

Current Sikh Issues-Sikh Historical Perspective

Chapter 4-6

Derawad and Apostacy in Sikhs-Causes and Solution

Derawad is in total contradiction to the Divine thought of Sikh religion. Guru Granth Sahib is the eternal Sikh Guru, containing the Divine thought of Sikh religion, as revealed by God, the Almighty, through Sikh Gurus, for humanity, as proclaimed by them, and so considered as word of God, which has to be understood by the Sikhs and then to act upon that Divine knowledge to live in the truthful Sikh way of life. The Sikh initiation of Amrit-khande de pahul, as prescribed by the tenth Sikh Guru is a part of Sikh religion and mandatory for all the Sikhs to live in the Sikh code of conduct.

The Sikh panth has to take its decisions as to Sikh affairs under the Divine guidance of Guru Granth Sahib. There can be no other personal Guru or guide for Sikhs. On the other hand in derawad, the head of the dera or sect poses him to be the Guru of that sect and is considered as such by the followers of that dera and sect, though without any distinct Divine thought and he alone takes the decisions as to the affairs of the dera or sect. It is the exploitation of innocent masses who have not been imparted the Divine teachings of their religions.

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 and 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 fellow men, 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 last analysis religion is. It is an independent and conspicuous order of its own. The world today needs its message of Peace and Love"

H L Bradshaw, an eminent American scholar of religions- "The Sikh faith is the universal religion for the present space age. It is truly the answer to the problems of modern age. The older> faiths were good in their day but that day is now past and we are living in the dispensation of Guru Nanak. The other religions contain truth but Sikhism contains the full of truth. It is the summum-bunum for the modern man. It completely supplants and fulfills all the former dispensation of older religions."

Prof. Arnold Toynbee, the eminent American historian and scholar, "In the coming religious debate, the Sikh religion and its scripture : ADI GRANTH: will have something of special value to say to the rest of the world. "

Sikh religion fulfills all the human aspiration as to all the spiritual, secular, social and economic aspects as contained in Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal Sikh Guru and there is no need or scope of any other personal GURU OR GUIDE, as to any matter, whatsoever, which has been so conceded by even the eminent western scholars of world religions. If any follower of Sikh religion does not live in Sikh way of life and Sikh code of conduct, under the Divine guidance of Guru Granth Sahib and falls in to the net of any derawad cult, church or in any other faith or system, instead of, to be proud of his religion and to strictly live by its dictums, then the only reason can be that he is totally ignorant of the Sikh Divine thought and he has not been imparted the knowledge of the basic features of Sikhism.

The Sikh organizations and institutions, the Sikh preachers and the Sikh leaders, religious and political, have to share the responsibility in this regard, for not preaching Sikh religion to Sikhs even. To dilute the Sikh identity and code of conduct, to weaken the Sikh political aspirations and to mislead the Sikhs, the state powers had also given the patronage and support to the derawad, just after the annexation of Sikh empire and up till now.

The Sikh political leaders had themselves been trying to get the blessings of the heads of the deras just for electorate gains, to get votes through them, thereby giving them the recognition, though being detrimental to the Sikh cause, instead of denouncing them and their self made cheap slogans and educating the Sikhs to alienate them from the deras, and any other system and to live in Sikh way of life. These deras attract the innocent Sikhs who have no study of Sikh religion, by making references to the dictums of Sikh religion itself as if they are preaching Sikhism but Sikh preachers and leaders do not expose them with honesty of purpose and so such persons remain misguided. It is only by the preaching of Sikh religion with earnestness to all the Sikhs that these deras can be made ineffective, so far as Sikhs are concerned.

Still Sikhs are sincere to their religion and to make any sacrifice for it, even though, may not be living in Sikh way of life and its code of conduct. This spirit can easily lead them to the total rejection of dera wad and to live in strict Sikh way of life and code of conduct, with the honest and proper preaching of Sikh religion. The Sikh political leaders should adopt this approach rather than the blessings of the dera chiefs for getting votes.

