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## PREFACE

In the history of the world, there are many religions and *Deras* related to them. A look at the background of the history of *Deras* would certainly prove the effects of these religious institutions on human life. Humans had rarely secluded themselves from religion since antiquity. Among such religions *Udasi Derashold* a significant place. There are many *Udasi Deras* in Punjab, ranging up to 100 in Punjab region only. These *Udasi* saints are also known as "*Jattadhari*." Guru Nanak's son, Baba Shri Chand is called the founding father of these *Deras*. The main objective and principle of these *Deras* is to live a life of austerity away from the worldly pleasures and domestic life and to preach Guru Nanak's principles. At present, these *Deras* have undergone an intensive change. With the changing times, these *Deras* have expanded its welfare work in the social, religious and educational aspects of the society alongside moral and spiritual. Now, these *Deras* not only promote social and religious goals but also make it an aim to spread education at a greater level. Along with this, some *Deras* have shown their interest in spreading health facilities by building up hospitals, dispensaries and medical institutions. These *Deras*, in this manner, help the people in keeping up their health and raising the standard of their living through education. The purpose of this thesis is to bring these *Deras* to light, their history and present condition, the growth and development they underwent in this span of time, alongside the work they did. This research work also aspires to inform and enlighten people about their objectives and principles.

## Review of Literature

Amir Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, Macmillan, London, 1931. The book consists the knowledge about the *Deras* and other religious organizations of the ancient and the middle ages.

Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, Language Department, Patiala, Punjab, 1960. This book provides different and certain explanations for the words such as *Dera*, *Udas*, and *Sant*. This book throws light on the lifestyle, dress up, and appearance of the *Udasi* Sadhus.

Shiv Ram Das, *Udasin Chakarvarti, Udasiyan Da SacchaItihas*, Udasin Mahamandel Publication, Punjab, 1995. This book talks about the development, growth, areas, scope and ideology of the *Deras*.

Swami Shantanand Udasin, *AisiMatra Le Pahire Koi*, Jalandhar, 1996. This book is about the childhood of Baba Shri Chand, his life, teachings and *Baani* of Baba Shri Chand, and his relations with Sikh Gurus.

Giani Isher Singh Nabha, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Ji Sahib Ate Udasin Prampara (Guru Nanak Dev Ji Da Jiwan VirtantDharamSidhantanSamet)*, Shri Avdoot Jagat Ram Udasin Samiti, Kankhal, Haridwar, May 1998. This book reveals the relations of Baba Shri Chand with Sikh Gurus until he breathed his last.

ManmohanSehgal, *Shiv SawroopShrichandra (Biography of Lord Shri Chandra)*, Jalandhar, 2001. This book contains and provides information about the life of Baba Shri Chand, the founder of the *Udasi* cult.

Baba Virsa Singh, *Loving God*, Sterling Publishers, Delhi, 2006. The mentioned book talks about the different works and contributions made by different *Udasi Deras* for the welfare of our society.

Editor Sarbjinder Singh, *VishawDharamBani, Sampradye Ate Chintak*, Volume 3, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2007. This book consists of the information about the origin of the *Deras* and their contribution to the society.

Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampradye De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji, SantMagghar Das Ji*, Dera Baba Mandas Publisher, KhuddiKalan, Barnala, 2007. This book contains information about the life of Baba Shri Chand.

Gurdev Singh, *Udasi Sampradye Ate Sikh Panth*, Gobind Sadan, New Delhi, 2007. This book talks about the works of social welfare done by *Udasi* organizations. This book also sheds light on the work done by the organization in the field of education.

## **Scope**

The *Udasi* tradition is a very important tradition. Its scope is very large and wide. The *Udasi* cult had Guru Nanak's son, Baba *Shri Chand*, as its founding father. He preached about this tradition. However, some scholars argue that this tradition is very ancient. They have not only associated it with Shiva's ideology, but have argued that the tradition is also related to ancient Hindu religion. Baba *Shri Chand* made Baba Gurditta, the son of sixth guru, Guru Hargobind, his heir. Baba Gurditta preached about the *Udasi* ideology and chose his four representatives, who would help preach about the religion at various places. Those

were BaluHasna, Almast, Phool Sahib and Gobind Sahib. The institutions and its branches formed by the efforts of those four were called four *donnas* of *Udasi* tradition and are still existent. The main branch of this tradition is in Allahabad. They ask their followers to live in the will of God, a philosophy of living adopted by those who live in *Gurmat*. Their followers are spread all over India and numbers in lakhs. The *Udasi* saints have established many schools and colleges where free education is imparted to the students. With the changing times, there have been numerous changes and influences on the *Udasi* saints. At present, the protocol of the tradition has enlarged. They have shown their contribution in every field- be it social, religious or educational. Due to this, their influence area has grown large and wide.

### **Objectives**

- ❖ To analyze and mention the history of the *Udasi* tradition.
- ❖ Detailed description of the historical *Udasi* saints and *Deras* alongside the current *Deras* of the Malwa region.
- ❖ A detailed view about the relations and the association of the *Udasi* saints with the Sikh Gurus.
- ❖ To talk about the works of social welfare undertaken by the several organizations with their direction from the *Udasi* saints.
- ❖ To study their contribution in social, religious and educational fields is highlighted.

## **Plan of Work and Research Methodology**

In the wake of the scope and background of the research work, it becomes necessary to talk about the methods of research adopted, and the problems regarding the collection of material. Primarily, this research work has been based on three types of methods: Analytic method, Secondary data and personal meetings.

The Analytic method is used both in participatory and non-participatory methods. Secondary data included Historical material, magazines, journals, books related with the *Deras*, and pamphlets. This material had also made the base for the research instead of just its usage. All this material has been collected from Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha Library, Punjabi University Patiala, Bhai Gurdas Library, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, and the Joshi Library of Panjab University, Chandigarh.

The third method of personal meetings and questionnaire has been used in a very effective way. Saints, *Dera* organizers, preachers, office staff, followers and many other social parties or NGO's were interviewed at certain time intervals. The collected information and their ideas were recorded and are used as a source of analysis for this research. The material related to the *Deras* has been collected using historical techniques, and the data has been collected with objective approach for right and factual material. The same has been achieved. Afterwards the material and collected data has been critically analyzed from different perspectives. These perspectives are not only religious or spiritual but also social, economic and political.



## **Need of Study**

This research work has much importance in the present context. Globalization, development, and growth in the sector of Education have made people aware of the true meanings of religion. Still, many new *Deras* have been built at different places. Their number has grown to thousands. *Udasi* tradition is an important cult. This is related to Sikhism. Although many people have researched on this topic, my aim is to understand the real and authentic working of these *Deras*. Are these *Deras* really doing some social welfare? Why people, especially villagers in a larger count, have such faith on these *Deras*? Do visits to these *Deras* solve their adversaries or problems? Are these *Deras* under political control? What interest and favor these *Deras* have in the state and the regional politics? Do these places are helpful to give any lead to the society in getting rid of any problem in the social and educational areas and sector? What place and opinion women hold in the ideology and working of these *Deras* and do they work for their upliftment? What differences have come, over time, in the ideology of these *Deras*? The aim of this research work is to raise these questions in order to find some authentic answers.

## **CHAPTERIZATION**

### ***Deras*: Meaning and Origin**

The first chapter introduces the origin and meanings of words such as *Dera*, *Sant*, and *Udas*. This chapter also includes the origin, making, and history of the *Udasi* cult. The pioneer and founder of this cult Baba Shri Chand is also introduced in this chapter.

## **Development of *Udasi Deras***

This chapter describes the history and the saints of the *Udasi Dera* falling in the Malwa region of Punjab. In addition, this chapter also contains some important information about the development and growth of these *Deras*.

## ***Udasi* and Sikh Gurus: Their Relations**

This chapter reveals about the relations between the founder of the *Udasi* cult Baba Shri Chand and Sikh Gurus. In addition, this chapter also includes information about the ways in which *Udasi* Mahants preached in favor of the Sikh religion. It also peeps into the present condition of these preaching of the Sikh religion by *Udasi* saints.

## ***Udasi* Cult: Contribution in Politics, Religion, Society, and Education**

This second last chapter consists of the detailed analysis about the development and growth of the *Udasi Deras*. This chapter also applauds the contributions of the *Udasi Deras* in the social, religious, political, and educational fields.

## **Conclusion**

## Chapter 1

### Meaning and Origin of *Dera*

*Dera, Dehra and Dhehra* are synonyms. *Dehra* word is derived from *Deh* that means body.<sup>1</sup>

*Bhai Prapati manukh deheya.*

*So sahu bind na visrau nanak jin*

*Sndar racheya dehu.*<sup>2</sup>

The *Banni* composed and included in Shri Guru Granth Sahib relates the meaning of the word *Dehra* to *Deh* that means body. In this context, Bhai Kahan Singh thinks the meaning to be a place where the funeral of body has taken place. A *Samadhi* or mausoleum has been made on that place in his/her memory, or temple on the place of mausoleum. (Place of worship that has been built is called *Dehra*.)<sup>3</sup>

With the passage of time, many of those memorial religious places grew to be cities e.g. Dehradun.

The words *Dera, Dhehra* and *Dehra* also mean house, a place where one can stay. A temporary place built as a shelter and a place of permanent residence is also called *Dera*.<sup>4</sup>

In the history of the naming the villages, the word *Dera* had been used with the names of many villages and colonies. Cities and villages like *Dera* Baba Nanak, *Dera* Ismail Khan. Bhai Gurdas, prominent Sikh scholar, wrote that Baba Shri Chand had built *Dehra* of Guru Nanak:

*Bal jati hai Shri Chand Babbana Dehra Bnaye.*<sup>5</sup>

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1. *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, p-12.

2. *Shri Guru Granth Sahib*, p-712

3. Bhai KahanSingh, Nabha, *Guru shabad Ratankar Mahan Kosh*, Publication Bureu Punjabi University, Patiala-1999, p-649.

4. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Purav Aank*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, p-562.

5. Bhai Gurdas, *Gian Ratanawli*, Bhai Rala Singh and Sons, Punjab Commercial press, Amritsar, 1914, p-26.

The word *Dera* also connotes a place made in the memory of any religious person.

Refraining from delving deep into this matter, we can take two historical examples, *Dera* Baba Nanak and Dehradun. Even before Guru Nanak came, the *Dera* Baba Nanak was known as *Dera* Baba Nanak. Guru Nanak's sons built *Dera* Baba Nanak in the memory of their father. Later on, Maharaja Ranjit Singh took the responsibility of looking after the place.<sup>6</sup> Dehradun city was built in the memory of Shri Guru Har Rai Shaib's son Baba Ram Rai.<sup>7</sup>

The above-mentioned information derives the fact that the word *Dera* cannot be confined to any one meaning. *Dera* signifies and means a place to live as well as the whole village.

A multifaceted study of the effects of the social phenomena of Punjab was carried out. In this survey, origin alongside the growth and development of these *Deras* and their contribution in the welfare of the society was put under scrutiny. It is difficult to say when the advent of these *Deras* has occurred.<sup>8</sup>

Today, the word *Dera* is used in so many contexts because the old religion has been divided into many factions. The belief of the Religion is to establish a unique identity for itself and for that matter they need a place to sit and preach about it. These places too are known as *Deras*. In other words, a place which is used for the sole purpose of preaching about the religion is called *Dera*. In *Deras*, alongside the preaching and promotion of the religion, the clarification and importance of the belief must also be preached.

The Sikhs are divided into two major factions, *Amritdhari* Sikhs and *Sehajdhari* Sikhs. *Amritdhari* Sikhs are those who abide by the rules of Guru Gobind Singh and enter into the religion after drinking the *Amrit* (a drinkable substance made in a special way, a way of baptism.), as administered by Guru Gobind Singh. *Sehajdhari* Sikhs or a Sikh deist (literally slow adopter) is a person

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6. Bhai Kahan Singh, Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, *Purav Aank*, *Op. Cit.* p-649.

7. *Ibid*, p-649.

8. Sarabjinder Singh, (Editor) *Vishav Dharam Banni, Sampardayi ate Chintak*, Publication Bureau Punjabi University, Patiala, Part third, edition-2007, pp-38-40.

who has chosen the path of Sikhism, but has not become an Amritdhari (an initiated Sikh initiated into the Khalsa). A Sehajdhari believes in all tenets of Sikhism and teachings of Sikh Gurus. *Nirmale* and *Nihang* are also parts of Sikhs. *Nirmale* came into existence after tenth Guru Guru Gobind Singh. They wear *Kashhera* and *Cholla*. Basically they wear sienna, dandelion and white coloured clothes. Because of pure or *nirmal* river which flows from the mountains gave them the name *Nirmale*. Their main aim was and is to attain and spread the knowledge. Their headquarters are situated at Haridwar. *Nihang* Sikhs are armed Sikhs and always wear blue dresses. *Udasi* Sikhs are part of *Sehajdhari* faction. Baba Shri Chand was the founder of this cult. Guru Gobind Singh formed the group of *Sevadhari* Sikhs. These are water harvesters and worshipers of Ramrasia.<sup>9</sup>

The first institutional division of the Sikhs happened after Guru Nanak Dev went to the heavenly abode. The followers of Guru Nanak accepted his elder son Baba Shri Chand as his successor and refused to accept Guru Angad Dev as his nominee. The followers of Baba Shri Chand are called ‘*Udasi*’ or ‘*Ekaantwaasi*.’ At present, there are patient and humble Sikh followers of the tradition in a large number.<sup>10</sup>

A small religious group is called *Mat* which has been originated from a large religion. The ideology of this group has some similarities to the larger religious organization yet there are some differences.

Now, large number of *Deras* has been established in Punjab. The religious preaching is done by the managers of the *Dera* and the *Dera* saints. The *Deras* have huge number of followers attached to them. It has been observed through a deep analysis that the *Dera* saints not only preach about the religion but also attend to the development of the *Deras*.

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9. Max Arthur Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Part 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>, Publisher Forgotten Books, London 1935, p-2.

10. *Ibid*, p-1

If the history of the *Deras* is to be seen, it can be said that the religious organization greatly influence human life. Man has hardly thought about his life leaving alone religion and the religious centres have put a great impact on human life. In the present times, *Deras* have become such an institution that has impacted humankind greatly. The basis for their establishment has been to preach religious morals and principles. But they had to pass through a lot to come to their present shape.

The words *Sant* and *Mahant* have been associated with every *Dera*. The development of the history of the *Deras* has been continuing since antiquity and there is hardly a scholar who has questioned this. The meaning of the word *Dera* is an institution or a place to live, a tent or pavilion. This has been provided to us by the *Mahan Kosh* of Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha.

The word *Sant* in English refers to Saint Hamilton, pious and deeply religious person and ascetic, mendicant, etc. Similarly, the word *Dera* in English refers to camp, encampment, dwelling, lodging, abode, monastery, cluster, seminary, hermitage, etc.<sup>11</sup>

These *Deras* are related to different institutions. Especially in Punjab, one can find a large number of *Deras*. Some *Deras* are very old. Hence, it can be said that these *Deras* have been present since ancient times and there are some *Deras* which are related to medieval ages.<sup>12</sup>

In Punjab and other parts *Deras* are trying to encourage more people to follow so called human gueius. In Punjab there are an estimated 9,000 *Deras* in Punjab. each *Dera* headed by a Baba or a Sant. These *Deras* are far off from villages, cities and urban living. Some *Deras* are so influential that they have large property under them. Some *Deras* have established their distinctive identity due to their involvement in social, religious and educational areas. In some *Deras*, congregations are held on large scale where a large number of people come.

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11. Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha, *Mahan Kosh*, Op. Cit. p-32.

12. Mohan, Sahigal, *Shri Guru Granth Sahib EkSanskritikSarvekshan*, Language Department , Patiala, Punjab 1970, p-373.

Most *Deras* are associated with their central institutions for their problems, rituals and succession. Some *Deras* are involved in their religious work only. Whereas there are many *Deras* which are involved in the social welfare of the people and they are very influential in these areas.<sup>13</sup>

From the above mentioned facts, it can be stated that the saints living in the *Deras*. Dera is a punjabi word of Persian origin meaning camp, abode, temple, sacred shrine or habitation. In Sikh literature it has been used for camp and containment. Some Gurudwaras have also been called as Dera eg- Gurudwara Dera Sahib, Dera Baba Nanak. In Punjab and other parts Deras are trying to encourage more people to follow by so called human guise. In Punjab there are Deras in different numbers. So while Sikh religion does not approve of these Deras and especially worshipping a Guru in physical form. There has been no research done on this subject. As we know that the seeds of religion and spiritualism of Indian civilization have been sown in the ancient times. Religion is a social-cultural system of designated behaviors and practices, morals, world views, texts, sanctified places, ethics or organizations that's relates humanity to supernatural or spiritual elements. However, there is no scholarly consensus over what precisely constitutes a religion and Sikhism is based on the spiritual teachings of Guru Nanak, the first Guru (1469-1539) and the nine Gurus that succeeded him. The development of Sikhism was influenced by the Bhakti movement and Vaishnava Hinduism however Sikhism was not simply an extension of the Bhakti movement. The early Sikh sects were Udasis and Minas founded by Sri Chand the elder son of Guru Nanak, and Pirthi Chand the elder son of Guru Ram Dass respectively, in parallel to the official succession of Sikh Gurus.

The Saints of the *Udasi Deras* usually wear ochre clothes. They wear turban of the ochre colour or just wear a small turban. They usually wear *Kurta* and *Chadar*. The *Udasi* saints speak Punjabi. Because of the ascetic language, some words of Hindi language get mixed up in their language. It can be said that

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13. *ParasBhag, Op. Cit.* p-373.

there is such a mixture of Hindi and Punjabi. The language is not only understood by the common people but it also influences them. They understand every conversation about the *Dera*.<sup>14</sup>

We will discuss the *Udasi Deras* taken up in the research project in the next chapter. It is also stated that I have taken up the study of *Deras* established after the independence of the country. The *Udasi Deras* in Punjab are large in number. These are also called *Jatadhari*.

