

Second Edition:

Revised and updated with Gurbani of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

(1621-1675)

The True Story



Gurmukh Singh OBE
(UK)

Published by:

Author's note: This Digital Edition is available to Gurdwaras and Sikh organisations for publication with own cover design and introductory messages.

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Second edition
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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)

First edition: April 2017

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Revised and updated with interpretation of the main themes of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Gurbani.

References to other religions in this book:

Sikhi (Sikhism) respects all religious paths to the One Creator Being of all. Guru Nanak used the same lens of Truthful Conduct and egalitarian human values to judge all religions as *practised* while showing the right way to all in a spirit of *Sarbatt da Bhala* (wellbeing of all). His teachings were accepted by most good followers of the main religions of his time who understood the essence of religion, while others opposed. In this account, every effort has been made to interpret Guru Tegh Bahadur's life, teachings and martyrdom, accordingly.

**Message from the Hon General Secretary of The Sikh
Missionary Society UK
(First edition 2017)**

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

First edition April 2017

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

Second Edition May 2021 commemorating 400th Parkash Year of Guru Tegh Bahadur:

Dedicated to Mata Natti ji also known as Mata Ananti or Mata Bassi), wife of Baba Gurditta (eldest son of Guru Hargobind). She was the head of Guru household at Kiratpur Sahib from 1644 following the demise of Guru Hargobind ji until her own death in 1664. She was the mother of Guru Har Rai ji and the grandmother of Guru Har Krishan ji.

12 Facts relating to Guru Tegh Bahadur, some contrary to traditional belief:

- Guru Hargobind was the architect of the strategy to be followed by his successors.
- Guru Tegh Bahadur was the most travelled Guru after Guru Nanak.
- The suggestion that Guru Tegh Bahadur was meditating at Bakala for 20 (some say 26 or more) years cannot be possibly true for two reasons. Firstly, he could not have covered extensive areas of Northern India up to Assam doing *parchar* (preaching) while meditating at Bakala for over 20 years; and, secondly; it is against the miri-piri (temporal-spiritual) life philosophy of Sikhi based on an active life of a householder.
- He remained constantly in touch with the Guru Family at Kiratpur.
- Tegh Bahadur was *named* as the next Guru when referred to as *Baba at 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.
- Contemporary evidence from Assamese Buranji (chronicle) suggests that the first arrest which eventually led to the Guru's martyrdom, was following complaints from the Brahmins and Ulema of northern and eastern Indian subcontinent against the Guru's preaching tours.
- 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

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

All my colleagues, the dedicated *sevadars* at The Sikh Missionary Society UK, for their encouragement to undertake this study; and, late S. Jarnail Singh Jandu and S Amarpreet Singh (Society's Website Manager) for their technical support and advice.

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, 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)

Reading aids and some useful tips:

Guru-family relationships over five generations can be confusing and difficult to follow. It will be useful to have ready access to **Guruship Succession diagram** (page 1).

Also, the main cities and towns mentioned in this account should be located on the map to get an idea of the vast tracts covered during Guru-*parchar* (preaching) tours. See Missionary (Parchar) Tours of Guru Tegh Bahadur at page 2.

Sikh words have been used with translation in brackets when first used. This is an educational process because not all word-concepts can be translated into English and are best read and understood in the context of the narrative.

The more important publications have been highlighted in the *Bibliography*.

It is important for the reader to understand the Sikh concept of **One Guru Jote (Light) in all Guru-persons**. Therefore, the *Guru* (The Enlightener) is a singular concept in Sikh tradition.

Introduction to the first edition 2017

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 telling¹, 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 II).

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*

¹ For example, to be fair to him, Sardar Rattan Singh Bhangu makes this clear in his own great work, *Sri Guru Panth Parkash*.

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)

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* (Spritual 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

Introduction (Second Edition)

Distortion of Sikh history by Indian NCERT (National Council of Educational Research & Training) historians², and the controversy about the Guru's life as *Baba Tegh Bahadur* at Bakala before Guruship, were the main reasons for the initial study.

In his message introducing the first edition of this monograph, ***Guru Tegh Bahadur: The True Story***, the Hon General Secretary, Sikh Missionary Society UK, Sardar Teja Singh Mangat, wrote, "*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.....It is almost impossible to separate fact from flight of poetic imagination!*"

The first edition gave many pointers to the methodology and further research into some aspects of the Guru period covered by Baba/Guru Tegh Bahadur. After a careful study of events following the demise of Guru Hargobind, it is possible to agree with Dr Bhajan Singh Giani³, that in his last instructions, Guru Hargobind advised his successor Guru, Har Rai, that he was to respect his *Chacha* (uncle) *Baba Tegh Bahadur*, *like his own father*.

Thus, Baba Tegh Bahadur's background **active** role from 1644, until his own turn for Gurgaddi in 1664, becomes clear. A strategic bridge can be seen through the life and martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, between Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind and Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh. Meanwhile, the Guruships of Nanak VII, Guru Har Rai and Nanak VIII, Guru Har Krishan, continued building and consolidating Sikh

² See Appendix: *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.*

³ Bhajan Singh Giani Dr, *Guru Tegh Bahadur* (Punjabi), National Book Trust, India. 1995 p 25.

organization and institutions from a position of strength while keeping a low profile.

