

## CHAPTER XII

# THE SIKH INSTITUTIONS

The Sikh institutions can be termed in three categories :

1. Sikh Religious Institutions
2. Sikh Educational Institutions
3. Sikh Political Institutions

Sikh gurdwaras, in which all the holy congregations are held in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib* daily to preach Sikh religion are the Sikh religious institutions. SGPC, elected by Sikhs in Punjab manages the historical Sikh gurdwaras located in Punjab. There are separate management committees for all the Sikh gurdwaras to be elected by the Sikhs.

Sikh schools and colleges are the Sikh educational institutions. These were set up to impart general education besides Sikh studies to make the Sikh students live as per the Sikh ways of life and be successful in their vocations.

Sikh political institutions are to take care of the Sikh Socio-Political affairs alongwith the aim to preach Sikh religion.

## Sikh Religious Institutions

### Harimandar Sahib, Amritsar (Golden Temple)

Harimandar Sahib Amritsar is one of the prime historical Sikh religious places. Third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Dass purchased the land of several villages which now comprises Amritsar. He deputed fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Dass, to construct a Sarovar (a big holy water tank) there with the vision to make this place a centre for Sikh religion. Guru Ram Dass got dug the tank, the sarovar in the vast area of more than 400×400 sq. ft. Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, got constructed Harimandar Sahib (Sikh gurdwara) in the centre of this sarovar on a 67 sq. ft. platform. Gurdwara is in 45 sq. ft. area with four doors on each side, exhibiting the divine Sikh doctrine that it is open for everybody without any distinction of cast and creed in difference with other religious places of the prevalent Indian religions where everyone had no access. It was a practical step to eliminate the distinctions and inequalities in mankind

as everyone is to be considered of equal status. The visitors to the gurdwaras are served community meals, by sitting in the same row without any distinction, whatsoever. The system is called *Sangat* and *Pangat*. Before joining the holy congregation in the gurdwara, one is expected to take meals in the same row sitting and treating everyone as equal in all respects.

There is the causeway of 202 ft. in length and 21 ft. wide as a bridge for approach to the gurdwara space. There is a 13 feet wide circumambulatory path, all around the main gurdwaras building. On the top of the building at 26'-9" height, there is low flated *gumbaz*, (dome), having the lotus petal motif in relief at the base, inverted lotus at the top which supports the *Kalash* having beautiful *chhatri* at the end. It is the best independent design of Sikh school of architecture and an architectural specimen of the world.

Guru Arjan Dev, fifth Sikh Guru compiled *Guru Granth Sahib* (then called *Adi Granth*) containing the Divine Hymns of the first five Sikh Gurus of 31 Bhagats, whose spiritual verse had affinity with Sikh divine thought, and he installed it in Harimandar Sahib. Since then these Divine Hymns being the word of God, divine revelations for the entire mankind, are regularly recited and sung in Harimandar Sahib from the early hours of the morning to late at night. Thousands and thousands of devotees come to this holiest shrine to pay their obeisance daily. The construction of Harimandar Sahib was started in 1588 AD. It was completed in 1601 A.D. *Guru Granth Sahib* was installed in 1604 in Harimandar Sahib for the first time. The first granthi was Baba Budha Ji, who had performed the coronation ceremony of all the first five successors of Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. Guru Arjan Dev, used to sit at a lower level than that of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, exhibiting his respect and regards to it as containing the word of God. Later, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master, added the divine composition of Guru Tegh Bahadur in it and, before his demise in 1708, declared the Granth as the Eternal Living Guru to be ever acknowledged by the Sikhs.

Harimandar Sahib was demolished and damaged several times in 18th century by the Mughal rulers and Afghan invaders when Sikhs were in armed conflict with them for about a century and the sarovar filled up, thinking that it was a source of powerful spiritual inspiration for Sikhs to enable them to defeat their armed forces which were well organized and in very large numbers from the two countries—India and Afghanistan. Sikhs would take no time to immediately reconstruct these religious holy places. The Harimandar Sahib in the present form is from the time of Sikh rule when Maharaja Ranjit Singh got it gold plated.

In June 1984, the government of India under Indira Gandhi as the Prime Minister of Congress party attacked it with army tanks on the false pretext of arresting Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwala and some of his followers. It happened on the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru, killing thousands of innocent pilgrims. Akal Takhat was literally demolished but, later on, repaired by the government to pacify Sikh sentiments. However, Sikhs did not accept the government repairs and totally

demolished it to reconstruct a new building by themselves. It was reconstructed by the Sikhs as a magnificent building, bigger in size than the previous one. The repairs needed in the entire Harimandar Sahib complex were done by the Sikhs themselves. Sikh history has the testimony that whosoever damaged or demolished Harimandar Sahib could not survive for more than five months. Sikhs never tolerated the defiling of the most sacred of Sikh shrines Harimandar Sahib in the holiest of the holy Sikh historical religious places, having Akal Takhat in front of it in that complex.

