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MEDITATION

Being United with God's Spirit



ਗਉੜੀ ਮਹਲਾ ੫ ॥

ਤਾਪ ਗਏ ਪਾਈ ਪ੍ਰਭਿ ਸਾਂਤਿ ॥ ਸੀਤਲ ਭਏ ਕੀਨੀ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਦਾਤਿ ॥੧॥
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ਦੁਖੁ ਦਰਦੁ ਜਮੁ ਨੇੜਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੋ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵੈ॥੪॥੫੯॥੧੨੮॥

[SGGS: 191]



Translation*

No more distress; God has brought peace.
It is all quiet, the Lord is merciful.
I am blessed with Grace of God:
Distance for long ages, I have now been united with the Lord.

Remembering the Name of the Divine (1)
All malades have come to disappear (2)

Reciting the Scriptures in the Quest,
Repeating His Name with every breath. (3)

Sorrow, pain or Yama won't ever haunt,
Says NANAK: he who God's praises chants. (4)

* Translation: KS Duggal's "GURUVAK": The Word Divine.
Courtesy: UBS Publisher's Distributors Ltd., 5, Ansari Road, New Delhi. 110002.

INDIA: A Nation Slipping Voicelessly into Quiet Nothingness?

I J SINGH*

I came to the United States from India over 60 years ago. Completed graduate education and settled here. When I came here there were perhaps three recognizable Sikhs in a city like New York. Now retired, my perceptions are more American than Indian, yet India remains in my bones and I don't always understand why India behaves as it does in this world. And rarely am I a loyal Indian in my public pronouncements on policy issues.

Few years ago, a New York publication came up with an exciting marker once a year. The issue asked some active, reasonably educated people to write brief notes on life as immigrants since they had come from across the world to make up collectivity what makes New Yorkers and New York. I was delighted to be included as the sole Sikh writer – a role that I filled and enjoyed for several years.

And then came COVIDS whose brief stint verily became an almost lifelong stay. It is still there. You know its features – its connectivity is stronger than any. It ravaged families and friends and continues to do so.

In one brief essay I took note of the havoc it had brought and ended with the line: *"This too shall pass."* But clearly, I was too optimistic. It still exists and its power remains awesome.

But one feature bothered me. Sikhs generally keep unshorn hair and wear turbans. So most Sikhs are easily identified on the street. *But major Sikh temples ran their services without maintaining the 6-foot distancing as recommended by health authorities.* Music is an important part of Sikh religious services – again distancing was non-existent and even masks were actively discouraged, hence not used.

It is amazing how the people of India – Sikhs in Punjab – actively discouraged the mention of masks. I had written an essay then that the newspaper published *but received absolutely no notice from any Sikh readers.*

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I have never heard Sikh teachings to reject scientific principles and rational ideas to be taken over and replaced by prayers instead.

The government of Punjab is run by non-Sikhs known for their anti-Sikh attitudes, so they ignore the growing cost in lives. The government leaders and spokesmen never appear to inform us of the daily casualty rates and such critical information remains hidden. The political leaders of the government have remained silent. Just imagine such total silence for politicians.

God alone knows how many Indians have caught the virus. There is a critical shortage of medications, even oxygen in hospitals.

A recent slight ray of light has appeared within the last couple of weeks.

Somehow the news has leaked out to the international world around us and now the news publications from Delhi and nearby have started reporting. Yet no news by the government media, not even a hint escapes from the government of India. In the last few days television news briefly reporting the sorry lack of supplies like oxygen, emergency medical help, even emergency food for the suffering people I

Where are these supplies coming from? Not from the government, even if that seems to be the primary need and a fundamental duty of the government.

Where are the supplies and inadequate help coming from? Believe it when I tell you, not from the government at all but volunteer services from Sikh volunteer organizations. They supply food, medical aid, even oxygen. And surely none are acknowledged on news reports.

Even now, the Indian government has not acknowledged the dangerous situation. Until now the global press ignored Indian government and its neglect of a growing emergency. Now the international press has started taking notice. Don't forget India's critical place in the world, its large population, and the fact of its being a nuclear power.

Why do India and Indians appear to be largely lackadaisical in their approach to reality? These questions come from the ages. And will the people outlast our questions? All I see is that the current rulers of free India hope to outlast the questions, and I am afraid they might.

Note that supplies – short as they remain – are coming in from volunteer Sikh organizations – medical help, oxygen and food to survive.

The political leaders have not appeared at a national platform or national medium to inform people of their dire states etc. and to outline any course of action.

Why is the Indian government sleeping? Why are the powers of the press invisible or are they deliberately truncated?

I hate to submit that India seems running on denial. For instance, I watch the program from Amritsar relayed on TV across the world. There is not a hint of a mask, no social distancing at all. About 15 to 20 people crowd the small space for the raagees, and never a hint of even a word of Covin.

India is a large country with a burdensome population. Is this India's solution? I wonder.

SIKHS IN AFRICA, WESTERN ASIA & CENTRAL ASIA

SWARN SINGH KAHLON of Chandigarh has written three books covering Sikh Diaspora in non-English speaking countries titled SIKHS IN LATIN AMERICA, SIKHS IN ASIA PACIFIC and SIKHS IN CONTINENTAL EUROPE.

Now, he is gathering relevant information for his next books on Sikhs in African countries as well as Sikhs in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Syria, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

If any reader of THE SIKH REVIEW has any information about Sikhs in the above-mentioned countries, then he/she should kindly contact the author.

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Guru Tegh Bahadur – Tribute on 400th Birth Anniversary

BRIG RAWEL SINGH (RETD)*

The Sikh religion originated in India in 1469 and had ten gurus from Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539 CE) to Guru Gobind Singh (1666 – 1708). The fourth guru describes how all successive gurus had the same vision as Guru Nanak -

ਗੁਰੂ ਸਿਖੁ ਸਿਖੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਏਕੋ ਗੁਰ ਉਪਦੇਸੁ ਚਲਾਏ ॥

First the guru is the disciple and the disciple becomes the guru; they expound the same teachings. [M: 4, SGGS: 444]

Historical Context of the Great Sacrifice

India had been experiencing attacks from the North West for a long time. Guru Nanak appeared on the scene when India was under the rule of the Lodi dynasty. The y rulers did not care for the masses and indulged in comforts and pleasures. The Mughal Babar attacked and established their rule over India. All Muslim rulers tried to impose the Muslim faith on the predominantly Hindu India by various methods.

Guru Nanak described how the Hindus had lost the spirit of dignity, and submitted to bidding of the Muslim rulers -

ਖੜੀਆ ਤ ਧਰਮੁ ਛੋਡਿਆ ਮਲੇਛ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਗਹੀ ॥ ਸਿਸਟਿ ਸਭ ਇਕ ਵਰਨ ਹੋਈ ਧਰਮ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਰਹੀ ॥੩॥

The Hindus had forsaken their Dharma and adopted the Muslim ways. Everyone seemed to be of one faith as freedom of religion had ended. [M: 1, SGGS: 663]

People secretly practiced their religion but outwardly followed the Muslim ways -

ਅੰਤਰਿ ਪੂਜਾ ਪੜਹਿ ਕਤੇਬਾ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਤੁਰਕਾ ਭਾਈ ॥

The Hindus performed worship at home but outwardly adopted Islamic practices. He told them to give up pretence. [M: 1, SGGS: 471]

The Sikhs were not prepared to submit to this subjugation. The second Guru Angad said -

ਜਿਸੁ ਪਿਆਰੇ ਸਿਉ ਨੇਹੁ ਤਿਸੁ ਆਗੈ ਮਰਿ ਚਲੀਐ ॥ ਧਿਗੁ ਜੀਵਣੁ ਸੰਸਾਰਿ ਤਾ ਕੈ ਪਾਛੈ ਜੀਵਣਾ ॥੨॥

One should die for that cause which one loves. It is disgraceful to live in the world if the cause lost. [2] [M: 2, SGGS: 83]

*[E-mail: brgsa@yahoo.co.in]

Guru Nanak taught -

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ ॥ ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ ॥

If you would like to play the game of love, come to me with head on the palm, i.e. be prepared to die. Once you take a step on the path, do not hesitate to give your head/life.

[M: 1, SGGS: 1412]

The then Mughal emperor Jahangir wanted to stop progress of the Sikh faith and amongst many other things, tried to convert the fifth Guru Arjun to Islam. The Guru made the supreme sacrifice of giving up his life in 1606 but did not accept the condition to give up his faith. , despite severe torture.

The Muslim rulers particularly focused on converting the Pundits of Kashmir, even using coercion, to Islam and the latter felt helpless. Hearing of the Sikh spirit of not accepting oppression, the Pundits came to the ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur Sahib in 1675, seeking help against forced conversion to Islam by the Mughal rulers. He asked them to tell the authorities, that they would all convert if Guru Tegh Bahadur was converted. The Guru did not accept conversion and was finally beheaded, after long torture in 1675.

Main Teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur, literally meaning the warrior of sword, showed firm commitment to his following words -

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥੧੬॥

One who has Divine awareness, neither intimidates nor is intimidated.

[M: 9, SGGS: 1427]

Asking people to understand that the real self is the soul, he taught not to get attached to needs of the body alone and uphold their faith. He said -

ਜਾਗ ਲੇਹੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਜਾਗ ਲੇਹੁ ਕਹਾ ਗਾਫਲ ਸੋਇਆ ॥ ਜੋ ਤਨੁ ਉਪਜਿਆ ਸੰਗ ਹੀ ਸੋ ਭੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਨ ਹੋਇਆ ॥੧॥

O human being, why are you inebriated with physical pleasures and become indifferent to needs of the soul. Even the body with which you are born does not keep company on death.

[M: 9, SGGS: 726]

He also cautions against acting by own will -

ਮਨ ਰੇ ਕਉਨੁ ਕੁਮਤਿ ਤੈ ਲੀਨੀ ॥ ਪਰ ਦਾਰਾ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਰਸ ਰਚਿਓ ਰਾਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਨਹਿ ਕੀਨੀ ॥੧॥

O man, what evil counsel you have taken? You indulge with others' spouses and vilification of others. You do not engage in Divine dedication / obedience.

[M: 9, SGGS: 726]

ਮੁਕਤਿ ਪੰਥੁ ਜਾਨਿਓ ਤੈ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਧਨ ਜੋਰਨ ਕਉ ਧਾਇਆ ॥ ਅੰਤਿ ਸੰਗ ਕਾਹੂ ਨਹੀ ਦੀਨਾ ਬਿਰਥਾ ਆਪੁ ਬੰਧਾਇਆ ॥੧॥

You have not tried to know of emancipation but run after gathering money. However, none of these accompanies to the hereafter and Divine justice will bind you in vain.

Guru Tegh Bahadur makes the mortal aware of life truths -

ਸੁਖ ਮੈ ਆਨਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਮਿਲਿ ਬੈਠਤ ਰਹਤ ਚਹੁ ਦਿਸਿ ਘੇਰੈ ॥ ਬਿਪਤਿ ਪਰੀ ਸਭ ਹੀ ਸੰਗੁ ਛਾਡਿਤ ਕੋਉ ਨ ਆਵਤ ਨੇਰੈ ॥੧॥
Plenty of people give company in good times but no one comes near in adversity.

ਘਰ ਕੀ ਨਾਰਿ ਬਹੁਤੁ ਹਿਤੁ ਜਾ ਸਿਉ ਸਦਾ ਰਹਤ ਸੰਗ ਲਾਗੀ ॥ ਜਬ ਹੀ ਹੰਸ ਤਜੀ ਇਹ ਕਾਇਆ ਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਪ੍ਰੇਤ ਕਰਿ ਭਾਗੀ ॥੨॥

The husband has much love for his life and she ever sticks to him in life. However, when the soul leaves the body s/he keeps away calling the body a ghost.

ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੋ ਬਿਉਹਾਰੁ ਬਨਿਓ ਹੈ ਜਾ ਸਿਉ ਨੇਹੁ ਲਗਾਇਓ ॥ ਅੰਤ ਬਾਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਨੁ ਹਰਿ ਜੀ ਕੋਉ ਕਾਮਿ ਨ ਆਇਓ ॥੩॥੧੨॥੧੩੯॥

This is how conduct of those with whom one is attached. None of them is of help at the end when the soul leaves the body and has to account for deeds. [M: 9, SGGS: 634]

He taught that one can do nothing after death and Divine justice binds erring souls. Human birth is the opportunity to conform to Divine commands and obviate the above.

ਬਲੁ ਛੁਟਕਿਓ ਬੰਧਨ ਪਰੇ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਹੋਤ ਉਪਾਇ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਅਬ ਓਟ ਹਰਿ ਗਜ ਜਿਉ ਹੋਹੁ ਸਹਾਇ ॥੫੩॥

One's strength is lost on death, Divine justice binds the erring soul and it can do nothing then. O Almighty, I take Your protection now, please save me like the elephant caught by the panther prayed – according to a Puranic story -, submits ninth Nanak. [M: 9, SGGS: 1429]

The opposite happens if one invokes the Almighty in life -.

ਬਲੁ ਹੋਆ ਬੰਧਨ ਛੁਟੇ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਹੋਤ ਉਪਾਇ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਭੁ ਕਿਛੁ ਤੁਮਰੈ ਹਾਥ ਮੈ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ ਹੋਤ ਸਹਾਇ ॥੫੪॥

One who obeys Divine commands has the strength, bondage by Divine justice is obviated as every measure has been taken. O Almighty everything is in Your hands; You alone can help, submits ninth Nanak. [54] [M: 9, SGGS: 1429]

The following Shabad of Guru Tegh Bahadur is a complete guide for life and describes how one is emancipated.

1. Accept God's will and not be attached to comforts and possessions.

ਜੋ ਨਰੁ ਦੁਖ ਮੈ ਦੁਖੁ ਨਹੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥ ਸੁਖ ਸਨੇਹੁ ਅਰੁ ਤੈ ਨਹੀ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਕੰਚਨ ਮਾਟੀ ਮਾਨੈ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

A person, who does not feel pain when in distress/suffering, i.e. is not depressed or lose faith in adversity.

Who does not have (love for comfort and in whose mind there is no fear; considers wealth as dust, is not attached to possessions. [1]

2. One should not indulge in, or be affected by, vilification or sycophancy.

ਨਹ ਨਿੰਦਿਆ ਨਹ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨਾ ॥ ਹਰਖ ਸੋਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਆਰਉ ਨਾਹਿ ਮਾਨ ਅਪਮਾਨਾ ॥੧॥

One who neither indulges in slander nor sycophancy of others; is devoid of greed, attachment to the world-play and pride/arrogance.

And remains unaffected by joy or sorrow and does not care for respect or disrespect. [1]

3. One should give up expectation from others or for rewards for good deeds - .

ਆਸਾ ਮਨਸਾ ਸਗਲ ਤਿਆਗੈ ਜਗ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨਿਰਾਸਾ ॥ ਕਾਮੁ ਕ੍ਰੋਧੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ ॥੨॥

S/he gives up expectations from others and desires; remains without expectations from other creatures.

S/he is one whom lust and anger do not touch; such a person's mind is the abode of the Creator, i.e. finds the Almighty within.[2]

4. One who follows the guru leads such a life. S/he remains unattached to the world-play in life and his/her soul merges with the Almighty on death, obviating further births and deaths - .

ਗੁਰ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਜਿਹ ਨਰ ਕਉ ਕੀਨੀ ਤਿਹ ਇਹ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਪਛਾਨੀ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਲੀਨ ਭਇਓ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਪਾਨੀ ਸੰਗਿ ਪਾਨੀ ॥੩॥੧੧॥

Only the person on whom the guru is kind – to teach –s/he understands and follows this way of life.

S/he remains absorbed in the Master of the universe like water with water, i.e. s/he becomes like the Almighty, ninth Nanak. [3][11] [M: 9, SGGS: 633]

5. Finally, the Guru advises to accept the inevitable willingly - .

ਚਿਤਾ ਤਾ ਕੀ ਕੀਜੀਐ ਜੋ ਅਨਹੋਨੀ ਹੋਇ ॥ ਇਹੁ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥੫੧॥

We should worry/take measures if something/death can be prevented or undone. There is no one here forever; this is how the Creator has created the world-play, says ninth Nanak. [M: 9, SGGS: 1429]

Conclusion

Guru Tegh Bahadur's life and teachings are a unique example of steadfastness to one's faith under all circumstances. He gave his life to protect the rights of people of another religion to practice their faith. This is selfless service to humanity and a unique example in world history. □

Holistic Vision of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji

[PART-II]

DR. DEVINDER PAL SINGH*

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, ninth Sikh Guru, fell as a martyr to the freedom of consciousness and belief [1]. The Guru's great sacrifice was to vindicate the people's right to profess and practice their faith. It meant the assertion of the principle of justice for which the ruling Mughal rulers of the day had very scant regard. For this reason, the life, career, and teachings of Guru Tegh Bahadur are of immense significance even in contemporary times, when the forces of hate, fanaticism, and tyranny are still very dominant and assertive.

In this Part-II of the article (*Part-I has already been published in May 2021*) Ninth Guru's views on the various aspects of life are being reported.

Impermanence

Change is a fact of life. Moments come and go. Days pass by, turning into weeks, then months, then years. We and our lives are continuously changing [19]. Nothing is permanent. Guru Tegh Bahadur says that impermanence is a fact that we have to accept and work with. To feel the pain of impermanence and loss can be a profoundly beautiful reminder of what it means to exist. Impermanence is the cornerstone of Guru Tegh Bahadur's teachings. He proclaims: "*all that exists is impermanent; nothing lasts.*"

ਇਹੁ ਮਾਰਗੁ ਸੰਸਾਰ ਕੋ ਨਾਨਕ ਥਿਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥੫੧॥ ਜੋ ਉਪਜਿਓ ਸੇ ਬਿਨਸਿ ਹੈ ਪਰੋ ਆਜੁ ਕੈ ਕਾਲਿ ॥

Nanak says: This is the way of the world that nothing is permanent. [M. 9, SGGS: 1429]

Therefore nothing can be held onto in this world. When we don't fully appreciate this simple but profound truth, we suffer, as did the Sikhs who descended into misery and despair at the Guru Tegh Bahadur's passing. When we understand the impermanence of

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life and the world, we have real peace and understanding, as did the disciples who remained fully mindful and calm. According to Guru Tegh Bahadur, impermanence is the number one inescapable fact of life. Attachment to possession and achievement invariably leads to disappointment and disillusionment because everything is ephemeral. He asserts;

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਸੋ ਸਗਲ ਬਿਨਾਸੈ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਦਰ ਕੀ ਛਾਈ ॥

Whatever is visible, all shall pass away, like the shadow of a cloud. [M. 9, SGGs: 219]

But Guru Tegh Bahadur says it is possible to find ease and grace in the world of change. It is possible to restrain the mind and achieve liberation within the transient world. One means of reducing clinging to worldly things/passions is to see the transient nature of what we cling to. This insight can show us the futility of trying to find lasting happiness in what is impermanent. It can also encourage us to examine thoroughly why do we cling. Impermanence is not only to be overcome and conquered. It is also to be lived and appreciated. Though impermanence makes suffering a built-in factor of human life, yet permanence is like the petal emerging from the sepal of a flower of impermanence. It makes happiness possible. Temporariness is an ongoing process of living and dying in time. Permanency is salvation, bliss, cessation of attachment. Guru Tegh Bahadur emphasizes God's eternal nature and urges us to imbibe His love in our lives to transcend impermanence.