The elder son of Guru Nanak, Baba Shri Chand, is known to be the founder of this tradition. The main goal of these *Deras* is to stay away from worldly distractions and to preach Nanak Mat in their own way. The main centres of these *Deras* are in Haridwar and Kankhal. But it does not mean that the other *Deras* lack in importance.

It would be true to say that other *Deras* are similar in their importance and their influence is also the same on people. Among their symbols are hair, *majithi chola*, *sees* and *ucchakulla*, *kali seli*, *tumbi*, *lakkjanjeer*, etc. Hence, with the use of these symbols, they have made a different clan among themselves. Having a different ideology, they are still influenced from Sikh principles.

The *Udasi* saints living on the banks of the river Ganga were very effective in eighteenth century. They have made their altars in Mungre, Bhagalpurush, Rajmehar and Kattak. Out of these, some have become temples. Some have been taken over by the Sikhs. It is said that the *Gurudwara* of Kattak was the first place of the *Udasis*. It is seen from various documents that in ancient India, the preaching of Sikh religion was initially done by *Udasi Nanak panthis*. They have their organisations and altars there.<sup>15</sup>

It is necessary to tell in brief that their structure is not the same as before in present times. With the changed situations, there has been a change in their

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14. Ibid, p-42.

15. Udasin Swami Santanand, *AisiMatra Le Pehre Koi*, Swami Sant Das Publication, Jalandhar, 1996, p-90.



structure, objectives, their works, and their involvement is great in social welfare and political arenas.<sup>16</sup>

They have also started taking interest in educational field. It will be discussed in detail later.

In almost all the *Deras*, the tradition of *Langar* has been adopted and it has been so strengthened that unlimited number of the poor and the needy can eat stomach full of meals from the *langar*. Its importance has been so increased that it has also led to the popularity of these *Deras*. In the present times also, the tradition of *langar* is also prevalent.

The *Deras* of the present times are not only associated with the religious and social change, but their aim is also to bring about a change in the educational field. With this, some *Deras* have also taken interest in the field of health and have established dispensaries, hospitals and institutions related to medical education. They have provided help to many poor and needy people. The present research project aims to come to an understanding of the various works done by these **Deras** in detail and to provide awareness about them.

With the change of time, there have been rise of various sects and *panths*, which are small in number and are influential. Among them, *Udasi* tradition is one which has been consistently growing. The reason for its growth is its founder Baba Shri Chand, and his charismatic personality and spiritual achievements. He always advised the human mind to lead an ideal life and such advice is still preached to the people by his tradition. Some scholars believe Baba Shri Chand to be the founder of *Udasi* tradition. But there are some who have not only associated him to Shiva, but also to the Hindu ideology.<sup>17</sup> In reality, *Udasi* tradition is multi-faceted. Its origin is associated with the Sanskrit word *Udas*. It means *belaag*, *beetrag*, *nirpeksh*, *virkat*, an ascetic society, *Udasi* cult, *Nanak Shahi Sadhu*, etc.<sup>18</sup>

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16. Bhai Kahan Singh, *Guru Sudhakar*, Language Department, Patiala, 1899, p-649.

17. Gurnam Kaur, (Editor), *Udasi Da Akadmik Paripeksh* Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1997 p-78.

18. Harbhajan Singh, *Gurmukhi Lipi Me Hindi Kawya*, Bhartiye Sahitye Mandir, Delhi, 1963, p-137.

About the origin of the *Udasi* tradition, it is said from the writings of Guru Nanak Dev and the *vaars* of Bhai Gurdas that *Udasi* tradition has been continuing before the time of Guru Nanak. But Baba Shri Chand gave it a new direction. He was a *hathi-jati* and great saint. He was born on the ninth day of *Bhadonshudhi* in 1551 in Sultanpur Lodhi, District Kapurthala, to Mata Sulakhni and Guru Nanak Dev. During that time, Guru Nanak Dev used to work in the company of Hakam Daulat Khan.<sup>19</sup> Along with his job, he also recited the name of God. His spiritual elegance also had its effect on the child Shri Chand to a great extent. He also started exercising the name of *Satnam* from his childhood and would recite the word *tera* (Yours) continually and got lost in the recitation of God's name. Baba Shri Chand was an extraordinary child from his childhood. On his birth, there was ascetic ash spread over his body and had earlobes of human flesh. These were the symbols that indicated his ascetism during his childhood. His mental interests were also different from other children. He did not have love for material things. He would love to be alone and recite God's name wholeheartedly.<sup>20</sup> It is due to this reason that he had decided to lead an ascetic life which would attend to the human welfare.<sup>21</sup>

When the principles of Baba Shri Chand's life are studied, it is seen that he spent his life in a strict discipline and struggled to give a real colour to the principles of his father, Guru Nanak. His goal was to persevere for the needy. Like a common ascetic, his aim was not to attain personal liberation. Like his father, he aimed at promoting social welfare and would participate in such works with great zeal. The powers he gained from his spiritual sources, he used them for helping the poor and the needy. He would advise the ordinary people to live life of sacrifice. His faith was that *Saadhna* or disciplined practice could be done with an intensive practice. The goal of the human being is to lead the life like a flower which is

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19. ManmohanSehgal, *Shiv Savroop Shri* (Biography of Lord Shri Chand) Jalandhar, 2000, pp- 311-12.

20. Loc cit.

21. Udasin,SwamiSantanand (Editor), *Shri ChanderTatavdarshan*, Swami Sant Das Publication, Jalandhar, 1994, p-165.

characteristic of humbleness, service and *Simran*. He had a firm faith that life should be led sacrificing the materialistic world.<sup>22</sup>

Baba Shri Chand travelled to religious places, pilgrimages and advised the superstitious people to lead a pure and disciplined life. He emphasized on leading a life full of love for each other, decency and peace rather than listening to the false preaching of the *Pandits* and *Maulvis* who divide people on the basis of sects. In order to preach his principles, he travelled on foot for thirty years. During those travels, he saved the Islam followers from the cruelty of the Hindu followers.<sup>23</sup>

He impressed the rulers of Kashmir, Sindh, Peshawar, Kabul, etc. with his magical powers and took promises from them that they would stop harassing the Hindus and would give them liberty to practice their religion. At present, the *Deras* have been established in such places in the memory of Baba Shri Chand. The recitation of *Satnam* is still prevalent at such places. In Baba Shri Chand's words, a real rich man is he whose mind is devoted to the welfare of others. Hence, it can be said that Baba Shri Chand practiced and propagated the principles of *Udasi* tradition during his life time and his principles were then propagated by the upcoming saints. The ideals and teachings of this tradition continued to influence people.<sup>24</sup>

The *Udasi* saints propagated the religious principles, especially in the troubled times from 1708 to 1900, and maintained the pride of Sikh religion. These saints did a praiseworthy service in propagating *Gurbani* by writing an important Granth.

The influence of *Udasi* saints has been great during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The kings gave the *Udasi* saints properties and due to this reason, there was a downfall in the character of these saints. They started preaching their

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22. Udasin SwamiSantanand, *AisiMatra Le Pehre Koi*, *Op. Cit.* p-209.

23. Upadheya, L.P, *Matar-Vaid-Darapan*, Jalandhar, *Op. Cit.*, p- 221.

24. ManmohanSehgal, *Shiv Savrup Shri Chand* (Biography of Lord Shri Chandar) Swami Sant Das Publication, Jalandhar, 2000, p-334.

ideals in the *Gurudwaras*. As a result, *Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar* came into existence. Due to its influence, *Gurudwaras* were liberated from the possessions of *Udasi* saints and were given to Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee. With this, there were differences among the *Udasi* saints and their preaching cooled down. Still, these *Udasi* saints were propagating their principles at their will.

The basis of incantation of Shri Chand *MatraBaani* is the situations, dialogues with Naths and yogis and the answers given to them without fear. In a way, Shri Chand attacked on the contemporary yogis. According to him, the yogis disguise themselves in ascetic clothes and pretend to be preaching the ideals of the tradition. He took upon the task of teaching them a right direction by showing off the pretence and leading a true life.<sup>25</sup>

The *Udasi Deras* have worked for the welfare of the society in such a great number of ways that Baba Shri Chand has earned a distinctive place in the society. It should be stated here that it would be wrong to include the *Udasi* saints into the Sikh religion and to accept them as separate part of the Nanak *Panth*. The most important thing is that *Udasi* saints worship the idols and *Samadhs* of their elder saints. In the *Akhadas* of the *Udasis*, they worship the five devas. This worship is not done by any Sikh. If it is not agreed upon, then on what basis are *Udasis* called the Sikhs. In a similar vein, the *Udasis* worship Shri Ganga and Shri Prayagraaj and even go to such places. The religion of Guru Nanak is not different from *Panth* Vedas and relics. There were *Udasis* before him also. Keeping in view this dissent, it can be said that the *Udasi* saints never opposed Sikh Gurus, their principles, their religious scriptures, their social customs and religious beliefs. Almost all saints of the *Udasi* tradition respect Sikh religion and Sikh protocol. Though one does not accept them as part of the Sikh religion, we cannot deny the fact that they never ever disrespected Sikh Gurus, Sikh ideology and philosophy and never did they spoke against them.<sup>26</sup>

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25. L.P.Upadheya, Ibid, pp-207-08,

26. Udasin, Swami Shantanand, *AaisiMatra Le Pehre Koi*, Op. Cit., p-175, Personal meeting with Shantanand Ji Shastari, Udasin Dera, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar.

Baba Shri Chand spread the humanitarian message to every home, but he also imagined a united nation so that people get united to fight their own struggle and inculcate self-respect, self-belief and self-dependence in them, reciting the name of the Almighty every now and then. His *Baani* deals with his various thoughts which throw light on the principles of Guru Nanak.<sup>27</sup>

At the present times, the structural development of the *Udasi* tradition and their regional influence has become widespread. One thing is certain that in India, *Dera* tradition has been progressing since the ancient times. When an institutional structure of a *Dera* is established in a place, it starts working for its principles from there on. When the followers of the *Dera* increase in number, various strategies are formulated to develop and expand the *Dera*. When there is a rise in the popularity of a *Dera*, its followers start giving donations, thereby increasing the income of the *Dera*. The *Mahants* start formulating various strategies.<sup>28</sup>

The funds are first used for the building of the *Dera*. When the followers of the *Dera* start coming from the outside places, it does not only increase its popularity, but also lead to the spread of its ideology. Then it leads to the establishment of similar branches of the *Dera* in outside regions.<sup>29</sup>

Different rules are followed for different issues in the *Deras*. All these are framed keeping in mind the ideology and development of the *Dera*. This is the reason that transparency, honesty, discipline, time management and custom made rules become an important part in the working of *Deras*.<sup>30</sup>

It becomes important to establish a management committee to solve various issues in the *Dera*. It is because in some matters, delay and wrong decision can lead to a question mark on the working of the whole *Dera*. In big *Deras*, there is a

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27. *A Glossary of Tribes and Castes of the Punjab and N.W.F.P*(1883), Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, 1970, Vol 23, p-172.

28. Simarjeet Singh, *GurmatParkash*, Amritsar, 2007, pp-28-29; Mahant Anantanand, Udasin and Giani Indar Singh, *Shri Chand Parkash*, ar. Ealgaan Publication, Amritsar, 1995, pp-40-45.

29. Karam Singh, Mahant Heera Das Ji, *Jivan Ate Shakhshiat, Udasin Bhekh da Anmol Heera*, Mayas Publishers, Bathinda, p- 20.

30. Paramjeet Singh, *Pandit Taara Singh Narotam: Jeevante Rachna (Shri Gurmat Nirne de Sandharbh Vich)* Bhai Chatar Singh, Jeevan Publication, Amritsar, 2008, p-69.

budget committee which manages the financial accounts of the *Dera* where it also becomes important to keep notice of the money spent by the *Dera*. In reality, this committee does not only play an integral part in the *Dera* but in order to manage the *Dera* in a disciplined way, it becomes its role to regulate the income and to see that there is no wrongdoing in the *Dera* and that the money is spent in an honest way.<sup>31</sup>

We are talking here about the regional influence and expansion of the *UdasiDeras*. What was the reason behind the founding of the *Dera* on that particular place? How the *Deras* expanded with time in terms of their buildings, their increase in number of followers, economical and religious strengthening, and their influence in regional and outside places? All these issues are the basis of our investigation of the *Deras* of the *Udasi* tradition.

The antiquity of the *Udasi* tradition and the principles of the *UdasiDeras* are the touchstones which make this tradition an important one. It is also because the founding father of this tradition is known to be the elder son of Guru Nanak Dev, Baba Shri Chand. In other words, it means that we have been living in the *Udasi* tradition since the time of Gurus.<sup>32</sup> The *Udasi* saints went to various places and due to some geographical situation, or their own will or keeping in view the followers of the *Dera*, the *Udasi* saints constructed various *Deras*.

*Dera* Bhai Prithi Sahib (*Dera* Maanik), which is related to the *Udasi* tradition, is situated in a village in district Muktsar. This *Dera* is also called *Dera* Maanik.

We know that man is a social animal and imagining his existence without the society is not just improbable but impossible. The truth is that man and society have been joined together in such a form that they complete each other and there is

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31. Das, Shiv Ram, *UdadsinChakarvati, Udasiyan Da SachaItihas*, Parkashak Udasin Mahamandal, Punjab, Mitiheen, P-123; Nirmal Sampardaye, Amritsar, Guru Nanak Dev University, Amritsar, 1981, p-50;

32. Sant Nirbhinder Singh, *AacharjRoopRahantJanam II NaitNaitKathant Beda II* (AscharajVastu) Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh, December, 1997, pp-83-84; Swami, Kishor Das, Swami Bhashkranand, *Swami Vivekanand ate Swami Ishwar Das* (SampadakMandal), *Shri ChandarChandrika*, New Delhi, 1994, pp-79-80.

no ambiguity about this fact. Man cannot live alone by himself, but to fulfill his needs and existence, human beings build relationships with each other that make a society. When he is associated with a society, he falls into the maze of worldly distractions and perversions such as lust, anger, avarice, *maya* and pride, throughout his life. These are worldly abstractions and build the economic life of man.<sup>33</sup>

When a human being tries to know himself, he also seeks to find peace and liberation. This condition can be called the first step towards *Udasi*. In order to attain peace of mind and happiness, a human being tries to seek the Truth of life and also carries his attempts to liberate himself from the cycle of life and death. He reaches on a conclusion that God has created just one path for that which leads to God himself. Hence, he starts worshipping God who has made him.<sup>34</sup>

While living in the society, due to his own needs or due to the norms of the society, man builds relationships with others. Cast in the web of the worldly pleasures and societal norms, he is caught in these relationships. He has just two ways to live in the society: one is to live in the society, get married, earn income through hard labour and worship God seeking peace, love and liberation; the other way is to leave the worldly pleasures, break from all relationships so that he does not get involved in any social relationship and lead his whole life in preaching the religion, serving humanity and reciting the name of the Almighty.<sup>35</sup>

Such human beings leave the society and to find a lone place go to the *Deras*. It is the first stage of becoming a saint. Because the tradition of all *Deras* is to guide human beings to break off themselves from the worldly perversions of

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33. GurpartapDas(Editor). *Shri Chand Aank*, Publication Udasin Mahamandal, Jildh 46, 3 September, 1995; Shri Chandar.AulakhPurakh *Da SimroNam*(Shri ChandarBhagwan Ji Da 505 SalaJanamSamaroh), Bhkhi Mansa, Publication Dera Baba Balwant Muni Ji Maharaj. p- 127.
  34. Ramdas, Shiv,*UdasinChakarvarti, Udasiyan Da SachaItihas*, Publication Udasin Mahamandal, Punjab, Dateless, p-112-13; Paramjit Singh, Nirotam, Pandit Tara Singh, *JivanTeRachana*(Shri GurmatNirne De SandarbhhVich), *Op. Cit.* pp-67-68.
  35. Sant Nirbhinder Singh, *AacharjRoopRahantJanam II NaitNaitKthant Beda II* (AscharjVastu) Nirmal Ashram, Rishikesh, December,1997, pp-192-200;Osho, *Dharam Ate Rajniti*, OshoParkashan Ludhiana, 1996, pp-136-137.

lust, anger, avarice, *maya* and pride, and to lead the people to strive on the path of peace and liberation, a human being starts living his life in a humble and decent manner. The heads of these *Deras* not only guide the people about the tradition of these *Deras* but also preach the teachings of the religion and advise people to follow that path which leads to God.<sup>36</sup>

The teachings are to sing praises and worship nature and happiness of human being is in seeking god and serving the humanity. The goal of human life is not only to eat, live and be married, get married and lead a family life and then die, but it is seek liberation.

For understand the true meaning of Paap-Punya to understand pure and impure; and to earn by one's labour. According to their teachings, man should not insult or backbite against other beings. If a man keeps these things in mind and find ways to seek God, he can make his life better. These things have been the basis of the ideologies of various institutions and will remain so.<sup>37</sup>

This is the reason that saints all over the world have believed themselves to be the ideal saints and earned respect. Guru Angad would stay at Khadoor Sahib and preach his teachings to the married Sikhs, but Baba Shri Chand followed the principles of his father and maintained the tradition of Shri Kartarpur, but he also visited places outside Punjab and far and off in the country.

The saints of the *Udasi* tradition become *Udas* leaving the societal life and responsibilities. They leave the society and reside in the *Deras* in lonesome places because they are of the belief that it is only by leading an ascetic life that one can seek God and win Himself.<sup>38</sup>

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36. Osho, *Akhat Kahani Prem Ki*, Osho Parkashan Ludhiana, 1991, p-79; Swami Kishor Das, Swami Bhaskarnand, Swami Vivekanand and Swami Ishvardas (Editor Group) *Shri Chanar Chandrika*, New Delhi, 1994, p-112.

37. Giani Balwant Singh, Kotha, Guru, *Nirmal Panth Di Gaurv Gatha*, Shrimaan Mahant Balwant Singh Secretary, Haridwar, Uttaranchal, 2009, p-451.

