

# **Current Sikh Issues-Sikh Historical Perspective**

## **Chapter 4-5**

### **Sikh initiation-Amrit and Sikh code of conduct (Mandatory for Sikhs)**

Sikh religion believes in, Fatherhood of God, Brotherhood of mankind and Truthful living. Concept of God is, one and only one, creator of the entire creation, its sustainer and destroyer, without any incarnation, unborn and self illuminated, whose light shines in all.

Only His Name is to be meditated to abide in the mind, which burns ego, eliminates vices, inculcates virtues to lead a truthful living in Sikh way of life, obeying the Will of God, the Almighty, awaiting His grace to unite with Him. Truth, Name of God and Pious deeds is the Divine message of Sikhism to convert the human mind from self narrow egoistic tendencies to God tuned of higher consciousness to be activated in all the socio-political affairs throughout the span of life. Divine knowledge is to be obtained from the Divine teachings of Sikhism but it is not the end of the matter as these are to be acted upon in the practical Sikh way of life. It automatically leads to truthful living in Sikh way of life, which is infect way of God.

Fatherhood of God automatically leads to Brotherhood of Mankind, as the same is the creator of the entire creation, the same is His light which shines in all. The Divine message of Sikhism is that human race is one, without any distinctions or discriminations on any ground whatsoever. The religions, faiths, systems, which created divisions and discriminations in mankind were out rightly rejected in Sikhism and effective steps were taken to establish equality in mankind. Sikhism teaches love between man and man as love between man and God and the selfless service to humanity. The eminent scholars of world religions and history have appreciated it. Suffice it to quote,

Max Arther Macauliff, British eminent scholar, author of, The Sikh Religion, "It would be difficult to point to a religion of greater originality or to a more comprehensive ethical system than Sikh religion. The Sikh Scriptures contain sublime truths, the study of which cannot but elevate the reader spiritually, morally and socially. There is no tinge of sectarianism in them. They teach the highest and purest principles that serve to bind the man to man and inspire the believer with an ambition to serve his fellowmen, to sacrifice all and to die for their sake"

John Clark Archer, the eminent British scholar, "Sikhism, indeed itself reveals something of what in the ast analysis religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world today needs its message of Peace and Love"

Who is to deliver such a message? Only, the Sikhs, the followers of Sikh religion, who are rather duty bound to bring to the notice of world, the Divine teachings of their religion, which has been commented by some scholars of world religions to be, the religion of the present age; capable to solve the problems of the modern man. However the Sikhs will themselves have to get the full understanding of their religion, and act upon it. They have to become and act as Sikhs by taking the Sikh initiation and observing the Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, being mandatory for all the Sikhs. They will have to also ensure it for their younger Sikh generation. One uniform Sikh code of conduct inwardly and outwardly is a must for all the Sikhs, having its own significance.

There is no dispute in Sikhs over the issue of Guru Granth Sahib to be the Sikh Guru in perpetuity, as declared by Guru Gobind Singh, and to understand and act upon, its Divine thought, though its practical compliance may not be very encouraging, due to the materialistic entanglements. However some of the Sikhs, who do not adhere to Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct, express their doubts, to be obligatory for all the Sikhs, to defend their defiance, which needs the discussion as to this aspect.

Sikh initiation of Amrit-khanda de pahaul, five Sikh emblems and Sikh code of conduct, as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, are part of Sikh religion and mandatory for all the Sikhs. Four violations-kuraihats, were also prescribed, the first being to prohibit the cutting of hairs on any part of the body. It is also contained in the 5 emblems. The defiance or breach of these obligations may ex-communicate the defaulters from Sikh panth, till the re-baptism after apology, and promise not to repeat the fault. Such is the strict discipline for Sikhs to observe the Sikh code of conduct. The tenth Guru had made it clear in his Divine declarations, that there can be no exemption to it. There is thus no scope for any doubt.

