

## List of Sikh Missionary Society's Publications

A List All these books except marked\* are for free distributions to individuals

- 1 Introduction to Sikhism
- 2 Guru Nanak (for children)
- 3 The Guru's Way (for children)
- 4 In the Guru's Footsteps (for Children)
- 5 Guru Arjan: Apostle for Peace
- 6 The Sikh Symbols
- 7 Unavailable
- 8 A Spur to the Sikh Youth
- 9 Unavailable
- 10 Unavailable
- 11 The Gurudwara (The Sikh Temple)
- 12 The Saint-Soldier
- 13 Unavailable
- 14 Glimpses of Sikhism
- 15 The Sikh Marriage Ceremony
- 16 Defender of Religious Freedom : Guru Tegh Bahadur  
(The Supreme Sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur)
- 17 The Sikh Women
- 18 The Turban and the Sword of the Sikhs
- 19 The Teachings of Guru Amardas
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- 25\* The Sikh Ideology
- 26\* Panjabi and Sikh Studies (GCSE Level)
- 27 Vasakhi
- 28 Introduction to Guru Granth Sahib
- 29 Dasam Granth Vernan te Vichar (Panjabi)
- 30\* Guru Tegh Bahadur: The True Story



॥ੴ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫਤਹਿ ॥  
(God is One, all glory be to Him)



# GURU TEGH BAHADUR (1621-1675) The True Story



*He gave his life for religious freedom*



**Gurmukh Singh OBE (UK)**

ਸਿੱਖ ਮਿਸ਼ਨਰੀ ਸੁਸਾਇਟੀ ਯੂ.ਕੇ.

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**GURU TEGH BAHADUR  
(1621-1675)  
The True Story**

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**The account which follows is that of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX. His martyrdom was a momentous and unique event. Never in the annals of human history had the leader of one religion given his life for the religious freedom of others.**

***Tegh Bahadur's deed [martyrdom] was unique***  
(Guru Gobind Singh, *Bachittar Natak*.)

***A martyrdom to stabilize the world***  
(Bhai Gurdas Singh (II) *Vaar 41 Pauri 23*)

\*\*\*\*\*

# **Message from the Hon General Secretary of The Sikh Missionary Society UK**

## **Sikh Missionary Society UK publications:**

- (1) *Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675): The True Story*
- (2) *Defender of Religious Freedom: Guru Tegh Bahadur (for students)*

For some years, the Sikh Missionary Society UK had felt the need for a well-researched publication about the life and unique martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur ji.

Earlier publications have been influenced either by Brahmanical thought or are biased against Guru ji's life mission and the noble cause which he pursued to the end. At least one text book published by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) of India, relies on highly biased and even hostile non-Sikh evidence like the Mughal reports and Persian sources.

More objective historiographers had insufficient contemporary evidence to go on. As a result, they could not agree on some important dates and events. However, in recent years, much more reliable evidence has come to light through the records kept by the Bhatt poets and Panda geneologists. One outstanding example of such a source is *Guru Kian Sakhian* by Bhai Sarup Singh Koshish and published by late Prof. Piara Singh Padam. Thus, it has become possible to cross-check dates and events against these sources and their interpretation against mainstream Sikh tradition of One-Guru-Jote continuity i.e. Sikh belief in the Light Guru Nanak in Ten Guru persons.

The Society is grateful to Sardar Gurmukh Singh OBE for undertaking this project. His background as a retired Principal Civil Servant (UK) and a renowned journalist and interpreter of Sikh ideology made him eminently suitable for this task. He has undertaken a comprehensive study of various sources and produced two publications: one for research students and mature readers and an abbreviated version for school students and average readers.

I commend the publication in hand to readers while thanking the Sangats for their continued generous support of the Society's missionary work.

## **Teja Singh Mangat**

Hon. Genertal Secretary

The Sikh Missionary Society UK

14 April 2017

## **Sikh belief in One Guru *Jote* (divine Light)**

Guru Nanak Dev (1469 -1539) was the founder of *Sikhism*. The Sikhs themselves prefer to describe the Sikh way of life as *Sikhi*.

The Sikh belief is that Guru Nanak received divine knowledge (enlightenment) directly from the Supreme Timeless Being. That the same *Jote* (divine Light) of Guru Nanak passed through a succession of nine other Guru-persons and now resides in the Sikh Holy Scripture, Guru Granth Sahib, venerated as the Living Guru of the Sikhs.

Therefore, the *Guru*, meaning the Giver of knowledge or the Dispeller of darkness, is a singular concept for the Sikhs.

In order to stress this *Sikhi* concept of *One Guru Jote*, the Guru-persons are referred to as Nanak, Nanak II, Nanak III and so on to Nanak X.

The stress is on One Guru, one *Sikhi* mission, one world-view with one vision of a world order in which no one inflicts pain on another. That is the vision of a *halemi raj*<sup>1</sup>, an expression used by Guru Arjan Dev, Nanak V, the first Guru martyr.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **Dedicated to Mata Gujri ji, wife of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX.**

\*\*\*\*\*

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<sup>1</sup> This is reference to the ideal regime based on justice and which looks after the well-being of all. A state in which all feel secure. SGGS p74.

## **11 Facts relating to Guru Tegh Bahadur, some contrary to traditional belief:**

- **Guru Hargobind was the architect of future strategy to be followed by his successors.**
- **(Guru) Tegh Bahadur remained active before and after Guruship.**
- **He remained constantly in touch with the Guru Family at Kiratpur.**
- **Tegh Bahadur was the most travelled Guru after Guru Nanak.**
- **Tegh Bahadur was named as the *Baba of Bakala* by Guru Har Krishan before his demise.**
- **Guruship was passed on to Tegh Bahadur at an open well-attended ceremony at Bakala *before* the arrival of Makhan Shah Lubhana.**
- **Makhan Shah came to Bakala to serve the Guru for a prolonged period.**
- **Guru Gobind Singh was born on 18 December 1661.**
- **Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested or detained three times.**
- **Aurangzeb was at Delhi when he ordered the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur.**
- **Delhi Sikhs played a daring and well-planned part following Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution.**

**\*\*\*\*\***

## Acknowledgements

All my colleagues, the dedicated *sevadars* at The Sikh Missionary Society UK, for their encouragement to undertake this study project.

S. Gurinder Singh Sacha for reading the draft and making invaluable suggestions as an experienced educationist and author.

S. Jarnail Singh Jandu, Sikh Missionary Society *sevadar*, for his dedicated computer support.

My younger brothers: Baldev Singh Dhaliwal JP, Australian national award winner and community leader; and Dya Singh, the world-renowned Gurbani *sangeetkar* (singer-musician) and scholar. They have always been there when most needed for advice and encouragement.

My ever-patient wife Harpal Kaur ji for her support and well-timed refreshments as I spent long hours researching and writing.

I owe my early education in mainstream *Sikhi* (Sikhism) to my revered father, late Giani Harchand Singh Bassian of Malaya (1909 – 1975), a renowned Punjabi educationist and *Kirtania-parcharak* (singer and preacher of Gurbani).

Finally, no *karaj* (task or project) can be completed without Guru-focus and His *Bakhshish* (blessing). Truly:

*Gur Tegh Bahadur simariyay, ghar nao-nidh aavay dhai*

All treasures are yours when you meditate on [the life and unique martyrdom of] Guru Tegh Bahadur. (Guru Gobind Singh & Sikh *Ardaas* – daily supplication)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Some useful tips for the reader:

It will be useful to have ready access to **Guruship Succession diagram** [Page 1] when reading this account which refers to Guru-family relationships over 6 generations. Punjabi words are in italics and have been explained in English in brackets and a separate glossary has not been considered necessary.

The more important publications have been highlighted in the *Bibliography* at the end. It is important for the reader to understand the Sikh concept of **One Guru Jote** (*Light*) in all Guru-persons given at the beginning of this publication.



## Introduction

In Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Sikhs have a most remarkable story to tell the world torn apart by religious conflict. It is the story of a great saint-martyr who gave his life for the religious freedom of all. He was witness to the end, to the founding belief of Guru Nanak's egalitarian ideology: that all have the fundamental human right to own chosen religious path to seek the Ultimate Reality described by numerous Names. His was a protest through his supreme sacrifice, against zealous proselytization and bigotry.

It was in that sense that in the history of great martyrdoms for worthy causes, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was described as unique by Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh. The universal objective of Guru Nanak's mission was to secure the human rights of all. Religious freedom is one of those rights.

The clash between *Baabay ke* and *Babar ke* started with the egalitarian ideology of Guru Nanak. There was an immediate confrontation between Guru Nanak and Babar but the inevitable was delayed till the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur followed the Sikh-Mughal conflict during the Guruship of Guru Hargobind and the extensive preaching tours of Tegh Bahadur before and after Guruship.

Guru Gobind Singh's "*Tilak janju Rakha Prabh tanka*" should be read in the sense that it was a consequence of the egalitarian Sikh ideology. Even the highly biased NCERT historian (see below) realised this when he wrote a distorted account of Guru Tegh Bahadur's lifestyle and about the reason for the shaheedi.

The main reason for this publication is that earlier publications about the life and martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur either do scant justice to the Guru's active life or have been written more like fiction in the traditional *saakhi* (story-telling) style. One example is an otherwise informative biography of *Guru Tegh Bahadur* by Dr Trilochan Singh (see *Bibliography*) which is written more like a historical novel. That is the

style of most traditional Sikh writers and poets. It is almost impossible to separate fact from flight of poetic imagination!

Many writers have not taken too much trouble to cross-check even some important events and dates and just carried on with the traditional accounts written on the basis of oral tradition of story telling<sup>2</sup>, or hearsay, or even guesswork when evidence was not available. Nevertheless, what the great Sikh poets and scholars believed to be true at different times of Sikh history, is an important aspect of historiographical evidence. This is a point missed by many Indian historians relying e.g. on Persian sources.

One serious consequence is distortion of Sikh history in educational textbooks approved by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) of India. My attention was drawn to this re-writing of Sikh history by Dr M S Rahi, a Chandigarh based lawyer, in August 1998. As requested, I sent a formal *Affidavit* in the form of an "opinion" to the High Court of India dated 9 May 1998 (Annex).

That evidence related to just one passage about Guru Tegh Bahadur from the publication *Medieval India – A History Textbook for Class XI*. To quote a few lines: "*The Sikhs were the last to come into military conflict with Aurangzeb. As we have seen, there was conflict with the Sikh Gurus during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. But the reasons for the conflict were political and personal rather than religious. The Guru had started living in style, with an armed following, and assumed the title of sachchah padshah ("the true sovereign"). However, there was no conflict between the Guru and Aurungzeb till 1675 when Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested with five of his followers, brought to Delhi and executed. The causes of this are not clear. According to some Persian accounts, the Guru had joined hands with a Pathan, Hafiz Adam, and created disturbances in Punjab. According to Sikh tradition, the execution was due to intrigues against the Guru by some members of his family who disputed his succession and who had been joined by others. But we are also told that Aurungzeb was annoyed because the Guru had converted a few Muslims to Sikhism and raised a protest against religious persecution in Kashmir by the local governor {5}. It is difficult to sift the truth of these allegations....."*

(see full text of this passage at Annex)

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<sup>2</sup> For example, to be fair to him, Sardar Rattan Singh Bhangu makes this clear in his own great work, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash*.

Such distortion of Sikh history in text books requires not an emotional but research-based response. That has been my main objective as I have collated evidence about the life and unique martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The project was undertaken at the request of colleagues at the Sikh Missionary Society UK in January 2016. This proved to be a much more challenging task than anticipated. Fortunately, due to more recent research by late Prof Piara Singh Padam, we have the evidence of *Bhat Vahis* which has been made available for cross-checking, albeit, with caution, of dates and events.

I am convinced that here we have, at least, the start of a serious study of Guru Tegh Bahadur's life and martyrdom – otherwise much distorted by *parcharaks* (traditional preachers) and Indian NCERT historians alike. There are pointers to further research to show the Guru *Jote-Jugat* (Spiritual Light & method) continuity during this critical period. The same twin-track approach emerged as the Sikhi miri-piri tradition symbolized by Akal Takht Sahib.

So, the main reason for this publication is to produce a factual account for the research student and the mature lay reader. While some dates may not be necessarily correct, the chronological order of events is based on reasonably authentic records available to date.

This is my labour of love for the Great Guru who laid the foundation for the final chapter in Guru Nanak's mission, the revelation of the *Khalsa Akal Purakh ki Fauj* (*Khalsa*, the Army of the Timeless Being).

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa  
Waheguru ji ki Fateh!

Gurmukh Singh OBE  
Sewauk2005@yahoo.co.uk  
14 April 2017

# GURU TEGH BAHADUR - The True Story

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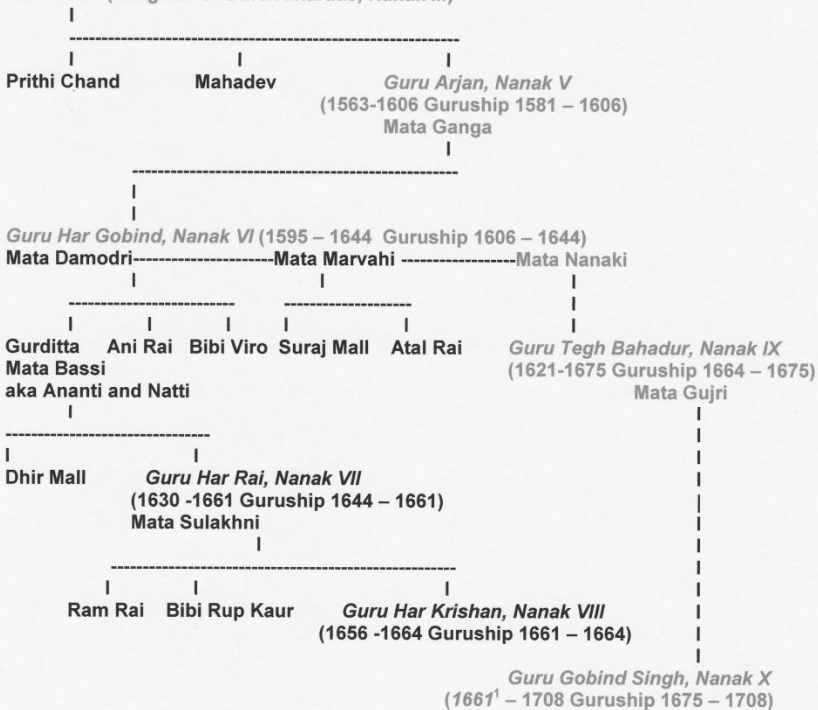
## Guruship Succession:

Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539);  
Guru Angad Dev, Nanak II (1504-1552 Guruship 1539-1552);  
Guru Amardas Nanak III (1479-1574 Guruship 1552-1574)

### Guruship family succession chart from Guru Ramdas, Nanak IV onwards.

*Guru Ramdas, Nanak IV* (1534 – 1581 Guruship 1574 – 1581)

Bibi Bhani (daughter of Guru Amardas, Nanak III)



### Mughal emperors during this period:

During the period covered by the Sikh Gurus mentioned in this account, the emperors on the throne of Delhi were: Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurungzeb (1658-1707). Jahangir was on the throne of Delhi when Guru Teg Bahadur was born and Aurungzeb was the emperor on whose orders he was executed in Delhi on 11 November 1675.

<sup>1</sup> As discussed in this account, contemporary sources e.g. evidence of Sakhi number 14 in *Guru Kian Sakhian*, confirm the year of Guru Gobind Singh's date of birth as 1661.

# Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX (1621-1675)

## Synopsis

**Born:** 1 April, 1621 (Bikrami Vaisakh vadi 5, 1678) at Amritsar and named Tyag Mall. He was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, Nanak VI, (1595-1644) and the grandson of Guru Arjan Dev, Nanak V, who was martyred in Lahore by the orders of Emperor Jahangir on 30 May 1606. The place where he was born is called *Guru ke Mahal* in the Guru Bazaar street in Amritsar. Tyag Mall was later given the title and name *Tegh Bahadur* (the fearless master of the sword) by his father following the battle of Kartarpur in April 1635.

**Siblings:** He was the youngest of six siblings after Baba Gurditta (1613-1638), sister *Bibi Viro* (1615-year of death not known), Baba Ani Rai(1618-year of death not known), Baba Suraj Mal (1617-1645) , and Baba Atal Rai (1619-1628).

**Battle of Kartarpur:** On 26-27 April 1635 at Kartarpur and Palahi. At the age of 14 years, Tegh Bahadur took part in the battle at Kartarpur.

**Marriage:** Tegh Bahadur was married on 4 February, 1633 to Gujri (1624-1705), daughter of Lal Chand Subhikkhi and Bishan Kaur who were living at Kartarpur, in the Jalandhar district.

**Kiratpur:** After the battles with Mughal commanders, Guru Hargobind decided to settle down at Kiratpur in the Himalayan Shivalik hills with his household from May 1635. This location had been gifted by Raja Kalyan Chand of Kehloor in May 1 and was away from the main Mughal traffic. Tegh Bahadur was 14 years old by now and stayed there with his Guru-father till the latter's demise on 3 March 1644.

**His mission:** Guru Hargobind passed the Guruship to Har Rai, his grandson, the younger son of Baba Gurditta, before his demise on 3 March 1644. He also apprised Tegh Bahadur, now 23 years old, of his

mission. Tegh Bahadur was to propagate Guru Nanak's mission, strengthen network of Guru Nanak's Sangats and remain available to serve the Guru on *Gurgaddi* - Guru Har Rai, (Guruship 1644-1661), and Guru Har Krishan, (Guruship 1661-1664) - till his own turn to make the ultimate sacrifice for *dharam*, the righteous cause. Tegh Bahadur was instructed to take his mother, *Mata* Nanaki, and his wife, Gujri, to go and live at Bakala.

**First preaching tour:** 13 June 1656. The *vaheer* (preaching group with families on the move) stayed at Kurukashetra and then set forth for Hardwar and reached that sacred city on 29 March 1657. With stops at Mathura, Prayagraj, Benaras, Sasram and Gaya the *vaheer* reached Patna.

**Birth of Guru Gobind Singh:** Patna became the Guru family base for the next few years from 1657 and Gobind Das (later Guru Gobind Singh) was born at Patna in 1661. *Here on Samat 1718 Pokh Massay Sudi Saptmi on Wednesday Gobind Das was born.* (Evidence of Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi number 14.) i.e. 18 December 1661.

**Return to Delhi:** On 21 March, 1664, Tegh Bahadur was at Delhi at the *Dharamsala* of Bhai Kalyana. He met Baba Ram Rai and Guru Harkrishan and headed for Punjab.

**Demise of Guru Har Krishan:** Before his demise on 30 March, 1664 at Delhi, Guru Har Krishan announced *Baba* Tegh Bahadur of Bakala as the next Guru.

**Guruship:** 11 August 1664 at Bakala. Ceremony conducted by the Sikh delegation from Delhi led by Mata Sulakhni (wife of Guru Har Rai and mother of Guru Har Krishan)

**Makhan Shah Lubhana:** Visited the village of Bakala on the Divali festival which was on 9 October 1664. On 22 November, 1664, Makhan Shah accompanied the Guru to Harmandar Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar and remained with the Guru on his tour of Punjab till his return to Kiratpur in May 1665, a period of about 7 months. From there he took leave of the Guru on 6 May, and left for his home.



**Preaching tour of Malwa and north-eastern Indian sub-continent:** Invited by prominent Sikhs from Patna and Dhaka. The tour started in October 1665.

**First Arrest:** Near Dhamtan on 8 November 1665. Following mediation, placed under the care of Raja Ram Singh on 13 December 1665. Tour of north and eastern Indian sub-continent resumed 16 December 1665. However, officially, he remained under detention and in the care of Raja Ram Singh.

**Raja Ram Singh's military expedition to subdue Ahom people of Assam:** 6 January 1668. He met the Guru towards the second half of 1668 and sought his help. The Guru and the Raja crossed river Brahmaputra towards the end of 1668 to reach Dhubri visited by Guru Nanak. Peace was mediated between Ahom people and Raja Ram Singh and both sides built a mound called Teghpur or Tegh Parbat to commemorate the peace treaty.

**Aurangzeb's religious persecution and the Guru's return to Punjab:** The Guru started for Punjab towards end of 1669 with preaching stops at important places to strengthen the network of *sangats*.

**Second detention from Agra:** On the way to Delhi, he was brought under guard from Agra to Delhi to be released later through the intercession of the Guru's Muslim disciple Saif Khan, who was related to Aurungzeb. The Guru was at the *dharamsal* of Bhai Kalyana at Delhi on 20 June 1670. Meanwhile, the family group which started from Patna sometime after the Guru left, reached Lakhnaur by 13 September, 1670.