The strategy worked! It gave the Sikh movement valuable time – almost 30 years – to strengthen itself after the martyrdom of Nanak V, Guru Arjan and the defensive battles of Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind. The Emperor's attention (*Sauron's Eye!*) was kept away from the intensive parchar tours of Baba Tegh Bahadur between 1656 and 1664 before Guruship.

Requests from diaspora colleagues to publish the original monograph with addition of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani to commemorate the 400th Parkash (birth) Anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur has given me another opportunity to revise the book⁴. The role of the Brahmin in opposing the egalitarian Sikhi of Guru Nanak has been further exposed by the contemporary evidence of Assamese chronicles, the *Buranjis*⁵.

It was not a difficult choice to dedicate this edition to Mata Natti ji, also known with affection as Mata Ananti or Mata Bassi, wife of Baba Gurditta ji. She was symbolic of the great sewa and sacrifice of the Guru-ladies who managed the Guru Household. Mata ji was the mother of Guru Har Rai and grandmother of Guru Har Krishan and managed the extended Guru family at Kiratpur Sahib for 20 years during a most uncertain time from 1664 until her demise in 1674.

I have learnt much by researching the *True Story* of the remarkable life and martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. It has been a spiritual experience with many *Eureka* moments of discovery and wonderment while remembering Sikh Ardas (daily prayer):

⁴ For example, a scholarly publication by Dr Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, not available to the author earlier, has been a useful source of reference in this edition.

⁵ Referred to by Dr Fauja Singh, Dr Trilochan Singh et al but not actually seen by the author.

“Let us mediate on Guru Tegh Bahadur and the [proverbial] Nine Treasures of life will come to our homes [our lives will be filled with contentment.]”

I would like to believe that the Guru has guided this pen.

This has been a team effort and the main contributors have been acknowledged separately.

Waheguru ji ka Khalsa
Waheguru ji ki Fateh!

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15 May 2021
London, UK

GURU TEGH BAHADUR - The True Story

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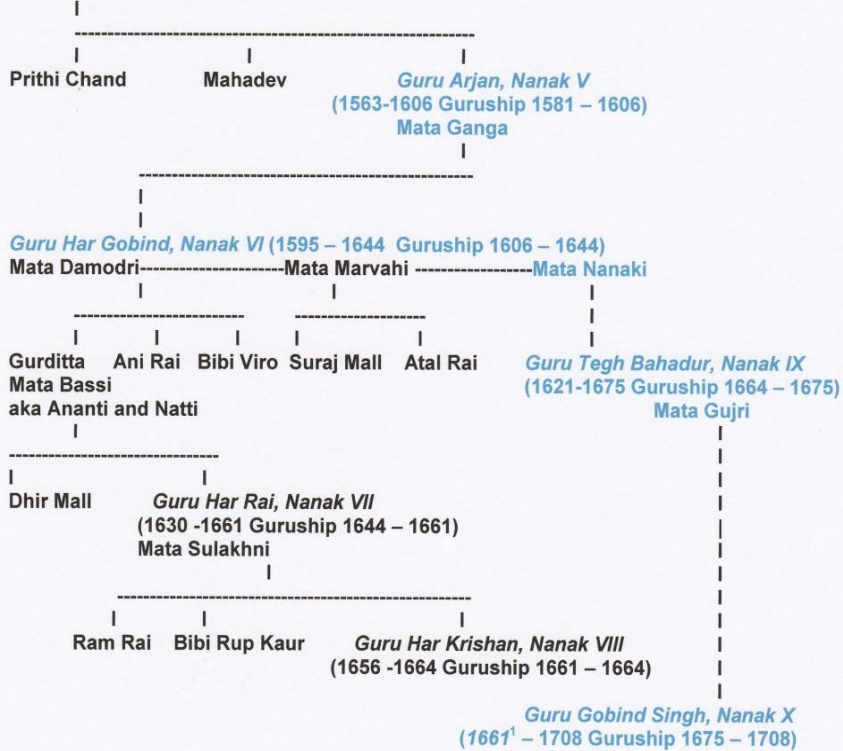
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Guruship Succession:

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.

¹ 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.

Missionary (*Parchar*) Tours of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Most **highlighted** main cities and towns can be located on the map by using Google search (English spelling of some places is not fixed). The *vaheer* (caravan with families, carts and animals) camped for prolonged stays at certain places while the Guru and prominent Sikh *parcharak* (missionaries) moved around independently in surrounding districts doing Sikhi parchar. Some parcharaks moved long distances from the location of the main vaheer. The name of Guru Nanak and the Guru's presence in the area attracted large congregations.

First prolonged parchar tour before Guruship from (mid-1656 to April 1664).

It is probable that while Sikhi parchar by prominent Sikh parcharaks in the *vaheer* continued in and around the stopping places mentioned below, *Baba* Tegh Bahadur returned to Punjab in-between to manage own affairs and also to consult with Guru Har Rai (Guruship 1644 to 1661). Nevertheless, it is regarded as the first prolonged Sikhi parchar tour of *Baba* Tegh Bahadur before Guruship. According to one Bhatt Vahi account, Gobind Rai (Guru Gobind Singh) was born during this tour at Patna on 18 December 1661. That date is disputed by some historians.

