

English Section



Editor : Diljit Singh 'Bedi'

DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS
(16th December to 15th January)

- 16 Dec. (a) Treaty of Bharowal. Gulab Singh recognised as Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir. Henry Lawrence appointed as British resident at Lahore. (16-12-1846)
- (b) A Sikh Convention held at Amritsar demanded formation of Punjabi Suba. (16-12-1950)
- 17 Dec. Battle of Mehraj. Martyrdom of Bhai Jaita, Bhai Sukhia Mandan etc. (17-12-1634)
- 18 Dec. First Anglo-Sikh battle held at Mudki. (18-12-1845)
- 19 Dec. Punjabi Bill passed by the Punjab Assembly. (19-12-1967)
- 22 Dec. Third Round Table Conference held at London. The Sikhs bycotted it. (22-12-1932)
- 23 Dec. Sikh Ex-service-men held a convention at Amritsar. Thousands attended and supported the Sikh struggle (Dharm Yudh Morcha). (23-12-1982)
- 24 Dec. Akali Jatha Khara Souda Bar set up with Jathedar Kartar Singh Jhabber as chief. (24-12-1920)
- 27 Dec. The Sikhs refused Jawahar Lal Nehru, the then Prime Minister of India, permission to make election speech from the dias of Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara. (27-12-1953)
- 28 Dec. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee took control of Bhai Pheru Gurdwara. (28-12-1922)
- 29 Dec. S. B. Mehtab Singh addressed the All Parties Convention, told the leaders “in case the Sikhs were ignored, the future of India shall have to be decided by sword”. (29-12-1928)
- 30 Dec. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee announced agitation for the right of the Sikhs to wear the sword. (30-12-1935)
- 31 Dec. (a) Indian regime passed Gurdwara Amendment Bill in furtherance of conspiracy to occupy the Sikh shrines. (31-12-1958)
- (b) Punjab Government accepted killing of 328 Sikhs and the arrest of

- 3751 Sikhs in 1987. (31-12-1987)
- 1 Jan. First batch of Sikh Jatha courted arrest on the issue of Sword. (1-1-1936)
- 6 Jan. Bhai Satwant Singh and Bhai Kehar Singh hanged in Delhi Jail. The bodies of two martyrs were cremated inside the Delhi Jail. Curfew was imposed in the whole of the Punjab. (6-1-1989)
- 7 Jan. The newly executive members of S.G.P.C. arrested. The S.G.P.C. decided to send Shaheedi Jatha (Martyrs band) to Gurdwara Gangsar Jaito. (7-1-1924)
- 9 Jan. The Sikh intellectuals Conference, held at Amritsar, supported the Dharam Yudh Morcha. (9-1-1983)
- 11 Jan. Last prayers for Bhai Satwant Singh and Bhai Kehar Singh performed at Shri Akal Takhat Sahib. (11-1-1989)
- 12 Jan. The Sikhs got control of the Shrines at Anandpur Sahib. (12-1-1923)
- 13 Jan (a) The Hindus attacked procession brought on the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib at Jammu, 9 Sikhs were killed. (13-1-1989)
- (b) Battle of Chelianwali in which 132 officers and 2446 soldiers of the British Army killed. After that, due to the huge loss of army and man power the British armed forces indulged in indiscriminate killings of innocent Sikhs. This barbarious act of so-called civilized English Society surpassed the earlier atrocities of the Mughal Empire on the Sikhs. (13-1-1849)
- 14 Jan (a) The outer wall of Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib (Delhi) demolished by the British Govt. (14-1-1914)
- (b) Punjabi became official language at district level, in the Punjab. (14-1-1967)
- (c) Referendum in 54 villages of Fazilka and Abohar. The Punjabi speaking Hindus of these towns declared Hindi as their mother tongue. But referendum in the village Kandu Khera blocked the move to transfer these towns to Haryana. S. Parkash Singh Badal played an important role in this connection. (14-1-1986)



In continuation with the last edition:

SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI
(1666-1708)

-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'

We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book '*History of the Sikh Gurus*' by S. Surjit Singh Gandhi former Head of Sikh History Research Board (SGPC).

All that was needed was to adapt the Panchayat to the need of the time. Between the two i.e. the Granth and the elected representatives of the community (Panth) both the spiritual and secular functions of the Guru ji could be taken care of. The Granth could become the spiritual Guru, the Panth itself the secular Guru and the combination of the two the mystic entity".¹

Institution of masands

The institution of masands as it ceased to serve also needed drastic action. Masands, together with Sants, formed the first of the organisation that Guru Amar Das Ji founded and Guru Arjan Dev Ji developed. For several decades, it served the cause of Sikhism creditably well; but as time rolled by, many evils crept into the institution so as to make it unfit for any laudable task. The reasons were not far to seek. The office of a masand, which in the first instance was filled by men of piety and integrity became hereditary in the families of the first incumbents, and in course of time, fell into the hands of those persons who were neither serious about their episcopal duties, nor possessed the requisite integrity in respect of financial matters. The disputes about the succession" to the Guruship at the death of Guru Hargobind which led to a positive weakening of the Guru's position and prestige and the simultaneous existence of rival claimants provided the masands opportunities to become recalcitrant and independent entities.