**Large Sikh gathering at Anandpur:** Vaisakhi 1673.

**Preaching tour of Malwa and Bangar countryside:** Middle of 1673.

**Final preaching tour of Malwa to strengthen Sikh organisation:** 1674 when Gobind Das accompanied him. The Guru returned to Chakk Nanaki towards the end of 1674 via Kaithal and many villages in Sirsa and Hisar.

**Kashmiri Hindu delegation:** Kashmiri delegation led by Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt sought the Guru's help against Aurungzeb's religious persecution and met him at Anandpur on May 25, 1675. Gobind Das anointed as the next Guru on 8 July, 1675<sup>3</sup>.

**Final arrest:** Arrested on 11 July, 1675 from village Malikpur Ranghran with two other Sikhs, kept at Sirhind for about four months under torturous conditions in an attempt to convert them to Islam, and then taken to Delhi by 5 November, 1675.

**Martyrdom:** 11 November 1675. Body cremated that night by Delhi Sikhs and his *sis* (head) cremated at Anandpur Sahib on 17 November 1675 by Guru Gobind Singh.

Thus was laid the ideological and organisational foundation for Guru Gobind Singh to complete the final chapter of Guru Nanak's Mission and for the emergence of the *Khalsa, Akal Purakh ki Fauj* (the army of the Timeless Being)

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<sup>3</sup> Guruship ceremony took place at Anandpur Sahib on 8 Haar Samat 1732 (8 July, 1675): Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p37; Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi p59 (item 20), Bhat Vahi Tolanda, Pargana Jind and *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi no. 28. However, Vaisakhi 29 March 1676 is the date given in the Encyclopaedia of Sikhism V.2 p88. According to Nanakshahi Calendar, the Gurgaddi Day is celebrated on 24 November each year.*

# Historical background

## Mughal emperors

During the period covered by the Sikh Gurus mentioned in this account, the emperors on the throne of Delhi were: Akbar (1556-1605), Jahangir (1605-1627), Shah Jahan (1628-1658) and Aurungzeb (1658-1707). Jahangir was on the throne of Delhi when Guru Teg Bahadur was born and Aurungzeb was the emperor on whose orders he was executed in Delhi on 11 November 1675.

Unlike Akbar, himself a moderate and just emperor, his successors started depending on a fanatic interpretation of Islamic *sharia* code to justify their cruelty and oppression to hold on to power.

Emperor Jahangir died in 1627 when Tegh Bahadur was 6 years old, and Prince Khurum sat on the throne of Delhi as Shah Jahan (meaning ruler of the world). He adopted a stricter policy than Jahangir against non-Muslims. His first royal command on ascending the throne was to ban *tableeg* or conversions to non-Islamic religions. However, the Sikhs remained defiant and ignored this order.

*Badshahnama* recorded: "It has been brought to the notice of the Emperor (Badshah Hazoor) that the re-building of some Hindu temples was started in the previous rule [of Jahangir] but they are not complete as yet. Now the *kaffirs* (non-believers) wish to complete them. The Emperor [Shah Jahan] who is the guardian of the faith, has ordained that the temples being built in Banaras should be demolished. News has been received that about 76 temples (*mandars*) have been demolished."<sup>4</sup>

Relying on a fanatic interpretation of the Islamic code of *Sharia*<sup>5</sup> to remain in power, rather than on a humanitarian regime administered through just laws and fair treatment of the subjects, the Mughal rulers of

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<sup>4</sup> Sangat Singh pp 257-258

<sup>5</sup> Islamic law which is derived from the Islamic texts and tradition e.g. the *Koran*, *Hadith*, *ijma* and *qiyas*. These religious authorities give much religious as well as temporal power to the Muslim clergy in an Islamic state.

the day were bound to be concerned by what they regarded as the growing Sikh threat to their oppressive rule.

Guru Nanak's *sangats* (Sikh centres) had been established all over the Indian sub-continent by 1539 when Guru Nanak passed on the Sikhi mission to his successor Nanak II, Guru Angad (Bhai Lehna before Guruship)

## **The growing Sikh movement**

This was the time when the *Sikhi* path of Guru Nanak was under continual challenge from the emperors of Delhi. They were becoming increasingly concerned about the egalitarian message of Guru Nanak attracting followers in increasing numbers from all over the Indian subcontinent.

During the later Guru period, thousands of Hindus were converting to Guru Nanak's *Sikhi* in Punjab due to prominent Sikhs – men and women - appointed as regional preachers from the time of the Nanak III, Guru Amardas (1479-1574).

The missionary tours by Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind in Punjab and the arid regions north-west of Delhi (now in Haryana state) gave further impetus to Guru Nanak's mission. The Guru's movement in Punjab was also made necessary by the defensive battles forced on him by local Mughal commanders.

Following the martyrdom of his father-Guru, Arjun (1563-1606), hundreds of young people of rural Punjab flocked to the Guru. They were also attracted by his charismatic saint-warrior personality. Like earlier Gurus, Guru Hargobind's followers were from diverse religio-cultural backgrounds. Many Muslims have been mentioned as his constant companions. Amongst these were poets and bards and a famous warrior of the time, Painsday Khan.

Defence of the Sikh faith continued through armed resistance by the Gurus as a last resort. That Guru Hargobind had been able to repulse superior forces four times with the support of ordinary people, was a matter of grave concern to the Mughal regime.

## Contenders for Guruship in Guru families

From time to time, misguided and disgruntled relatives of the Guru persons, who felt aggrieved for being passed over in Guruship succession, took their grievances to the emperors on the throne at different times. They failed to realise that the Light of Nanak passed on to the most worthy successor of the time. Tegh Bahadur himself was passed over twice for Guruship following the demise of his father, Guru Hargobind and of his nephew<sup>6</sup> Nanak VII, Guru Har Rai. It was only the latter's son, Nanak VIII, Guru Harkishan, who passed on Guruship to Tegh Bahadur, otherwise his grand uncle (the *Baba* based at Bakala at the time), that *Guru* Tegh Bahadur was revealed as the Light of Guru Nanak as Nanak IX.

## The Throne of the *Sacha Patshah*, the True king

Even during the times of the earlier Gurus, and certainly by the time of Nanak V, Guru Arjan 1563-1606, the Guru was referred to as *Sacha Patshah* (the True King) and his seat was referred to as *Sacha Takht* (the True Throne) from which the Guru dispensed *Sacha Niao* (True Justice).<sup>7</sup> Contemporary sources and the *Bani* in *Adi Granth*, confirm that the Guru sat on the True Throne from which he dispensed True Justice. The first structure of Akal Takht, the seat of the Guru as the temporal and spiritual (*miri-piri*) sovereign, was erected and completed by Bhai Gurdas and Baba Budha ji on 15 June 1606<sup>8</sup>. Soon after that date Guru Hargobind conducted the secular affairs of the Sikhs from Akal Takht until he left for Kiratpur in 1635.

Following the martyrdom of Guru Arjan, his son, Guru Hargobind, was anointed Guru on 25 May 1606. Guru Hargobind prepared the Sikhs for armed defence of Guru Nanak's egalitarian mission to establish a just socio-political order (referred to as *halemi raj* by Guru Arjan).

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<sup>6</sup> The younger of Baba Gurditta's two sons. The older was Baba Dhir Mal. Baba Gurditta was the eldest brother of Tegh Bahadur (see later).

<sup>7</sup> Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol I p56, SGGS pp84, 1087.

<sup>8</sup> Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol I p57

Sikh historians believe that by resorting to armed defence, Guru Hargobind was carrying out the final instructions of his father, Guru Arjan before his martyrdom. Like his predecessors, he had been trained in the use of arms by revered Baba Budha (1506-1631)<sup>9</sup>.

## **Guruships of Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan**

The two Guruships of Guru Har Rai, Nanak VII, (Guruship 1644-1661) and Guru Har Krishan, Nanak VII, (Guruship 1661-1664) stabilised and consolidated the theo-political gains of Guru Hargobind.

A strong defensive force was retained by Guru Har Rai, and, presumably not disbanded by Gur Har Krishan. Community care facilities were developed and included medical care. Such non-military strengthening of Sikh facilities and organisation was low profile and did not attract too much attention from the Mughal Emperors at Delhi. They would have assumed that Sikhs were returning to a more peaceful and conciliatory lifestyle after the battles of Guru Hargobind, who, in any case, had no option but to defend himself.

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<sup>9</sup> Baba Budha is one of the most revered figures in Sikh tradition. He was blessed with long life by Guru Nanak and lived on until the 25<sup>th</sup> year of Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind's guruship (1631) when Tegh Bahadur was 10 years old. Renowned for his piety, he was also skilled in the use of arms and trained the children of the Guru family in self-defence.

# Part 1: Life Before Guruship

## Early Life

Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675), the ninth Guru of the Sikhs, was born on 1 April, 1621 (Bikrami Vaisakh vadi 5, 1678) at Amritsar and named Tyag Mall. He was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind, Nanak VI, (1595-1644) and the grandson of Guru Arjan Dev, Nanak V, who was martyred in Lahore by the orders of Emperor Jahangir on 30 May 1606.

He was the youngest of six siblings after *Baba*<sup>10</sup> Gurditta (1613-1638), sister *Bibi*<sup>11</sup> Viro (1615-year of death not known), Ani Rai (1618-year of death not known), Suraj Mal (1617-1645) , and Atal Rai (1619-1628). The place where he was born is called *Guru ke Mahal* in the Guru Bazaar street in Amritsar.

Tyag Mall was later given the title and name *Tegh Bahadur* (the fearless master of the sword) by his father following the battle of Kartarpur in April 1635.

Tegh Bahadur was born 15 years after the martyrdom of his grandfather, Guru Arjan and would be the second Guru martyr in Sikh history, in 1675.

His mother's name was *Mata*<sup>12</sup> Nanaki the daughter of Hari Chand and Hardevi living in the village Bakala.

Child Tegh Bahadur grew up in the company of revered Gursikhs like the great scholar Bhai Gurdas and the elderly Baba Budha. By this time, partly due to the continual external threat to the *Sikhi* (Sikhism) mission of Guru Nanak, training in the use of arms for self-defence, including the

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<sup>10</sup> *Baba* is a term of respect generally used for grand-father, male members of that or earlier generations, and holy men. A son of a Guru is called *baba* regardless of age. Therefore, to avoid confusion, although, the title *Baba* has not been used for Guru Tegh Bahadur, it should be understood that he was known as *Baba* Tegh Bahadur before his Guruship in 1664.

<sup>11</sup> *Bibi* is a term of respect for women and can be variously used for mother, sister, daughter or daught-in-law.

<sup>12</sup> '*Mata*' is a term of respect for elderly ladies and is also used by the Sikhs for the wife or mother of a Guru.

use of the sword<sup>13</sup>, archery and horse-riding, had become part of the Sikh tradition. Tegh Bahadur too received such martial training from Baba Budha and his early education from revered scholar Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636). Baba Budha passed away in 1631 when Tegh Bahadur was 10 years old.

## **Guru Hargobind's defensive battles**

Tegh Bahadur grew up during a period when his father, Guru Hargobind, had to fight some defensive battles against the Mughals.

Tegh Bahadur was about 13 years old when Guru Hargobind was attacked under some pretext at Amritsar on 14 April 1634, by Mukhlis Khan, who was Emperor Shah Jahan's commander at Lahore. Guru Hargobind and the Sikhs stood their ground and defended the city. Mukhlis Khan was killed and the invading force was repulsed. Similarly, the mughals were defeated in other battles which followed: on 16 December 1634 at Lahira near Mehraj (Bathinda District); on 26-27 April 1635 at Kartarpur and Palahi. At the age of 14 years, Tegh Bahadur took part in the battle at Kartarpur. He showed exceptional bravery and fighting skills. These battles and the Guru's victories against heavy odds while leading Sikhs from diverse backgrounds, destroyed the myth of Mughal invincibility in the minds of the ordinary people of Punjab.

From a very young age, Tegh Bahdur witnessed the bloodshed at these battles. He was fully aware of the continual threat to the Guru-person who sat on Guru Nanak's *Gurgaddi* (Guru's throne) as the *Sacha Patshah*, the True King for the Sikhs. He would have heard from his father, Guru Hargobind and prominent Sikhs like Bhai Gurdas and revered Baba Budha, about the martyrdom of his grandfather, Guru Arjan, for the defence of the faith and about the bigotry of Emperor Jahangir.

All these early life experiences would have a lasting influence on Tegh Bahadur. He continued to accompany his father on hunting expeditions and retained his interest in the use of arms. He was also inclined towards meditation.

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<sup>13</sup> The Sikh sport of *gatka* substituting a stick for a sword for training and exercise is a continuation of the ancient Sikh martial tradition.



## Marriage

As was the tradition in those days, Tegh Bahadur was married at an early age on 4 February, 1633 to Gujri (1624-1705), daughter of Lal Chand Subhikkhi and Bishan Kaur who were living at Kartarpur, in the Jalandhar district. Their family village was Lakhnaur near Amballa (now in Haryana). Two brothers of *Mata* Gujri are mentioned in Sikh history. One brother Mehar Chand (probably the older), lived at the family village, Lakhnaur and the other, Kirpal Chand, later joined the cavalry of Guru Har Rai<sup>14</sup>.

## Guru Hargobind settles down at Kiratpur (May 1635 to March 1644)

After the battles with the Mughal commanders, the Guru knew that they would not leave him alone. He decided on tactical retreat to Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills from May 1635 to continue building the Sikh organisation. This location had been gifted by Raja Kalyan Chand of Kehloor in May 1626, and was away from the main Mughal traffic. His eldest son, Baba Gurditta had already founded a habitation there as instructed by him.

Tegh Bahadur was 14 years old by now and stayed there with his Guru-father till the latter's demise on 3 March 1644. Young Tegh Bahadur grew up into a young man in the loving company of his Guru-father who taught him the deeper *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) message of Gurbani in *Adi Granth*<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> The renowned *baee sao swar* (2,200 horsemen) defence force. Unlike his grand-father Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai was left alone by the Mughal emperor and nawabs during his Guruship. Yet, with such a force, the Guru was always in a strong defensive position. Otherwise, he was renowned for his compassion and ran a well-equipped medical centre.

<sup>15</sup> The "First Scripture" compiled by Nanak V, Guru Arjan, in 1604. Later, Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh, included *Shabads* (holy hymns) by Guru Tegh Bahadur and in 1708 passed on the Guruship to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as the perpetual Living *Shabad* (Word) Guru of the Sikhs.

This was a period of nine years of participation and service in *Guru-darbar* (Guru's court) while receiving instruction in the temporal-spiritual (*miri-piri*) twin-track whole-life approach of Sikh ideology. Despite his inner detachment as taught by *Gurbani* (Guru's Word), Tegh Bahadur had first-hand experience of the affairs of Guruship in his father's company.

Sikh *sangats* (congregations) from different parts of the country and beyond visited Guru Hargobind at Kiratpur.

Tegh Bahadur grew up watching his father-Guru conduct Sikh community affairs from *Akal Takht*, Throne of the Timeless Being (at Amritsar) and later at Kiratpur. Most probably, he accompanied his father on some preaching tours mentioned in Sikh history in the regions north and west of Delhi including Malwa, Haryana and adjoining parts of Rajasthan.

His education included *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) aspects of Sikh living and goals. Sri Akal Takht Sahib established by his father, Guru Hargobind, represented the complementary aspects of *miri* and *piri* living. His grand-father, Guru Arjan Dev had stated the *miri* goal of Sikhi: a *halemi raj* in which no-one oppressed another. From Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Hargobind, the *Sikhi* message was consistent and clear: that socio-political activism was an essential component of *Sikhi* living.

Tegh Bahadur had witnessed the battles forced on Guru Hargobind. He himself took part in the last of these showing great courage and mastery of arms. The tactical retreat to Kiratpur and the continued strengthening of Sikh organisation by Guru Hargobind was also part of his own mission in life made clear to him by Guru Hargobind. The next phase of Guruship demanded a long-term strategic approach to strengthen the ideological and organisational base of *Sikhi* to be able to withstand and defeat the Mughal might and oppression in the war of liberation. Tegh Bahadur would take inner detachment from world-play and attachment to a just cause, to the next level in Sikh martyrdom tradition.

The point to note is that during this period of his life and during his preaching tours when he himself sat on the *Sacha Takht* (true throne) of Guruship as the *Sacha Patshah* (True King) till his martyrdom in Delhi in 1675, he remained fully involved in the secular affairs of the community. After Guru Nanak, his preaching tours were the most extensive. He

visited and strengthened Sikh organisation through *sangats* (congregations/Sikh centres) all over the country.

Guru Hargobind, about whom Bhai Gurdas wrote, “The warrior Guru, the vanquisher of armies, but his heart is full of love and charity”, passed the Guruship to Har Rai, his grandson, the younger son of Baba Gurditta, before his demise on 3 March 1644.

## **Tegh Bahadur’s mission**

Before his departure from this world, Guru Hargobind apprised Tegh Bahadur, now 23 years old, of his mission. An unobtrusive but steady build-up of Sikh organisation over the next few years was the need against a powerful empire which was keeping a watchful eye on the person who sat on Guru Nanak’s *Gurgaddi*. The rulers of Delhi were themselves encouraging disputes about the Gurgaddi as part of own tactics to divide the *Sikhi* movement.

The Guru’s own strategic response to the Mughal threat was to instruct Tegh Bahadur to take his mother, *Mata* Nanaki, and his wife, Gujri, to village Bakala. Tegh Bahadur’s maternal grandparents (*nana* and *nani*), Hari Chand and Hari Devi lived at Bakala. They were a well-to-do business family. He was to receive the income from Guru Hargobind’s land at the new town of Sri Hargobindpur. He arrived at Bakala with Mata Nanaki and his wife Gujri to settle down and prepare for the next phase of his life.

For the next 20 years, fulfilling his mission, Tegh Bahadur remained constantly available to serve Guru Nanak’s *Jote* residing in the successors of Guru Hargobind: his grandson, Guru Har Rai, (Guruship 1644-1661), and his great-grandson Guru Har Krishan, (Guruship 1661-1664).

## **Life at Bakala**

Accompanied by his mother, Mata Nanaki, and wife, Gujri, Tegh Bahadur arrived at the village Bakala in early 1644, soon after the demise of his father, Guru Hargobind on 3 March, 1644.

*“Tegh Bahadur was now remote from the main seat of Sikhism, yet he carried with him the ambience in which he had grown. He was the example of virtues the Gurus had taught. He had humility and compassion and a firmness of mind. He lived a strict and holy life and spent most his time in meditation. Yet he was no recluse. He attended to family responsibilities. He went out riding and followed the chase. In the Sikh faith the temporal and the spiritual were not disjointed. This was amply attested in Guru Tegh Bahadur’s life.”<sup>16</sup>*

Bhai Mehra is mentioned in Sikh tradition as a wealthy Sikh of Bakala who became devoted to Tegh Bahadur and served him well. In addition to the spiritual aspect, it was to be expected that a saintly member of the Guru family like Tegh Bahadur would promote social stability and local prosperity as visitors from far and wide flocked to see him.

Tegh Bahadur made Bakala his base for the next 20 years while he also spent many years on long preaching tours, especially from 1656, as requested by Nanak VII, Guru Har Rai (otherwise, his nephew by relationship). In fact these tours continued till his martyrdom in 1675.

His choice was for a simple life, inclined towards solitude; yet he was active as a householder and preacher of Guru Nanak’s mission. He had numerous visitors from *Sangats* (Sikh congregations) in India and abroad e.g. from places like Kabul, who came to meet the *sant saroop* (saintly) son of the great saint-warrior Guru Hargobind. He sat in local *Sangat* and recited *Gurbani*. Sikh sources such as *Twareekh Guru Khalsa* and *Mehma Prakash* confirm an unobtrusive but active life during this period, otherwise much misrepresented even by some Sikh preachers portraying Tegh Bahadur as some sort of recluse or ascetic in the Brahmanic tradition.

His wife, Gujri’s brother Kirpal Chand, who came to be revered as *Mama Kirpal Chand* by the Sikhs (being Guru Gobind Singh’s maternal uncle i.e. *mama*) was in Guru Har Rai’s army. He also visited Bakala and kept Tegh Bahadur informed of the state of Sikh affairs. In turn, Tegh Bahadur and his wife, Gujri, and mother Mata Nanaki, also went to Kiratpur to meet Guru Har Rai and other relatives. The communication was important and continual.

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<sup>16</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 1994, p64.

Misreading Tegh Bahadur's quiet and simple life, even though he lived the full life of a householder and kept up his daily routine and carried out his family responsibilities, some under the Brahmanic influence, treated him like a recluse who had opted out of society<sup>17</sup>. On the other hand, evidence is emerging, especially from *Bhat Vahis*, that Tegh Bahadur retained his influence in the Guru family.

