

The Namdhari Sports Academy: Development of a Religious Belief into a Renowned Sports Academy

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Abstract: The present paper makes an attempt to study the gradual development of a religious belief into a renowned sports academy i.e. Namdhari Sports Academy. Basically Namdhari sect is a religious sect who wears white dress with white turbans. They are strictly vegetarian and not supposed to touch the meat or any alcohol product. They are focusing on the welfare of their people. For this very reason they have constructed many schools and colleges. In fact they also have formed a hockey team which is very famous on national as well as international scenario. They focused not only on hockey but other games also. They have been taking participation in various national and international tournaments for many years. Namdhari Sports Academy has unique place in India's Sports Academy. So this paper will study the gradual growth of this academy from its inception time.

Key words:- Religion, Vegetarian, Namdhari, Hockey, Sect.

I. INTRODUCTION

History of Namdhari Sports Academy

Satguru Pratap Singh, former Head of the Namdhari Sect, gave orders to their people to migrate from Pakistan and get settled in the village Jag Malera in Sirsa district during partition days. After that the full Namdhari sect got settled there. They worked a lot for the upliftment of their people. They built schools and colleges in the village. The 1975 World Cup victory inspired the Head to promote hockey in the village and one year later the local team i.e. Namdhari XI was formed. In 1977, a hockey training centre was established at their village school namely Shri Guru Hari Singh Mahavidalya in which 20 boys were selected for coaching and training by Coach Pal Singh. They got special diet and equipments over there. Namdhari XI won its first reputed tournament i.e. Jawahar Lal Nehru Hockey Tournament for juniors in New Delhi in 1980. Known for their vibrant energy and excellent fighting traits, it soon made a place for itself as one of the top teams in the country.

“Namdharis, known for their extraordinary contribution in the freedom struggle, are also set to be the first private organization in the country to have their own Astro-Turf at Bhaini Sahib, near Ludhiana, the sect's headquarter” (Singh).

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This turf has been used to train the players as well as to host national level tournaments. Even the C.M. of Haryana, has promised them a dream –“dream of laying synthetic turf at Santnagar in sirsa, the precious hockey nursery of Namdharis” (Gupta), which is ready to use now and Namdhari Sports Academy has shifted to Sant Nagar. The players of the Namdhari Hockey got various jobs in different departments for their exceptional performance and achievements by the different state and central Governments. “Training from May to February, Namdhari Hockey team plays not only in domestic tournaments but also in tournaments hosted in Canada, US and UK. Non-resident-Indians living in these countries arrange for tournaments like Surrey Cup, Canada, or Cal Cup, US - No other domestic team gets a similar opportunity” (Gupta).

II. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF NAMDHARI SPORTS ACADEMY

- i. The Society is established for the promotion of Sports and Games especially in the field of hockey;
- ii. To encourage talented and promising young sportsmen, (including hockey players) and to give them grants and economic assistance;
- iii. To conduct Tournaments in various games at District/State and National level;
- iv. To distribute awards, medals and trophies to the winning and runner-up teams with the main object of promotion of sports and games;
- v. To acquire land/buildings through lease/purchase, wills or legacies from public/private sector and to construct and maintain stadiums for various sports, especially for hockey, of National/International standard;
- vi. To arrange coaching to the young sportsmen in the field of sports, physical exercises to develop better stamina for healthy sportsmanship;
- vii. To inculcate sense of discipline, sportsmanship and service to mother-land among the coming generations;
- viii. To seek affiliation and get recognition with the various sports boards and state govt. agencies and



departments necessary for the purpose.

- ix. All other acts, deeds and things necessary and incidental to the promotion of sports and games in various fields.

