the turbans upon heads and Kirpans on their bodies making them conspicuous from all other, separate culture, separate rites, rituals, separate customs and personal law. Sikhs had their own independent Sovereign Sikh empire in a very vast area of North India, for about a century over which they ruled, adjoining the boundaries of Afghanistan on the one side, China on the other side. Such a powerful was their rule that even British after occupying the rest of India entered in agreement with them not to interfere in to the territories of each other. During the struggle of Sikhs against Mughal rule, the adjoining Hindu states had sided with Mughals and remained in battles against Sikhs. After uprooting Mughals and Afghans in a prolonged struggle Sikhs established their own independent sovereign Sikh rule over the vast area which remained under their

occupation. The eminent Sikh scholar, Prof. Puran Singh, author of a prestigious book "Spirit of the Sikh" in chapter "Sikh People" has asserted the Sikhs to be a nation: "Guru Gobind Singh cut the moorings of Sikh nation from its racial past and a nation wholly modern in spirit and mind sprang up out of Guru's mind, with a highly inspiring and most deeply reactive tradition and history of its own." It was a nation that was set on voyaging in to the oceans of its future. The Hindu of the Muslim past was abolished for the Sikh. The Sikhs thus successfully cut themselves off from all the past systems of thought and life. I am neither Muslim nor Hindu nor Jain, nor Jew, nor gentile. I am the man with no castes, no separate color. My life is love. My vision is of the words of soul. My religion is the person of the Guru. My tendency is Godward," said the Sikh. Rightly remarked the eminent British historian J.D. Cunningham, in his book "History of Sikhs," London 1849: "Sikhs are wholly different from other Indians in religious faith and worldly aspirations. Guru Gobind Singh formed such a Nation, which elevated every one, politically and religiously after doing away with class system." Sir Charles Eliot rightly remarked in his book,

"Hinduism and Buddhism," London, 1921 Vol II, Page 207: "Sikh Religion is a Religion of special interest to mankind; since it

has created not only political society but also customs so distinct that those who profess it rank in common esteem as a separate race. Guru Gobind Singh's ordinances were successful in creating a nation." Dorothy Field in his book "Religion of Sikhs, London,

1914, page 34- 35, rightly remarked: "Of no other religion (than Sikh Religion) it can be said, that it had made a nation in so short a time." The Russian official newspaper, "Prevada" commented:

"In this world, there are two communities, who possess all the ingredients of being a Nation. There are Jews and the Sikhs." The Jews have got their Homeland, but the Sikhs have no land, home of their own so far." (Autobiography of Master Page 197)

Sharomani Gurudwara Parbandhik Committee, (SGPC) and Sharomani Akali Dal, the Sikh representative bodies, Religious and political respectively passed the resolutions that Sikhs are a nation. On 25 March, 1981, SGPC passed the unanimous resolution: "Sikhs are a Nation." On 11 May, 1981, Akali Dal passed the unanimous resolution: "Sikhs are a Nation." On 15 March 1981, Sikh Education Conference, demanded and resolved:

"Association Status for Sikhs in United Nations Organization (UNO)" It is thus obvious that Sikhs are undoubtedly a separate Nation. It is obviously from the brief references as to Sikhs and Sikhism that Sikhs are a separate Nation; Sikhs have a separate religion; Sikhs have a separate history; Sikhs have a separate quest of justice; Sikhs have separate ambitions for higher values, spiritual, ethical and moral. This separatism of Sikhs is not to separate God, the Almighty in the mankind, but it is for the Unity of God for the entire humanity, only and the only one God, to meditate His Name alone and to live under His submission. This separatism of Sikhs is not to separate the mankind on the basis of caste and creed systems but to maintain the unity and equality of the entire mankind to be of the same brotherhood and of one race. This separatism of Sikhs is not to separate the mankind as to way of life but it is to ensure the way of truthful living for the entire mankind with the selfless service of the

humanity relying upon one's social responsibility to the humanity. The separate quest of justice of Sikhs is not to seek separate justice for themselves alone but to seek justice, (Religious, political, social and economic) for every human being who is the victim of injustice anywhere. The separate ambition for higher values in spiritual, ethical, moral, and all other spheres is not for Sikhs alone but for the entire mankind so as to clear the clouds of suspicions in the humanity in all the spheres and maintain the human dignity and the disturbed world peace.

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