

Editorial



Pseudo Gurus in Sikhism

Sikh religion right from its inception is facing threat from self proclaimed gods and gurus. Dissensions in the early Sikh Panth took the shape of several minor or major sects during the 16th and the 17th centuries. Incidentally, these first and the most serious early challenges to the newly evolving Sikh faith and its identity were posed by the progeny or the direct descendants of the Sikh Gurus. These persons asserted their claims in the form of a dissent to grab the fundamental institutions of Guruship and the *bani* or the *Adi-Granth*, sacred scripture of the Sikhs. With the rise of these peripheral or centrifugal forces, the Mughal state felt encouraged to enhance its opposition in more ways than one. Conservative Hindu elements did not lag behind to play their role. This situation not only gave rise to internal contradictions within the Sikh *Panth* (deterioration of the institution of the *Masands*), but also led to the tradition of martyrdom in Sikh history (Guru Arjun, 1606 and Guru Tegh Bahadur, 1675). With a view to all this, Guru Gobind Singh brought a radical change in the situation by instituting his Order of the Khalsa, marginalising, at least, some of these destructible forces.

These above mentioned persons have definitely harmed the mission of Sikh Gurus by distorting Sikh history and ideology. It is natural process in the history of any religion. One who tries to re-write history, adds or distorts some of the facts from his imaginations and some time with the aim of mollified intentions. Janamsakhi Bhai Bala, *Gurbilas patshai Chhevin* etc are the live examples of this attempt.

Many self-proclaimed gurus based on the ideology of Guru Granth Sahib have cropped up in recent times too and have started their own mission (gurudom). Out of these some are still adhering to Sikh Gurus and others have totally deviated from the ideology of Guru Nanak-Guru Gobind Singh. Many of our Sikh brethren have also fallen in their traps and thus drifted away from the ideology of Guru Granth Sahib. In this process, our preachers and Sikh leadership can mainly be held responsible. How these gurus have become so popular in modern society, is a matter of introspection. This issue has to be studied discreetly in order to counter such faked gurus, and it is important to know how they originated and how they prospered.

During British rule a new sect known as Naamdhari had cropped up. Namdharis believe that Guru Gobind Singh lived for 146 years (1666-1812), eventually bestowing the succession on Balak Singh of Hazro in 1812. Thus, Balak Singh became the first Namdhari Leader. His successor, the second Namdhari Leader, Ram Singh (1816-1885), is revered in the Namdhari sect as arguably the most important Guru. His status in the Namdhari sect is similar to that of Guru Nanak Dev in mainstream. Namdhari Sikhs believe fully in all Sikh Gurus from Guru Nanak Dev onwards and respect both Sri Aad and Dasam Granth equally along

with their living and non-living gurus. Present living guru of this sect is Baba Udai Singh with their head quarter at Bhaini Sahib, at Ludhiana Punjab. Very rarely or occasionally, Namdharis go to the Sikh Gurdwaras, as they have built their own. Also, perhaps Ram Singh has prescribed a standardised code (*Rahitnama*) for them with Namdhari version of Ardas (prayer). Although believing in the tenets of Guru Granth Sahib, Akal Takhat has declared them non-Sikhs.

Another sect which has harmed Sikh religion most is Pseudo (Sant) Nirankaris of Delhi. This mission bifurcated from Nirankaris, who originated in Rawalpindi in the northwest of the Punjab (Now Pakistan). The sect was founded by a Sahajdhari Sikh Baba Dyal (1785-1855), a bullion merchant. This mission is the follower of Guru Granth Sahib except they have their own gurdwaras and also have gurus. Baba Dayal, while performing kirtan used to recite repeatedly "dhan nirankar", thus was called Nirankari. Baba Dyal's successor, Baba Darbar Singh, collected and recorded the Baba Dyal's essential teachings and established Nirankari communities outside of Rawalpindi. During the leadership of Baba Ratta (1870-1909), the Nirankari were estimated to number in the thousands. Some members became involved in the Singh Sabha Movement, a Sikhism revivalist movement, under the fourth leader Baba Gurdit Singh. It is said that he was first to performed *Anand Karaj* (Sikh marriage ceremony) in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib. The Singh Sabha Movement was largely based on Guru Nanak Dev's teachings and was the revival of Sikh tenets. Nirankaris are a sub-section of Sikhism inspite of having gurus (leaders). The present head of this mission is Baba Jagdarshan Singh Nirankari with head quarter at Chandigarh. He is eldest son of Baba gurbax Singh Nirankari, who expired on 21st April 1998.

