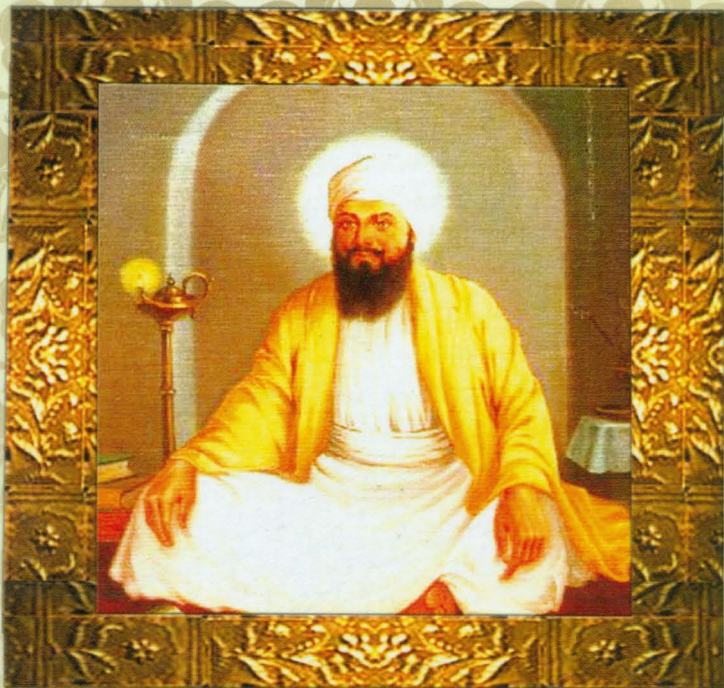


Guru Teg Bahadur

His Life and Teachings



THE LIFE & TEACHINGS OF

**GURU
TEGH
BAHADUR**

AMRITA SHARMA

Singh Brothers
Publishers, Booksellers, Exporters

Sole distributors:

Singh Brothers

Publishers, Booksellers, Exporters

Head Office: Bazar Mai Sewan,

Near Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar-143006 **Tele:** 254 5787

Showroom: S.C.O. 223-24. City Centre,

Near Guru Nanak Bhawan, Amritsar-143 001,

Tele: 0183-255 0739 **Telefax:** 0183-254 3965

E-mail: singhbro@vsnl.com **URL:** www.singhbrothers.com

Originally published by

STERLING PRESS PRIVATE LIMITED

A-59, Okhla Indl. Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020

Tel: 26386165 **Fax:** 91-11-26383788

E-mail: sterlingpublishers@airtelbroadband.in

Website: www.sterlingpublishers.com

© 2006, Sterling Press (P) Ltd.

Reprint 2012

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Illustrations by Veenu Jacob

Printed at Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi-20.

CONTENTS

1. Birth	5
2. Childhood	9
3. The Pensive Years	16
4. The Revelation	24
5. The Sojourn	30
6. Bengal and Assam	40
7. In the Reign of Terror	46
8. Martyrdom	50

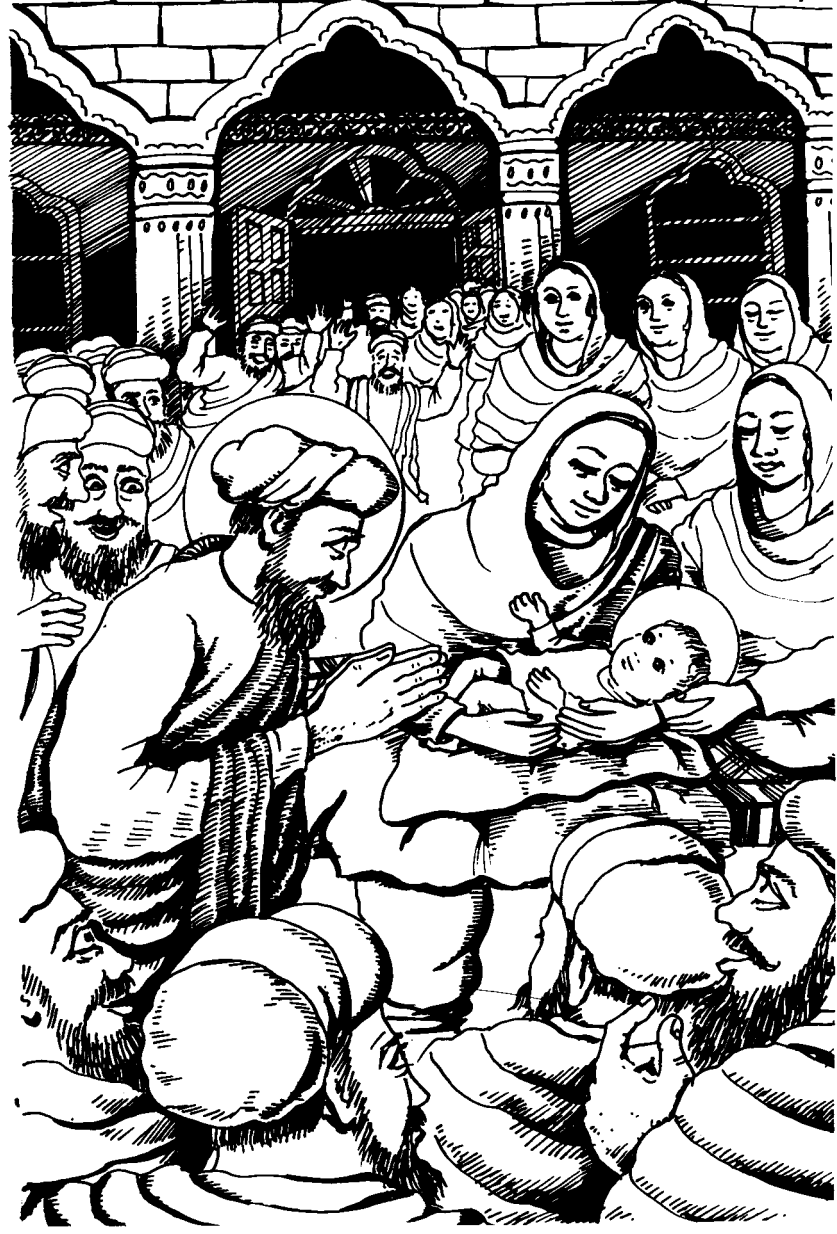
*To Kamal Kaku,
who has always been the wind
beneath my wings.*

BIRTH

The ninth Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was born on April 1, 1621, in the *Guru Ka Mahal* in Amritsar, where his family was staying.

