



Publication Series No. 1

**SRI GURU ARJAN DEV JI**  
(1563—1606)

S. SHER SINGH, M.Sc.

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# SRI GURU ARJAN DEV JI

(1563—1606)

WHAT HE DID FOR INDIA AND MANKIND AT LARGE?

BY

BHAI SAHIB BHAI SHER SINGH, M. Sc.,  
KASHMIR

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The pages of history shine with the heroic deeds of this martial race, and the examples of self-devotion, patriotism and forbearance under the severest trials, displayed by their leaders of the community, are excelled by none in the annals of the nations.

*Latif in "History of the Panjab,"*

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## SIKHS FROM OTHERS' VIEW!

The Sikhs are a religious denomination. They are not racially denominational, and though they properly belong to a tribe, they are a very ancient stock, one of the most ancient European stocks, according to Professor Arthur Keith, and one of the finest both in brain conformation and in bone conformation, of any of the races that ever appeared on the earth. I know an Englishman who came into contact with the Sikhs and who has the greatest admiration and affection for them. They are a people of a fine, ancient, noble race and they are one of those ancient and noble races which have, if I may say so, a constitutional apprehension of the spiritual life.

*Lord Olivier in the House of Lords,  
—26th February, 1924.*

To sum up some of the moral and political merits of the Sikh Religion: It prohibits idolatry, hypocrisy, caste exclusiveness, the concremation of widows, the immurement of women, the use of wine or other intoxicants, tobacco-smoking, infanticide, slander, pilgrimages to the sacred rivers and tanks of the Hindus; and it inculcates loyalty, gratitude for all favours received, philanthropy, justice, impartiality, truth, honesty and all the moral and domestic virtues known to the holiest citizens of any country.

*Macauliffe (in "Sikh Religion," Vol. I, xxiii).*

## FOREWORD

Despite the mad pace at which the scientists have travelled to achieve Peace, they have brought unhappiness, clouded mind, poor memory, lack of self-confidence, initiative and success, weak body both mentally and physically. The man of to-day is a hopeless apology for the man of yesterday. The scientist has struck and with him has the rest of the world. Religious leaders have not been inactive either. Lectures and conferences have been held and religious literature in most attractive forms has been made available. Yet the gropingly suffering humanity has struggled for Peace and Light.

Maybe they are in search of Guru Nanak, maybe Guru Arjan has a solution for them, maybe Guru Gobind Singh can knit their intricate knots. Yet has the Panth carried the message of the Gurus far and wide? The answer is a big No!! Quite likely the solution is here.

Being deeply conscious of the handicap we are faced with, we are convinced that each individual and particularly each Sikh Society has its quota in this direction. This Sikh Religious Tract Society, to do its mite, is placing this tract in your hands in the belief that its contents will be made known to as many persons as possible. The Society will appreciate to receive for publication any valuable material which is sent to them. We are puffed a bit in placing Sardar Sher Singh's interpretation of Guru Arjan Dev ji's life task in nut shell whom we owe a debt of gratitude.

We must also express here our deep thanks to all the Panthic organisations and gentlemen who have encouraged

us in this work by asking us to distribute free copies of this tract on their behalf.

So we need your prayers, encouragement and criticism.

TARN TARAN, }  
20th May, 1933. }

SECRETARY,  
*The Sikh Religious Tract Society.*

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦ

## SHRI GURU ARJAN DEV JI

**The Gurus.** In these days of ant-like men and mole-hill realms, we do not know, much less we can visualise, as to who were those Himalayan personalities whom the world calls and reveres as Masters, Messiahs and the Gurus. Democracy has reduced every one to dust. In trying to bring about superficial equality, it has pulled out the root of real greatness. And thus we are faced today with the terrible spectacle that while there are many pigmy-teachers and Lilliputian-leaders, yet there is no outstanding world-personality. Hero-worship has been driven underground. Genius has taken wings and flown. India has yet to re-produce the sages of whom we are really proud. England has yet to produce another Carlyle or Shakespeare. In dealing with the atoms and molecules, our genius has itself shrunk to the size of a punctured bladder. We know much of the little things of the earth, of the constituents of the air that we breathe, of water that we drink, of the foods we eat, of the vitamins that are said to vitalise, but we do not know what is God, soul and man—matters which are of real consequence to us. Plain living and high thinking are no more. We have piled mountains of wealth and of gold, but in our hearts we are all uneasy, and a tremor of uneasiness convulses the whole world today. We have built sky-scrapers which kiss the clouds, but our souls are yet cramped, etiolated and anaemic. The machines are all working at breakneck speed and with double shifts and yet the poor are unclad; there is so much unemployment in the world and there is the recurring conflict between



labour and capital. Indeed, there is something very much wrong with our little world of Denmark !