Some important deras-sects, just as, Namdharis, Nirankaries and Radhasawamis originated in the 19th century and flourished in 20th century, whose heads were called as Gurus/ SatGurus, in total contradiction to the Divine thought of Sikh religion, where in Guru Granth Sahib is the only Sikh Guru, and there can be no personal Guru, though they mostly made the references to Sikh Divine Hymns to attract the Sikhs. They did get the state patronage to misguide the Sikhs. Nirankaris also came in to direct conflict with the Sikhs and edict from Akal Takhat had to be issued that Sikhs should totally boycott them as to have no contacts with them. Nirankaris were made ineffective in punjab, though they were under the direct protection and patronage of Indian Govt, but Punjab had to witness violence on Nirankari issue for over a decade, ignited under state strategies. However no main stream Sikhs gave any recognition to these deras and sects.

A new dera .named, Sacha Sauda ,came in to existence in the 20th century, with head quarters at Sirsa, which is now in Hayana. Its present chief, Gurmit Singh changed his name to Gurmit Ram Rahim Singh as if to represent all the three main religions of Sikhism, Hinduism and Islam but admitting that his dera is not religious institution and it is reformatory only. He is also called as Guru,the same deceptive methods of the deras to misguide the innocent persons , ignorant of the dictums of their religion. He came to the lime light in may,2007, when he was accused of imitation of Guru Gobind Singh by wearing the dress like him and preparing the, jamme insan, as named by him, just like Amrit prepared by the tenth Sikh Guru and announcing seven sitaras, just as panj piaras selected by the tenth Guru.

What for all this drama was done, if that dera is only concerned to social reforms alone? Why the head of the dera is propagated as Guru if he is a social reformer only? What was the need to change his name to include the name sakes of the three religions as originally he was with a Sikh name? No explanation for all these deceptions.

Sikhs raised protests against his this conduct, to be blasphemous, hurting the Sikh feelings. An edict was issued from Akal Takhat to boycott him and his followers and the deras and Sikhs to have no contacts with them and to get closed all of his deras in punjab. He had shown his regrets that he could never imagine to imitate the tenth Sikh Guru. He also made an apology from the tenth Guru that he could never think of to imitate him .Sikhs rejected the regret and apology being fake and dishonest.

A case has been registered against him for blasphemy in this regard to hurt the Sikh sentiments, to which he will have to face his trial in the criminal court. CBI is already investigating the two murder cases and rape allegations against this self made Guru and social reformer, under the directions of punjab and Haryana High court.

The selfish political urge to get the blessings of even such a person by political leaders for votes has gone to such a low extent, that in the assembly elections held in punjab in feb,2007,the leaders of the main political parties approached him, including the Sikh leader Parkash Singh Badal, president Akali Dal, with folded hands, bowing before him, while he was sitting on his raised platform seat in his congregation hall, thus providing the legitimacy to him, though his actions to pose him as Guru are anti Sikh.

He released its video recording to be shown on T.V. network, when Sikhs raised the protests against him and the dera wad to assert that Sikh leaders also used to appear in his darbar and gave him the recognition as a Guru. What message will be to the ordinary Sikhs and to the junior Sikh leaders. Would such a conduct of the Sikh leaders, end the dreawad or help to flourish it ?

However he supported the congress party, one of the reasons for which might be to get its support for the criminal investigations being done by CBI. Congress leaders are soft to him for his anti Sikh activities. The former congress chief minister, Amrinder Singh has not come forward to denounce his anti Sikh activities, though he tried to steel the Sikh agenda from Akalis, to attract the Sikh votes, while in power. If he would have obliged the Akali leaders in the elections, then perhaps they would have tried to ignore his anti Sikh activities, to which they never raised the voice earlier.

Akali leaders now allege that because of the Sirsa dera support to the congress party, their party lost several seats in the Malwa belt. If that is correct then are not the Akalis responsible for it. SGPC is under the control of Akali Dal. Why preaching of Sikh religion was not done to bring the Sikhs in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, which would alienate the Sikhs from such a dera, instead of making efforts to get the blessings of dera chief to get votes of his followers.

