

SIKHS AS A GLOBAL COMMUNITY WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO GURU GOBIND SINGH'S IDEOLOGY- DIASPORA

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Abstract: This paper throws light on the birth of a new religion named "Sikhism" by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. It shows the journey of the religion and how it has been successful in putting up its roots throughout the world. The paper lays focus on the preaching's and teaching's of the Sikh Gurus. The Sikhs have inculcated and followed the same throughout their journey over the world. Even their parts of community which got settled in the different parts of the world are till date following the practices mentioned in their religion. "Dastar" generally termed as Turban is the best example that can be quoted here. It further quotes the ratio of Sikh community in various foreign countries. It also has instances of their prime holy place Shri Harmandir Sahib, also known as Golden Temple. Although the journey was never easy and peaceful for them, they still continued to follow the words of their Guru's.

Sikhs are the followers of a religion founded by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469 to 1539). Following the same tradition there have been in total of nine successors of Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the 10TH Guru of the Sikh community bestowed Guruship on the holy book of Sikhs that is known as Shri Guru Granth Sahib Ji. Shri Guru Arjun Dev Ji successfully completed this sacred book in 1604 and published its first version at Shri Harmandir Sahib Ji.

After the demise of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji, sikh raj was established all around Punjab under the leadership of Shri Banda Bahadur Ji. Maharaja Ranjit Singh Ji fought the Afghan and Mughal authorities, and then successfully established Sovereign Kingdom. In 1849 Punjab was included under the British Raj.

1) Punjab began to be known as the Homeland of the Sikhs as it transformed enormously under the colonial rule besides laying the foundation of a global Sikh community as they were taken to various colonies of the expanding British Empire. Now Sikhs were sent to the eastern parts of India as a result of which they began to migrate to different cities. Sikhs constitute a total of 2% of India's population as per government records in 2011. The overall of population of Sikhs around the world is estimated to be approximately 1.5 to 2 million.^[1] Sikhs mainly reside in United Kingdom, United States of America and Canada where they have managed to keep and spread the true spirit of their religion, culture and language. They have even been true and loyal to the teachings of their Gurus especially to Khalsa Panth, established by Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, an organization in India has been responsible for the management of Gurdwaras since 1920. Indian Diaspora has spread the true spirit of Guru Nanak Dev Ji's mission "GOOD TO ALL" also known as "SARBAT DA BHALA" all around the world.

Maharaja Dileep Singh was the first Diaspora amongst the Sikh community to be sent as a Christian to England in 1854. Bhai Maharaj Singh was exiled to Singapore in 1850 where he died five years later. His remains were later on discovered by the Sikhs in Singapore. The Indian mutiny of 1857 led to the reorganization of Indian armies i.e. replacing the 'disloyal' Phobias with the 'Martial Races' of Punjab.^[2] Punjabis have always been known for their fighting spirit and because of this they were even offered jobs in the army by the Britishers. They joined these jobs and in 1849 in order to make the Sikhs happy Britishers brought many reforms in Punjab. Sikhs had fought ample number of battles by 1858 being a part of the British army. During World War I they fought in the Middle East, East Africa and Europe. The Sikhs who were a part of the army had gone abroad earlier. C.V. Creagh, Deputy Superintendent of Police at Sind was transferred to Hong Kong in 1866 demanded for a Sikh army as a result of which a total of 100 Sikhs were sent to Hong Kong and also became the first batch of Sikhs to be sent to abroad. The very first overseas Gurudwara was founded in 1901 in Hong Kong. In 1896, 900 Sikhs were found in Malay States who had come there by participating in the British army. By 1890 the number of Sikhs in Australia and New Zealand increased. Some of them tried their hands in the sugarcane fields of Fiji. By this time many Sikhs were being sent abroad as a part of railway construction. By 1900 many Sikhs

settled on the west coast, working on the California farms on the Pacific railways and in saw mills of British Columbia, Oregon and Washington.^[3]

The Sikh migration to North America coincided with increasingly restrictive immigration policies imposed by Canada and the United States. A major confrontation took place in Vancouver in 1914 when Gurjit Singh chartered a ship and sailed to Vancouver with 376 passengers, mostly Sikhs from the Far East challenging the Canadian color bar policy.

During the partition of India on 15th august, 1947 many ancient Sikh buildings became a part of the newly founded Pakistan and a lot Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were murdered during the same. The Indian Muslims were sent to Pakistan and the Pakistani Hindus and Sikhs were sent to India as a result of which a lot of problem occurred during the process of resettlement. As a result of partition many properties, lands and houses were damaged, although the government tried its best in helping the people to resettle but since it was not sufficient many Sikhs tried and began to move to foreign lands. During this time due to industrial revolution the demand of the Sikh community increased in foreign countries and for this reason western countries happily welcomed them in their countries and in return Sikhs too began to work hard for every job that was allotted to them. Although there have been many changes in the immigration rules over the time still Sikhs specially Sikh students have managed to somehow travel to foreign countries for the sake of their bright future.