This really sets us a-thinking as to why modern man with all his labour and sweating has come to such a sorry pass as this ? Has not the twentieth century many startling inventions to its credit, such as the wireless, the aeroplane, the X-rays which explore heights and depths hitherto shut up to our outer eye ? Has not Einstein discovered for us a law which tells us that Time and Space are relative like the hand and the glove ? Has not Ford given us the secret of duplication whereby automobiles are made and reproduced much as we reprint books and newspapers ? All this true, too true, and yet we do feel a vacuum within our hearts ; we feel that with every leap into the dark, another limbo is opened in the closet of our soul. Indeed, the old law of compensation is as active in the realm of discovery as in the realm of darkness. The greater and the more luminous the scientific achievements of today, the darker the shadow they cast in our mental world. The dragons of science, namely, electricity, magnetism, steam have grown like the Samsons and Goliaths of old, but correspondingly man has dwindled into manikin, into hop-o -my-thumb. If we might express it mathematically, man is composed of two elements, namely, *M* which is his spiritual greatness or Manliness, and *N* which represents the number of his possessions :  $MAN = M \text{ (Manliness)} \times N \text{ (number of possessions)}$ . Science has increased the last factor of easements and possessions, and has, therefore, correspondingly reduced his Manliness. This is why the modern man is so small despite all his possessions and scientific achievements. The fact of the matter is that the brute-in-man is still at large ; although he has changed his outward garb, yet the prowling propensity is still there. It is this which is the root cause of recurring wars, which makes neighbourly nations quarrel like cats and dogs. Will science make us any better ? Yes and

no ; yes, it will bring in its train many other amenities of life, and no, because these amenities are later on found to be no better than the Apples of Sodom which the serpent offered to Eve when she was in the Garden of Eden ! Investigations are good as far as they go, but at best they are merely accretions. Our soul which is our choicest possession is no more to be found in the world of matter than can light be discovered in the womb of darkness. Thus our energy has gone astray, our effort has been derailed, and we find ourselves in a deep morass of materialism from which it is becoming increasingly difficult to extricate ourselves. We followed too far the will-o'-the-wisp of materialism, and today we find ourselves lost in the arid Sahara of agnosticism.

When man sinks into a depth deeper than this, when he sells his birthright for a mess of pottage, it is then that a Guru is born to dispel the darkness of ages. Five centuries back, India, the land of seers and saviours, had sunk to abysmal depth. Sanskrit, the language of the intelligentsia, had gradually died and become petrified. The Vedas had either become sealed books or were replaced by other books of doubtful authenticity. The masses were cut off from light and learning. Buddhism, like the sciences of today, had devoted more attention to head than to the heart, and thus the springs of *Bhakti* had become dried. When Buddhism died its natural death in India, dry philosophy sprang up like the mushroom growth, and although it derived its inspiration from the Vedas of old, yet without the under-current of heart, this philosophy was as sterile as a tree deprived of its root. The Mohammedans had conquered India and had replaced the Purans by the Qoran. But the Qoran was foreign to the Indian genius and remained as much on the surface as that philosophy of old. Evidently a deep-rooted genius was the pressing necessity of the age and it found its response in Nanak. Guru Nanak was sweet and simple like the

narcissus-lily. The lily springs from the earth and is primarily of the earth, so was Nanak a real son of India and its true exponent. His hymns are redolent with divine fragrance. He sang like the nightingale, and worked like the bee. He travelled on foot the length and breadth of India and went as far as Mecca in the west and Tibet in the north and by the time he died, India felt itself rejuvenated as the Guru had injected in its arteries the same vital ichor which it had lost. Guru Nanak did for India what no other leader of mankind did; he left his Self behind! We, therefore, find the happy phenomenon of a long list of *Avataras*, each aglow with the same Divine Flame, each working for the stricken *Bharatvarsh*, but changing the medicine to suit the altered needs and requirements of the patient. In the span of one century, no less than four Nanaks had administered to the spiritual needs of India, and now came the turn for the fifth and the central figure, *i.e.*, Shri Guru Arjan Dev.