In 1929 the Sant Nirankari Mission formed out of the Nirankari movement. The Mission was defined by its belief in a living Guru after the Guru Granth Sahib. The group later developed its own distinct spiritual movement. At the time of the partition of India in 1947, the Nirankari abandoned their center in Rawalpindi, which has since then been part of Pakistan, and established themselves in Delhi. These pseudo (Sant) Nirankari totally departed from Sikh ideology, although they used Guru Granth Sahib for their citations.

Another sect worth mentioning is Radhasoamis sect. Radhasoamis is a sect and a spiritual movement, founded in 1861 by Shiv Dayal Singh Seth. Like the Nirankaris, the Radhasoamis also do not have very long past tradition, just a period of nearly over a century. He related the human soul to Radha whose goal was to merge with eternal reality (Swami), thus the name Radhasoamis As do the Hindus, he preached vegetarianism and abstinence from intoxication.

Shiv Dyal Singh was never big on spreading his

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teaching or increasing his flock of devotees. He established his Satsang in Agra. In 1855 Shiv Dayal Singh had only a handful of followers. At the time of his death in 1878, it is thought that his following had grown to several thousand.

The Radhasoami movement split into two factions after death of Shiv Dayal Singh in 1878 A.D. One of his disciples, Jaimal Singh (1911-1903), a Sikh Jat of village Ghuman (district Gurdaspur, East Punjab) and a soldier by profession, set up the first Radha Soami centre on the left bank of the Beas river. They have a second faction also as well, In spite of their other factions, yet they continue to use the common label of "Radhasoamis. Hence, the religious centres of the Radhasoamis are generally referred to as Radhasoami Satsang, symbolising the company of truthful people (*satsang*).

Nevertheless, the Beas Radhasoamis are operating independently of their parent centre at Agra (Dyal Bag). They have their own line of succession of five Gurus up to now from Jaimal Singh (the founder) to their present religious head, Gurinder Singh, who succeeded Charan Singh in 1990 and is still continuing. Significantly, all the Gurus of the Beas Radhasoamis happened to be Sikhs in contrast to the successor of Shiv Dayal (the founder of Agra Centre) at Agra, who all were non-Sikhs. Under the religious leadership of Sawan Singh Grewal (1903-48) (an engineer by profession) and his grandson Charan Singh Grewal (1951-1990), the first and third successor of Jaimal Singh (founder of the Beas Dera) respectively, the Beas Radhasoamis have gained much influence enhancing their following in substantial proportions in India and abroad. At around 1900 AD, the Beas Radhasoamis began to split into various factions, the majority of which camp up into the post-independence period. It is notable that, the activities of the Radhasoami Gurus and the successors of Jaimal Singh at the Beas Centre began to be seriously challenged by an organisation set up in 1931 by Giani Harcharan Singh Lubana of village Nangal Lubana in district Kapurthala (Punjab, India). It was named as Shrimoni Radhasoami Mat Vicharni Sabha with its head office at Bunga Lubana at Baba Bakala, three mile away from Dera Baba Jaimal Singh (Beas). The executive committee of the Sabha continued its crusade against the Beas Radhasoamis enthusiastically and through various ways and means almost for a decade or so.

One most fundamental difference between the Beas Radhasoamis and orthodox mainstream Sikhs is that the former do not look upon the Adi-Granth as their Guru; rather they continue to believe in and practise the tradition of a living Guru and emphasise his necessity in their way of life. They do not keep the Adi-Granth in their religious establishments, but only a raised platform, where their Guru sits to deliver his discourses. but they have never tried to alter the

proceedings or tenants of mainstream Sikhs and do not portray their leaders as successor to the 10 Gurus of the Sikhs. Today the Beas ashram maintains a Langar (free kitchen) and has lodgings for Sadhus, Sewadars, Satsangis and others.