ਨਾਨਕ ਬਿਰੁ ਹਰਿ ਭਗਤਿ ਹੈ ਤਿਹ ਰਾਖੇ ਮਨ ਮਾਹਿ ॥

Nanak says: only devotional worship of God is permanent; enshrine this in your mind. [M. 9, SGGs: 1429]

Freedom through Bairaag (non-attachment)

The root of happiness is non-attachment (*Bairaag*). Bairaag is not a fleeting impulse that can make a person run away from objects of enjoyment, but the non-attachment of an aesthete, enabling him/her to enjoy without being bound to the thing. However, the person does not crave fun. The feeling is not just one of dissatisfaction with worldly pleasures. It is positively of the nature of pangs of separation (*birha*) from the Beloved [7]. So intensely is the Beloved missed, and so profoundly is the union with Him desired that the whole being resounds with His Naam (Love of God). Yet, this love is as dispassionate as it is intense.

Gurbani proclaims that happiness is not dependent upon one's possessions or how one's family and friends are doing. It comes from one's connection to God. That is

where the practice of *Bairaag* leads to. When one releases attachment to things outside, one stops looking for pleasure externally and turn inward, the only place where lasting happiness resides. Non-attachment doesn't mean you stop caring or stop working to do the things that matter. It is only about seeing the impermanence of the physical world. It is about enjoying what life has to offer without becoming identified with it or attached to it.

The concept of *Bairaag* is ably described [18] in Guru Tegh Bahadur's hymns. He advises us on the meaning of living and giving freely with no attachment to the result. This teaching is a reminder that whether a situation goes one's way or turns one's life upside down, one's ship (of life) is steadied by connecting to one's higher self. That will allow the person to continue moving forward along his/her path without becoming stuck on something good or bad that comes his/her way. He proclaims:

ਜਿਹਿ ਬਿਖਿਆ ਸਗਲੀ ਤਜੀ ਲੀਓ ਭੇਖ ਬੈਰਾਗ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਤਿਹ ਨਰ ਮਾਥੈ ਭਾਗੁ ॥

One who has forsaken all sin and corruption and has adopted an attitude of non-attachment, Nanak says: Listen, O Mind! that person is blessed. [M. 9, SGGS: 1427]

A person doesn't need to renounce all his/her possessions to practice *bairaag*. He/She can simply recognize that all material things are impermanent. Guru Tegh Bahadur proclaims that a person, whose understanding is unattached everywhere, who has subdued himself and from whom desire has fled, he/she through the renunciation of attachment, has attained the supreme state.

ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਮਮਤਾ ਤਜੈ ਲੋਭ ਮੋਹ ਅਹੰਕਾਰ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਆਪਨ ਤਰੈ ਅਉਰਨ ਲੇਤ ਉਧਾਰ ॥

One who renounces Maya (possessi-veness) and is unattached from everything, Nanak says; Listen, O, Mind! God abides in his heart. [M. 9, SGGS: 1427]

If the *bairaag* is born of an awakening intuition, direct knowledge of the essence of self and every object, then, in the person arises a complete and automatic indifference to the worldly phenomena. This indifference is neither born of disgust nor satiety but is a preoccupation with something exceptional and all-pervading. It claims all his attention. Such a spiritually awakened man is in a state of universal acceptance, seeing all things as alike and equally good. He is full of complete bliss. Guru Tegh Bahadur says that such a person achieves salvation and can help others attain it.

ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਿਖੁ ਏ ਸਭ ਤਿਉ ਕੰਚਨ ਅਰੁ ਪੈਸਾ ॥ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਏ ਸਮ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਫੁਨਿ ਤੈਸਾ ॥੨॥
ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਏ ਬਾਧੇ ਜਿਹ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਨਉ ਗਿਆਨੀ ॥

That mortal who renounces possessiveness, greed, emotional attachment, and egotism - Nanak says: he is saved, and he saves many others as well. [M. 9, SGGS: 220]

Also, *Bairaag* is a key to attain a state of fearlessness, for which Guru Tegh Bahadur himself is an outstanding example.

Fearlessness

With profound insight, one realizes [18] that the things one fears most are predominantly out of one's control. Fear of the future, fear of the past, fear of not being loved, fear of pain, fear of sorrow, fear of the outcome, etc. It all leads to the basic fear of death, which is our survival instinct and at the core of everything we do. A beautiful poem, written by Rabindra Nath Tagore inspires [26] the quality of a peaceful warrior. He wrote; "Let me not pray to be sheltered from dangers but to be fearless in facing them. Let me not beg for the stilling of my pain, but for my heart to conquer it." In reality, fearlessness coexists with the practice of non-attachment (*bairaag*). The idea of non-attachment was emphasized by Sikh Gurus in their hymns over and over again. Guru Tegh Bahadur, in his hymns, articulates such a view as;

ਜੋ ਦੀਸੈ ਸੋ ਸਗਲ ਬਿਨਾਸੈ ਜਿਉ ਬਾਦਰ ਕੀ ਛਾਈ ॥

They, to whom heaven and hell, ambrosial nectar and poison, gold and copper, are alike. So are the praise and slander, greed, and attachment, all the same to them. They are not bound by pleasure and pain. Know that they are truly wise. (SGGS, M. 9, P. 220)

It appears impossible to practice non-attachment in this age, where attachment seems so steeped in human beings. This idea of practicing letting go is possible if one allows oneself to find a moment of clarity in which one asks oneself, what would I do if I wasn't afraid, or hurt or needing something else.....? What would I do if my slate was clean? One would most likely allow one's true nature to shine, and one would most likely be unwilling to harm oneself or others. The chances are that the person would act out of love and courage steeped in full potential. Guru Tegh Bahadur proclaims this state as;

ਭੈ ਕਾਹੂ ਕਉ ਦੇਤ ਨਹਿ ਨਹਿ ਭੈ ਮਾਨਤ ਆਨ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨਿ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਤਾਹਿ ਬਖਾਨਿ ॥

One who does not frighten anyone, and who is not afraid of anyone else -says Nanak, listen, O Mind! call him spiritually wise. [M. 9, SGGS: 1427]

So how do one practice fearlessness? By pausing and allowing oneself to see the situation as is in all, its entirety. Which takes moral courage, especially when one faces

things one wishes not to notice. Once you look at them with detachment, they become much smaller and less scary, and whatever they are and nothing more. Then asking oneself what one would do if one weren't afraid? Space emerges, an expanse for breath, for clarity, and one'll know how to proceed, or even more one won't stand in one's way, but one'll allow oneself to come to play. Guru Tegh Bahadur, who has willingly sacrificed his life, against unusual odds, for the greater good, is an exemplar of such a state of fearlessness. He attained this state of courage through his non-attachment to worldly things and passions. He obtained his moral strength through his dedication to the Eternal Truth (God). He articulates;

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਹ ਭਜਨ ਤੇ ਨਿਰਭੈ ਪਦੁ ਪਾਵੈ ॥

Nanak says: by meditating on the Lord (God), you shall obtain the state of fearlessness. [M. 9, SGGS: 726]

Love/Worship of God

Guru Tegh Bahadur dedicated [18] his life to the high ideals he had set before himself. He led a householder's life and didn't shy away from his personal and social responsibilities. However, he always avoided getting bogged into any entanglements. He devoted most of his time to spiritual advancement. Even in his hymns, he implores us to practice the love of God in our lives and to worship Him. The Guru articulates:

ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਇ ਲੇ ਛਾਡਿ ਸਗਲ ਜੰਜਾਲ ॥

Nanak says: sing the Glorious Praises of the Lord and give up all other entanglements. [M. 9, SGGS: 1429]

Sikhs worship God, the Creator, being the epitome of virtues. By contemplation of God, one willfully tries to imbibe similar virtues in oneself. In Sikhism, each moment is considered holy and living an act of devotion. Sikhs are expected to remain God-conscious at all times. Their prayers exhort the need for self-exploration, self-knowledge and self-realization, and leading their daily lives following the Guru's teachings (Gurmat). Guru Tegh Bahadur proclaims this fact in his hymns as;

ਰਾਮੁ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਰਾਮੁ ਸਿਮਰਿ ਇਹੈ ਤੇਰੈ ਕਾਜਿ ਹੈ ॥ ਮਾਇਆ ਕੋ ਸੰਗੁ ਤਿਆਗੁ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਜੂ ਕੀ ਸਰਨਿ ਲਾਗੁ ॥ ਜਗਤ ਸੁਖ ਮਾਨੁ ਮਿਥਿਆ ਝੂਠੇ ਸਭ ਸਾਜੁ ਹੈ ॥

Meditate on the Lord; meditate on the Lord. It alone shall be of use to you. Abandon your association with Maya, take shelter in the Sanctuary of God. Remember that the pleasures of the world are false; this whole show is just an illusion. [M. 9, SGGS: 1352]

Praise and worship is a crucial part of our walk with God. Worship is the act of expressing reverence and adoration towards God. True worship comes from the heart, and it is authentic. It's commanded by God and is followed by blessings. When we choose to worship in faith, God sets in motion things only seen in the spiritual realm. What goes on in the spiritual realm will eventually show up for our eyes to see in the worldly domain. When we take our focus off of ourselves, off of the circumstances around us, and place it on God's Worship, trust and acceptance would replace our worry. Thus, we become beneficiaries of worship, but it should not be our primary motive. Our motivation to worship should be more than that. True worship is never self-serving or self-centered. Guru Tegh Bahadur encourages us to follow God's path of love to lead an authentic life.

ਰਾਮ ਨਾਮੁ ਉਰ ਮੈ ਗਹਿਓ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਸਮ ਨਹੀ ਕੋਇ ॥ ਜਿਹ ਸਿਮਰਤ ਸੈਕਟ ਮਿਟੈ ਦਰਸੁ ਤੁਹਾਰੋ ਹੋਇ ॥

Enshrine the Love of God (*Naam*) in your heart. There is nothing as good as it is. Meditating on God, one's troubles go away; and the person receives the blessed vision of God. [M. 9, SGGS: 1429]

Salvation through Spiritual Enlightenment

Guru Tegh Bahadur regarded [1] the attainment of *Nirban Pad* (also called *Amar Pad*, *Achal Pad*, and *Mukat Pad*) as the highest goal of one's life. By it, he meant a blissful state where joy and sorrow, pleasure and pain, praise and condemnation, respect and contempt do not affect. It is a state of perfect emancipation from the bonds of life. He pointed out that the best way to achieve the goal was to lead a life of full dedication (*Bhagti*) to the Supreme Reality. It may be possible only through the cultivation of an attitude of complete detachment from the various allurements of life, which impede all progress on the path to spiritual advancement. However, in doing this, individuals are well-advised not to develop any unhealthy prejudice against family and social life. He articulates;

ਸੁਰਗ ਨਰਕ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਿਖੁ ਏ ਸਭ ਤਿਉ ਕੰਚਨ ਅਰੁ ਪੈਸਾ ॥ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਏ ਸਮ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਫੁੰਨਿ ਤੈਸਾ ॥੨॥
ਦੁਖੁ ਸੁਖੁ ਏ ਬਾਧੇ ਜਿਹ ਨਾਹਨਿ ਤਿਹ ਤੁਮ ਜਾਨਉ ਗਿਆਨੀ ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਤਾਹਿ ਤੁਮ ਮਾਨਉ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੋ ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ॥

They, to whom heaven and hell, ambrosial nectar and poison, gold and copper, are alike; so are the praise and slander, greed, and attachment, all the same to them; they are not bound by pleasure and pain. Know that they are truly wise. Nanak says that recognize those mortal beings as liberated, who live by this way of life. [M. 9, SGGS: 220]

ਮਾਨ ਮੋਹ ਦੋਨੋ ਕਉ ਪਰਹਰਿ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਕੇ ਗੁਨ ਗਾਵੈ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਇਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਕੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਕਹਾਵੈ ॥

A person who lays aside both pride and attachment and sings the Glorious Praises of Lord (God). Nanak says, "that person is said to be 'jivanmukta' (liberated while still alive)." [M. 9, SGGS: 831]

Guru Tegh Bahadur enunciates that such a person attains God-like status.

ਸੁਖੁ ਦੁਖੁ ਜਿਹ ਪਰਸੈ ਨਹੀ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਭਿਮਾਨੁ ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਨੁ ਰੇ ਮਨਾ ਸੋ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਭਗਵਾਨੁ ॥

One who is not touched by pleasure or pain, greed, emotional attachment, and egotistical pride, Nanak says, Listen, O mind! such a person is the very image of God.

[M. 9, SGGS: 1427]

Emancipated person

The dispassionate love (*bairaaag*) culminates [16] into a state of perfect harmony - a complete, conscious, and spontaneous union with God. This state is called *Sahaja* (state of equipoise), *amarapad* (state of immortality), *nirvanapad* (desireless state), *nirbhaipad* (a state without fear), or *Mukti* (state of liberation). One who has attained it has been variously called *Gurmukh* (guru-oriented person), *Brahma Jnani* (a knower of Brahma), or simply *jnani* (knower), *Jeevan Mukta* (liberated during life) or simply *Mukta* (liberated one). Guru Tegh Bahadur, in his hymns, has repeatedly alluded to the various characteristics of such an emancipated person. He articulates;

ਜੋ ਪ੍ਰਾਨੀ ਨਿਸਿ ਦਿਨੁ ਭਜੈ ਰੂਪ ਰਾਮ ਤਿਹ ਜਾਨੁ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਜਨ ਹਰਿ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੀ ਮਾਨੁ ॥

That mortal, who meditates on God, night and day, know him to be the embodiment of Him. There is no difference between God and His humble servant. Nanak says understand that this is true. [M. 9, SGGS: 1427 -1428]

With his/her devotion to God, a seeker of spiritual enlightenment becomes an ideal image of God and eventually attains salvation.

ਜਿਹ ਘਟਿ ਸਿਮਰਨੁ ਰਾਮ ਕੋ ਸੋ ਨਰੁ ਮੁਕਤਾ ਜਾਨੁ ॥ ਤਿਹਿ ਨਰ ਹਰਿ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਨਹੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੀ ਮਾਨੁ ॥

That person, who meditates on God in his heart, is liberated, know it well. There is no difference between that person and God. Nanak says: accept it as the truth. [M. 9, SGGS: 1428]

Thus, according to the Guru spiritual enlightenment is achievable. Humans must make the best of their lives to achieve it. The state of spiritual enlightenment releases the resources of inwardness, fearlessness, and courage to face life's troubles and turmoil. It

even provides the resoluteness to sacrifice one's life for the well-being of others. It is gloriously exemplified in the life of the Guru himself.

Conclusion

Guru Tegh bahadur's life and works have a shining message for us. In times of deep distress and acute difficulties, we should not run away from the situation but must face it with full moral and social responsibility. Self-transcendence is not merely reaching out to the divine within, but it is also reaching out to the other human beings through selfless service and sacrifice. A person's aim is not only a personal liberation but to help others to attain liberation. One must shoulder one's social duties with full responsibility for the good of all and must act in complete accord with the divine will. The Guru's life history teaches us that we should not look vainly for miraculous interventions in life but should build inner strength to accept adversity cheerfully.

Real progress demands a commitment to honest living, a life of self-discipline, and the development of our essential human nature, which is divine. To reach the divine is to come to the pinnacle of human evolution and liberation from fear. Guru asserts that human life is precious as it affords opportunities for self-refinement and spiritual enlightenment. Guru Tegh Bahadur emphasizes that an individual must actively bring his/her divine creative role in operation for his/her advancement and social upliftment. That is the only panacea to purify the spheres of personal, family, social, and political relationships. □

[Concluded]

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Asth Guru in Pandemic - Role less Appreciated

PROF. CHARAN SINGH*

Historical Facts

The Eighth Guru of the Sikhs is *Bal Guru*, Guru Harkrishan ji. In 1661, Guru Harkrishan ji was annointed as a Guru at the age of 5 years, by Guru Har Rai Ji, and was constantly challenged by many, maily outside of Sangat, to prove his spiritual mettle. In a balanced manner, like a true saint not affected by *ustat/nindya* sometimes, he would help the shaking faith of devotees, by demonstrating some unique strengths. One of it, illustratively, was a test of a very egoistic Pandit who wanted to know whether young Guruji was familiar with traditional spiritual literature of India. The story is well known that the Pandit deliberately chose a deaf and dumb, uneducated, illiterate person, Chajju, to test the Guru. Lo behold, Guru simply touched the head of Chajju with the end of his chari, the stick, and suddenly, knowledge and wisdom, was visible in every word uttered in interpreting the Gita. The Pandit was astounded, puntured of ego and fell on the feet of Guru Harkrishan, pleading forgiveness with folded hands. The mature, benovelent and beloved Guru, smiled and blessed even that Pandit. The sangat saw the 'miracle' and appreciated how the Guru had dispelled the doubt in mind of a arrogant Pandit in such a simple manner, without hampering any law of nature. Such was the astounding wisdom and maturity of our Bala Pritam, eighth Guru of the Sikhs.

The popularity of the Guru was obviously expanding, and people flocked to him from all directions. Guru Harkrishan preached the universal message of Guru Nanak, and the message contained in Adi Guru Granth Sahib, compiled by Guru Arjan Dev.

Role of Guru and Pandemic of 1664

In 1664, Guru Harkrishan ji was on a short visit to Delhi at the invitation of the Emperor, Aurangzeb, for a brief interaction. He was just 8 years, and then Delhi was

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suddenly caught in the grip of cholera and small pox pandemic. There were no modern medicines and no hospitals. Delhi was mainly old congested city where the outbreak was severe, especially people of all walks of life, including the Muslims. The Guru, could have chosen to go back to comforts at Kiratpur as his official engagement in Delhi, and brief interaction with the Emperor was satisfactorily over. Moreover, Kiratpur, and Punjab were not in the grip of any pandemic and were safer places to continue to do *parchar* of Sikhi. But, No, the young Guru felt he was more needed in Delhi to serve humanity to the best of his capability. He, a spiritual teacher, cannot lose an opportunity to serve other humans in distress. Guru plunged whole-heartedly in *sewa*, nursing and tending to ailing people in person. The water tank of Bangla Sahib became a hospital point with sick people coming there to meet Guru Harkrishnan, and to get blessings, medicines and treatment. Tirelessly, confidently, Guru interacted with people, giving them hope in midst of fear, despair and helplessness.

The Bal Guru was not a child, he had taken tough decisions, and lived each day with it. Finally, one day, he was diagnosed with the symptoms himself. The sangat despaired, but Guru was steadfast - any human body is prone to disease he said, and accepting even this ailment as will of God, Guru retired to the banks of Jamuna for his last hours. He was confident and composed till the end, and discussed matters of court and Guruship. Final decision of succession was also planned well - The next Guruship was to go to Baba at Bakala, where Guru Tegh Bahadur ji resided, and who had met him, a few months earlier in Delhi.

Conclusion

The last few days of Guru Harkrishan ji was an example of how Guru deliberately chose and immersed into *sewa* of human race, in total faith of Almighty without worrying about his personal health, welfare and well-being. What mattered to Guru was the interest of human race, even if he had to sacrifice his life in pursuing this effort. It was a clear demonstration to all concerned as to what the priority of a young spiritual Guru, whom many dismissed simply as a child, was.

This special role of Guru Harkrishan, Bala Prtiyam but with ideal objectives of a very mature spiritual master has not been shared with the world by we Sikhs. How, despite the choice, Guru stayed back with the ailing population of Delhi, nurtured them, stood by them

in difficult times, and served them at the cost of his own precious life. How lucky the sangat of Delhi was, and Guru, simply a visitor in Delhi, chose to dedicate his life for the sick, ignoring healthier environment available at Kiratpur. Are we Sikhs of Delhi, satisfied that we have done sufficient enough for the gestures of Guru Harkrishan Ji? We dont have a state-of-the-art Medical College and Hospital nor a world renowned university in the name of Guru Harkrishan, not even an iconic Musuem celebrating exclusively the life and sewa of the Guru. We dont even have Research lab dedicated to pandemic reserach in the name of our Guru, the only spiritual master who gave up his life serving the people of city, where he came as a short term visitor to meet the Emperor. And the state of Guru Harkishan Public Schools is known to all of us. Is this our dedication to our Bala Pritam?