**The Fifth Guru.** Shri Guru Arjan Dev ji is the central-most figure of the Sikh history and is on all accounts a unique personality such as has no parallel. Coming as he did between Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh Theocracy, and Guru Govind Singh, the creator of the Khalsa Brotherhood, Guru Arjan Dev combined the prophetic qualities of the one with the dynamic personality of the other. The more you read him the clearer becomes the conviction that Guru Arjan Dev was the very head and heart of Nanak. Were it not for him Sikhism would have run to seed, and it would not have been what it is to-day: a mighty *pipul* which has its roots deep in the bowels of Eternity. A worthy son of the worthy father, Guru Ram Das, it was Guru Arjan Dev who first proved in his person that the Guru's son is really the fit person to step into the shoes of his father. Guru Nanak selected Angad in preference to his own sons, but evidently the holy influence of Nanak was as much at work in the lineal line as in the

outside world, so that a century of preparation had changed the very spiritual seed. The Guru held the *Gadi* for close upon three decades, and these days were certainly the most successful in expansion and consolidation of the Sikh Religion. He laid the foundation of Tarn Taran city which was to become a raft to carry the drowning souls across the ocean of *maya*. Most of the temples and tanks that are found at Amritsar or Kartarpur were laid in his time. He organised a band of missionaries who carried the torch of divine light to the farthest corners of the Punjab. He introduced the *kar-bhet* system which, if well administered, has all the potentialities of good and expansion. He organised a daily service at Durbar Sahib Sri Amritsar. Indeed, his hands were always full with many schemes which aimed at dispelling the forces of darkness, and in ushering in light into this land of the Five Rivers. This was quite in consonance with the prophecy of his grandfather Sri Guru Amar Dev whose viands he took in both of his hands while yet a child, that Guru Arjan Dev's hands will be always full with matters spiritual. manifold as were his activities in his busy life of about forty years, yet there are three outstanding works connected with him, any one of which, by itself, would be sufficient to make his name immortal; they are: the compilation of the *Ad-Granth*, the construction of the Golden Temple at Sri Amritsar, and last but not least, his own sacrifice for the sake of his cause and the country. We will do well to take each separately.

**Compilation of the Ad-Granth.** It was an Himalayan task which Sri Guru Arjan Dev took on his shoulders when he tried to compile the *Granth* and yet he carried it through as he alone could. The *Ad-Granth* is by no means the Sikh Bible, but it is the common-Bible of the whole *Bharath-varsh*. You will find therein the psalms of Kabir side by side with the hymns of the Gurus, of Farid and Bhikhan, the Moham-

medan saints alongside those of Namdev and Ravidass who were pre-eminently Hindus; there is a lyric of the Bengali poet Jaidev, the reputed author of Gita-Govinda, and another from Ramanand who was the founder of the Vaishnavite movement in India. Indeed, all those who outpoured their heart in their own mother tongue, the Hindustani, and all those who were inspired by the Divine Voice, found a niche in this immortal Temple of the Spirit. Who that reads this Divine Book can fail to be stirred by the deep surging of the Spirit which animates the whole poetry? Every page sparkles with divine refulgence, each line tingles us with rare joy. There is no human chord that is not struck, there is no depth that is not stirred! Words stutter to give an idea of the labour involved and the value of the Herculean task accomplished!

In the pages of the Guru Granth, you do feel Man come into his own, developed to his full stature of manhood, when man is no longer man but one with the Supreme Self. No longer are elemental forces of Nature the objects of worship, but only the Timeless Spirit whom we call the *Akal-Purakh*. The arid deserts of philosophy have been replaced by the mountain-heights of meditation. No longer the cold philosophy of the head but the palpitating warm blood of the heart! Humility, the crown of godliness, has taken the place of bloated egotism! The mother-tongue has displaced the high-stilted Sanskrit. For the first, and perhaps, the last time, you find the whole of India trying to speak a common language, a language understood more or less in all corners of India, and which is the language of the unlettered masses. Herein, is the first concerted attempt to evolve both a common language and a common nationality. In Guru Granth, therefore, lies hidden the seed of India's unity, as also of its salvation.