The Sikh Rehat Maryada, published by SGPC, is the Collective decision of Sikhs concerning the matters with which they have to deal with during the span of their lives. It is in accordance with the Sikh dictums and Sikh religious practices, already being followed by Sikhs from the days of Sikh Gurus, and it has been codified only. It has to be observed by the Sikhs to maintain their separate Sikh identity and uniformity, in accordance with Sikh Religion.

SGPC had appointed a committee in 1927, consisting of distinguished Sikhs known for their commitment to Sikh cause, to formulate the Sikh code of conduct as sanctioned in Sikh religion, after ascertaining the views of all the Sikhs .The committee sought the opinion of all the Sikhs and Sikh organizations and held discussions for a long period and then submitted its report. It was then thoroughly considered by SGPC, which confirmed it and then published it in 1945, to be strictly observed by Sikhs. The SGPC members of that time were known for their sacrifices in the Gurdawaras reforms movement and devoted to Sikh cause.

It was of utmost necessity for the Sikhs to have the uniform and consistent Sikh code of conduct as the Sikh adversaries and particularly those who were propagating Sikh religion to be part of Hinduism were creating confusions for Sikhs to make them follow the same Brahmanical rites and rituals, which had been rejected in Sikhism. Even anti Sikh rites had been introduced in Sikh Gurdawaras by the mahants who were acting under the influence of British administration and Brahmanical agents.

Max Arthur Macauliff who resigned the high post of divisional judge in Punjab to author, *The Sikh Religion*, after a deep research, published by Oxford University London in 1909, had recorded in its introduction in Vol.1 that,

"The best religion of the present age, Sikh religion, may not survive for long as Sikhs had fallen under the Brahmanical net to follow its rites and rituals, prohibited in Sikh religion, in spite of the warnings of their great Gurus, forgetting their Sikh code of conduct."

The Sikhs should have the correct historical perspective of Sikh code of conduct to follow it strictly. No one should take it so lightly as to challenge it on his own whims as the personal views are to be kept subject to the collective decisions. The first dictum of Sikh religion is to follow the Gurus-word, than of his own self-centered mind. The Sikhs, who defy the divine dictum of Guru Gobind Singh as to Sikh

initiation and Sikh code of conduct, follow their self-centered whims than Gurus- word, not permitted in Sikh religion, wherein Gurus- word is supreme.

Sikhs who make wild allegations against it, to be useless and not part of Sikh religion, cause irreparable harm to Sikh religion, rather supporting the Sikh adversaries and their agents, who propagate Sikhism to be a part of Hinduism and are allergic to the Sikh code of conduct, which stands in their way as it establishes a separate Sikh identity. They are totally ignorant and caught in their net.

A few Sikh writers have even gone to the extent of using the deceptive Brahmanical card, to mislead the Sikhs, that Sikh code of conduct has introduced the Brahmanical rites, to create the controversies and confusions against it. Every item of Sikh code of conduct is to be under the Divine guidance of Guru Granth Sahib and in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib and so how can it be said to introduce the Brahmanical rites. It obviously is to establish a separate Sikh identity. The daily prayers as provided in Sikh code of conduct in the morning, evening and at night are the Divine compositions of Sikh Gurus, besides the meditation in the Name of God =96Waheguru, as per the dictums of Sikh Gurus. The Amrit of double-edged sword -Khande da pahaul, and its manner of preparation, to be mandatory for the Sikhs, has been described as prescribed by the tenth Sikh Guru. Five Divine compositions of Sikh Gurus, containing Name of God, are recited to prepare it as prescribed by the Tenth Guru. All the anti Sikh and Brahmanical rites and rituals in every respect have been specifically prohibited. To allege Sikh code of conduct, to introduce the Brahmanical rites, is a false and deceptive assertion under dishonest motivation to create confusions against it, so as not to be strictly observed by the Sikhs.