38. Manmohan Sehgal, *Shri Chand, Shiv Savroop*. Swami Sant das Parkashan Parishad, Jalandhar, 2000, p- 169-70. Shri Narian Mishar, Krishan Prem Aavarthi (Editor) *Snatan Darashan Di Prishthbhumi*, Sanatan Ashram, Lucknow, pp-279-80; Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampadayi De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Sant Magghar Das Ji, Dera Baba Maandas Parkashak, Khuadi Kalan, Barnala, 2007, pp-167-68.



A Dera is a type of socio-religious organization in northern India. Jacop Copeman defines the Deras as monasteries or the extended residential sites of religious leaders, frequently just glossed as sect. The word Dera derives from the Persian word *Derah* which literally means a camp, abode, monastery or convent. The phenomenon of Dera, as a sectarian institution, is not new in Punjab and it is much older than the Sikh faith and Panth. Deras in Punjab, before the Sikh faith, belonged to Sufi Pirs, Yogi Naths and Sants of the Bhakti movement.

In true terms, the goal of human life is to attain *moksha* and to gain this, the path is led through serving humanity and following the principles of humanity, in order to attain God. It is because of this that the *Udasi* saints do away with the familial bonds and go to lone places of *Deras* to seek God and by their good thoughts, they attract people towards them. They treat the patients by giving them free medicines and satisfy themselves by serving food to the hungry in *Langar*. With this, peace of mind is attained and the name of God is uttered along with preaching about the religion.<sup>39</sup>

In the ancient scriptures, it has been written in clear language that the service of humanity is the service of God. In other words, one who serves humanity with a pure heart and selflessness, he makes the creator happy and his service is known to be the service of God. As a result, he is awarded with *moksha*.

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39. Giani Balwant Singh Kotha, *Nirmal Sampardai*, Nanak Parkash Patrika, December, 2005, Volume 2, Punjabi University, Patiala, p- 121-22; *The Glossary Of Tribes and Castes of The Punjab and Utari Pashmi Sarhid Prant*, 1883, Language Department, Patiala, Punjab, 1970, P- 172.

## Chapter 2

### Development of *Udasi Deras*

Guru Nanak Dev, before leaving this world and his body, decided to choose an heir to the *Guru Gaddi*. For that purpose he presented his sons, and other Sikhs to hard, tough and rigorous challenges. Both of his sons, not only refused to comply with his wishes but also disrespected him, claiming his order to be improper and inappropriate. When Guru Nanak Dev chose Guru Angad Dev his heir, Shri Chand, in revolt, applied ash on his body and undone hair, and formed his asana in the cremation ground. And this became the origin of *Udasi* cult.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Nanak Dev, in the wake of the revolt of his sons, asked Guru Angad Dev to move from Kartarpur to Khadoor Sahib. However, Shri Chand, still, was revolting against the *Gurugaddi*. Guru Amardas, during his time, tried hard to differentiate between the Sikhism and *Udasi* cult and also cautioned Sikhs against the seductive and ignorant preaching of Shri Chand. In a meeting with Guru Ramdas, Shri Chand questioned about his long beard. But Guru Sahib's humility made him realize the fact that spirituality is not hereditarily attained, but is attained with the blessings of Guru Sahib. Although, Fifth and Sixth Sikh Gurus respected Shri Chand as he was the son of Guru Nanak Dev but they never approved his ways of worship. Even, Baba Gurdit Singh's assimilation with Shri Chand was not able to assimilate this sect with Sikhism as Baba Bhudh Singh too, was not a son that would live according to Guru Sahib's wishes. Thus, Baba Shri Chand started his own *Gaddi*. It was impossible in Sikhism to approve this kind of religious practice. However, the relations between *Udasi* cult and the last Sikh gurus remained cordial and during the *Khalsa* struggle, the person belonging to *Udasi* cult looked after the *Gurudwaras*. However, as this cult endangered the Sikh philosophy and rituals, Sikhs, for the last time, revolted against the *Udasi* cult and freed the

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1. Personal Meeting with Mahamandleshwar Swami Shatanand Udasin, Udasin Dera Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar,

*Gurudwaras* from the *Mahants*.<sup>2</sup> As for the evolution of the *Udasi* cult, after Baba Shri Chand, his predecessors showed full faith in Sikh Gurus and preached in favor of the Sikh religion. In battles of Guru Gobind Singh, too, *Udasi* saints fought like brave soldiers and attained martyrdom. Baba Gurditta appointed four sadhus of *Udasi* cult at different places to propagate the ideas of the cult. These four people were Balu Hasna, Almast, Phul Sahib and Gobind Sahib. The four places founded and nurtured by these four great souls hard work and commitment became famous and still are with name of four Dhuns. The description of these places is as follows: Balu Hasna- Charan Kaul (near Anandpur Sahib), Almast- Nanak Mata, Phul Sahib- Bahadurpur, District Hoshiarpur, and Goind Sahib- Sangal wala Akhara, Amritsar. Likewise, time to time, many persons got gifts (Bakshishs) from the Guru Sahibs. In the *Udasi* cult, there is a description of six rewards and sub rewards. The name of those are as follows: Bhagat Bhagwan, Suthre Shah, Sangat Sahib, Miyan Sahib, Baghatmal, and Jeetmal. As for now, the *Udasi* saints are more than 30,000 in numbers. The preaching of the *Udasi* saints have deep influence and impact and also have many influential Dhunas. As for until now Balu Hasna had 403, Almast 176, Phul Sahib 36, Meera Sahib 232, Bhagat Bhagwan Sahib 8, Suthre Sahib 383, Diwana Sahib 20, Maliye di sanstha 6 Deras.<sup>3</sup>

The lessons, rules and the view of the *Udasi* cult were designed and framed by Baba Shri Chand. The rules of the *Udasi* cult could be enlisted thus:

- Continuous meditation of the *Satnam*.
- Believe in one God (*Akal Purakh*).
- To live life as an ascetic.
- Vegetarian food.

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2. Swami Shatanand Ji Udasin, *Aisi Matra le Pehre Koi*, Sant das Publication, Jalandhar, 1996, p-146.

3. Personal Meeting with Mahamandleshwar Swami Shatanand Udasin, Udasin Dera Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar,

·No drugs.

A follower of the *Udasi* cult eats and sleeps less and devotes much of the time to the meditation and worship of the name of the God. *Udasi* saints preach the ideology of Guru Nanak Dev across the world. Scholars of the Baku University, Russia after diligent research have found, a *Sarai*, on whose walls, alongside the *mool mantra*, the name of the *Udasi* saints, those who went, lived and preached there, is engraved. *Udasi* saints helped nurturing and retaining the pride of the Sikh religion by preaching *Gurmat* in grave times especially during 1708 to 1900 AD. These saints did an applaudable task of writing the scriptures to publicise *Gurbani*. The saints were influential at the time of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Princes and Kings would present the Sadhus with land. And the lands, gradually, corrupted these Sadhus. They started preaching their own morals, ignoring the principles and philosophy of Guru Granth Sahib. This became the reason of *Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar*. This revolt and voice of reformation resulted in snatching away of the Gurudwaras from these *Mahants*. They were taken under the order of the *Prabandak* Committee. Due to these conflicts of their interest, the Saints slowed down the preaching of the Sikh religion. And those among them who were still preaching, were doing it in their own way. Nowadays, the *Udasi* hermitages, *akharas*, and their ideology has taken its shape and are placed in an important space in the society. There has been many great personalities in the *Udasi* cult. In line of succession of *Gurdev Guru Sangat Sahib*, *Nirvan Haidas* has been a great soul. *Nirvan* was the grandson of Des Raj who was the disciple of Baba Varindhavan Sahib, and was the disciple of Baba Gurmukh Singh. He lighted the *Dhuna* of *Gurdev Guru Sangat Sahib* in his village Vasu Astana, District Jhang. He tried to influence the people to come near close the *Udasi* cult. And lived the life on the principle, preached by the great souls, of living in the world but in a liberated kind.<sup>4</sup>

*Nirvan* reached his village *Vasu Astana*, District Jhang (now in Pakistan), on the occasion of the birthday of *Udasiancharaya Shri Chandra*, on *Bhadon* 9, 1823.

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4. Manmohan Sehagl, *Shiv Sawroop Shri Chandra (Biography of Lord ShriChandra)* Sant Das Publication, Jalandhar, 2000, p-334,

5. *Ibid*, p-335.

Although, he lived in this village only, but due to his peaceful and peace loving nature and being a traveler by nature, he would roam around a lot.<sup>5</sup>

*Majha, Malwa, Doaba* and the Western Punjab were the areas of his travel. While roaming, he was taken into the *Uadsi* cult, as he became the disciple of Baba Vrindhavan Sahib, who as the main disciple of *Gurdev* Guru Sangat Sahib Satyasmshuru, who in turn was the disciple of *Gurdev* Karta Hari Rai, the disciple of Baba Shri Chand. His return to his native village cheered the people. He established his *asana* and lighted the *Dhuna* there. As per the ritual and tradition of the holy day, they presented *rota* as offering.<sup>6</sup>

He complied to the wishes of the people and agreed to live in his village. *Nirvan* would meet people, two times a day and would preach for some time, otherwise he would remain in *Samadhi*. He made a hut for himself there and the routine of recitation and remembering the name of god began. *Nirvan* was a *Maha tavaspi* and a scholar. He wrote some essays too. But during the hullabaloo of partition, he could not safeguard his writing. No one else too, was able to safeguard his writings.<sup>7</sup> Mata Shukhan was the daughter of the brother of *Nirvan*. She was blessed with the idea of *Udasinta* and *Vairaga* from her childhood. She did not want to indulge in the bond of marriage.

She wanted to live a life of an ascetic and celibate, and wanted to look after the *dhuna* of *Nirvaan*.<sup>8</sup> But, her parents and relatives wanted her to live a worldly life, a life as a *Grihasth*. So, she reluctantly and unwilling complied to their wishes. But, the will of the god was something else, days before her marriage the groom died. Now, Shukhan openly revolted against all of them, who wanted her to get married. She retorted that even God's will is with her, then why should she not live life as a saint? She became the disciple of his uncle *Nirvaan* Haridas. She

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6. Swami Shantanand Udasin, *ShriChandra Tatvdarshan*, Sant das Publication, Jalandhar, 1994, p-176.

7. Swami Shantanand Udasin, *Aisi Matra le Pahire Koi*, *op.cit*, p-211.

8. Dr. L.P. Upadhya, *Matra Ved Darpan*, Swami Sant das Parkashan Publishers, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar, 1998, p-226.

looked after the place and him with so much faith, respect and care that in 1836 AD, he chose her as his successor. She was influential in her village. The villagers were aware of her intellect and spirituality. The jujubes tree under which she performed her austerities, is still known as the jujubes (tree) of the truth. She carried on the austerities and rituals of *Nirvaan* until 1903 and kept the traditions of *Nirvaan*.<sup>9</sup>

A child of third, named Bhola, fell from the roof of his house in the village Vasu. The parents took the dead body and placed him in the feet of Mata Sukhan and urged her to save their only child. She in return, demanded the child forever.<sup>10</sup> The parents agreed as they thought that he was already dead and if he lived with the blessings of Mata Sukhan, they, at least, would be able to see him. She changed his name from Bhola to Pritam Das. She supervised his nurturing and education. He grew up learning the rules, principles and rituals of the hermitage. Mata Sukhan saw her successor in that brilliant child. She realized the fact that the *Dhuna* of *Nirvaan* Haridas would flourish in the hands of this child. Thus, she handed over the *Dhuna* to Swami Pritam Das in 1903, before leaving her body.<sup>11</sup>

Shri Ganesh Paupli was the foster disciple of Swami Pritam Das. They had the tradition of having one son only. But he wished to have more than one son for his son Shri Keval Ram. One day he told his arduous desire to Swami Pritam Das. He blessed him for that but on the condition that the third child would have to be offered to the hermitage. Swami's words proved true and Shri Kavel Ram became the father of more than one son. On the occasion of *Maagh Purniama* Mata Hardevi Bai gave birth to the third Child. Gurdev, on his birth, named the child Santdas. When Santdas was five years old, he was offered to the hermitage.<sup>12</sup> Swami Pritam Das began his trials and plans to fit the child Santdas into the

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9. Dr. Manmohan Sehgal, *Shiv Sawroop Shri Chandra (Biography of Lord Shri Chandra)*, op.cit. p-336.

10. Loc cit.

11. Swami Shantanand Udasin, *Shri Chandra Tatvdarshan*, op.cit, p-196.

12. Dr. L.P. Upadhya, *Matra Ved Darpan*, op cit. p-228.

automaton of his principles. He was provided with a special ambience, a planned routine for the day. His food, sleep, work, everything was planned into a certain pattern. Child Santdas would get up in the dawn, would freshen up and then would go to his meditation and worship and afterwards would analyze things. When he became bit older he began to learn music, as all this was arranged for him.<sup>13</sup> As he was living in the hermitage, listening to the *Satsang* was a routine for the child. In this way the child's versatile nature was nurtured. He was sent to a Sanskrit school of the neighbourhood village Rodu, to learn the analysis of the scriptures. He learnt much at school and for the study of Guru Granth Sahib, he was sent to Giani Ameer Singh in Amritsar. He learnt and studied the deep analysis of Guru Granth Sahib from almost all possible ways.<sup>14</sup> With the help of Swami Pritam Das, Baba Santdas learnt and studied Gita, Yoga Vashisht, Ramayana, and other religious scriptures. Giani Ameer Singh would often say that Swami Pritam Das had taught him everything already. He sent him to me just to give me the credit of all this.<sup>15</sup>

He returned from Amritsar wiser and matured. The responsibility of the renovation of the hermitage was given to the able disciple Santdas. Swami Pritam Das would go for pilgrimages for months, leaving hermitage under the responsibility of Santdas. In this way, Swami Santdas on many occasion, received the responsibility to look after the hermitage. And he untiringly and quite successfully performed his duties.

In 1943, Swami Pritam Das was well aware of his drawing death. He had, among others, seven main disciples. From this lot, Swami Santdas was the most able, the most loved, the well knower of the activities of the *Dhuna*, and the master of music and preaching. Everyone was aware that he would be his successor. The villagers and other people were already informed that the Swami would leave his body the next day at 12:40. Swami Satanand presented himself at his feet and urged that his death would be an unbearable sight for him to watch.

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13. Swami Shantanand Ji Udasin, *Aisi Matra le Pehre Koi*, op.cit. 1996, p-212.

14. Personal Meeting with Swami Shantanand Udasin Ji, op.cit

15. Swami Shantanand Udasin, *Shri Chandra Tatvdarshan*, op.cit. p-178

Gurudev replied that he would always remain with them. He must always serve the society. There will be a time when

He would become famous. Swami Santdas eyes were wet due to tears and he asked for forgiveness.<sup>16</sup>

Swami Pritam Das patted him three times and said given three times. Thus, he handed over everything to Santdas before being one with the eternal light. The death of Swami Pritam Das was an unbearable loss for his followers, Swami Santdas, despite his condition, consoled everyone. He preached that the weeping is done for those who spent their lives recklessly in this world. The life of the great person is devoted to the welfare of others and to salvate themselves and many others through meditation and wisdom. So to cry on his death is to insult him.

He would live with them, so there would be no use in crying. Swami Santdas words relieved the saddened souls a bit. He looked after the *Dhuna* and its activities remained the same. He would organize the *Satsang*. His fellow saints Baba Thakur Das, Baba Brahm Das, Baba Haridas, Baba Narayan Das and others were satisfied with the guardianship of Swami Santdas. He, through *Satsang*, gave the message of cooperation, cordial and harmonical living.<sup>17</sup>

The time flowed according to its course and the evil of Communalism was at its peak. Hindus and Muslims became thirsty of each others blood. Partition happened. It divided the country into India and Pakistan. People had to migrate. The refugees were provided with shelter and other facilities at the hermitage of Swami Santdas.

After partition and freedom, Swami Santdas chose Jalandhar to be the place of founding a hermitage. He long with his fellow saints, settled in *Muhalla* Kashrakhan. Swami Ji blew the conch on the first evening and people gathered, they lighted the *jyoti*, and all the saints sang the *aarti* of Shri Chandra. In addition to this, people organized food for the saints and the tradition of *Langar* and *Pangat* began. People started gathering every evening. Saints does

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16. Swami Shantanand Udasin, Loc. Cit.

17. Dr. L.P. upadhyea , op.cit, p-230.



have a special aura around them. He began participating in their sorrows and the happiness. Swami Satanand was a knower of medicines. So after the morning session of the preaching, he would do the checkup and would give the medicine to the patients. He, himself would make the medicine. He would recite the name of the God until the medicine his ready. In the evening, all the children would gather at the hermitage. All the sadhus would teach them. Swami Santdas would take care of the handwriting of the children. So for this reason, at least for some time, the Dhuna would look like a school.

One evening, a boy, named Inderjit, son of Thakur Ameer Singh started praying in front of everyone. Santdas was very pleased with this. He was testing the child, secretly. He prayed to his Guru Pritam Das, be kind on me Gurudev and the head of this boy should bow down forever to this hermitage. Santdas saw his successor in that boy.<sup>18</sup>

Next day, he invited Ameer Singh and told to him about his thinking and asked him to offer the boy to the hermitage. Ameer Singh was perplexed but he left without saying anything. Though his routine was not changed due to this, he would come to the hermitage, would pay his respects to the Swami and would do his service and devotion. But one day, on 12th June 1956, he suddenly came along with his wife, Rukamni, and his son. He offered the boy to Swami Santdas. From that day onwards, Inderjit was devoted to the hermitage. He was born on 16th June 1945, in village Kamaliya, District Mintmugri. Inderjit was perplexed and in doubt for some days. But afterwards he adjusted and managed with the life of the hermitage. He made his heart strong.

He was not affected by the visit of his family members. Swami Santdas, on the occasion of the birthday of Shri Chandra, formally announced, in front of the gathering, the entrance of Inderjit into the tradition. He named him Ishwar Das. Swami Santdas was already impressed with the boy's abilities. At home, he had studied many religious scriptures and the plan of his higher study was to be

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18. Persona Meeting with Udasi Swami Shantanand Ji Shastri, Udasin Dera, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar.

organized by Swami Santdas. In between this time, an incident happened, Swami Santdas had gone somewhere. In his absence, Baba Thakur would sermonize. But on that particular day he was ill, so could not perform the task. Ishwar Das, at this crucial time, gave the sermon. All of the people were really impressed with the sermon and praised him and his abilities to Swami Santdas on his return.

