I

INTRODUCTION

The Origin and Development of Sikhism as a religion.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION : THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF SIKHISM AS A RELIGION

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Introduction:

Sikhism, the religion of the Sikhs has had its origin in the state of Punjab of North Western India. It is one of the most important religions at present existing in India. Sikhism is the youngest of the major religions of the world. It is a pure lofty monotheism issued out of an attempt to reform Hinduism and Muhammadanism. The religious background of Sikhism can be traced back to the Sant Tradition. The origin of Sikhism was to be found in the Bhakti movement of Hinduism and in the Sufi mysticism of Islam. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Religions states about the Sikh Religion as "The religion of the Sikhs ("disciples"), an Indian people living mainly in the Punjab and the adjoining areas, and forming a brotherhood based not on race but on religious ideas and traditions". Vergilius Ferm explains about Sikhism as "A faith that arose in India as a result of the coming of Islam".

The founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak (1469-1539) was born in 15th April 1469 in a village named Talwandi (now in Pakistan) in a Khatriya family of Bedi Subgroup. Encyclopaedia of Religion and Religions stated about Nanak as "a contemporary of Luther and like him a Protestant against much of the religion of his day".

The followers of Sikhism are known as Sikhs. The word 'Sikh' is derived from two sources. It is derived from the Sanskrit word 'Shishya' which means 'disciple'. About the other source of the word 'Sikh' A.S. Sethi claims that it is "related to the Pali Canon, where the word is 'Sekho' meaning a person who is dedicated to truth". The Sikhs are the followers of their ten Gurus beginning with Guru Nanak and ending with Guru Gobind Singh. In 1708, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, personal
Guruship ended and the Sikhs revered the *Adi Granth* (Holy Book of the Sikhs) as their Guru.

Though the terms 'Sikh' and 'Singh' are used ordinarily in the same sense, yet there is a difference between the meaning of the two words. Loehlin observes about the two words as that "Sikh means learner, and Singh means Lion; and these two terms aptly describe the difference between them".10

Macauliffe observes about the word 'Singh' as "who accept the baptism inaugurated by Guru Gobind Singh".11 On the other hand the word 'Sikh' designates the followers of all the Sikh Gurus.

The Chief doctrine of the first Sikh Guru Nanak was 'The Unity of God, brotherhood of man, rejection of caste and the futility of idol worship.' Nanak aimed at uniting Hindus and Muslims into one brotherhood. Nanak's main utterance was "There is no Hindu; there is no Mussalman."

Khushwant Singh holds that Sikhism is "born out of a wedlock between Hinduism and Islam".12 Sikhism arose as a protest against the cultural and political conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. Observing this, Everyman's Encyclopaedia stated about the aim of Nanak as "Nanak a humanitarian aimed at combining Hindus and Muslims into one brotherhood by a unique blend of Sufi beliefs."

Sahota observes about the birth of Sikhism as Nanak's "Outright condemnation of the ritualism and farce of Brahmanical religion and begotry of the followers of Islam was so vehement and so effective that a large number of the adherents of both these religions became Guru Nanak's followers and gradually evolved themselves into a new sect which was ultimately transformed into a full fledged religion."14

Guru Nanak was met with a problem of social awakening, completely new in character and wider in scope. Therefore, Nanak tried to lay the foundation of social order based on equality and amity among the individuals.
Origin of Sikhism

About the origin of Sikhism Harbans Singh maintains that "The origin of Sikhism lies in its historical necessity when India was passing through a critical period in which the masses suffered greatly from ignorance, injustice and intolerance."¹⁵

In order to explain the origin of Sikhism, we have to explain the early Hinduism, Muslim invasions to India and the compromise of Hinduism with Islam.

When the Aryans came to India the people of Northern India worshipped a variety of Gods and Goddesses. At that time polytheism was prevalent among the inhabitants of Northern India. But the Aryans were the worshippers of nature. They worshipped rising sun, moon, the sky, thunder, lightning and the like natural events. Hindu Pantheon was originated as a result of the animistic faith of the aboriginals and the faith of the Aryans as the lovers of nature.

Birth of the caste system was also the results of the act of settling the Aryans in India. They divided the common people into four castes, viz. Brahmin, Kshtriya, vaishyas and the Sudras. According to Khushwant Singh, "The caste system has been rightly described as Brahmanical Hinduism, for it was the Brahmins who moulded this pattern of social order to suit their own ends."¹⁶

Another important aspect of Brahmanical Hinduism¹⁷ was the philosophy and poetry of the Scriptural texts like Vedas, Upanisads and the Epics.

The first revolt against the Brahmanical Hinduism was started by Mahavira (founder of Jainism) and Gautama the Buddha (founder of Buddhism).

In the south of India the Alvars¹⁸ and the Adyars¹⁹ started the renaissance of Hinduism against the caste distinctions of Brahmanical Hinduism.

Advent of Islam is also responsible for the origin of Sikhism. As a religion, Islam was first introduced in India in the 8th century A.D. through the Muslim traders from Arab. Dhillon observes that, "The Arabs, under Muhammad-bin-Qasim (A.D. 711-12) opened the North-West gate for the advent of the Muslims in India and thus Muslim influx started."²⁰ In the Western part of India, specially in Malabar region
Muslims of Arab spread "from the year A.D 636 onwards." Gradually in the South of India also Islam spread to the Tamil regions. But before the invasion of Muslim armies, Islam spread peacefully in India without disturbing the local people. The invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni (A.D. 971-1030) caused havoc in the minds of the local Hindu people. He destroyed Hindu temples. Mahmud of Ghazni invaded India several times.

The Bhakti movement, which spread over India from the 11th century brings the compromise of Hinduism with Islam.

Bhakti movement, in India was the Renaissance movement within Hinduism, which revolted against casteism and worship of Idols of Hinduism. The exponents of Bhakti movement in the South India were Samkara (A.D. 800), Ramanuja (A.D. 1016-1137), Madhava, Vallava and others. Of these Samkara was a Brahmin and established the faith of uncompromising monism. He believed in the existence of One, indefinable and all-pervasive God. The main teaching of the supporters of Bhakti movement were that God is One and indescribable. God is the only reality and absolute submission to the Will of God is the only means to serve God.