## Akal Takhat Amritsar

Akal Takhat was constructed by the sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind in front of Harimandar Sahib to discuss and decide all the socio political Sikh affairs. Guru Arjan Dev the fifth Sikh Guru, was martyred by Mughal emperor Jahangir to stop the spread of Sikh religion and to crush the freedom of religion. Sikhs were now to face the Mughal armed forces with their own armed forces. It was the message to the Mughal rulers that Sikhs would not yield to their tyrannical rule and they were sovereign. The dimensions of Akal Takhat were bigger than those of Mughal Takhat of Delhi. It was to exhibit that Sikhs were at a higher pedestal than that of the Mughals. Akal Takhat was a symbol of political sovereignty of Sikhs for which Sikh armed forces were a must to challenge the Mughal army.

So great is the sanctity of Akal Takhat which its name itself denotes to be the throne of immortal God, the Almighty. Its foundation was laid by Guru Hargobind, the sixth Sikh Guru himself on June 15, 1606. Its construction was done by Baba Budha, the first granthi of Harimandar Sahib, appointed by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru and Bhai Gurdas who scribed *Guru Granth Sahib*, then called *Adi Granth*, under the direction and supervision of Guru Arjan Dev. After the sixth Guru left Amritsar in 1635 for Kiratpur, Akal Takhat and Harimandar Sahib remained under the control of the descendents of Pirthi Chand, the elder brother of Guru Arjan Dev, who had become his rival but was rejected by the Sikhs.

In April 1698, Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru appointed Bhai Mani Singh as granthi Harimandar Sahib, who took over its control as well as that of Akal Takhat ousting the anti Sikh rivals. After the departure for the heavenly abode of Guru Gobind Singh, Akal Takhat became the central place for Sikhs to meet the challenge of the Mughals in the struggle which prolonged for a century, ultimately establishing the Sikh rule by wiping out the Mughals and Afghan invaders. Sikh leaders would meet at Akal Takhat and discuss the plans and the policies with unanimity and then to take action in the field unitedly in that struggle. The decision to establish Dal Khalsa and Sikh *missals* (confederacies) were taken at Akal Takhat by the Sikhs. The periodical reports were to be regularly sent by the heads of these organizations to Akal Takhat to be reviewed, discussed and consolidated. Akal Takhat thus became the prime centre of Sikhism for their struggle.

During the Sikh rule, the Jathedar of Akal Takhat, Akali Phula Singh was so powerful that he summoned the head of the Sikh state, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, for his misconduct and ordered the punishment of 100 lashes after tying him to a pillar of Akal Takhat. Maharaja Ranjit Singh, as a devoted Sikh, obeyed this order of Akal Takhat and got tied himself to the pillar for receiving the punishment, though the jathedar Akal Takhat, after seeing the obedience and submission of Ranjit Singh, imposed the punishment of five instead of hundred lashes.

During the Akali movement for ousting the Mahants from gurdwaras all the peaceful Sikh movements and agitations were started from Akal Takhat and became successful. It has ever remained the centre for the Sikh struggle.

In the Republic of India, when Sikhs were betrayed by not implementing the pledges and promises made to them by the Indian congress leaders for an autonomous state, and discriminated against them by refusing the reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis and usurping their resources in the implementation of reorganization the peaceful agitations (*Morchas*) were continued from the Akal Takhat. *In Dharam Yudh Morcha* (1982-84) the centre was also the Akal Takhat. Thus Akal Takhat is the central place of Sikhism.

In accordance with the provisions of Sikh Gurdwaras Act 1925, the management of all the historical Sikh religious places was invested in SGPC including Akal Takhat. The jathedars of Akal Takhat, thereafter, are appointed by SGPC, some times with the advice of other Sikh organizations and Sikh personalities, while a few times without taking any such advice. In the recent past, there had been controversies as to appointments, suspensions and dismissals of the jathedars of Akal Takhat on political motivations leading to division among Sikhs as to accept or reject the jathedars appointed by SGPC, which affected the authority and prestige of the highest Sikh religious office. The blame is to be shared by the SGPC for creating such a distressing situation.

There is no clear cut procedure and rules as to the designating of the authority to appoint, suspend and dismiss jathedars of Akal Takhat and of other Takhats, or for deciding the qualification for appointment, the terms of appointment; the grounds for suspension and dismissal, the powers and authority to be invested in jathedar for like other relevant matters. The rules in this regard should be framed with the approval of all the Sikhs worldover, as the authority of Akal Takhat is applicable to every Sikh. A high powered commission may be appointed to deal with the matter, if so needed.

## Four Sikh Takhats

There are four Sikh Takhats besides Akal Takhat. These relate to Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru.

### 1. Takhat Kesgarh Sahib, Anandpur Sahib

Guru Gobind Singh created Khalsa at this place on Baisakhi day of 1699 with Amrit

of double-edged sword and made it obligatory with five Sikh emblems. No Sikh is to be exempted from this initiation and code of conduct. Guru Gobind Singh resided mostly at this place.

## 2. Takhat Damdama Sahib, Talwandi

Guru Gobind Singh stayed at this place for about two years after the battles with Mughals came to end. He prepared the present version of *Guru Granth Sahib* at this place.

## 3. Takhat Patna Sahib

Guru Gobind Singh was born at this place and remained there for about 4 years before coming to Anandpur Sahib. Takhat Patna Sahib is in the state of Bihar.