Approximately 1.5 to 2 million overseas Sikhs resides in United Kingdom, Canada and United states. Many Sikhs live in the Far East, Europe and East Africa. It's not easy to gather the exact number of Sikhs living around the world has only Canada list the Sikhs residing there in their national census. Currently Canada has the largest population of Sikhs that accounts for around 1% of Canada's total population i.e. 30 million; while on the other hand Sikhs makes 0.5% of United Kingdom's total population that is around 432,000 over 58 million which makes it the second highest Sikh Diaspora across the world. Sikhs are counted as part of Asian Indians who account for 1,678,765 of the total population of 281 million. Near about 250,000 Sikhs reside in America. Sikh population in Germany is around 40,000, in Italy it is 75,000 and similarly one can locate Sikhs in various other countries. Many Sikhs reside in various muslim countries. Sikhs have successfully made a benchmark for themselves no matter where they had gone or where they reside.^[4]

Irrespective of the place and country where ever the Punjabi's reside or go, they have neither forgotten their culture nor their language. Many Gurudwaras have been founded in foreign countries by the Sikhs a they have also trended the study of Gurbani, Punjabi language and other Sikh traditions. The Gurudwaras in foreign countries comprises of libraries that encompasses a lot of material about Sikhs and their culture. Punjabi has been stated as the second official language in Canada by the Canadian government keeping in mind the population of Sikhs residing in the country. Sikhs have been privileged with the right of wearing a turban to the Canadian court while the British men still have to remove their caps before entering the court. Sikhs have even formed various political associations in foreign countries. Akali Dal, Congress Party and small communist groups are the political associations formed by Sikhs in Punjab. Similarly Eastern Indian Canadian Citizens Welfare Association and The Indian People's Association of North America are typical examples. Early associations in the Far East are the Khalsa Diwan of Malaya, the Singapore Khalsa Association and the Sikh Pratinidhi Sabha etc. In North America, the Khalsa Diwan Society was formed in March 1909 in Vancouver. The Khalsa Diwan Society played a key role in reppresenting south asians interests to the Canadian government. It also raised 22,000\$ for the Komagata Maru passengers to pay for the charter; besides providing funds for the Gadar Movement. During the time of Gurudwara Reform Movement lot of help and support was provided by the Diaspora. In 1913 Gadar Newspaper was published in San Francisco.^[5] Many Sikhs participated in the Indian Nation Army founded by Subhash Chander Bose in order to free India from the British Raj. Workers associations were formed in the 1950s and 1960s taking inspiration from Gadar Movement. During the Punjab crisis in 1984 various organisations were formed such as Babbao Khalsa, International Sikh Youth Federation, World Sikh Organisation, Khalistan Council, Sikh Association of America and the California Sikh Youth and more.

As Sikhs are recognised differently across the globe, they have managed to introduce their media Chardi Kala in Vancouver, Awaz-E-Qaum in Birmingham, and The World Sikh news in Stockton, California etc. Sikhs have gained popularity and success in every field for example Mohinder Singh Sajan became a part of Canada's defence; Davinder Singh and Inderjit Singh were elected as members of parliament in Singapore where Choom Singh occupied the position of Supreme Court judge. There have been many Sikh mayors around the world. Sukhi Turner, a female Sikh and many more have been elected to local government bodies in New Zealand.

Sikhs have a unique identity across the world which was given to them by Shri Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Shri Guru Gobind Singh ji who introduced Guru Granth Sahib to the Sikhs. Today Sikhs all across the globe follow and respect the teachings of their gurus and Guru Granth Sahib Ji. The seed sown by Guru Nanak Dev Ji has been nurtured very beautifully and successfully by the nine successors and culminated into the creation of

Khalsa Panth by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699.^[6] Following the footsteps of Guru Nanak Dev Ji who fought against the Lodhi kings and Babbar, Guru Gobind Singh Ji too fought against the Mughal empire and Himalayan kings and successfully protected and kept alive the principles of Khalsa.

The spirit of Sikhism and Sikh ethics has been kept alive by the Sikhs living in India as well as across the world. Even the foreign governmental bodies equally respect and honour the Sikhs as well as their religion and tradition. Sikhs have been given all the possible rights by the foreign governmental bodies. Sikhs too never hesitate in raising a voice for their rights as they consider themselves as the children of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. In United States, UK and Canada following the five K's introduced by Guru Gobind Singh Ji they wear "DASTAR" or "KESKI" also known as turban. The same is being protected by various associations founded in foreign countries such as Sikh American Legal Defence and Education Fund. As the Sikhs wear turban they have been given special rights in the foreign countries. Arpinder kaur and Mohinder Singh Sajan are a few examples of the same.

Living in foreign countries Sikhs too believe in the concept i.e. GOD IS ONE. They follow all the religions as well as rituals. They believe in working with honesty, following the teachings of their gurus and helping others. They help the needy whenever required such as Guru Harmandir Sahib Ji, Amritsar serves Langar to almost 1 lakh devotees on a regular basis irrespective of their caste, religion or color.

It's highly impressive how Sikhs have been following the teachings of their gurus and also wear Kirpan irrespective of the country they live in. Special arrangements are made by the Canadian government to celebrate the auspicious occasion of Baisakhi at high level.^[7]

So at last we can conclude that Sikhs have made a different and unique place for themselves and their religion across the world. They follow the teachings of their gurus no matter what and where ever they go through.

References:

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