Sikh initiation, is also criticized by such persons, on altogether, deceptive, baseless and untenable grounds that, Name of God, is the only Amrit in Sikh religion, to dispute the naming of Amrit to Khande-da-Pahaul, the Sikh initiation, and that the Divine Hymns of the tenth Guru, recited at the time of preparation of the Amrit are not in Guru Granth Sahib.

There can be no dispute that Name of God is the only Amrit, everlasting, in Sikh religion. The Sikh initiation is everlasting in its own sense and is in a different context. It also makes the taker to meditate in Name of God. There is no contradiction in this regard.

The Sikh initiation of Amrit was prescribed by the tenth Sikh Guru and the manner of its preparation and the Divine compositions to be recited as well, to which he had the full authority. All the Sikh Gurus had the same Divine Spirit. Even if, he had prescribed the recitation of his Divine compositions alone, could any one have a right to object to it? It is no where provided that only the Divine compositions of Guru Granth Sahib could be recited at that time. It was the decision of the tenth Guru, to be obeyed by the Sikhs. His Divine Hymns are of the same esteem as of other Sikh Gurus for Sikhs.

Sikh initiation is mandatory for all Sikhs. There are directions of Guru Gobind Singh himself in this regard to the Sikhs that they must get the Sikh initiation-Amrit-khande de pahul and keep all the five Sikh emblems and strictly adhere to the Sikh code of conduct, as prescribed by him on Baisakhi 1699.

In Sikh rehat- nishane Sikhe- he declared that all the Sikhs must take Amrit of doubled edged sword and possess the five Sikh emblems, kesh -unshorn hairs, kangha to comb the keshas, kachha-the prescribed underwear, kara -the bracelet on the wrist and kirpan -the dagger prescribed, with the specific mention, that there can be no exemption to any Sikh, from it.

Guru Gobind Singh issued hukamnama-commandment, in the very next month, dated Jeth 26, 1756, (May 1699), to the Sikhs that all the Sikhs must take, Amrit-khande de pahul and possess the 5 Sikh Emblems and strictly observe code of conduct as prescribed by him.

Saina pati, author of, Gur Sobha, completed in or about 1716, who remained with Guru Gobind Singh, stated, that it was the wish of the great Guru, that all the Sikhs must take Sikh initiation of Amrit and observe the code of conduct in that regard, as prescribed by him.

Nath mal, a dhadi of durbar of Guru Gobind Singh in, Amar Nama, Written by him in oct.1708, stated, that Guru Gobind Singh commanded all the Sikhs to take the Sikh initiation of Amrit and adhere to Sikh Code of conduct as prescribed by him.

In all the rehat Namas, written by the eminent Sikhs, who remained in the service of Guru Gobind Singh, it has been mentioned that Guru Gobind Singh, had commanded all the Sikhs, to take Amrit-khande da Pahaul and observe Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by him.

Some persons misinterpret the definition of Sikh, as given in Sikh rehat maryada, that the belief in Amrit-khande da Pahaul, even without taking it, is sufficient. It is on the face of it ridiculous and turning the definition of Sikh as given in Sikh rehat maryada, besides defying the injunction of the Tenth Guru, who made it mandatory for Sikhs. The definitions of Sikh in rehat Maryada, is as under,

"Any human being who faithfully believes in, one Immortal Being, ten Gurus, from Guru Nanak sahib to Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Granth Sahib, the utterances and teaching of ten Gurus and the Baptism bequeathed by tenth Guru and who does not owe allegiance to any other religion is a Sikh."

Even if the definition would have not contained the words, as to Baptism, then also there could be no doubt as to the Sikh initiation of Amrit to be mandatory for Sikhs, as it would fall under the Teachings of ten Gurus, being the very pertinent obligatory teaching of the Tenth Guru, on which he rather laid a great stress to be Mandatory for Sikhs and to which there can be no exemption for any Sikh. The mention of "Baptism" was made in the definition to make it more significant and not to dilute it. Baptism means to be accepted in a religion, and it is the Christianity word, being mandatory for all the Christians to enter that religion. Thus Sikh initiation of Amrit makes one to become and act as a Sikh.