## 4. Takhat Hazur Sahib, Nanded

Guru Gobind Singh remained at this place for some time in the last days of his life and ordained the Sikhs to accept *Guru Granth Sahib* as eternal perpetual Guru. It is in the state of Maharashtra.

## Other Historic Gurdwaras

Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, is the birth place of Guru Nanak Dev—founder of Sikhism, where he lived in his childhood.

Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib is the place where Guru Nanak Dev resided after completing the missionary travels till his heavenly abode.

Gurdwara Panja Sahib is also connected with Guru Nanak Dev, where his hand impression still exists on the piece of rock to stop it, which was pushed by Wali Kandhari. The water gushing fountain exists uptill now.

These Gurdwaras are now in Pakistan, after 1947 partition of India.

Gurdwara Sultanpur Lodhi is in Kapurthala district. Before starting his missionary travels, Guru Nanak did store-keeper's job here for a few years and lived with his sister who was married there.

Gurdwara Khadur Sahib, in Amritsar district is the place of the seat of Guru Angad Dev, the second Guru.

Gurdwara Goindwal Sahib is the place of the seat of Guru Amar Dass, the third Sikh Guru.

Gurdwara Kiratpur Sahib in Ropar distt. is the seat of 6th, 7th and 8th Sikh Gurus.

Anandpur Sahib is seat of ninth and tenth Sikh Gurus. There are several other historical Sikh gurdwaras connected with Sikh Gurus.

Amritsar is connected with 3rd to 6th Gurus of Sikhs. Third Sikh Guru, Guru Amar Dass purchased the land of several villages, and sent Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Sikh

Guru to develop it and constructed the sarovar, which he did. Fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev constructed Harimandar Sahib in the centre of the sarovar and installed *Guru Granth Sahib* in it. Sixth Sikh Guru, Guru Hargobind constructed the Akal Takhat in front of Harimandar Sahib. Thus it was made a central Sikh religious institution.

Gurdwara Tarn Taran Sahib, where a very spacious sarovar was constructed by Guru Arjan Dev is situated in Amritsar district.

Gurdwara Kartarpur Sahib, in Jalandhar district, was the seat of sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind for sometime before he shifted to Kiratpur Sahib, a sub mountainous place in Shivalik hills.

Gurdwara Mukatsar Sahib is in the memory of the last battle of Sikhs with Mughal rule, where forty Sikhs gave their martyrdom in the battle who had left the great Guru at Anandpur Sahib.

Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Lahore is in memory of the martyrdom of fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan Dev at Lahore.

There are gurdwaras at Delhi in the memory of the martyrdom of ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Teg Bahadur. Gurdwara Sis Ganj is the place of martyrdom of the great Guru and Gurdwara Rakab Ganj is the place of cremation of the body of the divine Guru. Gurdwara Bangla Sahib is in the memory of the eighth Sikh Guru, Guru Harkrishan who stayed at the house of Raja Jai Singh, when he was called by Aurangzeb, but Guru refused to meet him.

Historical Sikh Gurdwaras exist throughout India and in the area now in Pakistan and in several other countries where Guru Nanak Dev and other Sikh Gurus visited including Afghanistan, Iraq and Bangla Desh. All these should be under the management of a central Sikh institution.

Sikhs have constructed magnificent gurdwaras at all the historical places in the memory of the divine Sikh Gurus. The Divine composition and hymns of the Sikh Gurus are regularly recited and explained in these religious places in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Some writers have mistakenly compared such visits to the Hindu pilgrims which have been discarded in Sikhism. In fact the Hindu pilgrimages to the holy Hindu places were meant for the washing of sins which were rejected by Sikh Gurus that sins flourished in the mind and could be wiped out in the mind itself by meditation in the Name of God, while the visits by Sikhs to their holy historical places concerned with Sikh Gurus are to pay obeisance to Sikh Gurus and to get inspiration from their divine teachings to meditate in the name of God so as to imbue it in their minds to burn ego and eradicate the vices, and inculcate virtues in order to live a truthful life in Sikh way of life. These visits are never meant to wipe out the impurities and sins by merely visiting such religious places as pilgrimage.

Similarly some writers like W.H. McLeod misunderstood and misrepresented the construction of wells as *Bauli* at Goindwal by third Sikh Guru and the spacious water tanks (*sarovars*) as at Amritsar by fourth Sikh Guru to compare with the ritual baths by Hindus at their holy rivers. These wells and sarovars on the precincts of Sikh

Gurdwaras are meant to take baths by the huge congregations. These are not meant to wipe out the sins like the ritual Hindu baths in rivers. The Sikhs after taking the bath go inside the gurdwaras to hear and sing the divine hymns of Sikh Gurus in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib* and to meditate in the Name of God. All the Sikh Gurus in their Divine hymns have clearly stated that impurities of the mind can only be wiped out by meditation in the name of God and imbuing God in one's mind and not by any ritualistic baths or other rites and rituals. These wells and sarovars practically eliminated the discriminations and distinctions in the mankind as every one could use these on the basis of human equality just as in holy Sikh congregation and community kitchens.

## Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)

SGPC is the statutory Sikh institution under Sikh Gurdwara Act 1925, to be elected by the Sikhs directly for the management of historical Sikh gurdwaras in Punjab. Its other aim is to preach Sikh religion. There are thousands of employees of SGPC to conduct the different functions, connected with the management of Gurdwaras. The entire Punjab was divided in separate constituencies to elect members of SGPC by Sikhs. After the partition of India, the areas of Punjab to western side from Wagha border in between Lahore and Amritsar, went to Pakistan. So after 1947, SGPC has no control over the gurdwaras now situated in Pakistan. Pakistan has now constituted a separate Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, not acceptable to SGPC, though it wants the gurdwaras in Pakistan under its control as was before 1947. Sikh leaders should have got included in the Indian independence Act, the provision in that regard.

After the reorganization of Punjab, the historical Sikh gurdwaras situated in the areas allocated to Haryana and Himachal, though remained under the jurisdiction of SGPC but government of India has subjected Punjab to hold elections to SGPC etc. It has also caused some practical difficulties. Thus the original shape of SGPC took some changes due to the changed situations. The elections of SGPC are for a period of five years to remain in office, but the executive committee including the President are elected for one year by the general house of SGPC in the month of November each year. There are about 175 SGPC members, while fifteen members are co-opted by the general house of SGPC. Jathedar Akal Takhat is also an observer member but having no right of vote. SGPC has always been under the control of Akali Dal, whose candidates get the overwhelming majority. There is party factionalism still as it is in Akali Dal, because SGPC members also take part in active politics, some to become MLA's or MPs and some to aspire for ministerial posts in government. The President of Akali Dal has his say naturally as the members are to get the nominations of the party for elections.

In the last few years, due to the serious party factionalism in Akali Dal, it did reflect in SGPC also. Even the highest Sikh religious office of jathedar Akal Takhat, Amritsar was made controversial by casually removing the jathedars and appointing others in their places, without consulting the other Sikh organizations as was the previous

practice. It was due to the vested interests of the President Akali Dal or of the SGPC, or by the SGPC executive. It divided the Sikhs, as some other Sikh leaders, organizations of Sikhs and very considerable number of Sikhs refused to accept the newly appointed jathedar terming him to be *Sarkari* and continued to accept the removed jathedars, as it happened in the case of Bhai Ranjit Singh. Such a division among Sikhs, and the weakening of jathedar Akal Takhat authority for which SGPC may be responsible is very dangerous to Sikh interests. SGPC has to ensure the unity of Sikhs and the confidence of all of the Sikhs and the respect of jathedar Akal Takhat among Sikhs. The party factionalism and the irregularities lower the prestige of SGPC itself which must be safeguarded to command respect.

As a matter of policy, SGPC members should not aspire to political offices. Their trend of mind should be more religious than political. The Akali Dal leaders should not interfere in their working, to the least, though they may be nominated by them. SGPC members have statutory obligations to fulfill by their own discretions, without any influence, with honesty, integrity and dedication to Sikh cause. The efficient and honest management of Sikh gurdwaras and preaching of Sikh religion with honesty of purpose is to be their only guide. The Sikhs and particularly Sikh youth is drifting away from the Sikh code of conduct. SGPC has to share the responsibility for it. It must enrol the preachers having missionary zeal so that the Sikh youth and other Sikhs are brought back to the Sikh code of conduct by carrying out a movement on the lines of Singh Sabha movement.

It must be ensured that in the schools and colleges of SGPC, there remains no teacher and no students who is not following Sikh code of conduct. Then it should pay attention to other Sikh schools and colleges in Punjab to achieve this aim. The management of all the Sikh educational institutions should be made Sikh oriented and the teachers should be following the Sikh code of conduct. It is then only that the Sikh students would follow the Sikh code of conduct, besides reserving a period a day for each class for the teaching of Sikh religion and History. Each SGPC member should be in-charge of his constituency for this purpose. There are vast resources and finances at the command of SGPC. Their budget is over two hundred crore rupees which must be utilised for the preaching of Sikh religion to make all the Sikhs observe Sikh code of conduct. Then Sikhism can be brought to the notice of the world by getting translation in world languages of Sikh scriptures and Sikh history to which Sikhs owe their duty. The eminent scholars of the world concede Sikhism to be a religion of the modern age and capable of solving the problems of the modern man. SGPC has to take the leading part in this respect to achieve the aims.

The voters of SGPC must be True Sikhs with Sikh initiation of double-edged sword, complying with the requirement of five emblems of Sikhism and following the Sikh code of conduct. Then only can they elect the members of SGPC complying with such obligation and commitment to Sikhism and Sikh cause, having a religious trend of mind and preaching of Sikh religion. A dishonest statutory amendment was made in 1959

in Sikh Gurdwaras Act 1925 to make Hindus as voters in the garb of *Sehajdhari* Sikhs, not known in Sikhism, so as to take control of the Sikh gurdwaras from Akali Dal and thereby to also finish the separate political representative party of Sikhs which had always been dominant in SGPC. It proved to be a futile exercise as the congress and its government could never practically avail of this provision which Sikhs could never tolerate. There is no class in Sikhs as *Sehajdhari* Sikhs. Either one is a Sikh or not and nothing in between. To become a Sikh, definite initiation procedure has been prescribed and Sikh code of conduct exists, which is a must without any exemption. SGPC should have not allowed such an anti-Sikh amendment in any way.