Truely, however, in the traditional spirit of the Gurus teachings, Sikhs have worked tirelessly in the Covid crisis of 2021. This reflects, how the setting of ideals by the Guru in 1664, are still operational in the Sikh community. And hence my suggestions that before next generations forget it, let us institutionalise the Guru's unique message to prioritise only service to human race as ideal objective of Sewa. □



**Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, New Delhi, is dedicated to memory of
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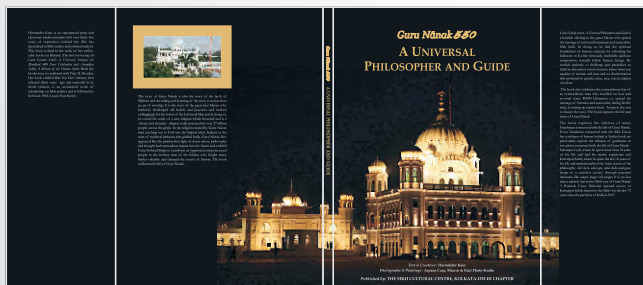
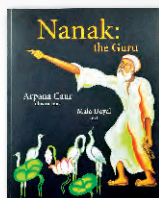
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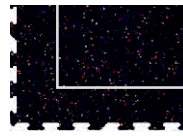
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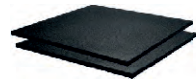
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Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji - A life of 'Unparalleled' Legacy

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In Sikh prayer (**Ardas**) we have a line which says:

“ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦਰ ਸਿਮਰਿਐ ਘਰ ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਆਵੈ ਧਾਇ ॥ ਸਭ ਥਾਂਈ ਹੋਇ ਸਹਾਇ ॥”

Translation: Remember Tegh Bahadur Ji, the nine treasures shall run to our homes; and Guru Ji will help us everywhere.

This is in first part of Sikh prayer (Ardaas), which is an invocation Guru Gobind Singh recited at the beginning of his epic poem Chandi di Vaar. In it, he called upon the power of *Adi Shakti* in the form of Pratham Bhagauti. Here the line about Guru Tegh Bahadur describes succinctly the spiritual bliss obtained in his remembrance. The blessing of the ninth Nanak brings the nine treasures which will be showered on him/her. The number 9 is an indicator of all the treasures possible as 9 is the highest number in the single digit. So, on the occasion of 400th Parkash Purab of the giver of all the treasures; let us briefly look at his life and his message.

It was 1st of April 1621, when in the house of Guru Hargobind Sahib and Mata Nanak Ji, the great soul was born. The new born child was the sixth child and named Tyag Mal, who later become Tegh Bahadur. Guru Hargobind Ji saw the brave and heroic spirit of his own late father Guru Arjan Dev Ji in him. Guru Hargobind Sahib blessed the new born child with these words, “May the Immortal Lord bestow on you all the divine blessings.”

When the child Tegh Bahadur was 4-1/2 years, Guru Hargobind personally took him to Bhai Buddha, a venerated figure in Sikhism, and requested him to accept the child as the pupil. He said, “*You were kind enough to be my teacher. O Enlightened One, accept Tegh Bahadur as your pupil.*” Child Tegh Bahadur bowed before the wise sage - Baba Buddha, who blessed him in acceptance as his student. The education started with the recitation of Mool Mantra. Baba Buddha Ji shared his own spiritual life experiences with

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the new student. In addition, Baba Buddha Ji, who had spent time with all the six Gurus, from Guru Nanak to Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji, shared historical anecdotes from Guru's lives with him. Additionally Tegh Bahadur also learned poetry, philosophy and history from Bhai Gurdas Ji - a scholar of great repute. He also learned horse riding cum swordsmanship from Bhai Bidhi Chand and warfare skills from Jati Mal. But, the most important source of inspiration to him was the life of his own father Guru Hargobind Sahib Ji.

Baba Tegh Bahadur as a child would spend long hours in deep meditation, and his poetic outpourings offered glimpses of a budding poet. When Tegh Bahadur's elder brother by 2-1/2 years, 9 years old Baba Atal passed away at a very young age, it made a lasting impression of him regarding significance of abiding by the Will of God.

Guru Hargobind with his family visited Tarn Taran, and there Tegh Bahadur as a child heard the details of supreme sacrifice by his grandfather Guru Arjan Dev Ji, from those who were eyewitnesses to the event. Next the family visited Khadur Sahib, sacred to the memory of Guru Angad Dev Ji. Again Tegh Bahadur as a child witnessed and absorbed the history there. From there family visited Goindwal, their ancestral home. Here he heard about the life story of Guru Amar Das and their great-grandfather Guru Ram Das. From there, they all returned back to Amritsar. The tour was highly inspirational as it connected him deeply to the spiritual aspects of the faith. Thus Tegh Bahadur was blossoming inspired by history, along with tenderness of a poet, resolve and the courage of a warrior, plus mysticism of a spiritual master.

In 1631 Guru Hargobind Ji was summoned to Ramdas village as Baba Buddha's end time was approaching; there Baba Tegh Bahadur witnessed with calm detachment and suppressed sorrow the grand end of his teacher at age of 10.

Soon afterwards in 1634 at the age of 14 Baba Tegh Bahadur got permission from his father Guru Hargobind Ji to join the battle in Kartarpur. The fifty thousand men of Mughal army were led by Kale Khan, the brother of Mukhlis Khan, who had died in the first battle. Kale Khan was assisted by Qutab Din, Painde Khan, Anwar Khan and Usman Khan. The Sikhs were led by Bidhi Chand and Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Ji. Here the young Baba Tegh Bahadur displayed exemplary courage and heroism. . It was for this display of exquisite swordsmanship that Tegh Bahadur became talk of the town.

Guru Sahib was very pleased that his son was not just a saint at heart but also brave at heart. In that battle, Guru Hargobind Sahib had one to one fight with his estranged

protégé Painde Khan who had joined the Mughal army with insider information and treacherous designs in his mind. In this fight he was killed by Guru Ji. Then after the death of Kale Khan and Qutub Din, the royal army retreated from the battlefield. The victory here against heavy odds while leading Sikhs from diverse backgrounds destroyed the myth of Mughal invincibility in the minds of the ordinary people of Punjab.

In 1636, Guru Hargobind Ji made a sudden visit to Goindwal to be with Bhai Gurdas Ji whose end was approaching. Baba Tegh Bahadur again witnessed passing away of another great soul whose life and teachings had made a lasting impression on his tender mind. Baba Tegh Bahadur was deprived of the personal guidance, experience of a great saint, scholar, poet and philosopher. Alas, he was not going to hear the sweet and melodious voice of Bhai Gurdas Ji. In 1638 guru ji eldest son Baba Gurditta passed away.

Baba Tegh Bahadur was about 20, when he was married to Gujri, daughter of Bhai Lal Chand and Bibi Bishan Kaur in Kartarpur. It was an arranged marriage initiated by Holy Mother Nanaki. Guru Hargobind Ji had retired to Keeratpur after the Kartarpur battle and spent last ten years of his life there with family including Baba Tegh Bahadur and his new bride. He breathed his last on March 3, 1644. Guru Har Rai, his grandson succeeded him as the Guru. Guru Hargobind had asked everyone to bow to newly anointed Guru and Baba Tegh Bahadur was first one to bow to his nephew.

Soon about a month later Baba Tegh Bahadur left Keeratpur with his mother, wife, and brother-in-law Kirpal for Bakala. At the time of departure Baba Tegh Bahadur was 23, and devoted his time in deep meditation with the divine spirit within. He did not renounce the world but only the worldliness. It was time for him to prepare for the next phase of his life. Mata Gujri, his wife followed his foot-steps and started her own meditation. It was midnight of 30th March 1664; when the call came to him to carry the 'Torch of Light' of Guru Nanak Dev Ji to spread its light all across and to save the Dharma and uphold righteousness in the formidable times ahead. A day before his demise, Guru Har Krishan consecrated his Baba who lived in the village Bakala as the next Guru.

Interesting anecdote to note is that Guru Hargobind had anointed his grandson Har Rai as his spiritual heir. He in turn had anointed his younger son Har Krishan as the heir. Now, 20 years later Guru Har Krishan had anointed his grandfather's youngest brother as his heir and the ninth Guru.

In June 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur purchased a land, seven miles away from Keeratpur, and laid the foundation of city of Anandpur. Shortly afterwards in November 1665 he started on his long 'Missionary' journey towards the east, visiting the places visited by Guru Nanak Dev Ji in his first *Udassi*. Towards the end of May 1666 Guru Ji reached Patna, stayed there till August. Leaving behind his family in Patna, guru ji continued his journey of the east, stopping on the way at various places he reached Dacca in October 1666. At the time of birth of Guru Gobind Rai (later) Singh Ji on 26th December 1666 in Patna, Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was in Dacca. From there Guru Ji proceeded to Dhubri, Kamrup in February 1668, at the request of Raja Ram Singh son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh.

Raja Ram Singh was leading an expedition against Ahoms for their annexing Gauhati, on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. Together Raja Ram Singh and Guru Ji marched along the river Brahmaputra and reached Kamrup early in February, 1669 A.D. The Ahom ruler at the time was Chakradhawaj Singh and his Commander-in-Chief was Lachit Barphukan. Guru Tegh Bahadur camped at Dhubri while Raja Ram Singh with his forces camped at Rangamati. The Imperial Army was confident of its strength but was not as yet sure whether the five holy men with them would be able to destroy the evil effects of magic and witchcraft of the Ahoms. Just across the river the Ahoms were unnerved by the superior numbers of the Imperial Army, but they were confident that the supernatural powers of their magicians backed by their tactful resistance would keep the attackers at bay.

The Ahom women magicians employing their tantric paraphernalia began reciting mantras for destruction of Guru Ji's encampment directly across the river. But all their magic spells failed to harm the great Guru. In desperation from across the river they hurled a 26 feet long stone, which came arcing across the sky like a missile and struck the ground, near Guru Ji's camp, so hard that nearly half of its length was embedded in the ground. It can still be seen there today. Next, they launched a pipal tree towards Guru Ji, and it landed close to where Guru Ji was sitting, but no damage was inflicted. Guru Ji finally shot an arrow taking aim at the altar from where the operations were being orchestrated. Suddenly, the whole operations of magic came to a halt. Then women magicians realizing futility of their efforts came forward to Guru Ji asking for forgiveness. During that meeting Guru Ji assured that he will mediate

between the Ahoms and Raja Ram Singh to avert the war. Guru Ji acting as mediator was able to negotiate peace which allowed Gauhati (now renamed Guwahati) to remain with Ahoms.

After the peace agreement was signed Ahom King invited Guru Ji to Kamakhya temple and honored him there. The happy occasion of the peace settlement brought about by the efforts of Guru Tegh Bahadur was celebrated by a joint homage to the shrine of Guru Nanak by the Mughal and Ahom armies. The mound of peace was erected with the red earth carried by the soldiers of the armies using their shields as pans. This permanent monument to Guru Tegh Bahadur's successful peace efforts stands in Dhubri to this day. Now a Gurudwara stands on the mound and it is called Thara Sahib or Damdama Sahib. From here Guru Ji returned back to Dacca (now Bangladesh Capital) and then visited Jagannath Puri before returning to Patna in May 1671. It was on return only that Guru Ji first saw his son Gobind Rai. Guru Tegh Bahadur and family reached Anandpur after leaving Patna in February 1672.

Although Guru Ji had left Dhubri, from the reading of Assam history the events took a tragic turn. A period of battles between the Ahom and Mughal forces in the region of Guwahati followed, with varied results of forts changing hands many times. Lachit led the fight in 1671 and inflicted a crushing defeat to the Mughals at every front. Lachit out maneuvered the army of Raja Ram Singh in every battle, which led to the stalemate of the war. Aurangzeb asked his general to initiate diplomacy and sign a friendly treaty for the time being. But Lachit's trusted Lieutenant Atan Burhagohain, who later became the Commander-in-Chief, opposed such a deal stating that the treaty would be an example of typical Mughal treachery. When the final battle of Saraighat started, Lachit was terribly unwell. However, despite being ill, he displayed tremendous valour and exemplary leadership. Such an action by an ailing yet forceful Lachit motivated his troops. They fought the battle with a fierce zeal and intense courage. The Mughal army suffered comprehensive defeat in the hands of Lachit's army.

While Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was in Anadpur Sahib, a delegation of 500 Kashmiri Pandits, under the leadership of Pandit Kirpa Ram, head of Sanskrit Institution in Kashmir, visited Anandpur and shared their deep piteous plight of forced conversion to Islam with Guru Ji. On careful listening the distressing situation of the visiting pandits Guru Ji was deeply pondering over all aspects of the situation, when the young Gobind Rai, of the age

9, suggested that he, his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, being the supreme religious soul, on whom the pandits have assigned their total faith, should come forward to sacrifice himself to protect the fundamental right of worship symbolized by the *Tilak* and sacred thread. This is a detailed subject in itself to be dealt separately. Finally, Guru Ji laid down his life for the protection of Hindu faith on November 11, 1675 at Chandi Chowk, Delhi. Thus, no parallel is found in the history of mankind where someone gave his own life to protect the right of freedom of other's faith. Guru Gobind Singh Ji penned the following lines about the supreme sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji:

“ਤਿਲਕ ਜੰਦੂ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤਾ ਕਾ ॥ ਕੀਨੋ ਬਡੋ ਕਲੂ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ ॥ ਸਾਧਨ ਹੇਤਿ ਇਤਿ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰੀ ॥ ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ ਪਰੁ ਸੀ ਨ ਉਚਰੀ ॥ ੧੩॥”

“Tilak janjoo rakhaa prabh takaa. Keeno baddo kaloo meh sakaa. Sadhan het itee jin karee. Sees dheaaa par see na aucharee.[13]” (Dasam Granth, Pg. No. 54)

Translation: *He protected (with his life) the forehead mark and sacred thread (of the Hindus), which marked an unparalleled heroic event in the Kal (Iron) Age. For the sake of men of other faith, he laid down his head without a groan.*



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The Legacy of Guru Arjun Devji@

(LATE) DR. SANGAT SINGH*

The era of Guru Arjun Dev (September 1581-May 1606) was marked by a rare liveliness, vitality and high spirit in the realm of Sikhism. He was an exceptional genius. He belonged to the new generation, born after the passing away of Guru Nanak.¹ Sikhism during his period made rapid strides to come into notice as a powerful third force, independent of both Hinduism and Islam. Above all, he raised the level of Guru to that of *sachcha padshah* (true king)² as against the worldly kings whose position was ephemeral.³

The achievements of Guru Arjun are to be viewed in the context of the fierce resistance he met from within the family – his elder brother Prithi Chand who externalized the conflict and sought assistance of the hostile elements to contain the growing influence of Sikhism. But it had little impact, if at all, on Guru Arjun who remained calm and composed till the very last.

Guru Arjun tried to defuse the crisis *en famille*. He transferred all the property of his father to Prithi Chand who was not appeased. Prithi Chand at the moment was being instigated by high caste Hindus who already were on the lookout to contain the Sikh movement. Assisted by a wily Brahmin, Mahesh Das alias Bir Bal, one of the nine gems of Akbar's Court, the detractors tried to fish in the troubled waters. At Bir Bal's instance, the district revenue official, Sulhi Khan, too aligned himself with the detractors.

With the help of some misguided *masands*, Prithi Chand started preaching that he had been invested with the Guruship and not Arjun Dev. He was able to mislead some simple-minded Sikhs. The state of his meanness could be judged from the fact that he would collect their offerings and direct them to the *langar* of Guru Arjun to take their meals. That rather contributed to his undoing.

The efforts of Bhai Gurdas who, by now was back from Agra, to persuade Prithi Chand to adopt the path of sanity fell through. Bhai Gurdas in disgust gave him and his

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@ Excerpted from his magnum-opus: *The Sikhs in History*.

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collaborators the plural epithet of *miné*, deceitful or highway robbers, which stuck to the clique. The leading Sikhs successfully combated misleading propaganda of Prithi Chand, who otherwise met series of setbacks.

Prithi Chand with the assistance of detractors prepared a Memorandum (*mahjar*) leveling charges against Guru Arjun and presented it to Emperor Akbar who treated it with the contempt it deserved.⁴ The wily Bir Bal was killed in 1586 when on a campaign against Pathans in the Frontier. Sulhi Khan marshaled his resources to attack Guru Arjan but, on the way at Haher whereto he reverted to confer with Prithi Chand, met unholy death when his horse along with him jumped into a brick oven.⁵

Guru Arjun was least distracted by these goings on. Right from the beginning, he concentrated on the missionary tours and the construction work, which went hand in hand.

Ramdas Sarovar shortly afterwards renamed *Amritsar*, the pool of nectar, *Santokhsar* and *Guru ke Mahal* (Guru's residence) all left midway by Guru Ram Das were completed around 1588. The foundation of Harimandir, now also known as Golden Temple, was laid on Maghi, Sunday, December 28, 1588, - the foundation stone being laid by the renowned Sufi Saint of Qadiry Order, Mir Mohamed Khan, known as Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore.⁶ Harimandir, unlike Hindu and Muslim places of worship, was built at a *lower* level than the surrounding area. It had doors on all the four sides, signifying both humanity and universalism and that it was open to people of all the denominations.⁷

Side by side, during his extensive missionary tours of *Majha* and *Doaba*, Guru Arjun founded the towns of Sri Gobindpur on Beas. Tarn Taran, Kartarpur, apart from the city of Amritsar for which he invited people of all trades and professions. The religions centres established at these places became centres for consolidation of the Guru's following. Tarn Taran had the privilege of having the biggest *sarovar*, tank, and emerged as the centre for cure of leprosy victims. The Lt. Governor of Jalandhar Doab, Syed Azim Khan, who became Guru Arjun's disciple, played a leading role in establishment of Sikh centre at Kartarpur.

Guru Arjun also built a *Baoli* at Dabbi Bazar Lahore, (it was paid for by Wazir Khan, Governor of Lahore), a couple of wells at Tarn Taran, Gangsar well at Kartarpur which had as pure water as that of Ganges, a huge well with six wheels at Chheharta near Amritsar and another well with three wheels at Amritsar. He also laid *Guru ka Bagh* apart

from some other constructions like Ramsar at Amritsar. Guru Arjun's missionary tours were a great success in attracting disciples, cutting across religious lines. These included hill Rajas of Kulu, Saket, Haripur and Chamba who visited him at various times. The Malwa was aptly covered by Masands.

The widespread building activity was indicative of sharp increase in the number of Sikhs, who according to Mohsin Fani of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* were found in all parts of Hindustan and beyond. It also invited a reorganization of *Masand* system to channelise the funds for construction work. With the consent of the Sikhs, *daswand*, i.e. one-tenth of their earnings was fixed. It was carried by *Masands* to the Guru on Baisakhi day. He also encouraged the Sikhs to enter into trade activity, especially those of Turki horses, and also probably himself entered that trade. It made the Sikhs to have trade encounters with tough Pathans of the trans-frontier region. Afghanistan and beyond. It enriched them and also the Guru's treasury. Besides, the hazards of horse trading made them some of the finest horsemen of Asia.