Places:

Bakala, Kiratpur Sahib (13 June 1656), **Ropar**, Banur (near Rajpura, Punjab), **Kurukshetra** (Haryana) (mid-winter 1656), **Hardwar** (29 March 1657), Garh Mukteshar, **Mathura, Agra, Prayag (Allahabad)** from beginning of 1661, **Benares** (Varanasi) (21 June, 1661), Sasram, Gaya, **Patna**.

Return from Patna via the same route as above e.g. he was at **Prayag** on 3 January 1663, Delhi (21 March 1664) and back to Bakala by early April 1664.

Second Parchar Tour (after Guruship) of Majha, Malwa and Bangar Desh areas.

Bakala, Amritsar (22 November, 1664), Village Walla near Amritsar, **Tarn Taran**, **Khadur Sahib**, **Goindwal**, Khem Karan (west of Amritsar), Sultanpur, Zira, Zira, **Moga**, Darauli, **Faridkot**, **Bathinda**, **Talwandi Sabo** (Dam Dama Sahib), on to **Bangar** area: Maur, **Dhamtan** and surrounding districts (Kharak, Khatkar, Tek and Kaithal) Kurukshetra, and back to **Kiratpur Sahib** by 6 May 1665.

Third Parchar Tour of Eastern India (from October 1665 to end 1671)

Kiratpur (October 1665), **Ropar**, Saifabad (Bahadur Garh near **Patiala**), **Sunam**, Shajli, Lehragaga, **Dhamtan** (October-November 1665), **Delhi**, **Mathura**, **Agra**, **Etawa**, **Kanpur**, Fatehpur, Prayag (**Allahabad**) March 1666, **Benares**, Mirzapur, **Sasram**, **Bodh Gaya**, **Patna**, (End May 1666), Barh, Bada Gaon, **Monghyr (Monger)**, **Bhagalpur**, Colgong, **Sahibjanj**, Kantanagar (now Lachmipur), **Malda** (Sufi centre), **Godagari** (Bangladesh), Gopalpur, Pabna, **Dacca**, (Mid-1667⁶),

parchar from Dacca for one year followed Guru Nanak's route probably to **Jaleshwar**, **Rupsa**, **Baleshwar**, **Cuttack**, up to **Jagannathpur** (Puri in Orissa). Back to **Dacca** and return towards Patna. **At Monghyr** (Munger) (second half of 1668 met Raja Ram Singh) ., **Dhubri** (Assam border) (early 1669, **Guwahati**, **Hajo** (Teghpur/Tegh Parbat 24 km from Guwahati), **Return from Guwahati**, **Bangaigaon**, Siligiri, Katihar.(by-passed Patna to take short route through) **Agra** (detained and brought to Delhi under guard). Released by 20 June 1670. **Rohtak**, **Kurukashetra**, **Pehova**, **Lakhnaur (near Ambala)**, Saifabad ((now Bhadurgarh near **Patiala**), Lahal, Lang,

⁶ Fauja Singh & Talib p 39.

Mulowal, Sekha, Thikriwala, **Malha (Sodhian)**, **Kartarpur** (near Jalandhar) and back to **Bakala** (end 1671).

Fourth Parchar tour of Malwa and Bangar Desh (From middle 1673 to end 1674)

Anandpur, Saifabad (now Bhadurgarh near **Patiala**), Patiala, **Mulowal**, Sekha, **Handiaya**, Dhilwan, Maisar Khana, Pandherian, Alisher, Joga Bhupali, Khiva, Sumaon, **Bhikhi**, Khiala, **Maur**, Tahla Sahib, **Talwandi Sabo** (Damdama Sahib), **Bathinda**, **Sulisar**, Bada Pind, Bacchauna, Gobindpura, Gaga, Gurne, Makrod, on to Banagar Dash: **Dhamtan**, **Kaithal**, **Sirsa**, **Hisar**, and slow return to Anandpur towards end 1674.

Final *Shaheedi* (Martyrdom) route from Ananpur to Delhi (1 July 1675 to 11 November 1675):

Anandpur (1 July 1675), **Kiratpur** (10 July 1675), **Malikpur Ranghran** (arrest 12 July 1675), **Sirhind** (kept at Bassi Patthana), to **Delhi** on 5 November 1675. Martyrdom at Delhi on the orders of Emperor Aurungzeb on 11 November 1675.

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.

Assamese Buranji evidence and role of the Brahmin and ulema (Islamic clergy): That the Brahmins and Ulema (Islamic clergy) complained to Aurungzeb that the Guru was vitiating the whole socio-religious environment by preaching Guru Nanak's egalitarian message of true religion which rejected discrimination under any excuse.

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 Harmandir 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. That Makhan Shah came with an armed guard and was prepared to stay with the Guru for such a prolonged period is significant in view of the dispute about Guruship.

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: Following complaints from the Brahmins and ulema (Assamese Buranji evidence as above). 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 Sikh *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 Rai accompanied him. The Guru returned to Chakk Nanaki towards the end of 1674 via Kaithal and many villages in Sirsa and Hisar.

Delegation of Brahmins led by Kashmiri Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt: Brahmins from many Hindu centres including those from Kashmir, sought the Guru's help against Aurungzeb's religious persecution. They were led by Pandit Kirpa Ram Datt who had been in the service of *Guru-Ghar* (Guru's House) for many years, they met Guru Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Rai at Anandpur on May 25, 1675.

