

## Political Condition of the Hindus

Hinduism is said to have been a great political force not only within India but its effect was felt beyond its confines. The Hindu conquests extended far and wide. But after the war of Mahabharata their political power suffered a gradual decline. In due course of time the country was parcelled up in small principalities. Numerous Rajas no higher than fief-holders came to rule over the length and breadth of India. They were always at logger-heads with one another, ready to destroy one another and highly gratified at the downfall of others. Only the descendants of Kaurvas and Pandavas were ruling over bigger chunks of land. After this Great War which can justly be called the war of annihilation of the Hindus, the solar and lunar dynasties ruled over their respective areas for a very long period.

The Buddhist kings wiped off the remnants of these great dynasties. They came to be remembered only in name. The kings of the *Agni* (Fire) Dynasty crushed the might of Buddhist kings and threw them out of India. The descendants of the Agni Dynasty who came to be called Rajputs were ruling over small kingdoms and were hostile to one another. None of them could ever acquire a great kingdom. Mutual animosity was at the back of all their actions and they could never conceive the grand idea of a nation and nationalism. *If we peruse the pages of history we shall find that not a month passed, without there being a battle on the soil of India.* The Rajput kings were always fighting with one another on one pretext or another. Though there had been great kings like Raja Bikramajit and Raja Bhoj, now it was a different story of mutual bickerings and strife. The Rajputs had displayed great feats of personal valour sung by the bards all over India. Such heroic actions were in great numbers and were spread over large areas and great periods of time.

The Hindus had failed to forge a common bond of national brotherhood. Not to speak of nationalism, they could not think of any common national interest. According to European historians the break-up of the Hindu political power in small principalities was a great boon to the Hindus and saved them from immediate and total capitulation before the Muslims onslaught. The Muslims could not conquer the whole of India in one or two battles. At every step they had to face hostile and determined forces of the Rajput kings and other Hindu kings, who fought pitched battles for every inch of their country and capitulated only when they had no strength left. Were that these kings had united and fought together against the common enemy! In my opinion which is at variance with the considered view of the European Historians, the Muslim invaders were tempted and eventually triumphed because they faced no united opposition. Had there been a strong central power of the Hindus, the Muslim invaders in all probability would have made a hasty and inglorious retreat. The

predicament in which the Hindus found themselves now would never have come about. There was no dearth among the Rajputs and the Kashatris of fighting spirit of which they gave ample proof in individual and unorganised acts of resistance, still fondly remembered and sung. The sad story of Prithvi Raj and his cousin Jai Chand vividly proclaims how the mutual bickerings and internecine wars were responsible for the downfall of India and the Hindus and the establishment of Muslim rule lasting over hundreds of years. They were also responsible for the induction of Rajputs in the employment of the Muslim kings and of their women into the Harems of the Muslim kings and princes. They were also responsible for the slavery of Hindu India.

It is very difficult to assess the extent and enormity of Muslim atrocities and insufferable indignities inflicted on the Hindus during this long period. The Hindus had never the inclination and genius to write their history and the relentless spate of death and devastation, torture and tyranny, never allowed them to gather their wits around them and to pen such things. They were too stunned to keep note of these unending tales of woe and misery of their people. It was left to Muslim historians to keep a track of such acts and record them. Most probably they were prompted in this by a desire to record the glorious times of the Muslim rule, to record the grand deeds of death and devastation of Kafirs as convincing proof of the stupendous Muslim might. Had they not taken pride in penning these gory details with unabashed glee, such records would have been lost for ever.

The writing on the wall was there for all Hindus spelled very clearly. They were in a state of utter destitution and despondency, of abject humiliation and helplessness. They bore untold sufferings and hardships without a murmur, without raising a voice of revolt, without coming to the aid of one another, without ever dreaming of standing unitedly or at least thinking of a common cause in the vaguest of terms. Those communities well versed in the wielding of swords and the art of warfare had long since left the sinking boat of Hindu Dharma and gone over to the Muslim fold. They were lost for ever to the Hindu world. The Rajputs and the Kashatris had lost their valour which was confined to old stories alone.

The Muslims had been ruling over the length and breadth of India for many centuries. The foundations of their dominance had struck deep roots. Guru Gobind Singh with his sagacity and farsightedness thought of loosening the stranglehold of Muslim power by first weakening it. During this long period of slavery under the Muslims no Hindu had ever thought on these lines. It was left to Guru Gobind Singh to transform an enfeebled, humiliated, disunited and downtrodden people like the Hindus of his day, into a living nation fired with the ideals of nationalism and brotherhood. It has been said earlier that no person had ever thought of doing so in the last four

thousand years of Hindu history. The Guru wanted to build such a nation over which the Brahmins could make no dent with all their machinations. For the completion of his mission, changes of two kinds were needed, one in the religious and the other in the social sphere.

The material at his disposal was disheartening and well-nigh spent up. The Hindu power was in tatters, the Hindu Dharma on the way out and the people lying supine under the Muslim heel. The Hindus were sitting frightened in their homes like mice in their holes. Their faces were downcast, their hearts despondent, their shoulders beaten, their minds bedeviled, their limbs enfeebled, their bodies emaciated. *The Hindus could suffer their daughters and their women-folk being taken away before their very eyes and sold as slaves in the foreign markets for a petty consideration of two dinars.* A lesser man, almost any man, would have given up before embarking on such a mission as that of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh took up the challenge and created such a virile, upright and one-God-loving people like the Sikhs who struck terror in the hearts of their enemies, who were ever ready to lay down their lives for their country, people and Dharma, who always came to the succour of the needy, the tyrannised and the down-trodden. He changed cowards into men of great courage, uncowed by the Muslim might. He surveyed the country and selected the people and the area where he was to put into practice his grandiose schemes. The selection of the area was determined by the kind of men inhabiting therein.