Most important of all this is perhaps the attitude of Beas Radhasoami leaders towards the mission of Guru Gobind Singh. Although, their adherents are largely keshadharis. (wearing uncut hair), yet they do not fully adhere to the practice of baptism (*Khande ki pahul*). Besides this, the Beas Radhasoamis have their own method of initiation or the practice of delivering *Naam* (Name of God), the union of Radha and the Soami. Hence, the greeting slogan of their own "Radhsuamis" clearly differentiates their position vis-i-vis the orthodox Sikhism and the Sikhs.

There are many other fake gurus who offend Sikh religion by imitating Guru Gobind Singh. Such one person is Satnam Singh alias Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh of Sirsa, Haryana. He is involved in a murder case but Haryana police had no courage to arrest him in spite of many clashes with Sikhs. Apart from these, there is no dearth of babas in Punjab who have started their own gurudom. They are running their own colleges and living like kings and not spiritual heads.

Dera Vadbhag Singh is another pharisaism worth mentioning. Baba Vadbhag Singh (1716-61) was leaniel descendant of Guru Hargobind Sahib, through the latter's elder son Baba Gurditta, and grandson of Dhir Mal. He was born to Baba Ram Singh Sodhi and Mata Raj Kaur when the atrocities inflicted by the invading Mughals were at their peak. Vadbhag Singh, even at the tender age of five, would listen intently as his mother read, Gurbani and other holy scriptures. Realizing that his son was a child prodigy, baba Ram Singh appointed some of the most learned scholars to coach his son in all branches of knowledge, including the martial arts.

Although Baba Vadbhag Singh was inclined towards spiritualism, he was forced to wield the sword as wave after wave of Mughal invasions, especially those led by Ahmed Shah and Nassar Ali, had created havoc in the region. When Nassar Ali attacked Kartarpur, Baba Vadbhag Singh fought valiantly but had to take shelter in the hills because he had only a handful of soldiers as compared to over 10,000 soldiers of Nassar Ali.

In one of the ensuing battle, Nassar Ali was captured and later burnt alive by him.

After the war, Baba wanted to retire to the hills (Now a part of Una district in Himachal Pradesh) in order to pursue his spiritual goals. While he was taking bath in the cool waters of one of the valleys, he saw the images of the ten Gurus. Thus he decided to name it the *Darshani Khud* and the waters of this khud came to be called *Dhauri Dhar* or Charanganga.

Later he pitched the Nishan Sahib under a

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berry tree and began to meditate. It is believed that life was not easy as the valley was full of ghosts and evil spirits. The Baba had to fight with all of them. Due to his spiritual powers, he was able to defeat them. The Baba constructed a gurdwara on a hill nearby and called it Dehra Sahib. Right across it is Manji Sahib, the place where the Baba used to meditate and relax. The Baba soon began to attract a large following and the place came to be known as Mairhi Sahib. Mairhi is now in Una district of Himachal Pradesh.

But now these shrines of Baba Vadbhag Singh are used for acts against the teachings of Sikh Gurus. It is projected that by coming to this place bad spirits are dispelled. The *manmat* of tying random cloths, balloons and even buckets to the Nishan Sahib is shocking. The old Babas and Bibis doing giddha and bhangra while chanting "Jai Babe Di" is also disturbing. Pictures of Durga and Shiva are displayed in gurdwara premises.

Although Baba Vadbhag Singh was a GurSikh, yet the dera under his name is involved in activities which are against Sikhism.

All the above mentioned religious traditions, had their origin from within the Sikh community in the 19th century directly in response to the socio-religious milieu in the broader context of Punjab history in general and the history of the Sikhs and their religion in particular. Modern historians have characterised them as "Socio-religious reform movements", each having its different nomenclature representing its ideology in relation to the monotheistic concept of God to be worshiped through different ways and means. Notably each of them had a split affecting its strength and influence. Among these, only the Beas Radha Soamis has gained considerable popularity and enhanced its demographic constituency particularly during the post-independence period. Unlike them, the Nirankaris and the Namdharis are fast losing their separate identity, status, strength and influence both numerically and geographically in the broader context of the Punjab history and the mainstream Sikh history in particular.