When he was born, his father Guru Hargobind, was busy with his daily prayers in the Hari Mandir. They were in the middle of the prayers when a messenger came with the good news of the birth of his fifth son. Hearing the good news all the people present rejoiced, and sang hymns to hail the birth of a great soul.

On hearing the news, Guru Hargobind headed home with the high priest of Hari Mandir, Bhai Budha, Bhai Bidhi Chand and Bhai Gurdas. His wife, Nanaki, was sitting beside the newborn baby when Bhai Budha entered to pay his respects. He blessed the child, and hailed him as a child of destiny who would live and die like a true saviour of humanity.



When Guru Hargobind came to see his child, he surprised everyone by bowing to him. The baby did not cry at all but gazed motionlessly at his father. When the others asked him the reason for it, he said that he saw his father, Guru Arjan Singh's spirit in his child.

He named the child 'Tegh' Bahadur, since he foresaw that the boy was going to be brave and powerful enough to wield a sword (Tegh) for the protection of his religion. He predicted that this child would protect the country from disaster, and wipe out the roots of tyranny and oppression from it. Mother Nanaki, who was a pious and noble lady, heard everything quietly. Something told her that her child had a hard battle to fight in the future, and though she did not doubt his strength, her heart trembled a little.

When Bhai Gurdas, the Sikh savant, looked at the child he knew that the child would sacrifice his life for his religion and *dharma* (righteousness) but would not give in to fear and falsity. He blessed the child saying that his life and death would be the envy of sage and warriors alike.

The holy city of Amritsar rejoiced for ten days on the birth of the great soul; people

made offerings to the Guru's family, and distributed food and clothing to the poor in celebration of the saviour who would save them from evil and tyranny.

CHILDHOOD

The child 'Tegh' was brought up like a royal prince. He had beautiful clothes to wear and best of food to eat. He grew up to be a healthy child, but as time passed he began to spend more and more time with himself, in meditation or in deep contemplation of something. He rarely went out of the house or played with boys of his age. He preferred peace and isolation, and loved listening to *Shabads* even though he could not understand their meaning. He became more and more absorbed in himself with time, and was often found in deep thought. Mother Nanaki noticed his solitary living, and confided to her husband about it. Guru Hargobind, however, assured her by telling her that Tegh was destined to become a great man, and this was his preparation for it. Whoever got the opportunity to talk to him was astounded at the vast knowledge the boy possessed. He told them that the main object of life was to carry out God's will, and lead a truthful life.



Even as a child, Tegh Bahadur could not bear the sight of suffering either of men or of animals. He had a very tender heart which melted easily at the slightest of reasons.

When he was five years old, he was sent to a Sikh school where they taught *Gurbani* (their religious scriptures) among other subjects. He was taught by Bhai Budha, who was not only the high priest but also a man of great wisdom. Tegh Bahadur, due to his intelligence and keen interest in studies, soon won the heart of Bhai Budha. In no time, the boy had mastered history, mathematics and Punjabi. His father, Guru Hargobind, was aware of the importance of military training. He wanted to prepare Tegh Bahadur and his other friends so that they could face the unpredictable Imperial attacks. He ensured that all the boys were given military training.

Guru Tegh Bahadur learnt quickly, and was soon proficient in the use of weapons like swords and dagger. He was also a very skilled horseman. On the other hand, he also took a very keen interest in poetry and art. He learnt various *ragas* with complete dedication, and also composed several hymns which were included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Tegh Bahadur had a very tender heart which was full of compassion for the people.

During this period of his growth he often remained silent and pensive. Very early in life he had realised that the world was transient and illusory in nature, and that the only true thing was the Name of God which had the power to heal even the most aggrieved heart.

When Tegh Bahadur was eight years old, he underwent the baptism of the *charan phul*, the Guru's lotus feet, after which he was considered "initiated", and could become the rightful devotee of the true one. This proved to be a great experience for Tegh Bahadur since he was more his father's disciple than his son. He studied their religious scriptures devotedly under his Guru, and gradually, understood the infinite meaning and philosophy of the Sikh faith.

The teachings of Guru Nanak influenced him a lot, and he imbibed from them the concept of equality of man and unity of God. His mother, Nanaki, also had a great influence on the development of his personality and character. She was his inspiration for most of the hymns he wrote, during this period. Under the influence of the virtuous and powerful personality of his father, and the gentle qualities of his mother,

Tegh Bahadur grew up into a complete human being.

Tegh Bahadur was very fond of his elder brother, Baba Atal Rai, and his playmate, Mohan. One day, Mohan was bitten by a snake in the middle of the night, and he died. Next morning, when Baba Atal Rai came to know of his death he immediately went up to the body of his friend, and persuaded it to rise. To the amazement of all present, Mohan became alive again. When Guru Hargobind heard of the incident, he was furious with his son for interfering with God's work. Atal Rai realised his mistake, and sought his father's forgiveness but since he was angry at that moment, he refused. Within a few hours everyone heard of his sudden death, and the Guru's family was grief-stricken. Guru Hargobind consoled the people by saying that the immortality of Atal Rai was God's wish. His brother's death, however, was a shock to Tegh Bahadur. He did not speak to anyone for several days.

