



Sikhs: Hegemony, Power and Suppression in Khushwant Singh's A History of The Sikhs

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Abstract- Khushwant Singh's *A History of The Sikhs* is one of his comprehensive and authoritative research on the Sikhs. The research scrutinized the social, political and religious consequences which gave birth to the new religion Sikhism. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony enhanced the research to categorize role of Sikhs as the subordinate class that resisted the control exercised by the dominant class of Mughals. The research studied the cultural values of Sikhs that further initiated the development and reformation of Punjab during the Mughal Empire. The ideologies of cultural hegemony raised the question that how Sikhs being the subordinate group developed their social and political society in Punjab. Not only they developed their cultural and social values but flourished to the extent that present Punjab still follows the same customs and rituals. The research explored the origin of Sikhism, establishment of socio-political institution and deterioration of cultural components by Mughal Empire. The study expounds the nature of domination through consent and force that exemplified the tussle for power between the Mughal Emperors and Sikh Gurus.

Keywords- Sikhs, Mughals, Cultural hegemony, Power, Suppression

I. INTRODUCTION

The culture and power structure of Punjab are greatly influenced by the history of Sikhs. Khushwant Singh's *A History of The Sikhs* critiqued different aspects of the Sikhs that expound the establishment of independent state of Punjab. He closely studied the history of Sikhs that constitutes their scriptures, Sikh's church and their relationship with the Mughals who conquered the entire nation as the dominant and powerful. Punjab as the nation came into existence as the result of mingling of various conquering races, languages and their culture. For the Arabs, Afghans, Mongols and Turks invaders, Punjab was the major gateway and first home to conquer. The culture of Punjab was greatly influenced by the invaders who settled down on the land of Punjab conquered the local women or claimed the other's wives in the battle. Punjab as the land and Punjabi as the language were born out of this mingling of race and culture. These races developed the love for the new land and lost the nostalgic memories of their birth place and origin. At the end of fifteen century land of Punjab was divided between Hindus and Muslims where ruled the social evils to the extent that humanity lost its' essence. The rigidity of religions provided the space for the reformation that can be exemplified through the birth of Sikhism. Sikhism is scrutinized as the movement of reformation that brought the rapprochement to the Hindu-Muslim faiths and their relationship without any control. The revival of Punjab was initiated by the Guru Nanak and his successors who not only harnessed the spirit of harmony but also gave the words to the women's sufferings. The research enhanced the reformation of religion, condition of women and culture of Punjab considering the function of Sikhism as the religion and social institution against brutality of Mughals. Khushwant Singh's work defined the role of Sikhs and Sikhism that revived the orthodox customs and rituals for the welfare of humanity. His work is supported by the strong references and original researches in various languages such as Persian, Gurmukhi and English. It is surprisingly to note that before Khushwant Singh's work Captain Joseph Davey Cunningham's *History of Sikhs* termed as the standard work that glorifies history and religion of the Sikhs. It also defines the origin and culture of Punjab. Cunningham was the British historian, poet and playwright who took the initiative to provide the Sikhs their place in the history of the humanity by illustrating their connection with the different religion and creed. He deeply studied and experienced the community of Sikhs and colonial Punjab as the assistant of Colonel Claude Wade who was appointed the agent by East India Company on Sikh Empire. His work was published in 1849 that provided the Sikhs a platform to share the space in the history of colonial world. For this Cunningham had to pay the heavy cost as he earned the prejudice and disrespect of British officers also excluded from the political engagements. Khushwant Singh's works scrutinized the origin of culture and values of Punjab that derived under the Sikhs auspices.

A History of The Sikhs acknowledged the socio-political condition of Punjab in order to explore the complexity and sensitivity of relationship shared by Hindu, Muslim and Sikhs. The role of Sikhs in Punjab is not successfully scrutinized to the fact that the culture is always studied in the context of spicy food, heavy dress, loud music and various dance forms. Khushwant Singh gave the high volt blow to the readers' mind by identifying the martial, social and political engagements of Sikhs during the imperialistic rule of Mughals in India. Khushwant Singh's work informed the readers that history of Punjab cannot be read by excluding the history of Sikhs. Antonio Gramsci's theory of culture hegemony defined the ideologies that critiqued the power and suppression in the society of Punjab through the tussle between the Sikhs and Mughals. The imperialism through culture not only illuminated the role of Sikhism but also its' principles that resisted the foreign powers. Gramsci's concept of cultural hegemony addressed the relationship between the power and culture under the capitalism. It is important to define the term cultural hegemony to study the functions of dominant group and their strategy of suppression through the consent. The cultural hegemony is about the cluster of ideas that undermine or reinforce the existing social structure in order to define the power of dominant fundamental group and suppression of the subordinate group. The mechanical direction on the socio-cultural life imposed by ruling parties can be critiqued as the cultural hegemony. The characterization of hegemony can be studied in the following words:

"the spontaneous consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is historically caused by the prestige [and consequent confidence] which the dominant group enjoys because of its' position and function in the world of production."(Lear, 2007, p. 567)

The above statement clarifies that the hegemony is not only about the domination or dominant as the ruling group can't maintain their hegemony only through domination. They deceived the subordinate group by decorating the ornaments of domination as the aura of moral authority by legitimating the symbols of culture. *A History of The Sikhs* apprised the readers about Sikh's ten Gurus and their social and political engagements, religious belief and the sacrifices made by Gurus not only for the benediction of Sikhism but also for the various other religions that were being suppressed by the Mughals of the time. The Mughals, here are critiqued as the ruling class who brutally established their feet of suppression in northern India. The invasion of Taimur in fifteenth century forced the local governors to set themselves as the independent monarchs. The following words describe the invasion of Mughals:

"It has been noted how the peaceful spread of Islam was arrested by the conquest of northern India by Mussalmam armies. The Hindus were defeated and many of their temples were razed to the ground.In order to equip themselves for the task, they studied other languages, cultures, religions and ways of life." (Singh,1963, p. 24)

The above statement denotes the rich, trading and wealthier Hindus as the subordinate group who were overpowered by Mughals with the purpose of spreading Islam in Hindustan. This scenario described the miserable and pathetic conditions before the birth of Guru Nanak. The political turmoil greatly affected the religious aspects as the Hindus were forced to follow the Islam. Their temples were abolished with purpose of promoting Islam by circumcising and fasting during Ramadan as guided by the principles of Koran. The political, religious and cultural disturbances gave the birth to the reformist movement of religion as the Sikhism.

Origin of Sikhism

In order to have deep insight into the cultural hegemony the readers need to analyze the questions such as who Sikhs are and what their role in the history of Punjab is. The Sikh religion was originated by Guru Nanak Dev recognizes as the first Sikh Guru. Guru Nanak dedicated his whole life for the betterment of humanity. Guru Nanak is not only recognized for Sikhism but worshipped by people of various religions such as Muslims, Tibetans and Persians. In fact this religion was emerged to settle down the issues of caste, values and the difference in the belief system that were troubling the relation of Hindus and Muslims. Guru Nanak was the founder of Sikhism. He was born to Mehta Kalian and Mata Tripta in the village named Talwandi Rai Bhoie, Pakistan. He is God's angel sent to the earth at the time when the world was suffering from the various social issues such as caste system, untouchability, falsehood, molestation of women as approved by Khushwant Singh in the words of Guru Nanak:

“The age is like Knife. Kings are butchers. Religion hath taken wings and flown. In the dark night of falsehood I cannot see where the moon of truth is rising.”(Singh, 2011, p. 24)

The above quotation describes the social scenario in which Guru Nanak Dev was born. The Muslim community was the ruling class as Taimur's invasion led to the fall of local government in 1398. The Mughal's rule imposed the illegal taxation in order to deteriorate wealthier Hindu trader. This political turmoil and social violence affected the religious practices of Hindu as Mughals aggressively imposed the Islamic religious practices. According to Khushwant Singh resources the devils had read the vows of marriages as Hindu and Muslim preachers had dismissed themselves from their own duties. Babur was the grandson of Taimur also known as Zahir-ud-din Babur, founder of Mughal Empire whose mission was to spread Islam by any means. Also he demolished various sacred places, destroyed Hindus homelands, kidnapped women for slavery such devastating scenarios forced the God's angel Guru Nanak to take birth on this planet. The demolition of homeland and temples defined the domination by force that led to cultural hegemony. Guru Nanak Dev had an encounter with Babur when he arrested Guru Nanak along with the innocent Hindus and Muslims during his invasion to Kabul. He was influenced of Guru Nanak's teachings and agreed to release the innocent people of Kabul. Bhai Santokh Singh quoted from Guru Granth Sahib to describe the suffering of people:

“ Khurasan Khasmana Kiya Hindustan Draya
Apey Dos Na Deyi Karta Jum Kar Mugal Chareya
Eyti Mar Payee Kurlanney Tain Ki Dard Na Aiye.” (Santokh Singh, 2008, p. 77)

The above incident depicts that Guru Nanak's message is for the humanity not for a particular religion. The marginalized people who were the victim of the rigid caste system found the solution in the holy composition of Guru Nanak. The followers of Guru Nanak critiqued the secular aspect as he was the strict monotheist who believed that the God is one and is free from the religious concept of reincarnation. Guru Nanak preached his followers that the torturing of flesh as fasting for long time and isolating families for the search of true knowledge would not allow human soul to meet the Almighty. His teachings have shown the right path to the householders [grihastha dhrama].

Guru Nanak Dev started the concept of 'Sadh Sangat' where the people irrespective of their religion collected at a place for worshipping the God. Guru Nanak emphasized on the casteless society so he started 'Guru Ka Langer' where Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras have to eat food at the same platform as Brahmins who categorized as the superior beings did not allow the shadow of lower caste in their kitchens. The first Sikh Guru focused on casteless society with the vivid idea of providing the equal rights to everyone. The casteless society strongly discards the powerful institution of cultural hegemony rather offers the values of liberty, freedom and choice. The power of suppression exerted the control in the society successfully as it was divided into caste, religion, status and gender. The religious, communal and commercial aspects together form the culture. According to Khushwant Singh Guru Nanak is considered as the first leader of Punjab also approved by various historians such as Bhai Santokh Singh. The people who were divided into Hindu and Muslims and further sub-divided into their own religion breakaway from their parent communities started following Guru Nanak. These followers became Sikhs who spoke Punjabi language and greeted each other with 'Satkartar' instead of 'Namaste' or 'Salam-alaikum'. But it is to be clarified that Hindu and Muslim were never dishonored or overpowered by Sikhs rather they fought or martyred for the rights of Hindus. One who follows Guru Nanak's teaching became 'Sikh' means a learner. Guru Nanak's teachings are summed up in three principles 'Kirt Karo', 'Nam Japo', 'Vand Chako'. Guru Nanak dev is not only a teacher but also an active reformist as his teachings lead to various social evolutions. Guru Nanak honored Bhai Lehna the second Guru of Sikhs later named as Guru Angad Dev this annoyed two sons of first Guru, Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. The command of Sikhism was not given to Guru Nanak's son because they did not possess the qualities of being Guru. Bhai Lehna met Guru Nanak in 'sadh Sanagat' and his pious qualities were being recognized to hold the position of second Guru. Bhai Lehna's obedient nature and his services in 'Guru Ka Langer' made him Guru Angad Dev. Angad means 'Guru Ka Ang' part of Guru's body. The second Guru played the significant role in the context of culture.

He analyzed thirty five letters composed by Guru Nanak and gave the Sikhs the written language known as Gurmukhi [uttered from the Guru's mouth] in current northern India. Hegemony clearly appraised the social and political predominance that exercised the control through the two levels. First, the civil society that constitutes the social institutions further worked as the tool of domination within the conscious of

subordinate class. The civil society operates the components of culture such as trade unions, religious bodies and academic institutions that induced the control through consent. Here language is scrutinized as one of the essential phenomenon that ruled over the civil society. It is through the language that the ideologies are introduced in the society to exert the power. The research paper 'The concept of Cultural Hegemony: Problems and Possibilities' states:

"The available vocabulary helps mark the boundaries of permissible discourse, discourages the clarification of social alternatives and makes it difficult for the dispossessed to locate the source of their unease, let alone remedy it." (Lear, 2007, p. 570)

It is significant to note that if language discouraged the subordinates to locate the source of control than it also empowered the opposites. Here, Sikhism is analyzed as the social institution that constitutes the elements of ruling class being the subordinates. The reason that discards the dominant's control is their language, economical and social institutions that emerged and flourished under the Mughals. After Guru Angad Dev, Guru Amardas became the Sikh Guru. Guru Amardas's twelve years of services to Guru Angad Dev made him third Guru from 'Amro Nithava'. At that time Guru Amardas was seventy five years old, the eldest Sikh Guru. The third Guru further took the principles of Guru Nanak and broke the various orthodox social ceremonies as banned 'Sati Pratha' where the widows were burnt alive along with the dead body of their husbands. Today people failed to recognize that before Britishers it was Guru Amardas who condemned the act of 'sati' by conducting the various campaigns in Punjab. He described the 'sati' in the following words:

"A Sati is not she, who burneth herself On the pyre of her spouse.
Nanak: a Sati is she, who dieth with
The sheer shock of separation
Yea, the Sati is one who liveth contended
And embellisheth herself with good conduct:
And cherisheth her Lord ever and calleth On Him each morn."(Guru Granth Sahib, p.787)

The 'Pardha System' was abolished where women were ordered to hide behind the curtain also not to encounter any men without Pardha. Guru Amardas Ji promoted the system of langer in order to have the casteless society. Bhai Santokh Singh in *Suraj Prakash* quoted from the *Guru Granth Sahib Ji*:
"Pehle Pangat Piche Sangat"(Santokh Singh, 2008, p.30)

The above quote means people who came to meet Guru Sahib have to sit together for the Langer then only they can attend the 'Sadh Sangat' to worship the Almighty. The women who were marginalized also had no status in the society moved out of their homes for being the part of 'Sadh Sangat' without any pardha. Guru Nanak Dev's following words raised the status of women and broke the limitation guided by the patriarchal orthodox society:

"From the woman is our birth; In the woman's womb are we shaped To the woman are we engaged To the woman are we wedded. The woman, yea, is our friend, And from woman is the family. If one woman dies, we seek another; Through the woman are the bonds of the world, O' why call woman evil who giveth birth to kings."(Guru Granth Sahib, 473)

The above statement raised the question why are women tortured and considered as lower being as she has given the birth to the great worriers. It is important to scrutinize that third Guru built the temple at the Goindwal in Punjab when Mughal emperor Akbar was at the throne. In the context of cultural hegemony it is to be appraised that Sikhs were doubly marginalized as Brahmins considered as ruling class in Hindu society also Mughals at the throne were ultimate dominant or conquerors. The Sikhs being the subordinate group possessed the power of resistance. Fourth Guru, Guru Ramdas lost his parents at an early age and spent most of his life in serving the Sikh 'sangat'. After providing the services to 'Guru Ghar' under the supervision of Guru Amardas was given the command of Sikhism. It is significant to note that Sikhs are counted as the subordinate group because they are less in number. In contrast to that they have the courage and valor to resist the domination of Mughals. The Sikhs played an essential role in the society of Punjab as they fought against the social evils such as sati pratha, padha system, untouchability and stood against the brutality of dominant class. The cultural hegemony expounds beyond the strategy of domination as the consent and force are practiced hand in hand. The theory of cultural hegemony rose the question what cultural components of the dominant played an important role to seek the consent of

subordinates? The consent that provided the power to dominant group is achieved by values, beliefs, norms also the social institutions that are controlled by ruling party. The readers will be surprised to critique that Sikhs being the subordinate group was not completely suppressed by the dominant. Though they established the components of culture under the Mughals and flourished to the extent that worked as the institution of solace between the Hindus and Muslims. According to the Khushwant Singh's work Guru Ramdas provided the business to the trade men by building a town called 'Guru ka cak' or 'Cak Ramdas' or 'Ramdas Pura'. This town is destined to be the sacred capital of Sikhs with the motive of expanding the new beliefs, values and cultural activities to the various parts by utilizing the collected revenue. In the context of culture the economic status allowed the Sikhs to establish their culture in the Punjab. Later fifth Guru of Sikhs, Guru Arjan Dev continued with the task of completing building of the temple at 'Cak Ram Das'. Amazing fact about the temple of God called Harmandir sahib was that the Muslim peer, Hazrat Mian Mir was invited to place the foundation stone of Harmandir Sahib or Golden Temple. The architectural features of temple were planned to be symbolic as the temple has four doors which represent the harmony and love among the religion of Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Christians but it does not mean that people apart from these religion are not welcome. The people irrespective of their caste, color and creed can visit Harmandir Sahib.