But it was Ramanuja (A.D 1016-1137), who popularized the Bhakti movement in the South of India and advocated the path of Bhakti (devotion) as the best means to salvation.

In Northern India, Ramananda22 (1360-1470), a Brahmin of North India, popularized the cult of Bhakti. But Bhakti margo as explained by Ramananda is qualitatively different from Ramanuja. Ramananda's Bhakti margo is emotionally oriented while Ramanuja's metaphysically oriented. Kabir23, a Muslim by birth was a disciple of Ramananda. Khushwant Singh stated about Kabir as "the chief Protagonist of an understanding between Hindus and Muslims."

In the early years of the sixteenth century, the Sufi Mystics tried to compromise Islam with Hinduism. Sufis were ascetic in nature and they had devotion to One Supreme Being, Allah. The Sufis acquired their knowledge from the Koran (The Holy Book of Islam) and Hadith (contains the dialogue, speech and practice of prophet Muhammad) of Islam. Like the Muslims, they also believed in One and Only God. But
the most significant aspect of Sufism was the way of life adopted by the Sufi leaders. Contrary to the Muslim conquerors who tried to demolish the non-believers and ruined their religious shrines, the Sufis welcomed the non-believers as their brothers. The concept of universal brotherhood of the Sufis formed a bridge for religious synthesis between Hindus and Muslims. Hence the influence of Sufi ideas and practice on the advent of Sikhism as a religion is most important. In this context, Abingdon Dictionary of Living Religions stated "Sikhism is an eclectic faith combining the teachings of Bhakti Hinduism and the Muslim Sufis."25

During the time of Nanak's birth the reigning dynasty was the Lodis26 and Sultan Bahlul Lodi27 (1451-89) reigned that time. The Encyclopaedia Americana states "When Nanak began teaching in 1499 there was almost complete lawlessness under the weak Lodi dynasty and the government was taking active measures to repress Hinduism. Nānak's doctrines in large part were a response to these chaotic conditions".28

Therefore Guru Nanak appeared at the juncture when both Hinduism and Islam were being corrupted by their religious authorities. And at this juncture Guru Nanak, propounded the Sikh religion.

Development of Sikhism

Regarding the development of Sikhism, McLeod states that the beginning period of Sikhism started from Guru Nānak and ended with the death of the tenth Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. This period was of fundamental importance, because three important events happened during this period. The first one was the formal engagement of a successor by Guru Nanak to the leadership of the community. The second important event of the period was the compilation of the authentic canonical Scripture, Adi Granth (First Book) by the fifth Guru Arjun Dev. Of these three important events of this period, the third one was the founding of the Khalsa29 (Pure) in 1699 by Guru Gobind Singh.

Dhillon divided the development of Sikhism into two phases. The "first in the
sixteenth century when the faith originated; second in the seventeenth century when it blossomed and finally became a third entity among the Hindus and Muslims".30

In the evolution of Sikhism, we can trace a twofold development. The first phase of development, i.e from "Guru Nanak down to the year 1604 when the compilation of the Granth Sahib was completed, the movement ran on peaceful lines".31 But from the execution of the fifth Guru Arjun the Sikhs gradually became a military order. The first idea of militarism arose within Sikhism during the Guruship of the Sixth Guru Horgobind. The beginning and end of the seventeenth century was important for two important institution i.e. 'Miri', 'Piri' and 'Khalsa' in Sikhism. In the words of Banerjee "The whole character of the movement changed as a peaceful sect was gradually turned into a military order and the devotee developed into the soldier saint."32 The second stage of development ran from 1605 up to the year 1699 when the Khalsa was created by Guru Gobind Singh.

The first Sikh Guru Nanak was a man of dynamic character. The reformatory role of Guru Nanak is comparable to the role played by Martin Luthar and John Calvin in the Christian world.

The most intense part of Nanak's thought was to be found in the ineffable union with the Supreme Being God, and the Path leading to this union with God. Fundamental teachings of Guru Nanak are contained in the verses known as Japji Sahib,33 which is the morning prayer of the Sikhs. Japji presents the spiritual, ethical principles for the realization of higher realms of reality. It is a unique expression of the identity of metaphysics and ethics achieved by a thinking mind. His other compositions are Ässä-di-Vār, Siddha-Goshti and Onkār, Ässä-di-Vār consists of the sociological aspect of Guru Nanak's thought. Siddha-Goshti contains the conversation of Siddhas with Guru. Nanak's another composition Onkār is in the Ramkali rāga.

Nānak was accepted by the Hindus and Muslims alike as a representative of God who had revealed Himself in human form to guide humanity. Nanak was much popular among the Hindus and the Muslims alike. It may be recorded from the following
conversation between Guru and Mardana: "Before he breathed his last, the Guru asked him as to how should his mortal remains be disposed of and it is then that Mardana replied that he was neither a Mohammadan nor a Hindu and therefore his remains should neither be treated according to Mohammadan rites nor according to Hindu rites but should be thrown into the river." 

Nanak visited all important centres of pilgrimage in India and abroad. He visited as far as Assam in the east. Nanak visited Assam during the reign of Ahom King Suhungmung (1497-1539 A.D). Assam was then a land of magic and witchcraft. Mardana, the companion of Nanak was also with him during his visit to Assam. Janam-Sakhis or biographical accounts of Guru Nanak unanimously accepted the story of the magic woman Nur Shah who used her magical enchantment on Mardana.

Guru Nānak visited the Shrines of different religions. During his visit to Assam he must have visited the famous Kamakhya temple of Assam. In this context, Trilochan Singh stated that "He must have visited the Kamakhya temple also, but there is no historical evidence or Shrine closeby commemorating his visit".

Guru Nānak also visited Dhubri of Assam, where he rested for some days. According to Trilochan Singh, "Ever since Guru Nanak's visit, the place was held sacred by people of all communities".

