

# Emergence of The Khalsa Commonwealth

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The situation before the creation of the Khalsa in and around Anandpur Sahib was very favourable to the Sikhs. The Hill chiefs in general and particularly the Chief of Kehlur, in which the city of Anandpur Sahib was situated had been crushed completely by the expeditions sent by Prince Muazzam. As a result, the order of Guru Gobind Singh had authoritatively established in the surrounding areas of Anandpur Sahib. There was no possibility of any attack either from the Mughals or from the Hill chiefs in the coming days. The Guru betook himself to the state of a constant communion and discerned how pregnant the coming years would be. He finalised his scheme of redemption which had been maturing in his mind for sometime and prepared to bring his mission to its ordained consumption.

The Vaisakhi at Anandpur Sahib had always been an occasion for fervid celebrations and the Sikhs were assembled from the remote areas of the Indian sub-continent. For the Vaisakhi of 1699 Guru Gobind Singh had ordered special preparations to be made. The *Hukamnamas* were issued to the Sikh Sangats to come in full strength and wearing arms. Elaborate arrangements were made at Anandpur Sahib for the reception of the Sangats. The atmosphere in the city of joy was tense with anticipation. So, as Vaisakhi approached, the city started humming with the pouring streams of the Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> The chroniclers record eighty thousand persons to have assembled on the day of first Vaisakh which corresponded on 29 and 30 March 1699. Guru Gobind Singh appeared on the stage. Instead of starting his sermons, the Guru unsheathed his sword and addressing himself to the vast congregation, uttered, "This sword wants a head. Let anyone come to me". These words numbed the audience. The Guru repeated these words for the second and the third time. At last Bhai Daya Ram, a khatri of Lahore came forward and offered himself. The Guru led him in the nearby erected tent and when the Guru came out, his sword was dripping blood. The whole assembly was gazing on the Guru's activities. The Guru again demanded the head. Bhai Dharm Chand, a Jat of Hastnapur came out. The Guru led him also in the tent. Three more heads were demanded and Bhai Mohkam Chand of Dawarka, Bhai Himmat Chand of Jagannath and Bhai Sahib Chand of Bidar cheerfully responded one after another and advanced to offer their heads. They were also led into the tent. After a while, the Guru brought the five Sikhs back from the tent into which they had been taken one by one. All the five Sikhs were decked in the dark-blue uniforms as our early chroniclers tell us. According to Bhai Gurdas II, "thus, the blue-dressed young Khalsa was created."

*lun upje Singh bhujhangye neel ambar dhaara.*<sup>2</sup>

Kesar Singh Chhibber writes "The hair on heads, arms on the waists and with blue dress, the Sikhs were named as Singhs."

*Sis kesh rakh sipahi Karne.*

*Kachh shashtar bandhvae Singh naam dharnae.*

*Maha Kall ka bana neela pehravna.*<sup>3</sup>

Sarup Das Bhalla writes "The long haired, blue-dressed and with the appellation of Singh, the high spirited Khalsa was created."

*Sis Kesh neel ambri Singh Sangya tej niwas.*<sup>4</sup>

Above all, there is a strong tradition among the Nihangs who regard themselves as the real adopters of the Khalsa code of conduct, to wear blue coloured dress.<sup>5</sup>

These five men named as *Panj Pyaras* (the five-beloved-ones) were to be the Presidium of the Khalsa Commonwealth which He was going to create. The new names of these

five-beloved-ones were: Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharm Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh and Bhai Sahib Singh. These five-beloved-ones were cheerfully standing before the assemblage. Guru Gobind Singh prepared *Amrit*. He took an iron bowl called *Sarab loh da bata*, filled it with pure water and the sugar cubes, called *patasas*, were added into it and stirred it with double-edged sword called *Khanda*. While stirring, the Guru recited the compositions from *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, with his own compositions. The *Amrit* was thus, prepared. The Guru offered the *Amrit* to the *Panj Pyaras* to be sipped one after another. It was done two times. First from first to the fifth and then from fifth to the first. The *Panj Pyaras* sat with *bir-asan* or in the heroic posture, with the left knee up and the right on the ground. Every time the Guru poured the *Amrit* into the palms of these five-beloved-ones and they sipped it while calling aloud *Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru ji ki Fateh*. (The Khalsa is of the great Guru and the victory achieved by it too is of the Great Guru). The five-beloved-ones repeated these words. Then some drops of *Amrit* were sprinkled on the hair and into the eyes of the *Panj Pyaras*. At the end, all the five of them shared *parshad* from the same bowl.