Gobind Rai anointed as the next Guru on 8 July, 1675⁷.

⁷ 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

Final arrest: Arrested on 11 July, 1675 from village Malikpur Ranghuran 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 holy *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)

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."⁸

Relying on a fanatic interpretation of the Islamic code of *Sharia*⁹ to remain in power, rather than on a humanitarian regime administered

⁸ Sangat Singh pp 257-258

⁹ 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.

through just laws and fair treatment of the subjects, the Mughal rulers of 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 leading to first Guru martyrdom of Nanak V, Guru Arjan Dev

To understand the mission and martyrdom of Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahadur, the second Guru martyr in Sikhi tradition, it is necessary to follow the development of the Sikh movement from Guru Nanak to Guru Arjan, the first Guru martyr.

Some historiographers regard the two Guru martyrdoms as “turning points”¹⁰ in the Sikh movement. That is due to lack of understanding of Guru *Jote-Jugat* continuity (see below). However, there is no doubt that they were major milestones in the progress of Sikhi. Otherwise, the progress of the Sikh movement from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh culminating in the twin institutions of Guru Granth and Guru Khalsa Panth, was continuous, consistent process and as ordained by the Guru *Jote-Jugat*.

Sometimes we forget that Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh was the third Guru martyr and his martyrdom started the third phase of Guru Granth and Guru Khalsa Panth. That phase continues today.

Understanding Guru *Jote-Jugat* concept and process

¹⁰ Gokal Chand Narangs “Transformation of Sikhism” written in 1912, was based on this postulation.

The Sikh belief in One Guru *Jote* and *Jugat* continuity needs understanding. Jote is the Guru Light and Jugat is the “method” (modus operandi). The operation of Jote-Jugat through Guru-persons is described with deep reverence by the Bhatt poets in *Bhatt Bani* in Guru Granth Sahib¹¹.

So, the Sikh belief is that the same Guru Light of Nanak guided the progress of Sikhi thought and strategy through Ten Guru-persons. That is, as if it were the same person with the one vision and mission, the same policy, planning and execution. It is possible to construct Sikh Guru history (*Gur lthas*), including the two major landmarks of the martyrdoms of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur as part of the same process. Each Guru person refers back to the founding spiritual and temporal principles and goals of Guru Nanak and the progress made by earlier Guru-persons.

This process explains some important events in this account covering the life and mission of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

After Guru Nanak, the Sikh movement grew quite rapidly in the next 67 years to 1606, systematically achieving the following milestones through each Guru-person:

(Guruship period in brackets. Also see Guruship succession diagram at page 1)

Nanak II, Guru Angad (1539-1552)

Contributed Gurbani, 62 hymns in addition Guru Nanak's 974, as Nanak II; formalised the Gurmukhi script; promoted *sewa* (selfless service) and the institution of langar started by Guru Nanak; promoted physical fitness and martial arts¹².

¹¹ *They shared the same Light and way; the King [i.e. the Guru Light in Nanak] just changed His body.* (SGGS 966)

¹² Thenceforth, martial arts training became a part of Sikhi life. Baba Budha ((1506-1631) of Randhawa clan, was blessed with long life by Guru Nanak. He had mastery of arm and trained Guru children up to the time of Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind, whose children, including Tegh Bahadur, were trained by him.

Nanak III, Guru Amardas: (1552-1574)

Contributed Gurbani, 907 hymns, as Nanak III.

The time had come to take Sikhi to the next level as a theo-social movement. The Guru strengthened Sikh organisation and started the *manji system* by appointing well trained area *parcharaks* (preachers).

*He knew that the majority of the converts to Sikhism hailed from Hinduism and that their conversion would not last unless a complete break with the old tradition was established.*¹³

Some of the measures he took to wean people away from discriminatory Brahmanic practices were:

He constructed a sacred holy well at Goindwal which replaced pilgrimages at Hardwar, Prayag and Banaras; sharing the well water and the eating together at the langar (community kitchen) as a pre-condition to seeing the Guru aimed to overcome caste prejudice; equality of women was promoted; they were told not to cover their faces and the evil practice of *sati* was condemned; and widow marriage was encouraged. One of the *manji* holders (senior area preacher) was a woman, Bibi Sachan Sacha, a remarkable first in world religions.

All these practical implementations of social reforms by successive Gurus, first introduced by Guru Nanak, were causing much concern amongst the Brahmins because the *manji* system was taking the liberating message far and wide to their religious centres in northern and eastern India. Highly respected Sikh missionaries like Bhai Gurdas visited places like Benares.

In due course, Guru Tegh Bahadur accelerated the dissemination of Sikhi in those areas and incurred the wrath of the Brahmins.

¹³ Fauja Singh Dr and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975 p 4.

Nanak IV, Guru Ramdas: (1574-1581)

Contributed Gurban, 679 hymns, as Nanak IV.

He continued by further institutionalising the Sikh movement. He developed the town of Ramdasapur as a prosperous Sikh centre, later called Amritsar. In addition to the *manji* system for spreading Sikhi, Guru Ramdas introduced the Masand system. Sikh network of Sangats (congregation) was growing. Regular collection of *Daswandh*, voluntary contribution of a tenth of one's income for funding community and charity causes, allowed permanent Sikh organisation, centres and institutions to grow. He started work on Amritsar sarowar (tank) which was completed by Nanak V, Guru Arjan.