About the intention of Nanak The Everyman Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy states, "Nanak's intention had been not to unite Hinduism and Islam but to begin a new religious outlook and to found a new community cleansed of the corruptions of both and, while blending the insights of both, expressing itself in simple celebration of the name of the One God".

As a supporter of strict monotheism, Nanak believed and preached the Oneness of God, Ek Onkār and the brotherhood of mankind. He described 'God' as 'Sargun' as well as 'Nirgun'.

The chief characteristic of Guru Nanak's religion is its emphasis on the ethical aspect of social life. This is however, the indispensable aspect of all the religions. Nanak
attached great importance on Nam. By repetition of Nam, according to Nanak, one can conquer his evils. Three important commandments of Nanak are 'Kirt Karo', i.e., 'do your duty', 'Nam Japo', i.e., 'repete the Name of God' and 'Vand cako' i.e., 'give in charity.'

Nanak rejected the distinction of castes in society and established 'Langar' or 'Community Kitchen' as a practical step to break the barriers of castes in society. 'Sangat' or 'holy assemblies' is also an important institution started by Guru Nanak. Another most notable point of Guru Nanak's religion is that by living in a householder's life one can attain salvation. Guru Nanak rejected the orthodox view of Laws of Karma and reinterpreted it by providing more room for freedom of man.

The works of Guru Nanak not only provided the doctrinal base of Sikh religion, but also promoted its institutional growth and development by setting up Sangats (holy con-claves) during his extensive travel for over thirty years in India and abroad. He visited Arabia, Mesopotamia, Afghanistan, Tibet, Burma and Ceylon.

Nanak died on September 22 in 1539. Before his death he nominated his successor Angad as the second Guru. And this custom of selection of Guruship was followed until the time of fifth Guru Arjun Dev.

About the teachings of Guru Nanak A. Banerjee stated that "Guru Nanak's teachings represented a great moral force which brought out all the virtues of the common people and enabled them not only to survive cruel persecution but also to create a sovereign state in a period of ruthless strife." 45

Guru Nanak was succeeded by nine other Gurus –

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<th>Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Angad</td>
<td>1504 - 52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amar Das</td>
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<td>Ram Das</td>
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<td>Arjun Dev</td>
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<td>Hargobind</td>
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<td>Har Rai</td>
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<td>Har Krishan</td>
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<td>Tegh Bahadur</td>
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<td>Govind Singh</td>
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Second Guru Angad (Lehina) was born in a small village in Ferozpur district on March 31st, 1504. Guru Angad continued the institution of Langar which was started by Guru Nanak. He also improved upon the old Punjabi script which is known as Gurumukhi script, i.e. the language spoken from the mouth of the Guru. Guru Angad carried the message of Guru Nanak as the Oneness of God and brotherhood of mankind.

The third Guru Amar Das was born in 5th May, 1479. His father's name was Tej Bhan and his mother's name was Mata Bakht Kaur. He thoroughly organised the Sikh Gurdwara, and remained the religious leader of the Sikhs for twenty two years. He concentrated on social reforms. Guru Amar Das introduced new ceremonial forms for birth and death. He strictly forbade the practice of Sati and tried to liberate woman from the practice of Purdah. Other social reforms made by third Guru Amar Das were remarriage of widows, intercaste marriage etc. He divided the whole country inhabited by his followers into twenty-two missionary units or Manjis as they were called. The literal meaning of the word 'Manji' is 'Charpoy' or 'Cot'. As Guru Amar Das, preached his sermons by sitting on the charpoy, likewise his devotees were also preach their duties in distant places by sitting on a charpoy or cot. The necessity of the Manji system was explained by Dhillon as "in those days it was not possible for them to visit the Guru frequently for the sake of joining the Sangat. Guru, therefore, appointed his pre-eminent devotee to impart his teachings to the followers who were at far-off places."

Fourth Guru Ram Das was a Khatri and of the Sodhi sub-caste. He was the son-in-law of third Guru Amar Das. Till the time of Guru Ram Das, Guruship was based purely on merit. But after the fourth Guru it became hereditary and meritorious. Guru Ram Das was born at Lahore in the year 1534. He founded the religious capital of the Sikhs, known as Ram Das purā, later known as Amritsar. Guru Ram Das excavated a big tank and it was given the name 'Sar of Amrit'. And for the expenses of construction of the big tank Guru Ram Das appointed some agents for collecting money from different areas. These agents were known as 'masand'.

The youngest son of Guru Ram Das was Arjun Mal, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs.
At the beginning of his Guruship Arjun Dev completed the Golden Temple at Amritsar. Guru Arjun invited, a Muslim saint, Mian Mir of Lahore to lay the foundation of the temple at Amritsar. In A.D. 1590, 5th Guru Arjun Dev excavated another tank at Tarn Taran. He also built a large temple at Tarn Taran, and the place became very important place of pilgrimage. He also founded the towns of Tarn Taran in Amritsar District and Kartarpur in Jullundur District. Guru Arjun also founded another town known as Horgobindpur, after the name of his son Horgobind. But besides these contributions, Guru Arjun's crowning work was the compilation of the Adi Granth, the authentic holy scripture of the sikhs. Adi Granth contains the writings of the first five Gurus and the ninth Guru including Guru Arjun's composition the Sukhmani Sahib, the writings of the sixteen Hindu and Muslim saints and the compositions of thirteen bhakts (bards).

After the extreme tortures by the orders of Moghul Emperor Jehangir, Guru Arjun breathed his last on June 1606. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun was the turning point in the history of the sikhs. Arjun was the first sikh martyr.

After the murder of Arjun, his son Horgobind became the sixth Guru. Guru Horgobind guided the Sikhs in the spiritual and worldly matters for thirty eight years. During his reign, the history of the Sikhs took a different turn. Horgobind built the Akal Takht, a platform of about 12 feet high, which resembles the raised platform of the emperor. Sikhs were trained the use of arms during the period of Guru Horgobind. He himself assumed two swords, 'Piri' and 'Miri'. According to Dhillon, 'Piri' signified spiritual guide and 'Miri' symbolised the 'Secular Authority'. Khushwant Singh also endorses the same view. Thus in Sikhism the idea of militarism developed during the period of sixth Guru Horgobind. From the time of Guru Horgobind, the Sikhs became a martial race from a purely religious sect.