No doubt, SGPC has passed resolutions several times to repeal this amendment, but that is not sufficient without positive activity. Akali Dal remained in power several times after this anti Sikh amendment but still it could not get it repealed, which is a stigma on Akali leaders itself. How ridiculous it is that if a Sikh having been initiated and observing Sikh code of conduct commits a violation and becomes *patit* 'apostate' and is excommunicated from Sikhism automatically till he again gets initiation in the same manner, after tendering an apology to the Sikh panth, while a person who has not become a Sikh with initiation and neither observes Sikh code of conduct, is still called a Sikh as *Sehajdhari* Sikh. How can such a religion of strict discipline allow such a class, which is totally unSikh in the concocted name of *Sehajdhari* Sikh. Similarly how ridiculous it is that according to 1959 amendment an apostate Sikh with a little violation of cutting even one hair from the body becomes ineligible to be a voter for SGPC while a person who has not yet even become a Sikh and is totally clean shaven remains eligible to become voter of SGPC. There can be no other instance of such a high stupidity and dishonesty in legislation in the world, besides the glaring interference in the religious affairs of a religion by the government. However, though after long delay, the government of India accepted the SGPC recommendation in 2003 and has barred the *Sehajdhari* Sikh right of vote in SGPC.

## Delhi Gurdwara Management Board

For the management of Sikh gurdwaras located in Delhi, the capital of India, there is the statutory Delhi Gurdwaras Management Board. The historical Sikh gurdwaras in Delhi are :

- i) Gurdwara Sis Ganj, where Guru Teg Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru was martyred by the Mughal ruler Aurangzeb, for the freedom of religion when Hindus sought his protection against their forcible conversion to Islam and the Guru gave his voluntary sacrifice to stop the forcible conversions.
- ii) Gurdwara Rakab Ganj, where the ninth Guru was cremated.
- iii) Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, where the eighth Sikh Guru stayed with Raja Jai Singh but refused to meet the Mughal emperor.

There are several other historical Sikh gurdwaras in Delhi. The gurdwara management Board Delhi has a huge budget and vast sources at its command. It has been under the Akali Dal leadership, whose nominees usually win the elections. It also suffers from the same party factions and political motivations like SGPC and so should follow the same guidelines. It can serve a lot to the Sikh cause, being in the capital of India, and to spread the preaching of Sikh religion in a meticulous manner.

## Local Management Committees

The other two Takhts, Hazoor Sahib and Patna Sahib are not under the jurisdiction of SGPC. Their management committees are to be elected under their own rules and regulations but some representation has been given to SGPC in those management committees.

Similarly, the other local gurdwaras in Punjab and outside, which are not historical have their own local management committees. There are numerous Sikh gurdwaras out of India, throughout the world and there would be hardly any big towns in the world, where there are no Sikhs and there they have not constructed their gurdwaras. All these gurdwaras have their local management committees. All the gurdwaras in the world, strictly follow the traditions and code of conduct of Sikhism. However, at some places, the intense disputes amongst Sikhs as to the management committees do exist. Some disputes have even been taken to local courts causing wastage of Sikh finances besides creating party factions amongst Sikhs leading to some fights in the gurdwaras. Such problems should be avoided and unanimous elections should be encouraged.

## Sikh Saints and other Sikh Preachers

### To Work with Missionary Spirit

Sikh saints and many other Sikh preachers also preach Sikhism. There is no dearth of Sikh saints and Sikh preachers (*Ragis, Dhadis, granthis* and *Katha wachaks*) but still the Sikh youth is drifting away from the Sikh code of conduct. The general impression of the Sikh saints and other preachers is that they are not above monetary consideration and as such the zeal of missionary spirit is mostly lacking. More than a half century back there were three Sikh saints who had imparted the *Amrit* of double-edged sword to hundreds of thousands of Sikhs each and brought them in the Sikh code of conduct. They were very well respected among Sikhs and considered to be above monetary considerations. These were Sant Attar Singh Mastuana, Sant Ishar Singh Kaleran and Sant Isher Singh Rerewala. Most of the present day Sikh saints connect themselves with these holy saints institutions. Sant Kartar Singh and Sant Jarnail Singh of Taksal Bhindranwala and some other Sikh saints are also famous for this purpose with missionary spirit.

The Sikh saints must live up to the high standard of morality and spirituality

befitting the high status it demands. They must preach Sikhism as the mission of their lives by mingling with the Sikhs on the level of equality as Sikh religious preachers, without any notion of superiority. There is a general impression and grouse against them that they get their feet touched from their followers in the wrong notion of superiority and convert their gurdwaras into Deras with somewhat different traditions than the Sikh code of conduct which are totally prohibited in Sikhism. A Sikh saint has to be above the materialistic tendencies, be in great humility and have a greater sense of equality with others. He should have a practical sense of missionary spirit and truthful living so as to automatically inspire others for the Sikh way of life. There are so many self proclaimed Sikh saints in Punjab that a few villages would come to their preaching areas. They try to preach Sikhism and Sikh code of conduct, but still many Sikhs and particularly Sikh youth are drifting away from Sikh way of life.