### **First long *Parchaar Yatra* (preaching tour)**

Early in 1656, when Tegh Bahadur was visiting Kiratpur, he had a discourse with Guru Har Rai during which the Guru delegated the responsibility for the propagation of Sikhi in Malwa, Haryana and north-eastern parts of the Indian subcontinent to Tegh Bahadur. According to one important source of Sikh history called the *Bhatt Vahis*, Tegh Bahadur returned to Bakala to prepare for prolonged preaching tours with his family and some prominent learned Sikhs.

They were accompanied by their families in the form of a *vaheer* which means a large group of men, women and children moving along like a caravan with carts, luggage and animals with armed guards. The impression given would have been that of a sizeable group of armed men on the move with their families.

The *vaheer* included some members of the Guru family and prominent Sikhs e.g. Tegh Bahadur's mother, Mata Nanaki, wife Gujri, sister-in-law Hari (wife of elder brother Suraj Mall who had passed away in 1645), brother-in-law Kirpal Chand, Sadhu Ram (husband of Tegh Bahadur's sister Bibi Viro), Dyal Das, Chaopat Rai, Matti Das, Baalu Hasna, Almast, Durga Das, Gaval Das, and others. Historically, the names are interesting e.g. Dyal Das (brother of Bhai Mani Singh) and Matti Das were martyred with Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675.

Soon after visiting Kiratpur, the preaching tour began on 13 June 1656. The *vaheer* stayed at Kurukashetra and then set forth for Hardwar with

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<sup>17</sup> It is a sad reflection on the quality of some Sikh *kathakaars* – interpreters of Guru's Word and Sikh tradition – that they too fail to appreciate this important phase of (Guru) Tegh Bahadur's life, which fully accorded with the Sikh and Guru tradition. Sometimes, these preachers cannot escape from the Brahmanic thought-trap and invariably end up interpreting Sikhi in Vedic or Snatan Dharma terminology life style.

preaching stops on the way, to reach the city on 29 March 1657. It was the Vaisakhi day<sup>18</sup>. From there, while camping for days at a time to hold congregations at Mathura, Prayagraj, Benaras, Sasram and Gaya the vaheer reached Patna.

According to *Bhat Vahi Poorbi Dakhni*, on 19 April 1661 the vaheer was in Pryag (Alahabad) and on 21 June 1661 in Banaras (Kanshi). There was a prolonged stay at Patna in Behar<sup>19</sup>.

***Evidence of Sakhi number 14 in Guru Kian Sakhian is relevant in connection with this prolonged tour and the birth of Gobind Das (later Guru Gobind Singh):***

“Sri Tegh Bahadur ji, at the age of 35 years, on the day of Samat 1713 Asad Sudi Ekam started his tirath yatra (pilgrimage) from Kot Guru Har Rai. When Sri Guru Har Rai ji passed away he [Tegh Bahadur] with family was in Patna. Here on Samat 1718 Pokh Massay Sudi Saptmi on Wednesday Gobind Das was born. Being far away from Punjab he did not get news of the demise of Guru Har Rai ji sooner. For that reason he came to Delhi and then Punjab in 1721 to condole with the family.”

A rough conversion of the *Bikrami* (Indian calendar) years mentioned above gives year 1656 CE as the year when Tegh Bahadur started the tour of north-eastern Indian subcontinent, year 1661 as the year of birth of Gobind Das (Guru Gobind Singh) and year 1664 as the year when he returned to Punjab via Delhi. Late Prof. Piara Singh Padam confirms<sup>20</sup> that this was a prolonged tour and Guru Gobind Singh was born during the later part of this tour at Patna on Poh Sudi Saptmi in year 1718 Bikrami. ***That gives Guru Gobind Singh's date of birth as 18 December 1661.***

Official reports of these movements and preaching activities were reaching the local Nawabs and the Emperor at Delhi.

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<sup>18</sup> CE calendar dates have been adjusted since then, so that Vaisakhi is now celebrated on 14 April each year according to the *Nanakshahi* Calendar.

<sup>19</sup> The exact dates of Tegh Bahadur's stay in and around Patna are uncertain. However, it is almost certain that he returned to Delhi by 21 March 1664, a few days before Guru Harkrishan passed away.

<sup>20</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay* (Punjabi) pp 26-27

After the travels of Guru Nanak, which covered the Indian sub-continent and many middle-eastern countries between about 1500 CE to 1521 CE, the preaching tours by Tegh Bahadur were the most extensive by any Guru. Far from being a recluse, Tegh Bahadur was the most active missionary before and after he himself was consecrated as Nanak IX, *Guru Tegh Bahadur* in 1664.

Tegh Bahadur was following in the footsteps of Guru Nanak and taking the universal message of the Guru to distant places and setting up *Sangats* (holy congregations as Sikh centres) all over Northern India. It is not surprising that even before he took over the responsibilities of Guruship, the Mughals were becoming greatly concerned about his movements. In view of other revolts around the country, the question uppermost in the mind of the Mughal administration would have been if he too was starting some sort of a rebellion against the empire.

When the news of Guru Har Rai's demise on 6 October, 1661 reached Tegh Bahadur in due course, the group headed back towards Punjab probably towards end 1663 or early 1664. On the way to Delhi, Tegh Bahadur heard that Guru Har Krishan was in Delhi with the Guru family. Baba Ram Rai, Guru Har Krishan's older brother was in Delhi also.

According to *Guru Kia(n) Saakhia(n)* and *Bhat Vahi Poorbi-Dakhni*, on 21 March, 1664 Tegh Bahadur was at Delhi at the *Dharamsala*<sup>21</sup> of Bhai Kalyana.

One version of Sikh tradition is that Baba Ram Rai had complained to Emperor Aurungzeb that he had been wrongly passed over for Guruship by his father Guru Har Rai; that as the elder son of Guru Har Rai, Guruship was his by right of succession and not that of his younger brother Har Krishan.

Guru Har Krishan, then aged 8 years, had been invited over to Delhi by Raja Jai Singh. He sent his minister Paras Ram to invite the Guru to his residence at Delhi. As the Raja and his son, Raja Ram Singh, were devotees, the Guru accepted the invitation. This was also Raja Jai

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<sup>21</sup> Place of worship and for the overnight stay of travellers. Most villages in Punjab and other parts of India had, and still have, *dharamalas* where free facilities were available for visitors to stay.

Singh's way of pre-empting any *summons* by Aurungzeb ordering the Guru to appear before him.

It needs to be remembered that, otherwise, the Gurus had not recognised the summons as such of any emperor of Delhi. When *summoned* by Aurungzeb, Guru Har Rai had sent his older son Baba Ram Rai as his envoy. In due course, in 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was not responding to any royal summons but set forth to Delhi himself to challenge the Emperor's policy of religious persecution.

Relying on the *Bhat Vahi* evidence, it is interesting to note that Tegh Bahadur met and had a conversation with Baba Ram Rai on his arrival in Delhi on 21 March 1664. Next, on the same day, he met Guru Har Krishan and the Guru family at the *haveli* (mansion) of Raja Jai Singh of Amber. Following the consultation, he left for Bakala having been away for some years from his home base on preaching tours. In any case, in view of the Mughal interest in the Guruship dispute, he would not have considered it advisable to prolong his stay at Delhi beyond one or two days.

By relationship Tegh Bahadur was Ram Rai's and Guru Har Krishan's paternal grand-uncle and both addressed him as *Baba* according to the family relationship. This account of Tegh Bahadur, rushing back to Delhi to meet Baba Ram Rai prior to his (Tegh Bahadur's) meeting with Guru Har Krishan at the *haveli* of Raja Jai Singh on the same day, is significant. It shows the responsibility entrusted to him by his father, Guru Hargobind, towards the Guru-person who sat on Guru Nanak's *Gurgaddi*.

According to *Guru Kia(n) Sakhia(n)* Guru Har Krishan was taken in a *paalki* (palanquin) by his older brother Baba Ram Rai to meet the Emperor on 25 March, 1664.

Saakhi number 18<sup>22</sup> makes most interesting reading and corrects some misunderstanding about Baba Ram Rai<sup>23</sup>. According to this *Saakhi*, in *Samat* 1721 (Bikrami year), *Chet Sudi* 8 on Thursday the Emperor sent

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<sup>22</sup> *Guru Kian Sakhian* pp 63-66

<sup>23</sup> These *Saakhis* present Baba Ram Rai and even Dhir Mall in a very different light than the traditional version, even allowing for the fact that the Bhattas, due to their profession as minstrels and genealogists, praised all and avoided any negative comment especially about members of the Guru's family.



his court official to invite the Guru to the royal court on the following day (Friday). Baba Ram Rai seated his younger brother Guru in a *paalki* (palanquin) and brought him to the royal court. They were accompanied by: Divan Dargha Mall, Kanwar (prince) Ram Singh son of Raja Jai Singh of Amber, Gurbakhsh, Mani Ram and some other Sikhs.

The Guru was seated and the Emperor acknowledged him with the respect due to a holy person. The Emperor asked Baba Ram Rai why he, being the elder brother, had not been anointed the Guru. Did he not feel insulted? *Sri Karta Purakh ji* (name for Baba Ram Rai) smiled and replied, "O King! Guruship is not the worldly property of anyone. Our father [as the Guru *Jyot*] was perfect in every way.....He considered him [Har Khrishan] worthy and passed on Guruship to him. According to Sikh tradition he is now seated on Guru Nanak's throne. I am now bound by what he says. Hearing this the emperor was satisfied."

The above clear account with witnesses, requires pause for thought. Baba Ram Rai's response should not surprise those who have read Sikh history about Baba Ram Rai's willing acceptance of his father's decision not to see him again because he had mis-interpreted a passage from Gurbani to please the Emperor. It is possible that Baba Ram Rai allowed himself to be influenced by others in his delegation.

The dispute about Sikh Guruship, real or invented, suited the designs of the emperors at Delhi. It was a means of weakening the egalitarian Sikh movement. No doubt there would have been differences within the Guru's family, but these appear to have been exaggerated and exploited by the emperors. From their own political perspective, from Jahangir onwards, those who sat on the throne of Delhi feared the freedom loving and fearless ideology of Guru Nanak.

The mission was progressing through an extensive organisation covering many parts of northern Indian sub-continent towards the status of a "state within a state" as the Sikhi *miri-piri* twin track temporal-spiritual ideology unfolded. It gave the Sikhs their numbers, organisation and decision making processes.

Guru Har Krishan impressed Aurungzeb with his wisdom even though he was only 8 years old. According to tradition, he was offered presents and chose a holy man's simple cloak instead of ornaments and toys.

The Sikh account is that the Guru decided there and then not to be in the company of this evil king in the guise of a pious religious man, again. And so it came to pass. The young Guru, whose holy sight dispelled the pain and suffering (*dukh*) of all, was struck by smallpox that evening. He departed for *Sach Khand* (realm of Truth) 5 days later on 30 March, 1664.

A day before his demise, Guru Har Krishan consecrated his *Baba* who lived at village Bakala as the next Guru. According to *Bhat Vahi Talaunda*, Pargana Jind, he raised his arm three times and said in a low voice, "Accept my Baba Tegh Bahadur of Bakala as the Guru after me." According to *Bhat Vahi Bhadso(n)* Pargana Jind, he raised his arm three times and said, "Take these symbols of Gurgaddi to Bakala. Place 5 cents (paisay) and coconut before Baba Tegh Bahadur and bow (*mattha tekna*) before him".<sup>24</sup>

However, according to Sikh tradition, he did not mention the name. When he uttered "*Baba Bakale*", it would have been clear that he meant his *Baba* who lived at the village Bakala i.e. Tegh Bahadur.

The fact is that the *Baba* from Bakala, Tegh Bahadur, was there only a few days before. Most probably, he was trying to resolve the differences about Guruship within the family instead of these being taken to the Emperor. It is even possible that he succeeded for the time being. Certainly the evidence from the *Bhatt Vahis* shows that Baba Ram Rai had accepted Guru Har Krishan as the Nanak *Jote*, the True Guru.

Regrettably, the same differences within the family surfaced again as soon as Guru Har Krishan left this world. The pretenders to Guruship within the extended Guru family exploited this confusion.

Tegh Bahadur had been away from Bakala for some years. For the next few months he remained in thoughtful aloofness and meditation on his return from such an extensive preaching tour. The news of Guru Har Krishan's death would have reached him within a few days. The glow of Nanak's *Jote* was now in *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, Nanak IX.

Following the demise of Guru Har Krishan in 1664, the time had come for Tegh Bahadur to be revealed as the Guiding Light of Guru Nanak's faith.

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<sup>24</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p53 *Bhat Vahis* 5 and 6

## **Guruship (11 August 1664 - 11 November 1675)**

Before his demise, Guru Har Krishan and the family moved out of Raja Jai Singh's residence to camp near river Yamuna. That would have delayed the news of his death reaching Sikh congregations and Aurungzeb, who took a keen interest in Guru succession. There were rumours and confusion. It is also possible that, due to earlier disputes about Gurgaddi, the Guru family and prominent Sikhs were not too keen to announce the name of the next Guru in Delhi.

They performed the rites of passage following Guru Har Krishan's death, returned to Punjab and in due course performed the Guruship ceremony by passing on the ceremonial marks of Guruship to Tegh Bahadur some months later.

On 29 March, 1664, a day before he passed away, Guru Har Krishan had entrusted a close group with the ceremonial marks of Guruship to be passed on to his *Baba*, meaning his grand-uncle by relationship, who lived at the village Bakala. The group included his mother Mata Sulakhni (also known as Mata Krishan Kaur and Kot Kalyani), Divan Darghah Mall, Chaupat Rai, Mani Ram, Nanu, Gubakhsh and others. As mentioned above, three times he raised his hand to utter faintly the words, "*Baba Bakale*" (meaning "My *Baba* at village Bakala"). According to at least two *Bhat Vahis* he did also mention the name of Baba Tegh Bhadur.

The name of the next Guru was probably not announced openly due to the background of Guruship succession disputes. Aurungzeb was encouraging such disputes as part of his administrative strategy to keep the Sikhs divided<sup>25</sup>. Possibly due to similar reasons, the Guruship succession ceremony was not completed too soon, but some months later at Bakala by the deputation led by Mata Sulakhni, on 11 August 1664.

In the meantime, according to *Bhat Vahis* record collated by Sarup Singh Koshish, Mata Sulakhni and other members of the Guru family

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<sup>25</sup> In ancient Sikh writings like the *Bhat Vahis*, the advice, "Do not trust the Turk" (*Turak da visah nahi karna*) is repeated. "Turk" was the expression for the Mughals. This would seem to refer to deception being used as part of Mughal administrative tactic.

and Sikhs attached to the Guru household attended to the rites of passage in connection with Guru Har Krishan's death.

## Part 2: Guruship

### Confusion about Guruship

The confusion which followed when Guru Harkishan passed on Guruship to his *Baba at Bakala*, was fully exploited by possible contenders for Guruship.

Word about the demise of Guru Har Krishan had spread. On hearing about the Guruship having been passed on to “the *Baba* at village Bakala”, the congregations from far and wide as well as the many pretenders to Guruship rushed to Bakala. Poor communication and lack of knowledge and whereabouts of the Guru family were fully exploited by those who believed that they had a right to Guruship. In any case, Tegh Bahadur had been passed over twice for Guruship.

From the above it will be seen why there was confusion about the next Guru as there were many in the Guru family who would have been addressed as *Baba* regardless of relationship or age. Amongst these was Dhir Mall<sup>26</sup>, the elder brother of Guru Har Rai.

Immediately on hearing of the demise of his nephew, Guru Har Krishan, and the confusion about the *Baba* at Bakala, Dhir Mall rushed to Bakala, set up his camp and his followers and *masands* (appointed representatives) proclaimed him to be the next Guru of the Sikhs.

Exploiting the confusion, all in all, 22 pretenders to Guruship, mostly related to each other being the descendants of the Gurus, are

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<sup>26</sup> Dhir Mall – 1627 – 1677: elder son of Baba Gurditta and grandson of Guru Hargobind. Baba Gurditta was Guru Hargobind’ eldest son. Dhir Mall was Guru Har Rai’s older brother. He was born in Kartarpur and stayed behind when Guru Hargobind moved to Kiratpur in the Shivalik hills. Dhir Mall lived at Kartarpur only a short distance from Bakala. He befriended his nephew Ram Rai, the elder son of Guru Har Rai.

A few months after the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Dhir Mall was also summoned to Delhi by Emperor Aurungzeb and was imprisoned at the fort at Ranthambhor, where he died on 16 November, 1677. *Baba* Ram Rai, who probably abided by his Guru father Har Rai’s decision to pass on Guruship to his younger brother, Har Khishan, was born on 11 March 1646 and passed away on 4 September 1687 at his *dera* in Dehra Dun.

mentioned in Sikh tradition. They turned up at the village Bakala and set up own camps, each claiming to be the true Guru on Guru Nanak's *Gurgaddi*.

Sikhs started arriving at Bakala and small congregations formed around these 22 claimants to Guruship. Bakala would have looked like a festival town with *chelas* (disciples) and preachers including the *masands* loyal to these claimants directing visiting Sikhs and *sangats* (congregations) from near and distant towns and villages to their own respective gurus. There was chaos and confusion while the *chelas* touted own guru-business.

Few would have heard of or heeded the deputation entrusted to pass on the ceremonial marks of Guruship to Tegh Bahadur. Led by Mata Sulakhni (Guru Harkishan's mother), the ceremony of passing over of the responsibilities of Guruship to Guru Tegh Bahadur was conducted on 11 August 1664 at Bakala. There are references to this delegation in *Bhatt Vahi Taolanda Pargana Jind* and other sources. Other prominent Sikhs were also called to Bakala<sup>27</sup>.

Soon after the formal ceremony witnessed by the immediate Guru family and prominent Sikhs who had been called at Bakala, Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX, visited Kiratpur to condole with Bibi Rup Kaur on the demise of her father, Guru Har Rai, and of her brother, Guru Har Krishan. Before assuming responsibilities of Guruship, Tegh Bahadur had spent many years in the eastern provinces using Patna as the Sikh centre. This was his first family visit to Kiratpur after his return. He re-visited Kiratpur on the demise of Mata Bassi<sup>28</sup>, mother of Guru Har Rai, on 29 September 1664. She had managed the Guru's household since the demise of Guru Hargobind on March 1644. As instructed by him,

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<sup>27</sup> The Guruship ceremony took place at Bakala on 11 August 1664 (Bikrami 1721, Bhadon di Amavas). These dates are confirmed by Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi; Bhat Vahi Talaonda Pargana Jind; and Sakhi number 19 of "Guru Kian Sakhian" by Bhai Sarup Singh Koshish published by Prof Piara Singh Padam. This was a well attended ceremony and many prominent names are given in Sakhi 19.

<sup>28</sup> Wife of Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind. She was also known as Ananti, Natti and Nihal Kaur.

Mata Nanaki had also left Kiratput to go to her parent's village, Bakala with Tegh Bahadur and his wife, Gujri.<sup>29</sup>

Yet, despite Guru Tegh Bahadur having been accepted as Nanak IX Guru-person by the mainstream Guru's family and moving around as above in the family circle, the traditional accounts by Sikh preachers tend to show that he remained in almost complete isolation or was intentionally ignored.

There is little doubt that even some Sikh writers tend to misrepresent the life of Guru Tegh Bahadur. In this respect, the reporters and informers of the Mughal administration seem to be more accurate when they continually conveyed concern about Tegh Bahadur's movements and his fearless message to the masses of "fear none and frighten none" in the northern and north-eastern provinces of India, *before* and after Guruship. He preached *dharam nebhaona* i.e. doing one's duty according to one's family, social and community responsibilities and role, to the end. So much so, that the name of Tegh Bahadur became synonymous with *dharam nebhaona*.

Makhan Shah Lubhana's role is highly relevant in this narrative. He was a dedicated Sikh in touch with Guru Nanak *Jote*. It is possible that he came with the intention of serving the *Gurgaddi* of Guru Nanak at a most critical time.

## **Role of Makhan Shah Lubhana**

Any remaining doubt about the True Guru was settled by a wealthy and prominent Sikh trader, Makhan Shah Lubhana, who arrived at Bakala with his family (his wife and two sons) and attendants. He played a much more significant role in the Guruship succession than normally acknowledged by Sikh preachers. He stayed on for many months serving the Guru to ensure a smooth transition.

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<sup>29</sup> The responsibility of women for managing the Guru-family and receiving Sikh *sangats* at Kiratpur between 1644 and 1664 was great and Mata Bassi, wife of Baba Gurditta, and Mata Sulakhni, wife of Guru Har Rai, receive special mention.