Seventh Guru Har Rai was the grandson of Guru Horgobind. He was born on 26th February, 1630. Guru Har Rai had friendly relations with Dara Shikoh, eldest son of Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan. As a result of this friendly relation, Har Rai supported Dara Shikoh, to fight against Aurangzeb. Guru Har Rai offended against his elder son Ram Rai
because he explained the verses of Guru Granth Sahib wrongly to emperor Aurangzeb. For this reason Har Rai qualified his younger son Harikrishan as the eighth Guru and disqualified his elder son Ram Rai. Guru Har Rai remained the spiritual leader of the Sikhs for seventeen years.

Eighth Guru Hari Krishen was "born at Kiratpur in the year A.D. 1656". He was the youngest son of Guru Har Rai. Har Rai's eldest son was deprived of guruship because of his villainous activities. Ram Rai reported the matter to the emperor Aurangzeb. It was for the first time in history that the emperor had to interpose with the matter of succession of Guruship. Then the Guru Hari Krishen was summoned to Delhi by the emperor. But he was stricken with small pox and died on A.D. 1664.

Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur was the youngest son of sixth Guru Hargobind. He was born at Amritsar in A.D. 1621. He was a man of solitary nature and devoted to peaceful activities with religious sermons and discussions.

According to Sikh tradition, Tegh Bahadur with his wife and other companions visited the important places of religious importance. Khushwant Singh holds that Tegh Bahadur travelled through Agra, Allahabad, Benaras, Gaya and arrived at Patna. On his way towards eastern countries Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at Dacca (presently in Bangla Desh) for about a year. Guru was in Dacca when he received the news of birth of his son at Patna. During his eartward journey Tegh Bahadur also visited Assam. In this context Khushwant Singh observes that "From Bengal the Guru went on to Assam. He spent nearly three years in the province before returning to Patna to join his family." Guru Tegh Bahadur accompanied Raja Ram Singh of Amber, who was deputed by Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb to make an expedition against Assam.

In Assam, Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Dhubri and Kamakhya. Regarding Tegh Bahadur's visit to Dhubri, Macauliffe maintains that at Dhubri, the capital of Kamrup, "the Guru informed Raja Ram Singh's officers that Guru Nanak had visited the place and rendered it holy by his footsteps."

The Gurdwara of Dhubri is a monument of Assam history which commemorates
the love and compassion of Guru for the Assamese people. Guru Tegh Bahadur was executed on November 11 1675. Guru Tegh Bahadur suffered martyrdom for religion. And his martyrdom was unique in the history of India or world.

The last Guru was Govind Singh. He changed the whole tenor of life of the Sikhs. He was born at Patna on December 26, 1666, in the absence of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who had left his family at Patna and gone on a missionary tour to Bengal and Assam. He was only nine years old when the charge of Guruship was given to him. He reorganised Sikhism into a martial form. Gobind Singh was a great organiser and had the vision of a great leader. Like his grandfather Horgobind, Gobind also trained his followers the use of arms as well as the technique of fighting.

Gobind built four fortresses, viz, "Anandgarh, Keshgarh, Lohgarh and Fatehgarh." Then he sent five of his disciples to "Benares to learn Sanskrit and the Hindu religious texts."

Besides these, the crowning event of Gobind's life was the creation of the 'Khalsa'. On the one day before 'Baisakhi' in 1699, the Guru assembled the Sikhs at Anandpur. A special tent was fixed on the raised platform. After the morning prayer, Gobind Singh went inside the tent and remained there for some time. After some time he came outward with a sword in hand and announced that his sword was eager for blood of five Sikhs. Then five Sikhs one by one rose to offer himself. After a long time Guru came out of the tent with the five Sikhs. Then the Guru announced that 'five beloved Sikhs' Panj Piyāre "were to be the nucleus of a new community" known as the 'Khalsa' or the pure ones. The baptising ceremony or 'Pahul' (Sikh initiation) was that Guru Gobind poured water mixed with sugar in an iron vessel, stirred it with a Khanda (double edged sword) and recited the compositions of earlier Gurus and his own. The members of different castes drink out of the same bowl. This process of drinking from the same bowl indicate their initiation into the 'Khalsa' and renamed them with the suffix 'Singh' (Lion) to male members and 'Kaur' to female members. After giving 'Amrit' to the five beloved Sikhs the Guru asked them to give him the 'Amrit' from the same vessel.
They were surprised and expressed their inability to do so. Then the Guru told them "the Khalsa is the Guru, and the Guru the Khalsa." Then the five beloved Sikhs baptized the Guru with 'Amrit'. In this way Guru Gobind Singh transferred the authenticity of Guru to the Panth.

As the outward sign of the disciples, members of the Khalsa were ordered to wear five K's. These five K's are known as Panca-Kākāra, Kesh (uncut hair), Kangha (comb), Kaccha (short drawer), Kara (iron bangle) and Kirpan (small sword). The religious symbols, according to Neville, "expressing beliefs, function in various intentional contexts." Besides these, members of Khalsa were asked to follow four rules of conduct, such as not to cut hair, abstain from tobacco and other alcoholic drinks, refrain from adultery and to eat Jhatka meat instead of Kosher meat. From that time onwards Gobind Rai was known as Gobind Singh. And the new greetings given to the Sikhs "Waheguru ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru ji Ki fateh". (The Khalsa are the chosen of God ; victory be to God)

Like the first Sikh Guru Nānak, Gobind Singh also believed in the authenticity of the Adi Granth and never granted the same sacredness to his own works. The work of the last Guru Gobind Singh is Dasam Granth. Like the former Gurus in Sikhism, Gobind Singh also attached great importance on 'Nam', i.e. repetition of the Name of God and rejected the Division of castes in society. Khushwant Singh observes about the change of Guru Gobind Singh as the "only change Gobind brought in religion was to expose the other side of the medal. Whereas Nanak had propagated goodness, Gobind Singh condemned evil."