It is well known to every one that for over a decade Sikhs and particularly the younger Sikh generation is drifting away from Sikh code of conduct including that of some so called Sikh leaders in punjab. Sikhs are the vote bank of Akali Dal which claims it to represent the Sikhs. The vote bank of Akali Dal is bound to shrink and shrink till Sikhs are brought back to Sikh code of conduct and in Sikh way of life, instead of going to the net of the deras. The results of the recent punjab assembly elections is the writing on the wall, wherein Akalis have lost even their traditional victory zone in Malwa belt and they failed to get the simple majority. Their vote bank consists only of Sikhs and they get Hindu votes as in alliance with BJP, whose vote bank is of Hindus.

Sikh leaders should now no longer compromise on issues relating to Sikh religion to get Sikh votes. They will have to be now clear on derawad to denounce it, being anti Sikh, to alienate the Sikhs from it, to the net of which some ignorant Sikhs have fallen and got misguided. Though the present Sikh burst is against Sacha Sauda dera, but it will have to be to alienate the Sikhs from all other deras, where in personal Guru ship is promoted, which is obviously Anti Sikh, irrespective of the fact that which dera supports Akali Dal in elections.

There can be no justification to encourage Namdharis by Sikh leaders, if they supported Akali candidates in elections, as they believe in personal Gurus, being anti Sikh. Akali Dal president, Parkash Singh Badal, after becoming chief minister reportedly went to them and offered the blank cheque and the setting up of the chair in a university in the name of Sat guru Ram Singh of that sect. What message it goes to Sikhs and other Sikh leaders as to the closing of such deras or flourishing them. The Namdharis should be rather persuaded to stop the practice of personal Gurus. It is the historical fact that Baba Ram Singh was a very devoted Sikh and never posed him to be a Guru in his life time. He was termed as Guru to discredit him in Sikhs and at the same time to create confusions in Sikhs on this matter, under British conspiracies as he started the movement against British rule.

The problem of the Sikhs and Sikh religion is not limited to the derawad, but Sikhs are also being converted to christianity and churches are being set up in punjab now, though during the British rule it could not be so done. It is a great aspersion on the present day Sikhs and particularly Sikh leadership. This evil needs to be dipped in the bud, which may otherwise take any ugly turn. The christian missionaries exploit the poor persons by giving them the economic help, which is the objectionable inducement. Similarly the weaker sections and schedule and backward classes are induced to the Deras. Sikhs should contact these persons to give them the security of their individual dignity and economic

safety as in Sikh religion those who look after the weak get the grace of God. The caste system has been rejected in Sikh religion, and it must be ensured that it leaves no trace in Sikhs.

Even beyond the deras and churches in punjab, the Sikh youth are in mass , drifting away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. Infect the beards and turbans, the signs of Sikh identity, are under extinct on the Sikhs under forty years aged. The intoxicants totally prohibited in Sikh religion are under use by the Sikh youth without any accountability to their parents, to their educational institutions and to the law enforcing agencies, causing adverse effects on their health. There is the total failure of the proper preaching of Sikh religion in the Sikhs itself, by the Sikhs and Sikh organizations meant for this purpose. Sikh leaders, religious and political are shedding only crocodile tears, without doing any thing of substance.

In reality Punjab,the so called homeland of Sikhs and the only state in the world wherein Sikhs were in majority is in the dangeous zone for Sikhs as if the present trend continues of the Sikh apostacy, Sikh migration to foreign countries and non Sikhs migrating to punjab from some other states, then Sikhs may become a minority there in the near future. It is now the right time to set the things right without any further delay.

