

Guru Gobind Singh as Founder of the Khalsa Commonwealth

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Creation of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh was not simply an endeavour to integrate the members of his community, it was also a powerful bid to carry the completion of his predecessor's revolution in the fields of society and religion. The seed which blossomed in the form of the Khalsa had been sown by Guru Nanak Dev and irrigated by his successors. The sword which was made compulsory in the Khalsa code of conduct was, undoubtedly conceived by Guru Gobind Singh but the steel for this had been provided by Guru Nanak Dev.

With the initiation, a new terminology was invented for the first time in the Punjabi language. It added new words and phrases in the day to day conversation. *Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal; Waheguruji ka Khalsa Waheguruji ki Fateh; Singh, Panth, Khalsa, Sarbat Khalsa, Gurmatta, Fateh, Kaur, Panj Pyare, Sava lakh* for one thing, *Chardi Kala*, etc. were the new words and phrases added in the Punjabi literature. These made it rich and impressive. These words represent the martial valour of the community. Besides this, the Khalsa terminology represents the masculine meanings in contradiction to the Indian traditional feminine meanings of daily conversation. For example, the Khalsa calls his birth place as the fatherland in place of motherland, for *darhi* (beard) the Khalsa says *darha sahib*, for *kachch* (short breeches) the Khalsa says *kachchehra*, for turban the word *Dastaar* or *Dastaar Sahib* is used, *Sri Sahib* for sword, *sava lakh fauj* is used for one man and *daala sahib* for dall etc. These words and phrases also show the high spirit of the Khalsa.

The creation of the Khalsa was an epoch-making event in the history of the Indian sub-continent. It marked the beginning of the rise of a new Commonwealth, destined to play as a champion against all kinds of situations. The superiority of the high caste people over their low caste brethren were set at naught as soon as one joined the ranks of the Khalsa, where all were equal and ready to render one another every help and useful service. It laid the foundation of brotherhood which produced in the fullness of time, men of uncommon bravery, unique devotion and rare spirit of sacrifice. The spirit of the Khalsa was so strong that even those people who had been considered as dregs of humanity were changed, as if by magic, into something rich and inspiring, the like of which this sub-continent had never seen before.

For the first time, in the polity of the administrative organization, it brought such a concept of democracy which was totally new in working. It was called the direct democracy. It was to be worked through the approval of the unanimous vote of the *Sarbat Khalsa*. *Sarbat Khalsa* was an institution to apply the concept of direct democratic process. Therefore, it was, to be a dynamic institution for it was, and at present, is a self-perpetuating and self-operating apparatus which can go into operation at all places where the five Sikhs gather. It radically transformed the psyche of the Sikh society. It is more democratic in comparison to its other counterparts. **In fact, the establishment of the Khalsa was a declaration of assuming the rights for self-determination and its readiness to defend it by all possible means.**

The spirit imbibed in the Khalsa to fight for emancipation from the shackles of slavery

turned over a new leaf and enabled it to establish a unique identity and to live with self-reliance and dignity. The Khalsa responded gallantly to the crucial challenges from time to time simply because its enthusiasm had been redoubled. It was nothing short of a miracle that the socially ignored and economically crushed people, galvanized by the creation of the Khalsa, worked wonders in the battle field against the regular troops of the hill chiefs and the Mughals. It was the Khalsa and only the Khalsa who was responsible for the multi-revolutions which came in the vanguard of the Sikhs in various spheres of life. The institutions of the Khalsa was a message to the whole world for the universal brotherhood of mankind.

During the first few days after that Baisakhi, some eighty thousand men received the *Amrit* of the *Khanda* to join the order of the Khalsa. Within a few months, the hills and plains around the city of Anandpur Sahib began to echo to the beating of wardrums and the loud shouts of *Jaikaras*. All the villages around Anandpur Sahib came under the protection of the Khalsa. Thousands of the *Amritdhari Khalsa* began to assemble at Anandpur Sahib under the banner of *Kesri Nisan Sahib*. They looked upon their Guru as their Sovereign. A sort of Khalsa Republic was established at Anandpur Sahib.