Militant Khalsa and Mughals

Guru Arjan Dev flourished the seeds of Guru Nanak's teaching under the rule of Akbar. After Akbar's death new emperor Jahangir came to the throne and was against Sikhs religious practices. Guru Arjan Dev was blamed for various false allegations for instance Arjan Dev aided Khusrau, the son and rival of Jahangir. Guru Arjan Dev was forced to pay the heavy fine to which Guru denied. The banker named Chandu flattered Jahangir in order to take revenge as Guru Sahib had refused the proposal of his daughter's marriage. So, Jahangir from the dominant class tortured the Guru by forcing him to sit on the hot iron plate and hot sand was flooded over Guru Arjan Dev's head. He is symbolic of peace and harmony. He uttered the *Sukhmani Sahib* [religious scripture] with the strong believe in 'Akal Purakh' or Almighty. Surinder Singh Kohli expressed Jahangir's true monstrous motive in his work *The Sikhs and Sikhism*. He said:

"I fully knew his heresies, and I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his houses and children be made over to Murtaza Khan, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to death with tortures."(Kohli, 2018, p.55)

The fifth Guru created the history for the Sikhs and gave the message that tree of Sikh religion required the blood to flourish. The sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind came to the throne at the age of eleven. The young Guru girded two swords around his waist under the guidance of fifth Guru. One sword named 'Miri' symbolic of temporal authority and another sword was called 'Piri' symbolic of spiritual authority. This is the only religion in the world that along with the message of spirituality gave the education of martial arts [shastra vidhya]. The sixth Guru Hargobind built the 'Akal Takhat' means the throne of 'Akal Purakh' or God where the political and social issues would be discussed. Harmandir Sahib is the symbol of spiritual authority whereas 'Akal Takhat' represents the sainthood and secular authority. The second level of cultural hegemony that exerts the control is political state. The political society is described in the following words of Gramsci:

"The apparatus of state coercive power which legally enforces discipline on those groups who do not consent either actively or passively"(Gramsci, 1999, p.145)

The political status of Mughals is vividly analyzed through their physical and psychological domination and distortion with the establishment of Mughal Empire by Babur. In contrast to that research scrutinized the political interventions of Sikhs being the religious body that not only compete with the dominant class but also established the Khalsa Raj. Guru Hargobind was arrested and imprisoned in Gwalior for promoting the martial activities. He was released with the fifty two defeated kings who were arrested by the Mughal emperor also their kingdoms were confiscated. Jahangir agreed to release the fifty two defeated rulers on the condition that they had to hold Guru's tassel. According to the Bhai Santokh Singh's research Guru Hargobind designed the gown with fifty two tassels and all defeated rulers were released by holding the each tassel. In Sikh history the day is celebrated as the 'Bandi Chodh' means 'The Great Liberator'. As per the Khushwant Singh's information also certified by various other historians that Guru Hargobind's son named Gurditta deserved to hold the throne of Sikhism but he lost his life at his early

age. So Gurditta's son named Har Rai became the next Guru. Though most of the Mughals were always contemptuous to the Sikhs but when Shah Jahan's son Dara Shikoh suffered from the undetectable disease sought the help of Sikh Guru who later was cured by Guru Sahib. Shah Jahan whole heartedly thanked Guru Har Rai for the medical help. Guru Sahib promoted the martial art and prepared the Sikhs for military missions as the time demanded. After Guru Har Rai, Guru Harkrishan ascended to the throne and attained incredible level of spirituality at the age of five. In his times people became the victim of epidemic of cholera and smallpox. Guru Sahib had cured the people from the diseases. At the time of Aurangzeb Guru Sahib visited to Delhi. Mirza Jai Singh senior general under the Shah Jahan greeted him warmly and Guru Sahib stayed at his Bungalow. This place is now recognized as 'Gurudwara Bangla Sahib' in Delhi where Sikhs believed that the 'sarovar' or pool carried the spiritual powers and possessed the curing properties.

Guru Sahib's last words were 'Baba Bakale' he meant his granduncle Tyag Mal would come to the Sikh throne as Guru Tegh Bahadur. At that time Aurangzeb's cruelty reached its height as he wanted everyone to follow Islam religion. He abused Kashmiri Pandits either to accept Islam or give up their lives. After long struggle Kashmiri Pandits came to Guru Sahib to seek help. Guru Sahib's son Gobind Rai enquired the reason of deep sorrow to which Guru Sahib told him that to save the religion of Kashmiri Pandits the great spiritual soul had to give his blood. Gobind Rai advised his father to sacrifice his life. The Hindu preachers analyzed to the Sikh Guru as the ultimate power to provide them the shelter from the tyranny of Aurangzeb. Guru Tegh Bahadur summoned to Delhi to meet Aurangzeb with three Sikh companions Bhai Mati Das Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dyal. Guru Sahib took the command in his hand and advised the Hindus to announce that if Sikh Guru converted himself into Islam than only Hindus would surrender and follow the suit.