Nanak V, Guru Arjan Dev: (1581-1606)

Contributed Gurbani, 2,218 hymns as Nanak V and compiled the First Sikh Scripture, **Adi Granth**, which included hymns of Nanaks I to V and many Bhagats, Bhattas and some Sikhs. Adi Granth was completed with 116 hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur by Guru Gobind Singh and installed as the Living Guru of the Sikhs after him.

In Guru history, this was the mid-point and the most significant consolidation of Sikhi as a theo-political movement. Harmandir Sahib (later called the Golden Temple) was constructed in the middle of the *Sarowar* (sacred tank) constructed by Guru Ramdas and other Sikh centres were built. However, with the compilation of the *Adi Granth the Sikhs now had their own holy Scripture*. The Granth became the firm foundation of Sikhi which started the alarm bells ringing in the camps of zealot guardians of Brahmanic and Islamic traditions.

As Dr Fauja Singh writes:

These prodigious achievements under the leadership of the Guru [Arjan] aroused envy and malice in the camps of his opponents, especially the orthodox sections of Hindu and Muslim communities. They made concerted endeavour to malign the prospering community in the eyes of Muslim rulers. Among them Shaikh Ahmed Alif Sani, the Naqshbandi leader of Sirhind, was exceptionally hostile to the rising popularity of Sikhism. The

Shaikh declared Sikhism as an enemy of Islam and vociferously incited the rulers to crush it. ¹⁴

Emperor Jehangir took serious note. The Guru was arrested under the false charge of collusion with Khusrau, put through extreme forms of torture and martyred in 1606

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.

Sikhi rejected discrimination under any pretext. That equality principle of Sikhi was seen as a threat to their religions *as practised*, first by the Brahmins and later, by the Islamic clergy. Both had a role in the martyrdoms of Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan, and Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur.

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 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

¹⁴ Ibid p.6

constant companions. Amongst these were poets and bards and a famous warrior of the time, Painday 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 deserving successor of the time. Tegh Bahadur himself was passed over twice for Guruship following the demise of his father, Guru Hargobind and of his nephew¹⁵ 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 role of the Brahmin

From the day Guru Nanak, aged 11, refused to wear the *Janeu* symbolic of Hindu caste hierarchy and divisions, the Brahmin felt that his position at the top was under threat from Sikhi. From then on, he became the enemy within "*driven by a mission to undermine, adulterate, contaminate and corrupt Sikhi. Guru Nanak and everything that he would represent from then on would be seen as a threat to the Brahmin clergy, and thus worthy of destruction by any and every means.*"¹⁶

¹⁵ 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).

¹⁶ Dr Karminder Singh, Malaysia, *Authentic Sikhi, Benares Conspirators.....*, *Asia Samachar*, 26 April 2021.

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).¹⁷ 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 1606¹⁸. 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).

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)¹⁹.

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.

¹⁷ Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol I p56, SGGS pp84, 1087.

¹⁸ Encyclopaedia of Sikhism Vol I p57

¹⁹ 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 25th 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. Baba Budha is remembered as a great saint-warrior in the true Sikhi tradition.

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.

However, the machination of the relatives within the Guru families, disaffected by Guru succession, continued. They took their complaints to the Mughal rulers at Delhi from time to time. From Guru Arjan onwards, the Mughal directed by the *ulema* (Islamic scholars) was looking for ways to destroy the Sikhi movement started by Guru Nanak. This suited the designs of the Brahmin also. However, Hindu and Muslim friends of Guru Nanak's House (*Guru-ghar*) also held influential positions in the royal court. Their intercessions delayed the inevitable final confrontation between the Emperors at Delhi and the Gurus.

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*²⁰ Gurditta (1613-1638), sister *Bibi*²¹ 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*²² Nanaki the daughter of Hari Chand and Hardevi living in the village Bakala.

²⁰ *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.

²¹ *Bibi* is a term of respect for women and can be variously used for mother, sister, daughter or daughter-in-law.

²² '*Mata*' is a term of respect for elderly ladies and is also used by the Sikhs for the wife or mother of a Guru.

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 use of the sword²³, 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 Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636).

From time to time, he travelled to Sikh centres at Tarn Taran, Khadur Sahib, Goindwal and Kartarpur with his father, other family members and his tutors. The stays were prolonged but his education was not interrupted.

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.

By the year 1621 when Tegh Bahadur was born, Guru Hargobind, and Emperor Jahangir had established some sort of mutual understanding and reasonably good relations. In fact, the Guru even accompanied Jahangir on a tour of Kashmir.

However, in 1621, the year when Tegh Bahadur was born, the Guru was involved in two incidents. A local Khatri Zamindar, Bhagwana, was killed in a conflict with the Guru when he resisted the development of the town of Hargobindpur. Rattan Chand, son of Bhagwana and Karam Chand, son of late Chandu Mal²⁴ complained to

²³ The Sikh sport of *gatka* substituting a stick for a sword for training and exercise is a continuation of the ancient Sikh martial tradition.