It is impossible to describe the poetry of the Guru Granth except by stating that it is as grand, simple and varied as

Nature itself. In its verse, the sunshine laughs, the birds sing, the *Chatrik* thrists, the *Koel* warbles plaintive notes, the rivers dance, snow sparkles; *Basant*, the king of seasons, comes in gala dress; the mountains give forth their sonorous echoes; the tide of human heart ebbs and flows; and man, the estranged-bride, is once more in the arms of her Beloved: the Supreme Spouse! All the gold of Indian daybreak is there! All the perfume of the Indian sandalwoods is there! All the pellucid purity of Indian pearls is there! Such is the Sikh Granth, the very quintessence of all essences!!

Each Bible is necessarily a symbol, an hieroglyph of the underlying Spirit. But there are Bibles and Bibles, some that lift the veil, however inadequately, others that heap curtains on curtains, mystifying the mystery itself, and making confusion worse confounded. In the Guru Granth Sahib, however, there is the first genuine attempt to completely take off the veil from the Spirit. Herein, at last, is the Isis completely unveiled! Herein the goddess of Saraswati comes to you in her stark nudity! Herein the goddess Vesta meets the virgins and the matrons alike, with equal hospitality!

Above all, Guru Granth Sahib is the only Bible which gives you complete information about that eerie-possession: the *Nam*, which is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven, and but for which all poetry is verbiage and all philosophy illusory. The Gospel of St. John holds out the hint about the Word which was in the beginning and which came not only from God, but *is* God; but it leaves you there to exercise your ingenuity as to how to ferret it out. The Gitas and Gitanjalis do not even refer to it. In the Guru Granth Sahib, the novice, *i.e.*, the Sikh is directly face to face with this weird Reality, and having discovered it first, he slowly builds the temple of the Spirit, laying long perpendicular pillars which having their basis in *Nam*, rear the dome into the infinite blue! The Sikh

begins with this weird-Bedrock first. He is, therefore, firm-footed. Others build only on a foundation of sand. It is this which makes all the difference between success and failure. Guru Granth Sahib is unique as it deals not so much with the metaphysical-*atman*, as with its practical correlate : the *Nam*. While the metaphysician obtains at best a side-long glance of Reality, the Sikh mystic experiences the dazzling Reality first hand !

Guru Arjan Dev's contribution to this Granth is by far the greatest, and it would be no exaggeration to state that his hymns are equal to or or greater than the hymns of all other hymns and *Bhāgatas* combined. From this fact alone the towering personality of the Fifth Guru will be obvious, but you have only to read any one of his psalms to gauge the real inwardness of his genius. In particular, his *Sukhmani* is the choicest of all his spiritual gems, and it is veritably the Koh-i-Noor of the Spirit ! Herein you find simplicity turned sublime, art engulfed by artlessness, love maturing into fecundity ! The *Sukhmani* stands in the same relation to other Gitas as the Himalayas to their foothills, the Swaliks. But each psalm of the Fifth Guru is a little *Sukhmani* in itself. The following is typical of his other hymns, and shows the change which comes over the Sikh when he is illumined by the ghostly Light of the Name :—

“ My mind is illumined ;  
 The egg of ignorance hath burst,  
 The captive soul is freed,  
 The fog of darkness hath dispersed !  
 No more endless cycle of life and death,  
 No more fretting and fuming  
 In steaming cauldron of Time, which cooled  
 As soon as the Guru showered the *Nam*-biessing !  
 The load of Karma is removed off my breast,  
 And I soar like a bird, free on its wing,  
 No more the irksome restraint of the law,  
 When the Lord himself dost the christening !

From the sea of Becoming I have reached  
 The shore of Being and of rest,  
 I reached this Haven when I was of the Guru,  
 And was, in turn, by the Guru blest !

Truth is now my resting-ground,  
 Truth is my Rock and my dwelling,  
 Truth is my capital and stock-in-trade,  
 Saith Nanak, yea, I have found my Home !

(*Maru V*).

Apart from the Guru's compositions, what strikes me as a startling evidence of his genius is the manner of the arrangement of the *Ad-Granth*. The hymns there are not like the unstrung beads, nor are they loosely strung ; on the other hand, there is an organic arrangement, such that, not even one hymn can be displaced or removed ! There is the deepest significance in the fact that the Guru arranged the hymns in the order of *Rags* or musical scales, for is not the universe itself planned on the self-same lines ? Consider the Music of the Spheres which spins out creation and makes layer after layer of the world-stuff much as the architect lays brick on brick. This is why the Celestial-City of the *Ad-Granth* is also laid on the cosmic style. In this City Celestial the main thoroughfares are the *Rags* which are like so many Milky Ways, resplendent with the diamond-dust of the Spirit ; the side-alleys or *Mohallas* are the Gurus or other *Bhagatas*, and groups of psalms are palaces or *Ghars*, while each hymn is like a little room or window of the soul. Such is the architecture of this *Granth*—a veritable image of the cosmos.