Tegh Bahadur was now thirteen years of age, and according to the customs of those times he was married to Gujariji, the daughter of Bhai Lal Chand and Bishen Kaur of Kartarpur.



At that time Shah Jahan was the Mughal Emperor. The Mughal army had twice been defeated by Guru Hargobind's men and was aching for revenge. An ex-general of Guru's army known as Painde Khan, who earlier had been dismissed by Guru Hargobind, went to Emperor Shah Jahan and instigated him against the Guru and his men. The emperor, already wanting to get even with the Guru, ordered the Imperial army to attack the Guru at Kartarpur.

At this point Tegh Bahadur and his brother, Baba Gurditta, asked for permission to fight in the battle and it was granted. It was Tegh Bahadur's first battle, and he fought bravely with the enemy and destroyed them. Mother Nanaki, who was watching the battle, was very proud to see her brave and valiant son fighting for them. The battle was won and everyone praised Tegh Bahadur's bravery. Guru Hargobind was very pleased and proud with his son who had risen well to the occasion.

THE PENSIVE YEARS

The year 1638, was a year of sorrow and bereavement for Tegh Bahadur and his family. Many of his close relatives and friends died that year. Baba Gurditta, his elder brother; Bhai Bidhi Chand, a devoted disciple of Guru Hargobind; Babak, the talented rabab player; Joli Mal, another disciple of Guru Hargobind; his stepmother Marwahi; all died during this period. All these sorrowful events left a deep mark on Tegh Bahadur and he became even more silent and withdrawn. He had begun to feel the futility of life.

All this while his father, Guru Hargobind, had a premonition that something dreadful was about to happen. Finally, he sent a message to all his disciples, friends and relatives to gather at Kiratpur. Among the invitees was his grandson, Dhir Mal, who was not only insolent and arrogant but also very shrewd in nature. Since he possessed the original copy of the *Granth Sahib*, he

proclaimed himself to be the next Guru. When he reached Kiratpur he openly declared himself the new Guru, but the crowd became furious, and asked Guru Hargobind to announce and appoint the next Guru.

It was then that Guru Hargobind installed Tegh Bahadur's elder brother, Baba Gurditta's son, Har Rai at the seat of the Guru. When mother Nanaki heard about the new Guru, she was really upset at the Guru's decision. At this, Guru Hargobind told her that the time for Tegh Bahadur to become the Guru had not yet arrived. He assured her that her son was destined to shoulder great responsibilities, and perform unparalleled feats of bravery. But the right occasion had not come as yet. Then he entreated her to go to Bakala at his mother's place with Tegh Bahadur and Gujari.

However, on February 28 1664, Guru Hargobind passed away. One month later, Bibi Nanaki with her son, Tegh Bahadur, and daughter-in-law, Gujari, left for Bakala in Amritsar as was desired by Guru Hargobind.

The place was aptly chosen since Bakala was a peaceful place where Tegh Bahadur could enjoy uninterrupted solitude and peace. He spent all his time in prayers, meditation

and in chanting God's name. Very rarely did he go out, and give people his darshan for the next twenty years. Tegh Bahadur lived in Bakala in perfect isolation, away from the political and religious affairs of the world.

While Tegh Bahadur was meditating at Bakala, many important changes had taken place in the political scenario of the country. The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan was usurped by his son, Aurangzeb, and crowned emperor on June 5, 1659. The enemies of the Guru succeeded in instigating the emperor against Guru Har Rai, who was called to Delhi to be converted to Islam. However, it was his son, Ram Rai, who went to Delhi instead of him, and was disowned by Guru Har Rai because he misinterpreted the *Guru Granth* to the Mughal king. After this, Guru Har Rai appointed his second son, Har Krishan, as the eighth Guru.

All this while Tegh Bahadur meditated and strengthened himself for the great sacrifice he was to make, to uphold *dharma* or righteousness. When he was not praying or meditating, he busied himself with feeding the poor and helping the needy. He even worked with his own hands and shared his earnings with others.



On March 30, 1664, Guru Har Krishan died of smallpox. When his mother asked tearfully who the next successor would be, he whispered 'Baba Bakala', meaning that the new Guru is at Bakala. But some selfish and hypocritical people began to call themselves *Sodhi Baba* and stayed in Bakala. They carried on wide campaigns for their claims, and their accomplices and hired men tried to prove them as real successors of the Guru. At that time, there were twenty-two imposters who declared themselves the successors of Guru Har Krishan.

The whole of the Sikh Sangat was restless and panicky in the absence of a true religious leader and guide, in such turbulent times. Most of the people of the Sikh Sangat believed in Tegh Bahadur and went to Bakala to meet him. They then pleaded with him to manifest his real form to the confused multitude. They believed that he was the true successor to the Guru's seat, and they requested him to take charge of it. Tegh Bahadur, who was deep in meditation, finally broke his trance. He assured them that he would accept the seat, but also told them to wait since the right time for it had not yet arrived.

Of all the contenders, Dhir Mal, the grandson of Guru Hargobind, was the most serious. When he heard of the Guru's death, he immediately went to Bakala and claimed his right to the Guru's seat. The Sikh Sangat felt a lot of pressure from his quarters for two major reasons. First, he had the holy book in his possession, and secondly, he was the direct descendant of the Guru. One day, he went to Tegh Bahadur and advised him not to run for the Guru's throne. When Tegh Bahadur did not say anything, he, in his fear and anger, spread false stories about Tegh Bahadur who all this while had retained his composure and was waiting for the right time.