From the days of Gobind Singh onwards there arose in Sikhism two main sects as Nanakpanthis or the Sahajdharis (followers of Nanak) and the 'Khalsa' or Keshdharis (followers of Gobind Singh).

During the period of Guruship of Gobind Singh, one Raja of Assam, whose name was Rattan Rai visited him with some precious gifts. Rattan Rai's father Raja Ram Rai was a disciple of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Gobind Singh, the last Guru of the Sikhs died in 1708, and the line of personal
guruship ended with his death. From that time onwards, Granth Sahib, the spiritual text of the Sikhs, installed as the Guru - the symbolic representation of the ten Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh gave the status of Guru to Guru Granth Sahib and told the Sikhs to seek their future guidance from it. Guru Granth Sahib is an unusually rich collection of poetry, which is not only educative, but also, philosophically uplifting and aesthetically satisfying.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh Banda Bahadur, who was enlisted in Khalsa Panth in 1708 by the tenth Guru, came into power. But Banda Singh was brutally killed at Delhi. After the execution of Banda Singh, 'Sarbat Khalsa' became the authorities of the Sikhs. After Banda Bahadur two remarkable men Jassa Singh Ahluwalia and Kapur Singh were the notable leaders of the Sikhs. After this, according to the decision of the Sarbat Khalsa, independent Jathas merged into the Dal Khalsa (army of the Sikhs). 'Dal Khalsa' was established under the command of Jassa Singh Ahluwalia. Ahmed Shah Abdali, a ruler of Afghanistan, invaded Punjab several times up to the year 1769. Bingley has stated that "The history of the Sikhs from the middle of the 18th to the beginning of the 19th century is a record of struggles, for pre-eminence among the chiefs of the different Misls or confederacies, who fought against each other more often than against their common enemies the Muhammadans." Then there arose in Punjab twelve Sikh Misls. Ranjit Singh Sukerchakia, son of Maha Singh of Sukerchakia Misl had risen towards the last part of 18th century. Ranjit Singh assumed the title Maharaj formally in February 1801. Ranjit Singh died in June 27, 1839. After the death of Ranjit Singh Dalip Singh assumed authority in 1843. At the end of the eighteenth century Maharaja Ranjit Singh founded the Sikh Kingdom with the capture of Lahore in 1799, which is survived until 1849 when Maharaja Dalip Singh handed over his kingdom and the Koh-i-noor diamond to British. Therefore in 1849 Lord Delhousi (British Viceroy) dethroned Raja Dalip Singh and as stated by Khushwant Singh "A proclamation was made declaring the kingdom of the Sikhs at an end."

Then the reformist movements like the Nām dhāris, the Nirankāris, Radhā-Soāmi and the Singh Sabha movement came into existence for the religious awakening of
Sikhism.

In the first World War (1914-1918) the Sikhs played a heroic part in the war.

In order to liberate the Gurdwaras from the control of the hereditary priests a committee was formed on 15th November' 1920 with 175 members. Khushwant Singh stated about this committee as "On November 15, 1920, a proclamation was made from the Akal Takht, Amritsar, to the effect that a committee of 175 to be known as the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee."\(^{87}\) This committee was registered on 30th April, 1921. On July 9, 1925 the Sikh Gurdwāra Act was passed by the Punjab Council. In 1966 the state of Punjab divided into two new states - Punjab and Haryana. And for taking over the Gurdwaras from mahants, a Semi-military corps of volunteers was organised, known as the 'Akali Dal'.\(^{88}\)

In the history of Sikhism, emergence of Singh Sabha Movement in the late nineteenth century is most influential. Another important event in the history of Sikhism is that the Sikhs were to "find their homeland divided between India and Pakistan in 1947."\(^{89}\) Another important event is that Punjabi Suba was established in 1966 with Punjabi as the official language.

**SIKHISM AND ITS DIFFERENT BRANCHES :**

(i) **Sahajdhāris and Keshdhāris**

Two of the major divisions of Sikhs were 'Nanakpanthis' or 'Sahajdharis' and 'Keshdharis' or 'Khalsa'. Nanakpanthis were the followers of Guru Nanak while 'Keshdharis' are the followers of tenth Guru Gobind Singh. Nanakpanthis or Sahajdharis did not keep long hair or wear the special signs of the Khalsa. While the Keshdharis accept the baptism inaugurated by Guru Gobind Singh. The title of the Keshdharis are 'Singh'. They Should follow all the ceremonial and social observances enforced by Guru Gobind Singh.
(ii) Udasi

Udasi\textsuperscript{90} Sect was founded by Sri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak. It was an ascetic order. According to Macauliffe Udasis were the Schismatical body of the Sikhs. The term 'Udasi' as stated by Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, "derived from Sanskrit Udās, 'Sad', and means 'Sorrow' or 'Sadness'.\textsuperscript{91}"

(iii) Ram Raias

Ram Raias, are the followers of Ram Rai, the eldest brother of Guru Hari Krishen, son of Guru Har Rai. Ram Rais are non-conformists. In the lower Himalayas, they have a greater number of adherents.

(iv) Handalis

Handalis, were the third Schismatical body of the Sikhs. According to Macauliffe, they "were the followers of Handal, a Jat of the Manjhā, who had been converted to the Sikh religion by Guru Amar Das, the third Sikh Guru.\textsuperscript{92}

(v) 'Minas'

'Minas' were the second Schismatical body of the Sikhs. 'Minas' are the followers of Prithi Chand, elder son of the fourth Guru Ram Das. Prithi Chand was disobedient to his father. Therefore Ram Das nominated his youngest son Arjun as the fifth Guru. Loehlin Stated about 'Minas' as "Mina is a term of contempt."\textsuperscript{93} 'Mina' is a term used for 'deceitful' or 'insincere'.