**Construction of the Golden Temple, Amritsar.**  
 While the depth and the beauty of the *Ad-Granth* must necessarily be reserved for the initiates, Sri Guru Arjan Dev left us an image of his divine mind in that Dream of Marble which is consecrated for all time at Amritsar. This temple



was at first commenced by Guru Rañ Dass, but the subsequent modelling and finish is due entirely to the Fifth Guru. Those who look on merely the alabaster and the gold miss the inner Spirit which pervades the whole building and but for which it would be another colourless Durgiana. The whole place is literally crammed with divine influence, and no one who enters the sacred precincts of the Durbar Sahib can fail to be stirred by that immanent Light which is congealed, as it were, to form the bedrock of this Temple! Guru Arjan Dev sanctified the building by his life-giving *mahtras* which he sang in accompaniment with tamboura. His divine voice filled and overflowed the dome, until it was absorbed and re-absorbed by the thirsty lake outside, which has, therefore, become literally a "Sea of Immortality". That divine voice still lingers in the folds and the curves of its sky-kissing cupola, and its echo still awakens the extinguished souls. It is this divine influence which took the writer once by surprise, when he was listening to the peals of sacred choir from within, and which has ever since been his life companion and his most cherished possession! It was a moonlit night and the image of the moon was clearly reflected in the blue sheet of glass. My eyes wandered from the golden dome to that far off queen of the heavens, and back again, when all of a sudden the bonds of my imprisoned soul were let loose, and lo! I was like a nymph ardently circling round the golden dome, like an enchanted seraphim! It was twelve years back that I had this salutary experience, but I know how that leaven has been steadily at work in the hidden depths of my soul, until the entire mass was all but leavened! I also remember vividly how on that eventful night, I felt, I did feel, how the moon itself tarried in its lawful course to pay obeisance to its Guru, for is He not eternally enshrined in the Music which rings from morn to eve, yea, to all eternity, under that heavenly dome?

We must consider at some length the Idea or the design which underlies the whole building, and which makes it verily an image of the living Reality. Consider first its lay out and approach : note how the temple opens on all the four sides ; the four cardinal points are its doors, the heaven itself is its invisible dome ! This is a Temple meant not for any particular sect or denomination, but for one and all, as much for the East as for the West. Before you approach the Temple, you must descend a flight of steps. Have you marked this startling feature, if not go to the Golden Temple and watch the construction ; this is an abiding symbol of the Sikh humility ! Then scan practically the 'limitless stretch of the *lapis lazuli* water. Isolated by this stretch of the blue, the temple remains immune from all worldly trouble, and the dust and dirt of the outside world cannot pollute the pearly surface of the Golden Temple. The holy waters wash its walls which remain firm in a sea of *Maya*. Mark the contrast between this tempestuous sea, on the one hand, and the Firm throne of the *Akal-Purakh* which is poised in the aforesaid lake like one big lotus ! I say mark this carefully, for if you have mastered the underlying idea--this eternal contrast between *Maya* and *Purusha*, and the connecting bridge of *Nam*, then alone you can realise the ground-plan devised by that Supreme Architect who fashioned the Golden Temple on earth on the self-same lines on which the heavens and the cosmos itself are built ! He who looks deep into this Idea, will realise why the Fifth Guru himself waxed eloquent in singing the praises of this Temple :

“ I have seen all temples, here, there, and everywhere,  
But O Temple ! none is like unto thee !

The Creator himself laid the design,  
This is wly thou art paragon of beauty ! ”

(*Punahs*)

Needless to say why the *Pauja Sahib* is being modelled on the selfsame design. Here, therefore, is an eternal design which may be copied by all these who want to transmute stone and mortar into that Virgin Rose which no mortal has touched or defiled!