Sikh initiation and code of conduct as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, being mandatory for all the Sikhs, clarifies that there is no distinction between Sikh, Singh and khalsa. It is the erroneous interpretation, that only those who can maintain the vows of Sikh initiation-Amrit, should take it, creating the fear psychosis. Some even go to the extent that the takers should be capable for it. As it is the Sikh initiation, so it has to be taken by all the Sikhs for acceptance in Sikh religion.

Every one who decides to become Sikh with the faithful belief in Sikh religion, Sikh Gurus and their teachings, is deemed to maintain the vows and to be capable to get Amrit. No one else has got a right to doubt him and to make his assessment. History records that on the Baisakhi of 1699, when the tenth Guru prescribed the Sikh initiation, twenty thousand Sikhs took it there, while eighty thousands in that very week. They were not assessed by any body to maintain their vows and to be competent for it. It is also sufficient to prove that the Sikh initiation was meant for all the Sikhs. It rather provides the determination to the taker to be sincere to its aims and objects. Why to doubt at the earlier stage, It being the Sikh initiation to become a Sikh.

A misconceived question is raised by some, that what for Sikh Initiation and code of conduct has been provided as Sikh religion deals with spirituality. To understand it, the definition of religion has to be gone in to and the Baptism as provided in other religions, will have to be understood. Christianity also deals with Spirituality, wherein Baptism is a must. Baptism means acceptance to the religion. The religion is not the game of freelancers that anybody may do any thing without any discipline and uniformity.

Religion is defined to be a, system of faith and worship. In every system, whatever its status may be, a great care has been given to its code of conduct and discipline, otherwise it cannot function smoothly. In every worldly ordinary system even, may be of school education, police, army, courts etc. the uniforms and other disciplines are provided. No one enquires that what for it is provided and rather submits to it. Religion is a system of very high magnitude, relating to the higher values of life and Divine knowledge and its discipline and code of conduct cannot be questioned, which helps to attain the higher values, uniformity and consistency.

Guru Gobind Singh had completed the final phase of Sikh religion, having been developed by his predecessors. There was to be no living Guru and Guru Granth Sahib was to be made the eternal Sikh Guru in perpetuity. So he was to prescribe the new Sikh initiation, which he did as Khande da pahaul, generally called Amrit, which is a part of Sikh Religion, to be mandatory for Sikhs. He himself took it from the panj Pyaras, after administering it to them. What could be the more Message to Sikhs that all the Sikhs have to take it.

Another question is raised by some, that the symbolism of other religions was criticized by Sikh Gurus and why five symbols of Sikh religion. Sikh Gurus had criticized the symbolism of other faiths, systems and the Religions as the followers of those religions had curtailed the Religious teachings to mere symbolism. Sikh Gurus gave the divine guidance to those persons in the terms of their symbols to inculcate the virtues of Truth, contentment, compassion, Righteousness, kindness, mercy, forgiveness, humility, etc., besides, the meditation in the name of God and to imbibe God in their minds. Sikh initiation, Emblems, and Sikh code of conduct, prescribed, are towards that higher goal, to imbibe name of God in the mind, and Inculcate the virtues, eliminating vices and burning ego, to live in Truthful way of Sikh religion, maintaining its uniformity and separate Identity, being a must for the religions.

Just take the example of Bhagats whose Divine Hymns are contained in Guru Granth Sahib, dealing with spirituality, but they could not establish any religion. They were in their individuality and did not set up any system of religion. If the Sikhs, would curtail the Sikh religion to merely Sikh Symbols without following the Sikh Divine teachings and without living In Sikh way of life, then they will also attract that criticism. Sikh Initiation is to enter the Sikh religion to become Sikh, observing its code of conduct as prescribed by the tenth Guru and then it depends from person to person that, what higher stage he attains. The more he will understand and act upon the Divine knowledge and Teaching of Sikh Gurus, the higher up he will go and go.