That was not an incidental development. His son Hargobind, born on 21 *Asarh*, June 18, 1590, as part of his education got thorough training in horse riding, swordsmanship and warfare at the hands of Baba Buddha. Guru Arjun could foresee the need for the new orientation in view of the persistent hostility of local *muqaddams* and *faujders* on their own and at the instigation of Prithia and malignant upper caste Hindus. They were hand in glove with one another.

Guru Arjun's perception of the times to come was notwithstanding Akbar's high regards for him. According to the Court historian, Abul Fazal's *Akbar Namah*, Guru Arjun accorded a profuse reception to Akbar on November 24, 1598, at Goindwal. *Akbar was really impressed by Guru Arjun's "bewitching and handsome appearance, sweet and melodious voice and fascinating and charming manners, his princely style of living, his warm reception and his singing of hymns" in praise of God.*⁸ At Guru Arjun's instance, Akbar issued orders to remit the revenue by one-sixth.

It may be mentioned that Guru Arjun was a great lyricist. His hymns had a rare quality to touch the symphony of one's heart. He mostly composed short hymns in simple language of the people. These straightaway affected the emotions of the singer and the listener. His *Sukhmani*, psalm of peace, still remains a masterpiece to put at ease a disturbed mind and provide it instant solace. Guru Arjun's *bani*, hymns, captivated the heart of the people and proved an effective instrument in spreading the Sikh panth.

By the time, Prithia's attempt to compose his own hymns in the name of Guru Nanak posed a threat to corrupt the Sikh philosophy. The compilation of *Guru Granth* had already been on the agenda of the Sikh panth. Guru Nanak had passed on the collection of his hymns to Guru Angad who had them copied and widely distributed. Guru Nanak had also collected Farid's compositions. Guru Angad enlarged the collection by adding those of some more Bhaktas. Later, Guru Amar Das had collected the hymns of his predecessors and his own as also of a number of Bhaktas, into *pothis*, volumes.

Guru Arjun, shortly after Akbar's visit, early in 1599, began the project of compilation of *Adi Granth*.⁹ Bhai Gurdas was appointed amanuenses. Guru Arjun took five-years to completed the project. *Adi Granth* was ready in 1604 when it was installed in the Harimandir with Baba Buddha as the first granthi.¹⁰ It was placed at a high pedestal while Guru Arjun himself sat at a lower level to emphasize that *shabad*, Word, is the Guru. It was embodiment of the Guru himself.

The compilation of *Adi Granth* was a major achievement of Guru Arjun.

Guru Arjun, like his predecessors, was a connoisseur in music and put it to good use in organising the *Adi Granth* including the hymns of bards and Bhaktas in various *ragas*, musical meters.

He also exercised great caution in selection of hymns of Bhaktas for inclusion. He rejected compositions like Pran Sangli obtained after considerable effort from Ceylon, being spurious. His ideological parameters were clear.

The *Adi Granth* enunciated unadulterated monotheism and humanism. It reflected pan-Hindustani and beyond, matter of fact, existence of Sikhism.

The death of Emperor Akbar in October 1605 marked a sea change in the policy of his successor, Prince Salim alias Nuruddin Jahangir, who out of political necessity was forced to uphold Islamic Puritanism of Naqashbandi revivalists led by Khwaja Mohammad Baqi-Billa (1564-1603) of Turan.¹¹

Shaikh Farid Bukhari, one of his followers had emerged as a strong force in Akbar's Court by the end of the latter's reign, while the spiritual mantle fell on Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi also known as Mujadid Alif-i-Sani (1561-1624).

After Salim's revolt, and Akbar's forgiving his errant son and proclaiming him heir-apparent, the leading nobles of Akbar's Court were divided into two factions. One, favouring Akbar's policy of *Din-i-Ilahi* and *Sulha-i-Kul* (Peace for All), favoured liberal minded Prince

Khusrau, Salim's son, and held Salim unsuitable for kingship. The other, of Islamic fundamentalists, sick of Akbar policy of religious tolerance, aligned with Salim and extracted promises to reverse Akbar's religious policy and further the cause of Islam at the cost of the non-Muslims.¹² They were to be humiliated and shown no quarters. Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi's letters, *Maktubat-i-Emam-i-Rabani*, fully reflect his philosophy of contempt for the non-Muslims.

In Punjab, the Hindu position was listless except that they would hobnob with the convenient officials against the growing Sikh influence.

Guru Arjun's high profile, active, missionary preachings, and pan-Hindustani aspirations rankled in the mind of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi who, in one of his letters, described Guru Arjun Dev as Chief of Infidels – *Rais-i-ahl-i-Shirk* – and a leader of the *Kafirs* – *imam-i-kufr*.¹³ Gokal Chand Narang describes Guru Arjun Dev as "the first great organiser of the Sikh nation."¹⁴ In the words of Mohsin Fani, the Sikhs had by now "become accustomed to a form of self government within the Empire".

Khusrau's indiscreet revolt against his father on April 6, 1606 and his hurrying to the Punjab, on way to the North West Frontier, to gain adherents greatly helped to strengthen the position of Islamic revivalists. Khusrau was pursued by Shaikh Farid Bukhari who in turn was being followed by Jahangir. The persons who directly or indirectly helped Khusrau were immediately punished.

Khusrau crossed river Beas and was followed by Shaikh Farid Bukhari who inflicted on him a crushing defeat near Bhairawal Khusrau was captured on April 27, 1606, near Chenab and brought as prisoner to Lahore.

Jahangir crossed to Beas on April 26, and was encamped at Jhabal. Upto May 22, i.e. for 27 days, there was no mention at all of Khusrau's calling on Guru Arjun much less the latter's blessing him.

Around May 23, a report about Guru Arjun's blessing Khusrau and affixing a saffron mark on his forehead poured into Jahangir's ears. That made him to call for Guru Arjan into his presence.

That sets the stage for Jahangir's entry in his memoirs, *Tuzak-i-Jahangiri*, which reads: "There lived at Goindwal on the bank of the river Biah (Beas) a Hindu named Arjun in the garb of a Pir and Shaikh, so much so that he had by his ways and means captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus, nay, even of foolish and stupid Muslims and he had noised himself as a religious and wordly leader. They called him Guru, and from all

directions, fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. For three or four-generations they had kept this shop warm. For a long time the thought had been presenting itself to me that either I should put an end to this false traffic or he should be brought into the fold of Islam.

“At last during the days when Khusrau passed along this road, this insignificant fellow made up his mind to see him and conveyed preconceived things to him and made on his forehead a fingermark in saffron which in Hindu terminology is called *qashqa* (*teeka*) and is considered propitious. When this came to the ears of our Majesty, and I fully knew his heresies, I ordered that he should be brought into my presence and, having handed over his houses, dwelling place, and children to Murtza Khan (Shaikh Farid Bukhari) and having confiscated his property. I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.”¹⁵

The first part about popularity of Guru Arjun and his mission was correct. The second part about Guru Arjun’s blessing Khusrau was a pure concoction, ¹⁶ probably the work of Shaikh Farid Bukhari who might have used Chandu as a tool. As Ganda Singh points out, “Never in the whole history of the Sikh Gurus, there has been any occasion for any Guru to anoint anyone, Sikh or non-Sikh, with a *teeka*. Even the succeeding Guru was never *teeka*’d by any Guru himself. The *teeka* or tilak ceremony of the succeeding Guru was always performed by a leading Sikh. In the case of Gurus Angad to Hargobind, the ceremony was performed by Bhai Buddha, a venerable old Sikh coming from the days of Guru Nanak. And the same practice was followed upto the time of Guru Gobind Singh, tenth and last Guru.”¹⁷

From the details in *Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*, it is obvious that Jahangir was looking for an opportunity to fix Guru Arjun. He left the details of punishment to be worked out by Shaikh Farid Bukhari on whom he had conferred the high title of Murtaza Khan – one who had gained the royal pleasure. *Tuzuk* does not mention of any fine being imposed on Guru Arjan, as has been mentioned by some contemporary sources like *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib* and Jesuits. That seems to be the result of a mix up.¹⁸

Guru Arjun nominated Hargobind as his successor and left for Lahore. He was subjected to a number of tortures. The Sikh traditional accounts mention that Guru Arjun was made to sit on hot iron plate, hot sand was thrown over his body, and he was boiled in a cauldron. *Dabistan-i-Mazhaib* mentions of his being deprived of food and water and put into the hot blazing sand and stoned which caused blood to ooze out of his head. He was tortured for 3 to 5 days.

With wounds blistering on his body, on May 30, 1606, tied hand and feet, he was thrown into river Ravi wherein he disappeared.¹⁹ In the words of Bhai Gurdas, Guru Arjun though in great pain on the night of May 29 - 30 was fully composed, with hymns in praise of God on his lips.

Guru Arjun's martyrdom, the first of its kind in the history of Hindustan, the sub-continent, caused great resentment and indignation among the general body of Hindus and Muslims, apart from the Sikhs. One tends to agree with Ganda Singh that "much of the Chandu-story was given currency to in those very days to shift the responsibility of tortures inflicted on the Guru from the Mughal Officials to the *Kafirs*.²⁰ Chandu was only a minor official at Lahore, and hostile to the Sikh Panth.

The non-implementation of Jahangir's orders about taking over of Guru Arjun's property and children remains inexplicable, notwithstanding Sikh tradition accounts about intervention of Mian Mir who at that stage had no influence either with the Emperor or Shaikh Farid Bukhari, the main actors in Guru Arjun's martyrdom. □

References

1. The first three successors of Guru Nanak were at various stages of their life at the time of his passing away in 1539.
2. Rattan Singh Bhangu in *Panth Parkash* relates a popular tradition that power and pelf of the world kept 12 kos (30 kms) from Guru Nanak and six kos from Guru Angad. It knocked at the door of Guru Amar Das and fell at the feet of Guru Ram Das, while in Guru Arjun's time it got admission into the house.
The fable beautifully describes the gradual evolution of the social and political power of the Sikhs. Cf. Gokal Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, (Delhi, 1989 ed), p.44.
3. The idea was extant in Guru Amar Das's time, but took concrete shape under Guru Arjun Dev.
4. Gauri M. 5, 99, A.G., p.199.
5. Bilawal M. 5, 104, A.G., p. 825 According to Muslim belief one, who is burnt to death, goes to hell.
6. For a bio-sketch, see Dr. Surinder Singh, "*The Life and Times of Miyar Mir*," PP&P, Vol. XXII, October 1986, pp. 243-72. There are assertions by some scholars that the foundation stone was laid by Guru Arjan himself.
7. This made Prithia to construct a corresponding centre at Haheer, wherefrom his wife came.

8. Cf. Hari Ram Gupta, *History of the Sikhs*. Vol. 1, The Sikh Gurus. 1469. 1708, (Delhi, 1984), p. 134. It was during this visit. Akbar looked into the complaints about the Guru's *bani* being tinged with anti-Muslim or anti Prophet expressions.
9. Ibid. p. 135.
10. It included hymns of Guru Arjun and his predecessors. Rababis and Bhatts associated with various Gurus, and Bhaktas both Muslims and Hindus, including Shudras and Outcastes from different parts of Hindustan.
The hymns in Adi Granth were arranged according to Ragas, musical meters and their sub-meters. This resulted in intermixture of the hymns of all the Gurus in a particular Raga. Then followed the hymns of Bhaktas beginning with those of Kabir and ending with those of Farid. At places there was interspersing of hymns of Gurus and Bhaktas. It was an integrated compilation which gave equal importance to each contributor.
11. Khwaja Mohamad Baqi Billa (1564-1603) arrived in India by close of the 16th century, and established new Sufi order which advocated the use of state power for Islamic preaching.
12. Ganda Singh, "The Martyrdom of Guru Arjun", PP&P. Vol. XII, April 1978, p. 163.
13. Ibid, p. 171.
14. Narang, n.67, p. 46.
15. Ganda Singh, n. 77, p.160.
16. Bhai Vir Singh while editing *Gurpratap Suraj Granth* (pp.1189-92), holds a prolonged discussions and comes to the conclusion that Khusrau never called on Guru Arjun, and rather it was the work of Guru Arjun's opponents, including Prithi Chand, Brahmins and high caste Hindus and Maulvis. Cf. Narang. N. 67, p. 48.
17. Ganda Singh, n. 77, p. 165.
18. In the very next item in *Tuzuk*, Jahangir mentions of cases of Raju and Amba, one of whom was fined Rupees, 1,15,000. This caused some confusion about Guru Arjun being fined. Ibid, p. 175, also Gopal Singh, *A History of the Sikh People*, 1469-1988, (Delhi, 1988), pp. 194-95 for Jesuit Letter of 1606-07 published in Lisbon in 1609.
19. Ganda Singh, n. 77, pp. 169-70.
20. Ibid. p. 172. It may be mentioned that Sikh traditional accounts mention of Chandu, a Divan as the main tormentor. They were not aware of *Tuzuk-I-Jahangir's* mentioning of Guru Arjun which came to light only in 1931. Or of the Naqshbandi order.

Historical Gurdwaras *Commemorate*
Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's
Legacy

Gurdwara Baba Bakala Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab



Sacred shrine where 9th Guru meditated for approx. 27th years.

Gurdwara Thada Sahib, Amritsar, Punjab



This shrine commemorates Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Amritsar in 1664.

Historical Gurdwaras *Commemorate*
Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's
Legacy

Gurdwara Dhubri Sahib, Assam



In Dhubri, Guru Ji brought peace between Imperial commander Raja Ram Singh and the Ahom King of Assam.

Gurdwara Bara Sikh Sangat, Kolkata



Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib Ji on his return journey from Assam visited this place in April 1668.

Commemorating Guru Tegh Bahadur This Centenary

[PART-I]

*NIRMAL SINGH**

BACKGROUND

The year 2021 marks the passing of 400 years since the birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur, our 9th Guru, in April 1621. Sikhs at that time were just 15 years past the martyrdom of the 5th Guru and nascent Sikhi was passing through a difficult period. Since the difficulties persevered through a century under ministries of the later Gurus and following several decades of struggle under evolving Sikh leadership before the community could look to some relief, it may help develop a clearer perspective of the role of Guru Tegh Bahadur, if we took an overview of the lead events since Guru Arjun's martyrdom.

Historians mostly agree that robust growth of Sikhi made segments among Hindus and Muslims turn increasingly inimical towards the Sikh Gurus. Additionally dissonance in the Guru families provided sharper focus to those hostile towards Gurughar. One effect of action by Jahangir to impose death penalty on Guru Arjun at the behest of orthodox coterie among his courtiers was that it demonstrated the reversal of Akbar's 'policy of religious neutrality and eclecticism'¹ under the new Emperor. The internment of Guru Hargobind, successor of Guru Arjun, would have confirmed the change in policy. Post that Jahangir tried to moderate his relations with the Guru.

Guru Hargobind, while he maintained friendly relations with Jahangir, did not forget to explore other means to strengthen and consolidate the Sikh community. The Guru had accompanied Jahangir to Kashmir and Rajputana and subdued rebellion by Tara Chand of Nalagarh.² He however discretely continued to organize and train his band of armed Sikhs and tried to bring the community together by attempting to heal the divide³ with the Minas. He did not succeed to turn Mina divide round but another opening came up.

In 1624, a few days after his eldest son Gurditta was married, Guru Hargobind with his four sons went to meet Sri Chand at Baarath. Baba Tegh bahadur was three and was not with them. During their stay at Baarath, Sri Chand asked Guru Hargobind to give a son to him. Guru replied 'if you desire, they all are available'. Sri Chand gave Udasi *bekh*

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to *Gurditta*. After the Guru left, Gurditta stayed back. Sri Chand explained *Udasi Mat* and bestowed the *Gadi* of Pramukh Guru of *Udasi Sampardai* on him before Gurditta left.⁴ It helped heal a divide in the Sikh community going back to the passing of Guru Nanak and Udasis soon became an active component of the Sikh *parchar* missionary.

In 1627, Jahangir fell ill in Kashmir and decided to go back to Lahore but died on the way. Shahjahan, known to be close to orthodox groups, succeeded in the struggle for succession to the throne and the Sikh-Mughal relations again turned inimical. Sikhs too were not any more hesitant to cross swords with adversaries. Guru Hargobind fought four battles with Mughal forces after which to avoid recurring conflicts, c. 1634 he moved to the hilly area of Shiwaliks and set up base at Kiratpur, outside the territory under direct Mughal control.⁵ But Amritsar slipped into Mina hands.

Gopal Singh⁶ records that under Guru Hargobind seats of Sikhism were consolidated from Kabul to Dacca --- His son Baba Gurditta, as the *Pramukh* Guru of Udasis, set up four *Dhuans* that supplemented the system of *sangat* and *masand* to further spread teachings of Guru Nanak. Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Entry Dhuan, PUP, adds that these Dhuans were initially assigned to different areas but later each of the branches spread out and established their preaching centers over the country. The Dhuan headed by Bhai Almast, with its headquarter at Nanak Mata had branches in Eastern India including at Dhaka. A couple of decades later the sangats in Eastern India provided not only strategic depth to the Sikh community but also became the source of support and funds to the Gurus in the difficult times - notwithstanding the dislocation forced by adverse disposition of the Mughal Government and family rebels.

Guru Hargobind, before he passed away in 1644, installed Har Rai, the younger son of Gurditta, as the successor Guru. Gurditta had predeceased his father in 1638 and none of other children of the Guru 'seemed suitable for the position'. Dhir Mal, elder brother of Har Rai was rejected because he had 'formed an alliance with Emperor Shah Jahan'. Dhir Mal also claimed to possess the original copy of *Adi Granth* to support his claim to *Gurgadi* and continued to intervene in later succession too.⁷ After the ceremony, Guru Hargobind asked everyone to bow to Guru Har Rai and Baba Tegh Bahadur, 24 and by passed, was the first to do so.⁸

Guru Har Rai had a peaceable disposition and he moved further into the interior close to Sirmor and stayed there most of the time. During his ministry, three new branches of Udasis known as *Bakshishes* were added to the already large *Udasi* order. Guru Har Rai had blessed the *Bakshishes* known as *Suthrashahis*, *Bhagat Bhagwanias* and *Sangat Sahibis*. This was helpful to Guru's constrained missionary in Shiwaliks.

Guru Har Rai's relations with Shahjahan had improved after he helped treat his favorite son, Dara Shikoh. But Aurangzeb's ascension to the throne 'in 1658 marked beginning of long, consistent and active policy to gain a control over the Sikh religious affairs⁹' - foreboding the testing times in the half century ahead.

Aurangzeb sent a message to Guru Har Rai 'to deliver his son Ram Rai as a hostage for the Guru's reputed support of Dara Shikoh'. Aurangzeb asked Ram Rai after his arrival in Delhi, to explain a verse from *Asa-ki-Var* in Adi Granth. Ram Rai replied that the text had been miscopied and should have been *mitti beiman ki*, the dust left after cremating the bodies of faithless people. Guru Har Rai, on hearing of this, decided not to see Ram Rai again for changing the word of Guru Nanak¹⁰. Before his passing in October 1661, Guru Har Rai installed his younger son, age five, Har Krishan as Guru.

Ram Rai was rewarded by Aurangzeb with land grants in Dehra Dun region. After few years, in Jan 1664, Aurangzeb summoned Guru Har Krishan, through Raja Jai Singh, to appear at his court¹¹. The Guru came to Delhi and was lodged at the house of Jai Singh.

When Guru Har Krishan was summoned, Kunwar Ram Singh was present with Guru the first day¹². In the session Ram Rai was emphatic that decision of his father to install his brother was based on cogent reasons. It went well but the next session planned for the following day could not be held because Guru Har Krishan passed away that night. Gandhi says that appearance with Aurangzeb was fixed for 28th March but the Guru went into a retreat for 5 days on 25th March due to which, the appearance did not take place at all.