²⁴ This is the Chandu Mal who was a party to the martyrdom of Nanak V, Guru Arjan Dev together with the fanatic Mujaddid Alf Thani of Sirhind who mentored Emperor Jahangir.

the Faujdar (army commander) of Jalandhar. The latter sent a detachment against the Guru which was defeated at the battle of Rohilla.²⁵

Jahangir died in 1627 to be succeeded by his son, Shah Jahan who was less tolerant than his father. There were minor clashes between the Mughal commanders and the Guru when Shah Jahan was in Lahore in 1628.

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, although outnumbered, stood their ground and defended the city. Mukhlis Khan was killed and the invading force was repulsed.

The Guru was aware that this was only the start of the final conflict with the Mughals and kept on the move for the next eight months in the Malwa region through Kartarpur (of Sodhis near Jalandhar). He travelled widely. In Malwa, Villages like Bassian near Rai Kot, Takhtupura, Pati Hira Singh, Bhagta Lambhwali were visited. Sikhs prepared to defend the Sikh movement, grew in numbers during this period. Sikhi following in Malwa was further strengthened by Guru Tegh Bahadur's preaching tours some decades later.

Once again the Mughal forces caught up and attacked the Guru. They were defeated in 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.

²⁵ Based on *Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi*

From a very young age, Tegh Bahdur was witness to the bloodshed at three of 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.

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.

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.

*"That the Guru had thought of founding a new Sikh centre here at the foot of the hills as long back as that, speaks volumes of his foresight. But he continued to function in the plains as long as he could and decided to shift to Kiratpur only when the continued hostility of the Mughal authorities rendered it difficult."*²⁶

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*²⁷.

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

²⁶ Fauja Singh Dr and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p 14.

²⁷ 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.

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.

Demise of Baba Gurditta (1613-1638)

The demise of Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind and the eldest brother of Tegh Bahadur in 1638 was a traumatic event for the Guru family and left a lasting impression on young Tegh Bahadur's mind regarding use of occult powers. As Dr Fauja Singh noted:

It was for the second time that a son of the Sixth Guru had earned his displeasure by indulgence in occult powers. Atal Rai had done it many years earlier at Amritsar and had been severely reprimanded for this act of indiscretion. He took his father's displeasure to heart and met an early and premature end. Baba Gurditta now committed a similar indiscretion for which

he got an equally severe repro-bation from his father. His end, too, was similar to that of his younger brother Atal Rai. The lesson of these two incidents was too strong for Tegh Bahadur to forget. That he could never be unmindful of this fact is amply evidenced by the resoluteness with which during his incarceration at Delhi he resisted the insistent demand of the authorities for the display of a miracle.²⁸

Later Baba Ram Rai was severely reprimanded by his father, Guru Har Rai, for showing miracles²⁹ to gain Aurungzeb's favours.

Demise of Guru Hargobind 3 March 1644

Guru Hargobind, about whom Bhai Gurdas wrote, "The warrior Guru, the vanquisher of armies, but his heart is full of love and charity"³⁰, passed the Guruship to Har Rai, his grandson, the younger son of Baba Gurditta, before his demise on 3 March 1644.

Guru Hargobind's defensive retreat to Kiratpur and longer-term strategy for survival and expansion of the Sikh movement outlined to successor Guru persons, would unfold in the next three decades to 1675. In that year, Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur, would court martyrdom to start the final phase leading to the emergence of the Khalsa, the death-defying (*mar-jeevda*) invincible saint-warrior of Nanak IX, Guru Gobind Singh.

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

²⁸ Fauja Singh Dr and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975 pp 14-15

²⁹ A miracle is an extraordinary event which is not explained by natural or scientific laws. Sikh teaching is to accept Divine Will (*Hukam Razaee*) and not believe or indulge in any practices which attempt to interfere with that Will.

³⁰ Vaar 1.48

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. Then, there was the enemy within, the Brahmin, determined to destroy the egalitarian Sikhi of Guru Nanak!

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 (*naana* and *naani*), Hari Chand and Mata 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.

Guru Har Rai too was fully briefed by Guru Hargobind about the next-steps for the growth of Sikhi as a powerful theo-political movement to lead the people to freedom from the exploitative priest and the tyrannical prince. There was a need for low-profile strengthening of Sikhi institutions over the few years and Guru Har Rai was eminently suited to that task. He also kept regular contact with his uncle (*chaacha*) by relationship, Tegh Bahadur, now the Baba of Bakala.

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) until his own term of Guruship (1664-1675).

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."³¹

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.

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

³¹ Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2nd edition, 1994, p64.

out his family responsibilities, some under the Brahmanic influence, treated him like a recluse who had opted out of society³². On the other hand, evidence is emerging, especially from *Bhat Vahis*, that Tegh Bahadur, revered as the Baba of Bakala, continued with his advisory role until his own turn to take over the Guruship and to make the supreme sacrifice to uphold *dharam*.

First long *Parchaar Yatra* (preaching tour)

Background

On taking over the Guruship, Nanak VII, Guru Har Rai (1630-1661), strengthened the Sikh institutions of community service.

After Guru Hargobind's strategic withdrawal to Kiratpur in Shivalik Hills, Guru Har Rai took over at a time when the Sikh movement was under constant threat from Mughal emperors at Delhi – Shah Jahan up to 1658 followed by Aurungzeb. The need was for low profile service-based activism while maintaining ever-ready military strength in case armed defence became necessary.