These five-beloved-ones before coming into the fold of Sikhism belonged to the five different castes of the Indian society. Bhai Daya Ram was a *Khatri*, Bhai Dharam Das was a *Jat*, Bhai Himmat Chand was a *Jhiver*, Bhai Mohkam Chand was a *darji* and Bhai Sahib Chand was a *nai*. After taking the *Amrit* they became the Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh. It was their new-life. This new-life into the Khalsa Commonwealth meant the annihilation of their previous family ties, of the occupation which had hitherto determined their place in society, of their earlier beliefs and creeds, and of the rituals they had so far observed. It was called *Kul naas*, *Kirt naas* and *rasm naas*. Their worship was now to be addressed to none but one *Akal Purakh*. They were given the surname of *Singh*, meaning lion (the lion of Guru Gobind Singh). The surname of the Sikh women would be *Kaur*, meaning *Kanwar* (Prince) of the Guru. The *Panj Pyaras* would ever wear the five emblems of the Khalsa. These were to be the *Kesh*, the *Kangha*, the *Karha*, the *Kachhehra* and the *Kirpan*. The first letter of all these five emblems was 'K', so these were also called *Panj Kakaar* (five Ks).

The Guru made a stimulating appeal in the name of humanity. He placed great emphasis on the love of mankind. He dwelt on the necessity of subverting the tyrannical rule and building a new society. He presented a new class of men and women ready to sacrifice everything in the service of the humanity. He put forth the belief that the time was ripe for action. The new-born *Panj Pyaras* were enjoined to help the poor and fight the oppressor and to consider all human beings equal, irrespective of caste and creed. They were to recite the *five banis* daily, morning and evening. They had to keep themselves strictly into the Khalsa code of conduct. They were never to cut hair, never to smoke, never to malice female, never to eat the flesh of an animal killed by the way of *halal*.

After delivering all these instructions, directives and completing the process of *Amrit*, the Guru himself stood with folded hands before the *Panj Pyaras* and requested them to baptise him in the same way as he did. This sounded to the *Panj Pyaras* as a strange request but the Guru explained them that the order of the Khalsa had been established under the direct command of the *Akal Purakh*. "He, who calls me God shall fall into the pit of hell. I am a servant of Akal Purakh. Have no doubt whatever about this. I am a servant of the Supreme Lord, a beholder of the wonders of His creation."<sup>6</sup> The Guru must also be one of them for there was to be no difference between the Guru and the Khalsa. He had created the Khalsa in his own image. The request was accepted and the Guru was also baptised. With the Guru, his wife, Mata Sundri ji was also baptized and she was renamed as *Sahib Kaur*.<sup>7</sup> The Guru was to be the father of the Khalsa Commonwealth while Mata Sahib Kaur

was to be the mother. Anandpur Sahib was to be the Republic of the Khalsa. Therefore, the Khalsa was to be citizen of Anandpur Sahib.

After completing all the ceremonies of the inauguration of the order of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh is said to have delivered his valedictory address to the *Amritdhari Khalsa* in these words:

'Today you take a new birth in the house of the Guru. You have become a member of the Khalsa Commonwealth, your birth place is Anandpur Sahib. You all are, now, commanded to accept *Guru Granth Sahib* as the Guru. Know *Guru Granth Sahib* as the visible body of the ten Gurus. He who has a properly trained mind, shall find confirmation thereof in the contents of the *Granth* itself.<sup>8</sup> All the Sikhs, are hereby directed to take the *Amrit* of the *Khanda* because this *Amrit* is the key to easement of the complexities and pains of life.<sup>9</sup> This *Khanda* is the symbol of power. The God also created this even before the creation of this world. All the activities of the world are based upon this *Khanda*.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, first contemplate this power then remember Guru Nanak.

The semitic scriptures and the Aryan sacred books speak of many view points but you are not to accept the authority of these. The exegetic commentaries on these texts bring out subtle niceties of thought but you are not to regard these as sacred.<sup>11</sup> Neither to Krishan nor to Vishnu do I render homage or worship, for, though I have heard of them, I know them not.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, you are not to believe in these deities. Your main aim is to propagate *Dharm*, the right way of life to exalt the virtuous and to destroy the evil doers, root and branch.<sup>13</sup> You will have the qualities of all the virtues of heart and the excellences of mind. You are to be a new and unique type of man who bears arms and constantly lives in the presence of God; who strives and fights against evil with his gaze rivetted to the stars. You have been ordained to achieve this goal. You are the well-armed and well-integrated man.<sup>14</sup> Some early historians like Bute Shah and Ahmad Shah Batalvi write that Guru Gobind Singh delivered a long speech to the assembly of the Khalsa in which he directed the Khalsa in these words: "I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, obliterating all differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different rules laid down for them in the