Meanwhile, Bhai Gurditta, the high priest, visited Tegh Bahadur and told him that he was entrusted with the task of crowning him as their next Guru by Guru Har Krishan, who had revealed to him that the light of Guru Nanak now shone in him. Then, on behalf of the eighth Guru, Har Krishan, he placed a five paise coin and a coconut before Tegh Bahadur and declared him the ninth Guru.

In all modesty and humility, Guru Tegh Bahadur accepted the seat of the Guru and the immense responsibility therewith, but he



requested that the announcement of his succession be held back for sometime. When mother, Nanaki, protested that a Guru was needed to guide the lost and confused Sikh Sangat, he assured her by saying that the time had not yet arrived, and when it did, nothing could stop the truth from being known. All the people who had gathered there to listen to his sermon, bowed in obeisance and vowed to remain silent.

THE REVELATION

Guru Tegh Bahadur had said that truth is truth and cannot be hidden for long. One day, it was revealed to the world in a miraculous way, just as Guru Tegh Bahadur had predicted.

In the town of Punjab, there lived a merchant by the name of Makhan Shah. He was a rich businessman, and an ardent devotee of the Guru. He was a shipping magnate whose ships of merchandise and other goods used to go to far-off countries. One day, while sailing, his ship was suddenly caught in a storm on the high sea. He grew panicky when he felt his ship slowly sinking. Immediately, he thought of his Guru and prayed to him. He also promised to make an offering of five hundred *mohars* or gold coins to his Guru whenever he reached Bakala. As if by miracle, the storm calmed down and his ship was steady again.



When an elated Makhan Shah landed at Bakala, he was really sad to learn of the demise of the Guru, and more so, of the numerous claimants to the holy seat of the Guru. He was in a fix for sometime but finally hit upon a solution. He decided to make an offering of five gold coins to all the claimants, and whoever knew that he had 500 in mind, would be the real Guru.

He first reached Dhir Mal who happily accepted the offering of five mohars, and so did all the others. He finally went to Guru Tegh Bahadur with a heavy heart. When he put five coins in his hands Guru Tegh Bahadur immediately looked up, and reproached him for going back on his promise of 500 mohars. Makhan Shah fell at his Guru's feet, and cried with joy. Then he ran out and climbing the roof of the house, shouted ecstatically that he had found the true Guru. Hearing him a large crowd gathered, and people left everything and ran to have darshan of the true Guru. He was then jubilantly installed at the seat of the Guru. It was on March 20, 1665.

When Dhir Mal heard of Tegh Bahadur becoming the Guru he was stung with jealousy. He began plotting against Guru

Tegh Bhadur in various ways. When everything else failed he conspired with his men to kill the Guru, and plunder his house. With 500 men, Dhir Mal attacked and raided the house of the Guru. One of his men fired at the Guru, and injured his shoulder before running away with the booty.

Seeing this, Makhan Shah and his brother-in-law, Kirpal Chand, retaliated and attacked Dhir Mal's house. They not only bought back the Guru's property but the *Granth Sahib* too. Guru Tegh Bahadur, however, did not approve of this act of vengeance and asked Dhir Mal to be set free and his property returned to him. He forgave Dhir Mal and his accomplices, and told his followers that the sacred name of God was the greatest wealth they possessed. He told them that everything except that name was transient and perishable. Soon after this Dhir Mal left Bakala, and went to Kartarpur.

As time passed, Guru Tegh Bahadur began preaching his sermons regularly to the people. He told them that the main cause of man's restlessness was his feeling of discontent with whatever he possesses. It is the desire to acquire more than he already has, that sows the seeds of discontent and unhappiness.



He taught them that pleasure was nothing but absence of this feeling of discontent, which leaves the mind pure and peaceful. This was the state of *anand* or bliss. On the other hand, *trishna* or desire caused restlessness.

THE SOJOURN

In November 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to visit the holy city of Amritsar and his birthplace. He was accompanied by his mother and wife, and Bhai Makhan Shah, along with other followers. But when they reached the Hari Mandir (the Golden Temple), they found the temple gates closed.

The priests of the holy temple were afraid that Guru Tegh Bahadur would lay his control on the temple, and thus deprive them of the earnings. And so, they quietly closed the doors, and slipped away to an unknown place. Guru Tegh Bahadur waited for some time under a tree near the *Akal Takht*. When Makhan Shah requested the Guru to let him open the door forcibly, Guruji refused saying that the priests will be destroyed by their own weaknesses, and lust for wealth. Then the Guru went to a place outside the city, and stopped for some time at 'Tharha Saheb'.



When the citizens of Amritsar heard of it, they were furious with the priests of the temple, and went to see the Guru. They entreated him to curse the priests, but Guru Tegh Bahadur refused. Some of his followers reached the temple, and angrily asked the priests to open the gates. Harji Sodhi, the self-proclaimed chief priest of the temple, got scared on seeing the excited crowd, and quickly had the gates opened.

Meanwhile, the Sikhs from the closeby village of Balle came to pay their homage to the Guru, and asked him to visit their village. The Guru immediately went with them to Balle, and preached to the people there. He told them about the significance of the divine Name, the repetition of which brought about deliverance.

After fulfilling the wish of his followers in Balle, he retired to Bakala. There his followers welcomed him warmly, and made offerings to him in cash and kind. His popularity increased day by day, and people from all over came to seek his darshan and listen to his prayers. All this caused jealousy amongst the Sodhis of Bakala, Dhir Mal and others.



One day, a message arrived from Kiratpur saying that the Sodhi-Sangat wanted to have his darshan. Guruji readily agreed to comply with the request, and left for Kiratpur immediately with Makhan Shah, Bhai Mati Das and Dayal Das. They crossed the river in boats, and were met on the other side by the people of Kartarpur who had come there to catch a glimpse of their Guru. The Guru addressed the excited crowd of thousands, and blessed them. At night everyone had food from the Guru's langar, and said their prayers together. From there they reached Ropar, and after having stayed there for a short period they proceeded to Kiratpur.