But the soul of the Golden Temple is deeper and still more beautiful: it is unending, ravishing Music from the *Ad-Granth!* The *Ad-Granth* and the Golden Temple are not two, but indissolubly one, even as are the body and the soul. The Golden Temple is the tabernacle where the eternal *Nam* resides. How I wish we could see through the outer covering into that living presence of which the gold and the alabaster are but symbols! The Golden Temple was once razed to the ground and rebuilt, why? Did not the Supreme Architect know of the fate that was to befall it once? Yes, He knew it well enough, but permitted this sacrilege at the hands of the iconoclast so that the ghastly experience may remain as an eternal reminder to the worshippers that the soul of the Golden Temple is not its brick and mortar, but that impalpable, yet thoroughly real, *Nam*, of which alone we are the worshippers! We can afford to be deprived temporarily of the outward Tabernacle, but woe befall the day when the Sikhs are weaned from their bosom companion: the *Nam!* The holy choristers inside the Temple always remind us about that priceless Possession, even as the milk-white slabs outside remind us of the virtues of purity. Let us not forget either!

**The Guru's Sacrifice.** This brings us to the still more eventful part of the Guru's life. From the *Ad-Granth* to the Golden Temple is a slow but arduous journey. He who had laid these two mile stones on the march to life had already accomplished his life's task. But the crown of martyrdom was also reserved for this angelic soul, and when

the Supreme One offers it to His servants, it must be gladly worn. The enemies of the Guru were already on the lookout. They could not patiently feel the ground sinking from under their feet. Sikhism, a plant of yesterday, had evidently struck root, nay more, it had begun to flourish. The *Ad-Granth* and the Golden Temple were visible signs of the vigour of this creed. Hundreds of thousands of men ran to the feet of the Guru to be initiated into this new fold. They felt that the Sikh was an entirely new creation, something altogether changed. They saw with their own eyes, the sparrows changed into hawks, the paupers became millionaires in spirit. Evidently, the ferment was at work. The fuse was working slowly but surely, and very soon the Castle of Ignorance was doomed to destruction. News were carried to the Emperor of this silent revolution in the land of the Five Rivers. Monarchs are always suspicious of anything new and startling. With an Akbar or Babar, it would have been different, for the blue blood still coursed in their veins, but Jehangir was a very sordid specimen of humanity. He had sold himself to his beautiful wife, in a fit of passion which clung to him like a shadow all his life. In this fitful frenzy, he was fanned by wine and other idle engagements which kept him tied like a prisoner in the hands of his wife and her relatives. In fact, Jehangir is the sorriest figure in all Mughal history. All other Mughals were great in one way or the other: Akbar was an empire-builder and peace-maker; Shah-Jehan made that wonderful Taj which is Love crystallised into marble so that all may wonder and see; Babar was an adventurer and a founder, and even Aurangzeb had his redeeming feature for he used to earn his pittance by copying and selling the Qoran; but what was there to the credit of this voluptuary Prince who sold the birthright of governance in a fit of passion, and who passed all his life as a hen-pecked husband? We can well understand the

mentality of a worldly king such as this as to why he inserted the following lines in his autobiography :—

“On the banks of the river Beas there stands a village Goindwal. Here lived a Hindu Master, Arjan. He had quite a number of Hindu simpletons, as also several Mohammeden rustics as his disciples. There he proclaimed his leadership. He was hailed on all sides as a Guru, and worshippers from all parts of the country rallied round him and paid homage to him. This ‘shop of Gurudom’ had continued for the last three or four generations. I was contemplating since long either to end this trade or to convert the Guru into Islam. In the meantime Khusroo was passing that way, crossing the river near Govindwal. The idiot approached the Guru and laid before him his case imploring for help. The Guru put on the saffron mark (*tilak*) on the forehead of Khusroo in token of his blessing. When I heard all this I ordered the Guru to be brought before me. I conferred all his belongings and children to Murtza Khan, forfeited this property and ordered that he should be tortured to death.”

The details of torture are too well known to need specific mention. Suffice it to say that the Guru was seated on a red-hot plate of iron, and burning sand was poured over his body. The Guru was firm like the Himalayas, and his face was throughout flushed with divine glory. At about the eleventh hour, Saint Mian Mir who was a bosom friend of the Guru learnt of this ghastly tragedy. He ran to the feet of the Master and wished to see the Emperor personally, for as he said : “Master ! I cannot bear to witness this torture.” The Guru loved Mian Mir as the father loves his child, and asked him to look up, when lo ! the hosts of Heaven were clustered on his head, and each angel was vying with the other bending from his throne to cheer the departing soul, and to welcome the Guru into everlasting habitation !