There is no dearth of the self proclaimed Sikh Sants, preachers, jathedars and Sikh leaders, and several Akali Dals have been set up and every one of these parties claim to represent the Sikhs, but there is increase in the Sikhs to drift away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, day by day. The so called Sikh political leaders appear to have no concern in this regard, being engaged in their cheap party factions and vested interests and raise only the empty slogans of panth in danger, when out of power to attract the Sikh votes. Now there is the internal danger to Sikh religion from Sikhs itself. All the Sikh leaders, religious and political, should realize such a grave situation and their responsibility to tackle it unitedly, rising above petty factionalism and empty slogans, to bring awareness in Sikhs to uphold Sikh values.

Now it is the time, without any scope of further delay, to start the movement of preaching Sikh religion in Sikhs itself and of Sikh initiation, Amrit -khande de pahul, as prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh, to be mandatory for Sikhs, with honesty of purpose, and to ensure that all the Sikhs take Sikh initiation and to observe Sikh code of conduct and live in Sikh way of life. SGPC, having all the resources at its command with the huge budget of about three hundred crores Rs. and duty bound to preaching of Sikh religion, should lead this movement in punjab, with the co-operation of all the Sikhs, Sikh leaders and Sikh organizations. The SGPC constituency, should be made as a unit for this purpose and its member to be in charge of it. All the Sikh leaders of that area should be actively involved in it, rising above the party factions. The jathedars of the Takhats should supervise it in their areas.

First of all, the Sikh leaders and their families, the members of all the Akali Dals and Sikh organizations and their families, should be imparted the Sikh initiation and awakened of the Sikh dictums to live in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. Then all the Sikhs should be imparted the Sikh initiation and ensured that they live in Sikh code of conduct. The Sikhs who pose them as Sikh Sants and Sikh preachers should be involved in their areas. All the persons involved in this movement should remain confined to their areas of duty till such a preaching and Sikh initiation is completed. All the Sikhs will be automatically alienated from dera wad, churches and other vices like intoxicants, when they revert to Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life. Not only the Sikh leaders, even no other Sikh should be given any

recognition in any sphere by the Sikhs, who is not in Sikh way of life and code of conduct. In such a deteriorating condition, hard steps will have to be taken to get the things right.

Such movements should be undertaken by Delhi Sikh Gurdawara management committee and the managements of the Sikh Takhats, Hazoor Sahib and Patna Sahib and all other Sikh Gurdawaras through out the world in their areas and by all other Sikh organizations. It is only then that all the Sikhs can be brought in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, to which most of them and particularly Sikh youth are drifting away. Only those Sikhs, who are committed to Sikh way of life and to preach Sikh religion should hold the posts of the management committees of the Gurdawaras and other Sikh organizations as it is then only that these Sikh institutions can discharge their duties with honesty of purpose in this regard.

It is the urgent need now to make the Sikh educational institutions, Sikh schools and colleges, to be Sikh oriented, to teach the students, Sikh religion and History, as to enable them to live in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, for which these schools and colleges had been set up, but which have now lost that purpose. The managements and teachers, what to say of the students, are not in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, in most of these Sikh educational institutions, resulting the Sikh youth to drift away from Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life.

In the foreign countries, there are as yet no Sikh schools and colleges but Sikhs have set up Sikh Gurdawaras in the areas of their residences, world over. Sunday Gurdawara schools should be set up in all the Gurdawaras to teach Sikh religion, history and Punjabi to Sikh children to enable them to live in Sikh way of life.

The world scholars of religions are accusing the Sikhs for not discharging their duty to bring the Divine message of Sikh religion to the notice of the world, but it is yet to be brought to the notice of Sikhs. If that is so done then the Sikhs can preach it in the world. Sikhs are now spread world over and they now need the world Sikh representative body to preach Sikh religion to the Sikhs first and then to the world and to look after the common Sikh affairs in uniformity and unitedly, which should consist of the eminent Sikhs, known for their honesty, integrity, capability and commitment to Sikh religion and the Sikh cause. The involvement of all the Sikhs world over is a must to take the collective decisions in the Sikh affairs to be made acceptable to them.