The Sikhs must prescribe some procedure to declare only a very befitting divine personality as a Sikh saint, fulfilling the high qualifications and the essentialities laid down in Sikhism in the divine proclamations of Sikh gurus as contained in *Guru Granth Sahib*. No one else should be permitted to suffix the word 'Sant' to his name himself. It has now become so common that the real meaning and respect of this word has lost its value as the undeserving ones also proclaim themselves as Sikh saints. It results in disrespect and not the same high regard even to the deserving godly personalities. In Christianity very stringent tests have to be passed to confer the nomenclature of saint which is conferred very rarely after great scrutiny and mostly after the death of such a godly person which has given a very high stature and respect to it. Sikhs should give a careful consideration to this aspect to get the needful done.

The other preachers of Sikh religion including the *granthis*, *Kirtan jathas*, *Katha wachaks*, *Dhadis* should be more missionary than professionals who do it only for monetary gains. They should also live up to the high values of the Sikh religion, in their practical life, which they teach to others. These Sikh preachers can play a great role in preaching Sikh religion and bringing the Sikhs under the Sikh code of conduct. There is no dearth of such preachers. It is a matter of appreciation that these preachers are now available throughout the world in all the gurdwaras, but still the preaching of Sikh religion and bringing the Sikhs under the Sikh initiation and code of conduct of Sikhism is not so encouraging. These preachers should be given uniform training and refresher courses to preach Sikh religion in an effective manner. They should be highly educated to impress upon the Sikh youth raised in countries outside India.

The jathedars of Akal Takhat and other Takhats should work earnestly in their areas and supervise and mobilize all the resources under the jurisdiction of their areas to preach Sikhism and bring all the Sikhs under the Sikh code of conduct.

The managements of all the Sikh gurdwaras should be strictly adhering to the Sikh code of conduct and should ensure the preaching of Sikh religion, so as to bring all the Sikhs in their areas to be under the Sikh code of conduct. There should not be any disputes for the offices in the managing committees. The capable Sikhs with inner

desire of selfless service and preaching of Sikhism should be selected or elected.

The two statutory management committees—SGPC and Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee—with their vast finances and resources, should preach Sikhism so as to leave no Sikh out of the Sikh code of conduct. They should publish Sikh scriptures and Sikhs history in other world languages to bring it to the knowledge of the World. There should be no disputes and party factions in them of any sort. They should function in harmonious co-operation and coordination.

## Sikh Educational Institutions

In the 19th century, after the fall of the Sikh empire, Sikhs thought of establishing Sikh schools and colleges, besides Sikh gurdwaras. The Singh Sabha movement made the Sikhs aware of the need of education for the younger Sikh generation, both general and about Sikhism. Sikh schools were set up throughout Punjab for this purpose. After school education, the college education was essential. So Sikhs set up Sikh colleges. The first Sikh college of repute was established at Amritsar as Khalsa College which became well known for its architecture and education. The college was set up in a vast area. The first Principal of the college was a well known British educationist. Then the management came under the total independent management of Sikhs. Several other Sikh colleges were setup. Thus Sikh schools and colleges were spread throughout Punjab. SGPC also setup its schools and colleges in medical, and engineering sciences as well.

Initially these Sikh schools and colleges educated the Sikh students as to their religion and history besides the other subjects and proved successful in bringing the Sikh students within the ambit of Sikh code of conduct. Those students led the Sikh way of life, wherever they went for the vocations of their lives. However, for the last few decades that spirit of Sikh education is dwindling. Slowly and steadily most of these educational institutions of Sikhs have misrepresented themselves as to have nothing left of Sikhism in them to teach Sikh religion and history. They are now only by name. Sikh schools and colleges are without teaching Sikh students their religion and history at all. The teaching staff and the management also have no interests in this type of Sikh education. This is the main reason that Sikh students studying in these schools and colleges drift away from the Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. The Sikhs are themselves responsible for bringing about the hopeless situation. This matter has to be taken up by the Sikhs themselves to ensure that these institutions should be overhauled, their managements should be sincere and dedicated to the teaching of Sikh religion and Sikh history and their teaching staff as well to fulfill the object for which these institutions were set up i.e. to enable the Sikh students to follow the Sikh code of conduct and lead the Sikh way of life in the real sense.

Sikhs and Sikh organizations must take necessary action immediately to ensure :

1. That in all Sikh schools and colleges, Sikh prayers and at least one brief lecture

on Sikh religion or history mostly by students, should be made a daily routine just before the classes start, as is done in the Christian schools.

2. There must be one period daily for each class to teach Sikh religion and Sikh history.

3. Sikh students must have the Sikh appearance with hairs uncut and turban on the head.

4. Sikh students should be initiated with *Amrit* of double-edged sword following Sikh code of conduct.

5. The Sikh teachers must be Gursikhs, having been initiated and observing Sikh code of conduct as otherwise the students would feel confused, as the teachers are to be role models for students.

6. The managements of the Sikh schools and colleges must be dedicated to Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life as to ensure these essentialities with their inner conviction.