Swami Santdas was happy to hear the praise of his choice, but he did not let anyone suspect it.<sup>19</sup> Swami Santdas was pleased seeing the development of Ishwar Das. Swami Ishwar Das acquired the basic knowledge of Sanskrit from the local scholar Pandit Swaran Dutt and Pandit Kharati Lal. He was sent off to Udasin University, Haridwar to acquire the higher education. Swami Santdas instructed him before sending him. He asked him not to indulge in any kind of evil practices at hostel. He made the point that to learn something he would have to meditate hard. He asked him to follow the principles, traditions, vows and limitations of the hermitage. He was not allowed to return to the monastery during his study. All this time Swami Ishwar Das lived at the Udasin Panchayati Akhara, Haridwar. In the absence of Ishwar Das, Swami Santdas took another child under

his guardianship. To both the disciples, Ishwar Das and the new adopted child, Swami Santdas provided the parental love, Guru's discipline, and paved the way for just like a teacher.

In 1967, Swami Santdas on the demand of the followers and his own wishes, planned to build a building in the memory of Swami Pritam Das. As per the plan, they began building Dera Pritam Bhawan, Udasin Dera, Jalandhar.

The building was completed on Swami Pritam Das's demise day in November 1968 AD. In this new building the idols of Shri Chandra, Swami Pritam Das and Gurmandir were established. In 1970 AD, at the same place a *Seva Dera* named as Shri Mukh Niwas was built for social welfare. Swami Santdas was a reader of great writers books. He also taught people. In the same year, 1970 AD, he

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19. *Loc.cit.*

Dr. Manmohan Sehgal, *Shiv Swaroop Shrichandra (Biography of Lord Shri Chandra)*, *op.cit.*, p-337.

established a library which was named as Gursangat Library. Swami Santdas was known of Ayurvedic herbs. He also helped sick people, to his full ability. Having this aim in mind, he founded a hospital, Guru Sangat Mission Hospital, on the occasion of the birthday of Shri Chandra. Swami Santdas wanted to relieve himself of the responsibility and wanted to hand over it to his disciple. So, he planned a formal occasion to announce Swami Ishwar Das his successor. But no one was informed as of the reason for this gathering. Swami Santdas invited *Udasin* Saints from the various parts of the country and also invited his followers and the supporters of the *Dera* and his disciples. The gathering understood the reason, when Swami Santdas made Swami Ishwar Das Shastri to sit on his *Gaddi* following all the rituals and the traditions. And on that day 4th December, 1974, he announced him his successor.<sup>20</sup>

On 30th March, 1983, at three o'clock in the midnight, the sun of Pritam Bhawan, Udasin *Dera*, Jalandhar set forever. Swami Santdas was, probably, aware of his future. He did not sleep that night but meditated. He had a bath at near about two. Again he went into his worship. After some time, he called for Swami Ishwar Das, patted him and asked him to look after *Sangat- Pangat*. With this, Swami Santdas, after preaching the disciple of social welfare, uttered Om in a loud pitch and became silent forever. The news spread faster than the wildfire. His followers with teary eyes were silent.<sup>21</sup>

Afterwards, the *Dera* came under the control of Mahamandleshwar Swami Ishwar Das. And this *Dera* grew under his guardianship. He not only followed the great path and high values and principles, but took the plans of Swami Santdas to a new level. In the memory of Swami Santdas, many statues and buildings were built. Shri Shastri built a *Dera* at the G.T. road, in Kurukeshtra.<sup>22</sup> Swami Ishwar Das, inaugurated the Swami Santdas Public School at Jalandhar, in the memory of Swami Santdas, on 30th March, 1986. The standard of education in this school

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20. Personal Meeting with Swami Shantanand Udasin Ji, *op.cit*

21. Dr. Manmohan Sehgal, *op.cit.*, p-338

22. Personal Meeting with Swami Shantanand Udasin Ji, Udasin Dera, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar

was higher and progressive. Alongside this school, Swami Ishwar Das founded another *Dera*, Hari Das Udasin *Dera*. On, 2nd April, 2000, in the memory of Swami Santdas, Swami Ishwar Das inaugurated Swami Santdas Public Sachool, in Phagwara city, Distt. Kapurthala. The responsibility of these schools and other organizations has been given to Swami Satananad, his *Gur-bhai*.<sup>23</sup> Swami Ishwar Das was preaching and spreading the mission of Shri Chand in all the directions of the world. He was always indulged in the social welfare, the development of his community and the country, and in preaching about and spreading the religious policy. Swami would help the physically wounded or sick people, alongside those who were mentally upset. It was only because of his well planned, organized and constructive policies that the Udasin Dera Pritam Bhawan, Jalandhar is growing by each passing day.<sup>24</sup> Swami Ishwar Das Shastri was also related to the works of social and national development and its intergrity. Due to his commitment towards constructive works of social welfare, he was presented with the title of *Mahamandleshwar* by the whole of his *Akhara* at the occasion of *Kumb Mela* in Haridwar in 1986 AD. The whole of the community gathered at the capital of the country, Delhi, on the occasion of the completion of 500 years of Shri Chand, which they celebrated with great enthusiasm. Swami Ishwar Das was the vice-president for this occasion. On this occasion, Swami Ishwar Das, under the supervision of Swami Satananad also published a book entitled as *Shrichand Tatv. Ahiji Matra Le Pahre Koi* and *Matra Ved Darpan*, books written by Swami Ishwar Das and Dr. L.P. Upadhiya, respectively were also published by the *Dera*. Swami Ishwar Das also founded an organization, named Sarb Bharati Swami Santdas, after the name of Swami Santdas. The aim of the organization was social welfare and to spread the teachings of *Udasinacharya* Lord Shri Chandar to the people.<sup>25</sup>

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23. *Loc.cit.*

24. Dr. Manmohan Sehgal, *op.cit* p-338.

25. Personal Meeting with Swami Shantanand Udasin Ji, *op.cit.*

After the demise of Swami Ishwar Das, Swami Satanand was chosen his successor, who is providing his services till now. The *Dera* has retained its rules, regulations, traditions and rituals. And it is developing and growing each day and is always ready for social welfare. A lot of research has been done on the *Deras* of Punjab: *Dera* Lang Sardargarh, District Bathinda; *Dera* Bhai Prithi Sahib, Midha, Malout, it is also known as Manik *Dera*; *Dera* Tup, Bathinda, *Dera* Jalal, Village Jalal; *Dera* Khudi Kalan, Bajakhana road etc. The history of these *Deras* is looked upon in detail.

*Dera Bhai Prithi Sahib, the Midha Dera*, as mentioned above, is known by the name of *DeraMaanik*. At present, the *Dera* is run by its head Mahant Ganesha Das. He is about 49 years old and is a matric pass. He is basically from a landlord family. He was given to the *Dera* when he was about 7-8 years old. This *Dera* has its origin in the village *Maanik* situated in West Pakistan. It is 300 year old. The *Dera* was founded by Shri 108 Mahant Sewadas. After the partition of the country in 1947, this *Dera* had been allotted much land as compensation in village Midha.

The *Dera* is known by the name of its popular saint, Baba Prithi Sahib. According to a fable, when Baba Prithi Sahib sat outside the village *Maanik*, the salty water of the well turned sweet. Due to this incident, people started worshipping the saint. After some time, when the wishes of the people started getting fulfilled at the *Dera*, the people's belief in the *Dera* grew stronger. The founder of the *Dera* had been the president of the central institution of *Udasi Deras* spread all over India. The Mahant of this *Dera*, Baba Satnam Das, had been a member of Ayurvedic Council of the country. The *Dera* is run by its current head-Mahant Ganesha Das.

The Mahants of the *Dera* had led a life of austerity since its foundation. The *Dera* has hundred hectares of ploughable land. It runs three *Langars* at a big scale every year. The first *Langar* is celebrated on the eve of Baba Shri Chand's birthday. The second is organized on the anniversary of Maharaj in the month of *Bhadon*. The third *Langar* is also famous as an anniversary function and is

organized every year. The *Dera* is open in the morning and in the evening. Women's entry to the *Dera* is strictly prohibited in the evening.<sup>26</sup> This *Dera* is built in village Midha, which is situated on Fazilka-Malout road. It has been built in an expanse of 6-7 hectares of land. During the partition, the *Dera* came under the territory of India. The head of the *Udaasi Dera's* came out on the level of India and he was Mahant Ganesha Das, who is presently heading this *Dera*. The land owned by this *Dera*, which is approximately 100 hectares of land, is used for social service as the harvest is sold and the money earned is spent on the welfare of people. Out of the same income from the harvest, three *Bhandaras* are organised on a big scale every year.<sup>27</sup> *Dera Baba Maandas Udasin* is another popular *Dera* which is situated in the village Khuddi Kalan.

It is five kilometers away from the main road to Bajakhana. This *Dera* is related to the *Udasi* tradition. As according to the saints of the *Dera*, the *Dera* is 150 years old. From its date of establishment till now, the saints and Mahant of the *Dera* are as following: according to the historical records of the *Dera*, the first Mahant of the *Dera* were Baba Kirpa Das, Baba Pancham Das and Baba Maghar Das. Among them, Baba Maghar Das is heading the *Dera* presently. He has a good character and kind behavior.

He is well-versed in Ayurvedic medicines. Due to his this talent, he is known far and wide. People come from far off places to take medicines from him, their physical suffering is lessened by the medicines given by him and their mental and emotional strain is relieved by his blessings and preachings.<sup>28</sup> The *Dera* is situated on the periphery of village Khuddi Kalan. The *Dera* is surrounded by hugely built walls from all sides. It is spread over 5-6 hectares of land. On the entrance of the *Dera*, there is Darbar of Shri Chand on the right hand side along with a mandir and an altar. On the same side, the residence of the head of the *Dera*, Saint

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26. Personal Meeting with Bhai Ganesha Das Ji, Maanik Dera, Malout road, Village Midha distt. fazilka.

27. Loc. Cit.

28. Personal Meeting with Mahant Maggar Das Ji, Dera Baba Maan Das Ji, Khuddi Kalan, Barnala. Bhai Kahan Singh, Gurshabad Ratankar, *Mahan Kosh*, Language Department, Patiala, 1996, p-763.

Maghar Das is built, which has a dispensary as its first room.<sup>29</sup> The source of income of the *Dera* is the charity and donations given by its followers. The second source of income is the harvest within the *Dera*. *Langar* is served twenty-four hours. The saints of the *Dera* had always been interested in literature. Due to this, the literature of Udasi saints is still safeguarded within the *Dera*. As per the orders of the saints, the handwritten *Adi-Granth*s had been kept in the *Dera* which were then presented to the Gurudwara in 1984. Still, Saint Maghar Das has kept contacts with literary people, writers and historians and from time to time, he holds meetings with them. His meetings and talks are mostly organized with scholars and religious saints. Baba Maghar Das has a strong belief in the principles of *Udasi* tradition and he never does anything out of that tradition.<sup>30</sup>

*Dera Langh* is said to be the oldest *Dera* in the old district of Faridkot because it has nearly 400 hectares of ploughable land. At present, this *Dera* comes under Giddherbaha sub-division of Muktsar district. The *Dera* is situated on the periphery of village Sardargarh on Giddherbaha- Bathinda road. A concrete road leading to Government College, Sardargarh, also leads to the entrance of the *Dera*. This *Dera* is very huge. Why was the *Dera* called Langh? In direct language, it can be said that the *Dera* is an amalgam of the triptych of three districts- Bathinda, Ferozepur and Faridkot, and the *Dera* had been related to the *Udasi* tradition since its establishment. The head of the *Dera* neglects homely life. On the one side of the *Dera*, verandahs are built for the animals, in which there are about 100 milk-giving buffaloes and cows. Good breeds of horses are also kept there.

The *Dera* has its own significant place in the area. The *Dera* people had built a Government College, named Baba Shri Chandar Government College, Sardargarh a few years back over 20 hectares of land, so that the children of the ordinary

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29. Maan Das Dera, Khuddi Kalan, After Interviewing several of the concierges of Barnala.

30. Dr. Gandha Singh, *Personal Meeting Relating to the Mahants of Various Deras*, Sikh History Society, Amritsar and Patiala, 1955, pp-52-53.

Sohan Lal Suri, *Umdat-Ut-Tawarikh*, Punjab Ithihas Parkashan, volume 3, Chandigarh, 1902, p-246.

people can get education at low expenses and attain higher education. The Saints of the *Dera* also built a hospital in Giddherbaha city.

In addition, many schools and *sarais* have also been built in nearby villages. During elections, many celebrated and famous political leaders visit the *Dera* seeking support from the *Dera* and its followers. Apart from influencing the social and religious lives of the people, the saints of the *Dera* also have influence on their political orientation and thinking.<sup>31</sup>

*Dera Tapp* is the main *Dera* of Bathinda district. Almost half of the city is built on the land belonging to this *Dera*. From the old times, the *Dera* would be given a name, on a certain basis. Thus, this *Dera* was also named as *Dera Tapp*, which situated on the Gohana road. The *Dera* is situated on a high *tilla* almost on the road. It is engulfed by the wall from all sides. In the *Dera* there is an ancient and old tree. The first saint of this *Dera*, built his hut, with the use of reed, under this tree. Therefore, the *Dera* is known as *Dera Tup*.<sup>32</sup>

The head of this *Dera* was related to the *Udasi* cult from the beginning. He used to wear saffron clothes along with saffron turban. He would wear long kurtas and chadras. They still wear the clothes of same styles. It is important to note here that the *Dera* is built like an old haveli, but the construction is done with bricks and cement. In front of the main door of the *Dera*, there is an empty courtyard, built on a higher ground. The saint, usually, sit near the main gate and converse with people and his followers.

The saints of this *Dera* has built a hospital for deaf, dumb and handicapped persons. The common people consider this hospital as a social boon. The people and the administration respects them for this reason.<sup>33</sup> There is a banyan tree, which is 300 years old. Baba Nihal Das meditated under this tree. He built a hut under this tree, having its roof built of straw. The roof of the hut was

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31. Personal Meeting with Mahant Kumb Das Ji, Dera Lang, Giddherbaha, distt bathinda.

32. Bhai Kahan Singh, *Gur Shabad Ratankar, Mahan Kosh*, op.cit, p-704.

33. Personal Meeting with the Head of Dera Tapp, Saroopanand Ji, Bathinda, Gohana Road.



called *Tuppad*. And this *Tuppad* was further shortened as *Tup*.<sup>34</sup> Another important and unique quality of this *Dera* is the people. The people including the head of the *Dera* are really polite and simple nature. They do not run after to take the credit and are also not influenced by the politics. Even though the politics of Bathinda city is deep and unique. *Dera* Jalal, is situated in the Jalal village. The village is situated near *Bhagta Bhai Ka* village, District Bathinda. The *Dera* has a different appeal and stature, and is built in a really spectacular way. The road diverging to the *Dera* is well built, which adds to the glamour of the *Dera*. A double-storey building is constructed within the *Dera* where a large number of *Sadhus* and Saints reside. On the right side of the *Dera* is the residence of the *Dera* head. There is a dispensary in the room beside his residence. *Langar* is served twenty-four hours in the *Dera*.<sup>35</sup> The area within this *Dera* is full of plenty because the Saint of the *Dera* has opened an eye hospital on the name of his brother, who was in the army and was martyred while on duty. The hospital is named after him. People come from far-off places to get cured. The *Dera* Saints do not keep themselves restricted to their own region but also encourage people from other far-off places to come to them so that the *Dera* Saints can establish their branches in other regions too and can work for the welfare of the society as a whole. It is due to this reason only that the *Dera* head had built an eye hospital in Ganganagar, Rajasthan too. This hospital is well-known and is considered one of the best hospitals in the state.

The *Dera* Saint also gives financial assistance to schools and for the marriages of the girls. The *Udasi Deras* have not limited themselves to just being a religious organization. But these have helped the people in the society against their exploitation by the Government. They have also helped raising the living standard of people and in making them self-dependent. There are also some *Udasi*

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34. Loc.Cit.

35. Personal Meeting Dera Head Swami Divyanand Giri Ji, Dera Jalal, Village Jalal, Bhagta Bhai Ka Road, District Bathinda.

36. Anil Chandar Banerjee, *Anglo Sikh Relations (Activities of the Sikh Mahants)*, A. Mukherjee Company Limited, Calcutta, May 1949, p-64

*Deras* who are helping people to get better health facilities in their region because they are of the belief that people with a sound body can have a sound mind. Only the healthy human race can lead the society.

## Chapter 3

### ***Udasis and Sikh Gurus: Their Relations***

The people and land of Punjab State has been an important symbol, both in spiritual and moral aspects, for its ancient civilization and tradition. The land of Punjab has been the land of the sages from the time immemorial. As in Punjab, the seeds for India's civilization were sown by the sages and afterwards by the Sikh Gurus. The fertility of the land and happiness played an important role for the development and growth of every religion. The people of Punjab adopted Hinduism in the Vedic age. It is important to mention here that before the Aryans the civilization of the Sindhu valley has given them a very simple and appropriate religious life. This and Vedic religion both had a deep impact on the religious life of the people. Preaching about Buddhism and Jainism began somewhere in the 6<sup>th</sup> Century. This marked the development and growth of these religions on a wider scale. In the medieval era (East Medieval and North Medieval eras) meaning the *Saltant* era and *Mughal* era marked the growth of Islam. This land gained importance to itself with the birth of Guru Nanak Dev in 1469 AD. He chose Bhai *Lehna* as his predecessor before the former's demise. This started a tradition and string of Sikh Gurus which ended with the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. The tenth Guru elected Guru Granth Sahib to be the next Sikh Guru, and that not only increased the importance of Sikh religion but also provided it a unique and never diminishing shape. Almost everyone know that after Guru Gobind Singh, Banda Bahadur provided a new direction to the Sikh religion and the Sikh society. On the other hand, during this time *Mahants* were growing their *deras* rapidly without any interference from any side.<sup>1</sup> A try to understand the *Udasi* cult alongside the *Udasi* saints' contribution in preaching about the Sikh religion would definitely provide

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1. Baba Khem Singh, *Maha Harnam Singh Maharaj*, Volume 6, Bhuchokalan, Bathinda. 1997, p-33.

us with a clear understanding about the relations of Baba Shri Chand with Sikh gurus. It is wise to write in here about that.