III. FUNDING AGENCY OF NAMDHARI ACADEMY

When Namdhari Seeds Company came into existence a decade later, it proved to be a boon for Namdhari XI. Namdhari Seeds spends a enormous amount approximately half a crore rupees each year on the team. “Unlike the other big names in Hockey, Namdhari picks toddlers from their Hockey nursery in the village of Shri Jivan nagar, Sirsa, Haryana. The potential ones are taken forward to Shri Bhaini Sahib, Ludhiana. A pocket money up to Rs. 10,000 per month, good student life, boarding, lodging and a synthetic turf (gotten from SAI, Bangalore at throw away price of Rs. 10 lakhs) is what waits for a potential player who happens to make it to this Ludhiana based hostel” (Gupta). About the financial assistance provided by Namdhari Seeds, Gurcharan Singh said that “We don’t have to send our scouts to the schools. Parents in these 18 Namdhari villages know that the likes of Sardar Singh, Gurmail Singh and Malak Singh have started young and have gone all the way to playing at Bhaini Sahib. What else do the parents want? We pick kids from Class six and take care of all their needs. They don’t have to pay a single penny” (Ganguly).

IV. GOVERNING BODY OF THE NAMDHARI SPORTS ACADEMY

Namdhari Sports Academy got registered on 7th January 2004 at village Shri Bhaini Sahib situated at Ludhiana. The society is established for the promotion of sports and games especially in the field of hockey. The sports academy encourages the talented and promising young sportsmen and also gives them grants and economic assistance. Namdhari Sports Academy conducts various tournaments at district, state and national level. The society also distributes awards, medals and trophies to the winning and runner-up teams with the main object of promotion of sports and games. The academy gives the coaching to the young sportsmen in the field of sports, physical exercises to develop better stamina for healthy sportsmanship. They also inculcate sense of discipline, spirit of sportsmanship and service to motherland among the coming generations.

Table. 1 Governing Body of the Namdhari Sports Academy at the time of Registration

Sr. No.	Name	Designation	Address
	Sh. Uday Singh Ji	President	Namdhari Sports Academy VPO. Shri Bhaini

			Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Baldev Singh	Vice-President	235/1, Guru Nanak Pura, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Rashpal Singh	Secretary	VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Gurcharan Singh	Treasurer	Namdhari Seeds Pvt. Ltd. VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Harminderpal Singh	Executive Member	73/3, Power Colony, Sarabha Nagar, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Jagroop Singh	Executive Member	Vill. Jarkhar, District Ludhiana, Punjab
	Sh. Didar Singh	Executive Member	VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab

The academy got registered unanimously by the general body of the association in its meeting held at Shri Bhaini Sahib with the permission of His Holiness Shri Satguru Jagjit Singh Ji, Head, World Namdhari Mission on 29th December 2003 under the chairmanship of Sh. Uday Singh Ji, President of the association Namdhari Sports Academy. The association Namdhari Sports Academy got registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 with the rules and regulations regarding membership, subscription, funds, meetings, quorum, resolution, bank account, inspection of records, dissolution, removal of membership, trust,



beneficiaries of the trustee, utilization of the income, amendments, responsibilities of the office bearers and other related issues.

Table. 2 Governing Body of the Namdhari Sports Academy at present

Sr. No.	Name	Designation	Address
	Sh. H.S. Hanspal (Ex. M.P.)	Patron	K-17, Rajouri Garden, New Delhi
	Sh. Jagtar Singh	Patron	VPO. Panihari, District Sirsa, Haryana
3.	Sh. Uday Singh Ji	President	Namdhari Sports Academy VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
4.	Sh. Baldev Singh (National Coach)	Vice-President	235/1, Guru Nanak Pura, District Ludhiana, Punjab
5.	Sh. Prabhjot Singh Chief of Bureau (The Tribune)	Vice-President	The Tribune, Sector 29-C, Chandigarh
6.	Sh. Rashpal Singh	Secretary	VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
7.	Sh. Gurcharan Singh	Treasurer	Namdhari Seeds Pvt. Ltd. VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab
8.	Sh. Didar Singh (Olympian)	Executive Member	VPO. Shri Bhaini Sahib, District Ludhiana, Punjab

9.	Sh. Hardeep Singh (Olympian)	Executive Member	
10.	Sh. Jagroop Singh	Executive Member	Vill. Jarkhar, District Ludhiana, Punjab
11.	Sh. Amar Singh	Executive Member	
12.	Sh. Harminderpal Singh	Executive Member	73/3, Power Colony, Sarabha Nagar, District Ludhiana, Punjab

Namdhari Sports Academy is affiliated with Indian Hockey Federation. The players of the Namdhari hockey team directly take participation in Sub Junior, Junior and Senior national hockey championships. Namdhari XI is a well known name in Indian Hockey Circles. Due to the achievements made by the famous first team from 1980 to 2000, the name of Namdhari XI became synonymous with good hockey playing teams in India.