Bhai Santokh Singh's work *Suraj Prakash* approved the facts that how bravely Sikhs sacrificed their lives to save the Hindus from the religious persecution as Bhai Dhayala was boiled in the hot water, Bhai Mati Das was minced into the two parts, Bhai Sati Das was muffled up in cotton and was set on fire. Guru Tegh Bahadur was murdered in Chandi chownk. Gurudwara Sisganj Sahib was built in the respect of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and his companions. He is also recognized as 'Hind Ki Chader'- The protector of Hindus. Guru Tegh Bahadur's body was stolen by Lakhi Shah Vanjara after strict warning of Aurangzeb he burnt his house in order to complete the ceremony of cremation. Presently the place was recognized as Gurudwara Rakab Ganj Sahib. His head was taken by one of his followers named Bhai Jaita to Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's family in Anandpur Sahib for cremation where Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib is built. The spirit of tolerance exemplified by Sikh- Gurus defined the originality of principles that any religion teaches in the universe. The various researches defined the Sikh-Muslim relationship in the context of religion but failed to consider the socio-economic conditions that gave the birth to the militant Khalsa. It is important to analyze that Sikhs were not struggling against the Muslims but against the few Mughals as Jahangir and Aurangzeb. There are historical instances that defined the unison relationship of Sikhs and Muslims as Hazrat Mian Mir, Sufi saint was invited by fifth Guru to place the foundation stone of Harmandir Sahib also the friendship of Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana is symbolic of love and peace. On the other hand the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who wanted to spread the Islam came to the throne after executing his two brothers, exiled his third brother to Burma also imprisoned his father. The personality and deeds of Aurangzeb are against the Islamic value system, it means the religion is manifested as the tool of power to seize the entire world and exercise the control. The militant Khalsa was built and trained to confront such force and control that hegemonized through culture, religious values and belief system.

Contemporary Sikh Guru

Gobind Rai, the son of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib received the head of his father at the age of nine for cremation in Anandpur Sahib. The political situation of the time was getting worst so Gobind Rai was shifted from Anandpur Sahib to the mountains of Paonta Sahib in Himachal Pradesh. In Paonta Sahib Guru Gobind spent many years of his life also fought his first battle 'Bhangani ka Yodh'. A divine angel, philosopher, poet and warrior Guru Gobind Singh gave the soul to the Sikh religion by establishing the institution of Khalsa Panth in 1699. According to Bhai Santokh Singh's information Guru Gobind Singh asked for five heads in an open diwan organized at Anandpur Sahib on the festival of Baisakhi. The five Sikhs who came forward were Daya Ram, Dharam Das, Mohkam Chand, Himmat Chand and Sahib Chand. Guru Sahib formed Khalsa Panth by taking up the ceremony of 'Amrit Pauhal' as sacred amrit or holy water was prepared by Guru Sahib by reciting five holy scriptures named *Japji Sahib*, *Jap Sahib*, *Sawayiye*, *chaupayi sahib* and *Anand Sahib*. The five faithful followers of Guru Sahib were baptized and made them Singhs as Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh, Bhai Mohram Singh, Bhai Himat Singh and Bhai Sahib

