

# Emergence of Khalsa: A Divine Will

*Joginder Singh Jogi \**

*\* Advocate by profession, Jogi ji is a former President, Takht Sri Patna Sahib Mg. Com.*

*Address: Sadashiv Properties, Katras Road, Dhanbad 826001. (Jharkhand)*

It has been acknowledged by almost all the writers on Sikh history that the creation of Khalsa was an epoch making event in the religious and political history of the country and it marked the beginning of the rise of a new people, destined to play a significant role against all oppression and tyranny.

Much has been written by scholars regarding the creation of Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh, but differences exist among the scholars about the real purpose of the creation. Some writers are of the opinion that the creation of the Khalsa was a process of militarisation to avenge the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Similarly, others have explained the phenomenon which led to the foundation of the Khalsa as a part of the process of fight against the Mughals who perpetrated this kind of oppression.

J.D. Cunningham,<sup>1</sup> writes: "But Govind dwelt upon the fate of his father, and the oppressive bigotry of Aurangzeb; study and reflection had enlarged his mind; experience of the world had matured his judgement, and, under the mixed impulse of avenging his own and his country's wrongs, he resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life, and upon giving precision and aim to the broad and general institutions of Nanak. In the heart of a powerful empire he set himself to the task of subverting it, and from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption, he called up simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose, and enthusiasm of desire."

According to W.H. McLeod<sup>2</sup> "The Tenth Guru Gobind Singh, having observed the growing hostility of both the hill rajas and the Mughal authorities, and having reflected upon the weakness of his followers, reached a momentous decision. This decision he put into effect during the Baisakhi festival of 1699 and the result was the foundation of the Khalsa."

To the writers holding the view of Guru Gobind Singh's policy of 'open hostility' towards Mughals or Islam, it appeared natural that Guru Gobind Singh should seek to avenge his father's cruel death and punish the rulers responsible for that. **By this, these writers attribute ordinary human motives to the Guru, contrary to the high spiritual ideals set forth before him.**

However, A. C. Banerjee<sup>3</sup> differs with this so-called open hostility of Guru Gobind Singh and says, "It is not easy to explain Aurangzeb's forbearance towards Sikhs during these years. There was nothing to prevent him from following the precedent laid down by Jahangir after the execution of Guru Arjun; the Ninth Guru's young successor might have been put behind prison walls. The policy followed in the case of Jaswant Singh and his family might have been repeated; the Sikhs were then not in a position to offer such resistance as the Emperor encountered from the Rathors." Gokul Chand Narang<sup>4</sup> also rules out this view of open hostility of Guru Gobind Singh towards Mughals, and observes "He was a child of tender age at that time. To think of revenge or active resistance was out of question. His martyred father had no doubt, before his execution, invested him with the insignia of Guruship and the faithful Sikhs were ready to follow any leader who would revenge their Guru's death, but howsoever strong might Gobind's determination have been, it would have been suicidal for a little boy of fifteen to declare open war against one of the greatest empires of the world."

**Guru Gobind Singh was not at all inimical towards Islam or Mughals. In none of his writings has Guru Gobind Singh indicated any hostility towards Islam or Mughal Empire. History is witness to the fact that Muslims fought battles on the side of Guru**

### **Gobind Singh and came to his rescue at most critical moments.**

According to Hari Ram Gupta<sup>5</sup> "Guru Gobind was determined to exterminate the religious oppression of the Mughal Government. He concentrated against the cruel Government and not against Islam. There is not a word in his speeches and writings to prove this baseless charge. Nor does history offer any event of incident in proof of it. He was an embodiment of love and affection for all.

In *Bachittar Natak* (his autobiography), Guru Gobind Singh has described his mission as follows :-

"The divine Master sent me for the sake of dharma  
On this account I have come into this world--  
Extend the Faith everywhere,  
Seize and destroy the evil and sinful;  
I assumed birth for the purpose  
of spreading the faith, saving the saints  
and extirpating all tyrants.

The Guru was clear in his mind that fighting against injustice was not a deviation from the spiritual path. It was essential ingredient of practical religion. Tyranny in all its forms-social, political and religious - was to be countered and annihilated.

It would therefore appear that Guru Gobind Singh felt that there was a divine sanction behind his activities for which God had sent him in this world, namely to promulgate *dharmā* to raise the holy and to cast away the evil doers from the very roots.

Again, different views have been expressed by Indian and Western Scholars on the point whether the changes effected under Guru Gobind Singh were in conformity with the spirit of the teachings of Guru Nanak and the succeeding Gurus. It is stated that some of these scholars misunderstood the developments of Sikhism in its proper perspective, while others have gone deep into the Sikh thought and institutions and found its development in its true perspective. This point has been effectively - and in detail - discussed by Shiv Kumar Gupta<sup>6</sup>. It will be interesting to recall the view of various writers on this point.