Tears trickled down the cheeks of aged Mian Mir and thus departed the holiest of holies: Guru Arjan Dev, a martyr to the cause which he espoused all his life! The Guru died when he was still in the prime of his life, for he was only forty-three when he shuffled off the mortal coil. Thus was fulfilled the prophecy of the first Guru and the founder :—

“ If thou wisheth to play the game of Love,  
Place thou, then thine head on thine palm, and then  
step forth into this lane,  
Yea, if thou wantest to tread this path  
Fear not to sacrifice thy head !”

All hail to Shri Guru Arjan Dev, the Prince of Martyrs, the Heart and Soul of Sikhism !

**Conclusion.** The Guru is not dead, but is here, there, and everywhere. Indeed, as long as the *Ad-Granth* is there to kindle the Divine Flame in the heart of its worshippers and devotees, so long Shri Guru Arjan Dev is in our midst. In that deathless Form is enshrined the Living Spirit of our Lord. Guru Arjan Dev is a towering personality, head and shoulders above all others. Indeed, he was a spiritual prodigy. While yet a boy, he carried an old head on young shoulders, and with the march of time his reputation for wisdom remained steadily on the increase. It was he who realised for the first time, and tried to give form to the golden idea of India's spiritual unity and solidarity. Although today we are cut into many pigeon-holes by communal partitions and although we are more sundered than ever before, yet it will not be long before we run back to the banner which the great Guru Arjan Dev hoisted four centuries ago. The Gurus were as much our political saviours as our spiritual Masters. But they knew that Rome was not built in a day, nor can a nation be evolved in the twinkling of an eye. They,

therefore, began with constructive work at first. The *Ad-Granth* is the spiritual cement whereby they intended to knit the heterogeneous mass of India. The *Ad-Granth* is our all-India Bible. The language used is the all-India Hindustani, and not merely the Punjabi. You find therein the principle of give and take, of compromise already at work. The psalms compiled therein come in from all corners of India. The saints when they sang these hymns, purposely used such expressions as may be understood in all parts of India so that the whole of India may thrill together, may weep together, may laugh together. But we are fallen on hard times once more ; we talk in our separate gibberish, we cherish separate idioms, we build separate Towers of Babel. How can we expect Swaraj to descend upon us from the heavens under such circumstances ? If we are really in dead earnest about Swaraj, we must begin where the Gurus left us ; we must cherish the Guru Granth as our common-Bible, we must worship the Golden Temple as our common-centre of communion ; indeed, we must become true disciples of the Gurus. That way lies our freedom and salvation, otherwise we wander in the wilderness of political chaos, or sink in the morass of communal rivalry.

The Sikh culture aims at reconciliation of the East and the West. The Sikh is intended to abridge the yawning chasm between the Hindus and the Mohammdans. Sikhism is new life ; it is awakening in the *Nam*. We can no more cut ourselves off from the Light than we can afford to cut ourselves off from air, by raising wooden partitions of caste, creed and colour. Our salvation lies in breathing the Sikh air more freely, sinking our mutual differences in the common solvent of Sikhism, and worshipping the indigenous god-Gurus who laid down their lives at the common altar of Mother Ind. Five centuries back Nanak pointed to us the Way,

and his beckoning Finger is still outstretched like a radiant beam of Light, out of those nimbus clouds which begird the impregnable heights of the Kailash with a ring of gold. I repeat : the Guru is still in our midst, only He is uplifted on a throne of eternal snow and silver, if only we had the eyes to see! Let us work as He did, let us labour as He did. Guru Arjan walked in the footsteps of the Master and became a Guru and a Martyr! It is up to us to follow in His footsteps and to be transfigured likewise,..... for, Sikhism is but another name for the Alchemy of Soul!!

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“ If thou wisheth to play the game of love,  
Place thy head on thy palm and step into this lane  
If thou wantest to tread this path  
Fear not to sacrifice this head.”