A cursory glance at the Sikh history is enough to make it evident that the Sikh religion is a flowing river of sacrifices. In the world history of religions, there is a scant possibility of example where sacred souls gave away their lives to save the religion. However, some sacrificed their bodies, some sacrificed themselves in service of Sikh religion and others spent their whole lives preaching about the religion.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the contribution, historians did not give places to many great people. Baba Shri Chand, the elder son of Shri Guru Nanak Dev, is one of them. Struggle and even war for the attainment of the throne has been a regular occurrence in the history of mankind. Possession of power and struggle for throne was the main cause for Mahabharata. History of every community is full of domestic wars. However, the behaviour of Sikh community with Baba Shri Chand and his cult can never be justified. If a *Mahant* committed a blunder and a bloody event happened afterwards, still whole of the people belonging to that society cannot be deemed guilty for that. Late Giani Sant Singh Maskin in his book *KahtDarshan* writes that instead of applying medicine on the wounded arm we have sawed it.

There is no doubt that *Uadsi* cult is a new cult. From the beginning of time until Baba Shri Chand, many sages and kings were the followers of this cult. He initiated an intact and principled nursery, and he planted four plants in the different directions of India. This resulted in the development and growth of this cult and at present in this country and abroad have almost 3500 *gaddisto* which approximately 50,000 *sadhus* and *Mahants* are related and it is hard to tell the numbers of the followers. These saints are of both kinds married and celibate.<sup>3</sup>

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2. Shri Narayan Mishar, KrishanPremAvasthi (Editors), *SanatanDharam Di Prishtbhoomi*, Sanatan Publications, Sanatan Ashram, Lucknow, 1995, pp-51,52; Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampradye De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Sant Magghar Das Ji, Dera Baba Man Das Publishers, KhuddiKalan2007, pp-79-80.
  3. Manmohan Sehgal, *Shiv Swaroop Shri Chand*, Swami Sant das Publications Committee, Jalandhar, 2000, pp-109-110.

Guru Nanak Dev, founder of Sikh religion, raised voice against the superstitions, false rituals and hypocrisy, prevalent at his time. Baba Shri Chand, born in the home of Baba Nanak, carried forward his father's work in his own way. Both, the father and the son travelled the world, had an understanding that until the people would stop believing in these superstitions and hypocrisies of the religions, and until their souls would remain dead, they would not stand against the cruelties meted out on them. Although, both of them had some ideological differences, their aim was same. They both aimed at taking people out of the superstition and hypocriticality rampant at their times.<sup>4</sup> The total time span from the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469 and the demise of Guru Gobind Singh in 1708 is 239 years. Baba Shri Chand was born in 1494 AD and he remained on this earth for some 149 years. During his lifetime, seven Gurus sat on the *Guru Gaddi*. The seventh Guru Shri Har Rai succeeded Guru Hargobind after his demise in 1638. Baba Shri Chand died some five years after this event in 1643.<sup>5</sup>

Sikh historians do not mention the meetings of Guru Angad Dev and Guru Har Rai after their reception of the *Guru Gaddi*. These two Gurus have ever met him is a debateable fact, even though Guru Har Rai was the son of his first follower Baba Gurditta. Other four gurus respected him for being Guru Nanak's son. The Gurus would often visit *Barath* Sahib to meet him and he, too, would visit them. Historians (Gandha Singh, Hari Ram Gupta, J.S. Grewal, S.S. Bal, Harbans Singh) bear witnesses to this in their writings.<sup>6</sup>

The account of the relations between Guru Sahibs and Baba Shri Chand is necessary as to know the cause which shaped the earlier and later form of *Udasi* cult towards the Sikh religion.

Baba Shri Chand acquired the ideas of *Simran*, *Samadhi* and *Bhakti* from his father. Guru Nanak's spiritual life influenced and shaped the childhood of

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4. Loc. Cit.

5. Loc. Cit.

6. Mahant Dayal Singh, *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth*, KirpaSagar Press, Lahore, 1935, p-50-51; Mahant Ganesha Das, *Nirmal Bhushan*, Singh Brother Publication, Amritsar, 1937, pp-98-99.

Baba Shri Chand. He had all the characteristics of his father. As is the Punjabi Idiom, “*PyoPrPuttar, Nasal prGhoda, BahutaNhiTeThodaThoda.*” According to the Neurological science, son acquires almost all the aspects of the personality of his father. He learnt everything from the revolutionary works and ideology of welfare. None of them had any armed bodyguards, or an army. They were never afraid of anything, never hesitated. Thus, Baba Shri Chand learned all this from his house, especially from his father. The garden planted in our house would naturally fragrance our house.<sup>7</sup>

*Langar*, which he initiated with a small amount of 20 rupees, is still going on in many *Udasi* deras and Gurudwaras even after almost 550 years. Due to this, the relations between Sikh society and *Udasi* society are becoming strong.<sup>8</sup>

When the life and principles of Baba Shri Chand are analyzed closely, it proves that Baba Shri Chand tried hard to materialise the preaching of his father and lived a life of an ascetic in hard discipline to help the needy and the poor. The aim of Baba Shri Chand’s life was welfare of the others. He was not like any ordinary saint who focused only at his personal liberation. He never liked this idea, instead he, like his father, thought the social welfare to be his duty. He was certain of the fact that to live life after leaving all the worldly duties is not right. He attained some miraculous powers through his spiritual meditation. He used them mostly to cure the patient or the disease ridden persons. He would always preach and encourage the masses to live a simple and ascetic life. Guru Nanak Dev roamed around the world for the betterment of the people.<sup>9</sup>

Some scholars, even today, debate about the idea that Baba Shri Chand did not adopted all the ideals of his father, whole-heartedly. However, there is no doubt that he respected his father. If this be not so, he would never have written himself

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7. ManmohanSehgal, *ShivSwaroop Shri Chand*, Swami Sant das Publications Committee, Jalandhar, 2000, p-110-112; Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampradye De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Sant Magghar Das Ji, Dera Baba Man Das Publishers, KhuddiKalan, Barnala, 2007, pp-89-91.

8. Loc. Cit.

9. ManmohanSehgal, *Shiv Swaroop Shri Chand*, *Op. Cit.*, p-334.

to be “*Nanakpoota*” in his seminal work *MatraBani*. ‘*Aarta Nanak Patshah Da*’ this entire work worships Guru Nanak Dev. He had many similarities with Guru Nanak Dev. Baba Shri Chand is blameless here as well. Guru Nanak Dev would choose Bhai Lehna his successor was certain from their first conversation, where Guru Nanak says, “You are Lehna (a play on the word *lena*, meaning to take it), and I am here to give.” Then to go on debating about and doubting on the ability of Baba Shri Chand does not make any sense. If we look at it from another perspective, Guru Nanak Dev’s ideology as can be derived from his works supports the fact that only a married person would have been his predecessor and he knew the decision of Baba Shri Chand to remain celibate all his life. Guru Nanak also advocated and preferred the idea to serve others over personal deeds. His *Banni* bears witness to it, “*VichDuniyaSevKamaiye Tan DargahVasanJaiye.*” Thus, the father and the son shared a cordial relation.<sup>10</sup> When Guru Nanak Dev chose Guru Angad Dev as his successor, he revolted by applying ash on his body and on his hairs. This marked the beginning of *Udasi* cult.<sup>11</sup>

The relations between Guru Amardas and Baba Shri Chand were very cordial. Guru Amardas was the most elderly of all the Sikh Gurus. He lived up to the age of 95 and for twenty-one and half years, he was the Sikh Guru. He was born in 1479 AD and went to the heavenly adobe in 1574 AD. He lived in his residential village *Baskre*, before the attainment of *Guru Gaddi*. He would go to Haridwar barefooted every year before the attainment of *Guru Gaddi*. There is a Gurudwara, in his memory, at Kankhal. He was 15 years elder to Baba Shri Chand. Guru Amardas, after attaining the *Guru Gaddi*, visited Dera Baba Nanak and then went to Barath Sahib to meet Baba Shri Chand, as he was there.<sup>12</sup> There is

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10. Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampardye De Modi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Op. Cit., pp-71-72; Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Ate Udasin Samprada, Guru Nanak Sahib Da Jiwan (Dharam Sidhantan Samatt)*, Shri Avdhut Jagat Ram Udasin, Ashram Samiti, Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, pp-55-58.

11. Manmohan Sehgal, *Ibid*, p-300.

12. Mahinder Singh Rahi, *Udasi Sampardye De Modi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Op. Cit, p-3,4; Mahant Ganesha Das, Madan Mohan Singh, Amritsar, *Granth Itihas Nirmal Bhaikh*, Manak Dera, Midha, p-351.

a grand Gurudwara built in his memory and it also has an idol of Baba Shri Chand. The meeting of these two great souls was very polite, cordial and affectionate. After formally asking about each other's help, they shifted their conversation to Divine love. At that time Bhai Jetha, who later became the fourth Sikh Guru with the name Guru Ramdas, and Mohan were with him. Mohan, Guru Amardas' son was a happy-go-lucky person and was in divine love. Baba Shri Chand saw his own reflection in him as he was also a Guru's son. Baba Shri Chand in between the conversation dropped the idea of adopting Mohan, as Baba Shri Chand grew a liking for Mohan. Guru Amardas happily gave his son to Baba Shri Chand. He said that if he had liked him, he could keep him. Guru Sahib was so kind that he gave his son with his own hands. Baba Shri Chand took the time to speak his mind, but Guru Sahib did not take any time to give him. How could anyone say that Baba Shri Chand was angry with *Gurughar*. This also proves the point the followers of *Udasi* cult have enormous faith in the teachings and preaching of Sikh Gurus and they respect them as they respect Baba Shri Chand.<sup>13</sup>

Guru Ramdas was born in 1534 AD. He lived in Lahore. He was the fourth Sikh Guru and he passed away in 1581 AD. Baba Shri Chand was 80 years old when Guru Ramdas became the fourth Guru. Baba Shri Chand once visited Guru Ramdas just to know whether he respect him or not. He established his *Dhuna* outside the city. When Guru Ramdas got to know about his visit, he went ahead with gifts to welcome him. He touched his feet and gave him respect. Guru Ramdas was young at that time. His beard was quite long. Baba Shri Chand thought of a mischief. He saw and commented on his long beard, saying why had he kept that long beard? The Guru answered politely that it was to clean the feet of great souls like Baba Shri Chand. While saying he took his beard and went ahead to clean his feet. Baba Shri Chand immediately got up from his seat and hugged the Guru and said his politeness and humble nature had made him able to be Guru Nanak's successor. He truly deserved the *Gaddi* of the father, Guru Nanak. His

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13. Loc. Cit.



humble nature was unparalleled and endless. They both conversed about Divine knowledge and their bond became strong. They deliberated about the construction of *ChakRamdas*. The Guru returned to *ChakRamdas* after his meeting with Baba Shri Chand. Both shared a mutual respect and faith. This was the reason that even today *Akhara 'BrahmButa'* and *Akhara 'MangalWala'* are situated at Shri Amritsar *Darbar*. People visit these places to pay their homage.<sup>14</sup>

Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Sikh Guru and the first martyr in the Sikh tradition, was born in 1563 AD in Guru Ramdas's house. In 1605 AD, he drank the goblet of martyrdom in the reign of Jahangir. He succeeded his father as the fifth Sikh Guru in 1581 AD. At this time, Baba Shri Chand was 87 years old. The Guru thought of compiling the *Banni* of his predecessors and people from every caste into one scripture, as he himself created *Banni*. Around 1598, Guru Arjan Dev visited *Barath Sahib* to meet Baba Shri Chand with gifts, money and horses as offering. The Guru was working on his creation *Sukhmani Sahib*. Baba Shri Chand spent a large time of his life in *Barath Sahib*. Baba was sitting near his *Dhuna*. He touched his feet. They both had a long conversation about spiritual and divine power. When the Guru informed him about his endeavour of compilation, Baba Shri Chand became very happy and said his endeavour was of great kind. He further asked him whether he too was creating *Bani* according to the tradition set by the earlier four Gurus. He said that the *Bani* was created according to worship of the Gurus, if he asked, he could recite that for him. Baba said that worship of Gurus was the worship of God. There was nothing better than that. Guru Arjun then recited the first 16 *ashatpadis* from *Sukhmani Sahib*. Baba Shri Chand got very happy. After listening to 16 *ashatpadis*, Guru paused and said to Baba, "You are the son of the Guru, after this, the influence of *Banni* had stopped because he was very close to God. Kindly permit me to continue it further." Baba closed his eyes and recited the starting verse of 17 *ashatpadis* saying the aphorism,

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14. Manmohan Sehgal, *ShivSwaroop Shri Chand, Op. Cit.*, p-39-40; Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Ate Udasin Samprada, Guru Nanak Sahib Da Jiwan (DharamSidhantanSamait)*, Shri Avdhut Jagat Ram Udasin, Ashram Samiti, Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, p-50.

“*aadsacchjugaadsacch hai bhisacchnanakhosibhisacch.*” He recited it from the *Banni* of his father Guru Nanak Dev. This proves the fact that Baba Shri Chand did not like to be at par with the Sikh Gurus. But, he also wanted to further their tradition and rituals. Therefore, after uttering these two *Shlokas* he indicated the Guru to add 8 more *ashatpadis*, and said this *Banni*, whom you have entitled as *Sukhmani Sahib* would, in a true manner be the *Banni* of happiness.<sup>15</sup> From all this, we can infer that Baba Shri Chand and Guru Arjan Dev shared deep and cordial relationship.

Nowadays, we recite *Sukhmani Sahib* for almost two hours a day, but have forgotten about those who have contributed in its creation. We hate even the words like saint, even though this is a definite example of praise for a saint.

From the ten Sikh Gurus, two Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh (grandfather-grandson) had to succeed the *Gurgaddi* in a relatively small age. Their father sacrificed themselves to safeguard the religion. Guru Hargobind succeeded Guru Arjan in 1605, after latter’s martyrdom. Baba Shri Chand was more than a century old at that time. Guru Hargobind, alongside his sons- Baba Gurditta, Ali Rai, Suraj Mal and TeghBahadur- visited Barath Sahib to meet him. He offered him gifts, money, clothes and horses. Afterwards, Guru Hargobind sat with Baba Shri Chand, where his *Dhuna* was lit. In the conversation Baba Shri Chand asked about Guru Sahib’s sons. Guru Sahib told him about the early demise of his one son- Attal Rai and the other four sons.<sup>16</sup> Baba Shri Chand showed the wish to make one of Guru’s son his successor. He told the Guru about his old age and expressed the wish to amalgamate the cult to that mainstream from which it originated. Therefore, he asked the Guru to offer a follower out of his sons. Guru Hargobind happily offered all of his sons to him. Baba Shri Chand looked

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15. Mahant Dayal Singh, *Baba Nanak Ji Da Nirmal Panth*, KirpaSagar Press, Lahore, 1965, Volume Four. p-539.

16. *Ibid.* p-539; Kapoor, Pritpal Singh and Narinder Singh Soch, *Itihas Akhara Brahm Boota Shri Amritsar, Sant Maral: Jiwan Ate Jiwan Darshan*, Jiwan Mandir Pustakmala, Amritsar, 1987, pp-22,29.

carefully at all of them and then chose Baba Gurditta as his successor after a careful analysis. Historians are of the view that Baba Gurditta looked like Guru Nanak. Therefore, he chose him. Baba Gurditta was married at that time. Guru Hargobind happily gave him to Baba Shri Chand. Sikh Gurus' hearts were filled with reverence and love for Baba Shri Chand.<sup>17</sup>

Baba Gurditta, after becoming the disciple of Baba Shri Chand, served him for the last six years of his life. Baba Shri Chand always had a relation with *Gurughar* and Sikh Gurus also visited him at Barath Sahib and had respect for him. The journey of almost a century and half, which Baba Shri Chand and Sikh Gurus travelled side by side, came to a halt with the demise of Baba Shri Chand in 1643 AD. The last meeting of Baba Shri Chand, with a Sikh Guru was with Guru Hargobind Sahib.<sup>18</sup>

The discussed history proves the point that even Baba Shri Chand founded a different cult, still the whole of his life he strived to lead his life on the principles of Guru Nanak, alongside his decisions. He was not jealous of the Sikh Gurus but had cordial and affectionate relationships with them. He always met them with a big-heart and would bless them. He gave his support for the growth and development of the *Panth*, which Guru Nanak Dev initiated. He chose Bhai Gurditta, the elder son of Guru Hargobind, his successor.

Leaders of *Udasi* cult have full faith in Sikhism that's why every *Dera* has Guru Granth Sahib. One would not be exaggerating while saying that the result of the whole life's endeavour of Baba Shri Chand is that the followers of the *Udasi* cult, those who visit *Deras* and pay their services in the form of *Langar*, keep Sikh Gurus and Baba Shri Chand at one pedestal. *Udasi* saints kept the honour of Sikh religion with preaching about *Gurmat* in the time of grave danger especially between the years 1708-1900 AD. These saints wrote an important *Granth* to

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17. Baba Khem Singh, *Maha Harinam Singh Ji Maharaj*, Volume 1-5, Bhuchokalan, Mayas Publishers, Bathinda; Rakesh, Vishnudutt, *Acharya Shri Chand Ki Vichardhara*, Prvodya Publications, New Delhi, 2000, pp-16-18.

18. Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Ate Udasin Samprada*, Op. Cit., pp-30-32.

preach about Sikh religion. During the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, these *Udasis* were leaving their impact. Kings granted lands to these *Udasi* saints, which made them corrupt. They began preaching their own ideals in the *Deras*. Gurudwara *Sudhar Lehar* was a result of this. Under this movement, *Gurudwaras* were snatched away from *Mahants* and the administration of these came under *Gurudwara Prabandhak* Committee. These resulted in the slow pace of preaching about the religion. Still these saints are preaching about the religion as per their capability. After Baba Shri Chand, these *Mahants* kept full faith in Sikhism and preached about *Gurmat*. These *Mahants* also were part of the army of Guru Gobind Singh. They attained martyrdom in the battles fighting for him. Baba Gurditta sent four of his followers – BaluHasna, Almast, Phul Sahib, and Goind Sahib. The places which were established by these four people established came into being as four important places for *Udasi* cult, and exist even today. The places are known as BaluHasna-CahranKaul (near Anandpur Sahib), Almast- Nanak Mata, Phul Sahib-Bahadurpur, District Hoshiarpur, and Goind Sahib-SangalWalaAkhara, Amritsar.<sup>19</sup>

In this way Baba Shri Chand started a new *Gaddi*. It was impossible to give it a space in the Sikh religion. Baba Shri Chand's relations with the later Sikh Gurus were cordial and during the *Khalsa* struggle looked after the *Gurudwaras*. Afterwards, they became astray from the principles of Sikh religion and Sikhs indulged themselves in another movement to take the *Gurudwaras* away from the *Mahants*.<sup>20</sup>

However, the character of Baba Shri Chand clears the point that he preached the idea of humanism and imagined about a nation, a place where people can live with self-reliance, self-respect, and independence. A place where people can live and fight for their rights in a unified way. He also thought of a place where people would always remember the name of the lord and worship Him. His

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19. Udasin, Swami Shantanand, *Aisi Matra Le Pahire Koi*, Sant das Publication, Jalandhar, 1996, p-196.

20. *Loc. Cit.*

*Bani‘Matra’* contains many thoughts that carry forward the ideology and principles of Guru Nanak Dev.<sup>21</sup>

Baba Shri Chand gave a new life to *Udasi* cult alongside serving the society, nation and Hindu religion. He preached about Sikhism under the guidance of Guru Granth Sahib. He also scripted many copies of Guru Granth Sahib and he, keeping those copies on his head, delivered those at different places on foot. He also contributed in the dangerous work of digging up a 150 meter long canal to fill the *sarowar* of Amritsar for four years.<sup>22</sup>

Almost all the *Udasi* saints respect Sikhism and Sikh principles and go to their limits to respect and preach about the principles of Sikhism and Guru Granth Sahib. Although, we cannot consider *Udasis* as part of Sikh religion, but we have to accept the fact that at no place they either went against or abused Sikh religion, ideology, and principles. We know the fact that Guru Nanak Dev and all of his successors worked to make people aware of their condition. He wanted them to realise the fact that to make this society beautiful is also their responsibility. If the *Udasi Deras* or *Akharas* are working in the direction of welfare of society and its inhabitants, it would never mean that they are going away from the philosophy of Sikh religion or are working against it.

We know one thing for sure that Guru Nanak Dev and almost all of his successors wanted to awaken the morally sleeping people to provide them with good life. They wanted people to realise the fact that the people living in a society has the responsibility to safeguard their society from degradation. If the *Udasi Deras* are working to give a definite direction to the society then it does not mean that they have gone against the philosophy of Sikh religion and are working against their ideology.

If we go to the *Deras* of Jalandhar and listen to the ideas of the *Mahants* there, we would get to know that their sole ambition is to establish and construct

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21. Singh, Karam, *Mahant Heera Das Ji: Jiwan Ate Sakhsyat, Udasin Bhekh Da Anmol Heera*, Mayas Publication, Bathinda, p-20; Mahant Ganesha Das, *Granth Itihas Nirmal Bhekh*, Publisher Gaini Madan Mohan Singh, Amritsar, Volume Second, p-493.

22. Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Ate Udasin Samprada*, Op. Cit., pp-110, 113.

an ideal society. They want to work then through this society of such kind that would not only encourage and establish the ideals of welfare of the people but would strengthen them simultaneously working on to establish the true reality of the religion.

## Chapter-4

### Contribution in Fields: Politics, Religion, Social, Education

The tradition of the *Deras* has been followed from ancient times. The shape and structure of *Deras* have been different in different times. In ancient times, these were *Ashrams*. The *Ashrams* were mostly for promoting education and religious propaganda. Saints and Sages used to live here. They used to spend their lives according to Indian culture. Along with this, they gave knowledge to students to live simple life. The time of war between ancient period and the medieval period came. These wars were fought between Hindu and Arabians of Greece and after that, medieval period began. When structure of these *Deras* changed suddenly, then Peer *Faqeer* started to live there.<sup>1</sup> Those who lived at these *Deras* suddenly, their viewpoint changed towards society, religion and politics. In medieval times, a different cult *Sohravardi* came into existence and after sometime, it was soon divided into two parts. First one was the class which started living under the shelter of state and the saints and sages of second class were attached with only religious and social works. Their life began to be considered as immensely sacred.<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, a different religion named *Sufi Silsila* came in to existence in medieval period; they were those who gave these *Deras* an organised and a decided form. The common people started to go there to fulfil social and religious objectives. These religious places were not seen then in the form of *Deras*, rather as the places of saints and sages. During these two periods (Medieval and ancient), these religious places got importance in terms of politics when the kings of that times started to help them

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1. *Tarikh-E-Firozshahi*, Kolkata, 1862, Lohore: Sons-E-Meel Publications, pp- 68-81; Barni, Ziyauddin Barni, *Fatva-E-Jhandari*, English Translation, Prof. Muhamad Habib and Dr. AfzalludeenRaahi, Title-2- *Plitical Theory of Delhi Saltanat*, Aligarh 1960, pp- 62-68.
  2. *Aian-E-Akbari*(Baluchman English Translation), Digital Library of India, Volume 1, 1873, p- 327; *Sikh Theory of Evolution, Its Philosophy of History* (Edited) Khark Singh, Daljeet Singh, Chandigarh, 1997, pp- 83-84.

financially. In medieval period, Sultan and *Mugal* kings allotted lands to these saints and *faqees* so that they could grow more.<sup>3</sup>

After medieval period, typically from Akbar's time to Shah Jahan, these *Deras* also became centres for providing education, along with their social and religious propaganda. Education of Islam now started to be taught here.<sup>4</sup>

It is necessary to write here that when Guru Nanak Dev gave *Gaddi* to Bhai Lehna (Guru Angad Dev) then Baba Shri Chand started his own cult. A *Dera* is established to take forward this cult. This *Dera* came to be known as *Udasi Dera*.

As against his father Guru Nanak Dev's philosophy, Baba Shri Chand started preaching from this *Dera* believing that while living in society, God cannot be worshiped. Rather he believed in the principle of world renunciation and he did this in a very bold statement, saying that we should spend our life in mountains and jungles and should stay away from social and family life.<sup>5</sup>

When the British rule was established, the British intended to use these religious places to protect their own interests and they began to serve the saints, *Faqees*, Gurus and other religious nobles here. In 1849 AD, after making Punjab a part of British rule, British officials did not just encourage the *Mahants* of these *Deras*, but decided one-sidedness of providing complete security to them and helped them in another viable way. The *Mahants* of these *Deras* started taking sides in favour of British Government officials. We can get information on a very large scale from the history of Punjab that *Mahants* of these *Deras* in many areas outside of Punjab and even in Punjab did not only collect money but also used it for themselves and for a long time, these *Deras* and lands of these *Deras* were misused.<sup>6</sup>

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3. Amar Ali, *The Spirit of Islam*, Mackmilan, London, 1931, pp- 264-65; S.A.A. Rijvi, *Muslim Revise List Movement in London Indian in 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> Century*, Agra University, Agra, 1965, p- 68-73.
  4. K.M Ashraf, (Edited), *Life and Conditon of the people of Hindustan*, Kolkata, 1935, Second time 1970, pp- 100-01; Hari Singh, *Nirmal Bhekh Da Itihas ate Sampardaiyk Bansawali*, Published, Gali Bag Wali, Amritsar, 1951, p-22.
  5. ManmohanSehgal, *ShivSwaroop Shri Chand*, Swami Sant Das Publishers, Jalandhar, 2000, pp-211-212; Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Sahib ate Udasin Samprada (Guru Nanak Sahib da Jiwan: Dharam Sidhantan Samait*, Shri Avdhut Jagat Ram Udasin Ashram Samiti Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, pp-89-100.
  6. Giani Ishar Singh Nabha, *Itihas Baba Shri Chand Sahib ate Udasin Samprada (Guru Nanak Sahib da Jiwan: Dharam Sidhantan Samait*, Shri Avdhut Jagat Ram Udasin Ashram Samiti Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, pp-162-163.



The *Gurudwara* reform movement took place and all the wrong activities performed in *Deras* were responsible for birth of this movement. After passing *Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar*, in 1925, some changes came in the form of these *Deras* (after establishment of SGPC, social-political and economic spheres of *Deras* were changed completely). After this, it was an attempt that these *Deras* should stay away from all forms of evil and put people on the true and honest path.<sup>7</sup>

This time it was felt that these *Deras* were a place of peace where people can go and get themselves free from their grief and can achieve their religious goals. Once again after independence, there was a great change in the form of these *Deras* when the *Mahants* living here started to figure out the property they had with these *Deras*, their own personal property and started taking advantage. Once again these *Deras* became places of evil. Now there was no hope for common people to take true and honest paths from these *Deras*. But we can see that still after so many ups and downs, lots of social and political efforts have been taken to give right path to *Mahants* of these *Deras*. As a result, with the social and religious works, *Dera Mahants* also started doing educational works. Soon a large number of *Deras* were not only famous for their own teachings and propagation, rather financial conditions of these *Deras* became more strengthened than before.<sup>8</sup>

The spiritual thought was especially important in the *Baani* of Lord Baba Shri Chand, the founder of this *Dera*. They believed in Advaita Brahmanism. According to their cult, religion is a truth and it never changes nor divides in more than one. He praised the Brahma in *Vaidik Kal*. The unity of Brahma is manifested in a multiplicity of attributes. This is a mystery of the *Nirgun-Sargun* of the unity and diversity. When Brahma create the world, then he becomes virtuous with the combination of *Maya* (Money). Brahma is the real form of the three-Brahma, Vishnu and Mahesh.<sup>9</sup>

In the context of Baba Shri Chand, Brahma is the Ultimate Truth, omnipresent and formless. His creation is transitory, mortal and myth. The lack of quality of work and

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7. Sarbjinder Singh, *Nanak Parkash, Patrika*, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University Patiala, Chapter 33,34 and 41, 1976.Pp-78-79.

8. *Ibid*,pp- 143-63.

9. Manmohan Sehgal,*Shiv Savroop Shri Chand, Op. Cit.* pp- 162-63, and Mahendar Singh Raahi, *Udasi Sampardaye De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Sant Maghar Das Ji, *Dera Baba Mandas Parkashan*, Khuddi Kalan, Barnala, 2007, pp- 69-70.

the natural power in the world is due to the doctrine of *Maya* (Money). That's why only Lord Brahma has a logical history. Because Baba Shri Chand has considered Brahma's *Sargun* form and the shape of the name is dependent on his *Vaidik* symbols, and he is represented by five deities. Therefore, they addressed Brahma with the words Satnam, Gobind, Gopal, Ram, Krishan, Vasudev, Shiv, Mahadev and Narain. This world is the origin of *Maya* (money), Brahma is the All-powerful. Adopting the tyrant of that power or giving a different shape to his power, he is called a virtuous God in the form of God.<sup>10</sup>

*Udasi* spiritualism permits the doctrine of Karma theory, transmigration and the eighty four lakhs births of the soul before that of the human being. The Guru can only mobilize the means of protecting these bounds. In fact, *Udasi* spiritualism sees *Satguru* as God and it is also true. This *Udasi* perception of accepting Guru as *Brahma* is coded in *Gurbani*. Such a true Guru who has recognized who is a true man. There is a cure for every disease of the creature. He can make him get rid of him from worldly obstacles and also get rid of *Karma Chakar*. He includes human being into the Brahma. This is the salvation of man and his liberation. In *Udasi* spiritualism-Karma, Knowledge, Devotion- these three are considered to be the means of salvation. From these three, devotion depends heavily on simple and human love. Therefore, saints and *Mahants* had mostly stressed on devotion or worship. These two parts of worship and devotion are enough in itself. Therefore, *Udasi* spiritualism accepts other forms of worship and devotion. *Udasis* love this way of knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, Shri Chand arranged for devotional spiritual thought to show the path of salvation. In worldliness, creating inertia on the path of Karma is difficult. Therefore, in the *Udasin* cult, Lord Shri Chand has given the five *Deva Vidhan* for the recitation of the name of Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma. Giving the power and importance to Vishnu, Shiva, Sun, Ganpati, Baba Shri Chand showed the path of Lord's worship and devotion to the common people so that any interruption during worship could not come.

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10. Loccit; Sarbjinder Singh, *Nanak Parkash Patrika*, 1<sup>st</sup>-2nd, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University Patiala, 2000, p- 50; Swami ShivanandYogiraj, *Bharti Prachin Shej Rajyog Ki Sidhiya Ate Anubhutiyan*, Sanbsdashiv Publication, Gurukul Road, Varindhavan, Mathura, 2000, p- 55-56.
  11. Sant Baba Sher Singh, *Nirmal Darshan*, Rasala, ank February, 2006, Amritsar; Mahant Budha Singh, *Nirmal Updesh*, Nirmal Ahram, Rishikesh, 1994, pp- 19-22.

Even in this situation, he also gave permission of idol worship and arranged a kind of worship of five forms take as a one form into heart. Like this, human gets rid of worldly bridles and get blessed of *Karuna* (God's Bliss).<sup>12</sup>

The basic premise of Baba Shri Chand's above spiritual wisdom is his *Baani* and *Shabads*. Here we are presenting the analysis and study of his *Baani*. This is the most important thing in the direction towards God which is *Baani*. Generally, the words are used for the accentuation of the letters. But here the word *Matra* came into existence from the sound of two words *Maa+traa*. The meaning of these words are- *Maa*= *Maya* (Money), *Traa*= *Taan*.<sup>13</sup>

We have already talked about the above mentioned *Baani*. Here, it has been tried to explain its form, meanings and antipathy. Generally, *Udasi* is a *Kaav* (poetical) form. *Udasi* saints presented their aims, rules, theories and religious amounts with the way of *Baani*. Therefore, this is the reason that we have got lot of *Baanis* with the lot of *Matras*(amounts) with different names like, *Matra* Guru Nanak Dev Ji, *Matra* Baba BaaluHasan Ji, *Matra* Baba Sangat Sahib Ji, *Matra* Baba Gobind Sahib Ji, *Matra* Bakhat Mall Ji, etc.

In all these, the style is same as that of the "*Matrabaani*" of Baba Shri Chand, and in each, the style has been changed according to need. The aim to pronounce "*ajehimatra le pehre ko*" (*Matrabaani*'s last sentence) is that who follows the given regulations, "*aavagavanmitasoye*" is released from the cycle of birth and death.<sup>14</sup>

The basis for pronunciation of the "*Matrabaani*" of Shri Chand is the circumstances, the dialogue with the *Nathyogis* and the fearless answers given to them. Shri Chand in a way attacked the contemporary *Yogis*. The yogis adopt the outside ascetic getup and carry that disguise forward to show off their spirituality. *Bhagwan* has tried to show them the right path by making them understand the symbolic value of the signs, the rituals associated with asceticism. The "*Matrabaani*" is the basic testament to this fact.<sup>15</sup>

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12. Baba Khem Singh, (Publication), *Maha Harnam Singh Ji Maharaj*, Volume 1-11, BhuchonKalan, Mayas Publication, Bathinda.P-32.

13. Sarbjinder Singh, *Nanak Parkash Patrika*, 1st-2nd, Publication Bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2000,p 44-45.

14. *Ibid.*,p-50.

15. Swami Gopalmoni, *MatraManthan*, Publication Ashram Samriti,Haridwar, 2007, pp-18-19.

Baba Shri Chand gave a new life to the nation, religion, social service as well as to the *Udasi* tradition. His works carried forward his ideology to far off places where the preachings of the Sikh religion got on a new level. He did the service of manually writing the scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib and in travelling on foot to deliver the manuscripts to the *Takhts*. He also did the service of building a canal of 150 metres in the four years so that water could be reached in the *Sarovar* of Amritsar.<sup>16</sup>

The paths he had chosen for the people to tread upon have their significance even now. Until now, in the *Udasi Deras*, the tradition of abidance by Guru Granth Sahib, *Langar* for the needy, free medicine for the patients, has been kept steadfast. The congregation does not only remember Baba Shri Chand on his birth anniversary, but also praise his works done for the society. The research of his *Baani* and anecdotes related to his life had long been attempted. Today, the research has almost been accomplished. If we try to understand the ideology of Baba Shri Chand in a right manner as also his preachings for the religion far and wide, and the works done by the *Mahants* for the same, one can get knowledge about the relations between Baba Shri Chand and the Guru Sahibs that have been maintained since long time.

Now the nationalistic and political ideology of Baba Shri Chand will be described. From this, the relationship of the *Udasi Deras* with the politics of the country will be known. The biography of Shri Chand has come out like the oral tradition of story-telling in which the fictional and real content has so been mixed up that it is difficult to seek out the truth. He is mostly known as the “*Sahibzaada*” of Guru Nanak, but the work he had done for the downtrodden and the marginalized, leaving aside his home and happiness, is not remembered today by anyone.

From his life, one can feel the reflection of a simple and decent person. It was the time when Guru Nanak Dev himself defined in his *baani*: “*kalkaatirajekasaidharampankhkarudareya/ koodamawassacchchandradikehchadeya.*”<sup>17</sup> It is the first example in the exchange of the present dark world, when two great

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16. Sarbjinder Singh, *Op. Cit.*, p 44-45.

17. Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Ithihas Baba Shri Chand Sahib ate Udasi Samprada (Guru Nanak Sahib da Jiwan Birtant, Dharam Sidhantan Samait)*, Shri Avdhoot Jagat Ram Udasin Ashram Samiti, Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, pp-110-113; Mahinder Singh Raahi, *Udasi Sampardai De Modhi Baba Shri Chand Ji*, Sant Maghar Das Ji, Dera Baba Maan Das Parkashak, KhudiKalan, Barnala, 2007, pp 10-11.

personalities illuminated in a single house. One is a family person, but was still an *Udasi*, and the other is an ascetic, who has been travelling the world to solve the familial problems of the society.<sup>18</sup>

Baba Shri Chand was not just an ascetic from his clothing, but he desired of bringing a revolution in the society through his travels. In him was a fire of a true statesman. The instance of such a quality came into light in the city of Udaipur in Rajasthan, when he visited a temple there. RanaPratap's Minister Bhamah Shah of Udaipur was impressed by his personality. He used to visit to see him. Once, he took RanaPratap along with him to see Baba Shri Chand. During that time, RanaPratap was devastated after getting defeated in many battles, yet he had not accepted defeat against the Mughals. He had always given a sharp war against the Mughals in the battleground. He was a subject of hatred in the eyes of the Mughals. He was such a powerful soldier who had always given the Mughals a hard battle, even though he did not have ample army. His army could be counted in numbers as against the innumerable army of the Mughals. But now, his power, strength and treasury had been negligible. He himself had lost heart. Baba Shri Chand not only gave him the courage, but also asked him to preserve the proud heritage of his kingdom. He told him that those who tread the path of Truth are always victorious in the end. God is with such people. In the path towards the divine, God himself lead the bad towards the truth. He gave an example of Ravana who had innumerable force. But Shri Rama won the victory with the army of animals. So he should have courage. The way he had his head high against the Mughals before, the same should remain in the future. God helps those who fight their own struggles with will power and strong determination. Through his words, Baba Shri Chand instilled in RanaPratap courage to fight against the Mughals in such a way that he lived his life fighting against them. The other kings of Rajasthan had accepted defeat against the Mughals but RanaPratap was firm on the words of Baba Shri Chand. Baba Shri Chand inculcated a revolutionary spirit in the Indians so that they can fight against the odds. His personality exuded self-confidence and was very influential. In his *Baani*, "*Matrabaani*", he says: "*chetohnagritarhogaa; alakhpurkhkasimronaa||*"<sup>19</sup>

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18. *Loccit, Nirmal PanthDarshan*, Dera Baba Mishra Singh, Singh Brother Publication, Amritsar, 1529, Part 2, p -4.

19. Gurpratap Singh, *Shri Chand*, Weekly Edition, Amritsar, Volume 46, 1995, p-17.

This slogan ended being revolutionary. In the spirit of nationalism, it was his first attempt which tried to enable zeal among the downtrodden sect of the society. Through his travels, he went door to door to inculcate such a spirit in people. It is due to this reason that there are *Deras* in every corner of the country. During the battle of *Bhangani*, it was due to the courage of *Udasi* saint Bhai Kirpal Das that Guru Gobind was able to destroy the head of the army chief of hilly kings with his sword in such a way as if one has bumped his head into a wall. This scene is described very beautifully by Guru Sahib in his “*Bacchittar Naatak*.” Shri Chand Ji not only propagated fighting against the tyranny, but also focused on reciting the name of God.

From young age, he was of a sacrificial nature. On the basis of his meditations of his life, if he is compared to Dhruv Bhagat who went to jungles to seek God, it would not be a wrong comparison. To give a prominence place to mother, to give her a status of equality which has been taken away from her, Bhisham Pitamah (Devvarat) took on the path of an ascetic. He gave sacrifice for the happiness of his father. In a similar vein, his sacrificial nature and ascetic living was not influenced by anyone.

His sacrifice was beyond his selfless wish. That it is the life we spend in the worship of God and in the welfare of people, rising above the lust for our selfish wishes and fear of hell, is the only satisfactory life which steps one forward to liberation. As Vishisht Nirbana Prakarn says in Sarg 44: “*Saatgaanthkotinkisaadhnaaave sank // ramaamalmataphiregineindko rank ||*”<sup>20</sup>

It is proved from his character that while he preached the lesson of humanity door-to-door, he also imagined a firm foundation of a nation where everyone would unite to fight their own battles inculcating in themselves self-respect, self-confidence, self-dependence, etc., and also keep the name of the Almighty alive within them and recite his *Baani*. His *Baani* sheds light on many thoughts which carries forward the mission of Guru Nanak Dev.<sup>21</sup>

To what extent *Udasis* are related to social discourse and sphere, we can say with clarity that these *Deras* have worked a lot for the development of the society and making

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20. The given statements are from *Nirmal Bhushan* of Mahant Ganesha Das (p-45) and *Nirmal Panth Darshan* of Mahant Darshan Singh (Part Four).

21. Teja Singh, *Jiwan Katha Sant Atar Singh Ji*, Language Department, Patiala, Punjab, 1998, pp-39-40; and also see Simarjeet Singh, (Editor), *Gurmat Parkash*, Volume 11, 2008, p-7.

it progressive and this has earned a special place for Baba Shri Chand in the society. It would be relevant to say here that to include *Udasis* with the Sikhs and Sikh religion and Nanak *Panth* is not a right thing. For this, writer Shiv Ram Das Ji UdaasinChakravarty, in his book “*Udasiyan da SacchaItihaas*”, has given various reasons. The most important reason that has been stated in the book is that *Udasis* worship the idols and *Samaadhs* of their saints and that of Gola Sahib. Although the worship of five *Devas* done by the *Udasi’s Pooj Dove Akhadas*, that worship is not done by any sect of Sikhs. If it is not agreed upon, but is opposed, then on what basis the *Udasis* should be called Sikhs? In a similar way, the *Udasis* believe in pilgrim places such as Shri Ganga and Prayagraj and visit there too. It is important to know here that the religion of Guru Nanak is not different from *PanthVedas* and relics. There were *Udasis* before Guru Nanak too.

Keeping in view this continuing conflict, it would be appropriate to say that the *Udasis* have always believed in and never opposed Sikh Gurus, their ideals, their religious scriptures, social customs and traditions and their religious beliefs.<sup>22</sup>

The *Udasi* Mahatmas respect Sikh religion and Sikh protocol and to the extent to which they can, they wholeheartedly respect the Sikh ideology. Although we don’t ascribe them to be part of the Sikh religion, we will have to agree to this that they have never ever opposed Sikh Gurus, Sikh ideology and philosophy and never have they said anything disrespectful about them. Guru Nanak Dev and his successors wanted to create awareness in the minds of the sleeping people. They wanted to tell people that it was their duty to build a clean society. If the revolutionary work of creating awareness among people is done by the *Deras* in the society, it does not mean that they have separated from the Sikh philosophy and are working against them. If we visit the *Deras* of *Udasis* in Jalandhar and listen to the thinking of the people there, it becomes clear that their aim is to build a progressive society. The propagators of *Udasi Deras*, in order to bring awareness among the people in the society, have carried out educational reforms too. Keeping all this in mind, they have made efforts to develop the educational field. Wherever there are *Udasi Deras* or *akhadas*, the *Dera Mahants* have established educational institutions and made people aware that until and unless, they are not

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22. Simarjit Singh, *GurmatParkash*, Amritsar, March 2007, pp 28-29; Mahant Anantanand Udaasin and Dr. Gian Inder Singh, *Shri Chand Parkash*, EglanParkashan, Amritsar, 1995, pp 40-45,

educated, they can neither bring about social welfare nor can they advise others on religion.

For instance, in the Patiala city, if we look at the work done by *Dera Mahants* in the educational field, we can see that their contribution is no less than other societies and institutes. The establishment of Udaasin Higher Secondary School, in front of Mohindra Complex, can be seen as an exemplar in promoting the field of education by the *Udasis*. In the field of education, the characteristic feature of this tradition is that they not only give knowledge to children, but also teach them lessons on morality, spiritualism and decency. They also tell the students that they have certain rights and duties towards the society and the nation which they have to fulfill. It is also necessary to be mentioned that in these institutions, the students are taught the basic tenets of the Sikh religion on the basis of which it can be said that the propagators of *Udasi* tradition have never done anything in opposition to Sikh religion, Sikh philosophy, Sikh rituals and beliefs, nor have they said anything against these. But the *Udasi* tradition, though it prevails alongside the Sikh religion, yet it is a part of it. In brief, it would be true to say that *Udasi Deras* have contributed a lot in developing the character of the society. The *Dera Mahants* have contributed a lot in developing the educational sphere of the society and have led to the establishment of various educational institutions in different cities. The *Dera's* educational institutes are not only limited to higher secondary, but they provide education in higher educational and management studies, which have been established in some prominent cities. In Punjab, several areas are considered backward but due to the efforts made by the *Udasi Dera*, this does not seem quite true. *Dera Langh* had been considered a backward area in terms of educational reforms. But the head of the *Dera*, Baba Pritam Das took a great interest in the educational field. He has a great contribution in the field of education. From ancient times, religious places have been an epitome of education. Every religious place had a school associated with it in which the students were taught about linguistics and religious education. The *Mahant* or priest of the place would serve as teacher. But in the modern times, there has been a great shift in the field of education with the new reforms and regulations. There has been a great development in the field of education, with new subjects emerging and new type of knowledge contributing to the change in the field of education. In the place of small schools associated with religious places, big educational institutes are being established. In order to make the organization popular, schools and colleges are established with its name, land



is utilized for the same, scholarships are awarded to brilliant students. All these are creative ideas which attract people towards the *deras*.<sup>23</sup>

The *Mahant* of *DeraLangh* has established Baba Shri Chand Government College with the help of Badal Government, giving thirty hectares of land for the purpose. With this, students have been able to get education at very less expenses. Not only property was given to this college, but also financial support was provided for the construction of the building. It is due to the establishment of this college, that the popularity of the *Dera* has increased. The *Mahants* of the *Dera* have not only given a boon to the villagers in the form of a college but they are also building some schools and giving financial assistance for the same. The *Mahant* has given an assistance of one lac to Guru Gobind Singh College, *Giddherbaha* and led to the construction of many rooms there. He gives an annual assistance of twenty thousand to the committee of the city established for developing schools. He also helped in construction of a school building in a village named VaddaJhugga. The rooms have been constructed on the name of the *Dera mahant* Baba Karam Das. The same has been done in Swami Keshavanand College, Sangheria. The *Dera* has also built a school in village Sardargarh which provides education up to matriculation. For the construction of a school building in the village ChungiKalan, he has given assistance in the form of bricks from a kiln, and also built rooms for the residence of the teachers. In the village MehneBhaagu, a primary school has been built on the name of Baba Bhagwandas. With all these educational reforms, there has been rise in popularity of the *Dera* among the nearby areas and with this, religious popularity has also risen. In terms of contribution in education, the name of the *Dera* comes at the first place.<sup>24</sup>

Dera Bhai MaanDas, KhuddiKalan, has also contributed to the field of education to the extent that has been possible for them. In ancient times, the *Dera* was known as a hub of education and religious education. Students from far off places would come to attain learning in religion and Sanskrit. Though the *Dera* was of the *Udasi* saints, yet they stressed on the religious education all the more. With the changing times, the scope of

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23. Karam Singh, *Mahant Hira Das Ji: Jiwan ate Sakhsiyat, Udasin Bhekh da Anmol Heera*, Mayas Publication, Bathinda, 2016, p-20.

24. Gurdev Singh, *Udasi Sampradye ate Sikh Pant*, Gobind Sadan, New Delhi, 2007, pp-117,118; Giani Ishar Singh Nara, *Ithihas Baba Shri Chand Sahib ate Udasi Samprada (Guru Nanak Sahib da Jiwan Birtant, DharamSidhantanSamait)*, Shri Avdhoot Jagat Ram Udasin Ashram Samiti, Kankhal, Haridwar, 1998, pp-209-210.

education has changed too. In this dera too, with time, education took a back seat. But the present *Dera mahant* Bhai Maghar Das, keeping in mind his role, has taken a great interest in the educational reforms in Guru Gobind Singh College, Sanghera, and has given financial assistance for the same. Due to his services, he is given a role of General Secretary of the college by the Management committee. *Mahant* himself has an interest in literature. He meets various scholars time to time and tries to organize seminar in the colleges and schools of the village.

The dera *mahant* Gurbanta Das of the Dera JhangTapp in Bathinda has shown his interest in works of social welfare. In the field of education, his contribution is praiseworthy. He has established Mahant Gurbanta Das Memorial Nursing College for the region in which girls can do nursing course at a very less expense and are providing the society a respectable place for themselves. The *Mahant* has also contributed in the field of Ayurveda education so that the common man can also learn about this.

Dera Jalal has contributed significantly in the field of education. The *Dera* saints have taken a praiseworthy and unique step for providing education to the deaf and the dumb in the Ganganagar city. Through this *Dera*, an ashram has been constructed in Haridwar where the ordinary folk can stay.<sup>25</sup>

It is the characteristic of the *Deras* that since the beginning, they have never associated themselves with any political ideology nor have they shown support for any political party.<sup>26</sup>

These *Deras* have separated themselves from the politics of their region, Government and of the nation. The followers of the *Dera* also do not call themselves part of any politics or political party. But they have always advised their followers not to associate themselves with any wrong political ideology, and to the extent possible, they should keep themselves associated with clean politics and help those people who work

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25. Swami BishanParkash Sham, *Sadhu Sandesh Janam Sakhi Anak*, ShrichandAnak, ShrichadnParkashanSamiti, Amritsar, 1952, 1969 and 1970, Swami Gopalmoni, MatarManthan, Haridwar, 2007, pp 177-78.

<sup>26</sup> Personal Meeting with Swami Shantanand Ji, Udasin *Dera*, Gopal Nagar, Jalandhar. He said that Udasin *Deras* are working for social development and also giving straight religious path to common people. But they are also taking interest in educational and health fields to make their lives good and liveable and with this they are also giving religious path to them. He also said that even though, he considered Baba Shri Chand as a Guru of a different cult, but with this he also gives respect to Sikh Gurus. He believes in *Banni*.

for their society and nation on the whole and who can help in the growth of the nation. The *Udasi Deras* have not only adopted the institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* to help the poor, but also contributed for their strengthening. We get to know about some *Udasi Deras* in Punjab and outside Punjab, especially in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Uttarakhand, where special emphasis is laid on the health care of the people and such measures are adopted. In many places, dispensaries are opened where people are treated free of cost. The social welfare works of these *Deras* include making the people healthy, to make their thinking clean and healthy, because in a clean society, clean ideology and self-confidence can be developed.

In brief, we can say that the *Udasi akhadas*, *Deras* and saints have endeavoured to remove the institutionalization on one hand, and on the other, they have inculcated the thoughts of fraternity, humbleness, cordiality for the depressed and the needy. In order to remove the division between different sects of the society, they have opened the doors of their *Deras* to people of every sect and religion. All are welcomed in these *Deras* and are given needed assistance. Despite this, the saints also give financial assistance to the schools, for mass marriages of the girls. They have not limited themselves just to the religious preaching, but they have contributed towards raising the standard of thinking of the people in the society. Wherever these *Deras* are, the nearby regions and the people therein are made aware of their rights and are asked to demand their rights against their exploitation. The other characteristic of these *Deras* is that after the sun has set, women are not allowed to enter the premises of the *Dera*, reason being the *Dera Mahants*. The character of the saints and their followers has always been questioned. In order to keep these *Deras* free of stain, this step has been taken. The *Udasi* saints, in order to spread their ideology and thoughts, have taken the task of publishing books related to these *Deras*. The *Mahants* have not only published on the life of Baba Shri Chand, but also about the philosophy of the *Udasi* tradition and its relation to other religions. On these, research has been done and scriptures are written. The other characteristic of these *Udasi Deras* is that these *Deras* are far off from the socio-religious wrong doings, and those people are under surveillance who affect the philosophy and the works of these *Deras*. Attempts are made to keep these *Deras* away from the wrong doings.

## Conclusion

One thing is certain that there has been a tradition of *Deras* and *Mahants* that is prevalent since long in India, especially Punjab. Man is a social animal and he has not thought of going outside the confines of religion. The religious *Deras* and institutions have always affected human life. The shape and structure of the *Deras* have always undergone change in different times. '*Dera*', '*Dehra*', '*Dhehra*' are used synonymously. '*Dehra*' comes from '*Deh*', meaning body. The place where a body has been cremated, a crematorium is set up, and in memorium, a temple or altar is built, and that is called *Dera*. The followers of that religious figure make that *Dera* a symbol and build up class, organisation or a tradition. In today's world, such institutions are called *Deras*.

The word *Sant*, saint in English, stands for a saint, holyman, pious, deeply religious person and an ascetic, medicant etc. In a similar vein, the *Udasi* tradition is a very important institution. It has nearly 100 *Deras*. This tradition is building its hold very strongly.

In the time of Guru Nanak, many small *Panths* and traditions grew up. Among them, *Udasi* tradition has been progressing at a fast pace. The founding father of this tradition was Baba Shri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak Dev. The eldest son of Guru Nanak Dev, Shri Chand was a saintly figure who spent his whole life doing meditation of God and preached about the mission of his father at various places. Living away from the materialistic things and spending time in the meditation of God was his characteristic feature. This was the reason that the saints all over the world placed him at a position of an ideal saint and respected figure. Guru Angad would stay at Khadoor Sahib and preach the Sikhs there, but Baba Shri Chand took on the footsteps of his father, keeping the tradition of Kartarpur Sahib intact, also preaching Sikh principles across the country.