According to Wilson<sup>7</sup>, "To succession of the Sikhs of the son of Tegh Bahadur, Guru Gobind constitutes the most important era in the political progress of the Sikhs. He, in fact changed the whole character of the community and converted the Sikhs of Nanak, the disciples of a religion of spirituality and benevolence and progressors of faith of peace and goodwill, into an armed confederacy, a military republic." Major A. E. Barstow<sup>8</sup> is also of similar views and writes, "Religious fervour, however, was entirely eclipsed by military zeal" and thus "a religion became a political power, and for the first time in India a nation arose, embracing all races, all classes and all grades of society and banded them together in face of foreign foe." Expressing a different view, Niharranjan Ray<sup>9</sup> says, Guru Gobind Singh therefore came to understand and interpret the confrontation in a different manner, and for about three decades of active life which was given to him, he provided a strong positive response to that confrontation. **In the process the Sikh community emerged as a definite religious and socio-political entity somewhat democratized in its organization structure, a well organized force ready to fight, if and when necessary, against tyranny and injustice and against any challenge to one's faith and way of life, yet basically adhering steadfastly to its strictly ethical and devotional manner of living."**

Similarly, C. H. Payne<sup>10</sup> has observed that "it was no part of Guru Gobind Singh's object to displace the teachings of Nanak, but rather to adapt it to the new needs of his people. It has been rightly said, **"Guru Gobind Singh resolved to complete the work begun by Guru Nanak and carried on by his successors. He decided to create a body of men,**

**self-contained and compact, who would be strong enough to free themselves from the oppression of priests and rulers and to maintain the freedom thus achieved. In doing so, he was not, in any way, departing from the principles taught by his predecessors.”**

It may thus be stated that the Khalsa brought about by Guru Gobind Singh, though apparently seem to have introduced radical change in the existing Sikh way of life and style, yet examining the system in depth it would appear that Guru Gobind Singh did not go astray from the path set by his successors. It may be mentioned here that Khalsa was not brought about impulsively, as alleged by some non-Sikh historians, but it was the culmination and product of the mission undertaken by Guru Gobind Singh's predecessor Gurus starting from Guru Nanak. The foundation of the faith was laid by Guru Nanak. It may further be mentioned that at the conclusion of baptismal ceremony held on Baisakhi 1699, Guru Gobind Singh explained to the people the historical perspectives of the changed circumstances. He said that Khalsa is the **Army of Almighty** and that it had been brought into prominence by His Will. "**Khalsa Akal Purkh Ki Fauj; Pragatio Khalsa Parmatam Ki Mauj.**" The word 'pargatio' clearly indicates that the spirit of Khalsa was already present. In a Hukamnama issued by Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind addressed the Sikhs as "**Purab Di Sangat Guru Da Khalsa Hoe**"<sup>11</sup>. According to Guru Gobind Singh "God cherishth the poor, saveth saints and destroyeth enemies." Thus protecting the poor and the weak and destroying the tyrant are, according to the Guru, God's mission, in fulfillment whereof the Khalsa emerged by a Divine Will.

□



1. Joseph Davey Cunningham, History of the Sikhs, Rupa & Co., New Delhi, sixth impression 2006, page 65.
2. W.H. Mcleod, Sikhs & Sikhism, Oxford, third impression 2006, Section II, Evolution of Sikh Community, Page 4.
3. A.C. Banerjee, Creation of the Khalsa, Journal of Sikh Studies, Vol. I, February 1974, Page 29.
4. Gokul Chand Narang, Transformation of Sikhism. Reprint fifth edition. Kalyani Publisher, New Delhi, 1998, Page 75.
5. Hari Ram Gupta, History of the Sikhs, Vol. I, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi. Repring from second edition. 1984. Page 258.
6. Shiv Kumar Gupta, *Creation of the Khalsa*, Fulfillment of Guru Nanak's Mission. Punjabi University, Patiala. 1999. Page 41.
7. Wilson, Religion of Hindus, New Delhi. 1978. Page 128.
8. A.E. Barstow, Low Price Publications. Delhi. Reprint 2004. Page 8.
9. Niharranjan Ray, Sikh Gurus & the Sikh Society, Munshiram Manoharlal, New Delhi. second revised edition, 1975. Page 102.
10. H.C. Payne, A Short History of the Sikhs, Language Department, Punjab. third edition, 2002. Page 23.
11. Dr. Ganda Singh, Hukamnamas, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1967. Page 67.