On reaching there, they were welcomed by a huge multitude whom the Guru blessed. One day, Guru Tegh Bahadur decided to build a new place to stay which would not only be his residence but also a religious centre. And so a piece of land was purchased in a village called Makhawal, just five miles from Kiratpur. This was first known as Nanaki Chak. Later, it became famous as "Anandpur" and is now a big center of Sikhism.

After a while Guruji decided to follow the footsteps of Guru Nanak, and tour the country to spread the gospel of love, joy and

most important of all, the name of God. He wanted to establish centers of worship all over the country just as Guru Nanak had done. And so, he decided to tour the east.

Guruji believed that even a married or worldly man could be pious and religious. He did not believe in renunciation of family life for religious life. In the year 1665, Guru Tegh Bahadur left Anandpur with his mother and wife. He was accompanied by Bhai Dayal Das, Diwan Mati Das, Sati Das and his brother-in-law, Kirpal Chand.

Starting from Ropar, he went to Saifabad and then to Kurukshetra, which was a famous place of worship. A large crowd awaited him on that day of solar eclipse. Here, Guru Tegh Bahadur preached to them about the futility of rituals. The people were, however, surprised to see a Guru travelling with his family, riding on horseback and carrying a sword. Guruji explained to them that salvation can be achieved not by shunning or running away from the world or its affairs, but by being immersed in it, and still remembering the name. When some people asked him to take a dip in the holy tank, he refused saying that only pure deeds purify the mind and body. The simple and

lucid teaching of Guruji left a lasting impression on the minds of the people there, when he left.

From Kurukshetra, he reached Bani Badarpur where he donated a lot of money for the construction of a well. The people were grateful to Guruji as they could now get water easily.

Guruji's fame spread far and wide, and thousands of people from all over used to gather around him and listen to his words of wisdom. They were finally seeing light after a long dark tunnel.

When Guruji reached Delhi, he was received with great enthusiasm by the people. Then he resumed his travels once again. After stopping for sometime at Mathura, he reached Agra. There a man came to him, and asked Guruji for permission to leave his family and home to become a *sanyasi*. Guruji then told him to fulfil the responsibility of family and home that God had entrusted on him, and said that as long as he earned his livelihood honestly, fed his family properly, and gave charity to the needy and poor he was serving God as best as anyone could. The man realised the wisdom of the divine words, and he went back to his wife and children.

From Agra Guruji reached Allahabad, after stopping at Etawah, Kanpur and Fatehpur for short intervals. Here in Allahabad, he gave many sermons to the masses at various places. His stay here was very important for the Guru's family. It was here that the spirit and light of Guru Gobind Singh took shape in his wife's womb. Guru Tegh Bahadur was forty-five years of age and Mata Gujari was about forty-three when the saviour of humanity was conceived.

They stayed at Allahabad for a month, and then went to Banaras, which was an important place of pilgrimage. There he was welcomed with hymns of Guru Nanak, and devotees thronged in thousands to seek his blessings. The place where he stayed in Banaras was named *Shabð Ka Kotha* (mansion of the word). Here, the Guru opened a free kitchen for all, and distributed food and clothing to the needy. He taught the people that reciting the name of God was just as holy as the Ganges.

From Banaras he reached Sasaram, where one of his ardent devotees named Phagu had built a mansion for him. People often made fun of his high hopes that Guruji would visit him from such a far-off place as Punjab. But

one day, when Guruji actually entered his vast mansion riding a horse, his joy knew no bounds.

From Sasaram he reached Gaya, the holy place of Lord Buddha. There many learned *pandits* came to meet Guruji, and asked him to perform various ceremonies. But Guruji declined any such performance, and said that every man was himself responsible for all his actions and no ritual could undo it. He was against any offerings to the dead, and insisted, instead, on charity to the poor and needy. He said that a man could become perfect by his own deeds. Whatever he said went straight into the people's heart, and they were at peace in the light of his guidance. Guruji stayed at Gaya for a fortnight and in May 1666, he left for Patna. Thousands of people came to visit him there, and his devotees constructed a magnificent building for him to stay, known as Hari Mandir. He blessed them all with *Namdan*.

While Guruji was staying in Patna there were many upheavals taking place in the country. Aurangzeb, who was now the Mughal Emperor, was spreading his reign of terror and bloodshed in the country. He had imprisoned Shivaji by treacherous means on May 9, 1666, but he managed to escape on

August 19. There was great rejoicing among the Marathas and in the Guru's camp, at the news of his escape. It was around this time that Guru Tegh Bahadur received a humble request from the Dacca Sangat to visit Bengal, and spread the name in that part. So he left his mother, Nanaki, and his wife, Gujari, in Patna under the care of Bhai Kirpal Chand, and left for Bengal along with Bhai Bulaki Das from Dacca, and Raja Ram Rai of Kamrup, in August 1666. They reached Munger in Bihar, which was a big and prosperous town on the banks of river Ganges. Here, he gave religious instructions to the people, and asked them to worship only the Immortal One. He also wrote letters to the people of Patna and Banaras, from here. He held *kirtans* and delivered sermons daily at Munger. He was the only Guru to have come this far to teach His name.

From Munger they passed through Bhagalpur, Sahibganj and Kantnagar, and finally, reached Dacca in October 1666.