He used to supply goods to the imperial army and had the Mughal administration's authority to keep a contingent of armed men to guard his property, camels and carts etc. In any case, few merchants travelled without some sort of armed protection in those days. The fact that this Sikh devoted to *Guru-ghar* (Guru's house), came with a small armed force and stayed on for a few months, is relevant to this account.

He is described as "a devout Sikh of the Lubhana clan, was from village Tanda in Muzaffarbad district of Jammu and Kashmir. He had received Guru Har Rai in his home only 4 years earlier, during the Guru's visit to Kashmir in 1660."<sup>30</sup> According to Sikh tradition, when his cargo vessel got into difficulties at sea, he meditated on Guru Nanak's *Guru Jote* for support and also vowed to donate 500 *mohar*<sup>31</sup> (gold pieces) to the Guru.

His *Ardaas* (supplication) was answered. The vessel was saved. Makhan Shah took 500 *mohar* with him and set out to see the Guru on the *Gurgaddi* (Guru's seat) of Guru Nanak, and to fulfil his pledge. As guided by Sikhs on the way, he reached the village of Bakala on the Divali festival which was on 9 October 1664<sup>32</sup>. That was two months after Mata Sulakhni and the Delhi Sikhs had reached Bakala to formally pass on Guru responsibility for leading the *Sikh Panth* to Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Makhan Shah was looking for the true *Baba at Bakala* and was referred to the 22 claimants of that title! Amongst these was the leading claimant, Dhir Mall, backed by his *masand* (minister), Shihan.

The traditional version is that not knowing who the True Guru (Nanak IX) was, Makhan Shah thought that the Guru would be the *antarjami* (thought reader) and would himself ask for the exact donation amount he

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<sup>30</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, 1998 Vol 3 p25

<sup>31</sup> Different amounts are given by some sources. Nevertheless, it was significant amount.

Note about *daswandh* (tithes) donations (*chrrhavas*) by *sangats* and individuals: As today, these were used for community services like the *langar*, the community kitchen, and for congregation facilities. From the time of Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind, resources were needed for armed defence of Guru Nanak's mission.

However, the donations were also one of the main reasons for disputes about Guruship.

<sup>32</sup> *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, 1998 Vol 3 p 25



had vowed to the Guru. So, he started going around placing 2 *mohar* and bowing before each of the claimants to Guruship. Finally, when told that there was yet another member of the Guru family who lived in isolation and remained in meditation, he came to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He bowed and placed 2 *mohar* before the *True* Guru.

The Guru opened his eyes, smiled and asked Makhan Shah, “What about the rest of the 500 *mohar* you promised?” Makhan Shah, hardly able to contain his joy, placed the remaining amount before the Guru, bowed, went out and shouted from the rooftop that he had found the True Guru – “*Gur laadho re!*”

An alternative explanation of what followed is that Makhan Shah, due to his earlier meeting with Guru Har Rai when he received the Guru at his home in village Tanda, would have first paid his respects to Mata Sulakhni (Guru Har Rai’s wife and Guru Har Krishan’s mother) at Kiratpur. He would have been told by Mata Sulakhni that her son, Guru Har Krishan had formally passed on the Gurgaddi to his grand-uncle (*baba*) Tegh Bahadur a day before his demise in Delhi. Makahan Shah was a devout Sikh of the Guru. He would have known about the Guru family and the ongoing misguided claims to Guruship. On arriving at Bakala, he would have also been met by some Sikhs from the Delhi delegation.

Accordingly, himself convinced, he announced publicly that the “*Baba at Bakala*” was indeed, Tegh Bahadur, who was the True Guru of the Sikhs. “*Gur Laadho re!*” – I have found the Guru – he shouted from roof tops.

From the above account of Guruship succession, we also learn much about how the same historical events and evidence are diversely interpreted and recorded by historiographers and by the Sikh preachers and poets. At one extreme would be an account based on what is seen as factual evidence while the other extreme would be inclined towards folk lore, mysticism and miracles. Yet, a faith based account is important to get a balanced interpretation of events<sup>33</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> Those who rely entirely on non-Sikh Western and Persian sources or Mughal court sources, end up giving a one sided interpretation of events. This certainly seems to be the approach adopted by Indian NCERT historians. A faith based insight needs to be combined with, otherwise, an objective methodology for interpreting events and motivations.

Makhan Shah served Guru Tegh Bahadur and ensured that the *sangats* (congregations) were directed to him. He used his position and manpower to defeat unjust force directed at the Guru's person and the appropriation of his property by Dhir Mall's henchmen, the Masand Shihan and his men. Shihan fired a shot at Guru Tegh Bahadur but missed. His men plundered the Guru's house and took away many things.

They would have heard of the rich merchant Makhan Shah donating a large sum to Guru Tegh Bahadur while they were proffering Dhir Mall as the guru. Other Sikhs too would have made their traditional Divali donations to the Guru much to the chagrin of Dhir Mall and other pretenders to Gurdaddi. From the evidence before us about dates and announcements, it is almost certain that many devout Sikhs already knew by that year's Divali when Makhan Shah arrived with his family, that Guru Tegh Bahadur was seated on Guru Nanak's *Gaddi*. Yet, Dhir Mall's men did not accept that and took away the *charrava* (*sangat's* donations) by force and even attacked the Guru.

Unknown to the Guru, Makhan Shah and his men retaliated and brought back everything taken together with property belonging to Dhir Mall. The Guru instructed that everything should be returned to Dhir Mall, including the original Adi Granth, the Sikh Holy Scripture which was in the possession of Dhir Mall and kept at his house in Kartarpur.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> About Baba Ram Rai and Baba Dhir Mall, Prof. Piara Singh Padam has noted in the introduction to *Guru Kian Sakhian*, "...our historians do not tire of condemning Baba Ram Rai and Baba Dhir Mall. The truth is that they did err and were sidelined....However, our ignorance denied them their true place of honour. The truth is that in order to start separate *gaddis* (guruship-seats) in their names their leading *chelas* created division and antagonised the mainstream Sikh movement. That was the reason that Guru Gobind Singh instructed the Sikhs not to keep relations with their followers, the Ram Raayias and Dhir Mallias, because they had started siding with the administrators of the day [thereby betraying the cause of the Khalsa Panth]."

## First Preaching Tour after Guruship

On 22 November, 1664, Makhan Shah accompanied the Guru to Harmandar Sahib (Golden Temple) at Amritsar. However, the custodians did not allow entry<sup>35</sup>.

Guru Tegh Bahadur refused Makhan Shah's request to enter by force and for a short while stayed towards the north of the Harmandar Sahib complex where the location is commemorated as Gurdwara Tthada Sahib.

Accompanied by many Sikhs including Makhan Shah and his family, the Guru accepted a request from Bibi Harro of village Valla located a few miles west of Amritsar, to camp at her village. Her descendants still live in the village<sup>36</sup>.

Responding to Bibi Harro's prayer on behalf of the *sangat* of village Valla, the Guru, accompanied by many prominent Sikhs including Makhan Shah Lubhana and his family, stayed at the village. Realising their mistake and probably due to the loss of the generous donation they would have received from Sikhs like Makhan Shah, the priests of Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar, came to seek the Guru's forgiveness.

From village Valla the Guru toured and preached at the main Sikh centres (along the old Mughal Grand Trunk (GT) Road, of Tarn Taran, Khadur Sahib and Goindwal Sahib and proceeded through places like Khemkaran and Sultanpur towards the Malwa countryside. Heading south, the Guru passed through towns and villages such as Zira, Moga, Darauli and the Lakhi jungle (Bathinda and Faridkot districts) and reached

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<sup>35</sup> The holy site was under the control of Harji, son of Manohar Das also known as Meharwan, the son of Prithi Chand, the elder son of Nanak IV, Guru Ramdas. (EnS V4 p331, SMC p19)

The internal conflict about Guruship started with Prithi Chand who felt that by right Guruship after Nanak IV, Guru Ramdas, belonged to him and not his younger brother Guru Arjan.

<sup>36</sup> Sikh chronicles record the names of many prominent women in Sikh history who played important and extrovert social roles in the local communities. Some, during the Guru period and later, rose to great prominence.

Sabo Talwandi (Damdama Sahib) where the group stayed for about 15 days and dug a *sarowar* (holy pool).<sup>37</sup>

From there, at the request of a prominent Sikh Bhai Daggo the Guru went to Dhamtan in Haryana. Bhai Daggo was keen to make Dhamtan a centre of Sikhi<sup>38</sup>. Vaisakhi gathering was held here and hundreds from surrounding areas came to see the Guru and his Sikhs. From here the group visited places like Kharak, Khatkar, Tek and Kaithal and Kurkhetar (Thanesar). He preached against the use of tobacco to which the local people were addicted.

At Dhamtan, the Guru received news of the death in April that year of Raja Dip Chand, son of Raja Tara Chand of Bilaspur (Kiratpur was in this hill state). At the request of the Raja's widowed wife, Rani Champa, the Guru decided to visit the family at Bilaspur to condole with her. He reached Kiratpur on 6 May 1665 and set forth for Bilaspur within a few days on 13 May, with his mother, Mata Nanaki, late Guru Har Rai's wife Mata Sulakhni and some prominent Sikhs.

According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*<sup>39</sup> the Rani expressed a desire that the Guru should not leave Kiratpur area in Shivalik hills which was in her state. The Guru accepted her request and bought some land close to Kiratpur to lay the foundation of the village of Chakk Nanaki (now Anandpur Sahib) on 19 June, 1665 on the mound of Makhowal<sup>40</sup>.

Following this prolonged tour of Punjab from Amritsar with preaching stops at the most important places of Sikhi in Majha, Doaba, Malwa through Sabo Talwandi to Dhamtan in Haryana, and describing a curve towards the east and north, the Guru's train headed towards Kiratpur.

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<sup>37</sup> Guru Tegh Bahadur toured Malwa three times to 1673. This probably was the reason why Guru Gobind Singh had maximum support from the Malwa villages when he was being pursued by the Mughal army on leaving the fort of Anandpur in late 1705. Through the efficient news gathering system of the Mughal administration, news of the preaching tours of Guru Tegh Bahadur in the countryside were reaching the area administrators and the Emperor Aurungzeb at Delhi.

<sup>38</sup> Sakhi 33 of "*Malwa Desh Ratan*" and Sakhi 20 of "*Guru Kian Sakhian*".

<sup>39</sup> Saakhi 24

<sup>40</sup> The location of Chakk Nanaki, a few miles from Kiratpur, would have been chosen for strategic as well as family reasons. Also, Guru Hargobind had instructed Tegh Bahadur to leave Kiratpur.

This town in the Shivalik hills had been the base of the Guru family for nearly 30 years since Guru Hargobind left Kartarpur in 1635.

Makhan Shah remained with the Guru for this preaching tour and accompanied him till his return to Kiratpur in May 1665, a period of about 7 months, from where he took leave of the Guru on 6 May, and left for his home. The impression gained is that Makhan Shah played a key role in serving, stabilising and keeping a watchful eye on the continuity of Guru Nanak's mission through Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahadur. His timely intervention discouraged the imposters. Even Baba Dhir Mall appeared to accept the holy presence of Nanak *Jote* in Guru Tegh Bahadur as the true *Baba of Bakala* referred to by Guru Har Krishan before his departure from this world.

With this tour Guru Tegh Bahadur had been fully accepted as Nanak IX in the tradition of *Jyot Oha, jugat saee* (Same Guru Light – of Guru Nanak – and the same approach, method or manner<sup>41</sup>).

The Guru was moving around in the countryside with a large retinue including, as was customary those days, armed men e.g. those of Makhan Shah Lubhana, for protection of families and their luggage. The impression given could have been that of a largish party moving along and preaching “fear not frighten not” and “live and let live” universal message of Guru Nanak. Such information reports by local officials were causing alarm in Delhi.

Also, Aurungzeb had not forgotten that Nanak VII, Guru Har Rai and his armed Sikhs had sided with his older brother Dara Shikoh on the run after his defeat at the battle of Samugarh near Agra (29 May 1658).

It needs to be understood that the Mughals were invaders and were trying to rule vast areas and non-Muslim populations. First they had to subdue hundreds of rajas, powerful *jagirdars* (holders of fiefs), and tribal chiefs and then to make them pay tributes to meet the massive expenses of running the empire.

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<sup>41</sup> “*The same is the Divine Light and same is the method and mission. The King Nanak has again merely changed his body*”. Balwand and Satta, *Ramkali ki Var* SGGGS p966

Rebellions popped up everywhere and the imperial army was always on the move. Experiments of moderate and more tolerant shades of Islamic regime were tried by Akbar the Great and during periods of later regimes, but sooner or later they were bound to fail, because the underlying aim was subjugation of many peoples and qaums (sub-nationalities) and not equal rights for all.

Accepting everyone's right to live with dignity while enjoying full religious freedoms was not acceptable to Islamists seeking to convert all to Islam through ruthless methods. Mughal emperors needed the support of these religious fanatics while also aware that not all people of India were docile and some tribes were fiercely independent by temperament. There were such tribes in Punjab, the land of Five Rivers covering most of the area north-west of Delhi right up to the border of Afghanistan. Sikh Gurus were well aware of this also and knew that if the seed of Guru Nanak's egalitarian ideology of "fear not frighten not" fell on the right ground, it would surely sprout and bear fruit as a peoples' *halemi raj* in which no-one inflicted pain on another as envisaged by Nanak V, Guru Arjan.

Clash between Aurungzeb's cruelty as a ruthless ruler, after having put to death his own kith and kin who stood in his way and his religious bigotry, and the egalitarian liberating spirit of Guru Nanak's mission fearlessly preached by Guru Tegh Bahadur, was inevitable.

### **Tour of north-eastern India (October 1665 to end 1670)**

Gur Tegh Bahadur had returned to Punjab in 1664. Towards mid-1665, prominent Sikhs from Patna and Dhaka came to see the Guru and invited him to visit the Sikh congregations in those areas again. Such preaching tours revived the links of the regional people with the Guru and strengthened Sikh organisation and networking.

We also need to look at the importance of these extensive preaching tours by Guru Tegh Bahadur with long stops at the more important centres, in the context of the next phase of Sikh history leading up to the inevitable confrontation between the Khalsa of the Guru and the Mughal rulers – not just the Emperor at Delhi, but also the local Nawabs, rajas, jagirdars and landlords who ruled with an iron hand while living depraved life-styles. The cruelty of some like those who ruled from

Lahore and Sihind in Punjab is recorded in the blood stained pages of the Sikh history of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century.<sup>42</sup>

The Guru accepted the request of the Sikh delegation from the East and set out with his family and prominent Sikh preachers in October 1665. Following the regal *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) lifestyle of the Gurus since Guru Hargobind, the train included his wife, Gujri<sup>43</sup>, and Sikhs like Matti Das, Satti Das, Dial Das, Gawal Das, Gurdas, Sangat and Jettha and others. There is little doubt that he also had strong armed defence force for the security of his family and Sikhs, luggage, carts and animals.

The train went through Ropar, and many villages to reach the town of Saifabad (now Bahadur Garh) a few mile from Patiala, named after a Muslim nobleman devotee of the Guru, Nawab Saif Khan. He was related to the Emperor Shah Jahan. He presented a fine horse to the Guru which was named *Sri Dhar* by the Sikhs.

### **First arrest on 8 November 1665**

From Saifabad, the Guru reached Dhamtan passing through Sunam, Shajli and Lehragaga. Dhamtan had become an important Sikh centre due to the Guru's preaching visit about 6 months earlier. Once again hundreds of devotees came to see the Guru during the Divali festival. Reports of the Guru's movements and his popularity as a religious leader propogating the universal message of Sikh teachings were reaching Emperor Aurungzeb.

On hearing of this second visit to Dhamtan and the large gathering of the countryside people flocking to the Guru, Aurungzeb ordered his detention. According to *Bhat Vahi Jadobansian*, *Khaata Badtian*, Alam Khan Rohela was sent with a detachment to arrest the Guru and the main Sikh preachers Matti Das, Satti Das, Gawal Das, Gurdas Sangat and Dyal Das. (Matti Das, Satti Das and Dyal Das would be martyred with the

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<http://www.sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smsarticles/advisorypanel/gurmukhsinghsewauk/gurdwarashahidganjsinghsinghaniahalore.html>

<sup>43</sup> Given the clarification required about the exact date of birth of Gobind Das (later Guru Gobind Singh), it is a question for future research if Mata Gujri was already at Patna at this time. Patna had already become the Guru's family base for some years.

Guru in 1675.) The Guru and his Sikhs were arrested on 8 November 1665.<sup>44</sup>

Raja Jai Singh of Amber and his son Raja Ram Singh had close relations with the Mughals and they were also devotees of the *Gurughar* (Guru Nanak's House). When some Sikhs led by Chaupat Rai and Divan Dargha Mall met Rani Pushpa, the wife of Raja Jai Singh to secure the release of the Guru and the Sikhs, she assured them support and asked her son Raja Ram Singh to meet the Emperor. Both Raja Jai Singh and Raja Ram Singh had helped the Mughal Emperor and he accepted their request to place the Guru and the other Sikhs detained with him, under their care. The loyalties of the Rajput rajas were important for Aurungzeb, and, no doubt, grudgingly, he placed the Guru under the care of Raja Ram Singh on 13 December 1665.

### **Preaching tour from Delhi (16 December, 1665)**

It is significant that within three days, on 16 December, the Raja released the Guru, most probably with the request that he should go towards eastern parts of the Indian sub-continent, away from Delhi and Punjab. Aurungzeb would have heard of this tour of the Guru through the regional reporting network, but for strategic reasons decided not to take any action at the time.

However, it should be noted that *officially* the Guru had not been released and was still under detention and in the care of Raja Ram Singh by royal order. This was probably the reason for the Guru's detention from Agra mentioned by some historians (see later in this account).

The Guru and his leading Sikhs headed towards north-eastern parts of the Indian sub-continent. He selected his destinations so that established congregations of Guru Nanak in the towns and villages were visited and revived. Far from being discouraged by his detention, the Guru remained defiant as ever in his desire to spread the egalitarian message of Guru Nanak. Sooner or later, no matter how remote the

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<sup>44</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simaryiyay*, Sakhi Nos 13,14 & 15 p57



regions, reports of such preaching activities empowering the ordinary people against oppressive rule, were bound to reach the Emperor.

Leading Sikhs with the Guru's entourage covered large tracts around the main centres where the Guru's *vaheer* stopped for many days and weeks and preached to the people. For example, according to the *Bhat Vahi Jadobansian*, Matti Das and Satti Das were preaching at Hardwar by 21 April, 1666. The Guru's main group visited Mathura, Agra, Itawa along river Jamna, Kanpur along river Ganga, Fatehpur, Ilaahabad, Mirzapur, Banaras, Bodh Gaya (Bihar) and crossed the *Karamnash* river.

The Guru took a bath in this river defying the Brahmanic superstition that a bath in the river destroyed the accumulated credit of a person's good deeds! It is clear that the Guru preached against Hindu ritualism and Brahmanic practices. That is relevant in the context of his martyrdom for a belief system he did not subscribe to. In fact, his message to the masses was in line with Guru Nanak's condemnation of Brahmanic caste system and ritualism.

The Guru reached Patna along the River Ganges with his entourage in May 1666. From all accounts Patna had already become a centre for the Guru's mission for some years by this time. It seems probable that Mata Gurjri and the family settled here for many years since the earlier tour starting mid-1656. The Guru's internal household disputes mentioned by Sikh historians would be relevant to Mata ji's choice to settle down at Patna during (Guru) Tegh Bahadur's extensive *parchaar* tours. Patna as the Guru's family base, away from Punjab, made sense in view of Mughal vigilance also.

Many accounts in the Sikh tradition, including the birth and early childhood of Guru Gobind Singh, are centred around this city. In Patna the leading Sikhs were Raja Fateh Chand Maini, Ram Rai, Chain Sukh, Hira Nand, Murlidhar, Mehar Chand and Sangat Das.

From here, accepting the invitation of some leading Sikhs of Dhaka, the Guru left his family at Patna, and proceeded with other leading Sikh preachers, towards Dhaka. The Guru reached Bada Gaanv. This place remained a Sikhi centre under the care of Bhai Udo until 1723.

The Guru stopped at places like Bhagalpur, Sahibganj, and Raj Mahal, Malda and Pabna. Malda was a centre of Sufism. The Guru stayed here

for about a month and the Sufis discussed Sikh ideology with him. Next Murishdabad and on to Dhaka towards the middle of 1667, a Sikhi centre linked to Punjab through Sikh traders at the time. From Dhaka, the Guru visited Chittagong, Comilla and Sylhet.

## **Raja Ram Singh's expedition to Assam**

Later in 1668, Raja Ram Singh caught up with the Guru to seek his support. As ordered by Aurungzeb, from 6 January 1668, the Raja was on a military expedition to subdue the Ahom people of Assam.