When Guru Nanak went to heavenly abode, he was forty-five years old. He followed the ideals of his father and made *Dera* Baba Nanak his station. After some time, he built a hut in village Barath in the District of Gurdaspur, which was

fifteen to twenty miles away. There, the fanatic followers started coming. Baba Shri Chand did not pay much interest in eating and clothing, but an ascetic life became his way of living. It was owing to his meditation that he lived for 136 years and went to heavenly abode as a true ideal of a saint that inspired *Nanakpanthi* saints of the *Udasi* tradition. It would be wrong to say that he did not establish a new tradition, but he preached the teachings of Guru Nanak everywhere he went. Hence, the *Udasi* saints have always been preaching, reciting *Moolmantra* everywhere they go. The *UdasiMahatmas*, who recite their own "*aarta*" in the name of Shri Chand, would also sing the victories of Guru Nanak. Those who become preachers among the *Nanak panthis* are respectfully known as *Udasi*. The history is testimony to this fact that these *Udasis* have preached the name of Guru Nanak everywhere they went, not only in India but outside too. They built *Dharamshalas* at various places, wrote *Gurbaani* in the *Gutkas* and sent it to the religious followers and perhaps they founded the way for preaching Sikh principles by writing the *janamsaakhis* of Guru Nanak.

Therefore, those *Udasimahatmas* who would take on the disguises had a different role to play. It had its own importance no doubt, but according to the Sikh principles, following such a path is never propagated.

We know it through history that the preaching done by these *Udasi* saints cannot be ignored. However, it is also a fact that saints have ceased to be disciplinarians, ascetics and anthropologists as they used to be, but even in the old time some of them were not true to their calling. Leaders of the Sikh *Misals* and Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given several properties in the name of religious institutions and gave away such properties due to which the flow of money increased. The saints also came under the influence of money, which had very bad consequences.

During *Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar*, these institutions came out of the control of the *Mahants* to the hands of Sikh *Sangat*. Due to this, the *Udasi Mahants* had to face the music. This was a historic moment, which could not have been avoided. However, there were some selfish *Mahants* in disguise who

revolted against this movement and at certain time would not cease to insult Sikh tradition and the Gurus. It is true that the role of the leaders at that time was to seek an arbitrary path by meeting the wise saints but the negligence on the part of those leaders led to the loss on the part of the Sikhs. All over the country, the lakhs of *Nanak panthis* were the victims of this row and it is impossible now to rekindle those relationships. Still, the real followers of Sikhism, even the saints, are still following the same.

It is the role of the Sikh *Jathebandis* to make efforts for the union of the two because the way the *Udasi* saints can preach about the Sikh principles, no other married preacher can. The ascetic get up also has a role to play which cannot be denied. The signs of their get up include tresses, *Majithi Chola*, *Seesh* and *Ucchakulla*, *Kaali Seli Doombi*, *lokzanjeer*, etc. Hence, with the use of these signs, they make a different community which having their own ideology, are still connected with the main stream Sikh tradition. After Baba Shri Chand, Baba Gurditta, son of the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, became his successor. He preached a lot about the *Udasi* tradition. For this, he established four *Dhunas*, which are still prevalent now.

Before going to heavenly abode, Guru Nanak had announced Bhai Lehna to be the successor of his throne. From this onwards, the series of Sikh Gurus continued and ended with the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. On the other hand, during these times also, there was an expansion of the *Deras* of the *Mahants*, and without any fear and Government interference, they strengthened their hold. It is proved from the Sikh history that the history of Sikhs has been a battleground of martyrdom, perhaps it is only the Sikh religion that has given such a large number of sacrifices. Yes, it is a different thing that some have given it through body, through service and through preaching of the Sikh tradition for all his life. However, the historians of the time did not give ample recognition to many eminent persons. Among such personalities is Baba Shri Chand. There is no doubt that the *Udasi* tradition is the oldest one. From the ancient time to the time

of Baba Shri Chand, many saints and sages have been the followers of this tradition.

From the ancient time, the chronology of the *Udasi* tradition started with a nursery. In this, the first four plants were planted in all the four directions of India. Consequently, the number of *Gaddis* all over the world of the *Udasi* tradition amounted to more than 3500.

The father-son duo, Guru Nanak Dev and Baba Shri Chand travelled across the world and knew it well that until the downtrodden people were caught up in the false rituals and superstitions, and until when their dead souls will not awakened, they would not be able to fight against the injustice. Although there is a slight difference between the ideologies of both these prominent figures, yet their goals were the same- to relieve people from the web of superstitions. From the first Guru to the seventh Guru, the relationship of Baba Shri Chand with them were very cordial. The Gurus also respected him a lot. There is no account of Baba Shri Chand's meeting with Guru Angad Dev and Guru Har Rai. The other four Gurus greeted him with respect owing to his status of being son of the first Guru. It is proved that despite being a founder of a different tradition, Baba Shri Chand still followed the path of Guru Nanak and the principles of the Guru Panth.

He did not feel any kind of jealousy, but treated the Gurus cordially, giving them his blessings. From all this, it is clearly proved that Shri Chand led to the growth of the Sikh tradition through his full support and made Baba Gurditta the successor of his throne, who was the son of the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind. It is proved that the wide perspective of Baba Shri Chand made him a centre of attraction in the service of the Sikh tradition. The leaders of the *Udasi* tradition wholeheartedly believed in the Sikh Gurus. It is because of this that Guru Granth Sahib is respectfully placed in these *Deras*. The *Udasi Mahants*, especially from the period 1708 to 1900, preached the Sikh principles in full intensity and kept the pride of the Sikh religion intact.

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them reach places far and wide. They also did many works related to the Sikh religion. Hence, his worship towards the *Gurughar* is proved.

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In these schools, religion is also taught along with other subjects. It is done so that they connect to the religion. The *Deras* have institutionalised the spread of education. In earlier times, students would read about various religions, scriptures, and Vedas. At that time, the number of students used to be less and the subjects taught too. If we say that the main subject revolved around religious education, it would not be false. However, in the modern world, the structure of education has entirely changed. The number of students is high. Even the village girls go far off cities to get education in schools and colleges. The purpose of the subjects of study is to train students how to live in a society and lead a meaningful life. The *Deras* help the educational institutions financially from time to time, but the *Dera Mahants* take an active participation in leading such institutions by taking on the role of member of a managing committee.



They were taught about how to tackle the problems of life. To fend for diseases related to human body, they were given education on ayurveda and yoga.

In the modern world, the scope and view of education has undergone change. The target of educating the children is to make them financially well off and materialistic. Due to this, the parents are admitting their children in Christian missionary convent schools. Following these schools, children are not only forgetting about their culture and history but are also led astray from the civilisation. Keeping this in mind, the different traditions are educating children in different streams about religious scriptures. To what extent they will be able to win is another question. Another point is that education is very expensive these days. In the society, the education of women is not given importance and neither are they prepared for developing a taste in education in rural areas. The financially strong *Deras* have opened schools, colleges for women, or they have given their property to the Government for the same.

If the expansion of the *Deras* is concerned, they have a great contribution in the social life of people. *Deras* have been an important part of the life of people since their inception. Though there is a difference in scope and work of these *Deras*, they have always been progressive in shaping the society.

*Deras* have an important role in the process of socialisation. The union of people in the *Deras*, their participation in the functions, their working together for serving the followers by making *Langar*, all these are the basis and results of socialisation.

Their social contribution cannot be neglected in any way. They have been contributing to the ancient living in any manner. The spine of the modern world is money. *Deras* have much property, from which they gain income. Hence, the *Dera Mahants* are associated with social welfare by providing financial assistance. Consequently, these *Deras* operate several educational institutions, modern hospitals, ayurvedic dispensaries and provide them with needful financial assistance.

Consequently, the scope and span of these *Deras* has become vast. It is because their contribution is very high in the social works such as women empowerment, arranging for their education, marriages of poor girls, etc. It is felt that their contribution will be even higher in the coming years. These *Deras* have been leading people on a religious path by organizing *Deewans* from time to time. They have been promoting the Indian culture, especially that of Punjab. They have been leading people to follow the right path. Camps are organised for de-addiction. Therefore, the impact of *Deras* can be seen on various social aspects. The extent to which the *Deras* participate in politics is of significant concern. However, this is an indigestible matter. When the *Deras* came into existence, their main objective and work was to walk on the path given by religion and reciting *Bani* and educating people about the attainment of *Moksha*, and that politics is limited to the materialistic world.

While religion is associated with the meaning of life, politics is with the aspect of modern life. However, when we look at the history, it can be seen that religion and politics go side by side. Therefore, Guru Nanak was not just a social reformer but also a critical thinker who did not just take an interest in the politics of the time but also gave revolutionary ideas. These ideas had a great impact on the people of those times. Similarly, the *Dera* also take an interest in politics today. However, the *Udasi Deras* stay away from politics. They do not take any interest in it. Hence, the *Deras* have contributions in every field.

In the contemporary time, there have been some saints that preach principles of Guru Nanak through reciting and leading a discourse on *Gurbani*. Among them, Swami IshardasShastri of *MahamandaleshwarUdasin Akhada*, Haridwar is worthy of mention. He got his education from Mahakirtaniya Swami Sant Das, *Jhang Wale*. He lighted his wisdom in GopalNagriBasti in the city of Jalandhar. There are many other great saints like him that are able to create an environment where an arbitrary state can be maintained. There is no need to rekindle the old disputes again, but to find new ways of resolution.

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**IN**  
**HISTORY**

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## Conclusion

One thing is certain that there has been a tradition of *Deras* and *Mahants* that is prevalent since long in India, especially Punjab. Man is a social animal and he has not thought of going outside the confines of religion. The religious *Deras* and institutions have always affected human life. The shape and structure of the *Deras* have always undergone change in different times. '*Dera*', '*Dehra*', '*Dhehra*' are used synonymously. '*Dehra*' comes from '*Deh*', meaning body. The place where a body has been cremated, a crematorium is set up, and in memorium, a temple or altar is built, and that is called *Dera*. The followers of that religious figure make that *Dera* a symbol and build up class, organisation or a tradition. In today's world, such institutions are called *Deras*.

The word *Sant*, saint in English, stands for a saint, holyman, pious, deeply religious person and an ascetic, medicant etc. In a similar vein, the *Udasi* tradition is a very important institution. It has nearly 100 *Deras*. This tradition is building its hold very strongly.

In the time of Guru Nanak, many small *Panths* and traditions grew up. Among them, *Udasi* tradition has been progressing at a fast pace. The founding father of this tradition was Baba Shri Chand, the son of Guru Nanak Dev. The eldest son of Guru Nanak Dev, Shri Chand was a saintly figure who spent his whole life doing meditation of God and preached about the mission of his father at various places. Living away from the materialistic things and spending time in the meditation of God was his characteristic feature. This was the reason that the saints all over the world placed him at a position of an ideal saint and respected figure. Guru Angad would stay at Khadoor Sahib and preach the Sikhs there, but Baba Shri Chand took on the footsteps of his father, keeping the tradition of Kartarpur Sahib intact, also preaching Sikh principles across the country.

When Guru Nanak went to heavenly abode, he was forty-five years old. He followed the ideals of his father and made *Dera* Baba Nanak his station. After some time, he built a hut in village Barath in the District of Gurdaspur, which was fifteen to twenty miles away. There, the fanatic followers started coming.

Baba Shri Chand did not pay much interest in eating and clothing, but an ascetic life became his way of living. It was owing to his meditation that he lived for 136 years and went to heavenly abode as a true ideal of a saint that inspired *Nanakpanthi* saints of the *Udasi* tradition. It would be wrong to say that he did not establish a new tradition, but he preached the teachings of Guru Nanak everywhere he went. Hence, the *Udasi* saints have always been preaching, reciting *Moolmantra* everywhere they go. The *UdasiMahatmas*, who recite their own "*aarta*" in the name of Shri Chand, would also sing the victories of Guru Nanak. Those who become preachers among the *Nanakpanthis* are respectfully known as *Udasi*. The history is testimony to this fact that these *Udasis* have preached the name of Guru Nanak everywhere they went, not only in India but outside too. They built *Dharamshalas* at various places, wrote *Gurbaani* in the *Gutkas* and sent it to the religious followers and perhaps they founded the way for preaching Sikh principles by writing the *janamsaakhis* of Guru Nanak.

Therefore, those *Udasimahatmas* who would take on the disguises had a different role to play. It had its own importance no doubt, but according to the Sikh principles, following such a path is never propagated.

We know it through history that the preaching done by these *Udasi* saints cannot be ignored. However, it is also a fact that saints have ceased to be disciplinarians, ascetics and anthropologists as they used to be, but even in the old time some of them were not true to their calling. Leaders of the Sikh *Misals* and Maharaja Ranjit Singh had given several properties in the name of religious institutions and gave away such properties due to which the flow of money increased. The saints also came under the influence of money, which had very bad consequences.

During *Gurudwara Sudhar Lehar*, these institutions came out of the control of the *Mahants* to the hands of Sikh *Sangat*. Due to this, the *Udasi Mahants* had to face the music. This was a historic moment, which could not have been avoided. However, there were some selfish *Mahants* in disguise who revolted against this movement and at certain time would not cease to insult Sikh tradition and the Gurus. It is true that the role of the leaders at that time was to seek an arbitrary path by meeting the wise saints but the negligence on the part of those leaders led to the loss on the part of the Sikhs. All over the country, the

lakhs of *Nanak panthis* were the victims of this row and it is impossible now to rekindle those relationships. Still, the real followers of Sikhism, even the saints, are still following the same.

It is the role of the Sikh *Jathebandis* to make efforts for the union of the two because the way the *Udasi* saints can preach about the Sikh principles, no other married preacher can. The ascetic get up also has a role to play which cannot be denied. The signs of their get up include tresses, *Majithi Chola*, *Seesh* and *Ucchakulla*, *Kaali Seli Doombi*, *lokzanjeer*, etc. Hence, with the use of these signs, they make a different community which having their own ideology, are still connected with the main stream Sikh tradition. After Baba Shri Chand, Baba Gurditta, son of the sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind, became his successor. He preached a lot about the *Udasi* tradition. For this, he established four *Dhunas*, which are still prevalent now.

Before going to heavenly abode, Guru Nanak had announced Bhai Lehna to be the successor of his throne. From this onwards, the series of Sikh Gurus continued and ended with the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji. On the other hand, during these times also, there was an expansion of the *Deras* of the *Mahants*, and without any fear and Government interference, they strengthened their hold. It is proved from the Sikh history that the history of Sikhs has been a battleground of martyrdom, perhaps it is only the Sikh religion that has given such a large number of sacrifices. Yes, it is a different thing that some have given it through body, through service and through preaching of the Sikh tradition for all his life. However, the historians of the time did not give ample recognition to many eminent persons. Among such personalities is Baba Shri Chand. There is no doubt that the *Udasi* tradition is the oldest one. From the ancient time to the time of Baba Shri Chand, many saints and sages have been the followers of this tradition.

From the ancient time, the chronology of the *Udasi* tradition started with a nursery. In this, the first four plants were planted in all the four directions of India. Consequently, the number of *Gaddis* all over the world of the *Udasi* tradition amounted to more than 3500.

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If the expansion of the *Deras* is concerned, they have a great contribution in the social life of people. *Deras* have been an important part of the life of people

since their inception. Though there is a difference in scope and work of these *Deras*, they have always been progressive in shaping the society.

*Deras* have an important role in the process of socialisation. The union of people in the *Deras*, their participation in the functions, their working together for serving the followers by making *Langar*, all these are the basis and results of socialisation.

Their social contribution cannot be neglected in any way. They have been contributing to the ancient living in any manner. The spine of the modern world is money. *Deras* have much property, from which they gain income. Hence, the *Dera Mahants* are associated with social welfare by providing financial assistance. Consequently, these *Deras* operate several educational institutions, modern hospitals, ayurvedic dispensaries and provide them with needful financial assistance. Consequently, the scope and span of these *Deras* has become vast. It is because their contribution is very high in the social works such as women empowerment, arranging for their education, marriages of poor girls, etc. It is felt that their contribution will be even higher in the coming years. These *Deras* have been leading people on a religious path by organizing *Deewans* from time to time. They have been promoting the Indian culture, especially that of Punjab. They have been leading people to follow the right path. Camps are organised for de-addiction. Therefore, the impact of *Deras* can be seen on various social aspects. The extent to which the *Deras* participate in politics is of significant concern. However, this is an indigestible matter. When the *Deras* came into existence, their main objective and work was to walk on the path given by religion and reciting *Bani* and educating people about the attainment of *Moksha*, and that politics is limited to the materialistic world.

While religion is associated with the meaning of life, politics is with the aspect of modern life. However, when we look at the history, it can be seen that religion and politics go side by side. Therefore, Guru Nanak was not just a social reformer but also a critical thinker who did not just take an interest in the politics of the time but also gave revolutionary ideas. These ideas had a great impact on the people of those times. Similarly, the *Dera* also take an interest in politics today. However, the *Udasi Deras* stay away from politics. They do not take any interest in it. Hence, the *Deras* have contributions in every field.

In the contemporary time, there have been some saints that preach principles of

Guru Nanak through reciting and leading a discourse on *Gurbani*. Among them, Swami IshardasShastri of *MahamandaleshwarUdasin Akhada*, Haridwar is worthy of mention. He got his education from Mahakirtaniya Swami Sant Das, *Jhang* Wale. He lighted his wisdom in GopalNagriBasti in the city of Jalandhar. There are many other great saints like him that are able to create an environment where an arbitrary state can be maintained. There is no need to rekindle the old disputes again, but to find new ways of resolution.





## CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work which is being presented in the dissertation entitled **"UDASIS: ORIGIN AND CONTRIBUTION IN THE SIKH HISTORY"** in the fulfilment of the requirement for the award of degree of master of philosophy in faculty of Arts, is an authentic record of my own work. The work has been carried out during the period from 2016A to 2018

*for the submission of Dr. Daljit Kaur Gill*  
The matter embodied in this dissertation has not been submitted by me for the award of any other degree of this or any other university.

*Sarbjit Kaur*  
Sarbjit Kaur 2/12/2020  
University Roll No. - 166191018

This is to certify that the above statement made by the candidate is correct to the best of my knowledge.

*Dr. Daljit Kaur Gill*  
Dr. Daljit Kaur Gill 2/12/2020  
(Supervisor)

The M.Phil. Viva-Voce examination of Ms. Sarbjit Kaur has been held on 16.10.2020 (Online mode, with reference of UGC guidelines letter no. D. O. No. F.1-1/2020 (Secy.) on dated 29 April, 2020) and accepted for the award of M.Phil Degree.

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