BENGAL AND ASSAM

The Guru and his men were given a warm welcome at Dacca. People came from all over to pay homage to him. Everyday, more and more disciples came into his fold. The Guru won the adoring admiration of the viceroy, Shaista Khan, who still kept many Hindus in his administration, in highly respectable positions. He preached that only by the renunciation of all desires can a man achieve happiness. He told them that attachments and pursuits of pleasure only bring grief and misery into life.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was still at Dacca when he received the news of the birth of his son, Gobind, on December 26, 1666, by a messenger who had come all the way from Patna. There was great rejoicing in his camp and in all the sangats when they heard the good news. There were large-scale celebrations, and food and clothes were distributed among the poor. He now wanted



to proceed further, and spread the message of God in the interiors of Bengal. He wished to cover all the places from Rajmahal in the west to Sylhet in the east, and from Dhubri in the north to Banshhali and Fatehkachehri in the south. When he decided to leave Dacca, the people became very sad and begged him to stay, but Guru Tegh Bahadur said that it was the will of God that he leave and spread the name everywhere.

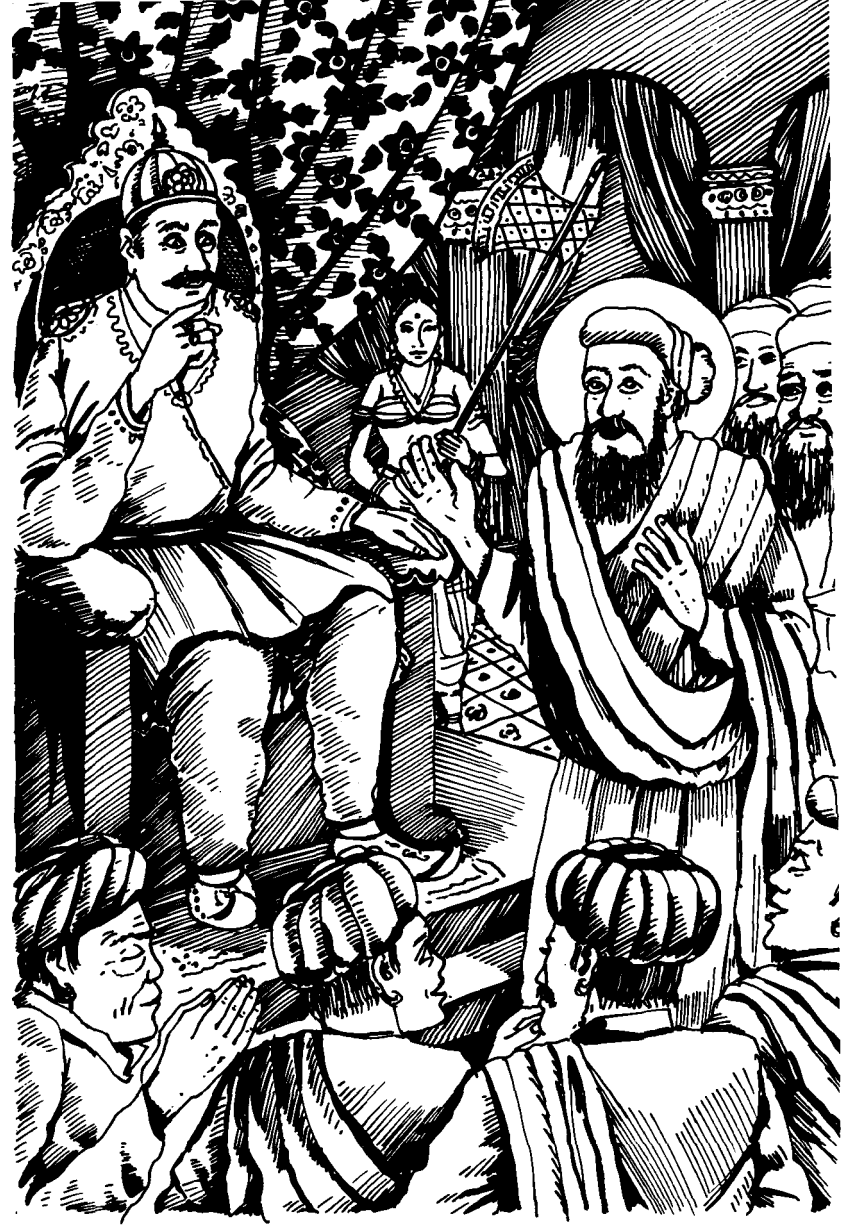
In 1667, Guru Tegh Bahadur and his entourage left Dacca with Raja Ram Rai. They reached Sylhet in a couple of days, where he preached to the people, and infused a new spirit into them. The name of *Akal Purukh* reverberated from all directions.

From Sylhet they proceeded further towards Sondip, passing through Shaistaganj, Agartala and Chittagong. In Chittagong he established a sangat, and made many more disciples. After visiting several other places in Assam he returned to Dacca early, in the year 1668. He was sad to find that the people here had again lost all hopes due to the ever increasing Mughal tyranny. They were very upset and gloomy about the future. Guruji exhorted them to worship one God, fear no one, and to remain

united. He succeeded in raising their spirits and infusing courage and strength in them.

The political scene was undergoing tremendous change at that time. The Mughal Emperor was hungry for the extension of his empire, and wanted to convert the whole of India into *Dar-ul-Islam*. In December 1667, when he heard that Guwahati was attacked by the Ahoms, he was furious. He cleverly reinstated Raja Ram Singh as the General of his army, and ordered him to attack the Ahoms.

In Dacca, Raja Ram went to meet Guru Tegh Bahadur, and sought his protection. Guruji not only agreed to protect him but also assured that he would accompany him to Kamrup since he wanted to spread the name in every corner of the area. In December 1668, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Raja Ram Singh left for Assam. On the way, the Guru preached at several places. When they reached Assam the Guru suggested that the dispute of the Assamese with the Imperial army should be settled by negotiations rather than by war, as war would bring about only destruction and bloodshed. As a result of his advice, the Assamese sent a conciliatory message which was reciprocated by Raja Ram Singh, at the



insistence of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Thus by his efforts, a serious conflict between the two armies was averted.