The impression gained is that Aurungzeb was not happy with the Raja and sent him on this dangerous mission to a remote rebellious region. From Aurungzeb's angle, if the Rajput Raja succeeded in his mission, Aurungzeb would recover the lost territory in Assam, and if the Raja died in the effort, the shrewd Aurungzeb would take possession of his home state!

Raja Ram Singh had released the Guru on 16 December 1665 without consulting Aurungzeb, who also suspected the Raja to be behind the escape of the great Maratha chief Shivaji (1627-1680) and his son Sambhaji from the Gwalior fort. When Ram Singh was sent to Assam, he knew that the Guru was still in that region and met him to seek his help. The Assamese tribes were known to practise black magic and the Guru's presence was re-assuring for the Raja's superstitious troops.

Guru Nanak was still remembered and revered in these parts after his preaching visits which established *sangats* (congregations) in many towns. Guru Tegh Bahadur was well received by the local people. Travel was slow and difficult and the Guru spent many days at each stop spreading Guru Nanak's universal message.

By the end of 1665, the Ahom chief Chakradhvaj Sehn (**Singh**) had retaken most of the areas in Assam conquered by the Mughal generals and extended his reach up to Guhati.

By the time Raja Ram Singh met the Guru at Dhaka probably towards the second half of 1668, the Guru would have been preparing to return to Patna. However, ever ready to make any sacrifice for others, the Guru agreed to accompany the Raja on such a prolonged and perilous

expedition instead of returning immediately to Patna. Raja Ram Singh was a Sikh of the Guru and had secured the Guru's freedom to move around, albeit, officially, while still in his custody.

The Guru and the Raja crossed river Brahmaputra towards the end of 1668 to reach Dhubri visited by Guru Nanak. The Raja stopped at Rangamati and went on to surround Gohati. The Guru was able to negotiate peace between the two sides and stopped further bloodshed. Both sides built a mound called Teghpur or Tegh Parbat to commemorate the peace treaty.

Raja Ram Rai of Gaoripur in eastern Bengal came for the *darshan* (holy sight) of the Guru. At his request the Guru prayed for the fulfillment of his wish for a son. The prayer was answered and many years later, his son, Raja Ratan Rai came to Anandpur with his mother Rani Swaranmati to see Guru Gobind Singh. He brought many presents including a rare and trained elephant which was named "Parsaadi Haathi", and a five-in-one (panj-kalaa) multiple-use weapon.

Another year had passed and by the end of 1669, the Guru, who had been getting reports of Aurungzeb's religious persecution, decided to return to Punjab via Delhi. Raja Ram Singh stayed on with his army to ensure continued stability in the region.

According to *Guru Kian Sakhian* (Sakhi 25), the Guru sent Divan Matti Das to Patna with the instructions that the family was to proceed to Lakhnaur (near Ambala), while he first went to Delhi and later, rejoined the family at Lakhnaur. According to other accounts he went to Patna first for a short while and then proceeded to Delhi. While at Patna, the Guru decided to return to Punjab in two groups as above.

On the way to Delhi, he was brought under guard from Agra to Delhi to be released later through the intercession of the Guru's Muslim disciple Saif Khan, who was related to Aurungzeb. Either the Guru was actually detained for 2 months and 13 days at Delhi, or it took that long for those like Saif Khan to get the royal order which had originally placed him under Raja Ram Singh's care, withdrawn by the Emperor. It is clear that the Guru had to stay on in Delhi for that period to get this matter cleared. Raja Ram Singh's success in his military mission and the Guru's part in negotiating peace would have also influenced Aurungzeb's decision – at least for the time being.

Records show that the Guru was in Delhi on 20 June 1670 at Bhai Kalyana's *dharamsal*<sup>45</sup>.

With the Guru were Nawab Saif Khan, and Sikhs Mati Das, Sati Das, Jettha and Durga. The Guru stayed at Bhai Kalyana's *dharamsal*, where Raja Ram Singh's mother Rani Pushpa, came for the Guru's *darshan* and to hear about the success of her son's mission in Assam.

Meanwhile, the family group which had started from Patna sometime after the Guru left, reached Lakhaur by 13 September, 1670, after stops at Ayudhia, Lakhnow, Nanamata, Hardwar, Pehova (in Haryana) and Kurukshetra. Mata Gujri's elder brother, Mehar Chand lived in this village. Sikhs from far and wide came to see child Gobind Das.

From Delhi, the Guru and his Sikhs reached Lakhnaur after stopping at Rohtak, Kurukshetra, Pehova and other Sikh centres. Saif Khan accompanied the Guru to ensure his safety<sup>46</sup>.

The Guru, now united with the rest of his family including Gobind Das and Sikhs who reached Lakhnaur by the longer route, stayed there for some time. In view of the attempts to portray Guru Tegh Bahadur as some sort of an opt-out ascetic by some preachers, it would be educational to note that the Guru's daily routine at Lakhnaur is described by Koer Singh in his *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* at p 42 as follows:

*(Broad translation):*

*The True Guru got up early in the morning (bhor jagain Satgur avtaari)  
He recited Gurbani, did Naam simran and kattha/held discourse with the Sikhs  
(Potthi Granth dharain nij cheetah. Sikhvain Sikhian bhed puneeta.)*

*After that he paid full attention to hand-held and missile weapons. (Shastar  
astar pun pooj kraava.)*

*Next he had food (Pun bhojansala meh jaahi.).....*

*He rested and at the same time he also met and spoke to the [visiting]  
Sikhs/sangats [This also gave the opportunity to keep informed of what was  
going in distant places in India]..... (Paiky kichh karayn araam Dyala. Pun  
Sikhian kahayn bachan tatkala.....)*

*They took the Guru for an outing and riding and hunting with dogs and hawks  
etc. Fearlessly, they went into the forest where there were many wild animals  
and they hunted bears and varieties of deer. (Laey Prabh ko ta swar karavay(n).*

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<sup>45</sup> *Dharamsal* is a place of worship and for rest of travelers or visitors.

<sup>46</sup> *Muasar-i-Alamgir* and the Guru's *Hukamnamas* to the sangats published by Dr Ganda Singh.

*Jai akhet so bibidh machaavay(n). Nirbhai jai(n) tahin bann maahi. Sunay sakaar jo adhik jahan hi. Suan sichaanan let apaara, Maaray reesh rojh jhankara.*

*In the evening they returned for the evening religious service which included [Gurbani] singing in sangat (Nis Kao sadan apnay aavay(n). Beh jag karaj ko rall gaavayn).*

From Lakhnaur the family visited Saifabad, Lahal, Lang, Mullowal, Sekha and Thikriwala, before arriving at Malha to see the Guru's sister Bibi Viro. Malha is now in the District of Muktsar. Bibi Viro's husband, Sadhu Ram, had accompanied the Guru during his long tour. Her sons, Sango Shah and Ganga Ram were delighted to see their father and *maternal uncle (mama)* Guru. The Guru stayed here for a month and went to Kartarpur and on to Bakala. Here the Guru stayed for about one and a half years till early 1672. *Sangats* came from distant places.

From Bakala, as requested by his son, Gobind Das, and also by a deputation from Rani Champa, the Guru arrived at Chakk Nanaki (Anandpur Sahib) in early 1672. Due to the Guru's presence with hundreds of Sikhs and *sangat* representatives visiting the Guru, the township started growing. Bhai Mani Ram (later Bahi Mani Singh following initiation as *Khalsa* by Guru Gobind Singh) came for the Guru's *darshan* around the Vaisakhi festival. The Guru visited Rani Champa at Bilaspur.

The following year, in 1673, a large gathering of Sikhs took place at Chakk Nanaki (now Anandpur Sahib). Such reports of the Guru's ever increasing popularity were reaching the Emperor. The Sikh organisation was growing through the area *sangats*. The *sangat* representatives were bringing in large donations (tithe called *daswandh*, being one tenth of one's earnings) for community kitchen and causes.

## **Tour of Bangar Des<sup>47</sup>**

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<sup>47</sup> The country north-west of Delhi was broadly named with reference to the naturally flowing rivers of the great undivided Punjab, the land of Five Rivers. Malwa and Bangar are areas south of river Sutlej. Broadly Malwa is the area between River Sutlej and the seasonal Ghaghar river and includes Ferozepur, Ludhiana, Patiala, Nabha, Jind and Faridkot. Bangar includes Haryana areas of Hisar, Rohtak and Karnal. With the exception of districts closest to Sutlej, these were mostly dry regions. That is no longer the case due to the canal irrigation networks.

From the middle of 1673, the Guru started another preaching tour of Malwa and Bangar countryside.

He set out for this final preaching tour of his life to strengthen Sikh organisation and returned towards the end of 1674. In addition to prominent Sikhs, the Guru took his wife Gujri and son Gobind Das with him<sup>48</sup>.

From Chak Nanaki, the first stop was Saifabad (now Bahadurgarh) where Saif Khan kept the Guru's entourage for 3 months. Saif Khan had become a devotee of the Guru finding spiritual peace in his company.

After Saifabad, the Guru stopped at the place where the city of Patiala is now located and Gurdwaras Dukh Nivaran Sahib and Moti Baag commemorate the visit. The group was at Moolowal about 80 KM west of Patiala for 5 days. Next on the route were the villages of Sekha, Handhai, Dhilvan, Mysar Khana, Pandharian, Alisher, Joga, Bhupali, Khiva and other villages to reach Sumao.

A large group of the *Sangat* of Kabul met the Guru here after being told at Chakk Nanaki that the Guru was in this area. Next Khiala, Maud, Tahla Sahib and Talwandi Sabo which had become an important Sikh centre due to the earlier tour. People came to see the Guru in large numbers from the surrounding districts. *Guru-Sar Sarovar* (tank) was dug. From here the group went to Batthinda, Sulisar, Bada Pind, Bashoana, Gobindpura, Gaga, Gurna, Makrod and other villages to reach the well established Sikhi centre of Dhamtan in the Jind district.

The Guru returned to Chakk Nanaki towards the end of 1674 via Kaithal and many villages in Sirsa and Hisar.

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<sup>48</sup> Gobind Das as Guru Gobind Singh would return to these areas many years later, hotly pursued by a strong Mughal force up to Muktsar. There the Mughals were dealt a crushing blow by a few Sikhs and sent back without achieving their objective of capturing or killing the Guru.

# Part 3

## Martyrdom

### Religious persecution by Aurungzeb

**“Some remain fearful [of their sins] even they be kings.”**

SGGS p 913

Emperor Aurungzeb, full name Muhi Ud-din Muhammad Aurungzeb (1618-1707) became Emperor on 21 July 1658. He had “waded through a river of blood”<sup>49</sup> to come to power. He assumed the title of *Alamgir* (conqueror of the world) and ruled for 50 years from 1658 to 1707.

He imprisoned his sick father Shah Jahan<sup>50</sup> in Agra Fort on 18 June 1658 where the latter passed away in February 1666. In the war of succession he persuaded his brother Murad to join him against his oldest brother Dara Shukoh who was defeated at Fatehabad near Agra. Dara was captured later, imprisoned and executed on 30 August 1659. During the celebration following the victory at Fatehabad, Murad was captured and imprisoned in the Gwalior fort on 5 July 1658. He was executed on 4 December 1661 for killing a religious person.

The fourth unfortunate sibling, Shah Sujah ran away from Assam in fear of Aurungzeb and died some time later. Aurungzeb got his sister Roshnara poisoned. Dara’s son, Sulaiman Shukoh was also not spared, nor his own oldest son Sultan Mohamad. That is not all, but suffice to say that the ruthlessness of Aurungzeb to grab the throne of Delhi had no limit.

He was fond of having religious discourses with men of religion. He was using Islam to justify his cruel regime in the eyes of the zealot Muslims. He had eliminated own father and siblings to grab the throne of Delhi. It is possible that his tortured soul found some solace in religious discourses and the propagation of Islam by any means. It is not unusual

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<sup>49</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p70

<sup>50</sup> “On September 6, 1657 A. D. Shah Jahan fell ill , of strangury [painful urinary problem] and constipation.” Jadunath Sarkar, *Aurungzeb* p.47 quoted by Dr Trilochan Singh, *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyre* , p 97.

for sinners to deceive themselves and the world by hiding behind the garb of piety and religion<sup>51</sup>.

To quote Harbans Singh, “The consciousness of this guilt only sharpened his [Aurangzeb’s] religious prejudice, and it drove him to the harshest measures he could devise against the non-Muslim population. By this policy he wished to please the Muslim orthodoxy and win reprieve for the crimes he had committed to gain the crown.”<sup>52</sup>

To remain in power, he adopted religious fanaticism of the extreme type sanctioned by those like Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1564-1624) of the *Naqshbandi* order. He was given the honorific title of *Mujaddid-i-Alf-i-Sani*, meaning the savior of the second millennium of the Islamic era. The Mujaddid was “Extremely saddened and angry” by Akbar’s tolerance of non-Islamic religions. He “got the divine order that he was appointed *mujaddid* (savior) of Islam in the second millennium.”

“By the end of Akbar’s rule, Mujaddid started the revival of Islam in a series of letters and lectures. Most of the letters, addressed to the Mughal officialdom, are written to Sheikh Farid Bukhari, who was given the highest post of *Muratzakhan* and the title of *Chheh Hazari*<sup>53</sup> by Emperor Jahangir as soon as he ascended the throne. This Muratzakhan was a devout follower of Mujaddid....Jehangir had handed over Guru Arjan to Muratzakhan to torture him and kill him.”<sup>54</sup>

In 1669 Aurungzeb ordered all provincial governors “to destroy with a willing hand the schools and the temples of the infidels and put an entire stop to their religious practices and teaching.”<sup>55</sup>

*“He destroyed some Hindu temples even in times of peace. In early 1670 he ordered that all grants of revenue-free land given to non-Muslims should be*

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<sup>51</sup> “The sinner like the deer hunter bows twice as much as others (showing piety and feigned humility). What can be achieved by bowing the head when the man goes with a impure (guilty) mind ?” (*Apraadhi doona nivae...*) SGGS p70

<sup>52</sup> Harbans Singh, p70

<sup>53</sup> Literally, one entitled to command 6 thousand troops.

<sup>54</sup> Kapur Singh Sirdar, *Saachi Sakhi*, English translation by Satjit Wadhva, pp 92-93

<sup>55</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p70



resumed [?]....In 1679 the emperor re-imposed the *jizya*<sup>56</sup> after more than a century of its abolition by Akbar. That this order too was implemented in the Punjab is evident from a document laying down the amount of *jizya* to be collected from all three classes of assesses in a village.<sup>57</sup>

Aurangzeb faced revolts right from the start of his reign. The Jat *jamidars* (land owners) of Talpat near Mathura led a revolt by 20,000 peasants in 1669 and in 1672 the Satnamis revolted in the *pargana* of Narnaul about 120 kilometers from Delhi. The Maratha chief, Shivaji, established his own kingdom in 1674.<sup>58</sup>

Aurangzeb's brutality and fanaticism had no bounds and increased as he faced more revolts in the country. In desperation, he looked for the ultimate solution in an extreme form of Islam. His tormented soul sought refuge in religious fervour and in a vision of one-religion Islamic state.

He especially targeted the Khamiri Brahmins for conversion to Islam with the willing support of Iftikhar Khan, his bigoted governor of Kashmir from 1671 to 1675. The logic was to convert the upper class Brahmins who were at the apex of the Hindu caste system, so that others would follow.

Iftikhar terrorised the Brahmins and thousands were forcefully converted to Islam and made to discard their sacred threads, the *jeneus*. These were collected and dispatched to Aurungzeb as proof of mass conversions and, therefore, the rumour amongst the non-Muslims that Aurungzeb received a *maund* and a quarter in weight of discarded *jeneus* daily<sup>59</sup> from around the country. Iftikhar excelled in this service for the Emperor's forced proselytization programme sanctioned by those, for example, who belonged to Sheikh Ahmad of Sirhind's school of Islamic thought.

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<sup>56</sup> Per capita tax imposed on non-Muslims by some Islamic states before 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is possible that the Taliban and ISIS are trying to re-impose it.

<sup>57</sup> Irfan Habib, *Agrarian System of Mughal India (1526-1707)*, Asia Publishing House, Bombay, 1963, 119-20 quoted by Jagtar Singh Grewal, *The Sikhs of Punjab*, p 67

<sup>58</sup> J S Grewal, *The Sikhs of Punjab*, p 68.

<sup>59</sup> A unit of weight in India varying greatly depending on locality, from 11 to 37.4 kg (the latter being the official weight.) Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, p48 "Sava man tootat jeneu ek dins manjhaar".

## The Brahmins seek the Guru's help

The Brahmins, led by those from Kashmir, were desperate. They had seen over the centuries that while they could mislead the ordinary people with Vedic mythology, superstition, idol worship and the *mantras* (magic formulas), the Mughals and other Islamic invaders from the North-West were not impressed by such practices nor stopped by the *mantras*.

However, the Brahmins were well aware of the great influence of Guru Nanak and the later Gurus had in the sub-continent amongst the Hindus and the Muslims. They were aware that all, including the kings and princes, bowed to Baba Nanak, revered as the *Guru of the Hindus and the Pir of the Muslims*. Guru Nanak and the saint-warrior Gurus, Har Gobind and Har Rai, had visited the valley of Kashmir and there were Sikh *sangats* in the area. Influential devotees of the Gurus, Sikhs like the trader, Makhan Shah Lubhana, were from Kashmir.

In desperation and unable to invoke their numerous gods and goddesses, one leading Pandit made it known that in a dream he had been told by Lord Siva to go to Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahadur for protection. Harbans Singh<sup>60</sup>, quotes from P. N. K. Bamzai's *A History of Kashmir*:

*Iftikhar Khan...was using force to convert the Pandits of Kashmir to Islam. Some pious men amongst the Pandits then met and decided to go to Amarnath and invoke the mercy of Siva there for deliverance from the tyrannies of the bigot. At the Amarnath cave, one of the Pandits saw Lord Siva in a dream who told him to go to Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, in the Punjab and ask for his help to save the Hindu religion. He spoke to his companions about the revelation. About 500 proceeded to Anandpur where Guru Tegh Bahadur was living.*

The rumours of a delegation of leading Kashmiri Brahmins going to Guru Tegh Bahadur would have attracted a large number of people under threat of forced conversions to Islam. It is probable that many followed the main delegation. The impression gained could have been of a large number – 500 according to Bamzai – going to Anandpur (Chakk Nanaki).

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<sup>60</sup> Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p71

As Harbans Singh writes, whether a group of 500 or 16 according to *Bhatt Vahi Talaunda*, reached Anandpur on May 25, 1675 led by Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt<sup>61</sup>, who had been the tutor of Guru Tegh Bahadur's son, Gobind Das. It is also probable that Kirpa Ram persuaded the Pandits to seek help from Guru Tegh Bahadur instead of relying on mythical gods and miracles. "He was well aware of the potentialities of the Sikh movement to stand up to the Mughal tyranny."<sup>62</sup>

The Pundit's dream of seeing the vision of Lord Siva (or a visiting *sadhu*<sup>63</sup> mistaken as Lord Siva) would have been a convenient form of persuasion which also gave credit to Siva for showing the way!

There were Brahman representatives in this delegation from Kashmir as well as many Hindu centres in India like Hardwar, Mathura, and Kurukashetra.

## The Cause

Guru Tegh Bahadur listened attentively to the pleas of these hapless Brahmins made helpless by their reliance on myths and miracles, and the societal caste divisions. Their belief systems rooted in the age of darkness (*dhundh* or ignorance) had drained a whole nation of any moral courage to stand up to injustice and oppression.

The Guru had been well aware of the policy of increasing religious intolerance of the Mughal emperors after Akbar. His own extensive missionary tours taking the message of universal brotherhood, equality and justice to remote parts of India were a bold response to that policy of forced *unity* through conversions to one religion.

In fact, it was on hearing about Aurungzeb's extreme form of religious persecution that the Guru had returned to Punjab from north-eastern India. Having witnessed the battles forced on his father, Guru Hargobind,

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<sup>61</sup> He was son of Aru Ram, a Sarasvat Brahman of Matan, located 65 km east of Srinagar. Aru Ram had met Guru Har Rai during his visit to Kashmir in 1660. Later, Kirpa Ram took Amrit and became Kirpa *Singh*, one of the martyrs of the epic Battle of Chamkaur. Also, *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi* 28 p78. Footnote refers to Sewa Singh's *Shaheed Bilas* p 60.

<sup>62</sup> Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p71

<sup>63</sup> *Suraj Parkash* p. 485

by the Mughal rulers and having himself been arrested by Aurungzeb due to his preaching tours, he also realised that Guru Nanak's mission was on a head-on collision with the evil empire.