(iv) Nirankāris

Nirankāris, a modern sect of Sikhism. It is a religious movement arose in the last lap of 19th century. Baba Dayal (1783-1854) was the founder of the Nirankāri Sect. The Nirankāris believe in God as the Spirit without physical form. They are the worshippers of the formless. Consequently Dayal Das declared himself as a Nirankāri and hence his followers also announced themselves as Nirankāris.
(vii) Gangushāhis

Gangushāhis, were the followers of Gangu, a disciple of third Guru Amar Das. The followers of this sect were against the initiation ceremony of Guru Gobind Singh.

(viii) Dhirmalia

Dhirmalia, founded by Dhirmal, elder brother of Guru Har Rai, is another Schismatical sect of the Sikhs.

(ix) Sanwal Shahis

Sanwal Shahis, are the followers of one of the disciple of Guru Nanak. According to Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics, they are found chiefly in the South-west Panjab.

(x) Sewapanthis

Sewapanthis, according to Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics are "confined to the Sindh Sāgar Doab."54

(xi) 'Kukas' or 'Nāmdhāris'

'Kukās' or Nāmdhāris also is a reform movement. The nickname of the Namdhari Sikh is 'Kuka'. The main centre of the Nāmdhari movement was at village Bhaini in Ludhiana district of Punjab. The Nāmdharis led an anti-British movement. Ram Singh was the leader of the Nāmdhari movement. Rām Singh advised his followers to live a simple life and repeat God's Name or Nam. As the motto of this movement is the repetition of God's Name, the movement was named as the Nāmdhari movement. Nāmdharis are also called Kukās, because of their habit of emotionally piercing shouts during their religious exercises. They wear white cloth, white woolen necklace and they bind a high white turban. Kukās are abstained from smoking, intoxicating drugs and drinks. Adi Granth is their only sacred text.

(xii) Nihang

Nihang, founded by Guru Gobind Singh is another important sect of the Sikhs.
They wear dark blue dress and peaked turban, often surmounted with a steel disc. Some of them wear a yellow turban under the blue. Modern blend of the Nihangs are known as 'Akalis'.

(xlii) **Nirmala**

Nirmala sect was founded during the guruship of last Guru Gobind Singh. Gobind Singh selected five of his disciples and sent them to Benaras to study Hindu theology and sanskrit. The school of these five theologians known as Nirmalas. K.S. Murty writes that Nirmalas "Sought to combine Advaita vedanta with the philosophy of action of the Sikh Gurus, eschewing Vaisnava bhakti emotionalism and preferring vedantic intellectualism." The Nirmalas also celebrated Daserā, Diwali and the like common festivals of Hindus. Samkranti is their important festival.

(xiv) **Gulabdasis**

Gulabdasis, is a religious movement started by Pritam Das, an Udasi mendicant. Followers of this movement stood against all kinds of religious activities and moral restrictions.

(xv) **Diwana Sādhs**

Diwana Sādhs is an order of Sikhs founded by Bala and Haria. Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics mentioned it as "ecstatic saints." The members of this order are mainly from Jats and Chamārs.

(xvi) **Mazhabi**

Mazhabi sect, originated from a converted sweeper. Mazhabi Sikhs are the descendants of these sweeper converted to Khalsa community by Guru Gobind Singh.

(xvii) **Ramgarhias**

Ramgarhias, is one of the most important sects of Sikh community. At the beginning of the 19th century they adopted Sikhism. Jassa Singh, a carpenter was the founder of Ramgarhia Misl.
(xviii) **Radha Soami**

Radha Soami sect was founded by Shiv Dayal (1818-1878). The doctrine which propounded by Shiv Dayal comprised the elements of both Hinduism and Sikhism. And he regarded God as stated by Khushwant Singh "as the union between radha (symbolising the soul) and Soami, the Master."96

(xix) **Gyānis**

It is another important sect of Sikhism. The first Gyani was Man Singh who was trained by Guru Gobind Singh himself. Their main aim was to explaining Adi Granth in simple language to the common people.

(xx) **Ramdasi Sect**

Ramdasi Sect was applied to a weaver converted to Sikhism. Cunningham stated about Ramdasi Sect as "Sikhs of the class of Chumars, or leather dressers, and who trace to the Rao Das, or Raee Das, whose writings are inserted in the Grunth."97

(xxi) **Akāli**

During the early twentieth century Akali movement drew a large number of persons. Cunningham stated about Akali as "Worshippers of Akal (God), the most eminent of the orders of purists or Ascetics."98 Akalis first appeared during the reign of Ranjit Singh. At the beginning period Akalis moved against the British government. But now Akali is a most important political party in Punjab. With dark blue dress and peaked turban surmounted with steel quoits, Akalis looked different from other armies.

(xxii) **Jat Sikhs**

Jat Sikhs are purely agriculturists. In the words of Bingley "The Jats of the Punjab, whether Sikh or Hindu, are in every respect the most important of the Punjab races."99 About the origin of the Jats Khushwant Singh writes, " It is now generally accepted that
the Jats who made the northern plains of India their home were of Aryan Stock.\textsuperscript{100} Jats are very courageous in nature. It should be mentioned here that Assamese Sikhs originated from this 'Jat Zamindar' Sects.\textsuperscript{101} Jats whether Sikh or Hindu are most influential in every respect. They are good natured, without vanity, light-hearted, hard worker and undemonstrative in nature.

Sikhism in Assam

Sikhism in Assam is the religion of the Sikh people living in Assam. The people who belonging to Assam but following the Sikh faith are Assamese Sikhs. The Sikhs have assimilated themselves into the Assamese society and have adopted the socio-cultural attitude of Assam.

Though Punjab is in the westward and Assam in the eastward of India, yet the visit of Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur has strengthened the relationship between Assam and Punjab.

I have already mentioned that both Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Assam at different times. But it is very difficult to locate the exact year in which the state of Assam came into contact with Sikh religion.