These movements might have been originated by their founders for much wider claims but they tended to smack sectarian outlook.

On the whole, thus, instead of coming close to the center or central stream of Sikhism and the Sikhs, they always preferred to remain on the periphery as quasi-Sikh. Heterodox traditions gradually further drifting them away from Sikhism or virtually coming close to their eclipse or merged with different ideologies. Many of these missions have become commercial business centers and have involved in illegal activities.☪

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Pongal and Tamil new year celebrations with

their local friends. "The villagers have become friendly now," says Darshan Singh.

In fact with the Punjabi farmers setting a trend, some local farmers have joined them as workers in the Akal Farm. Some have even returned to them offering to buy the green fields at a higher rate.

A retired Village Administration Officer, Syed Segana, has been with them for the past six years helping in administrative work and translations. "I am trying to teach them Tamil," he smiles, "but our friendship is beyond language, food and boundaries now." "Nature and greenery binds us together and it does not matter where we belong to and where we stay and work," he adds.

The Akal Farm yields: Amla and guava on 40 acres each, mixed dry fruits like cashew nuts and almonds on five acres, papaya on 10 acres. The farmers have planted 5,000 mango trees on 80 acres besides coconut and timber-value trees on 10 acres each and an assortment of other fruits and vegetables. They also cultivate inter-crop and this season harvested 15 tonnes of pumpkin, five tonnes of cucumber and 20 tonnes of water melon on a daily basis. (Courtesy The Hindu, Tamilnadu ed.)☪

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existence like that a spider which emits its own web from him. On the basis of Sikh cosmology God existed before creation in sauna (void) phase. He willed the creation of universe and the process began as follows.

Christianity advocates that Holy Spirit of God is different which exists in human beings, animals and birds etc. The holy spirit of God is only found in Jesus Christ. But Sikhism supports that all souls emanate from Lord which is like a biggest ocean, whereas separated souls are merely like the drops of water. Christianity has firm faith that all who believe in Christ shall be saved because he has taken the sins of humanity while being crucified on the cross. It lays much emphasis on repentance rather than righteousness. One repentant sinner is considered to be better than a million righteous and pious Christians, the approach of Sikhism upholds that a sinner has to face the music of deeds latter or sooner. It guides that both righteousness as well as repentance are essential.

Christian ideology does not support the theory of reincarnation. The believer shall enjoy the Heavenly abode. On dooms day all the souls will again enter the body already left and will face the judgment. The believers of Christ will be redeemed and others will be admitted in the Hell. Christian conviction was also taken by Islam. Christians on the one hand maintains that on the basis of actions one

will either enter in the Heaven or Hell or on the other hand believe in dooms day are contradictory. Nankian philosophy projects the theory of transmigration of soul. Heaven or Hell has no place in the mind of an awakened Sikh. During the period of Sikh Gurus, Hindus and Muslims both believed in Heaven and Hell. That is why to make one to understand the reality some references of Heaven and Hell have been given but for all the purposes did not accept the belief of Hell or Heaven.

ਕਬੀਰ ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਤੇ ਮੈ ਰਹਿਓ, ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੇ ਪਰਸਾਦਿ॥ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਕੀ ਮਉਜ ਮਹਿ, ਰਹਉ ਅਮਤਿ ਅਰੁ ਆਦਿ ॥੧੨੦॥ ਕਬੀਰ ਚਰਨ ਕਮਲ ਕੀ ਮਉਜ ਕੇ, ਕਹਿ ਕੈਸੇ ਉਨਮਾਨ॥ ਕਹਿ ਬੇਕਉ ਸੋਭਾ ਨਹੀ, ਦੇਖਾ ਹੀ ਪਰਵਾਨੁ ॥ G.G.S.pg1370

“Bhagat Kabeer has mentioned that by the grace of true Guru, I have been spared from the idea of Heaven and Hell. He has desired that from beginning to end he should remain dwelling within the joy of lotus feet of Lord. How one can estimate the extent of the joy of Lord's lotus feet? It is not befitting to describe, it. It has to be observed and enjoyed.”