The Khalsa implicitly believed that it shall rule, its enemies will be banished, only those will be saved who will seek refuge of the Khalsa - 'According to Sainapat, "The Khalsa mounted on the horses fully armed and went to the surrounding villages of Anandpur Sahib. The villagers were directed to adopt the Khalsa mission. The villages which accepted its directions were taken into its protection but those, which refused to obey its directives were plundered. The protected villages supplied the food and fodder to the Khalsa. It created much hue and cry. The opponents of the Khalsa approached the Raja of Kehlur and asked for their protection.

Macauliffe is of the opinion that Guru Gobind Singh wrote to the hill chiefs about his mission and appealed to them to accept it. "How has your religious, political and social status deteriorated! You have abandoned the worship of the true God, and addressed your devotions to god, goddesses, rivers, trees, etc. Through ignorance, you know not how to govern your territories; through indolence and vice you disregard the interests of your subjects. You place over them officials who not only hate you but are besides your mortal enemies. In your quarrels regarding caste and lineage you have not adhered to, ancient divisions of Hindustan into four sections, but you have made hundreds of sub-sections and subordinate minor castes. You despise and loath one-another through your narrow prejudices, and you act contrary to the wishes of the great Almighty Father. Your morals have become so perverted that through fear and with a desire to please your Musalman rulers, you give them your daughters to gratify their lust. Self-respect hath found no place in your thoughts and you have forgotten the history of your sires. I am intensely concerned for your fallen State. Are you not ashamed to call yourselves Rajputs when the Musalmans seize your wives and daughters before your eyes? Your temples have been demolished and mosques built on their sites; and many of your faith have been forcibly converted to Islam. **If you still possess a trace of bravery and of the ancient spirit of your race, then listen to my advice; embrace the Khalsa religion and gird up your loins to elevate the fallen condition of your country.**"

This statement of Macauliffe has been accepted by the Hindu historians such as Hari Ram Gupta. Therefore, there is some truth in this statement. But it was not for the Rajas or the Brahmins that they led the masses to bring revolutionary changes. As such, they could neither accept the Guru's proposals nor could they lead the masses themselves. In contrary to these proposals, the Raja of Kehlur thought otherwise. He was seriously concerned with

the new situation. He saw in it a great danger to his own authority. The circumstances were created to such an extent that both of the forces - the Khalsa at Anandpur Sahib and the orthodox Hindu leadership in the form of Rajas and Brahmins at Bilaspur - were on the threshold of war.

The Guru, as a matter of fact, wanted peace for his new-born Khalsa to grow and flourish, but the chief of the Kehlur State (Bilaspur) wanted to nip the Khalsa in the bud. The Raja consulted his fellow chiefs and they agreed that the Guru should be ejected from the hills. Therefore, the Guru was told to pay rent for the territory he occupied.

To this the Guru replied that the land had been bought by his father and no rent was due. The hill chiefs encircled Anandpur and stopped supplies of food grains. The Sikhs, led by the Guru's eldest son, Ajit Singh, who was then of fourteen years only, broke through the cordon more than once but eventually the Guru decided to move out of Anandpur to a small village called Nirmoh Garh near Kiratpur. The Raja of Bilaspur tried to ambush his forces but was defeated and had to pay the price of having several of his soldiers killed in the battle.

Later, the Hill chiefs got help from the Emperor. Mughal forces from Sarhind joined the hill chiefs and invested the Guru at Nirmoh. The Khalsa held them at bay and after twenty-four hours of continuous fighting, broke through the besiegers. The Guru then shifted to Basoli. The Raja of Bilaspur made one more attempt to crush the Guru's forces but was badly beaten. He made terms with the Guru and the Khalsa returned to Anandpur.