In addition to community kitchen (*langar*), the Guru ran a well-equipped medical centre³³. In fact, by this time, non-discriminatory

³² 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 Snaan Dharma terminology life style.

³³ Records show that Emperor Shah Jahan's eldest son, Dara Shukoh (1615-1659), was treated with herbal medicine from the Guru's medical dispensary. He became a devotee of the Guru. He wrote "Confluence of the Two Seas" which argued for harmony of Islam and Hinduism. In the succession war, he was eventually killed by orders of the victorious Aurangzeb, his younger brother, *in front of his terrified son on the night of 30 August 1659*.

langar had become an established Sikh institution in the countrywide system of Sangats started by Guru Nanak. It is interesting that medical research and care services were developed during this time. These services are essential during armed conflict if forced as a last resort as shown later during Guru Gobind Singh's defensive battles at Anandpur. Battlefied care services like those provided by Bhai Ghanaiya had been developed from the times of Guru Har Rai.

In modern-day parlance Guru Har Rai was the eco-Guru of the Sikhs. He was a conservationist and cared for flora and fauna; and a herbalist who practised natural medicine.

Guru Har Rai was following the strategy worked out by Guru Hargobind who had also apprised his youngest son Baba Tegh Bahadur of the threats and the need to continue strengthening the Sikh movement through the network of Sikh Sangats (holy congregations). These had been set up in the Indian sub-continent and abroad by Guru Nanak's devotees (*sikhs*, the students of the Teacher Guru) during his prolonged preaching tours.

Following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, he is reputed to have kept *baaee sao swar*, a defence force of 2,200 horsemen. This was a formidable peacetime force even for any stately prince to keep. With such a force, the Guru was always in a strong defensive position. Otherwise, he was renowned for his compassion and community service.

The reasons for keeping a strong defensive posture become clear in view of the underlying reasons for the martyrdom of Nanak V, Guru Arjan in 1606 and the defensive battles forced on Guru Hargobind to save Guru Nanak's mission. As events would show, the ever-imminent danger to Sikhi grew over the following decades to finally claim the second Guru martyrdom after Guru Arjan, of his grandson, Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahdur's in 1675. Not surprisingly, complaints to Delhi emperors against the Guru's *parchar* (preaching) included those from the ulema (Islamic clergy) and the Bramins of northern and eastern India (more about that later).

Suffice to say that, for 12 years to 1656 since taking over the responsibility of Guruship, Guru Har Rai was left alone by the Mughal emperors and the nawabs. This accorded with Guru Hargobind's strategy to keep a low defensive profile and withdraw to the Himalyan foothills away from the main Mughal traffic between Delhi and the north-west frontier.

The Guru's life-style continued to be saintly but stately and prepared for armed self-defence at short notice, albeit, as a last resort.

Nirbhao and *Nirvair* (without fear and without animosity towards anyone) while seeking peace from a strong defensive posture is Guru Har Rai's contribution to Sikh tradition.³⁴

Important meeting between Guru Har Rai and *Baba Tegh Bahadur* of Bakala in early 1656

Twelve years had passed since Guru Har Rai took over the responsibility of Guruship from his grandfather, Guru Hargobind. It was a transitional period of consolidation of the Sikh movement, and strengthening of organisation for the next phase of Guru Jote-Jugat progress towards a just and free society; for peace is not necessarily absence of war if there is oppression and inequality in human society. The kings were still tigers and the judges were still the dogs as described by Guru Nanak³⁵.

³⁴ *I am sacrifice unto him who being mighty considers himself powerless.
I am sacrifice unto him who being grand considers himself humble.*

Bhai Gurdas Var 12.3

³⁵ *The kings are tigers, and their officials are dogs;
They go out and awaken the sleeping people to harass them.
The public servants inflict wounds with their nails.
The dogs lick up the blood that is spilled.
But there, in the Court of the Lord, all beings will be judged.*
(SGGS 1288)

The Guru Jote in Guru Har Rai guided the next phase in the Sikh movement.

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 and eastern parts of the Indian subcontinent to Tegh Bahadur.

According to one important contemporary 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.

The *Parchaar Yatra* (Preaching Tour)

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, Sangat (son of Binna Uppal) 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 preaching stops on the way, to reach the city on 29 March 1657. It was the Vaisakhi day³⁶. From there, while camping for days at a

³⁶ CE calendar dates have been adjusted since then, so that Vaisakhi is now celebrated on 14 April each year according to the *Nanakshahi* Calendar.

time to hold congregations at Mathura, Prayagraj (Allahabad), Benares, Sasaram and Bodh 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 Benares (Kanshi). There was a prolonged stay at Patna in Behar³⁷.

Birth of Gobind Rai (Guru Gobind Singh)

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 confirms³⁸ 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 1661³⁹ and it was Wednesday according to the Julian calendar.***

³⁷ 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.

³⁸ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay* (Punjabi) pp 26-27

³⁹ The day of the week on December 18, 1661 under the old Julian calendar was Wednesday as confirmed by Bhatt Vahi and also by Google search.