Christianity believes that there are guardian Angels for the true believers and devil for non-believers. Sikhism on the other hand preaches that those who live a virtuous life is Angels and those committing sins are devils. For the purpose of preaching missionary system is encouraged by Christianity. Ascetism and celibacy is encouraged as a best way and means to serve the humanity. A priest can pardon or redeem a sinner. In case of Sikh religion God alone has the power to pardon directly. Guru acts as a medium to realize the God. Unnatural law of celibacy is rejected and house holder's life is recommended as a potent vehicle for serving the humanity.

Bible says that God has favorite people, chosen countries and tribes and punishes those who do not like him. While exercising his discretionary powers may pardon and reward if they are his chosen ones. God repented having created the human race and other creations. In case of Sikh religion God loves entire humanity as his very own and equal. After having created the creation is imbibed in it. Even an enemy is to be loved. n G.G.S. teaches about it as:

ਸਭੁ ਕੋ ਮੀਤੁ ਹਮ ਆਪਨ ਕੀਨਾ ਹਮ ਸਭਨਾ ਕੇ ਸਾਜਨ॥

ਦੂਰਿ ਪਰਾਇਓ ਮਨ ਕਾ ਬਿਰਹਾ ਤਾ ਮੇਲੁ ਕੀਓ ਮੇਰੈ ਰਾਜਨ ॥ G.G.S.pg.671

Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan has mentioned that I have made one to all my friends and I am friend to all. None is my enemy. When the sense of separation from supreme power was dispelled from my mind, then he united with the king of kings.

Both religions are vociferous in the condemnation of religious fanaticism and conversion by force. It is alright, if someone embraces another religion by conviction. Both lay much emphasis on the service of humanity and weaker section of society which tantamount as service to God. Charity

is encouraged in them. They preach that all evils in respect of adultery, prostitution, gambling etc. results in sins suffering and evil. The concept of word in Bible and Sikh scripture are almost compatible. According to Bible in the beginning word was there and it was with the God. Through word all things are made. Guru Granth Shaib also relates the shabad(word) as the vehicle for all creative activities of God.

JAP SAHIB

Tarsem Singh

Continued from July-August 15 issue of Sampark

ਕਾਲ ਹੀਨ ਕਲਾ ਸੰਜੁਗਤਿ ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਅਦੇਸ ॥

He is without death, and is combined with entire power, He is timeless, pervading every where and without any particular country. ||

ਧਰਮ ਧਾਮ ਸੁ ਭਰਮ ਰਹਿਤ ਅਭੂਤ ਅਲਖ ਅਭੇਸ ॥

He is the house of religion and is above the delusions. He is without the basic elements, unseen and without any guise. ||

ਅੰਗ ਰਾਗ ਨ ਰੰਗ ਜਾਕਹ ਜਾਤਿ ਪਾਤਿ ਨ ਨਾਮ ॥

He is with any attachment with body and is without any color, caste and lineage and name. ||

ਗਰਬ ਗੰਜਨ ਦੁਸਟ ਭੰਜਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਦਾਇਕ ਕਾਮ ॥ ੮੪ ॥

He is the eliminator of pride and destroyer of wicked and provider of liberation and fulfiller of desires. ||84||

ਆਪ- ਰੂਪ ਅਮੀਕ ਅਨ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਏਕ ਪੁਰਖ ਅਵਧੂਤ ॥

He is manifested from Himself, He is unfathomable, His glory can not be stated, He is one and one alone, pervading every where, and He is above the bondage of Maya. ||

ਗਰਬ ਗੰਜਨ ਸਰਬ ਭੰਜਨ ਆਦਿ ਰੂਪ ਅਸੂਤ ॥

He is the eliminator of pride, He is the destroyer of all, He is from the beginning and is unborn. ||

ਅੰਗ ਹੀਨ ਅਭੰਗ ਅਨਾਤਮ ਏਕ ਪੁਰਖ ਅਪਾਰ ॥

He is without body, imperishable, He does not have separate soul, He is one and one alone, pervading every where, and infinite. ||

ਸਰਬ ਲਾਇਕ ਸਰਬ ਘਾਇਕ ਸਰਬ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਤਿਪਾਰ ॥ ੮੫ ॥

He is all powerful to do anything, He is the destroyer of all and He nourishes all. || 85 ||