Thus in the Guru's eyes the masands had become despicable, preferring their mundane self-interest to their obligations towards the Guru. In view of this, they, at any rate, did possess neither the capabilities nor the honesty to execute the programmes of the Guru.

The following remarks from the Dasam Granth containing Guru Gobind Singh's personal testimony of the views and the practices 'of the masands voice a vehement

protest against the institution of masands:-

If anyone serves the masands, they say. 'Fateh' and give us all thine offerings.

Whatever belongs to you should hastily be offered to none but ourselves.

Think of us night and day, and mention not anyone's name, even by mistake.

If they hear of any one desirous of giving, they run to him even if it be night and they are pleased not unless they receive something.

They put oil into their eyes and they make people believe that they are shedding tears.

If they find anyone wealthy among their adherents, they serve the food and see that he takes it.

If they find him to be poor, they give him nothing and even if he begs, they do not show him their faces.

Thus the things reached such a pass that the masands who had been foremost among the Guru's auxiliaries became, in course of time, the greatest counterpoise to his authority.

Time demanded perfect harmony between the Guru and the Sikhs but the masand's mediacy fanned groupism among the Sikhs by shifting their loyalties from one group to another to different claimants to Guruship. The Guru needed money for executing his plans, and the masands were more interested in appropriating the offerings for their own use. Perfect co-operation to be extended to the Guru was the imperative for the success of the Sikh movement, but the masands were busy in building their own followings. The contemporary and semi-contemporary Sikh sources are full of anecdotes high-lighting the masands' impetuous callousness, avarice and moral corruption.

That the Guru Ji felt extremely sore about the masands is clear from the Hukamnamas issued to various Sangats before his final decision of winding up the order of the masands, on the Baisakhi day. Sukha Singh suggests that having been convinced of the jobbery of the masands, Guru employed punitive measures against them. Some of the masanda were consigned to the flames of a bonfire and after spilling oil on their heads, they were burnt, while some others were hung on the gallows or pierced with arrows on burnt on the hearth-place. The final dissolution of the order came about on the Baisakhi Day when the Guru formally abolished the order of the masands and established direct contacts with the Sikhs.

After the Baisakhi of A.D, 1699, the Sikhs were asked to send their offerings to the Guru through the authorised persons or to bring them personally to Anandpur. They were also asked not to associate themselves with the masands and their followers. Indeed, the earliest evidence available on the point leaves us in no doubt that the removal of the

masands was one of primary objectives of the Guru.²

Dissentient sects

Intimately connected with the suppression of the masands was the question of the dissentient sects viz. the Minas, the Dhirmalias and Ram Rjiyas. Har Das, the son of Meharban was still active and was keeping control of the central shrine of the Sikhs at Amritsar. He was making a fervent bid to popularise the compositions of Meharban and in his own 'code of conduct he discreetly leaned towards Brahmanism. Dhirmal, Guru Hari Rai's elder brother and Ram Rai, the eldest son of the Guru Ji, had already done their worst to gain Guruship. The example of these claimants was not lost upon the other members of Sodhi family and it has already been seen how on the death of Guru Har Krishan Ji, twenty two of them simultaneously claimed the Guru-Gaddi. Many of the Sodhis began to consider themselves as entitled to the services of the Sikhs in general and appointed their own masands. A great disruptive force was thus let loose in Sikhism, of which the masands were not slow to take the fullest advantage. The greed of these aspirants after the guruship and the recalcitrance of the masands fed each other and soon brought the entire movement to the brink of disaster.

It was, therefore, found imperative that some serious step should be taken. No wonder, the Guru Ji denounced the Minas, the Dhirmalias and the Ram Raiyas in unequivocal terms. In 1699, the Sikhs were solemnly prohibited from having social intercourse with the descendants or followers of Prithi Chand, Dhir Mal, Ram Rai or Masands who had fallen away from the tenets and principles of Guru Nanak.³

The Guru Ji had worked among the people of semi-independent states of Shivaliks and had tried to awaken in them the sense of the responsibility which they owed to the society. But he soon discovered that being steeped in superstition and old ideas of religion, they could not rise above the caste and racial prejudices to strive for any national purpose.