Singh. These Singhs were called 'Panj Piyare' beloved of Guru also the name was given 'Khalsa'. The 'Panj Piyare' or Guru's beloved are recognized as supreme as the Guru Gobind Singh and their instructions are to be followed by every Sikh and the Guru himself. Later Gobind Rai begged his own followers or Singhs with folded hands to baptize him. This act of Guru Gobind Rai astonished the Panj Piyare or Khalsa and proved that he himself is the master and slave. To become the Singh Gobind Rai needed the Khalsa. He was the first Sikh to take the 'Amrit Pauhal' from the Khalsa this ceremony turned Gobind Rai to Guru Gobind Singh. It is through this ceremony that the word 'Singh' came into the existence. The establishment of 'Khalsa' is critiqued as the power that resists the domination through control and consent. Gramsci's idea of hegemony is broadly influenced by Karl Marx's theory of capitalism where Gramsci accepted the struggle between subordinates and dominants. He disapproved Marx's idea that the power exerted by dominant class is only supported by the base structure composed of good distribution, productive forces, and money. Gramsci focused on superstructure that exercised the control through the ideological institutions, political and social institutions, cultural values and beliefs. Mughals exerted the control through the base structure whereas Guru Gobind established the institution of power in 'Khalsa' that constitutes both the base and the superstructure. For instance the formation of 'Akal Takhat' and 'Khalsa' ingrained the reformed value system in the Punjab that not only resisted the Mughal's domination but also withstood the orthodox Hindu-Muslim classism and inequality. Lear's research work scrutinized the superstructure in the following words:

"The state, which is usually thought of as political society - i.e., a dictatorship or some other coercive apparatus used to control the masses in conformity with a given type of production and economy - [is] a balance between political society and civil society, by which I mean the hegemony of one society over the entire nation, exercised through so called private organization like the church, trade union or schools." (Lear, 2007, p. 570)

It is important to clarify that the Sikhs institutions were not meant to exercise the control over the other communities rather to gain the power to overcome the domination and suppression of Mughals. After tenth mortal Sikh Gurus various fraudulent conspirator could claim the throne of Sikhism so Guru Gobind Singh compiled *Guru Granth Sahib* [Holy book of Sikhs] that constitutes the compositions of Sikh Gurus, Peers, and Fakirs who had devoted themselves to the Almighty or 'Akal Purakh'. Guru Granth Sahib's compositions include the hymns of six Sikh Guru, fifteen Bhagats eleven Bhatts and four guru Sikhs. The initial copy of *Guru Granth Sahib* is recognized as *Adi Granth* compiled by Guru Arjan Dev. Guru Gobind Singh completed the task of compiling *Guru Granth Sahib* by adding 115 hymns of ninth Sikh Guru, Guru Tegh Bhadr Sahib also his father. Guru Gobind Singh instructed every Sikh to worship the immortal Guru. The formation of Sikh religion and 'Khalsa Panth' required the blood to flourish as Guru Gobind Singh sacrificed two elder sons Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh in the battle of Chamkaur where forty Sikhs fought against the ten lakh Mughals under the emperor named Aurangzeb.

Guru Sahib's younger son Baba Zorawer Singh who was nine and Baba Fateh Singh was six when they became the victim of Wazir Khan's tyranny as they were bricked alive. Wazir Khan was recognized as the governor of Sirhind, a territory between Yamuna and Satluj river under the Mughal Empire. Their only fault was that they refused to convert themselves into Islam and the son of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Sahib's mother Mata Guzari attained the salvation before she heard the news of the execution of 'Chote Sahibzade'. After sacrificing four children and earning the name of 'Sarbandsani.' Guru Gobind blessed sadhu named Madho Das and made him Banda Singh Bahadur by baptizing him with 'Amrit Pahaul'. Banda Singh Bahadur was brilliantly trained to fight against the brutal Mughals of the time under the instruction of 'Panj Piyare'. During this time period Guru Gobind Singh's health was degraded as Guru Sahib was wounded by the fraudulent of Wazir Khan. Surinder Singh's *The Life And the Ideals of Guru Gobind Singh* cultivates our knowledge about Guru Gobind's spiritual life also demonstrated his martial skills as the most bravest warrior, detached from the notion of animosity. His militant ways were not only the demand of time but also became obligatory to strengthen the wave of religious reformation or Sikhism against the tyranny.

II. CONCLUSION

The concept of cultural hegemony is understood with the sincere analyzation of instances at the age of Mughal Empire such as arrival Babur in Hindustan, suppression of the Hindu religion, end of their luxurious lives also the young princes were starved to die and their wives were brutally molested. The

humanity lost the social, political, religious and cultural values. It was the dark age when Guru Nanak originated Sikhism- the religious, social and political institution that resisted the hegemony of Mughals. After Babur his son Humayun took over the throne whereas Guru Nanak found the divine light in Bhai Lehna and handed over the Guruship to him who later became Guru Angad Dev. Similarly after ninth Guru the divine light was carried out by Guru Gobind Singh. This divine light becomes eternal in *Guru Granth Sahib*. The Sikhs were instructed to follow the teachings of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Gobind Singh said:

“Sabh Sikhian Ko Hukam Hai Guru Manyo Granth” (Santokh Singh, 2008, p.484)

It means there will be no mortal Guru. Every Sikh has to follow *Guru Granth Sahib* as the Guru. In the context of cultural hegemony it is important to analyze what is the nature of the consent of subordinates. It is influenced by the mechanical functioning of established orders of dominants that exert the control through the components of culture and successfully imposed the beliefs to construct the absolute centre of hegemony. The Mughal Empire failed to exercise the control through imperialism no doubt that they had deteriorated the components of culture. Khushwant Singh's work appraised the readers about the origin of Sikhs, Sikh's religious beliefs and Sikh Guru's social and political roles.

The Sikh Gurus since the age of Guru Nanak carried courage to raise the voice against the various social taboos such as untouchability, cast system, sati pratha, dowry System and molestation. The belief system and cultural values of Sikhs rejected the hegemonic power that is symbolic of suppression, control and domination. The Sikh religion not only showed the path of salvation but also guided the people how to fight for the truth and one's own rights. Sikhism showed the path of equality and emphasized on the casteless society for instance the marginalized sections of the society who were not allowed to worship the God, to have the food in the Langer, to collect the water from the common well now found the solace in Sikh religion and adapted the conversion. Each Sikh Guru believed that there is one God 'Akal Purakh' also followed the concept of monotheism. The research paper 'The concept of Monotheism and oneness in Islam and Sikhism' defines the words of Guru Nanak's from *Japji Sahib*:

“Ik Om Kar Satnam

Kartapurakh Nirbhao Nirvar Akal Murat Ajuni Sehbhang Gur Parsaad” (Alimardi, 2021,p.71)

The composition means the universal God is the only truth, fearless, free from hatred. Guru Gobind Singh's *Jap Sahib* declared the fact that 'Akal Purakh' is free from all the cast system, has no particular shade, color and image. The value system of equality discards the hegemonic Mughal society where the people of other religion were forced to follow the Islamic values. The research brings forth the fact that Mughals forcefully legalized the religious body to deteriorate the cultural components of other religions where the Islamic values lost its essence because no religion teaches control, suppression, inequality and inhumanity. The concept of Cultural hegemony vividly scrutinized that Sikhs' fight was against the power of suppression though it was not against the religion. Gramsci, not only discussed the process of cultural hegemony but also provided the resolution to overcome it for the subordinate class. He is of the opinion that power of control can be resisted if the subordinates take into the consideration the social and political interests of other groups along with their own interests. The subordinates can strengthen themselves by making alliance with other social marginalized groups and resisted the suppression imposed by the dominants. The working class should function to empower themselves to fight against the ideological struggle by questioning their economic and political rights. In context of Mughals emperors and Sikhs Gurus the readers critiqued the same strategy adapted by the Sikhs Gurus to empower themselves against Mughals. Sikhs Gurus not only flourished the tree of Sikhism but also took into account the interests of others. For instance Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for the Kashmiri Pandits, Guru Gobind Singh empowered the women by providing them equal rights and weapons for self-defence. Sikh Guru also recognized the pain of women and took into consideration their suppressed rights and inequality.

The research work of Aasif Rashid Wani informed the readers about the Sikh women who initiated the religious and cultural development in the society for instance Mata Gujar Kaur, Mata Bhag Kaur, Mata Sundari, Mata Sahib Kaur played as important role in the history of Sikhs. Mata Sahib Kaur Devan is remembered as mother of 'Khalsa Putra' or amritdharis and Guru Gobind Singh as the father. Mata Bhag kaur promoted the shaster vidhya or martial art as she led the army of forty Sikh soldiers in the Battle of

Muktsar in 1705. It was the age where women were suppressed and ignored without realizing the fact that it is the woman who inculcates the value and culture in the society through her parenting and motherly love. Sikhism demolished the inequality and discrimination in the society between man and woman, rich and poor. This social and political development allowed the Sikhs to overcome the hegemony that exercised the control through social institutions. Sikhs developed their own values, culture and social institutions not only by recognizing their own interest but the interest of whole humanity. It is to be critically understood that Islam as the religious institution did not exercise the control rather it was Mughals who manipulated Islamic values to suppress the other groups and establish their control as the ultimate power.

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