As he listened to the pleas of the Kashmiri Brahmins for deliverance from the cruelty of Aurungzeb, Guru Tegh Bahadur would have reflected on the mission his father, Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind, had entrusted him with before his demise in 1644.

Following years of meditation and extensive countryside tours to awaken and liberate the spirit of the downtrodden people, the time for the final delivery of his mission had come. The Guru was going to fight a battle on behalf of those of a belief system which he himself did not subscribe to, a belief system the basics of which Guru Nanak had rejected.

Guru Tegh Bahadur reflected on how best to take up the case of the Hindus of India with Aurungzeb while the Brahmin delegation camped at Chakk Nanaki (Anandpur). Due to their religious qualms about food, there is mention of a Brahmin cook, Ganga Dhar Kaul<sup>64</sup> (also known as Gangu Brahman) being employed to prepare and serve them food.

This cook was the Kashmiri Gangu Brahmin who came with the deputation, and later, betrayed the Guru's family by turning informer and getting Mata Gujri and the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sahibzaday (princes) Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh, arrested at his village Kherhi near the town of Ropar. He had settled there following migration from Kashmir some years after Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom.

While the Kashmiri Brahmins were received with full hospitality and awaited the Guru's decision, he remained in deep thought. His son, Gobind Das, asked him the reason for his pensive mood. The Guru's response to his son (and probably those around him) deserves deep reflection about the Sikhi concept of martyrdom.

In 1999, the *Pingalwara* at Amritsar published an essay by S. Narain Singh with the title, "*It is the man and his cause that make him martyr.*"

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<sup>64</sup> Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p 62

To quote, "...dying in itself is not a worthy aim to be extolled. Human life is a precious gift of God, not to be thrown off purposelessly."

Firstly the cause espoused has to be just. Secondly, the community standing and purity of soul (*pavittar atma*) of the person who champions that cause is relevant for maximum impact.<sup>65</sup> Finally, martyrdom is the outcome of the confrontation between good and evil so that the objective of evil is defeated by the invincible martyr, who stands firm for the just cause to the last breath.

In the *Sikhi* tradition, martyrdom is not self-inflicted death through self-immolation.

Martyrdom is a consequence of the struggle between the forces of evil and the fearless warrior for good, who remains unconquered to the end i.e. does not bow to the will of evil, but abides by the Will of the Creator Being (*Bhana*) while remaining true to self. The ultimate victory is that of truthful conduct, justice and the righteous principle being upheld, and not the fear of death. Life is given but the just cause is not compromised or surrendered.<sup>66</sup>

## Who should take up the cause?

For Guru Tegh Bahadur, the cause to oppose oppression and bigotry was just. The quest was for a saintly person, the *pavittar atma*, universally revered by all in the Indian subcontinent, who would confront the bigoted Emperor Aurungzeb and, if required, sacrifice own life to uphold the principle of religious freedom.<sup>67</sup> For only the martyrdom of such a person would awaken the spirit of freedom in the ordinary people. Only such martyrdom would disperse the clouds of forced "unity" (*ekta*)

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<sup>65</sup> Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, p49

<sup>66</sup> The lessons taught by the two Guru Martyrs, Nanak V, Guru Arjan and Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahadur need to be remembered in the context of the true *Sikhi* tradition of martyrdom, which is distinct from the earlier Semitic tradition. For fuller discussion about martyrdom in Sikhi see the author's Sikhnet article *Martyrdom (Shaheedi) in Sikhi Tradition* at link: <https://www.sikhnet.com/news/martyrdom-shaheedi-sikhi-tradition>

<sup>67</sup> "The Guru Answered: 'Grave are the burdens the earth bears. She will be redeemed only if a truly worthy person comes forward to lay down his head.'" Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10 p49

aimed at creating one religio-centric totalitarian state at the expense of freedom of religion and the rich human diversity<sup>68</sup>.

Gobind Das too sat with his father and thought about this question posed by his father. Bold and forthright as ever, he spoke out aloud and told his father that the *Jote* of Guru Nanak was in him, and that he was the worthiest person in India to confront Emperor Aurungzeb in the final duel between good and evil. That was precisely the hope with which the Kashmiri Brahmins had approached the Guru (as indeed, their own Lord Siva had told one of them in his dream).

Gobind Das had reconfirmed their faith in the Guru, that he was the one and only saint-warrior of India who could save the Hindu religion by standing up for the universal principle of freedom of religion. Such an assurance from young Gobind Das at this critical and historic juncture also proved his own worthiness to receive the Guru Light (*Jote*) of Nanak. Guru Tegh Bahadur was pleased.

The struggle between the bigotry of Aurungzeb and the righteous cause taken up by Guru Tegh Bahadur, was not unequal. For, "Whereas the emperor could use the power of the state in support of his policy, the Guru could rely on moral courage inherited from a long line of illustrious predecessors to defend the claims of conscience."<sup>69</sup>

So the issue was resolved when the Guru's own son, Gobind Das, agreed with the Brahmins of Kashmir that the Guru on Guru Nanak's *Gurgaddi* (Guru's throne) Guru Tegh Bahadur, was the only person who was qualified to successfully confront the bigoted Emperor Aurungzeb. The Guru assured the Brahmins that he would take up their cause with Aurungzeb.

It was not a *challenge* to Aurungzeb through the Kashmiri Brahmins as some writers suggest, but an expression of intent to discuss his policy of forced conversions. The line taken was that if Aurungzeb could persuade the Guru that his policy of converting India to Islam was the

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<sup>68</sup> About the forced "unity" of Aurungzeb through a totalitarian state, the great poet Santokh Singh lamented in *Gurpartap Suryauday* that the clouds of [suffocating and forced] *ekta* (unity) were descending on humanity. Regrettably, the extreme form of *Hindutva* in today's India is also a reminder of the same type of forced unity at the expense of diversity.

<sup>69</sup> J S Grewal, *The Sikhs of Punjab*, p72

right one, and thereby convert him to Islam, then others were likely to follow him as the champion of their cause. On the other hand, if Aurungzeb failed in doing that he should return to a moderate rule and allow people to follow their own diverse religious paths.

In the background was also the popular belief that it was *Baba Nanak*, regarded as the “*Guru of the Hindus and the Pir of the Muslims*” whose blessing the Mughal Babar had sought to become the ruler of India. So the challenge before the successor of Babar i.e. Aurungzeb, was obvious if he wished to convert all India to Islam. All he had to do was to convert, the successor of Guru Nanak who was also regarded as the “Guru of the Hindus”, to Islam.

That was the message which, according to Sikh tradition, the Pandits of Kashmir took to the Emperor. They left Chak Nanaki (Anandpur Sahib) content that the Guru would keep his word and save them from the bigotry of Aurungzeb. Traditional accounts tell us that Aurungzeb was satisfied on receiving this message. He felt that his objective would be achieved soon and looked forward to meeting the Guru.

The die was cast for a confrontation between *Babar ke* (those of Babar) and *Babay ke* (those of Baba Nanak)<sup>70</sup>. This final struggle between religious bigotry and religious freedom, lasted about a hundred years before the evil empire was toppled and a people’s Khalsa Raj was established in Punjab, the land of five rivers i.e. most of the area north and west of Delhi up to the border of Afghanistan.

It needs to be remembered that the primary objective of the Guru was to confront Aurungzeb with his evil deeds including mass murder of thousands in the name of one religion. The primary aim of the Guru was not to intentionally “seek martyrdom”. However, it was almost certain that Aurungzeb would not change his policy of religious persecution and the Guru, following in the footsteps of his martyr grandfather, Guru Arjan, would give his life but not his belief in the principle that all had the right to practise own religion. Freedom to be able to practise own religion without fear of persecution was also an essential component of human

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<sup>70</sup> Ratan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash*, builds on this theme of “Babar ke and Babay ke” in his 18<sup>th</sup> century history of the Sikhs: That the tenure of the Mughal rule depended on the Mughals keeping their promise to rule with justice for all.

dignity. Those who practised own religion in secret also became cowards at heart and betrayed own preceptor (*guru*), people (*qaum*) and way of life.

Aurangzeb was receiving regular reports about what went on at Chakk Nanaki (Anandpur). He had been kept continually aware of the Guru's preaching tours. Guru Tegh Bahadur's "*efforts to mobilize the people to a new socio-religious consciousness was taken as a threat by the authoritarian regime of Aurangzeb which was midway through its proselytization program*"<sup>71</sup>. Aurangzeb was told of the swelling numbers of the Guru's followers and the vast increase in the resources from *sangats*' donations, which could pose a serious threat to the empire.<sup>72</sup>

*"The intelligence reports linking Guru Tegh Bahadur's generating a new enthusiasm amongst the people to the Pathan leader Hafiz Adam of Banoor's movement (which was considered subversive of law and order) for which he was banished in 1642, was sinister in character."*<sup>73</sup>

Guru Tegh Bahadur's *intent* to take up the cause of basic human right to practise own religion, albeit, at that time in the context of the Hindus of India led by the Brahmins of Kashmir under immediate threat of forced conversions, was conveyed to Aurangzeb.

## **Aurangzeb at Hasan Abdal**

Emperor Aurangzeb was in the process of suppressing a rebellion by Afghan tribes near the north-west frontier provinces of the Indian subcontinent and was still at Hasan Abdal near the border on his way back to Delhi. Earlier, on his way to the north-west, he had passed through Punjab when Guru Tegh Bahadur was on a preaching tour of the Malwa districts nearby. Most probably, he had already made up his mind to sort out this growing threat to his totalitarian regime when he

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<sup>71</sup> Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p 61.

<sup>72</sup> Syed Ghulam Husain Khan in his *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* quoted by Sangat Singh p61.

<sup>73</sup> Sangat Singh pp 61-2



returned to Delhi. He ordered the arrest of Guru Tegh Bahadur while still at Hasan Abdal.

Based on more recent research, there is little doubt that Aurungzeb issued an order to the Nawab of Sirhind for the arrest of the Guru from Hasan Abdal. However, this royal order was not announced publicly but passed by the Nawab to the *Kotwal* (the local commander of a police-station) Mirza Nur Muhammad Khan of Ropar. Chak Nanaki was in Ropar district.

## Final preparations to go to Delhi

The Guru prepared for his departure from Chak Nanaki. Despite certain death which awaited him, he was going to keep his promise to the Kashmiri Brahmins. To keep one's promise and not to betray trust is a sacred principle associated with Guru Tegh Bahadur's name by the bard, Bhat Kesho.<sup>74</sup> There was much to be done before he finally left to meet the Emperor at Agra or Delhi, the old and the new capitals of the Mughal Emperor where Aurungzeb lived when he was not on campaigns.

The Guru completed his briefings for continuing the mission of Guru Nanak. Prominent Sikhs were consulted on the final arrangements. The Guru's wife, Mata Gujri, accepted the Guru's decision as the Will of God (*Bhana*). Most probably, the Guru apprised her of what lay ahead for her. She was destined to endure great hardship and make further sacrifices to the end of her life<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> Composition attributed to Bhat Kesho with opening line, "Chit charan kamal ka aasra...." sung at Sikh weddings.

<sup>75</sup> Guru Hargobind's promise to his wife, Mata Nanaki, that not only would her son, Tegh Bahadur, sit on the throne of Guruship when the time came, but that he would perform a truly unique noble deed, was about to be fulfilled. As destiny would have it, two women in the Guru family wished for Guruship for those close to them, and were granted their wishes. The first was Bibi Bhani, the daughter of Guru Amardas, Nanak III, and the wife of Guru Ramdas, Nanak IV. The second was Mata Nanaki, wife of Guru Hargobind, Nanak VI. The sons of both, Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur, respectively, were martyred. This is the remarkable story of the path of *Sikhi* which demands the followers' head, as forewarned by Guru Nanak.

The Guru blessed his Sikhs and three of them asked to accompany him to Delhi. These were his ministers: Dewan Mati Das, Sati Das and Dyal Das. After one month and thirteen days following the departure of the Kashmiri delegation, having made due arrangements, he anointed Gobind Das as the next Guru after him on 8 July, 1675<sup>76</sup>. Three days later, on 10 July 1675, accompanied by the three Sikhs as above, he set out to meet Emperor Aurungzeb.

## The arrest

After a short stop at Kiratpur to meet the rest of the Guru family, on 11 July, 1675 the Guru and the three Sikhs crossed river Sirsa. From the latest evidence based on *Guru Kian Sakhian* and other sources as interpreted by eminent scholars, there is now little doubt that the Guru and his three Sikh companions were arrested at village Malikpur Ranghran on 12 July 1675, kept at Sirhind for about four months under torturous conditions in an attempt to convert them to Islam, and then taken to Delhi by 5 November, 1675.

According to Sakhi number 29 (*Guru Kian Sakhian* p 80) and *Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi, Khata Jalhanay Balaonto(n) ka*:

“Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru....was arrested by Nur Muhammad Khan Mirza, of the Ropar police post, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of Savan, 1732/July 12, 1675, at village Malikpur Ranghran, parganah Ghanaula , and sent to Sirhind. With him were arrested Diwan Mati Das and Sati Das, sons of Hira Mall Chhibbar, and Dayal Das, son of Mai Das. For four months they were kept in custody at Bassi Pathanan. The tyrants tortured the Guru a great deal. The Guru accepted God's Will.”<sup>77</sup>

The Guru was taken to Sirhind and placed in captivity to be converted to Islam by Shaikh Saifuddin Ahmad Sirhindi (successor of Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi, the *Mujaddid Alif Sani*) through *persuasion*. That included reasoning and offer of rewards and, failing that, physical torture. Some Sikh writers (e.g. Dr Trilochan Singh<sup>78</sup>) have confused this Shaikh of Sirhind with Nawab Saifuddin of Saifabad, the Guru's devotee and

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<sup>76</sup> Reference: *Bhat Vahi Tolanda, Pargana Jind* and *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi no 28: Guruship was handed over to Gobind Das on 8 Haar Samat 1732.

<sup>77</sup> Translation by Harbans Singh p.72. Also account by Kesar Singh Chhibar, *Bansawli Nama*, verse 9.

<sup>78</sup> Trilochan Singh pp 306-307.

friend, believing that the Guru spent four months in his company on his way to Delhi.

The Guru and the Sikhs were kept at the prison at Bassi Patthana(n) near Sirhind for about 4 months<sup>79</sup>. No form of persuasion worked on the Guru or his Sikhs. The Shaikh gave up after four months, and, as commanded by Aurungzeb, the Guru was put in an iron cage and taken to Delhi on or before 5 November, 1675<sup>80</sup>. Some accounts mention Agra as the city from which the Guru was arrested<sup>81</sup>. There is little doubt now that these accounts are mistaken and probably based on an earlier encounter of the Guru with Mughal officials at Agra when the Guru was returning to Delhi from Patna.

Based on Guru Gobind Singh's own evidence and also correction of the confusion of Hijri dates during Aurungzeb's time, most writers are now agreed that Aurungzeb himself was at Delhi when the Guru was taken there.

Sirdar Kapur Singh has collated the evidence in an essay, *Who killed Guru Tegh Bahadur*<sup>82</sup>, to show how Aurungzeb, following his extreme religious policy, replaced the secular sun-based calendar (*Shamsi-san*) introduced by Akbar, by Hijri calendar.<sup>83</sup> The confusion of dates places

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<sup>79</sup> Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi 29, Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi, Khata Jalhanay Balaote ka.

<sup>80</sup> Harbans Singh gives the date of the Guru's arrival in Delhi as 4 November and Sikh Missionary College as 3 November, 1675.

<sup>81</sup> Trilochan Singh pp 308-9 based on *Suraj Prakash Ras* 12, Ansu 38-39

<sup>82</sup> Kapur Singh, *Sikhism and the Sikhs* pp 290-306

<sup>83</sup> *'Akbar replaced Hijri by the Shamsi-san, the solar years. This secular reform did away with a great deal of chronological confusion and multiplicity then prevalent in various parts of India in obvious attempts to co-ordinate, somehow, the true secular year, the solar year with the Muslim religious lunar year and the era of the Hijri. This Shami-san introduced by Akbar was intended to replace the Fasali-san of upper India, the Vilayati-san of Orissa, the Bengali-san and the Maharashtra Arabi san....Aurungzeb...abruptly stopped rationalization of the secular chronological confusion of India by re-introducing the Hijri era and Lunar chronology into all official levels of Indian administration with the result that, for more than half a century, the Mughal official records were vitiated chronologically, requiring expert know-how to make the dates in our Persian records, understandable to us. It is to be noted that Aurungzeb, in this, had no other motive but that of religious fanaticism to change the entire*

Aurangzeb at Hasan Abdal when, in fact, he was already at Delhi when Guru Tegh Bahadur was taken there by 5 November 1675.

## Emperor's officials at Delhi

At this point it will be useful to name the main officials at Delhi involved with the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Aurangzeb's governor or Subedar of Delhi was Saffi Khan appointed in April 1674. The commander at Delhi Red Fort was Mutlafit Khan. The Royal or Shahi Kaji was Abdul Wahab Vohra. In effect he was the head of Islamic law ministry, the most powerful official after the Emperor himself, and reputed to be a most cruel and corrupt official<sup>84</sup>.

The Guru and his Sikhs were imprisoned in the Kotwali (police station) at Chandni Chaok near Red Fort. The Official or Daroga in charge was Khwaja Abdulla.

The executioner was *Jalad* Jalaludin of Samana who was later killed by the Khalsa troopers of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur when Samana was taken by the Khalsa army.

## The final confrontation

The most compelling evidence before us is that of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Mani Singh and the riddle of the solar-Hijri calendars solved by Kapur Singh, to show that Guru Tegh Bahadur was brought before Emperor Aurungzeb who was at Delhi at the time.

Aurangzeb was still hopeful that he would be able to achieve his goal of converting India to *Dar-ul-Islam* by persuading the Guru to accept Islam. The Guru and the Sikhs were brought before the Emperor. Aurungzeb used all sorts of tactics to persuade the Guru to convert to Islam. To start with, he was courteous and tried reasoning with the Guru.

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*face of India into a Muslim state and a Sunni Muslim society.'* (Kapur Singh p301)

<sup>84</sup> According to J N Sarkar, History of Aurungzeb, p 48 Vol III "He was the most corrupt and heartless quazi of the reign."

The personality of the Emperor is well described by chroniclers. He had proven himself to be a ruthless warrior and a successful general. He had a keen interest in religious discourses. With age, due to his religious fervour and penances, he took on the appearance of a pious man. There was belief that through austerities he had himself gained supernatural powers.<sup>85</sup>

Such men in history do have a mesmerising effect on those around them and are not without considerable following. Admirers of such men and their grand plans are bound to overlook the evil that they wreak on humanity at large. The most recent example in history is Adolf Hitler and he is unlikely to be the last of such men or women. They have personal charm, they are articulate and persuasive and control the minds of millions.

However, when it came to a clash of wills, the Guru and his Sikhs proved to be more than a match for Aurungzeb. Neither his charms nor the incentives he offered directly or through his officials worked. His threats failed.

Aurungzeb had made up his mind about Guru Tegh Bahadur in view of the two previous detentions of the Guru from which the well wishers of Guru Nanak's Gurgaddi had been able get him released. Instead of confining himself to a strictly opt-out 'spiritual' role as a local sect-leader, the Guru had in fact increased his influence all over India wherever Guru Nanak set his holy feet, and was now championing the cause of another oppressed religious people, the Hindus of India. The Sikhs of Baba Nanak could have been tolerated, but not when the one who sat on the Gurgaddi of Guru Nanak extended the religious freedom to other religions as well.

Emperor Aurungzeb failed to persuade the Guru to convert to Islam and handed the Guru and his Sikh devotees to the Royal Quazi, the head of the Islamic law ministry, Abdul Wahab Vohra and the Daroga in-charge of the Kotwali (police station and prison) at Chandni Chowk, Khwaja

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<sup>85</sup> One Sikh account mentions his daily spiritual visit to Mecca. In later years, one day, Guru Gobind Singh stopped his ethereal body on the way and told him to see Bhai Daya Singh who was not being allowed to see him by his guards, so that he could hand over the Guru's message, the *Jaffarnama*.

Abdulla. Some accounts suggest that the latter was devoted to the Guru and would have allowed some flexibilities, although, not regarding the torture of the Guru which was personally supervised by the Quazi (as also mentioned in *Bhatt Vahis*).

## In captivity at Delhi

Guru Tegh Bahadur was brought to Delhi by about 5 November 1675 and executed on 11 November 1675. So he and the Sikhs with him were in captivity at Delhi for about a week.

There are many accounts of the Guru in prison at Delhi. For example, Bhai Santokh Singh, the writer of *Suraj Parkash* writes that despite being kept in an iron cage, the Guru was able to move about Delhi at will through his spiritual powers. This narrative is not concerned with the miracles attributed to the Guru during this period. It needs to be kept in mind that when asked to perform miracles by Aurungzeb, the Guru condemned miracle-makers. That men of God diminished themselves by competing with the Will of God and showing off their spiritual powers like cheap magicians. Nevertheless, traditional Sikh accounts mention them.

