

Sikhs: Multi Dimensional Heroes

Abstract

Sikhism is a religion that came into existence in the 15th century and is comparatively a new and one of the most progressive religion in the world. Sikhs were formed as a clan of warriors to stand up against the atrocities of the Mughal Invaders. Since the beginning of Sikhism, their role in the elimination of social evils in the society is remarkable. Today India is a 68 year old democracy comprising of nearly 1.7% Sikhs of the total population. This religion achieved a lot in their existence of five centuries as compare to other religions of this world and Sikhs are the members of the relatively young religious faith.

This paper examines the uniqueness of this religion with special focus on the achievements of this religion in a short span of time.

Keywords: Atrocities, Cauldron, Gallantry, POWS' (Prisoners of War) Pseudo Secular State.

Introduction

The word 'Sikh' came from the Sanskrit word 'Siksati' – he studies literally mean a disciple about Sikhs Khushwant Singh says. A sikh is a follower of Sikhism, a monotheistic religion. The term Sikh means disciple, Students or (Siksa) (Khushwant singh p-15)

Creator of Sikhism made efforts to abolish social evils in the society like Sati Pratha (burning of the widow) and caste system. Guru Nanak Dev ji, Who established Sikhism was the first Guru of Sikhs. During 17th century, when there was Mughals empire .Aurangzeb, the main Muslim emperor, who harassed and humiliated Non- Muslims (including Sikhs). Even some Sikh Guru family members were executed by Mughal emperors. Mughals treated Hindu women as their own property and forced Hindus to accept Islam in retaliation, Guru Gobind Singh ji decided to make his followers (community of fighters) against atrocities and Singh sir name was given which means Lion. Followers of Guru Gobind Singh ji also changed their sir name to Singh. On the fighting nature of Sikhs Jahangir, the forth Mughal emperor wrote in his memoirs, Tuzuk -i- Jahangiri wrote about Guru Arjan Dev ji, fifth Guru of Sikhs,

"For a long time, the thought had been presenting itself to me that he should be brought to the fold of Islam." When in 1606 Guru ji refused to change his religion to Islam he was put to death by boiling in a cauldron and sitting on a hot iron plate.

Sikhs as Warriors

In 1897, at North West Frontier Province of India, during battle of Saragarhi 21 Sikhs of the 4th battalion were defending army posts against 10,000 Afghans. All were fighting against the Afghans army till the last bullet was fired. After 2 Sikh Anglo wars Britishers were managed to take control of Punjab as the last British Empire. After partition Master Tara Singh, the founder of Akali Dal raised the slogan of sikh state and said, "We have a culture different from Hindus, Our culture is Gurumukhi culture and our literature is also in the Gurumukhi Script."He further added, "If we want to have a province where we can safeguard our culture and our traditions."

Prominent Sikhs

Sikh community occupies significant place in the country as well as abroad. Former PM Dr. Manmohan Singh was ranked world's most powerful, influential and contemporary Sikh as per the first edition of the Annual 'Sikh 100' published in London. Earlier former Planning Commission Deputy Chairman Dr. Montek Singh Ahluwalia was ranked second most powerful sikh in the same edition of the annual 'Sikh 100'.

Late President Giani Zail Singh, the only 5 star rank Marshal Arjan Singh, Gen J.J.Singh, Gen. Bikram Singh, Late Gen. J.S.Aurora, Late Gen. Harbaksh Singh, Milkha Singh, Pargat Singh, Bhagat Singh was a great freedom fighter and still he is the Hero of the youths.

Sikh community has also won the maximum number of gallantry awards like PVC (Param vir Chakra) and Vir Chakra. 20 % of gallantry awards are won by sikhs even their population is just 1.7 % of the total population of India as latest statistics issued by central government. During 1965 Indo-Pak war late Gen. Harbaksh Singh was a Senior Officer in the



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Indian Army and he played a key role during this war and he was awarded Vir Chakra, Padam Vibhushan and Padam Bhushan Award. He led the Western command successfully against the Pakistan Army. Late Gen. Harbaksh Singh who was a man of determination and he encouraged the soldiers for fight against Pakistan and he visited front posts personally. Under the dynamic leadership of Gen. Harbaksh Singh. Indian Army launched attack in Lahore, Sialkot Sector, Kargil, Tangdhar and Hazipeer areas and also eliminated Pakistani intruders from J&K.

Marshal Arjan Singh was chief of the air staff of Indian Air Force, who is still a model for the new generations. The scene has become a part of history when on the occasion of death of our Scientist Philosopher Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam when he came on wheel chair and saluted without using wheel chair at the age of 96 years. Under the command of Air Chief Marshal Arjan Singh Indian fighter planes made bombardment on Kohat, Sarghoda, Rawalpindi, Sialkot, Lahore etc. On Arjan Singh's bravery government of India honoured with Padam Vibhushan award. In 2002 on Republic day he was decorated with the rank of Marshal of the Indian Air force (Equivalent to the rank of Field Marshal of Army). He was the Chief of the Air Force during Indo-Pak war of 1965 during Shashtri's era.

Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora was born in Jehlam district (now in Pakistan) was the son of an engineer and he was the (GOC in-C) of the Eastern Command

of the Indian Army during Indo-Pak war of 1971. In this war nearly 93000 Pakistani soldiers were forced to surrender before Indian army under the Command of Lt. Gen. J.S. Aurora. Gen. Niazi of Pakistan Surrendered to Gen. Aurora as POW'S (Prisoners Of War). Pakistan lost nearly 150000 sq. km. of their territory. When a French reporter said to Gen. Niazi, "How are you feeling tiger?", then he replied "Depressed".

This was the great victory of late Gen Aurora. Due to special effort of late Gen Aurora a new country Bangladesh came into existence. On the death of late Gen Aurora, Bangladesh foreign Minister paid tribute in these words.....

"Aurora will be remembered in the history of Bangladesh for his contribution during our war of liberation in 1971 when he led the allied forces"

Sikh Population

As per the 2001 census about 1.9 % of India's population were Sikhs but recently (as per the 2011 census report) data collected by the Registrar General and Census commission there is a decline of the Sikh population from 1.9% to 1.7%. It is a shocking but when we do the study of this religion this is the one of the most progressive religion in the world. Population of Sikh religion in this world is around 27 million and this is 0.39% population of the world Indian Punjab is the only place in the world where this religion is in majority with 57.69 % of the total population of Punjab.

Sikh Population

Religion	2011 Population in Crores		2001 Population in Crores		Growth Rate	Population +/-
Hindus	96.63	79.8	82.75	80.5	16.8%	-0.7%
Muslims	17.22	14.2	13.8	13.2	24.6%	+0.8%
Christians	2.78	2.3	2.40	2.3	15.5%	0.0%
Sikhs	2.08	1.7	1.92	1.89	8.4%	-0.2%
Buddhists	0.84	0.7	0.79	0.7	6.1%	-0.1%
Jains	0.45	0.4	0.42	0.4	5.4%	-0.03%
Others : 79 Lac = 0.7% of the Total Population						

Note : Census 2011 Data collected by Registrar General and Census Commission issued by central government.

Sikh religion is also found in Chandigarh 13.11%, Haryana 4.91%, Delhi 3.40%, Utrakhnad 2.34% as per the latest data issued by Government of India, Delhi, Madhya Pradesh, U.P., J&K, Rajasthan, and Haryana are the states where the population of sikhs is more than two lac.

Sikhs Abroad

It is a general belief that Maharaja Dalip Singh was the first sikh migrated to Britain and he was also the last ruler of Punjab. In 1849 he was exiled in Britain. Sikh migration from India begins especially from 1850's and onwards. During British regime sikhs were recruited in the Indian Civil Services and especially in the British Indian Army. General migration of Sikhs to UK was started in the 1950s. Most of them working as workers in industries like textiles and foundries. Most of the Sikhs were settled in Southall, Birmingham and London (UK). When we take the case of Canada, migration of Sikhs was started in the first decade of the 20th century. Earlier they came in British Columbia and later they (Sikhs) became a strong community in British Columbia and they also made Gurudwaras there. Sikhs were settled in Toronto, Montreal etc.

After World War II and during partition period Sikhs were migrated from India and Pakistan. Some of them went to UK and USA. During Partition most of the Sikhs crossed border for their safety. Punjab was changed from prosperous to violence hit area. Most of the Sikhs were shifted from West Punjab (now Pakistani Punjab) to East Punjab (Indian Punjab). In contemporary period Sikhs are settled in USA and even some of them joined US army and served with full honour and dignity and they are also doing their jobs in Los Angles, New York, Alberta (Canada) Ontario (Canada) etc. These are the places where Sikhs population is found in good numbers.

In the case of Australia, migration of Sikhs to Australia was started in the last decade of 19th century. Recently after the IT revolution migration of Sikhs to Australia rapidly increased as Australian Educational Institutes recruited Indian students. Thousands of sikh students are studying in Australia. Recently Canada has become the world's most Sikh Cabinet. Canada's new Prime Minister Justice Trudeau unveiled the most diverse Cabinet in the history of the Country. Four members of Sikh origin are inducted in his Cabinet. Harjit Sajjan a 42 year old

former police officer and veteran of three military deployments in Afghanistan is appointed as the new defense minister of Canada. The other Sikh ministers who inducted in various portfolios in Canadian govt are Amarjeet Sohi, sworn in as Canada,s minister of infrastructure, Bardish Chagger (daughter of Sikh immigrant) Sworn in as minister of small business and tourism. Navdeep Bains (A business School professor) Sworn in as minister of innovation, science and economic development. Indians has 4 percent of Canada's total population and Sikhs count 1.5 percent of the total population of Canada and awarding senior posts to Sikhs in Canada shows the status of this community in Canada and at international level.

Conclusion

Sikh religion is one of the unique, progressive, new and dynamic religion of this world. Their achievements are unmatched with other religions in a short span of time. They are really brave, adventurous and are capable to face any type of challenge that is why they occupied significant posts of Prime Minister, President, Air Chief Marshal, Generals, Diplomats, Businessmen etc. although their share in Indian population is just 1.7% it is really

remarkable. Recently Sikhs in other Countries are facing the problems of mistaken identity and trend of mistaken identity increased rapidly after the post Sept 11, 2001 attacks on U.S.A

In Some European Countries, this religion facing the problems of turban issue. Especially in France. This is the duty of the secular state (ie India) to protect the interests of the religious minorities not only in India but also in the other Countries of the world. Then countries like India can claim that India is really a secular state and not a pseudo secular state.

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