*shastras*, abandon them altogether and adopting the way of co-operation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay heed to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered holy in the Hindu religion, or adore the deities, such as Ram, Krishan, Brahma and Durga, but all should believe in Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism, eat out of the same vessel, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another"<sup>15</sup>

Though this statement is not an eyewitness evidence yet it provides the information of the tradition and opinion prevalent during the later period and among the later writers of the Sikh history. Perhaps it is the summary of Guru Gobind Singh's ideas expressed in the compositions of *Dasam Granth* as quoted before. Khushwant Singh also expresses the same opinion in these words, "In Gobind's own writings there are passages which give the impression that they might be summaries of the address he delivered on this occasion"<sup>16</sup> In fact, most of the accounts about the creation of the Khalsa are based upon tradition. The tradition is created by belief. The preparation of the *Amrit*, the names of the five-beloved-ones, the code of conduct of the Khalsa, all are based on tradition or on the accounts of the later writers. Therefore, tradition cannot be discarded. Instead, it should be regarded as a valuable source of information. After all, there is no value even of a contemporary written evidence if it goes against the belief of the community. For instance, the Durga Worship by Guru Gobind Singh, is recorded in many early writings but it goes

against the belief of the Khalsa that is why it has been completely rejected by the historians on the Sikh history. Similarly, the killing of the five goats at the time of selecting the five-beloved-ones are mentioned in many early writings but since it hurts the sentiments of the faithfuls, so this view also stands discarded. The tradition represents the sentiments of the community. If Bute Shah's statement is based upon tradition, as some historians opine, it represents the Sikh sentiments or the writers' intentions of advocating these sentiments. □

### References

1. See also Harbans Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, Chandigarh, 1969, p. 69.
2. The *vaar* of Bhai Gurdas II in *vaaran Bhai Gurdas ji*, SGPC, Amritsar, 1981, *varr* 41, p. 440
3. *Bansawalinama Das Patshahian Ka, Charan* 10, stanza...
4. *Mehma Parkash (kavita)*, Patiala, 1971, p. 825.
5. See also Sirdar Kapur Singh, *Parasaraprasna : The Bisakhi of Guru Gobind Singh*, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 2001, chapter VI, pp. 117-159.
6. Bachitter Natak, Chapter VI, Stanzas, 32-33.
7. Guru Gobind Singh had only one wife Mata Jito ji. She was renamed as Sundri by her in-laws. At the time of the creation of the Khalsa when Mata Sundri Ji was baptized her name was changed as Sahib Kaur.
8. AwigAw Bel Akwl kl qbl clwXo pMQ [sB is'Kn ko hukm hY gurU mwinE gMRQ [ gurU gMRQ jl mwnXO pRgt gurW kl dyih [jw kw ihrdw SuD hY Koj Sbd mih lyih [
9. plvhu phul KMfyDwr huie jnm suhylw [
10. KMfw ipRQmY swj kY ijin sB sMswr aupwieAw [
11. rwm rhlm purwn kurwn Anyk khNY mq iek n mwnXo [ isMimRq swsqR byd sBY bhU Byd khNY hm eyk n jwnXo [
- 12.iksn ibsn kbhMU n iDAwaNU [ kwn sunY pihcwn n iqn so [
- 13.Drm clwvn sMq aubwrn ] dust sBn ko mUl aupwrn ]
14. suD buiD sihq Bly gux swry [ nr aur qy kiljug inrvwry [ Dirh ssqR ismrih siqnwmU [Drm Drih phMucih surDwmU [ iem kwrX qy pMQ aupweo [ dy AwXuD rs blr bMDwXo [
- Bhai Santokh Singh, *Sri Guru Partap Suraj Granth*, Vol. 11, Ain 1, Ansu, 36.
15. As quoted by Teja Singh Ganda Singh, *A short History of the Sikhs: 1469-1765*, Bombay, 1950, p.68; Ahmad Shah Batalvi, *Twarikh-i-Punjab*, Punjabi University, Patiala (pbi. Trans.), 1968; Kanaya Lal, *Tarikh-i-Punjab (1875)*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1968, p. 48 and Pandit Shardha Ram Phillauri, *Sikhan De Raj Di Vithya*, Pressbeterian Mission, Ludhiana, 1868, p. 57.
16. *History of the Sikhs : 1469-1839*, Vol. I, Oxford, 2004, p. 85.