Looking at the performance of Namdhari XI, Satguru Jagjit Singh, the Head of Namdhari Sect, instructed the team to be given encouragement and exposure by sending them to foreign countries to play in various tournaments. The team management was approached by the organizers of different foreign organizations to begin their international hockey matches. Apart from the Namdhari Sangat the Indian community who lives in foreign countries also attends the team matches in big numbers and provides support to the team. Namdhari Seeds Pvt. Ltd. is the official sponsor of the academy. The efforts regarding the arrangements and other travelling expenses, equipments of their matches and other facilities entirely taken by the Namdhari Seeds.

V. DIET AND DRESS CODE OF NAMDHARI PLAYERS



Fig. 1 Dress Code of Namdhari XI team



Fig. 2 Player in Complete Namdhari Uniform

“Distinguished by their spotless white turbans and playing uniform, the Namdhari Vidyak Jatha hockey team are leading participants in national and International Hockey Tournaments. It is one of the finest hockey teams in India” (Singh). The significance of the team is, this is well followed among the sect. If one come across a few Sikhs dressed in white kurta, white pyjama and white turban on any playfield, it is sure that Namdhari match is going on. Head of the Sect, Satguru Uday Singh Ji, Managing Director of Namdhari Seeds, is a fanatical hockey fan and also played hockey in his earlier years. His passion for Hockey can be assessed by the fact that he often found on the turf sidelines watching Namdhari matches.

Various things separate Namdhari hockey team from the other teams in hockey scenario. First thing is that they are strictly vegetarian and live very humble life. They don't eat meat, chicken, beef or eggs for strength and stamina. They start their day with milk, butter, almonds, soaked grams. “Proving testament to the fact was none other than the team's manager Didar Singh, who represented India at the 1992 Olympics in Barcelona, the first from Sarsa to play for the country. Didar is decked from head to toe in a white kurta pajama and turban. “It's a price you pay to be the best. Every kid who comes to the academy knows what he is getting into. We don't compromise here. The players can't play in their kacchas but we make sure they wear them under the shorts. Our cook, Gurdev Singh, has been with us since 2000. We don't even have eggs. Our diet is full of milk and ghee” (Ganguly). Didar Singh also avers that “The way we train makes sure there is a fire in the belly. We train three hours in the morning, three hours in the evening. Then, we have the strict diet and dress code. All these things instill a lot of discipline in the boys” (Ganguly).

The coach of the Namdhari XI, Didar Singh, who represented the Tricolour at the 1992 Barcelona Olympics said

about the dress code of Namdhari players that “Earlier, the dress code used to be very strict, with all players having to wear ‘Kachera’. Now the rules have been relaxed, with players wearing shorts. But we still insist on the traditional attire during local tournaments. The entire contingent made sure to follow all rules of their religion. We bring our own cook and only have that food. Milk products are our main source of nutrition,” (Chowdhury). Didar Singh also avers that “Everyone in our village is a hockey fanatic. You won't find kids playing cricket there. We catch young kids with potential and start training them in our own nursery academy. If they prove to be good enough, they are then sent to Namdhari's centre of excellence — at Bhaini Sahib in Ludhiana — where they hone their skills on synthetic turf. Sports hostel equipped with all modern facilities, including air-conditioned halls and a multi-gym, are also there. We've started age-group training to make sure our squad is always full. Santa Singh, a junior international, is our next gift to the hockey fraternity” (Chowdhury).