When Guru Har Krishan was sick with small pox, Baba Tegh Bahadur arrived in Delhi on 21st March from his visit, at the urging of Guru Har Rai, to sangats in Patna and the East from 1656 to 1664. He was on way back to Bakala and with his mother visited Guru Har Krishan to offer condolences on passing of Guru Har Rai¹³.

Guru Har Krishan passed away on 30 March, 1664 and his dying words were, "Baba Bakala", indicating that his successor Guru was in Bakala. This was considered by many as a cryptic utterance but those in the know had no doubt who was the person in view of Guru Har Krishan.¹⁴

TEGH BAHADUR TO MAHAL IX

Sikhs had witnessed the happenings over the decades since the martyrdom of the fifth Guru and had no doubt that the Mughal Kings had made continued attempts to contain the activities of each of the Gurus and possibly install a person who would take the cue from them – an effort in which they succeeded only to distract but in the process firmed up the resolve of the Gurus and Sikhs to resist Mughal interference.

Baba Tegh Bahadur had stayed in touch with Guru Har Rai and had undertaken *parchar* to Patna at the Guru's suggestion. His brother in law, Kirpal, a soldier in Guru Har Rai's armed guard is also said to have kept Tegh Bahadur informed of the Sikh developments periodically.¹⁵ It is reasonable to infer that Tegh Bahadur had stayed sensitive to Sikh happenings but without at any time interfering in the matters. It is also possible that the Mughals with their ears to the ground, would have been conscious of the possibility of Tegh Bahadur becoming the Guru, with some trepidation, at a juncture when they were closing in to control of the Guru institution.

Sangat Singh has speculated that the delay in announcing ascension of Tegh Bahadur to Gurgadi by months was a strategic ploy to keep Aurangzeb and his close coterie from guessing who was going to succeed the 8th Guru to Gurgadi¹⁶ lest they try to harm or in any way compromise the person.

As soon as news got out that the dying words of Guru Har Krishan were Baba Bakala, there was flurry of activity in Bakala as local as well as outside aspirants of Gur Gadi set up shop as potential Guru choice. The total number is put at 22 that included Sodhis of various lineages like Minas, Dhir Mal, Sodhis of Lahore, and descendents of Suraj Mal plus a crop of local impostors¹⁷. Tegh Bahadur judiciously stayed aloof from this rush. Per Surjit Singh Gandhi, Dhir Mal was the most vociferous of the claimants.

After over four months, a Delhi Sangat led by Diwan Durga Mal and others including Mata Sulakhni, mother of Guru Har Krishan, Baba Gurditta son of Baba Budhha came to Bakala and Baba Gurditta performed the ritual ceremony of installing Tegh Bahadur as Guru. Sangat Singh says that the Guru asked for promise to maintain silence for the time being. Ranbir Singh records that it was a quiet, private ceremony. Surjit Gandhi's version is that it was an open ceremony where grandson of Bhai Mohan, son of Guru Amardas, was also present.¹⁸

The news finally became public on the Diwali day, 9 October 1664, when Makhan Shah Lubhana came to make his *mannat* - promised offering to the Guru for saving his prized merchandise on high seas and was aghast at so many people posing as Guru. Each one of them accepted two gold coins he offered but when Makhan Shah got to Guru Tegh Bahadur, he asked for the 500 coins he had promised. That became the '**gur ladho re**' moment – the joyful, spontaneous expression that Lubhana is said to have uttered and has since become a part of Sikh memory. It continues to be retold by the kathakars and ragis lauding the miraculous finding and thankful acceptance of the true Guru by Sikhs. Gopal Singh sees the process of elevation of Tegh Bahadur to have been 'an election by

consensus¹⁹ - a speculation because consensus of aspirants was invariably sought but its absence did not change the choice that the earlier Guru has made!

Dhirmal continued to be sullenly skeptical and his Masand Sihan made a gun assault on the Guru one night. The Guru suffered a minor injury, was calm but Sikhs were upset. They plundered Dhir Mal's house and took away the Saroop of original Adi Granth that he had appropriated. The Guru did not approve of the revenge attack and asked Sikhs to return the sacred Text to Dhir Mal which was done.²⁰

Tegh Bahadur was now the publically acknowledged successor to Guru Hari Krishan. He appointed Bhai Mati Das and Sati Das as Dewan and Minister and Bhai Dayal Das as household minister.²¹

THE TEGH BAHADUR MINISTRY Oct. 1164- Nov. 1175

In Nov. 1664 Guru Tegh Bahadur travelled to Amritsar to pay obeisance at Hari Mandir Sahib but 'when he tried to enter the temple, its doors were closed upon him by the custodian of the temple [Harji]' highlighting the continuation of familial hiatus.²²

The Guru reached Kiratpur in May 1665, and in June 1665 the Guru bought some land from Raja of Bilaspur near Makhawal village and founded a new town named after his mother as Chak-Nanki. Later this town was renamed as Anandpur. Baba Gurditta son of Baba Buddha, had laid its foundation.

After a brief stay, in August 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur, accompanied by his family and some Sikhs, set out for a missionary tour of sangats towards the East. The response was overwhelming, causing concern to Mughals. Upon reaching Dhamdhan in Banger area in December 1665, a Mughal enforcement officer Alam Khan arrested the Guru and some of his associates and produced them before Emperor Aurangzeb, who ordered to hand them over to Kanwar Ram Singh, son of Raja Jai Singh. Released after about two months, he resumed his mission and reached Patna via Agra, Allahabad, Benaras and Sasaram in May 1666. They halted at Patna as arrangements for the stay of the Guru's family were made. Guru Tegh Bahadur proceeded to Dacca in October 1666. Mata Gujri was the expecting and a son was born on 22 Dec. 1666.

At Dacca the Guru established a Hazuri Sangat with the help of Bhai Almast. Gurdwara Sangat Tola now marks the place where Guru Sahib used to deliver his sermons. It was here that the Guru heard of birth of his son. From Dacca, Guru proceeded to Chittagong via Jatia Hills, Sylhet and Agartala and returned to Dacca in 1668.

Raja Ram Singh, deputed by Aurangzeb, was then in Dacca for his expedition to Assam. He met the Guru and requested him to accompany on the expedition. Guru agreed and the Guru's presence is credited to have made possible the historic avoidance of a bloody conformation between the ruler of Kamrup and Raja Ram Singh.

An alternate account is that Aurangzeb deputed Raja Ram Singh, under house-arrest for negligence since escape of Shivaji, to the tough task to recapture Gauhati seized by Raja of Kamrup. Ram Singh knowing that Guru Tegh Bahadur had gone to Patna, halted there and learnt from Masand Bhai Dyal Das, that the Guru was at Dacca and planned to go to Dhubri and Assam to revive the Sikh centers established by Guru Nanak. Ram Singh set off to Dacca, met the Guru who acceded to his request to accompany him. A negotiated settlement took place and Guru Tegh Bahadur was asked to mark the new boundry line between the two forces. Mughals and Assamese agreed to co-exist without interfering in each other's territory.²³

The Guru returned to Patna to learn that under orders of Aurangzeb, things had turned ugly for Hindus and some Gurudwaras too had been demolished. He decided to return to Anandpur immediately. As had happened on his way out, the Guru along with some prominent Sikhs, was arrested also on the return journey at Agra in June 1670 - released by an imperial court at Delhi after a short detention.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was the first Guru to visit Sikh sangats in Eastern India set up 150 years earlier at the instance of Guru Nanak. These sangats saw increase in the days of succeeding Gurus who placed them under Masands to collect offerings and minister to the spiritual needs of devotees. In the time of the sixth Guru, Sikh sangats were firmly established at several places including Agra, Bina, Burhanpur, Mongher, Prayag, Ujjain, Gujrat, Lucknow, Patna, Daaca and Raj Mahal.²⁴

The Guru returned to Anandpur around 1671. He had spent about 5 ½ years, and as it turned out, 50 % of his total ministry in the missionary to the East. Besides this, he had earlier, prior to becoming Guru, spent some time in that area. The Guru also blessed Mihan Shahi Bakshish. Guru Gobind Singh later blessed Jitmaliyas and Bakhatmalia groups. The Udasis thus became active participants in the effort launched by the later Gurus to spread the message of Guru Nanak and to the propagation of Sikh faith.²⁵

Around 1672, the Guru set out on missionary to Malwa region of Punjab that lasted about 1 ½ years. The mission assisted in planting trees, digging community wells and cattle heads being distributed to encourage dairy farming. Several Muslim followers of Sakhi Sarvar adopted Sikhi. These developments did not sit well with fundamentalist Muslims and the ruling elite.

Concurrently Brahmins at major pilgrimage centers and Kashmir had been told to turn Muslims or face death. At this juncture, a group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Kirpa Ram came and met Guru Tegh Bahadur at Anandpur in May 1675 to seek his protection. The Guru, 'after long discussions with prominent Sikhs and Kashmiri Pandits' made up his mind to sacrifice himself for the cause of "Righteousness" and for the freedom of "Dharma."

The script played out fully. The Guru's offer was conveyed to Aurangzeb who was said to be pleased to accept it. The Guru with his three companions – Sati Das, Mati Das and Dayal Das – set out from Anandpur. All of them were arrested and brought to Delhi. In time, the authorities offered three alternatives to the Guru viz : (1) show miracles, or (2) embrace Islam, or (3) face death. The Guru accepted the last and did not budge from his resolve even after his three companions were tortured to death. He was publically put to death by severing the head from his body in Delhi's Chandni Chowk on November 11, 1675.²⁶ Gurdwara Sis Ganj marks the place where the execution took place.

The divine miracle followed in the form of a storm when a devotee Lakhi Shah Lubana, retrieved the Guru's dead body and cremated it by burning down his house and young Jaita, who separately took the severed head of Guru Tegh Bahadur to Anandpur, was honored by the young Guru Gobind Rai as "**Rangretta Guru Ka Beta**" and the head was cremated with full honor and proper ceremonies the next day.²⁷

TESTIMONY OF GURU GOBIND SINGH & SOME OTHER VIEWS

The event of martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur has been briefly but succinctly recorded by Guru Gobind Singh. His testimony is recorded in Dasam Granth Canto 5, Verses 13-16 in the following words²⁸ :

"God manifested a great event in the Iron age to protect their [ਤਾ ਕਾ] forehead mark [tilak] and sacred thread [janeou]. For the sake of believers [ਸਾਧਨ], he [Tegh Bahadur] laid down his head without even uttering a sound. 13.

He sacrificed himself for the sake of Dharma by giving his head but did not waiver at all from his creed. The saints of the Lord have abhorrence for performance of miracles and other malpractices. 14.

Breaking the potsherd of his body head of the king of Delhi [Aurangzeb], he left for the abode of the Lord. None could perform such a feat as that of Tegh Bahadur. 15

The whole world bemoaned the departure of Tegh Bahadur. While the world lamented, his arrival was hailed by the gods in the heavens. 16.

The above verses were written within years of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and clearly say that the Guru gave his head to protect their [ਤਾ ਕਾ] forehead mark [tilak] and sacred thread [janeou]. Fenech²⁹, in his book, says that "-- as we examine this passage closely, we find no reason to maintain that the Guru died according to the contemporary Tat khalsa understanding. The Tat Khalsa arrived at this interpretation through a simple syllogism. According to this view, the Guru sacrificed his life for the Hindu community because the items mentioned in the passage above and in all the earlier literature, the sacred thread, janeou, and frontal mark, tilak, were not recognized as religious emblems by the Sikhs but by the Hindus. **This notion is emphasized in English translation of the passage by including the pronoun 'their' before the terms** to imply that these symbols had no part in the Guru's community. To assume that the sacred thread and the frontal mark were not a part of the Sikh religious culture in which the author of the Bachiter Natak was raised is an understanding clearly rooted in later Tat Khalsa thinking."

Fenech is in error to say that the pronoun 'their' is addition by English translators – if he had tried to translate the verse himself he would have found that the English translation is pretty faithful representation of the original verses written by Guru Gobind Singh and that the Guru meant what he wrote. By using the words ਤਾ ਕਾ, the Guru explicitly implied that the martyrdom was for 'them'. Fenech is not pushing his view and says that 'the attempt above is simply to dispel the Tat Khalsa notion that the community for which the Guru died was a different one from his own' [pp.153-54]. It perhaps is so but he gives an impression that, in a roundabout manner, he is trying to diminish the ideals of Guru Tegh Bahadur as testified in Dasam Granth. That would be misreading of text.

Most readers would likely be familiar with the controversy about the depiction of Guru Tegh Bahadur negatively by NCERT³⁰ in books for the Class XI School students. This has since been corrected and one does not hear of it any more but future attempts to contest the reasons for *shahidi* of Guru Tegh Bahadur by detractors cannot be ruled out.

In fact the above apprehension played out in 2019 when Lord Indarjit Singh, decided to snap his decades long association with the BBC because an overzealous producer made an attempt to censor a script referring to Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom due to fear of Islamophobia!³¹

Let us also look at how history gets made if Sikhs engage with the society at large – an example came from Brandon, Manitoba, Canada where the Sikh community of the City

met with the Mayor Rich Chrest about the 400th anniversary of the birth of Guru Tegh Bahadur and shared with him the story of martyrdom of the Guru with the objective to enable Hindus to practice their faith without fear of being put to death.

The Mayor issued a proclamation saying 'Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life for the Human Rights and dignity of humankind ---- The City of Brandon honors Sikh history and culture, Guru Tegh Bahadur's place in South Asian history, and the City's valued relationship with the Sikh Community' and proclaimed April 1, 2021 to be "Guru Tegh Bahadur Day" in the City of Brandon.

HUKAMNAMAS HELP CONNECT SOME DOTS

Hukamnamas were started by Guru Hargobind on his ascension as Guru to facilitate the implementation of changes in the Panth as per the direction of Guru Arjun before his martyrdom. The mode of written communication must have helped the Gurus in staying connected with the vast spread of increasing number of Sikh sangats in distant places, pass instructions and help resolve any issues.

Guru Tegh Bahadur seems to have continued to use this mode during his ministry. His *hukamnamas* provide additional insights on some of the lesser known details that did not get to be recorded by other sources. We wanted to explore that area and have found some recently published studies helpful. In the following paragraphs we share the gist of relevant findings from two such sources.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's *hukamnamas* cover almost the entire period of his ministry. We gather from a 2002 study³² that even though his *hukamnamas* do not bear dates, the contents suggest that the Guru started to send these out at the start of his ministry. The scribe of Guru Tegh Bahadur seems to have written a *hukamnama* sent out earlier at the instruction of Guru Har Krishan. This indicates continuity of office support in spite of the delay in transition and disruptions.

An emerging finding is that while the *hukamnama* at the time of Guru Harkrishan was addressed to Bhai Ani Rai, Bhai Jasu, Bhai Ranga, Bhai Hazuri and Bhai Nehchal - then all Masands and prominent Sikhs. But these names do not figure 'in the *hukamnamas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur.' Out of his early *hukamnamas*, six are written on instructions of the Guru to Bhai Batha, as the Masand of Pattan Sangat. Bhai Batha, who was transmitting collections to the previous Guru, 'was elevated as Masand of Pattan sangat'. The study infers that it is indicative of the Guru's assertive response to a crisis of deep dissent that took long time to subside.³³

The Guru reorganized management of Sangats in the eastern region by a well-defined structural hierarchy working under his authority; thus creating a network of relations between the different Sangats, so far working in isolated independence. Eastern region had two Subas - Suba of Benaras and Suba of Patna. Both the Subas were placed under Bhai Dyal Das, the chief Masand of the eastern region. The Sangats of Patna city and Monghyr were under Patna Suba. Bhai Dayal Das was Masand of Patna Sangat and in charge of Patna Suba too. Sangats of Benaras city and Mirzapur were under Benaras Suba with Bhai Javehari Mai in charge of Benaras Suba.

In one *hukamnama*, the Sangat of Benaras was instructed to entrust their offerings to Bhai Javehari. It was Bhai Javehari's duty to send offerings to Bhai Dayal Das who then transferred these to the Guru. Thus a networked system of checks and controls was brought into being which could facilitate coordination.

The system set in place expected a Sikh to contribute a part of his earning - known as *kar* or *karbar* - to the Sangat. Sikhs also paid money for getting some ceremonies like engagement performed; made donations on fulfillment of desire or wish – *mannat* – and offered gifts and presents for the Guru – *bhet*. There are *hukamnamas* in which the Guru had asked Bhai Dyal Das to send such receipts.

An unconnected paper by Hardip Syan³⁴ investigating a different historical perspective on Sikh experience of that period offers evidence of other factors that may explain some of the developments that Sagar reflects upon in his study.

Khatri from Punjab had affinity with Guru Nanak and successor Gurus, all of whom were Khatri. They noted the growth of commerce along the Gangetic and north-west trade routes and started moving to those parts during 1500-1700. They maintained ties with the Guru.

Migration of Khatri Sikhs resulted in the formation of significant Sikh sangats in Delhi, Mirzapur, Lucknow, Allahabad, Benaras and Patna by the early seventeenth century. It is also said that the sangats were predominantly managed by Khatri.

In Guru Hargobind's letter in early 17th century, he reminded Sikhs of the east [purb di sangat] that *sewa* is directly beneficial for *rozgar* in this life because Guru's blessing is for now - not afterlife. Later in seventeenth century when Guru Tegh Bahadur sent letters to Sikhs in Patna and Benaras to help fund *langar* to support so many Sikhs

who travelled with him on all his missionaries and construction at the new township at Makhawal, he continued to stress the relationship between *sewa* and *rozgar*, and introduced the catchy phrase '*sewa ki bela!*'³⁵

Syan says 'Melding of religion and materialism was a unique feature of Sikhism in this period. In order to obtain divine protection a Sikh had to abide by the Guru's teachings' including *simran*, *kirtan* and *sewa*. The Sikh who did this would gain *rozgar* in this life and peace hereafter. He also says that possibly the Khatri donated gold at the call of the Guru in late 17th and early 18th centuries.

Khatri merchant network developed almost parallel to Sikh sangats and the Gurus used it to support their fund needs and get direct transmission of fund offerings by the use of *hundies* by individuals and sangats especially after the Masands were discontinued.

Syan says that it appears from Hukumnamas of early 18th century, that the ability of the Guru to raise a sizable war chest to fund Khalsa army is likely to have been a factor that influenced establishing Khalsa insurgency against Mughals in Punjab.

With the above factors added, the study by Sagar seems right to infer that the 'Sangats of eastern region not only served the Panth under Guru Tegh Bahadur but also became backbone of the Panth which is evident from the *hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh.'

Sangats in East held on in support of the Guru, but started to peel off and wither away after the Guru's passing possibly due to the lack of the Guru person that had been the focal point of their contact and support from the early days.



- End of Part I
[To be continued]

References

1. Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Manohar, New Delhi, 1999, p. 44.
2. This assertion is found in several accounts. Surjit Singh Gandhi, *History of Sikh Gurus Retold: 1606-1708*, p. 506, has attributed it to Sikh tradition.
3. Prithia died in 1618. Guru Hargobind met Meharban and talked of need to get past the differences that existed between their fathers. Meharban was adamantly opposed to reconciliation. For more, read Gandhi, *Ibid*.
4. *Life History: Baba Sri Chand Ji & Founding of Udasi Sect*, Giani Ishar Singh Nara, Translated into English by Harinder Singh Bedi, MS, pp. 274-76
5. Encyclopedia Britannica site – accessed 16 March 2021.