History bears account that Guru Nanak, in course of his first Udasi\textsuperscript{102} (Missionary tour) visited Kamrup\textsuperscript{103}. In this context Macauliffe observes that "The Guru and Mardana went to Kamrup, a country whose women were famous for their skill in incantation and magic."\textsuperscript{104} Trilochan Singh is of the opinion that during his travels to Assam, Guru Nanak met a landlord whose name was Bhai Bhumia.\textsuperscript{105} During his visit to Assam Guru Nanak visited the important religious centres of Assam.

After the visit of Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675) also visited Assam.\textsuperscript{106} During his journey towards eastern countries, Tegh Bahadur visited Benaras, Gaya, Allahabad, Patna, Dhakka and Assam.

Guru Tegh Bahadur reached Dhakka in 1666. While Tegh Bahadur was at
Dhakka, Raja Ram Singh, a Moghul army general, called on him for accompanying him to Assam. Guru Tegh Bahadur was highly interested in preaching of religion in different places. So, he gladly accepted the request of Raja Ram Singh to accompany him to Assam. Like Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur also visited Dhubri and Kamakhya temple of Assam. Trilochan Singh is of the opinion that in the Kamakhya temple "There is a panda there called the Sikh Panda, who tells of the traditional belief that both Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur visited the historical temple to address the pilgrims but they did not stop there." 

The Sikhs, however, began to settle in Assam permanently after the battle of Hadirachaki.

It was nearly a century after the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur that a batch of Sikh soldiers came to Assam. During the reign of Kamaleswar Simha (1795-1810 A.D.) two brothers of North Kamrup namely Hardatta and Birdatta recruited some Sikh soldiers along with some other soldiers to fight against the Ahom government.

Another group of Sikh soldiers came to fight for Assam and its people under the leadership of Chaitanya Singh. In the early part of the nineteenth century Maharaja Ranjeet Singh of Punjab sent a group of Sikh soldiers under the leadership of Bir Chaitanya Singh to help the Ahom King Chandrakanta Simha (1810-1818) to fight against the Burmese army.

Robinson stated about migration of Sikhs from Punjab to Assam that during the year of 1830s, quite a number of Sikh traders migrated from Punjab to Assam.

In the battle of Hadirachaki, Sikh general Chaitanya Singh and a number of Sikh soldiers were killed. Chaitanya Singh's wife commonly known as 'Maiji' or 'Mataji' (mother) with some Sikh Soldiers, who remained alive in the battle did not return to Punjab. They proceeded upstream through the mighty Brahmaputra and finally settled in Chaparmukh and established a Gurdwara which is now known as 'Gurdwara Mataji' and installed there the Holy Guru Granth Sahib. Two Cannons, one grinder, Chaitanya Singh's precious sword and some other rare articles also still preserved in this
Gurdwara. This Gurdwara Mataji of Chaparmukh, which was established in 1820 is the second historical Gurdwara in Assam. Gurdwara 'Tegh Bahadur Sahibii' which was formerly known as 'Gurdwara Damdama Sahib' of Dhubri is the first historical Gurdwara in Assam.

Besides these some of the Sikhs migrated from Punjab to Assam for trade or for transfer of service. They had also contributed to the rise of Sikh population in Assam.

The Sikhs first settled at Chaparmukh (Nowgong District, Assam) and later on they moved to Borkola, Hatipara and Lanka. (All in the Nowgong District of Assam). Gradually this Sikh society began to expand at Chaparmukh. Being originated from 'Jat Zamindar' sect they began to look for land more suitable for cultivation. So, some of them under the leadership of Ram Singh proceeded by upstream of Kolong river and then further up-stream by Haria tributary and settled at Borkola. Now 'Borkola Singgaon' is the biggest Assamese Sikh village in Assam. About 150 Assamese Sikh families now live at Borkola Singh gaon. Hatipara and Lanka are further extensions. There are eight Assamese Sikh families and a Gurdwara in Hatipara. While about seventy families of Assamese Sikhs live at Lanka. The name of the Lanka Gurdwara is 'Gurdwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha' which was established in 1934 and transferred to the present site in 1975. About eight families of Assamese Sikh are also to be found in Helem in the Sonitpur District of Assam. There are a few Assamese Sikh families live at a small town Rampur, Kamrup District of Assam.

It may be pointed out that Sikhs live in all the districts of Assam. Though they are not equally distributed in all the districts of Assam. Most of the urban inhabitants are non-Assamese Sikhs. Non-Assamese Sikhs of urban areas engaged in various tertiary occupations related with transport, communication and commerce. In Assam some people called the non-Assamese Sikhs as 'Punjabi Sikhs', Sikhs are very efficient in machinery activities. Almost in all the districts of Assam, in the urban areas, Sikhs have their own business like hardware shops, automobile repairing shops etc. Non-Assamese Sikhs migrated from Punjab to Assam due to service or trade. In the beginning of the twentieth century, there
were a very small population of Sikhs in Guwahati city. With the passing years these Sikh people spread out to other districts of industrial importance. Therefore the increase of population of Sikhs in Assam is due to the migration of Sikhs to Assam or due to the gradual increase of the Sikhs in Assam. Besides the non-Assamese Sikhs, Assamese Sikhs are also to be found in the urban areas of Guwahati, Nowgong, Dibrugarh districts of Assam. The British also employed the Sikhs in various departments of Assam. They recruited a number of Sikhs from Punjab for military services.

Therefore it may be noted here that present day Assamese Sikhs descended from different groups of people: Firstly, disciples of Guru Tegh Bahadur who established at Dhubri and Chaotala in the seventeenth century. Secondly, the group of Sikh soldiers brought to Assam to fight against the Ahom king in the eighteenth century and those Sikh soldiers brought to Assam in the nineteenth century to fight against the Burmese army. Thirdly, the Sikhs migrated from Punjab to Assam for business or for service also co-mingled with the local Assamese people. Therefore, Assamese Sikhs are the descendants of those of the Sikh soldiers or the migrant Sikhs from Punjab to Assam.