In the case of Sikhs, living outside India, there are rarely any Sikh schools and colleges. Gurdwaras must be utilized for the education of Sikh religion and history for the younger Sikh generation. It is a matter of great appreciation for the Sikhs residing abroad, that they have constructed gurdwaras in the areas of their residence. There would be now hardly any big town or city in the world without Sikhs and Sikh gurdwara. Sikhs should function Sunday gurdwara schools for teaching Sikh religion, Sikh history and Punjabi language once a week, one period each of their subjects. It should be ensured that all the Sikh students, residing in the areas of the gurdwaras are brought to attend such schools. However, in the times to come independent Sikh schools and colleges have to be set up in the countries where Sikhs reside. In Punjab also more Sikh schools and colleges are to be set up. Sikh universities will also have to be set up.

## Sikh Political Institutions

The political involvement of Sikhs themselves started actively just after the departure for the heavenly abode of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. Sikhs under the command of General Gurbax Singh, commonly known as Banda Singh Bahadur formed the Sikh army. Sikhs started towards Sirhind from the Vansahari situated on the outskirts of Delhi in 1709 and captured the Muslim principalities. On the way, Sikh administrators were appointed ousting the Muslims, who had affiliations with Mughals. On May 12, 1710, a battle took place between Sikh army and Mughal army outside Sirhind. Sikhs defeated the Mughals and occupied Sirhind. The Sikh flag was hoisted at Sirhind. Sikh Governor was appointed in place of Wazir Khan, the Muslim Governor who was killed along with other guilty officials for bricking alive the minor sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Sikhs occupied the territories up to Lahore. Sikh rule was established. Sikh currency replaced the Mughal currency. In 1715 December, Mughal army overpowered the Sikhs as they had very limited resources.

Sikh struggle was carried on for about a century with surprising ups and downs, under the leadership of Nawab Kapur Singh and thereafter under leadership of Jathedar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Dal Khalsa was first formed and then the Sikh confederacies under the command of Sikh leaders. It was ultimately in 1768 that the entire Punjab territories came under the control of Sikh confederacies. Reports as to progress of the struggle would be sent to Akal Takhat Amritsar, where Sikh leaders would meet, discuss and decide their strategies unanimously and then bring into action in the field.

In 1799 a consolidated Sikh sovereign state was formed under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. All the leaders and warriors of the Sikh struggle were very dedicated and committed to the Sikh cause with honesty of purpose. They wiped out the Mughal and Afghan invaders from their homeland Punjab and established their own Sikh sovereign state. None of them could be won over by the Mughals or Afghans. Sikh leadership of the struggle was good and exemplary. In the Sikh state, a mighty Sikh army had been formed. General Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phula Singh and others, were very committed Generals. The Sikh state was an exemplary secular state. Justice was done to every one. The fundamental human rights were restored. The entire North India adjoining Afghanistan on one side and China on the other, were vast areas of Sikh empire. The British who had occupied the rest of India dared not enter the territories of the Sikh state. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1839, the British in conspiracies with Dogra and Brahmin brothers, whom Ranjit Singh had brought at the helm of the affairs of the Sikh state, brought about the down fall of the Sikh empire. In a decade in 1849, the British occupied it ending the dynasty of Ranjit Singh. If the Sikh state had not been made dynastic by Ranjit Singh, and if Dogras and Brahmins had not been put at the top positions by Ranjit Singh as they were not committed to Sikh rule, the Sikh empire would not have ended.

### Sikh leadership from 1849 onwards

When the British pacified the Sikhs, they paid attention to the awakening of Sikhs as to the real aspects of their religion because Mahants who were managing Sikh gurdwaras, had started anti Sikh practices under Brahmanical influence. The Singh Sabha movement came into existence for that purpose. Gurdwaras were set up throughout Punjab. Educational institutions, Sikh schools and Sikh colleges were also set up to educate the Sikhs. In 1920, Akali movement was started which ousted the Mahants from Sikh gurdwaras to take them under the direct control of Sikhs. In 1925 British government yielded to the Sikhs and Sikh Gurdawars Act 1925 was enacted to bring Sikh gurdwaras under SGPC, to be elected by the Sikhs.

From 1926 onwards, the Akali Dal became active in politics. It supported the Indian independence movement along with congress party. Muslims demanded a separate country—Pakistan—on the basis of a two nation theory. Sikhs were given promises and assurances by the Congress to form a Sikh autonomous state with constitutional guarantees, so as not to demand a separate Sikh state Khalistan. Akali leaders headed

by Master Tara Singh were caught on the net of the crafty congress leaders and refused to even listen to British government for Sikh political power, though they were specially invited for this purpose. Sikh leaders did not even get the offers and promises of congress as to autonomous Sikh state and constitutional guarantees included in independent act. They caused irreparable harm to Sikhs as after independence congress refused to implement those promises and assurances. Master Tara Singh admitted in his autobiography that "he and all other Sikh leaders were ignorant of world politics and history as otherwise they could have got a separate Sikh state, particularly when the British government wanted to help them." At this crucial time, the Sikh leaders proved to be incapable, inexperienced and not worthy of leadership of a nation or religion.

After independence, these very leaders of Akali Dal headed by Master Tara Singh comprised the Sikh leadership up to 1960. They had not brought into the Sikh leadership any Sikh having knowledge of world history and politics, though there was no dearth of such Sikhs. Rather it went downhill as the next Sikh leaders were uneducated and inexperienced in equally politics and ignorant of even Indian politics and history.