6. Gopal Singh, A History of the Sikh People, Allied Publishers, 2002, note on p. 228. See also Gandhi, *ibid*, from challengers, the Udasis had turned supporters, p.631.
7. This account is per Encyclopedia Britannica site, accessed 20/3/2021.
8. Ranbir Singh, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Chief Khalsa Diwan, 1975 – full text of the book can be accessed at: [http://www.gurmatveechar.com/books/English_Books/Guru.Tegh.Bahadur.Ji.by.Ranbir.Singh.\(GurmatVeechar.com\).pdf](http://www.gurmatveechar.com/books/English_Books/Guru.Tegh.Bahadur.Ji.by.Ranbir.Singh.(GurmatVeechar.com).pdf)
9. Sangat Singh, The Sikhs in History, New Delhi, 1999, p. 53
10. *Ibid*, Britannica
11. *Ibid*, Sangat, p. 55
12. *Ibid*, Sangat, p. 56; Gandhi, quoting Malcom's Sketch of the Sikhs, says in note 23 on p. 626, *ibid*, that the dispute between Ram Rai and the Guru went to Aurangzeb and he had ruled that Sikhs were allowed to elect their own priest [Guru]. They picked Guru Har Krishan.
13. See Sangat, *ibid*, p. 55: Gopal Singh *ibid*, note* on p. 249; for a detailed account see Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 622
14. See DSGMC site and Wikipedia entry Guru Har Krishan. In any case, the insiders present in Delhi knew about the call by Baba Tegh Bahadur on the Guru and that he was headed to Bakala.
15. Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 621.
16. Sangat, *ibid*, p. 57
17. *ibid*
18. See Sangat, *ibid*, p. 57; Ranbir Singh, *ibid*; Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 623.
19. See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, pp. 244-45 and note*
20. See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, p. 245
21. See Gandhi, *ibid*, p. 625.
22. See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, p. 246
23. Ranbir Singh, *ibid*, pp. 81-83. Accounts by other sources are on similar lines and describe the high respect that Guru Nanak's message enjoyed with all segments of people, reinforcement and renewal of existing Sangats and establishing of new Sangats in some places. It was a very successful mission.
24. See Gopal Singh, *ibid*, text and note* p. 248.
25. See Sikh Encyclopedia entry Udasi, Mahan Kosh, pp. 9-10 and SGPC Website
26. Fenech has identified some similarities in martyrdom of Gurus Arjun and Tegh Bahadur. See Louis Fenech, *Martyrdom in the Sikh Tradition*, Oxford, New Delhi, 2002pp. 84-5. There are more similarities, not taken up in this search.
27. Unless otherwise indicated, the lead parts of the narrative in this section draws upon the account given at the web site of the SGPC.
28. ਤਿਲਕ ਜੰਝੂ ਰਾਖਾ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਤਾ ਕਾ ॥ ਕੀਨੋ ਬਡੋ ਕਲੂ ਮਹਿ ਸਾਕਾ ॥ ਸਾਧਨ ਹੇਤਿ, ਇਤੀ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰੀ ॥ ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਯਾ, ਪਰੁ ਸੀ ਨ ਉਚਰੀ ॥੧੩॥ ਧਰਮ ਹੇਤ ਸਾਕਾ ਜਿਨਿ ਕੀਆ ॥ ਸੀਸੁ ਦੀਆ; ਪਰੁ ਸਿਰਰੁ ਨ ਦੀਆ ॥ ਨਾਟਕ ਚੇਟਕ ਕੀਏ ਕੁਕਾਜਾ ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਲੋਗਨ ਕਹ ਆਵਤ ਲਾਜਾ ॥੧੪॥ ਠੀਕਰ ਫੋਰਿ ਦਿਲੀਸ ਸਿਰਿ; ਪ੍ਰਭ ਪੁਰਿ ਕੀਯਾ ਪਯਾਨ ॥ ਤੇਗ ਬਹਾਦੁਰ ਸੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਆ; ਕਰੀ ਨ ਕਿਨਹੂੰ ਆਨਿ ॥੧੫॥ ਤੇਗ

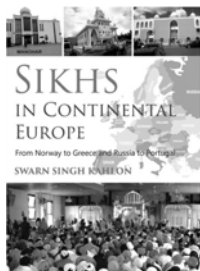
ਬਹਾਦਰ ਕੇ ਚਲਤ; ਭਯੋ ਜਗਤ ਕੋ ਸੋਕ ॥ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਹੈ ਸਭ ਜਗ ਭਯੋ; ਜੈ ਜੈ ਜੈ ਸੁਰ ਲੋਕਿ ॥੧੬॥ [Dasam Granth Canto 5, Verse 13-16]

29. See Fenech, *ibid* Martyrdom in Sikh tradition, , p. 152-54
30. See Panthic. org report @ <https://www.panthic.org/articles/2532> Distortion of Sikh History Continues In Indian Books, June 11, 2006. Also see: History and Sensibilities, Naunidhi Kaur, Frontline, Print edition : October 27, 2001@ <https://frontline.thehindu.com/the-nation/article30160048.ece>
31. <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/world/british-sikh-quits-bbc-after-producer-tries-to-censor-script-related-to-sikh-guru-martyrdom-554608>
32. For full text of the book *Hukamnamas of Guru Tegh Bahadur* by Sabinderjit Singh Sagar, 2002, GNDU, go: http://www.discoversikhism.com/sikh_library/english/hukamnamas_of_guru_tegh_bahadur_a_historical_study.html
33. The difficulties Guru Tegh Bahadur faced were that while some Masands were not loyal to the Guru, many Sikhs were confused by the propaganda. Early hukamnamas suggest that reorganization was done with the help of loyal Sikhs. In the case of Bhai Batha, the Guru asked Sikhs to obey his injunctions and termed him as his son to buttress his authority.
In a hukamnama Sikhs are also blessed to be his sons. Unlike earlier hukamnamas written to Sangats in Punjab, hukamnamas written to Patna and Benaras Sangats are not only addressed to a Masand and a few prominent Sikhs but are addressed to a large number of local Sikhs. Two hukamnamas addressed to Patna Sangat contain names of more than sixty Sikhs. Hukamnamas, written in Guru's own hand, emphasize Guru's blessings on 'means of livelihood' – a change from the earlier hukamnamas to Sangats in Punjab.
The Guru asked for twenty Bihar turbans possibly for the purpose of honoring Masands and prominent Sikhs. Hukamnamas to the sangats of eastern region show that the Guru sought advice of the Sangat on a number of occasions.
Sagar thinks that the Guru's use, in his hukamnamas, of verses from his Bani, written in relatively simple language and with familiar examples, would have helped in more effective communication with people in those parts of the country. The situation obviously needed the Guru to use all his persuasive and decision making skills.
34. Hardip Singh Syan, SOAS University, UK, *The Merchant Gurus: Sikhism and the Development of the Medieval Khatri Merchant Family*, June 2014, *Indian Economic & Social History Review*. Hardip has taught and worked at the University of London, the British Museum and the Institute of Historical Research. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/285490501_The_merchant_gurus_Sikhism_and_the_development_of_the_medieval_Khatri_merchant_family/citations
35. The actual word used is 'vela'[masculine] – popular in braj as 'bela'[feminine]. Both have been used in SGGS but none by M IX. In East the message would have been received as 'bela'-sewa kee - is 'feminine.' Bela has connotation of auspicious day, auspicious chance, blessed moment, blessed time one would be sacrifice to - ਓਹ ਬੋਲਾ ਕਉ ਹਉ ਬਲਿ ਜਾਉ -- ਭਲੇ ਦਿਨਸੁ ਭਲੇ ਸੰਜੋਗ - -ਸਫਲ ਮੂਰਤੁ ਸਫਲ ਓਹ ਘਰੀ – [Gauri MV, SGGS: 191] The word is popular in Braj and has been used by Guru Arjun in a shabad that could inspire altruistic spirit of giving – savor the text ਕਰਉ ਬੇਨੰਤੀ ਸੁਣਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਮੀਤਾ ਸੰਤ ਟਹਲ ਕੀ ਬੋਲਾ - Gauri Poorbi M V, p. 13.

BOOKS ON SIKH DIASPORA

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SWARN SINGH KAHLON



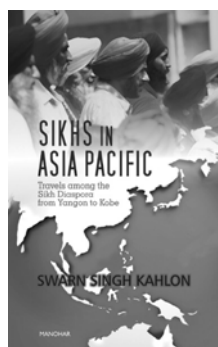
This book is the third in the trilogy of books looking at the comparatively less-known destinations of Sikh migration to non-English speaking countries. Earlier Sikh migration was focused on the British Commonwealth and the USA. Once restrictions were placed on entering the UK, the Sikhs were forced to explore the possibility of migrating to other countries including Continental Europe. The pace of migration picked up in 1970s. The author describes how Sikhs have kept up their traditions through 'Nagar Kirtans', turban, Youth Summer camps, and 'sewa'. There are now almost 140 gurdwaras in Europe.

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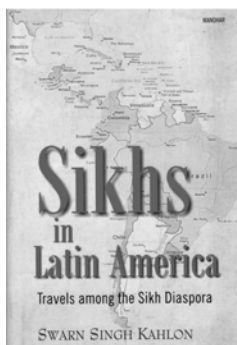


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SWARN SINGH KAHLON



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Guru Tegh Bahadur – Holy Travels to the East

[PART- II]

JAGMOHAN SINGH GILL*

This article is about the time when Sikhism in East India had already established itself with a strong foot-hold. The visit and teachings of First Master Guru Nanak Dev had created a deep impact among the local people. Successive Gurus were always concerned about their well-being. They were well-connected with the important Sikh centres like Kartarpur Sahib, Khadur Sahib, Goindwal Sahib, and Amritsar Sahib which had emerged on the basis of needs and priorities in different phases. Various missionaries were sent to propagate the message of righteousness. Among them one the earliest and the most prominent names was Bhai Gurdas. The local Sikhs stood by the big house of the Gurus with large offerings as a mark of utmost respect. Guru Tegh Bahadur, like his predecessors, was not a stay-at-home philosopher. According to him, honesty, hard labour, a cultivated brain, and developed social qualities made an individual self-dependent and took him closer to the Almighty like so many Sikhs who led such a life. Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to the East renewed the old ties and re-established the faith as the path of truthful living. Gurujī's aim was to help the suffering masses and equip them against grief with emotional and spiritual counselling. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib set out for a long journey to the East in order to set up new preaching centres and develop the old ones in bigger forms. He garnered followers en masse and created a stir wherever he went. It is a very long and interesting topic and can hardly be written in the space of a few pages.

[In this 'Part-II' of the article (*Part-I has already been published in May 2021*) I would focus on some important places, in the East, that Guru Tegh Bahadur ji had visited and established as major Sikh religious centres.]

Patna

In the 17th and 18th century Patna was an important trading hub and river port and boasted a very flourishing economy, the major share of the activities being with the

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Europeans, Armenians and other international traders. Patna was the home to the great Sikh Guru Tegh Bahadur's family for a few years. One of the most important and historical shrines of the entire Sikh world is Takht Sri Harimandir Ji of Patna, the birthplace of the Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh. Harimandir is situated in a lane called Harimandir- Ki-Galli, opposite Jhauganj Post Office, within the jurisdiction of Chowk Kalan Police Station. Sikhs from the entire world come to pay respect to this shrine. It was the headquarters of Purabi Sangat i.e., umbrella organization of Sikhs of the Eastern part of the country. A 'Hukumnama' (order copy) to 'Purabi Sangat' by the Sixth Master Guru Hargobind, which is preserved supports this fact. Documentary evidence proves that during the time of Guru Hargobind the Sikh Sangats had firmly been established at various places such as Alamganj, Monghyr, Patna, Rajmahal, Dacca and some other cities of eastern India.

Many Hukumnamas sent by the Gurus and one by Mata Sundari were in the name of East Indian Sangats. This shows the importance of the great shrine from early days.

Patna already had become the main diocese of Sikhs of east India, covering the area between Dacca and Puri. Guru Tegh Bahadur reached Patna in the month of May 1666. But before leaving for different places, he made necessary arrangements under the supervision of a devout Sikh lady, known as Mata Paidi and prominent Sikhs like Raja Fateh Chand Maini, for the safe stay of his family at Patna during the rainy season. Then Mata Gujari Ji was expecting a child as has been mentioned before.

Patna, or Pataliputra was known since ancient times. This was hallowed by the presence of many holy men including the Mahavira, Buddha, Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur. The birth-place of Guru Gobind Singh, Ji known as Sri Harimandir, is a magnificent building. There are also many other Gurdwaras associated with the names of Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh.

Barh

Barh town divided in two parts by National Highway 31. The older section seems to be on the bank of the river Ganga. This place is about 70 kilometres east from Patna. Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed here while going towards Dacca. A Gurdwara is under the management of Takht Patna Sahib is in the old market place of Barh Bazar near Teraha More which was devastated in the 1934 earthquake. No repairing or reconstruction has been done. There is Guru Granth Sahib and Janam-Sakhi of Bhai Bala. It is located just opposite to Vaisnodham Mandir and on the left is Jain Mandir. Bhai Kanahiya Singh alias Kamdahia Singh was last Granthi, now-a-days his wife Bibi Kulwant Kaur has been taking care of this Gurdwara since his demise.

Munger – Pakki Sangat

This Sangat on Belan Bazar on Pipal-Patti Road is very old and commemorates the travel of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji during his visits to Dacca and Assam. There is a bed said to be extant from Guru Ji's time. There are two hand-written, one old printed and one newly printed Guru Granth Sahib. The correspondence made by Guru Tegh Bahadur with prominent Sikhs named 'Hukumnama' found in Munger describes the stay and underscores the importance of this place in Sikh annals. There are two 'samadhis' of very early Mahants, Baba Pardeshi Ram and Baba Videshi Ram. The descendants of the Mahants are the present care-takers. There is Nishan Sahib erected at the initiative of a devout Sikh, Jagat Singh.

Bhagalpur

This is another important place where both Guru Nanak Sahib and Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed in the course of their tour towards the east. Two places worth mentioning are as follows.

Gurdwara Bari Sangat

Bari Sangat, said to be oldest is in Naya Bazar, Mahant Narayan Das Lane (Mohan Press Galli) commemorates the travel of Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib. Mahant Narayan Das was one of the Mahants about a hundred years ago.

Gurdwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji Bari Sangat is on the right side of 'Burha-Nath Ghat' of the river Ganga on 'Sakhi-Chand Ghat'. Guru Tegh Bahadur is said to have stayed here while going further east.

Chotti Sangat

This is a very important site in Jogsar Mohalla near Burhanath Mandir on the banks of river Ganga. This is a very old Sangat said to be connected to the travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. The descendants of the Mahants can remember quite a few Mahants chronologically. There is an old hand-written Guru Granth Sahib kept with due respect and sanctity.

Kantnagar

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Visit of Kantnagar - After one and a half centuries of Sri Guru Nanak's travels, Guru Tegh Bahadur again visited this part of India, obviously to rekindle the spirit of Sikhism. Wherever the Ninth Guru went, he advised his followers

to organize themselves into congregational circles and follow the tenets of Sikhism with religious zeal. In 1666, Guru Tegh Bahadur arrived at the settlement of Kantnagar. Here he stayed for a few days and preached the message of Sikhism among the people. Devotees came in large numbers and joined the congregation. At that time a good number of people who embraced his faith were subsequently came to be known as Nanak Panthis. Kantnagar was a big and prosperous village. It is said that thirty-six watchmen (chowkidars) used to keep round-the-clock vigil in this village. Situated on the left bank of the Ganga it was an important river port at that time. After continuous floods, about a hundred and fifty years ago the place went under waters. The Sikhs brought out Guru Granth Sahib and established a new Gurdwara in a safer place called Laxmipur in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit.

As you enter through a huge gate built in memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Laxmipur, you are immediately struck by its serenity and calmness besides the imprints of Sikhism all around. One cannot fail to notice a vibrant village life which is steeped in a unique kind of history, culture and heritage. Compared to other parts of rural Bihar, it is an affluent settlement with an impressive presence of Sikhs.

Rajmahal

“Rajmahal Bhanu Behal Bhau Bhagat Gurmat Man Bhani, Sanmukh Sodhi Badli Seth Gopale Gurmat Jaani”.

As per the above line of Vaars of Bhai Gurdas, the prominent Sikhs during the time of Guru Hargobind, Bhanu Behal, Badli Sodhi and Seth Gopal of Rajmahal were well acquainted with the thoughts of the Gurus and were great devotees of the Guru. This shows the importance of Sikhs of Rajmahal. Historically, it was a very important place in the medieval period, and was well connected with Patna and Dacca.

The town is on the banks of the river Ganga, bordering Bengal and Bihar (now Jharkhand). In 1576, the Battle of Rajmahal was fought between Mughal Emperor Akbar and Sultan of Bengal, Daud Khan of the Karani Dynasty. Daud Khan was captured and later executed by the Mughals. Later, after the conquest of Odisha in 1592, Raja Man Singh I, Mughal governor of Bengal Subah, came to Rajmahal. He chose the site for his capital in 1595–96 because of its strategic command of the Teliagarhi Pass and the river.

In 1608, the capital of Bengal was transferred to Dacca (now Dhaka, Bangladesh). Raja Man Singh also renamed Rajmahal as 'Akbarnagar' as a tribute to Emperor Akbar and also constructed palaces, gardens and mosques on behalf of Mughal rulers. In 1639,

Rajmahal regained its glory and was once more made the capital of Bengal by Shah Shuja, governor of Bengal Subah and second son of Emperor Shah Jahan. It continued as the seat of the Mughal Viceroy up to 1660 and a mint town till 1661.

Malda and Makhsudabad

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji visited both the places while moving farther east to Dacca. Both were very famous towns thriving in the silk and cotton industry. Traders from all over the world thronged these places. A Gurdwara is situated in the Sarbari area of the old part of Malda town, situated on the confluence of the Mahananda and Kalindi rivers. Malda was the capital of Bengal and known as Goud, in the early medieval times. It is diagonally opposite to Rajmahal.

Maksudabad is on the banks of the river Bhagirathi. Owing to its strategic location it became the capital of Subah Bengal being shifted from Dacca during the term of Murshid Quli Khan in the early 18th century and the name of the town was changed to Murshidabad. There was a Gurdwara run by Udasi saints, but now it doesn't exist.

Dacca

“Chaale Sanmukh Desh Bangale, Dundabhi Baaje Shabd Vishale”.

In “Suraj Prakash” Bhai Santokh Singh writes “When Guru Ji starts from Patna to Dacca, passing big towns on the river Ganga like Munger, Bhagalpur loud sound of ‘nagaara’ (drums) was made in the respect of Guruji”.

In 1666 AD Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji visited Dacca, among the most prosperous of South Asian provinces. Bengal was a magnet for traders from Britain in the 17th century under the Mughal Governor Shaista Khan. Guru Ji was accorded a warm and rousing welcome by the local Sangat as well as the influential Nawab Saishita Khan, brother of Empress Mumtaz Mahal, wife of Shah Jahan. The areas like Sangat-tolla where Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji is said to have stayed during his prolonged visit were exclusive Sikh Mohallas. During this visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur the Sangat of Dacca was called Hazuri Sangat. Bhai Natha and Bulaki Das made arrangements for the stay of the Ninth Master, during this visit between 1666 and 1670 approximately with some breaks for visiting other places.

As per the census report of 1830 the number of Sikhs (they all were Khatris) was around 1100 out of 32,000 Hindus. In the mid-19th century eminent Sikh chronicler, Giani Gian Singh, stayed in Dacca for about seventeen months researching on Sikhism of

Dacca and East India. In his account, "Twarikh Guru Khalsa", he gives a footnote on Dacca. He states that local Sikhs were very much pleased with him owing to his missionary and dedicated zeal for the cause of Sikhism. They offered him their daughters and settled there for the benefit of local Sikhs. Giani ji of course declined, as he had taken upon himself the mission of his life to spread Sikhism. There was a big house at No 14 Shreesh Das Lane at Sangat Tolla of Bangla Bazar. This was known as 'Sikher Bari' which means the House of Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur made it his residence-cum-preaching centre during his long stay at Dacca. In those days a Portuguese company also existed in the Sangat Tolla area. It was mostly inhabited by Sikh Sangat staying in many houses of this locality even before Independence.

