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## **RELIGIOUS AND SOCIAL ASPECTS OF KUKA MOVEMENT**

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# Religious and Social Aspects of Kuka Movement

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**Abstract – Religiously and socially, the condition of the land of the five rivers, as well as the rest of India was not better. It was in the above social and religious circumstances that Kukaism was initiated in order to drive away, to accuse social weakness, to meet the challenge of an overpowering western imperialism, and to fabricate the bonds of religious purity and brotherhood. It represented social reforms, clean living, honest earning, equality and simplicity when people in the Punjab had forgotten the message of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The work of the movement should not be under estimated. They created a reawakening in the land. They were the leaders which set the country on the path of progress, whereas the other movements devoted themselves entirely to social and religious movement but harsh behaviour of the British Government with the leaders of this movement, draw them into political sphere also.**

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## INTRODUCTION

The masterful influence of Baba Ram Singh sums to have given a new edge, a new need to the mission that he wished to set out before himself. 1857 A.D on Baisakhi Day, Baba Ram Singh Ji again like Khalsa Panth, created Namdhari organisation. The name of five Sikhs who were baptised are Bhai Kanh Singh Nihang (Malerkotla), Bhai Labh Singh (Amritsar), Bhai Naina Singh Wariyah (Amritsar), Bhai Atma Singh (Sialkot), Bhai Sudh Singh (Jullundhar). They were asked to adopt five Kakas of Khalsa – Kachha (Shorts), Karha (Iron Bangle), Kanga (Comb for the Hair), Kes (Unshorn Hair), Kirpan (Sword). Since the Kirpan had been disallowed by the Government, a heavy lathi was ordered to be kept in its place. Each one of them was required to keep a woolen rosary. There was a special emphasis laid on the administration of Gurumantar. During this ceremony, the secret word 'Wahiguru' whispered by the Guru into the ear of the new entrant. This was considered important, it established a personal contact between the teacher and the disciple.

The movement of Baba Ram Singh founded in 1857, had a comprehensive aim to achieve, having all aspects such as religious, social and political. He wanted to create a new individual having a strong character, deep and steady in faith, fearless in action, a person free from superstition, lethargy and cowardice. Baba Ram Singh exhorted his followers to read and recite Guru Granth Sahib regularly explaining the importance of reading Guru Granth & belief in its message. In addition to the emphasis on reading and reciting nam and bani. Baba Ram Singh revived the

practice of performing 'Akhand Path' Havan and Chandi Di Path. The reading Akand Path and havan continued for two or three days. Finally 'ardas' was performed.

Baba Ram Singh showed a keenest interest in reaching out to the people to deliver his message personally to them. This, he thought, would impart a great momentum to the missionary activities of his subas and other functionaries. He therefore, chalked out a programme of extensive tours, through the length and breadth of the country. In this programme visits to important holy shrines like Amritsar, Anandpur and Mukatsar on the great occasions of Baisakhi, Deepawali, Maghi and Holi were given the top most priority.

Baba's visit to Amritsar on the day of Baisakhi in 1863 is important as he was accompanied by a large No. of followers, since Baba Ram Singh had emerged a popular leader of the masses. By the time Baba reached Anandpur, when Baba Ram Singh wished to pay homage to the gurudwara. He visited the Keshgarh and Teg Bahadur Gurudwara on March 20, 1867 to worship. He gave an offering of Rs. Twenty Five at each place. But he felt offended when the pujaris of Keshgarh Gurudwara refused to pray for him. However Baba Ram Singh was happy with the conduct of the pujaris of the Teg Bahadur Gurudwara and paid them a rupee extra as they prayed for him. After his return to Bhaini, Ram Singh wrote a letter to the Mahants of Gurudwara Keshgarh enquiring from them why they did not consider him a gurumukh.

An immediate reaction of this incident was the closure of the doors of the gurudwara for the Namdharis. But this did not change Baba Ram Singh's approach he advised his followers, "Read and believe in the Granth which is greatest of the gurudwaras. But when Baba Ram Singh visited Amritsar on the occasion of Diwali 1867, he was received in recognition of his religious character from the Mahants of the Darbar Sahib, a Dushalla and a pugree. Namdhari sources also mentioned Baba Ram Singh's visit of these gurudwara at Amritsar and receiving Siropa. During this visit Baba Ram Singh made 2000 new followers including men and women.