Santa Singh, newest flower of Academy also admits that “I have progressed to this stage because of the years of training I underwent in Namdhari. There's no disadvantage because I am vegetarian. It's a normal food choice. It's no big deal. My teammates too know it's not allowed in my culture and are very understanding. I know the captain (Harjeet Singh) makes tea in his room and from the feedback I have got, it must be really wonderful. But I never had the habit of drinking tea since my childhood and I don't think I will start now” (Suchindran). He further said “Namdhari (academy) took care of us and ensured we had no difficulties with respect to purchasing balls, kits, sticks etc. The main coach, Uday Singh ji, is very keen on improving the facilities. When I previously went there, he wanted to know what the system is like here so that he can replicate it there. It's a hostel-type environment. We train in the morning, have breakfast, go for studies, have our lunch and start training again in the evening” (Suchindran). In an interview he admits that “It's interesting to play under people who have different philosophies. It was difficult to adapt. But I still follow the basics, In Namdhari, we were taught to be unique. Because that's what we do. I won't change my style just to fit in” (Suchindran).

“Having produced the likes of Indian hockey captain Sardar Singh, Malak Singh, Gurmail Singh, and recent Santa Singh to name a few, the Namdharis can stake claim to being the one of the top hockey academies in the country” (Ganguly). Along with these stars Namdhari Sports Academy has produced six batches so far. Here is the list of batches given below.



VI. LIST OF BATCHES PRODUCED BY NAMDHARI SPORTS ACADEMY

Table. 3 First Batch (Part A) of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
1.	Satguru Uday Singh Ji	
2.	Thakur Dalip Singh	
3.	Master Mansa Singh	
4.	Mohan Singh Randhawa	
5.	Baldev Singh (Bali)	
6.	Gurbhej Singh	
7.	Hardeep Singh	
8.	Makhan Singh	
9.	Sukhdev Singh	
10.	Gurmail Singh	
11.	Bali Singh	Goal Keeper
12.	Gurdayal Singh	
13.	Bhola Singh	
14.	Manohar Singh	
15.	Rishpal Singh	
16.	Pal Singh	Coach

Table. 4 First Batch (Part B) of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
1.	Sukhdev Singh (Captian)	
2.	Angrej Singh Cheema	
3.	Raghubir Singh	
4.	Paramjeet Singh (Pamma)	
5.	Heera Singh	

Table. 5 Second Batch of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
1.	Gurcharan Singh (Pappu)	
2.	Didar Singh	
3.	Gurmej Singh	
4.	Bagga Singh	
5.	Sukhdev Singh	
6.	Balvinder Singh	
7.	Gurcharan Singh (Goli)	
	Sukhwinder Singh	
	Sawinder Singh	Goal Keeper
	Gurdeep Singh	
	Gurnam Singh	
	Dhyan Singh	
	Harminderpal Singh	

	Darshan Singh	
	Jaswinder Singh Mukta	
	Sukhvinder Singh	
	Jaswant Singh	
	Gurbaksh Singh	
	Hardeep Singh	
	Baldev Singh	Coach

Table. 6 Third Batch of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
	Gurbaksh Singh	
	Hardyal Singh	
	Balwant Singh	
	Satnam Singh	
	Gurmeet Singh	
	Buta Singh Butter	Goal Keeper
	Gurpal Laadi	
	Ranjit Singh (Rana)	
	Kabal Singh	
	Baldev Singh (Bali)	
	Raghubir Singh	
	Gurdev Singh	
	Jasvir Singh	
	Jaspal Vaid	
	Harmeet Singh	Goal Keeper
	Rishpal Singh	Coach
	Darshan Singh	Coach
	Gurmej Singh	Coach

Table. 7 Fourth Batch of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
	Harpal Singh	
	Sardar Singh	
	Didar Singh (Junior)	
	Anmolak Singh Randhawa	
	Harvinder Singh	
	Savinder Singh	Goal Keeper
	Sher Singh	
	Gurpreet Singh (Gopi)	
	Gurcharan Singh (Chana)	
	Gurvinder Singh (Kala)	
	Ajmer Singh	