The Sikhs of Dacca were well connected with the Sikhs of East India, especially Patna Sahib. Patna Sahib's private retinue of army was sent to Dacca many times on various missions. One Sikh, named Bhai Mohan Singh, was appointed Diwan of Chittagong in the second quarter of 18th century during the reign of Nawab Murshid Quli Khan. Noted Historian, Dr. Tirlochan Singh, observed, "Diwan Mohan Singh was no less a pious Sikh than a brave soldier and an able administrator. He made good opportunities and established more than a dozen of Sangats within his jurisdiction and attached Jagirs to one and all of them".

Eastern Bengal District Gazetteers by B.C. Allen, published in the early 20th century, gives some description of the Guru's visit to Dacca and about the Sikhs, "Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Dacca, and there is a Sikh temple at Shujatpur near the Ramna. The Sangat at Sangattolla close to Sutrapur is now the chief place of worship but pious Sikhs still visit the ruins at Jafrabad where there is a well whose waters are thought to have curative powers".

Importance of Dacca for the Sikhs dates back to the visit of Guru Nanak in his first Udasi to spread the message of truth, righteousness and other human values to live on this earth peacefully. The Sangat of Dacca was illuminated by his effulgent message. Many places are said to be linked with the Guru's tour and wells were dug to provide fresh drinking water to his followers and common people alike. It is said that the colour of water changed thrice in a day and local Bengalis treated it with pious belief that Thakur Nanak (they address Guru Nanak in their local term) was there in this well. This was called as Barchha Sahib as per Bhai Dhanna Singh Chahal who visited Dacca in the 1930s. There were some lores relating to Guru Nanak's visit and his drawing drinking water by piercing a spear in the ground. This is now extinct. One Gurdwara, said to have been

visited by Guru Nanak, is at Ramna and is called Nanak Shahi Gurdwara. It is near the racecourse. It was earlier known as '**Nanak Ka Chapra**' i.e., shelter of Nanak. Guru Nanak rested here. Some part of the land of this Gurdwara was later acquired for the construction of Dacca University. Baba Gurditta (eldest son of the Sixth Master Guru Hargobind), head of Udasi sect sent the noted missionary, Baba Almast (head of one of the Dhuanas) to Eastern India including Dacca, to trace the places of Guru Nanak's visit and propagate the tenets of Guru Granth Sahib. After him Bhai Natha was in charge of Bengal's Sangat. He initiated the construction of Nanak Shahi Sangat.

While Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was at Dacca, the Sangat of nearby areas frequently requested Guruji to visit their places. So, he started his tour to Jayantia hills, Sylhet and then to Shaistaganj, Comilla, Lakhsham, Daulatganj Sitakund, Hath Hazari and onward to Chittagong and the sea-port of Sondip. He came back to Dacca after meeting the Sangat of Bengal from Noakhali, Chandpur and Narainganj. The purpose of his visit was to renew the ties with the Sangats already established by Guru Nanak and further strengthened by Guru Amardas ji and respected Udasi missionaries. The effect of the Guru's tour was miraculous and a big number of Sangats came up in Bengal. These Sikhs were always ready to perform any type of Sewa: from monetary assistance to manual labour and whenever there was a call from Guru Gobind Singh later on in the hours of struggle against the oppression of the Mughal rulers. There is a Gurdwara Sangat Suthra Shahi at Urdu Bazar and another one on English Road in Dacca. Nawab Shaista Khan awarded jagirs to Gurdwara Sangat Tolla and Gurdwara Nanak Shahi in Dacca after the visit of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. Dr. Tirlochan Singh who quoted from, "Topography and Statistics of Dacca 1840 AD", by James Taylor, confirms the presence of twelve Sangats beside the institution and places of other religions. Dr. Tirlochan Singh visited Dacca in 1959 and tried to bring to the notice of the administration the misuse of Sikh shrines by some unscrupulous people. It is there in his invaluable work on the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji.

Different places of Assam

Guru Tegh Bahadur reached Kamrup and preached among the people for some time. Here, he also brought a compromise between the forces of Raja Ram Singh, a Kshatriya general of Aurangzeb (who had led an expedition against Assam), and the local Ahom ruler as a true saint should have done. Towards the close of 1668, they set out for Assam, crossed the Brahmaputra and reached Dhubri, which had also been visited by Guru Nanak during his travels in eastern India. Guru Tegh Bahadur marked out the spot where the

First Guru had sat. People thronged to see him. Guru Tegh Bahadur travelled to many places like Rangamati, Kamakhya to as far as Hajo. After some time, Guru Ji went back to Dacca in April or May, 1670.

Return Journey from Dacca

In Dacca Guru Tegh Bahadur got a royal reception. Guru Ji informed the Sangat of his going back. Guru Ji appointed Bhai Natha as chief missionary of Bengal and Bulaki Das as Masand of Dacca region. The homeward journey began in 1670 amidst a very elaborate farewell in a fitting manner. Sangat from many parts came to bid farewell with moist eyes. This journey was faster than the outward journey. The change in Aurangzeb's religious policy to the detriment of non-Muslims, caused considerable concern to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He now wanted to be by the side of his people. The longest halt was at Patna where the Guru rejoined his family and saw for the first time his son, Gobind Rai. The span of the stay in Patna on the return journey varies in opinion of different researchers. Then Guru Ji moved towards Punjab visiting different places already discussed in the beginning.

A note on Jaunpur

Jaunpur is situated on the banks of the river Gomti. The Gomti, also known as Vashisti, originates from the lake of Pilibhit of Shahjahanpur and touches Kheri, Lucknow, and Jaunpur flowing about eight hundred kilometers before meeting the river Ganga in Saidpur. Guru Nanak visited Jaunpur during his first Udasi from Varanasi and then moved to further east. Few old Sikh families stay at Jaunpur with an old Gurdwara named Mirdang Wali Sangat in memory of Ninth Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji. This place was said to be the residence of Bhai Gurbakhs Ji. The Guru Granth Sahib is seated here in a commodious rectangular hall. A platform built inside a separate small room represents the Tap Asthan. Near this and the beside river, there is a narrow well and a ruined hut. About two acres of land is shown in the name of Gurdwara Bari Sangat under revenue village of Chachakpur. This Sangat is said to be established by one of the prominent early Sikh missionaries, Bhai Gurdas Ji under the patronage of Sixth Master Guru Hargobind. This place is on the eastern side of the Gomti River.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, along with large group of Sangat, visited Varanasi while coming from Allahabad and Mirzapur and stayed there for some time. News of Guru Ji's visit

spread to all nearby areas. This was followed by large number of Sangat visiting him and paying tributes. The Sangat of Jaunpur visited under the supervision of Bhai Gurbaksh Masand with large offerings. They listened to Guru's kirtan with utmost devotion. Guru Ji was so pleased that he blessed them and gifted Bhai Gurbaksh a 'Mirdang' (ancient Indian percussion instrument). From that time the Gurdwara became famous as "Mirdang Wali Sangat". Again, Guru Ji, while returning to Anandpur Sahib from his entourage of the east from Patna via Arrah, Chapra and Buxar, made a stay at Jaunpur's Mirdang Wali Sangat for five days. He blessed the masses of this area under leadership of Bhai Gurbaksh.

After touching few more places Guru Tegh Bahadur moved to Punjab, thus concluding the great holy travels of east India. Later on, his supreme sacrifice infused a new spirit of bravery and valour and became the most distinctive feature of his successor, Tenth Master Guru Gobind Singh.

CONCLUSION

Wherever Guru Tegh Bahadur went, a huge mass fell into his following. These people in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Assam, Odisha and Bangladesh constitute a very vital historical and spiritual component of mainstream Sikhism. They might have been in these faraway places for over three centuries in complete isolation from the fountainhead, i.e., the Akal Takht, but they have retained their distinct culture in a different social milieu while adapting and adjusting to the local ones in a most syncretic manner. This year (2021) we are celebrating the 400th Parkash-Purab of Guru Tegh Bahadur and have already celebrated 350th Parkash-Purab of Guru Gobind Singh, and then 550th Parkash-Purab of Guru Nanak Dev; but we have never celebrated the holy tours of our great Gurus, firstly the 500th anniversary of Guru Nanak's first Udasi and secondly 350th year of holy travels of Guru Tegh Bahadur towards East India. Both these occasions were also important for the Sikhs of this region in terms of our glorious legacy. We should embrace these distant people with the warmth of love of a brother and commit ourselves to their well-being in all manners possible. There should be a tie-up between Patna Sahib, the undoubted second most important citadel of our religion, and various Gurdwaras of historical importance in the States mentioned above and Bangladesh since they constitute important signposts in the journey of Guru Nanak Sahib some five hundred years ago, and later hallowed by the presence of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji and Guru Gobind

Singh Ji. I would make particular mention of Banaras, Nizamabad, Allahabad in eastern Uttar Pradesh; Rajgir, Sasaram, Gaya, Kedli Chatti, Laxmipur, Maheshwa (Katihar) and Halhalia (Araria) in Bihar; Dhubri and Naogaon in Assam; Dhaka, Chittagong, Rongpur, Dinajpur and Mymensingh in Bangladesh, Malda, Kolkata, Bishnupur and Chandrakona in West Bengal and Bhadrak, Cuttack and Puri in Odisha.

At many places new Gurdwara buildings are to be established for congregations. The older ones in dilapidated conditions are to be restored and maintained. The motive should be to make the Sikh brotherhood aware of their historic relationship. The historic bonding should be preserved. There is a large scope for development of Sikhism in Bihar and other places of Eastern India as well.

□

[Concluded]

The Seeker's Path: An Interpretation of Guru Nanak's Japji, by Sohan Singh

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Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib: Historical Analysis

*ER. KARAMJIT SINGH**

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was born on 01 April, 1621 to Mata Nanaki and sixth Sikh Guru Hargobind Sahib at Amritsar. He was named Tegh Bahadur by the Guru-father. He lived the life of a sober and obedient son. On account of his development in the religious discipline of the house, he was always engrossed in a silent repetition of God's *Naam*. He had a sharp intellectual. He was quick to grasp the schooling of his teachers, Baba Budha Ji and Bhai Gurdas. Apart from his schooling from these stalwarts of Sikh school, he also learnt the prevalent system of contemporary Hindu and Muslim studies. His father, who wore two swords - one symbolizing **Piri** (spiritual power) and other signifying **Miri** (temporal power) had instructed his prominent Sikhs to impart Military training to all the devotees who came to Akal Takhat. This practice was made compulsory for all, and thereby he established a well-disciplined class of Sikh warriors. His sons were also imparted military training to make them self resilient, and to face the lurking danger from the onslaughts of the local army. Young Tegh Bahadur was adept in horse riding, swordsmanship and the use of other weapons. His first encounter with the Mughal army happened during the battle of Kartarpur, probably at the age of eleven. He very efficiently displayed his valour and swordsmanship in this battle. He was indeed a brave son with an indomitable spirit and courage. He left behind footprints of his skill and bravery in the battle field. As such, he was renamed as Tegh Bahadur. Despite his peaceful disposition, he excelled in the battlefield.

Guru Har Rai, after a successful and peaceful tenure of 22 years, handed over the reins of the temporal seat of Baba Nanak to Harkishan Ji, who ascended to the Gaddi of Baba Nanak as the eighth guru. His life span was cut short due to an outbreak of smallpox. Being a true successor of Baba Nanak, he did commendable service and spared no efforts to assist the helpless, destitute and poor among the populace. Free medicines

**Editor- Ranjit: Punjabi Magazine [E-mail: karamdewal47@gmail.com]*

were distributed among the sick, disappointed and downtrodden people. The 'Great Healer' breathed his last on 30 March 1664. Before he left for the heavenly abode, he sent the insignia of Guruship to the brother of his grandfather, Tegh Bahadur Sahib residing at Bakala through Diwan Dargah Mal. **On being asked who will be our future guide, his reply was: "Baba Bakaley"**

Background:

Guru Har Rai Ji, Guru Har Kishan Ji and Guru Tegh Bhadur Ji, were contemporary of Aurangzeb. The Sikh chronicles are replete with the details of atrocities and summons from Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb to all the three Sikh Gurus to seek their attendance in his court at Delhi for one reason or the other.

The great bigot played a dominant and cruel role to usurp the throne of his father. After giving finishing touches to his grand and cruel diplomatic role, single-handedly settled with his brothers, killed them one by one and finishing any of the known or unknown aspirant to the throne of Mughal Empire. Having imprisoning his father, he ascended the throne of India in July 1658. The coronation was deferred to June 1659. It is on this account that the exact dates of happening can not be deciphered. Incidentally, the temporal seat of Baba Nanak and his successors and that of Babar and his successors ran concurrently, with a stark difference that Baba Nanak's successors ruled over the temporal authority and those of Babar ruled over the materialistic lands of Hindustan. And the persecution of the Sikh Gurus had started with the ascension of Emperor Jahangir.

Guru Tag Bahadur Sahib, having settled at Chak Nanaki, started the process of consolidation of Sikh Sangat. He embarked upon his missionary tours and strengthened the spiritual ties. At Dhamdhan, he was arrested on the orders of Aurangzeb and taken to Delhi. From Patna, he went to Dhaka, and went as far as Assam in the company of Raja Ram Singh, and mediated to bring a peace accord between Ahom King Chakardwaj of Assam and Raja Ram Singh. The peaceful and amicable edifice of coexistence erected by Akbar had started crumbling on account of the vitiated atmosphere created by Aurangzeb. V.D Mahajan writes: In 1659, Aurangzeb came to know that Brahmins of Multan, Sindh and Benars were using their temples for the purpose of religious instruction. He passed an order to put a stop to such activities.

Massairi Almigiri says, "Orders in accordance was sent to the governors of all the provinces that they should destroy schools and temples of infidels and put an end to their

educational activities as well as the practice of the religion of Kafirs. Aurangzeb had made it clear that it was prohibited by Islam from sanctioning the building of new Hindu Temples; nor could old temples be repaired. In isolated incidents since he came to power, venerated Hindu Temple had already been succumbed to his wrath. Aurangzeb wished to convert the whole of Hindustan as a Sunni Islamic state. For this purpose, he had established a separate independent department. He had ordered his ministers to use lawful or unlawful measures to accomplish this mission. The communal Sunni Islamic policy of Aurangzeb created such terror and anxiety among the non-Muslim population that feeble, poor and weak among the populace succumbed to the atrocities. Sacred threads, an outer frontal mark of Hindus, were torn out; cow meat was fed into their mouth, rape and rapine was the order of the day in Hindu localities. Hindus were forced to pay double the tax. It was in these circumstances that Pandit Kirpa Ram, along with a delegation, came to Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib at Chak Nanaki. The precise and operative details, which culminated in the martyrdom, from the Persian and Punjabi chronicles is given below:

Bhatt Vahi Talaunda (25 May 1975) says: "A delegation of sixteen Brahmans headed by Kirpa Ram (Mattan-Kashmir) son of Aru Ram grandson of Narain Das, great-grandson of Braham Das reached Anandpur Sahib. They waited upon the Guru and told him how keen Aurangzeb was to convert the land of Kashmir into the land of Muslims and in obedience of Farman of Aurangzeb how cruelly Iftikhar Khan, the governor of Kashmir, was implementing these insane orders with Islamic sword." It shall not be out of place to mention that Hindu temples were being demolished too. *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* mentions that Sikh temples were also subjected to demolition. The nondescript Sikh *dharmshalas* were targeted and brought down on the orders of the local Qazi. Latiff in History of Punjab writes that the Emperor had in those days thrown hundreds of Brahmans in Jail in the hope that if they first embraced the religion of the prophet, the rest of Hindus would follow suit, despite the fact that he had Hindu blood in his veins and that of his progeny, he was hell-bent to convert all Hindus to the religion of the Prophet. It is on record that Aurangzeb's grandmother was a Hindu. One of Aurangzeb's queen Nawab Bai, mother of Bahadur Shah, was a Hindu Rajput from Rajauri-Kashmir. His favourite concubine Hira Bai was a Hindu by birth.

Siyar-UI-Mutakhrien - by Ghulam Hussain (1783): The Sikhs had been looked into with suspicion and disfavour ever since the Jahangir times. In the year 1665, on his tour in response to a systematic wave of tyranny and oppression unleashed by Aurangzeb,

Guru was arrested at Dhamdhan and was allowed to proceed further on the assurance of Raja Ram Singh for favourable conduct towards the Islamic State of Aurangzeb. The details of these travels are amply supported by as many as 22 *Hukanamas* sent by Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji to the *sangat* of a particular place mentioned therein. These *Hukamnamas* (letters) mention the mode of instructions for preaching the *Sangat, Kar-Bhent* (offering) for *Guru-ka-Langar* and its deliverance at the next halt, essential instructions for the Sikh *Sangat* in creating an amicable environment and sending information about the next halt. Though the name of the Raja has not been mentioned in any of *Hukanamas*, but Dr. Ganda Singh has brought out the name of the Raja in his "*Makhije Twarkh Sikhhan.*" It is an open secret that the attitude of Aurangzeb towards non-Muslims had sky-dived since his return from Kashmir. State intelligence and news reporters were encouraged to interpret the large gatherings and money offerings at the congregation of the Guru, as he was considered a potent signal of opposition to the Sunni Islamic State. Ghulam Hussain wrote the much-referred account of Mughals up to 1783, and its English version came to light in the year 1823. The Ghulam Hussain version pertaining to Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, as quoted by Surjit Singh Gandhi, is given below.

"The Man (Guru Tegh Bahadur) finding himself at the head of so many thousands of people aspiring and he united his concerns with one Hafiz Adam, a Muhammadan Fakir. These two men no sooner saw themselves followed by multitudes implicitly addicted to their Chief's will, then forsaking their lowest calling. They fell to subsisting by means of coercion and extortion, laying waste the whole of Punjab".

Cunningham and Malcolm, without verifying the facts, have followed suit the text of Ghulam Hussain. The Sikh chronicles do not approve of such baseless allegations. Cunningham, on the authority of "*Siyar-Ul-Mutakhrien,*" mentions in a footnote that these predatory proceedings of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib and ordinary manuscripts admit such charges but deprecate a belief in them. Also, Cunningham mentions that Guru paid Rs. 500 to Raja of Kahlur for the purchase of Makhawal village. Such baseless stories had been planted and circulated by roping in Rajas of Jaipur house who revered the ninth Guru the most. In the *Hukamnamas*, the Guru mentions his arrival at a particular place and asks *Sangat* to gather for religious and missionary discourse (*Satsang*). The royal intelligencers and news reporters interpreted the large gathering and money offering at the congregation of the Guru as a dangerous argumentations to his influence and resources.

Seized and Martyred

The Guru told the delegation of Brahmans from Kashmir: "**You go tell the Mughal Viceroy that Brahmans will gladly accept to embrace the Islam if Tegh Bahadur, whom we revere as our Guru, is persuaded to do so.**" The reply of Guru was duly conveyed to the Emperor through his viceroy in Kashmir. Guru was called upon to Delhi. He proceeded to Delhi on 10/11 July 1675, accompanied by his trusted Sikhs, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dyal Das, reached Agra, where he was seized, imprisoned and sent to Delhi. The persecution of the Sikh Guru was carried out in a systematic manner. Now it was an open field for this Sufi order. With the advent of Aurangzeb, the religious policy of Aurangzeb became severe and punitive on account of the immoral and unethical measures being adopted to cleanse the system. He was very insensitive to the feelings of non-Muslim subjects. Even his Shia Subedars in Deccan were treated badly, subjected to humiliation and cruelty.