Sikh leadership was not able and capable of tackling the betrayal, discrimination and persecution of Sikhs by the dishonest and crafty leaders of the Indian government and to bring it at the international level of world politics. They only knew how to go to jails and send the Sikhs to jails in hundreds of thousands. Instead of starting a forceful agitation for implementation of the promises of a Sikh autonomous state and the constitutional guarantees and internationalizing it, and to give their supreme sacrifices in case of need, the Sikh leaders involved the Sikhs in the agitation for reorganization of Punjab on linguistic basis and they gave false slogans of fasts unto death and saved their skins on false pretensions.

After the reorganization of Punjab, Sikhs came into majority in Punjab. The Sikh leaders could not retain their hold on the Sikh vote bank besides their capability, honesty and integrity; otherwise they could have retained their power at least in Punjab for decades, particularly when the Sikhs were totally opposed to the congress for its hostility towards Sikhs. Most Sikh leaders were openly accused of corruption. When in power, they were known to have initiated no action to fulfill the Sikh demands and not having fulfilled their election manifestoes. They were unable to hold to their Sikh vote bank and so got defeated in the next election after once returning in power.

Sikhism teaches high morals and ethics to be activated in socio political affairs. It has no place for corruption and underhand means. The Sikh leaders have not come up to these standards particularly for the last more than four decades. The corrupt practices of Sikh leaders not only defame them but also all Sikhs and Sikhism because Sikhism forbids corrupt practices and the aggressions to the rights of others, besides the collection of wealth.

It is for the Sikhs to have an honest and capable Sikh leadership committed to the Sikh cause and who are aware of world politics and history. The Sikhs are now

spread throughout the world and one world Sikh leadership is the need of the day. That leadership is to be selected or elected from the village level. It should not take part in the elections of political offices and of gurdwara managements but should select capable and honest Sikhs of high integrity for all the political offices and religious offices. It should have an advisory committee of well known specialists of honesty and integrity with commitment to the Sikh cause. Sikhs should themselves resolve the terms, conditions and procedures to have an honest leadership capable of achieving their political and religious aims.

There should be only one political party of Sikhs as unity of Sikhs is most essential.

There should be the holding of one post of office only for one person and the democratic set up in reality.

The Sikhs themselves should become and act as true Sikhs, strictly observing the Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. They should be above petty party factionalism and conflicts with a sense of selfless service to the Sikh cause than selfish personal vested interests. It is then only that they would be able to elect the right Sikh leadership of honesty, integrity and capability with commitment to the Sikh cause.

The Sikh nation is at a very critical juncture today. All the Sikh institutions (religious, educational and political) should discharge their functions with honesty of purpose. That can be done only if the leaders of these institutions are honest with integrity, capability and are dedicated to the Sikh cause and work with the zeal of selfless service, without selfish and vested interests, in co-ordination with one another. Any Sikh leader who lacks these qualities, should be replaced at the earliest by those who have these basic essentialities; rather he should himself gracefully quit. To select or elect the honest and dedicated Sikh leadership, Sikhs themselves have to become and act as true Sikhs observing Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life and to be above petty party factionalism and selfish and vested motivations. It is of great value for the sake of their religion and themselves. Sikhs should have one world Sikh leadership. Interests and problems of Sikhs residing throughout the world are the same.

## World Sikh Representative Body

The world Sikh representative body is the need of the day to take panthic decisions on Sikh issues as all the Sikhs world over need to be involved in this regard, particularly when the Sikhs representative party, Akali Dal has become the Punjab regional party with the members and office bearers of Hindus and Muslims to give it a secular outlook to meet the legal requirements of the election laws for the legislative and parliamentary elections and no more, the exclusive party of Sikhs alone. All the Sikhs world over want their involvement in the decision making process on Sikh issues. SGPC, Delhi Gurdwara Management Committee, the management committees of Takhat Patna Sahib and Hazoor Sahib are the statutory Sikh bodies to be elected by Sikhs. They should nominate their representatives for this world Sikh representative body as fixed. Some other

traditional Sikh institutions to be elected by Sikhs can also do so. In the countries outside India, six or seven zones may be set up on the basis of Sikhs population and each zone should nominate the representatives on this body. The gurdwara management committees may be the electorate for that purpose, being elected or selected by Sikhs besides some other Sikh organizations if elected by Sikhs. These representatives may co-opt some members as fixed from each zone and area, the Sikhs known for their services to Sikh Panth.

Thus the Sikhs can elect or select their representatives easily from amongst the true Sikhs living in Sikh code of conduct and way of life and known for honesty, integrity, capability and sincerity to Sikh cause. A commission may be set up for this purpose to settle the procedural matters.

Such a representative set up of the Sikhs world over, can meet at Akal Takhat, Amritsar, to discuss and decide the Sikh issues. It can have its secretariat there and some such secretariats at some other places deemed proper. It should nominate jathedar Akal Takhat, as its spokesman, to ensure the compliance of the decisions taken to be acceptable to all the Sikhs. It may frame the rules and regulations for the appointments of jathedars of all the Takhats. It may facilitate the preaching of Sikh religion in the uniform methodology and ensure all the Sikhs to come under the Sikh fold – code of conduct and way of life. It will be in accordance with the concept of "Guru Panth and Guru Granth," as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh, which has remained overlooked in the recent past.