	Karamjit Singh	
	Joga Singh	
	Harjinder Singh	Goal Keeper
	Gurpreet Singh (Pitu)	
	Nahar Singh	
	Harnek Singh	
	Heera Singh	Coach
	Didar Singh	Coach
	Harminderpal Singh	Coach

Table. 8 Fifth Batch of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
	Malak Singh	
	Nanak Singh	Goal Keeper
	Harpreet Singh	
	Gurmail Singh	
	Gurbhej Singh	
	Dhyan Singh	
	Dilbag Singh (Bagga)	
	Lakha Singh	
	Lakhwinder Singh	
	Manpreet Singh	
	Gurpreet Singh (Gopi Jr.)	
	Gyan Singh	Goal Keeper
	Daljeet Singh	
	Gurmeet Singh	
	Harmeet Singh	
	Mandheer Singh	
	Gurwinder Singh	
	Dilbaj Singh (Kala)	
	Dhaka	
	Duman Singh	Goal Keeper
	Didar Singh	Coach

Table. 9 Sixth Batch of the players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player	Position
	Santa Singh	
	Avtar Singh	
	Kuldeep Singh	
	Bishan Singh	
	Jaswant Singh	Goal Keeper
	Shamsher Singh	
	Harwinder Singh	
	Bakshinder Singh	

	Karandeep Singh	
	Prince	
	Gagandeep Singh	
	Bhagat Singh	
	Harpreet Singh (Happy)	
	Udhampreet Singh	
	Harpreet Singh (Bhola)	
	Gurmukh Singh	
	Simranpreet Singh (Mani)	Goal Keeper
	Amritpal Singh	
	Sahilpreet Singh	
	Didar Singh	Coach
	Gurmej Singh	Coach

VII. FUTURE OF NAMDHARI SPORTS ACADEMY

Here is the list given below of players who are currently enrolled in Namdhari Sports Academy which can be safely called as the future of Namdhari Sports Academy.

Table. 10 Present Players of Namdhari Sports Academy

Sr. No.	Name of the Player
	Parvesh Singh
	Gursewak Singh
	Hanspal Singh
	Princepal Singh
	Tasveer Singh
	Abhijeet Singh
	Akashdeep Singh
	Princepal Singh
	Akashdeep Singh
	Satwinder Singh
	Jaskaran Singh
	Tasveer Singh
	Harwinder Singh
	Sahaj Bhangu
	Vazeer Singh
	Surpreet Singh
	Prince Virk
	Maninder Singh
	Arshdeep Singh
	Rajinder Singh
	Akashdeep Singh
	Husndeeep Singh
	Rajdeep Singh
	Jai Singh
	Husanpreet Singh
	Hardeep Singh



Mohabat Singh
Arshdeep Singh
Amritpal Singh
Gurpreet Singh
Hardeep Singh
Bakshinder Singh
Sahilpreet Singh
Shamsher Singh
Amritpal Singh
Prince Singh
Karandeep Singh
Balkar Singh
Kultar Singh
Balihar Singh
Ganga Singh
Lovepreet Singh
Manraj Singh
Karan Singh
Ajaypal Singh
Jagraj Singh
Gurlal Singh
Ajaypal Singh
Gurshant Singh
Jai Singh
Yashpal Singh
Gurnam Singh
Ajmer Singh
Hanspal Singh
Hasanpreet Singh
Vishaldeep Singh
Lovepreet Singh
Harshdeep Singh
Bihara Singh
Subhkirat Singh
Mankirat Singh
Harman Singh
Mehtab Singh
Pritam Singh
Gurnam Singh
Gurtaj Singh
Anmol Singh
Anmol Purewal

The academy is coaching nearly 70 junior and senior players who are playing the major all India tournaments all over the country. All these players are sponsored by Namdhari Seeds.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Hence, it can be safely concluded from this in-depth study that Namdhari sect is doing a lot for the upliftment of their people and for this very purpose they have formed their own hockey team i.e. Namdhari XI and this team strictly follows their religious beliefs on their play fields. They are well known in the world for their excellent skills of hockey along

with their religious belief which is the supreme motivational power for them.

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