The Guru then left Assam for Patna in February 1670. The news of his arrival in Patna sent waves of joy everywhere, and people were ecstatic at having their Guru back. The Guru too, was delighted to see his son, Gobind Singh, growing strong, both in body and spirit. Guruji thanked the Patna Sangat for looking after his family so well. Guruji stayed in Patna for sometime. Then he set out for Punjab passing through Jaunpur, Ayodhya, Lucknow and Moradabad. The Guru gave *Namdan* to the people gathered there for his darshan.

IN THE REIGN OF TERROR

From Moradabad the Guru went to Delhi. At this time the persecution of Hindus by the Mughals was at its zenith, and the people were really frightened. He tried to calm them down, and assured them of the power of God.

From Delhi he reached Anandpur in February 1671. The people were happy to have him there as fear and death lurked everywhere in Aurangzeb's reign of terror. His return boosted the sagging morale of the Hindu population. After sometime he made up his mind to call Gobind and his family from Patna, and summoned them to Anandpur. There he taught and guided his son for two years. He organised and trained his disciples. He held his darbar daily, and gave sermons to the people, stressing the importance of dharma (righteousness), and the need to protect and uphold it at any cost.

All this while, everyone at Anandpur could feel an undercurrent of unpleasant

happenings. Guru Tegh Bahadur dauntlessly infused the spirit of daring bravery and resistance amongst the people against oppression of any kind. He was practising what the founder of Sikhism, Guru Nanak, had preached—the equality and dignity of man. Guru Tegh Bahadur empathized completely with the suffering and sorrow of his people. He was full of compassion and love for them. Under the ruthless reign of terror that Aurangzeb was spreading at the point of a sword, Guru Tegh Bahadur knew that the time for him to act was nearing.

Day by day, the cruelty of the fanatic Mughal emperor increased. He had ordered the demolition of all temples, and the expulsion of all Hindus from his court. He was also forcing the devout Hindus to become Muslims.

In order to gain favour of the emperor, the Governor of Kashmir, Sher Afghan Khan, began terrorizing the Kashmiri brahmins. In fear and panic, around 500 of them managed to escape to the Guru for protection. They pleaded with him to save Hindu dharma from total destruction. They cried that they were being forced to turn Muslims, and all those who refused were being mercilessly slain.

Guru Tegh Bahadur heard everything calmly, and asked the troubled and terror-stricken people to eat from the langar and rest, while he thought the matter over. He assured them that he would sacrifice anything for the safety and honour of their faith.

The Kashmiri brahmins thus reassured, went away while the Guru brooded over their problem seriously. He realised that the dharma could be saved only if a pure and noble soul laid down his life for it. While he was deeply engrossed in his thoughts, his nine-year-old son, Gobindji, came running to him, and was surprised to find his father in a grave mood. When he asked the reason, the Guru told him about the atrocities of the bigot Muslim emperor. He also told him that the Hindu dharma was facing a very big crisis. He also confided that there was only one solution. If a noble man, the holiest of the holy, sacrificed his life for the cause of dharma the situation could be saved. Hearing this, Gobindji replied that there was none more holy and noble than the Guru himself.

At first Guru Tegh Bahadur was surprised, but then he was delighted to hear his responsible son express such noble sentiments. He immediately asked the

pandits to go to Aurangzeb, and tell him that all the brahmins were ready to embrace Islam if they could first convert their Guru. He also said that he would sacrifice his life for the cause of dharma but never be converted. The brahmins were very pleased to hear this. They went away with the hope that their religion was now safe. When Aurangzeb heard of Guruji's decision he immediately issued an order, and sent two officials to arrest Guru Tegh Bahadur.

When the officials reached Anandpur the city was cast in gloom, and there was sadness on every face. The Guru advised his family to stay put at Anandpur. He sought his mother's blessings, and instructed Mata Gujari to take good care of Gobindji.