The concept of Guru Granth-Guru Panth, as ordained by Guru Gobind Singh, needs to be revived as the overlooking of which for a long time has incapacitated the Sikhs to take their collective decisions. In Sikh Rehat Maryada it has been provided that all the decisions affecting the Sikh Panth should be taken by the Panthic Committee and the accredited representatives of the Panth, form a meeting of the Panth, and their decision is called Gurmatta, to be taken in the presence and Divine guidance of Guru Granth Sahib, on the subjects which are calculated to clarify and support the fundamental principles of Sikh religion, such as safeguarding the position of Sikh Gurus and the holy Guru Granth Sahib, the purity of the ritual and the Panthic organization.

The decisions of the Panth are to be inviolable and binding on all Sikhs. These should not violate the Divine teachings of Sikh Gurus and the Divine thought of Guru Granth Sahib and the established Sikh traditions of Sikh religion, which are binding upon Sikhs. The Sikh Panthic decisions were taken in this manner at Akal Takhat by the Sikhs during the Sikh struggle in 18th century and they became victorious to wipe out the Mughals and Afghan invaders and to establish Sikh Empire.

Sikhs are now spread world over and there is now the need of a world Sikh representation of Sikhs, as the Sikh interests are the same every where. It can effectively solve the problems of the Sikhs world over. It can preach Sikh religion in the world, with the co-ordination of all the Sikhs and Sikh organizations, for which Sikhs are being accused not to have discharged their duty to bring the message of Sikh religion, of love and peace, to the notice of the world, needed today. It can make the Sikhs to live in Sikh code of conduct and Sikh way of life, from which they are now drifting away, particularly the Sikh younger generation. It can take the decisions on Sikh affairs unitedly as the involvement of all the Sikhs is a must to make the decisions to be acceptable to all Sikhs, in accordance with the Sikh concept of Guru Granth-Guru panth, which are being brought under disputes, day by day.

SGPC, is the creation of Sikh Gurdawaras act 1925, to manage historical Sikh Gurdawaras in punjab, and to preach Sikh religion. It has to function under the provisions of that law. No one can contest its election, who is not a resident of punjab, under the act. Its representation in the world panthic council will be very effective, being the main Sikh representative body, to do the constructive work for the solution of the Sikh problems and to preach Sikh religion in Sikhs and in the world. It needs to be kept beyond any political pressure to discharge its religious duties with honesty of purpose. Its members should rather be of religious aptitude and not to meddle in any political activities, as political leaders have to sometimes make compromises to the detriment of religion. Akali Dal, which was the exclusive punjab Sikh political party, has now virtually become the punjab regional political party, with the Hindus and muslims, as its members, to give it a secular out look, to meet the requirements of election laws, to contest the assembly and parliamentary elections .It may do so with the Sikh support, as the political Sikh power is only concerned with punjab, where the Sikhs are in majority and that too with the tinge of secularism, as the election laws demand.

The Sikhs and Sikh institutions are duty bound to awaken every Sikh against derawad and to preach the teachings of Sikh religion and to ensure their compliance, wherein only Guru Granth Sahib is the Guru to guide in all respects and there can be no other Guru or guide, and to ensure that all Sikhs are kept out of the nets of all of the deras in whatever form they operate. It is not only the deceptive sachha sauda dera to exploit the innocent masses but there is a long list of such deras, the main visible being Nirankaris, Radhasawais, Namdharis etc, whose heads are portrayed as Gurus and Sat Gurus, not so permitted in Sikh religion, but which have attracted some Sikhs who are ignorant of Divine Sikh thought, which needs to be undone.

Sikh religious organizations like Sgpc have not been able to discharge their duty in this regard with honesty of purpose to preach Sikh religion to Sikhs even as otherwise no Sikh would have gone to the deceptive grips of any dera, to any churches or other faith systems and towards apostacy. They are duty bound to perform it now in the effective manner, rising above petty political factionalism.

The managements of the Sikh Gurdawaras, and other Sikh organizations world over, must preach Sikh religion, so as to ensure the Sikhs to live in Sikh way of life, particularly the younger Sikh generation.