

Basic Tenets of the Guru

The Guru wanted to establish two basic principles (a) that of universal brotherhood and (b) the spirit of sacrificing oneself for others without demur. The feeling of brotherhood can only dawn after the annihilation of all (man-made) artificial barriers between man and man. The baneful caste-system introduced by Manu and followed with a vengeance by the Brahmins had to be nullified.

During thousands of years, the differences, divisions and distinctions created by this system had entered into the Hindu psyche. The living apart of thousands of years without any social intercourse with one another had frozen into infrangible moulds. The cancerous poison of the caste system had entered into vitals of the human system. How was the Guru to smash all these barriers, instil a feeling of equality in the down-trodden of centuries, bring to the level of common clay those who claimed divine origin and had claimed and enjoyed divine rights for thousands of years. He achieved with a single master stroke what seemed impossible. He established the new institution of the **Khalsa**. A man's caste and distinctions of high and low were cast off on joining its membership. Here all were equal, knit in the bond of universal brotherhood.

The different gods, gurus, sects, traditions, rites and rituals were responsible for the creations of all kinds of differences and differentiations among the people. The worship of the Formless One created conditions that were favourable for the erasing of these distinctions from the minds of the people. Now - they started thinking in terms of unity and nationalism to the extent of putting the country and the nation above the self.

Before the Creation of the Khalsa

Some incidents that took place before the institution of the Khalsa deserve to be dwelt upon. During the early days of the Guru's seclusion, Raja Rattan Rai of Assam, a devotee of Sikh Gurus, came to visit him. Among other presents offered to the Guru, there was an elephant called Prasadi. In these days the Guru was engrossed in hunting, which attracted a good number of brave Sikhs around him. Guru Gobind Singh used to go hunting in great style, riding his elephant accompanied by his warrior Sikhs. In those days it was customary for high officials of noble birth to keep their kettle-drums in their homes. They used to carry these along on hunting. The Guru on seeing the ever increasing gathering around him decided to keep such a drum at his court. Some worldly wise persons advised the Guru against it without success. Then they prevailed upon his mother to restrain him from doing so, by reminding him of the tribulations his grandfather had to suffer. She advised him that the Guru should work for peace and engage in worship of Akal — the true duties of a Guru; he should not take to soldierly ways and assume a

regal bearing.

The Guru replied that he was the grandson of the illustrious Guru Hargobind Sahib, unawed by anybody, that she wanted him to remain in obscurity while his Lord Akal commanded his coming out in the open and that if any king looked askance at him, that king would have to measure swords with him. A heart, determined and dauntless, full of national fervour couldn't be expected to give a different reply — expedient and opportune. The kettle-drum was duly installed and taken out on hunting excursions. The Guru's hunting excursions, his martial bent of mind and his accumulation of weapons were causing concern to the local hill chieftains. The Guru often used to enter their territories in the course of his hunting trips, which was not to their liking. The beating of the drum added further to their unease. They started looking for pretences to pick up a quarrel with him.

Raja Bhim Chand of Kehloor was the first to provide such an occasion. He asked Guru Gobind Singh to give him *Prasadi*, the elephant. The Guru refused, against the advice of his mother and other well-meaning people, who wanted him to make peace with this offering. The Raja took umbrage and prodded by Kirpal, another hill chieftain, sent a message to the Guru to move out of the Raja of Nahan, hostilities were averted. Some historians have penned that a battle ensued between Bhim Chand and the Guru, with victory to the latter. Guru Gobind Singh founded a village called Paonta in the territory of Nahan in the Kartik month of the Samat Era 1741 (1684 A..D.) and built a fort there. Some Afghan Sardars, namely Kaley Khan, Hayat Khan, Bhikhen Khan, under the ire of Aurangzeb, were seeking the shelter of a Raja or Nawab. But no Raja or Nawab was bold enough to provide it. The Guru took them under his wing on the recommendation of Sayyad Buddhu Shah. A bold step, not unexpected of a man like the Guru, but inexpedient as later events proved.

During this period Raja Bhim Chand took a marriage party to Sri Nagar to marry his son to the daughter of Raja Fateh Shah. The Guru sent his Dewan Nand Chand with presents for the occasion. In order to please Bhim Chand, Fateh Shah refused to accept them. Dewan Nand Chand came back feeling small and insulted. This further strained relations between the Guru and the two Rajas. Raja Bhim Chand won over Raja Kirpal Chand Katochia, Raja Kesri Chand Jassowalia, Raja Sukhdial Jasrotia, Raja Hari Chand Hindooria, Raja Pirthi Chand Dudwalia and Raja Fateh Shah of Sri Nagar to his side against the Guru. Emboldened by this alliance they started causing petty annoyances to the Guru.

Then they joined their forces together and attacked the Guru in the Baisakh of Samat 1742 (1685 A.D.). Guru Gobind Singh, who was nineteen, then, led his small and inexperienced force

against the invaders. [Five hundred Udasi Sadhus who had fattened themselves at the Guru's Langar, decamped at the very outset.](#) The Afghan Sardars, whom the Guru had provided shelter, left the Guru in the midst of the engagement and crossed over to the enemy, in pursuance of a conspiracy already hatched with the Rajas. Sayyed Buddha Shah feeling hurt by this treacherous act came to the succour of the Guru. A pitched battle was fought for three days between the banks of Yamuna and Giri stream. The Guru was himself leading his army of irregulars who were far from well equipped. His force consisted of fakirs and mendicants unfamiliar with warfare, of ordinary men, tillers of land, petty traders and shopkeepers who had never even seen a skirmish from a distance.

The list of famous fighters on the Guru's side as mentioned in the *Janam Sakhis* contains the name of Lai Chand, a sweet-meat seller. This gives some idea of the composition of the Sikh army. Dewan Nand Chand and Kirpal Chand, the maternal uncle of the Guru, figure in the list. The Udassis, the eaters of dainties prepared by the Halwai Lai Chand, decamped from the field leaving their cook to fend for himself and face the heavy odds. What a fight it was! The down-trodden and the dregs of society gave such a dressing to the enemy that it slunk from the field, convincingly defeated, in disarray and disheartened. Raja Hari Chand was killed at the hands of the Guru, Raja Kesari Chand and Sukhdev were wounded. The Guru dazzled the enemy with the daring display of his swordwielding and marshalling of his men in a masterly manner. The Guru and his men emerged victorious.

The Guru learnt a lesson from the defection of the Afghans and the decamping of the Udasi Sadhus. This made him ponder deeply over the whole matter. He needed his own men, virile and dedicated fighters, united in a holy bond of brotherhood cutting across all barriers of caste and creed. The Guru was well aware of the timidity and disunity of the Hindus, lack of a common cause, of nationalism and of fellow-feeling among them. He felt the need of giving back to them their lost courage and restoring the human dignity of man. He wanted to instil in them strong feelings of brotherhood and nationalism.

Sounding their war-drum, the victorious army of the Guru entered Paonta. One son of Buddha Shah had died fighting valiantly in the battle-field. The Guru honoured Buddha Shah by bestowing a headdress on him by way of a robe of honour. He also gave Buddha Shah half of his personal turban, as a token of brotherly love, and a credential in appreciation of his help. The descendants of Buddha Shah are respected by the Sikhs, in consequence. A month after this victory the Guru marched to Anandpur, his previous abode. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur had bought this piece of land. Guru Gobind constructed here some small forts such as Kesgarh, Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Holgarh and Fatehgarh designed to afford protection against future

attacks.