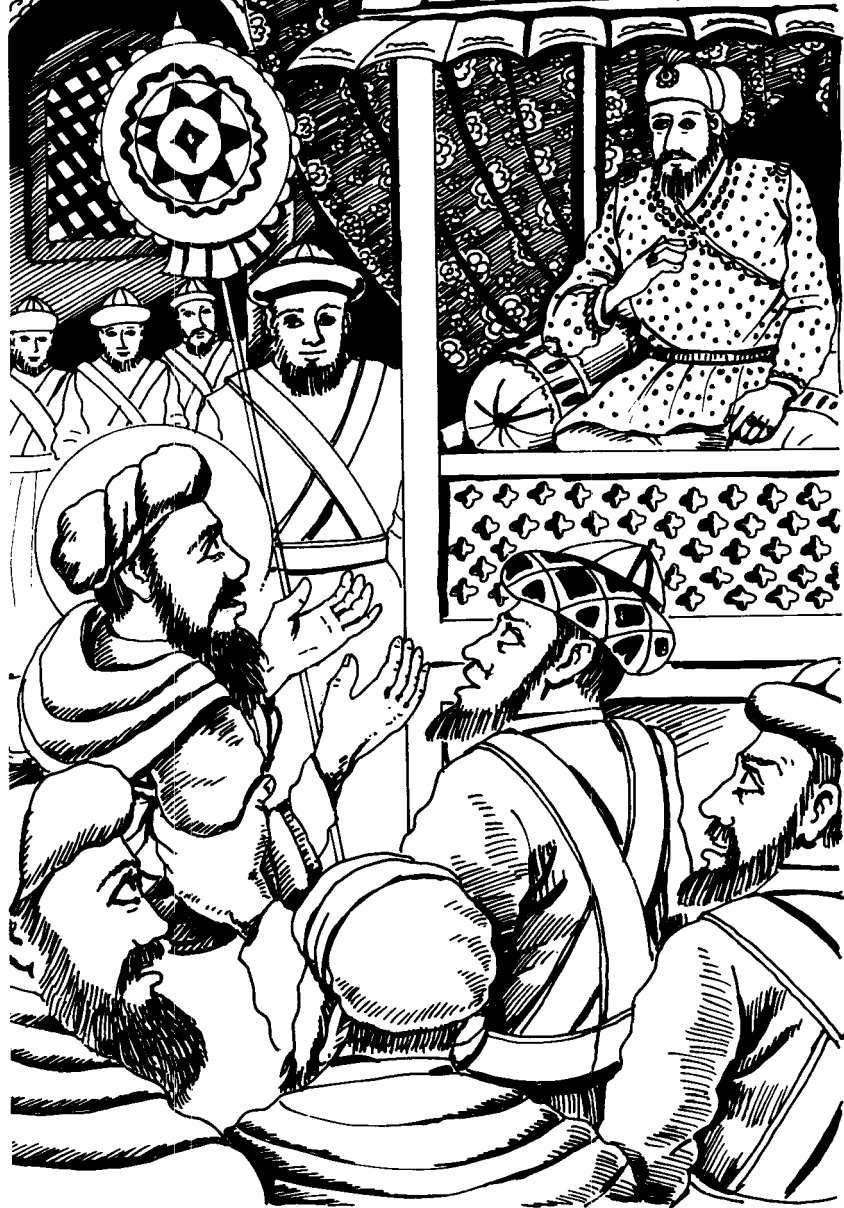
Before leaving for Delhi he addressed his people, and told them not to be sad for him since it was necessary to sacrifice himself for the freedom of his people. He also told them to worship their God and follow their dharma. The Guru reached Delhi in June 1675. He was accompanied by the chief priest, Bhai Gurditta, Bhai Matidas, Bhai Dayal Das and Bhai Satidas, who were the pet disciples of Guruji.

MARTYRDOM

Guru Tegh Bahadur was brought to Delhi as a prisoner, and kept in a lock-up at Chandni Chowk. Aurangzeb ordered Guruji to be brought before him in court. He then asked him to show some of his miracles, so that he could be convinced of the Guru's superior powers. But Guruji declined, saying that only pirs show miracles and since he was just a fakir devoted to, and having faith in, the Almighty he would not be able to please the emperor.

Aurangzeb then warned him that there were charges of treason against him which could be overlooked if he accepted Islam. But the Guru again replied that a faith which did not tolerate other faiths was no faith at all and that he was willing to suffer any punishment, but he would not change his dharma at any cost.

Aurangzeb then tried to tempt Guruji with an exalted position in his court. He also



offered him rewards and *jagir*, but Guruji refused, saying that a religion forced out of fear or greed was nothing but tyranny. The emperor, angry at being disputed, ordered that the Guru be subjected to bodily tortures. Again, the emperor tried to persuade the Guru to change his religion but he refused, saying that both religions could exist side by side. The emperor sent the Guru to the lock-up again, where he was tortured more ruthlessly than before. The Guru, somehow, managed to send a letter to Anandpur in which he openly declared his decision to sacrifice his life for the sake of his dharma and righteousness. He also asked Gobindji to be brought up well.

The Guru and his disciples continued to be imprisoned with many guards posted outside. One day, Guruji received a letter from Anandpur in which he could feel the sorrow and grief of his family. He now realised that the time of his death was fast approaching, and he must now appoint Gobind Singh as the new Guru. He sent Bhai Gurditta to Anandpur with a five paise coin and a coconut to instal Gobindji as the tenth Guru.

After giving Guruji a few days to think over, Aurangzeb offered conversion again,

but Guruji declined. The emperor was surprised at the boldness and courage of the Guru, and resolved to break it. He decided to punish Guruji's disciples to pulverise the Guru by showing him the sad fate of his disciples, and thus make him accept Islam out of fear.

Baba Matidas, Guruji's close disciple, was the first one ordered to be executed. Before dying, he was given a choice to embrace Islam or die. Mati Das happily chose death. Before Guruji's own eyes, Mati Das was cut in two by a wood cutting blade. Bhai Dayal Das was made to sit in boiling water, but he did not forsake his faith either. Bhai Satidas's body was also cut into pieces, but he too did not accept the conversion of his faith. Bhai Guruditta was caught by the soldiers while attempting an escape. He was put behind bars, and strict security was placed around him.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was asked for the last time if he was willing to convert himself. He refused and the order of execution was passed.

It was November 11, 1675, when Guruji was taken out of the iron cage for execution. He had his bath, and chanted the name of *Japji*, sitting beneath a tree. After saying his



prayers he got up and told the executioners that he was ready for the sacrifice, and that the emperor's orders should be carried out.

The vast multitude of people stood still, numb with grief and helplessness. The Guru raised his hands, and blessed them. The executioner then brought his sword down, and the Guru's head fell into the lap of Bhai Jaitaji. At that moment, the whole firmament vibrated with a deafening noise and the sky became overcast with black clouds. A great storm blew in the city, and filled everybody's eyes with dust. In this confusion, Bhai Jaitaji stealthily carried the holy head to Anandpur. The Guru's trunk continued to lie in the dungeon for sometime but was quietly and ingeniously taken out by a devotee, Lakhi Shah, to his house in Raisana. There the house was instantly set fire, before there was any interference from the Mughal court. Early next morning, the ashes were collected, put in a proper urn and buried there. In this manner, Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his life and saved his dharma.

Titles in this series:

Guru Nanak Dev

Guru Angad Dev

Guru Amardas

Guru Ram Das

Guru Arjan Dev

Guru Hargobind

Guru Har Rai

Guru Harkrishan

Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Gobind Singh