Gender and social equality was the main point on which Baba Ram Singh tried to build up the social order of the Namdharis. This task was extremely important as well as challenging in the contemporary feudal society, equality between man and woman was practically non-existent. The gender inequality actually began with the birth of a girl which was considered not good. The girl infant was often killed at the very time of birth. The girl infants, who escaped the fate of this practice, were neither groomed nor educated properly she was often subjected to mental & physical torture. Baba Ram Singh told his followers that, "this is my order and should be told to everyone that the girl of eighteen and boy of twenty should be married. In the process of restoring gender equality, Baba Ram Singh revived, the practise of administering amrit to the women. In 1858, he baptised one lady Kemi of village Siyaher in the district Ludhiana. Baba even appointed a woman as subas to carry on his missionary work. Bibi Hukmi of Village Variyah of district Amritsar was appointed Suba.

Baba Balak Singh and Baba Ram Singh was decided to save their disciples from costly marriage ceremonies and other expensive rituals. Among the Namdharis Baba Balak Singh also rejected the traditional mode of performing the marriages. He asked his followers to ceremonised marriages according to anandriti in a simple way avoiding all kind of expenses. Baba Ram Singh advised his followers not to cry and weep at the death of their relatives or friends because it happens according to the will of God. He said mourning and crying not only harms the living beings but it troubles the departed soul also.

With the passage of time Namdharis developed their centres of religious worship. For these centres, though they use conventional terms Namdhari dharmshala, where they perform their own beliefs and practices. Namdharis believe in a living human being as their Guru, therefore, they are not supposed to build up place of worship at home. Every Namdhari is supposed to pay regularly religious donations to their Gurus or Gurudwaras. They give due respect to their Guru, Whatever the Guru says they religiously adhere to him. They visit the Guru on every special occasions and rest visited him regularly. In daily routine every Namdhari is expected to visit Gurudwara. Before going to Gurudwara, a Namdhari should wake up at about 3

o'clock in the morning. He should go out for a walk. He should clean his teeth with a branch of Kikar or neem tree. He should take some exercise also. He should take a complete bath daily. After taking his bath a Namdhari should change his clothes every day. He should wear white clothes and tie a white turban tied in a straight manner. Thereafter he should sit on a silky or woolen white sheet to meditate. Then he should attend the congregation at the Gurudwara and listen to the 'Asa Di Var'. After the service at the Gurudwara is over, everyone is free to do his professional duties. In the evening again a Namdhari should say his evening prayer.

Baba Ram Singh's programme of uplifting the social status of woman was continued by his successors. Namdhari claim that it was due to the efforts of the Namdhari Guru Partap Singh that Anand Marriage Act was passed by the Government of India in 1909. Anand marriage was performed in the presence of the holy granth. It was a simple ceremony like the ceremony introduced by Baba Ram Singh. Baba Ram Singh forbade expenses on cumbersome and superfluous items such as dowry, ornaments, costly clothes, display of fire work, entertainment programmes etc. All prospective brides and bridegrooms assembled on that day and mass marriage ceremony was performed for all the couples. The prospective couples took bath and dressed in white were brought to the congregation where Asa Di Var was sung. Before the havan ceremony was performed, the bride put a woolen rosary around the neck of the would be bride room and also touched his feet. At the site of the Havana, five men sit near a fire alongwith the prospective couples. They read hymns from Guru Granth Sahib which were prescribed for the purpose. This ceremony lasts for about an hour. To maintain the simplicity in daily life, Baba Partap Singh tried to divert the women from the use of the nail polishing, lip-sticks, creams and powders etc.

He also responded to the birth control programme. For him celibacy could also help in solving this problem. Simultaneously he developed the idea of hard working, self-earning, self-pride, cleanliness and purity.

## CONCLUSION

In the view of the above discussion, it may be said that the origin of the Namdhari Mission can be traced to the teaching of Baba Balak Singh who emphasized on the 'Nam'. Baba Balak Singh chose Ram Singh as his successor who founded Sant Khalsa in 1857 and laid down the maryada for his followers. He was also precursor of programme of betterment of women. He tried to create a social consciousness through religious principles. With certain modifications, the socio religious beliefs and practices, introduced by Baba Ram Singh carried on by his successors. The Namdhari evolved their own Ardas which upheld the tradition of living Guru. They also developed their new centres of religious worship like Jiwan Nagar and Mandi. Baba Partap Singh continued the practice of

simple anand marriage by adding some new changes and emphasized the importance of education. He contributed a lot in the field of music.

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