# SRI GURU ARJAN DEV JI

*By Sodhi Brijindra Singh, M. A.*

'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his Cross daily and follow me.' 'Christ'

Sikhism idealises the spirit of 'the Cross.' Self-denial and sacrifice are the two guiding ideals of those who follow the ten Gurus. The life of a true Sikh interprets in its every aspect the inner meaning of 'the Cross'—the Cross that was carried by Jesus or Joshua some twenty centuries back—then known 'a wandering Galilean preacher.' Trace the formation of any sect, follow the growth of any religion, your labours will scarcely yield you examples nobler or more inspiring than of those truth-loving virile Sikhs into whose lives 'the Cross' got fixed with all its implications. They imbibed its full spirit and acted up-to the ideal—the ideal of self-denial and service—the goal of the many but the attainment of the very few. They took the ordeal with unflinching devotion and they have been dubbed as martyrs and they truly deserve the honour. The greatest Sikh whose martyrdom has proved and will ever prove a continual source of inspiration was Sri Guru Arjan Dev. I call him a Sikh and so calling I feel nearer to him. He was both a Sikh and a Guru, the master and the disciple at once. In him I realize the presence of the man and the superman.

Open the history of nations. It bears witness to but a few blessed souls who did for others what the others always do for their own selves. The ten Gurus in the land of Five Rivers and their numerous Sikhs number among those few blessed souls and almost fill-up the row all by themselves. Guru Arjan Dev was the prince of martyrs. He was the first to be sacrificed at the altar of truth and devotion. He had the courage to escape from his own self—the frammels of his own flesh and to live and die for others—for all the world. He served Truth with a persistence that has been hardly equalled ever since. The purity and grandeur of his self-sacrifice stand

all by itself and has its reward in scores of other martyrdoms in Sikh ranks.

Somebody has aptly remarked that martyrdom is for individuals. But the class which cannot produce a few martyrs will never produce many fighters. Guru Arjan Dev sacrificed himself and that strengthened the Sikhs who ultimately proved the saviours of India. Born and brought up amidst persecutions and trials the small following of the Sikh Gurus could hardly hold its own. But they held their heads high. Buffeted on all sides, it would have been crushed to the earth. But it was as strong as ever. Maltreated by many, the simple followers of Truth would have seen their life-mission nipped in the bud. But no, fresh as the morning air, they kept on spreading peace and giving comfort. The reason you ask. It is not far to seek. He who runs may read it. It is the blood of the martyrs. It is the sacrifice of sincere souls—the simple Sikhs. It is the inspiring career of their beloved Gurus. It is the noblest martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth in succession to the spiritual seat of Guru Nanak Dev. His martyrdom is an eternal guide to the faltering and hesitant on the path of self-denial. His self-offering is the never-ending spring of inspiration to aspiring souls. His patient sufferings draw tears from the eyes of the devout. His complete resignation is a lesson in itself. His devotion to his ideals strikes a similar strain in all those who contemplate and drink in the fervour of his strength of convictions. The courage and firmness with which he bore the boiling water on his skin stand as an enduring testimony to the finest qualities of the saint in him. He lived a martyr and died as one. Impossible to forget, it is equally impossible for his faithful followers not to take after him.

Guru Arjan was a lover of patience and a devotee of Truth. He denied himself and carried 'the Cross' in his bosom. A soldier of peace he vanquished his tormentors by

proving more than a match to their blood-curdling methods of torture and test. A man of God, he was perfect as the image of his Creator. Peace radiated from his smiling face, as he suffered, seated cross-legged on a red-hot iron pan. The burring sand even could not deprive him of his heavenly peace, of his angelic grace or of his supreme contentment. He remained unshakable. Temptations moved him not, nor threats cowed him. He glorified in the will of his Lord. As a godly messenger he delivered his message silently and in suffering. He lost himself so that the Khalsa may find itself. He died so that the Khalsa may live. His death brought life and his sacrifice strength unto the ranks of the as-yet weak and unorganized fighters of freedom and warriors of Truth and glory.

'Thy will be done.' He carried out 'His will' and hesitated never for a moment.

The people of Jerusalem horror-struck and at sea gather around Jeremiah. They ask him if the city will stand or fall. He answers 'Yes, stones fall but that which the soul builds in suffering endureth for ever.' What great words and what truth! The breath of those who suffer is never wasted. They build with their bodies with their bones and their flesh and their blood. The structure, they set up, endures for ever. It lasts till eternity. Like the Phoenix dying and another rising up from its ashes, the blood of the martyrs sows its own seeds. The seeds sprout up in time and the tradition goes down to posterity. The body of the blessed men who inherit such traditions never wavers even in face of odds, and never yields to force. Such men live till they forget their martyrs. They flourish till their heroes and holy men fade away from their minds. The Sikhs, however—every generation adding to the list of martyrs—have never and will never forget the martyrdom of Sri Guru Arjan Dev—so selfless was his love, so pure his motive, so patient his resignation and so firm his faith.