The criticism of Sikh initiation on such frivolous grounds is nothing more than to create confusion, which is based either on the total lack of understanding of Sikh historical perspectives or motivated dishonest views. It exhibits the disrespect to the tenth Sikh Guru and his Divine Compositions and the defiance to his injunctions, which a true Sikhs can never do. The Sikhs and particularly the Sikh writers are required to be very cautious in all these matters to have the self restraint as not to flout the Sikh values and Sikh collective decisions merely on their personal whims or under some motivation. The religious doctrines,

dictums and codes of conduct of a religion are mandatory for the followers of that religion and override their personal discretion. They can have no right to criticize and challenge them.

Most of the Sikhs and particularly the Sikh youth are drifting away from Sikh code of conduct due to the confusions being created and the lack of preaching of Sikh religion as some of them even think that perhaps it is not a part of their religion. It has to be explained to them that it is a part of Sikh religion and mandatory for them. One, who believes in Sikh religion and in no other religion, who believes in one God, Ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib and their teachings, who gets Sikh Initiation and lives in Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru, is a Sikh. Some Sikhs who do not get the Sikh initiation and do not follow Sikh code of conduct in that respect, for their own convenience or due to some other problems, and some of those who want to dilute Sikh identity to suite their propaganda that Sikhism is part of Hinduism and Sikhs are a sect of Hindus, raise the controversy as to the Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct.

They put forth the misconceived reasoning that it is nowhere provided in Guru Granth Sahib in the Divine proclamations of Sikh Gurus. Such matters, which relate to organization of Sikh religion, are not contained in Guru Granth Sahib, Which contains the spiritual aspects of Name of God. It also contains the Divine Hymns of several Saints in that regard who were Muslims and Hindus as well and not Sikhs

However the basic requirement of Sikh code of conduct of keeping unshorn hairs finds support from the very first Divine declaration of Guru Nanak, founder of Sikh religion, at page one of Guru Granth Sahib, that, one must live under the Divine Will of God the Almighty. The hairs on the body are under the Will of God and if shorn, it would obviously be the defiance of Will of God, which is not permitted in Sikh religion. All Sikh Gurus and their devoted followers kept their hairs unshorn from the very beginning.

Sikh religion was founded by Guru Nanak Dev and developed by his nine successors, while Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru, completed its final phase. He made very important and fundamental Divine declaration in that process for Sikh religion to be mandatory for Sikhs and to be a part of Sikh religion and to establish the separate Sikh identity. It was to prescribe, the obligatory Sikh initiation of Amrit, five Sikh emblems and the Sikh code of conduct, on Baisakhi of 1699. He himself prepared the Amrit and administered it to Panj Pyaras. He gave the authority to them to administer the Amrit to other Sikhs in that very manner and also to any five initiated Sikhs strictly adhering to Sikh code of conduct. He himself got the Amrit from those Panj Pyaras to whom he administered it. He directed all the Sikhs present there to get the Amrit at that time.

History records that over twenty thousands of Sikhs got the Sikh initiation of Amrit on that day who all had their keshas and hairs intact and unshorn and that over eighty thousands of Sikhs got Sikh initiation of Amrit in that week. It is more than sufficient to establish that Sikh initiation of Amrit was meant for all the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh issued Hukam Nama to all the Sikhs in the very next month of Jeth to get the Sikh initiation of Amrit and to keep the five Sikh emblems and to strictly follow Sikh code of conduct as prescribed by him. He made it very clear in his divine proclamations that there can be no exemption to it, being mandatory for all the Sikhs and they must maintain their separate Sikh identity. Recorded Max Arthur Macauliff, the eminent British scholar of Sikh religion, that Guru Gobind Singh instructed his Sikhs, "He who wearth long hair, without receiving baptism is a hypocritical and ignorant Sikh. I will not show myself to him. It is best to adopt one religion and not distract one's mind with others. They who call themselves my Sikhs and stray to other creeds are sinners."