Subedar (Captain), Ram Singh, who was the first Sikh, settled at Borkola village of the Nowgong district of Assam, married two Assamese Hindu women. And the present generation of the Assamese Sikhs of Borkola Singh Gaon are the descendants of Subedar Ram Singh.

References

1. Sant, a member of a devotional tradition of North India, who painting God as without attributes.
3. Mysticism of Islam is known as 'Sufism'. 'Sufis' are the Muslim religious person, D.S. Dhillon, 'Sikhism origin and Development, PP 43-44, 1988.


6. Founder of Sikhism, Nanak belonged to Bedi Sub-group. "while the remaining Gurus from Ram Das onwards, were Sodhis", A.H. Bingley, Sikhs, P.53, 1986.


17. Brahmanical Hinduism was in favour of caste distinctions in society and accepted the religious rites and rituals.

18. Alvars are the saintly orders of South India flourished between the 7th and 12th centuries.

19. Adyars are also saintly orders of South India.


22. Ramananda was "a leader of the Vishnuite reformation of the 15th century A.C., after the period of Timur's invasion of India, when the Moslem Sayids (1414-1450), and the Lodi Dynasty, ruled from Delhi till expelled by the emperor Babur," Major


29. Khushwant Singh, op cit, Vol I, PP 83 - 84


32. ibid, P.2

33. 'Japji' literally means 'remembrancer', It is the Principal Sikh prayer recited in the morning.

34. S.S. Sahota, op cit, P. 77.


38. The Shrine of the Goddess Kamakhya is situated about three miles from present town of Guwahati (Assam).


40. ibid.

41. ibid.
42. The Everyman Dictionary of Religion and Philosophy, Geddes Mac Gregor,

43. 'Langar' (community kitchen) is an important institution of Sikhism introduced by
Guru Nanak as a crusade against social injustice, D.S. Dhillon, op cit, PP 203-205.

44. 'Sangat' is an institution of Sikhism founded by first Sikh Guru Nanak. It is the
association of followers of Guru Nanak, "for the purpose of meeting and singing
his hymns together," D.S. Dhillon, op cit, P. 198.

45. A.C. Banerjee, op cit, P. 76.

46. Guru Angad modified the script existed at the time of Guru Nanak, which has
been known as the Gurumukhi Script.

47. The Practice of 'Sati' is that when the husband died, the wife either voluntarily
burnt herself on the pyre of her husband or was thrown into the fire without her
consent.

48. The Practice of Purdah was very common among the Muslims, though some
Hindus also supported this system.

49. D.S. Dhillon, op cit, P. 95.

50. ibid.

51. 'Tarn Taran' is the place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs. It is about eleven miles south
of Amritsar.


53. Sukhmani was the most popular composition of Guru Arjun ('the psalm of peace')
ibid, P.61.

54. ibid, P. 306.

55. Akal Takht is "Just five hundred yards opposite to Harmandar", D.S. Dhillon,
op cit, P.112.

56. ibid, P. 130.


58. "Gobind Singh was born at Patna in December 1667," A.C. Banerjee, op cit, P.163.
61. Raja Ram Singh was the son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh of Amber. He was a Rajput General of Moghul Emperor Aurangzeb. Gopal Singh, History of the Sikh People, 1979, P.248, S.K. Bhuyan, Atan Buragohain And His Times, PP 65-69, 1957.
63. As an evidence of Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Kamakhya temple, a Panda (Priest) of the temple Late Jagannath Sarma F/O Somnath Sarma preserved a fragment of historical record which proves Tegh Bahadur's visit to Assam.
64. Macauliffe, op cit, P. 356.
66. ibid, P.80.
67. ibid.
69. 'Baisakhi' is the harvest festival of the Sikhs, observed in the first of Baisakh (April / May).
70. The name of the five Sikhs were Daya Ram, Dharam Das, Mohkam Chand, Sahib Chand and Himmat Rai.
72. The word 'Khalsa' literally means 'Pure'. In Sikhism 'Khalsa' is the community of pure selfless devotees.
76. Dasam Granth is the collection of the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh.


78. D.S. Dhillon, op cit, P.145, 1988

79. 'Sarbat Khalsa' is an assembly whose first congregation was organised in Akal Takht in 1749.

80. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia was born at the village Ahl in 1718. His title is Kalal. He was the leader of Ahluwalia Misl.

81. Kapur Singh was born at the village Fyzullapur.

82. 'Dal Khalsa' is the merge of the independent Jathas' into an army.

83. A.H. Bingley, Sikhs, P.29, 1986

84. The Sikhs were reorganised by Nawab Kapur Singh into eleven large bands, which are known as Misls. Misls were not founded on the basis of castes. They were founded "either on the basis of the name of the leader or his village",


86. Ibid, PP 123-135.

87. Ibid, P. 198.

88. 'Akalis' are the semi-military group of volunteers.


91. Ibid.


97. J.D. Cunningham, op cit, P. 379, 1849.

98. Ibid.


101. The welcome Address to Sardar Saran Singh, adviser Governor of Assam from Assamese Sikh Sangat, Borkola village, Nowgong District, Assam.


104. Macauliffe, op cit, p. 73, 1909.


108. Ibid.

109. Hadira Chaki is also called Assam Chouki or Kandahar Chouki, S. L. Barua, A Comprehensive History of Assam, P. 366, 1985.


112. Ibid, P. 224.


114. E. Gait, op cit, p. P. 235

115. Ibid, PP 231-238

116. W. Robinson, A Descriptive Account of Assam, P. 313, 1841.


118. Gazetteer of India, Assam State, Nowgong District, Govt. of Assam, PP. 6 - 7, 1978.


120. See Appendix.
121. 'Borkola' is a village in Nowgong District of Assam, situated at a distance of 20 Km. towards South-west of Nowgong town in Nowgong District.

122. Hatipara is a village in the Nowgong District of Assam.

123. Lanka is a railway station of Nowgong District of Assam.


125. Kolong is an offshoot of river Brahmaputra.

126. Helem is a small town in Sonitpur District, Assam.