With a view to broaden the outlook of the people, it was the need of the hour that the Guru should resolve to break the old shackles with greater precision than had been done before and re-organise the society on the basis of common belief and common aspirations so as to enable the people to launch resolute struggle against political tyranny of the Mughals and socio-religious tyranny of the Hindu priestly classes of the Hindus and the orthodox Muslims alike.

He had enough experience of the behaviour of the Rajput potentates, who were interested more in maintaining their positions than in other things. Social reforms and reconstruction of the society were a far cry for them. Sometimes they would make a common cause with the enemy and try to harm the Guru Ji their deliverer, as Bhim Chand and others had done in the Hussaini war. In fact, the Guru Ji was convinced that the

general stuff of the hill people and their Rajas would not achieve the purpose; he will have to do something else to achieve his mission. The creation of the Khalsa was an attempt in this direction. In fact, the Khalsa embodied in itself all-out challenge to the Jati-based society wedded to archaic values.

Social complexion of the Sikh Community

The social complexion of the disciples of the Guru Ji also demanded some modifications in the ideological approach. Upto the time of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the composition of the Sikhs had undergone a distinct change. The Jats of Majha and Malwa had entered into the fold of Sikhism in a large number. They had their own tribal culture and their distinct behavioural pattern. They were opposed to sloth and traditional passivity, the bane of Indian society for centuries bygone. They were not rigid in their prejudices based on caste, food and various types of superstition. They, being the bulk of the Sikhs, were bound to affect the Sikh religion and society. The Sikh religion must create an atmosphere wherein their root tendencies might be utilized for the benefit of the community. Next to them were the people belonging to low castes of the society who embraced Sikhism. Their primary need was to have dignified social status and an atmosphere which should enable them to raise their head high without any fear just as the people of the higher classes did. Opposed to both these classes were Khatries, Brahmins and Jats who as a class could ill-brook the Jats and the low caste people being raised in the social scale. Many of them could comment on the prevalent jati-ridden society but were not prepared to completely abnegate the caste principles. Moreover, the Sikhs on the whole were still in the grip of various sectarian movements such as Nathism, Shaivism, Devism, etc. They also needed a fresh brainwash.

Thus sociological convass bore only a confused picture of the society. The Guru must rub off some unrequired contours or draw new ones to ensure the onward march of Sikh movement.

Contradictions on Polemical Plane

Another thing which prompted the Guru Ji to inaugurate the order of the Khalsa was the contradictions which developed on the polemical plane. Since the time of Guru Hargobind, the hitherto implicit of 'Miri' in Sikhism had become explicit. In course of time the movement acquired accretions which were distinctly political. Extreme danger and the character of the Sikhs contributed a good deal to its further development. This development confused many of the Sikhs because some of them could not understand Sikhism in all its imports while some were opposed to it because they were positive that the Sikhism was treading the road not recommended by Guru Nanak, In view of this, the future of Sikhism depended upon as to how these contradictory forces were united under the banner of one

ideal and how uniformity was secured within the system itself in order to assure the cohesion of the secular movement that was to be based upon it.

Guru's Mission

In this context the Guru Ji presented his own mission. In *Bachittar Natak* which was composed not long before the Khalsa was instituted, the Guru Ji seems to have believed that he had been chosen by God to establish his own faith, extirpate the evil and uphold the virtuous :_

"The Divine Guru sent me for religion's sake
On this account, I have come into the world
Extend the faith every where
Seize and destroy the evil and sinful.
Understand this, ye holymen, in your souls
I assumed birth for the purpose

Of spreading the faith, saving saints and extirpating all tyrants."

A timely adjustment between the forces of evil and those of good through the use of physical force was an essential ingredient of the moral world. God could not tolerate the unhappiness of His Saints who must be protected from the wicked.

To this purpose the use of force as a last resort in favour of the good was legitimate. Krishan, Ram who made use of force had peculiar fascination for Guru Gobind Singh. The power which was manifested through the human agency was God's, for an important attribute of God in Guru Gobind Singh's view was precisely this power.

To realize his mission, it was necessary that the Guru ji should have an organisation to serve as the instrument. Hence the mission also became one of the most important causes of the creation of the Khalsa.

The sociological changes, religious strifes brought about by the persecuting policy of Aurangzeb, the prevailing corruption, ignorance of superstition and his personal resentment at his father's execution, the impotence of the Hill Rulers coupled with the sense of Mission- all these things prevailed upon the Guru to contemplate some serious step, the outcome of which was Khalsa.

Notes and References:

1. Khushwanr Singh : A History of the Sikhs, P. 81.
2. Gur Sobha, 18-21, 24, 27 & 36 of the Akhborat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla dated the 13th May, 1710 contains the description of the emergence of the Khalsa as a result of the complete dissolution of the masand system~ Bachittar Natak, Section xiii Chapter 11.
3. , Macauliffe: Sikh Religion, vo]. Y, P. 95.

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