One version is that at Delhi, the Guru was kept under house arrest. Other accounts that the Guru was seen around Delhi and the “miracles” would have a simpler explanation. It is possible that once the Guru was taken to Delhi in an iron cage as public display of state authority, Aurungzeb, as part of his ‘softening’ strategy to persuade the Guru to consult others, kept him at a reasonably comfortable place for a few days, albeit, under strict guard. It is even possible that under similar vigilance the Guru was allowed some movement in Delhi to meet the Sikhs.

According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*, Sakhi no. 29, three choices were put to the Guru by the Emperor, much to the satisfaction of the Royal Quazi, Abdul Wahab Bohra<sup>86</sup>. These choices were:

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<sup>86</sup> Sir Jadunath Sarkar quoted by *Sikh Missionary College* p58.

1. Perform a miracle to show his divinity.
2. Accept Islam
3. Be prepared to die

Unhesitatingly, the Guru replied that if those were the only choices before him, then he willingly accepted the third choice. True devotees of God accepted God's Will and did not stoop to perform cheap miracles. They were ashamed to display occult powers to impress people<sup>87</sup>.

The religious path one followed was a matter of personal choice. Freedom to practise own religion was a human right and he would willingly give his life to defend that right. His cause to uphold the right of all to live according to own chosen religious path was more precious to him than his life.

Some writers have given details of the discussion between the Guru and Aurungzeb. It can be assumed that the Emperor was fully aware of the founding ideology of Guru Nanak, or, to him *Baba Nanak*, revered by Muslims and Hindus alike. In earlier years, he had long discourses with those like Baba Ram Rai, who despite his misrepresentation of one passage of Guru Nanak's *Bani* (sacred verse), was, nevertheless, an accomplished scholar of Sikh Scriptures.

Aurungzeb tried to persuade the Guru accordingly. From his perspective, there was great merit in the Indian subcontinent becoming a one religion Islamic state and the Guru was in a position to help him achieve that objective in return for high office in that monolithic totalitarian Islamic state. The Guru's response was along the lines referred to above in *Guru Kian Sakhian* (much elaborated by authors according to own interpretation.)

Influential Sikhs like Lakhi Shah, a royal trader (mentioned later in this account) would have been allowed to meet the Guru. When all other means of persuasion failed, Aurungzeb ordered that the Guru was to be kept in stricter and most uncomfortable detention in an iron cage at

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<sup>87</sup> Guru Hargobind had admonished two of Guru Tegh Bahadur's older brothers Baba Gurditta and Baba Atal for performing miracles. Both accepted their mistake and, according to Sikh tradition, gave up living by going into deep meditation.

Chandni Chowk Kotwali<sup>88</sup>. He was handed over to the Royal Quazi to be finally *persuaded* to accept Islam or to be executed with his Sikhs. Emperor Aurungzeb had given up in frustration.

According to *Bhat Vahis*, the Guru was tortured in ways beyond description (*Guru ji ko ghana kasht deea jo kathan se bahar hai*<sup>89</sup>) before the public execution.

Yet, chroniclers also mention that the *daroga* (jail superintendent) Khwaja Abdulla, when possible, did allow some flexibility regarding visitors to meet the Guru. That could have been part of the “carrot and the stick” tactic to weaken the Guru’s resolve while also hoping that he would be getting some advice from the visitors to save his life. No doubt the Kotwali officials and the *daroga* were also impressed by the Guru’s composure. However, neither threats of death nor torture worked.

## **Martyrdoms of Guru’s three Sikhs**

The next step was to make the Guru witness the death by torture of his dear Sikhs. Perhaps when actually faced by death, the Sikhs and the Guru would relent. The three Sikhs were finally given the alternative to convert to Islam. On refusal, Qazi Abdul Wahab Borah sentenced them to death by torture while the Guru was made to witness the executions.

On 11 November, 1675, the Guru was brought outside the Kotwali and made to sit under a tree to witness the martyrdom of his Sikhs. The event had been well publicised in Delhi and surrounding districts. Thousands had gathered there to witness the executions. All chroniclers are agreed that the Guru having being put through many forms of torture in the preceding days, was made to watch the merciless killing of his beloved Sikhs who had served Guru Nanak’s mission for many years.

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<sup>88</sup> According to S M Latif quoted by Dr Trilochan Singh, “The Guru Being unable to satisfy his Majesty one way or the other was by the King’s order thrown into prison and on his persistently refusing to become a convert, was subjected to bodily tortures.” (S M Latif: History of Punjab.)

<sup>89</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay* p 60 Bhat Vahi Talaonda, Pargna Jind no. 24)



The Sikhs sought the Guru's blessing. In the true Sikhi tradition each Sikh martyr focussed on the just cause and the true *dharam* symbolised by his beloved Nanak *Jyot* Guru Tegh Bahadur before him<sup>90</sup>, and willingly gave his life.

The order in which the Sikhs were executed is not clear. However, according to *Sakhi* number 30 (*Guru Kian Sakhian*), the first to be martyred was Dayal Das. He was lowered into a cauldron of boiling liquid<sup>91</sup>. Next, bound between two posts, Mati Das was sawn in two as he recited Gurbani (the Guru's Word). Finally, his younger brother, Sati Das, was wrapped in cotton wool and burnt to death as he kept his meditative gaze fixed on the Guru before him.

The Guru watched and uttered, "Blessed are the Sikhs and their *Sikhi!* Their martyrdoms have weakened the roots of the Mughal raj. This regime will not last for long."<sup>92</sup>

## **The Guru martyred (11 November 1675)**

Finally, the Qazi was convinced that Aurungzeb's objective to convert the Guru, and through him the Indian sub-continent, to Islam, was not achievable. True *dharam* was going to be victorious at the end. Aurungzeb had already decided on the three options for the Guru: to accept Islam, or to show a miracle or to accept death. In desperation, disappointment and shivering with the rage of a defeated zealot, the quazi ordered the execution of the Guru by the executioner Jalal-u-din of Samana.<sup>93</sup>

Before the final order for the execution, the Guru was allowed to recite 5 Pauries (holy stanzas) of *Japuji Sahib* and the final *Salok* starting "*Pavan Guru....*", so that when the Guru bowed his head at the end of that *Salok*, the executioner, Jalal-u-din, would swing his sword.

The Guru recited the Pauries and the final *Salok* and bowed his head. The *jalad* (executioner) swung the sword and severed the head of the

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<sup>90</sup> "*Be prepared to give your life before your beloved [Guru]*" SGGS p83

<sup>91</sup> Some accounts mention water while others, oil.

<sup>92</sup> *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi* 30 p83.

<sup>93</sup> *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* p.281

Guru from his body. By doing so, the executioner wrote a new chapter in the history of martyrdoms for just causes. This was a unique martyrdom to save the religion of another and for the religious freedom of all.

Some accounts suggest that, although, the Guru declined to perform a miracle saying that performing miracles was interference in God's divine Will; however, accepting the request of a devoted spectator, the Guru asked for a piece of paper, wrote a few words on it and asked that it should be tied around his neck. He said that the sword of the executioner will not be able to cut the thread and the paper. The executioner swung the sword and as the head was severed from the body the thread and the piece of paper fell on the ground, intact<sup>94</sup>. On the paper were written the words, "I gave my head but not my resolve (faith)."

So did the Guru *break the earthly vase* (human body) on the head of the Emperor of Delhi, Muhi Ud-din Muhammad Aurungzeb on 11 November 1675.

Thus wrote Guru Gobind Singh in *Bachittar Natak (Apni Katha 5/2/5)*  
*"He [Guru Tegh Bahadur] broke this earthly vase on the head of the emperor of Delhi [Aurangzeb] and went to the abode of God.  
No one has ever done such a unique deed like that [the sacrifice] of Tegh Bahadur  
[for other people's faith]  
The world mourned the demise of Tegh Bahadur, but there was rejoicing in paradise."*

Unable to bear the burden of this sin, the Qazi Abdul Wahab Borah passed away in great agony within a few days on 26 November, 1675.

The impact of this unique martyrdom was profound. It changed the course of the history of the Indian sub-continent, while it became the most prominent landmark in the landscape of martyrdoms for human rights and just causes in human history.

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<sup>94</sup> *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi 31 pp 83-4*

*'Since then the Delhi Kingdom became progressively weaker, it is since then that the Muslim [Mughal] power began to decline'.<sup>95</sup>*

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<sup>95</sup> Rattan Singh Bhangu, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash* translation by Prof Gurtej Singh, Vol 2, p 61.

## Part 4 After Martyrdom

### Events following the martyrdom

To understand what followed the execution, we need to understand that a huge crowd had gathered to witness this well-publicised epic event. Guru Nanak's Gurgaddi was held in great reverence by hundreds of thousands of Hindus and Muslims throughout the Indian sub-continent and beyond. Guru Tegh Bahadur had travelled extensively in northern and north-eastern Indian subcontinent. The delegation of Brahmins which met the Guru was from Sri Nagar, Hardwar, Mathura and Kurukashetra etc and by this time much publicity and interest had been generated in the Guru's arrest and the final dialogue with the Emperor.

There was much at stake for the Brahmins of India. The event attracted a large audience. People would have travelled long distances to be at Delhi on that day. The great disturbance which followed has been compared to a sudden dark storm of suffocating dust (*jhakhar*). By this time it was the evening of Thursday 11 November 1675 when the daylight hours were already getting shorter. The beheading of the Guru followed an uncontrolled surge forward by the huge crowd to take a glimpse of the Guru's holy face. A large dust cloud engulfed the whole scene and the confusion was total. The shocked guards were pushed away.

### The daring Sikhs of Delhi

This is when a brave and devout Sikh, Bhai Jaita, a road sweeper, who had been moving around near the scene with a broom and a bucket, looking for the right moment, rushed forward with the crowd, grabbed the Guru's head, wrapped it in a cloth and headed straight for Anandpur.

However, Bhai Jaita's bold action needs to be understood in the context of the earlier background organisation and planning of Delhi Sikhs. The official decision was that the body of the Guru should be cut into pieces to be hung at gates of Delhi<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>96</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p 39.

First, the Sikhs met at the Dharamsala of Bhai Kalyana and later at the house of Bhai Nanu. The leading Sikhs were: Bhai Nanu son of Bhai Bagha (tailor), Bhai Jaita son of Bhai Aagya Ram (Ranghreta), Bhai Udha son of Khem Chand (Rathore), Bhai Tulsi son of Bhai Bagha and Bhai Dhuma son of Bhai Kahna.

During this time the Sikhs heard that the royal contractor Lakhi Shah Vanjara (trader) and his sons Nigahia, Hema and Haadi had returned from Narnaol with their *tanda* i.e. a large number of carts drawn by oxen carrying building material (lime etc) for delivery at the Red Fort. This *tanda* had stopped near river Jumna where they were met by the Sikhs. It was agreed that following delivery of material at the fort, the caravan would return via Chandni Chowk and the Sikhs would pick up the Guru's body<sup>97</sup>.

The dust and confusion allowed Bhai Udha, Lakhi and his sons to take away the body to the house of Lakhi Shah and to cremate it by putting it in a large quantity of cotton and setting the house on fire. Bhai Jaita had already started towards Anandpur Sahib and Bhai Udha followed after cremating the Guru's body. They met at Kiratpur on 16 November 1675 where Gobind Das (later Guru Gobind Singh) arrived with the family and Sangat. Guru Tegh Bahadur's *sis* (head) was cremated at Anandpur Sahib on 17 November 1675.

Bhai Jaita and later behind him, Bhai Udha, covered a distance of over 200 miles by foot in five days! That makes it about 40 miles a day as they passed through dangerous countryside with Mughal guards at the main roads and crossings. Bhai Jaita's great and daring deed was acknowledged by Guru Gobind Singh by calling him "Guru's true son".

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<sup>97</sup> According to *Bhat Vahi Yadobansia ki* (Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Simaryaiy*, p 61 Sakhi number 25): Lakhi son of Godhu, Nigahia, Hema and Haari sons of Lakhi and Dhuma son of Kaana, lifted the body of Guru Tegh Bahadur and cremated it on Friday [12 September 1675] at night. Sakhi number 26 : Bhat vahi Multani Sindhi: Jaita son of Aagya Ram, Nanu son of Bagha, and Udha son of Khema took the Guru's head to Kiratpur. The head was cremated at Makhawal (Anandpur).

Both, Jaita and Udha, took Amrit in 1699 and Bhai Jaita took the name Bhai Jeon Singh and Bhai Udha, Udhai Singh. Bhai Jeon Singh died fighting impossible odds at the battle of Chamkaur<sup>98</sup> (7 December, 1705).

Baba Gurditta, (not to be confused with the eldest son of Guru Hargobind), a revered descendent of Baba Budha passed away on the same day (11 November 1675) on hearing of the death of the Guru and the other Sikhs with him.

Baba Dhir Mal and his disciple Masand Sheeha(n) and a Sikh Damodar, were put in prison at the fort of Ranbhambaur. Baba Dhir Mal died there in captivity on 16 November 1677 after one year, 2 months and 5 days in prison. Then his son Ram Chand was arrested and brought to Delhi. He was tortured to death on 24 July, 1678<sup>99</sup>.

## **End of Emperor Aurungzeb**

Emperor Aurungzeb spent most his life either scheming and plotting against own family or fighting wars trying to control vast areas of the Indian sub-continent. He spend his final years fighting wars in southern India. He thought of subduing Marwar and finally left for Deccan on 8 September 1681. He reached Aurungabad in March 1682. For 25 years he was engaged in warfare trying to subdue the Shia states of Golconda and Bijapur and trying to defeat the Marathas. He was not able to return to Delhi. He died at the age of 88 years on 3 March 1707 at Ahmed Nagar.

*According to Wikipedia, "Aurangzeb's policies partly abandoned the legacy of pluralism, which remains a very controversial aspect of his reign and led to the downfall of the Mughal Empire. Rebellions and wars led to the exhaustion of the imperial Mughal treasury and army. He was a strong-handed authoritarian ruler, and following his death the expansionary period of the Mughal Empire came to an end."*

He was responsible for the massive destruction of life and property throughout the subcontinent. He managed to destroy own family and the Mughal dynasty.

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<sup>98</sup> Prof Sahib Singh, *Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji*, P48

<sup>99</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p. 41

## Guru Tegh Bahadur's teachings

Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Gurbani* (Guru's Word) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib is in 56 *Saloks* (couplets) and 59 *Shabads* (holy hymns) in 15 classical *Raags* (musical measures). The language is the popular *sant-bhasha* spoken by the Indian *sants* or *bhagats* (holy men and women). His Message is soul-stirring and his unique martyrdom instilled death-defying courage in the frightened and down-trodden masses of the Indian sub-continent.

Those who have not studied Guru Tegh Bahadur's life and the nature of his mission climaxing in the unique sacrifice willingly made for a just cause, miss the central theme of his teachings in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. They regard his Bani as *vairagmaee* (doleful and leading to renunciation). As we have seen in this account of his life, his mission was to rouse the dormant energies of the people so that by understanding the transitional nature of this world-play, they could be motivated to great deeds without fear of death.

We need to understand the Guru's contribution to Sikh thought in the context of the same consistent Message of One Nanak *Jote* in all Guru-persons. Guru Nanak and the Guru-persons to Guru Arjan, Nanak V, had already established the institutions which served the spiritual and organisational needs of the community. These educational institutions of *sangat-pangat* (congregation and community kitchen called *langar*) were not exclusive to the Sikhs but inclusive for all who sat at the same level without any form of distinction. They taught the egalitarian values of non-discrimination, community service, sharing and participation as pre-conditions for human salvation.

Next, Guru Hargobind, Nanak VI further consolidated Guru Nanak's whole-life mission in terms of the *Sikhi* (Sikh way of living) twin-track approach of *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) by establishing the sovereign Institution *Sri Akal Takht Sahib* (Throne of the Timeless Being). This was the Guru's way of announcing to the world that the temporal authority of the kings and rulers was subject to the universal human rights as equals before one Creator Being. No one had the right to dispense arbitrary justice or to inflict suffering on others. All were subject to divine law.

Guru Arjan, Nanak V, had already alluded to this type of regime as *halemi raj*<sup>100</sup>.

The Guruships of Guru Har Rai, Guru Har Krishan and Guru Tegh Bahadur (Nanaks VII to IX) continued with this *miri-piri* mission. During this time *Baba* Tegh Bahadur (pre-and post Guruship), entrusted with a mission by his father, Guru Hargobind, was always there while Gurus Har Rai and Har Krishan further consolidated the Sikh institutions of community service. Contrary to accounts influenced by Brahmanic thought, his extensive preaching tours and presence in the northern Indian countryside from Punjab to Assam continued to attract Mughal attention. That attention and apprehension on the part of the oppressive rulers of India was due to Guru Tegh Bahadur's fearless message to the masses, which can be summed up as follows: One should fear none and frighten no one. One should remain inwardly detached from the world-play and dedicate human life to righteous living, truthful conduct. Such a *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) way of life leads to fearless conduct and readiness to make any sacrifice for a just cause.

There is an essential Guru *Jote* (Light) continuity in Guru Tegh Bahadur's teaching in the tradition of *Jote Oha, jugat saee* (Same Guru Light - of Guru Nanak - same methodology<sup>101</sup>). It is the same revolutionary message as that of Guru Nanak's 'Game of love' and that of the Guru-persons who followed. Very simply, this means that the Teaching of all Guru persons is the same and the continuity of activism is consistent with and builds on the work of earlier Guru persons. The ideology, and the activism which implements it, are the same.

Acceptance of death is a pre-condition<sup>102</sup> to full and fearless participation in this life. In *Sikhi*, inner detachment is not an excuse for opting out. Rather it is *raj-jog* as taught by Guru Nanak. That is the message of *miri-piri* which was also preached by Guru Tegh Bahadur in his *Bani*.

He realised that hiding from oppression and evil is not an option for those who wish to tread the righteous path of Guru Nanak. This was a

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<sup>100</sup> SGGS p74

<sup>101</sup> The same is the Divine Light and same is the method and mission. The King Nanak has again merely changed his body. Balwand and Satta, Ramkali ki Var SGGS p966.

<sup>102</sup> "*Pehla(n) maran kabool...*" SGGS p 1104



path which demanded the follower's head<sup>103</sup> when the time came, while remaining attached to the Creator and detached from the worldly play. *Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani* reflects this consistent message of *Sikhi*.

Armed defence was justified as a last resort. Throughout his life, the Guru retained his interest in the use of arms and in hunting while he prepared for the great task ahead – the *Kalu meh saka* (epic deed in the Age of Darkness<sup>104</sup>) - which he was destined to perform in the *Hukum* (Will or Order) of the *Akal Purakh* (Timeless Being).

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani has been more fully discussed by Sikh scholars along above lines e.g. by Prof Piara Singh Padam<sup>105</sup>. That message instilled unlimited courage in a down-trodden people so that they proved to be more than a match for the evil empire of a bigoted despot, Aurungzeb.

Thus, the ideological foundation was laid for the emergence of the invincible Khalsa, the Army of the Timeless Being.

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<sup>103</sup> Guru Nanak, "*Jao tao prem khelan ka chao....*" SGGS p1412

<sup>104</sup> The last of the four eons in Indian lore.

<sup>105</sup> Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariay*, Chapter 5 pp 62-75.

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Gurbilas Chhevin Patshahi

Sri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth by Bhai Santokh Singh

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# Annex

## AFFIDAVIT

[Formal affidavit by the author dated 5 September 1998. The history textbook referred to in the affidavit is a publication approved by the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) of India. Introductory personal details and some formal wording have been edited out]

### **PASSAGE FROM *MEDIEVAL INDIA - A History Textbook for Class XI***

#### **"THE SIKHS:-**

The Sikhs were the last to come into military conflict with Aurangzeb. As we have seen, there was conflict with the Sikh Gurus during the reigns of Jahangir and Shah Jahan. But the reasons for the conflict were political and personal rather than religious. The Guru had started living in style, with an armed following, and assumed the title of sachchah padshah ("the true sovereign"). However, there was no conflict between the Guru and Aurungzeb till 1675 when Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested with five of his followers, brought to Delhi and executed. The causes of this are not clear. According to some Persian accounts, the Guru had joined hands with a Pathan, Hafiz Adam, and created disturbances in Punjab. According to Sikh tradition, the execution was due to intrigues against the Guru by some members of his family who disputed his succession and who had been joined by others. But we are also told that Aurungzeb was annoyed because the Guru had converted a few Muslims to Sikhism and raised a protest against religious persecution in Kashmir by the local governor {5}. It is difficult to sift the truth of these allegations. Sikhism had gradually spread to many Jat peasants and low caste artisans who were attracted by its simple, egalitarian approach. The economic discontent of these sections may have been reflected by the Guru. In Kashmir, the previous governor, Saif Khan, is famous as a builder of bridges. He was a humane and broad minded person who had appointed a Hindu to advice him in

administrative matters. Stories of mass persecution by the new governor appear to be exaggerated because, Kashmir had been predominantly Muslim since the fifteenth century. Although Guru Govind Singh was not able to withstand Mughal might for long, or to establish a separate Sikh state, he created a tradition and also forged a weapon for its realisation later on. It also showed how an egalitarian religious movement could, under certain circumstances, turn into a political and militaristic movement, and subtly move towards regional independence."