And " Let him who calleth himself a true Sikh of mine, accept baptism and do good acts, so shall his previous sins all depart on his seeking the Guru's protection."( The Sikh Religion, M.A.Macauliff, vol-5, pages, 157 and 159)

Guru Gobind Singh had the authority to prescribe such Sikh initiation of Amrit and the code of conduct for Sikhs. All the Sikh Gurus had the same Divine Spirit. One who declares him to be a Sikh is bound to follow the injunctions of Guru Gobind Singh, tenth Sikh Guru, including the Sikh initiation and Sikh code of conduct prescribed by him, being a part of Sikh religion and to strictly observe them.

The other divine declaration of Guru Gobind Singh was to ordain the Sikhs to accept Guru Granth Sahib, the Divine Spirit of Sikh Gurus, Eternal Sikh Guru in perpetuity for all the times to come and to get the Divine wisdom from its Divine proclamations with purity of heart, being the Word of God. Every Sikh and even others admit it that Guru Granth Sahib is Guru of Sikhs and there is no controversy over it.

There is no controversy as well, as to the belief of a Sikh in Sikh religion, in one God, in ten Sikh Gurus and Guru Granth Sahib and their teachings. It is obvious that the requisite qualifications to be a Sikh are uniform and the same. There are no classifications or categories in Sikhs. One is a Sikh or not and there is no in-between. However due to the lack of the correct understanding of Sikh initiation, Sikh emblems, Sikh code of conduct and of Sikh historical perspectives, the self made classifications have been propagated as of, Amritdhari Sikhs, Keshdhari Sikhs, Sehajdhari Sikhs and Khalsa Sikhs, which can have no recognition in Sikhism, as the Sikh forms are mandatory for all Sikhs without any exemption.

There can be no personal choice or discretion in the mandatory dictums of a religion. Every religion has got its own form of initiation, emblems and code of conduct to be binding on its followers, besides its own ideology, doctrines and religious practices. Every one is free to follow the religion, which he prefers and once he decides to follow a certain religion, he has to obey the dictums of that religion. He can have no right to change or interpret any of the dictums to his personal views as it may misrepresent that religion and disturb its uniformity and consistency. These self created classifications or categories misrepresent Sikhs and Sikhism. Some Sikhs and particularly Sikh youth are drifting away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life with the creation of such confusions.

Some of the Sikhs who do not get Sikh initiation and observe Sikh code of conduct, have gone to the extent of asserting that these requirements to be a Sikh should be abrogated by Sikhs themselves as majority of Sikhs do not comply with it, instead of asserting that they should comply with these requirements and make other Sikhs to understand and comply these obligations, being part of Sikh religion.. They also put forth the argument that in no country except India, Sikhs have been given the legislative right to wear kirpan and to enter any service with beard and turban and so it is not possible to keep the Sikh emblems. It is on the face of it a misconception. The edicts and emblems of a religion can never be defied on such a ground.

It is the historical truth that in the Mughal regime Sikhs had been offered any service of their choice in civil or military if they would give up their emblems and adopt that of Islam, and otherwise they would be tortured and killed but they out rightly refused such offers and opted for death. It was this high spirit that they remained in struggle for about a century against those tyrants and wiped them out and established their own empire. Those autocratic rules are of bygone days. It is now the era of democratic world.

Had the Sikhs themselves not given up their initiation, emblems and Sikh code of conduct in the countries to which they migrated, the Govts Of those countries would have long before accepted their rights in this regard.

Still if some one was prosecuted for carrying kirpan, he was ultimately acquitted. If some one was discriminated for wearing turban, it was ultimately undone.