It is an irony of the Sikh Guru history that the events of their lives are so mingled that it is impossible to disentangle them. The tenth master has attributed in his "*Bachittar Natak*": *Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur did a miracle in Kalyug by protecting the frontal mark and sacred thread of (Hindus)*: This may be one of the inconclusive reason. During his lifetimes ninth Guru had been following the *Nanakian* principles of peaceful coexistence for a peaceful world as enshrined in Gurbani: ਨਾ ਕੋ ਬੈਰੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਿਗਾਨਾ ਸਗਲ ਸੰਗਿ ਹਮ ਕਉ ਬਨਿ ਆਈ ॥੧॥ (*naa ko bairree nahee bigaanaa sagal sang ham ko ban aa-ee*)

No one is my enemy, and no one is a stranger, I get along with everyone

[SGGS, :1299]

The ninth master knew that the world of Aurangzeb was beset with violence and non-coexistence. He knew that it was time that humanity is in needs unity of thought and a soft, soothing golden touch. The forcible conversion of Hindus to the religion of the Prophet resulted in the conflict of civilization. The loud cries of abandoned and bruised humanity were not reaching the ears of Aurangzeb.

Fanatically stubborn, Aurangzeb was inimical to his subjects; by temperament, he was helpless in the matters connected with his religious policy. In the words of Dr. Gopal Singh, "The Guru thus took upon his person the challenge of an empire on behalf of a

whole community. How, at crucial times, a single man's soul with the nobility of ideas to inspire him even to death, can turn the course of human history no matter how staggering the odds, is best illustrated by the exemplary manner in which Guru Tegh Bahadur stood up to the challenge of times.”

Tenth Master sums up the martyrdom of the Ninth guru as:

- Having left the mortal frame and squarely blaming the Delhi ruler, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur departed for the heavenly abode.
- He made such a supreme sacrifice that none could make such a deed; The entire world was plunged into grief and gloom; While the entire humanity raised a cry of helplessness, the heavens above reverberated with shouts of Victory. □

OBITUARY



We, the entire team of 'The Sikh Review' are deeply shocked and saddened at the sudden demise of our dedicated member S. Avtar Singh 'Tari', who fell victim to Covid 19, at the age of 44, on 2nd May 2021.

Tari, the short name he was popular with, was a devout gursikh, was ever-ready to render his selfless-services to the Sikh society -- irrespective of his association with.

His association with the Sikh Forum Kolkata was so binding that for the last two decades he had volunteered himself to the service of taking the students to and from Sunday Gurmat Classes -- back to their home safely, in his own car. His roles, as an activist, in annual gurmat camps, gurpurabs and other regular programmes had been outstanding.

He was truly such a charming 'gursikh' personality who made a place for himself in anyone's heart whosoever he had once met in his lifetime. He will be missed by one and all.

We offered our collective prayers (Ardaas) for the peace of the departed soul and condolense to the bereaved family members.

- The Sikh Review

Pushpinder Singh Chopra - “He left his Nishaan”

ROOPINDER SINGH*



Pushpinder Chopra (1943-2021), a bundle of energy bubbling with ideas—it is hard to write about him in the past tense. Yet, I must, because he is no more, another victim to the invisible enemy that is Covid 19, even as his wife Deepak battles on.

A decades-long friendship and association is hard to sum up in a few words. A bon vivant, who lived life well, Pushpinder was a warm host and had a tremendous zest for life. A School Captain and proud product of the Doon School, he seemed to know everyone and had a talent for putting together people and projects that he felt needed to be done.

He was the founder-editor of the well-regarded journal Vayu Aerospace & Defence Review, which is in its 44th year of publication now. Avi and Anne Sodhi were an integral part of VAYU.

Pushi was an engineer who had worked with that Tata group before heading Daimler Benz Aerospace in India. His passion for the aerospace world and his journal took him places, especially to various international air shows, at some of which Vayu would go on to win awards.

He would also go on to write books about the Indian Air Force, of which he was an unofficial historian, and also ‘1947, A Soldier's Story’ one about his father's experiences while heading the Wagah border post. Major General Mohinder Singh Chopra (then Brigadier) had left written notes that Pushpinder turned into a book.

For over four decades, since 1966, Pushpinder Singh has been engaged in researching, recording and writing on the Indian Air Force, focussed on its history from the foundations till the present, virtually becoming the historian-emeritus of India's air arm. His books and papers on strategic issues are well known, not so well known is his role in the well-deserved recognition of Marshal of the Indian Air Force Arjan Singh.

**Forwarded By: Ishwinder Singh <punjabeez@gmail.com>
[Inputs is ours - Ed - The Sikh Review]*

Pushi's biggest contribution to the community came with launching of NISHAAN Journal in 1999 celebrating 300th Khalsa Sirjna Divas. He founded 'Nishaan Nagaara', to highlight Sikh issues and heritage in April 1999. The inaugural issue was released by Dr Manmohan Singh. My friends Dr Inder Jit Singh of New York and Bhayee Sikandar Singh guided the magazine, which seen on the coffee tables of many a Sikh home.

A dynamic & pragmatic person who steered Sikh Forum for over 6 years and worked for the community through turbulent times with great imagination.

He was also a nominated member of the Governing body of Mata Sundari College, University of Delhi from 2014 to 2020. Steered sports activities of the college with great passion.

Pushi, my friend, we will remember you fondly and miss you a lot. You left your Nishaan in this world. □

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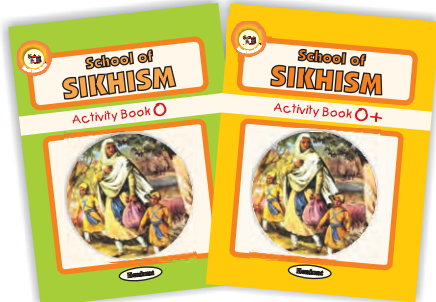
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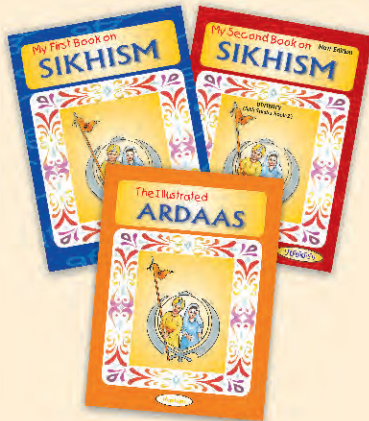
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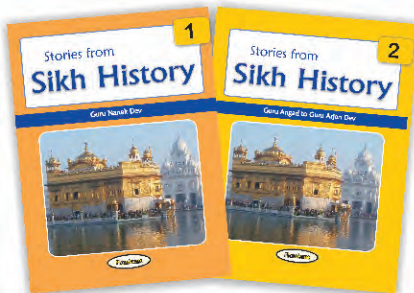
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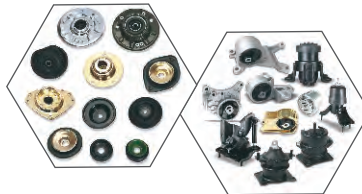
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SGPC to open free coaching academy for competitive exams

The Shiromani Gurdwara Par-bandhak Committee (SGPC) has recently announced to open an institute in Patiala to prepare the Sikh youths for Civil Services and National Defence Academy (NDA) and grade-A central or state service examinations.

The coaching, training and other facilities will be provided to the candidates for free.

The decision was taken in an executive committee meeting chaired by gurdwara body president Jagir Kaur in Amritsar. She said the academy named **'Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Institute of Competitive Studies'** will be dedicated to the 400th birth anniversary (parkash purb) of the ninth Sikh master.

"A sub-committee constituted for the purpose recommended that the institute should be set up at the Tohra Institute of Advanced Studies in Sikhism, Bahadurgarh, in Patiala. The Sikh candidates with unshorn hair and beard will be eligible for admission at the institute," she said.

"Besides, it was decided to use a sarai at Gurdwara Ber Sahib, Sultanpur Lodhi, as a hostel to encourage girls to join sports. The girls selected for the sports academy set up by the SGPC will be provided good coaches, sports kits, food, etc along with their education by the SGPC," Kaur added.

In the meeting, it was also decided that henceforth, no money will be charged from women admitted for delivery at Sri Guru Ram Das Medical College Hospital in Amritsar.

Courtesy: Hindustan Times

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

New York State Assembly issued citation to honour Guru Tegh Bahdur ji

The World Sikh Parliament's Councils for Religion and Civil & Human Rights organized the 345th martyrdom day and the 400th birth anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji at the Gurdwara Sahib, the Sikh Center of New York Inc., in New York City.

On this occasion, State and City officials from New York joined Sikh Community members and recognized **Guru Teg Bahadur Sahib as the protector of Human Rights.**

Catalina Cruz Assembly women from New York read the official citation from New York's General Assembly, recognizing Guru Teg Bahadur Ji's sacrifice to uphold human rights and justice. **She also recognized the Sikh community organizations' work, including that of the World Sikh Parliament during the Covid-19 pandemic.**

She promised to recognize the birth anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji & the martyrdom day permanently in the NYC Assembly through a resolution. She also agreed to recognize April 18th, 2021, as the “Human Rights Commitment” day.

Jessica González-Rojas Newyork State Assembly woman, Donovan Richards Queens’s Borough President, Zohran Mamdani, Assembly man, and Daniel, from Food Pantry, joined the event praised the commitment of the Sikh community towards human rights and social justice.

Himmat Singh, Coordinator of World Sikh Parliament, thanked all the officials and ensured the World Sikh Parliament’s welfare council’s continued support to combat covid-19.

Courtesy: Global Punjab

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

‘Oxygen Langar’ in Delhi’s Gurdwaras



national capital.

“The work that the government was supposed to do, is being done by society today.” The words of Jasmeer Singh, a volunteer at Gurdwara Damdama Sahib in Delhi, hold true as he and his team work tirelessly to make sure people get oxygen during the second wave of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) in the

Gurdwaras are Sikh places of worship and have always been famous for their hospitality and community kitchens or langars. Now, with the pandemic creating a huge oxygen shortage, they have started a drive to help COVID-19 patients with oxygen and other basic facilities.

“These people here are doing whatever they can to help. They also have limited oxygen, so they have to serve on a first-come-first-serve basis,” a relative of a COVID-19 patient told *Down To Earth* at the gurdwara, where he had brought his father-in-law as a last resort after being turned down by the city’s hospitals.

Still, this is a fine example of how communities rise to save lives, when the government fails its people.

Courtesy: Down To Earth

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Title of Book: *Brahm Gyani Sri Guru Arjun Dev Ji*

Authored by: S. Rajinder Singh Jolly

Published by: Jolly Literature House

Printed by: Printwell, 146, Inds. Focal point, Amritsar

Books available at: S. Makhan Singh, 8/47, Panjabi Bagh West, N. Delhi- 110026

Prof. (Dr.) Harchand Singh Bedi, 608, Bedi House, Park Lane, Dr. Het Ram Colony, Chheharta, Amritsar- 143105 [Price: Pl. read and inspire others to read]

A Review by Prof. Harpreet Kaur*

S. Rajinder Singh Jolly, a writer of international acclaim has devoted his book entitled, '*Brahm Gyani Sri Guru Arjun Dev Ji*' as a tribute to the eternal legacy of the golden history of Fifth Sikh Guru, the philosophy and ideals of life as propounded by him. The book is written in simple, terse and effective style which makes its reading very stimulating and the message of the book is undoubtedly comprehended by the readers of belonging to varied age-groups and backgrounds. As the writer uses three languages with equal ease *i.e.*, Punjabi, Hindi and English with an aim to cater to vast readership with variegated linguistic disseminations.

The book has four clearly demarcated sections, each section representing a different phase of life, teachings and legacy of the Fifth Master and the tradition of sacrifice. The spirit of undaunted valour and supreme sacrifice that the Fifth Master endorsed reinvigorated other legendary personalities of his times and later and even, the common masses to preserve the religious faith, restore justice, end oppression and subjugation and uphold human rights in the society.

*Principal, Mata Sundri College for Women, University of Delhi [E-mail: harpreetjaswal5@gmail.com]

In the **first** part, the writer covers birth, ancestry, childhood, education and marriage. Guru Arjun was born on 15 April, 1563 at Goindwal to revered parents, Guru Ramdas and Mata Bhani. He was imparted the best possible education under the meticulous supervision of Amardas Ji (his Maternal Grandfather), Baba Buddha Ji, Mohan Ji (his Maternal Uncle) and Pandit Beni Ji. Infact, Guru Amardas had perceived the divine qualities in his grandson and predicted his eventual succession to the status of Guru in the tradition of Guruship as hailed in our tradition. He was the first Guru-son chosen to succeed his father.

The **second** section of the book is devoted to the elevation of Guru Arjun to the Guruship. Guru Arjun has immense qualities and an all-embracing and extraordinary vision for humanity. He was an inordinate scholar, philosopher, builder, administrator, organizer and exponent of our religious scripture. Historian McAuliffe considered Guru as a symbol of piety, devotion and '*Nam Simran*'.

The first task, the Guru assigned to himself, after the elevation to the status of Guruship was aimed at completion of the construction projects initiated by Guru Ram Das for the benefit of Sikh community, in particular and humanity, in general. The designing and construction of the Holy Shrine, *HarMandar Sahib*, a three-story building is a marvel in itself. The legacy was continued by Guru Arjun who had a keen insight into art with the construction of *Amrit Sarovar*, Golden Temple Building and *Santokhsar*. A Muslim Saint, Faqir Main Mir, laid the foundation stone of the Golden Temple. The four doors of the holy shrine are a symbol of brotherhood and equality and depicts that the entrance of the house of God is accessible to all, irrespective of distinctions based on religion, castes or nationalities. *HarMandar* is constructed on a lower platform than the encircled area and is symbolic of the qualities of submission and humility i.e., a worshipper must step downwards and recognize that the way to attain God is only by bending low in submission.

Continuing the tradition of earlier Gurus to construct places of worship, Guru Arjun built a number of *Gurdwaras* as a part of his missionary work at Taran Taran Sahib (Eleven miles south of Amritsar), Kartarpur Sahib (Jullundur, Doab), Baoli Sahib (Lahore, Birthplace of Guru Ramdas) and Chheharta Sahib (Birthplace of Guru Hargobind, on the River Beas). Another point, which deserves a special mention, is that land for all the construction projects undertaken by the Guru was purchased instead of accepting the same as a gift or not extending worth of it to the rightful owner.

Section **three** of the book is devoted to the compilation and editing of *Guru Granth*

Sahib by the Fifth Master that is our everlasting reservoir of celestial knowledge, a literary classic and a spiritual treasure. Guru Arjun called the Granth as *Pothi Sahib* and was retrieved by Guru Arjun from Baba Mohan. Completion of Guru Granth and installation of the Holy Granth at *HarMandar* was the task of faith undertaken by the Guru. The reading, listening and believing in the Holy Scripture, the Eternal Guru invokes God's blessings and is the way to become *Jiwan-Mukt* (the enlightened one). All the hymns written by Sikh Gurus, at their culmination, has the name 'Nanak'. The scripture contains *Bani* recorded in 31 different *Ragas* (musical meters). Guru Arjun composed hymns in all *ragas* used in Guru Granth Sahib except *Raag Jai Jai Vanti* that was composed by Guru Tegh Bahadur.

The Holy Granth is a reservoir that contains Bani of Gurus and Bani of 15 Bhagats, 17 Bhattas and 3 Sevaks of Guru Ghar. The Bhattas composed Swayyas and 122 Swayyas composed by the Bhattas in praise of the Gurus are included in the Granth Sahib. Bhagats belonging to varied communities and faiths have enriched the scripture. Guru Arjun proclaimed that the entire mankind is spiritually one and ethically equal by giving a concrete proof and by including in the scripture, hymns of Gurus as well as saints belonging to the so-called lower caste in the Hindu social order, for example, Kabir was a weaver, Ravidas a cobbler, Namdev a calico-printer and Dhanna a Jat. The Granth contains the eternal Truth, proclaims complete and unconditional surrender to the Will of God and shows the way of His realization. The Granth lays down moral and ethical rules for the development of the soul and religious commandments for the progress of morality and attainment of salvation.

The **fourth** part contains the rich legacy of Sikhism that accords credence to the supreme value of sacrifice. The courage to sacrifice was emphasized by Guru Nanak who laid the seeds of Sikhism to blossom and subsequently, the successive Gurus nurtured it with qualities of valour, endurance and love of God and lived up to the precepts of the First Guru.

Guru Arjun emerged as the vanguard to fight against the unjust and atrocious political and social order and religious bigotry of the rulers who were causing misery and suffering to the helpless people. The Guru rejected the offer of Emperor Jahangir to embrace Islam and remained steadfast to his faith and readily chose to die rather than give away his faith. He laid the tradition of martyrdom in the Sikh history when he was subjected to extreme torture and repression at the order of Jahangir and at the hands of Chandu Shah, *Diwan* (Minister) whose enmity with the Guru surfaced when he rejected the proposal of marriage of his daughter with Guru's son, Hargobind. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev Ji convinced the Sikhs that the challenge of the fanatics backed by an unresponsive state power could

not be met simply with the passive resistance. His sacrifice filled every Sikh's bosom with the same spirit and they were willing to sacrifice everything for righteousness and nation. He achieved martyrdom and left a glowing trail of sacrifice in the defense of the faith with his eternal words invoking God even in dire circumstances, '*Tera Kiya Metha Lage*'.

Guru Tegh Bahadur met the same fate from Aurangzeb, as his grandfather, Guru Arjun, had received from Aurangzeb's grandfather, Jahangir. The history was repeated after 68 years but the devout sacrifices of both the Gurus that infused a new vitality and vigour into the Sikhs. The martyrdom of Guru Arjun and then of Guru Tegh Bahadur left no alternative before the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh than to take the recourse of the armed struggle to annihilate evil and deterioration in the social and political structure. *Khalsa* was a symbol of brotherhood wherein all castes are blended on a democratic basis.

Four *Sahibzadas* of Guru Gobind Singh presented an example of fearlessness and became martyrs whose names will be adorned in the Sikh history in the letters of gold till eternity. *Sahibzada* Ajit Singh and *Sahibzada* Jujhar Singh embraced death on the battlefield. Two younger *Sahibzadas*, *Sahibzada* Jorawar Singh and *Sahibzada* Fateh Singh were bricked alive at Fatehgarh Sahib at the order of Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind and became the youngest ever martyrs in the annals of history.

Sikh history is replete with instances of sacrifice and valour and a number of episodes that provided a direction to the Sikh history are prudently included to reiterate their significance to the contemporary generations.

The historical status of a towering personality of the Sikh history, Banda Singh Bahadur who suitably indoctrinated the *Khalsa* creed and mission should definitely be elevated in order to do a real justice to his contribution to the Sikh sovereign nation. He triumphantly marched and emanated like a hurricane in North India especially Punjab and took to the repressive state machinery. He received the boon of martyrdom only after he had extirpated the evil forces in large numbers and demolished the citadel of evil at various places. His triumph brought a relief to poor, oppressed and downtrodden segments after the ruin of exploiters and offenders. Banda Singh Bahadur exhibited formidable strength and sacrificed everything and faced extreme and heinous form of torture but neither faltered a bit from the path of religion, nor did he condense to obey the orders of his captors. Glimpses of the life of Banda Singh Bahadur and his exemplary sacrifice with the spirit of devotion is imperative to comprehend the spirit of valour and self-sacrifice of the Sikhs who faced all types of tortures bravely and laid their lives for righteousness. □

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