Having studied the above passage, my opinion, which follows, is in two parts: as foundation for my own belief and viewpoint, the first part deals with evidence from authentic Sikh religious writings, namely, Guru Granth Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh's works and evidence from works of eminent scholars; and, based on this evidence, the second part, in conclusion, deals with the impact of this passage on my own religious sentiments and heritage as a Sikh. As a consequence, the second part also deals with wider public implications of the import of this passage, that is, whether or not it offends and injures Sikh feelings.

## **OPINION**

A scholar observed once that "History is a science of fine principles, manifold uses, and noble purposes". The damage which a biased historian can do, whose purpose is other than noble, can be far reaching and incalculably damaging. The above passage, in my view, falls into this category.

The author of Medieval India states that " ... the reasons for the conflict were political and personal rather than religious." This is the premise for the other misleading statements and the intentional ambiguity introduced by the author to deny the great sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur for defending the religion of another, namely the Hindu religion at the time. The question raised is whether the Muslim emperors after Akbar, and especially Aurangzeb, were pursuing a policy of religious persecution; and, if so, whether there was a conflict between that policy and the Sikh religious ideology founded by Guru Nanak.

Let me first deal with the religious position from the Sikh point of view i.e. references to Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom in Sikh Scriptures and the progress of Guru Nanak's religious ideology culminating in Guru Tegh Bahadur's firm stand against Aurangzeb's religious bigotry. Thus wrote Guru Gobind Singh in his *Bachitar Natak*:

*After him (Har Krishan) came Tegh Bahadur (12)  
Who protected the frontal marks and sacrificial  
threads of the Hindus  
And displayed great bravery in the Kal Age  
All this he did for the sake of holy  
men  
He gave his head but uttered not a  
groan (13)  
He suffered martyrdom for the  
sake of religion.... (14) (Bachitra  
Natak)*

There are other references in Guru Gobind Singh's writings to the selfless sacrifice of the Guru, that no one else had done a deed of such magnitude and that the world grieved his demise while the heavenly saints applauded it. However, the above passage from his *Bachitar Natak*: gives the reason for this unique sacrifice in the history of world religions. Therefore, Guru Tegh Bahadur, according to the historical record of his own son, Guru Gobind Singh, gave his life to protect another's religion which was under threat at the time. This voluntary sacrifice arose from the teachings of the Sikh religion founded by Guru Nanak of which Guru Tegh Bahadur was the apostle at the time.

Guru Granth Sahib (GGS) is the religious\_book of the Sikhs. I quote a few statements translated into English from Guru Granth Sahib to show how religious teachings can impinge on socio-political injustice. There are numerous comments by Guru Nanak on the religious, social and political situation of the day in his *Asa ki Waar*, GGS pages 462-475.

Examples are:

*Both avarice and sin are the king and minister and falsehood is the  
master of the mint.  
(GGS p.468)*

*The subjects are blind and ignorant and they bribe corrupt officials.*  
(GGS p.69)

Guru Nanak does not spare the cowardly Hindu ministers of Muslim rulers:

*[On behalf of the Muslim rulers], you charge the Islamic tax for the cow and the Brahman, yet expect cow-dung (pocha) will save your soul i. e. cow-dung will not save you. You wear a dhoti, put on a frontal mark (tikka), carry a rosary and yet eat the Muslim's provisions. Secretly you perform Hindu worship (puja) but outwardly (due to your slave mentality) read Muslim books and adopt Muhammadan life style. Lay aside this hypocrisy? (GGS p.71)*

*Wearing blue clothes he (the Hindu) becomes acceptable to the Muslims. (GGS p. 72)*

Other quotations from GGS which impinge on the degrading and oppressive socio- political situation of the day and preach freedom from fear and oppression as a Sikh religious objective:

*The kings are tigers and the courtiers dogs, they go and awaken (i. e. harass) those who are sitting or sleeping (i.e. resting peacefully). Guru Nanak, GGS p.1288.*

*If one is compelled to live a life in disgrace, all that he eats is forbidden (i.e. It is better to die than to live in humiliation.) Guru Nanak, GGS p.142.*

*[As a sign of slave mentality] in every household foreign language is spoken. (Guru Nanak, GGS p. 1191.)*

Guru Nanak's challenge to the tyrannical rulers was direct and in forthright language. About Babar's invasion of India he said:

*Having conquered Khurasan, Babar has terrified Hindostan. Guru Nanak, GGS p.360.*

*Bringing the marriage party of sin, Babar has hastened from Kabul and*



*demands*

*perform gift [of our land, etc.] O Lalo. GGS 722.*

In *Babarbarani* Guru Nanak, in great anguish, described vividly the plight of the unfortunate Indians following the cruelty of Babar. It is not surprising that Guru Nanak was imprisoned by the Moghul invader for his strong protest. Guru Nanak was forthright in his condemnation of oppression of any kind, and, foreseeing the conflict between Sikh religious thought and the religious and social oppression around him, forewarned those who were aspiring to become his Sikhs:

*If you long to play the game of love, then place your head on the palm of your hand and step on my path (i.e. join my path. or faith which demands a fearless disposition). (Guru Nanak, GGS p. 1412).*

The liberating whole-life philosophy of Guru Nanak was bound to come into conflict with the religious persecution by the more zealous Islamic rulers of India and the Manuwadic social oppression practised through the degrading varanashram system which favoured the elitist Brahmanical social order. Therefore, "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and to give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes." (History of the Sikhs by J D Cunningham, reprinted by S Chand & Co. Ltd., 1985, p.34.)

Through Guru Granth Sahib, the teachings of Kabir had been accepted as part of Sikh tradition by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan. Thus said Kabir: *He alone is recognised as a warrior who fights for the sake of his principles (dharma). Kabir, GGS 1105.*

The hymns of Guru Teg Bahadur and the works of Guru Gobind Singh clearly show that these Gurus continued to build on Guru Nanak's tradition. Thus wrote Guru Teg Bahadur: *Whosoever frightens none, nor is afraid of anyone, says Nanak, hear O my soul, call him a man of divine knowledge (giani). (Guru Tegh*

Bahadur, GGS p. 1427.) This was a direct challenge to oppression in any sphere of life.

The hymns of the Gurus and selected hymns of Hindu and Muslim saints included by Guru Arjan in Adi Granth (later referred to as Guru Granth Sahib) did not spare perversions of both Islam and Hinduism. The position of Sikh religious thought is clear from the above quotations from Guru Granth Sahib. Did Islamic rulers respond to such forthright language on political as well as religious grounds or on political and personal grounds alone? Well recorded historical evidence suggests that their actions were in fact also motivated by religious bigotry. The reasons for the conflict between the Sikh Gurus and the more zealous Muslim rulers, egged on by religious fanatics like Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi Mujaddid-alif-thani (1561-1624) are recorded by reputable historians.

*"Aurangzeb only wanted pretext to get rid of a formidable man like Tegh Bahadur who stood in the way of his Islamic zeal.. ... He was again summoned to Delhi and refusing to embrace Islam, was put to death by the Emperor's order .... "* (Transformation of Sikhism by Gokal Chand Narang, Kalyani Publishers, reprinted 1989, p.69.)

Sirdar Kapur Singh in his paper "Communal Award" has quoted many non-Sikh historians who confirm that religious bigotry was behind the actions of the Moghul emperors after Akbar. Such intolerance was bound to clash with moderate and tolerant but fearless religious stance of the Sikh Gurus. In the final days of Akbar's moderate regime, Sheikh Ahmad Sirhindi, Mujaddid-alif-thani, who perceived himself as the defender of Islam appointed by Allah, and who clearly was much agitated by the tolerance of Akbar towards non-Muslims (*kaffirs*), wrote numerous letters (*maktubat*) to religious personnel as well as to Mughal officials (Friedmann Yohanan, Shyakh Ahmad Sirhindi, McGill Queen's University Press, Montreal & London, 1971, pp, 1-2). He wrote many letters to Sheikh Farid Bukhari, later given the title of "Murtzakhan" by Emperor Jehangir. This same Murtzakhan was responsible for the martyrdom of Guru Arjan. For the latter followed the footsteps of Guru Nanak and made a fearless spirit a precondition for following Guru Nanak's path. He said:

*Accept death first, abandon hope of life and come to me in all humility.*  
Guru Arjan, GGS p1102.

*The Merciful Master has now given the command, that no one shall annoy (oppress) another. All (shall) abide in peace in a benign regime.*  
Guru Arjan, GGS p. 74.

Jehangir as prince Salim had already been prevailed upon by Sheikh Farid Bukhari and the former was sworn to uphold Islam. "Accordingly, the leading noble (Sheikh Farid) having been sent by the others as their representative, came to the prince (Salim) and promised in their names to place the Kingdom in his hands, provided that he would swear to defend the Law of Mohamet." - Du .larric, Father Pierre Akbar and the Jesuits, London, 1626. p.204.

*"Occasional outbursts of bigotry on the part of Jahangir and his anti-Hindu sentiments may ultimately be traced to the influence of Mujaddid on the fickle-minded emperor."* Dr Mohd. Yasin, *A Social History of India*. Lukhnow, 1958; p. 171.

In his own diary, Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri, Jehangir writes " .... For three or four generations (of spiritual successors) they had kept this shop warm. Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him (Guru Arjan) into the assembly of the people of Islam" (Rogers and Beveridge, Tuzuk-i-Jahanqiri, Vol. I p.72). He handed Guru Arjan to Murtzakhan for execution under Islamic law which determined the manner of his execution. (According to *Bhat Wahi Karsindhu, Pargana Safaidon* quoted by Piara Singh Padam in Guru Kian Sakhian, Singh Broth. 1995, p.19, Murtzakhan in turn was killed in battle by Balu Rai, the grandfather of the famous Sikh scholar and priest of Darbar Sahib, Bhai Mani Singh Shaheed.)

Now I come to Aurungzeb and the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The quotations from GGS and Bachitar Natak given above leave little doubt that the religious position of the Sikh Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh remained consistent: the Gurus opposed any form of oppression robustly and made a fearless spirit a precondition for following the religious path of Sikhism. The next question is whether Aurungzeb himself was motivated by religious objectives.

Indubhusan Banerji writes

"Aurangzeb's religious policy which aimed at the establishment of an orthodox Sunni state had by now raised a whirlwind. The following measures that were adopted by Aurangzeb during the first ten years of his reign clearly show the extent to which the religion of the Hindus suffered at the hands of the new Emperor. Even in 1644, when Aurangzeb was Viceroy of Gujrat, he had shown his zeal for Islam by desecrating the temple of Chintaman at Ahmedabad and also by the deliberate suppression of various other temples. With his accession to the throne the policy of repression and discrimination became more general. Early in his reign the local officials of Orissa were called upon "to pull down all temples, including even clay huts, built during the last ten or twelve years and to allow no old temples to be repaired" In 1669 an order was passed "to demolish all schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their religious practices and teaching" (both quotations by Banerji from Sarkar's History of Aurungzib, Vol.III p. 265). The magnificent and time-honoured temples of Somnath, Mathura and Benares were demolished and Jeziyah reimposed rewards were given to converts. A systematic plan was followed for carrying out the policy of iconoclasm ....." etc. (Indubhusan Banerji, *Evolution of the Khalsa*, A Mukherjee & Co., 1980, Vol: Two pp. 57- 58.)

Guru Gobind Singh confirms, (see passage quoted from Bachitar Natak at the beginning of this evidence) that Guru Tegh Bahadur courted martyrdom to help the Hindus against religious persecution of Aurungzeb and that he rejected offers to save his life by embracing Islam. The Guru sacrificed his life for religion.

The author of Medieval India has been almost completely swayed by certain passages in Cunningham's History of the Sikhs. The latter writes "His repeated injunction that his disciples should obey the bearer of his arrows, show more of the kingly than the priestly spirit." (1985 edition by S Chand & Co. p.59). As Banerji writes (Ibid p. 61), "The implication appears to be that Guru Tegh Bahadur had been some sort of a political revolutionary. This view of the matter we think arises primarily from what Golam Hussein writes in Siyar-ul-Muktakhkharin."

Indubhusan Banerji, after examining much evidence, including the political aspects

(Evolution of Khalsa, pp 57- 63, concludes as follows: "We may take it that the Guru fell victim to religious bigotry and it is understandable why later Muhammdan writers sought to cloud the issue by giving it a political colour. The Guru's execution undoubtedly strengthened the resistance against the religious policy of Aurangzeb .....".

In view of this evidence, no impartial student of Sikh history can conclude that the basis for the conflict between the policy of religious persecution by the Muslim rulers after Akbar and the liberating thought of the Gurus was "political and personal rather than religious." It was in fact both religious and political: religious to the extent that Islamic rulers could not accept rise and expansion of a new religion; political because the liberating Sikh religious philosophy opposed the oppressive and corrupt regime of both the Muslim rulers and their cowardly Hindu henchmen (Ministers like Sucha Nand of Sirhand) and the Hindu rajahs, "*the Kshatryas who had forgotten their religion*" (Guru Nanak, GGS p. 663).

Having established the fact that Aurangzeb was a religious bigot and the main reason for the Guru's execution was to ensure unhindered spread of Islam, the whole tenor of the passage quoted from Medieval India becomes misleading and offensive to Sikhs.

Specific comments against the other offending or untrue parts of this passage are as follows:

*"The Guru had started living in style with an armed following and assumed the title of sachchah padshah ["the true sovereign"]."*

The sentence is offensive as it is not placed in the context of Sikh thinking. The Guru's life style was based on the *miri-piri* or *raj-yog* (combination of worldly and spiritual) concept of Sikhism which needs to be understood in its proper context. The Guru's followers called him the "True King" i.e. the Lord of this world and the next; as one who was above the worldly kings, for his reign extended over the conduct of his followers in this life and to matters spiritual. Other spiritual leaders have

been placed above those who hold temporal power. e.g. Jesus Christ has been called "King of kings".

*"The causes of this are not clear. According to some Persian accounts, the Guru had joined hands with a Pathan, Hafiz Adam, and created disturbances in Punjab. According to Sikh tradition, the execution was due to intrigues against the Guru by some members of his family who disputed his succession and who had been joined by others. But we are also told that Aurunqzeb was annoyed because the Guru had converted a few Muslims to Sikhism and raised a protest against religious persecution in Kashmir by the local governor. It is difficult to sift the truth of these allegations."*

This is a mischievous arrangement of the possible causes by placing last the most important and well authenticated cause (by contemporary accounts including Guru Gobind Singh's own testimony) that the Guru was executed for staunchly defending the then persecuted Hindu religion.

Indubhushan Banerji, quoted above, has shown that the later Muhammedan writers' accounts sought to cloud the real cause by giving the issue a political colour. Golam Hossein is the main culprit. Other western writers, including Cunningham, Pincott and Trumpp relied on these accounts without cross checking with other more authentic and unbiased sources. Some writers like Trumpp even mixed up the stories (*sakhis*) relating to Guru Gobind Singh with Guru Tegh Bahadur. The author of *Medieval India* has chosen to ignore the abundance of historical evidence which is now available to scholars of history. As a Sikh, I regard this not only a misconstruction of history but also a dishonest attempt to write off the historical debt which the Hindu religion owes to the Sikh Gurus.

*"In Kashmir, the previous governor, Saif Khan, is famous as a builder of bridges. He was a humane and broad minded person who had appointed a Hindu to advise him in administrative matters. Stories of mass persecution by the new governor appear to be exaggerated because, Kashmir had been predominantly Muslim since the fifteenth century."*

The author knows fully well that appointing a Hindu as a minister is no proof of a Muslim rulers tolerant attitude as the ministers of some of the most tyrannical Nawabs in northern India were often Hindu. Such men have been described by Guru Nanak in his Asa-di- Waar. The minister of the Nawab of Sirhand, who put the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh in a wall, was also a Hindu called Sucha Nand. Like other governors, Sher Afghan Khan, Aurungzib's governor in Kashmir was carrying out the Emperor's orders for converting Hindus to Muslims through incentives or by force. Kashmiri Brahmans lived in awe of the Emperor and approached the Guru as a deputation of 17 led by Pandit Kirpa Ram (Dutt) of Mattan (P.N.K. Bamzai's *History of Kashmir* p.371 quoted by by Sangat Singh in *Evolution of Sikh Panth*, p.61). Indeed following in the footsteps of this historical deputation, there were news reports of a large delegation of Kashniri Hindus led by Dr Agin Shekar, which performed "Kartigya Yatra", a thanksgiving trip to Sri Anandpur Sahib on Vaisakhi day, 13 April 1995, in memory of the supreme sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur 319 years ago in Delhi. (*Des Pardes*, Punjabi Weekly of UK, 28 April 1995, pages 9 and 37.)

The author's reasoning for contradicting traditional accounts is tenuous and he has failed to mention this historical deputation of Brahmans from Kashmir. Again the author is guilty of partial and prejudicial reporting to cast doubt on the Guru's great sacrifice.

*" ..... Although Guru Govind Singh was not able to withstand Mughal might for long, or to establish a separate Sikh state, he created a tradition and also forged a weapon for its realisation later on. It also showed how an egalitarian religious movement could, under certain circumstances, turn into a political and militaristic movement, and subtly move towards regional independence".*

Although one would not argue with the content of this passage, however, the manner of presentation and inference in the modern context has unwelcome connotations. It has never been suggested before that Guru Gobind Singh had directed his own energies towards the establishment of a Sikh state! Until his martyrdom in 1708 at Nanded at the hands of assassins sent by the Nawab of Sirhand, he was seeking justice from the establishment.

However, in his letter to Aurangzeb called *Jaffarnama*, he did say that when all other means have failed, it is just to take up the sword. Also, he had so disciplined and organised the order of the Khalsa Panth that it was capable of ensuring that justice was done, and of filling a void created through religious, social and political bankruptcy in the Indian system.

## CONCLUSION

I find the tenor of the passage from Medieval India highly objectionable on grounds of partial presentation of historical facts, the manner of presentation, and the underlying mischievous intent. In his bani, Guru Tegh Bahadur stressed the importance of freedom from fear based on the maxim "fear not, frighten not". (Slokas of Guru Tegh Bahadur, GGS p. 1427). The general tenor of Sikh teachings is aimed at fundamental human rights including freedom from fear in every sphere of life. As is evidenced by Guru Nanak's hymns in Guru Granth Sahib, he was openly preaching and laying the foundation for a free and plural human society in India (he used the word "Hindustan" when admonishing Babur, the Moghul invader, for his cruelty). Such religious ideals were bound to clash with the centralist Islamic vision of bigoted Emperors like Aurangzeb. However, the author has chosen to ignore these facts of history.

For the reasons given above, as a practising Sikh, as a life long student of Sikh history and as one who is proud of his great Sikh heritage, I am aggrieved by this offending passage from *Medieval India*. This passage belittles the great sacrifices of the Sikh Gurus and other Sikh martyrs; sacrifices, which turned the tide of Indian history and set India on the road to freedom. It is calculated to do maximum damage to Sikh history and heritage; it strikes at the root of Sikh faith; it is calculated to affect the psyche of the young reader in a way which can only be deleterious for the Sikhs. I am of the firm opinion that it offends the Sikh community world-wide.

I hereby submit this opinion for consideration by the Honourable High Court of India.



[Formal declaration witnessed by Justice of Peace on 5 September 1998, at Hounslow, Middlesex, United Kingdom.]

## About the author:



Sardar Gurmukh Singh OBE, is a Retired Principal Civil Servant (UK). He held many high profile positions including departmental representation at European forums and the World Trade Organisation (ex-GATT). He is well respected in the Sikh diaspora and was honoured by the Canadian Sikhs with “*Sirdar Kapoor Singh*” *Khalsa Millennium Award* in 2001 in recognition of his scholarly interpretation of Sikh ideology. He writes extensively about Sikh ideology and identity. He has produced many publications including Sikh centennial souvenirs and an Australian publication about *Vaisakhi*, and numerous articles on topical issues affecting British Sikhs. He was awarded an OBE (Officer of the Order of the British Empire) in 2016 New Year Honours for his community services.

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