

## ORGANISATION

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For this purpose, therefore, organisation became necessary. This organisation began at the very beginning of Sikhism. Sikhism broke with ascetic traditions from the very start. Guru Nanak Dev during his long travels, wherever he went established a *sangat* with an injunction to build a place where they could meet and sing the Guru's *Shabds*. This place used to be called a *dharamsala*, later on a gurdwara. This network of Sikh *dharamsalas* sprang up everywhere in the country. We find such centres of the Satguru's mission established in Kabul, Kashmir, Baghdad, Jalalabad, Kathmandu, Kamrup, Junagarh, Surat, Cuttak, Nanak Matta, Johar (near Sobathu), Colombo, Rameshwaram, Madras, Suttur, Kanjaliban, Adilabad, Mirzapur, Chittagong, Dubri, Decca, and many other places. Each *sangat* was under the charge of a Sikh appointed by the Guru. These were called *manjis*. *Manji* means a cot whereon a Sikh in charge sat when preaching. Bhai Lalo was the first to be appointed to preach in the North, and Sheikh Sajjan in the South West of Punjab. A large number of such workers were scattered over the whole place visited by Guru Nanak, in and outside India. There was Gopal Dass in Banaras, Jhanda Badhi in Bushair, Buddan Shah in Kiratpur, Mahi in Maisar, a priest's son Kalyug, at Jagannathpuri, Devlut in Lushai (Tibet), Sals Rai in Patna and Bihar, Raja Shivnabh in Ceylon, Sheikh Balol at Baghdad.

After Guru Nanak the missionary work developed and became more regular, though the sphere of activity narrowed down. There were twenty-two *manjis*, (sort of diocese), in the third Guru's time and fifty-two *pirrey*, (sort of parishes) by the time of the fifth Nanak, Guru Arjun. Each district was put under a *masand*. His

duty was to preach religion and to be responsible to the Guru for the *sangat* in his diocese. On Vaisakhi day, he used to visit the Guru along with the Sikhs of his *ilaka* (area) and report on the work he did and account for the offerings received. Gradually, the congregations gathering around the Guru acquired great sanctity. Ultimately, the tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, transferred the whole authority to the *sangat* when the Guruship was entrusted to the Five Beloved Ones under the supremacy of the *Gurshabd*. It was said "One disciple is a single Sikh; two form a *sangat*; but where there are five there is God Himself." When the devolution of full powers came, the Khalsa stood out as the embodiment of the Guru. Since then the system of forming a body of Five Beloved Ones for disposal of any executive work, settling a dispute or taking any decision was evolved. Matters of *Panthic* interest were discussed at the Akal Takht and the others were settled in local *sangats*. No person high or low was above their jurisdiction; even the tenth Guru himself was once hauled up for saluting with his arrow the tomb of a saint, which he had, of course, done to test the adherence of his Sikhs to *Gurshabd*. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was also called up at the Akal Takht for a dereliction and was punished.

This self-contained system of organisation of the Sikhs turned the Muslim Government and Hindu Rajas against them. It was this organisation that saved them in the period of persecution when a price was put on a Sikh's head and to grow long hair was declared a crime and the Sikhs were searched and hunted everywhere, when they had to repair to Rajputana deserts or the forests in the Northern Punjab and foot hills of the *Shivaliks* (1716-1763). The words in *Ardas* invoking His Grace and indulgence for all the bodies of the Khalsa wherever they are, is still a pathetic reminder of that time, besides a reference to the present-day Sikhs spread out all over the world. At about the same time, thus, the Khalsa came into its own and could function directly everywhere in all spheres of life as the embodiment of the Guru, the institution of the *masands* was abolished.

Thus, the *Panth* became a living organism guided by common sense and the ever lasting and dynamic presence of the Guru.