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

Most interestingly, there is also mention of Guru Tegh Bahadur prolonged parchar tour from 1656 in the *Assamese Buranjis* ⁴⁰(see later in this account). Once again we are reminded of the role of the Brahmin in opposing Guru Nanak's teachings. According to this contemporary source the orthodox Brahmins, the custodians of Hindu holy places, and the Ulema, the Islamic scholars, complained to Emperor Aurungzeb that the Guru's egalitarian teachings were not only attracting large gatherings but were also *vitiating* the whole socio-religious environment.

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.

Return to Punjab via Delhi: Meeting Nanak VIII, Guru Har Krishan and Baba Ram Rai (21 March 1664)

When the news of Guru Har Rai's demise on 6 October, 1661 reached Tegh Bahadur in due course, bearing in mind the distances, the

⁴⁰ *Assamese Buranjis* are an important source of the history of the Assamese rulers. Some of these chronicles were edited and published by an Assamese historian, Surya Kumar Bhuyan.

communication system those days and movement of the vaheer and parcharaks, the group headed back towards Punjab probably towards end 1663 or early 1664. However, Mata Gujri, young Gobind Rai and family stayed on at Patna which was now a Sikh centre. On the way to Delhi, *Baba Tegh Bahadur* heard that Guru Har Krishan was in Delhi with the Guru family. Baba Ram Rai, Guru Har Khrishan'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*⁴¹ 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 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

⁴¹ 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.

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 18⁴² makes most interesting reading and corrects some misunderstanding about Baba Ram Rai⁴³. According to this *Saakhi*, in *Samat* 1721 (Bikrami year), *Chet Sudi* 8 on Thursday the Emperor sent 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

⁴² *Guru Kian Sakhian* pp 63-66

⁴³ 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.

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 *Jyoti*] was perfect in every way.....He considered him [Har Krishan] 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".⁴⁴

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.

⁴⁴ 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 divided⁴⁵. Possibly due to similar reasons, the Guruship succession ceremony was not completed too soon, but

⁴⁵ 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.

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 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 Mall⁴⁶, 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.

⁴⁶ Dhir Mall – 1627 – 1677: elder son of Baba Gurditta and grandson of Guru Hargobind. Baba Gurditta was Guru Hargobind's 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.

Exploiting the confusion, all in all, 22 pretenders to Guruship, mostly related to each other being the descendants of the Gurus, are 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 Bakala⁴⁷.

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, *Baba* 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

⁴⁷ 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.

his return. He re-visited Kiratpur on the demise of Mata Bassi⁴⁸, 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, Mata Nanaki had also left Kiratput to go to her parent's village, Bakala with Tegh Bahadur and his wife, Gujri.⁴⁹

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 no-one" 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 ones 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

⁴⁸ Wife of Baba Gurditta, the eldest son of Guru Hargobind. She was also known as Ananti, Natti and Nihal Kaur.

⁴⁹ 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 in Sikh chronicles.

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.

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.”⁵⁰ 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*⁵¹ (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 1664⁵². That was two months after Mata Sulakhni and the Delhi Sikhs had reached Bakala to

⁵⁰ *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, 1998 Vol 3 p25

⁵¹ Different amounts are given by some sources. Nevertheless, it was a 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.

⁵² *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism*, 1998 Vol 3 p 25

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 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. Makhan 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 events⁵³.

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

⁵³ 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.

was in the possession of Dhir Mall and kept at his house in Kartarpur.⁵⁴

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 entry⁵⁵.

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 village⁵⁶.

⁵⁴ 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]."

⁵⁵ 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.

⁵⁶ 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.

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 Sabo Talwandi (Damdama Sahib) where the group stayed for about 15 days and dug a *sarowar* (holy pool).⁵⁷

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 Sikhi⁵⁸. 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 Kurukshetra (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.

⁵⁷ 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.

⁵⁸ Sakhi 33 of "*Malwa Desh Ratan*" and Sakhi 20 of "Guru Kian Sakhian".

According to *Guru Kian Sakhian*⁵⁹ 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 Makhawal⁶⁰.

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. 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, 1665 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 manner⁶¹).

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.

⁵⁹ Saakhi 24

⁶⁰ 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.

⁶¹ “*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

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.

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 fertile 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 and 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 18th Century.⁶²

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 included⁶³ some Guru-family members 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 an armed defence force for the security of families, 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

⁶²

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

⁶³ 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.

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 propagating 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 Guru in 1675.) The Guru and his Sikhs were arrested on 8 November 1665.⁶⁴

Evidence from Assamese *Buranji* (chronicle)⁶⁵

As an external contemporary source, the Assamese Buranjis provide interesting evidence into events which led to the arrest, or gave the Emperor another excuse for the arrest.

Assamese *Buranji* chronicles link the Guru's arrest with complaints from the brahmins and *ulema* (Muslim clergy) of the northern and eastern parts of India dotted with Hindu places of pilgrimage. Naturally

⁶⁴ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simaryiay*, Sakhi Nos 13,14 & 15 p57

⁶⁵ S. K. Bhuyan, *Badshah Buranji*, Sakhis 116 and 117 pp 163-164 referenced by Dr Fauja Singh.

their claims would have been for entirely different reasons depending the perceived threat to their respective religions, or more correctly, to religions as *practised* under their stewardship not entirely free from self-interest!

From 1656, *Baba* Tegh Bahadur had been preaching Sikhi Message of Guru Nanak before his Guruship with many other leading Sikh parcharaks (preachers) from 1656. The earlier Sangat system set up during Guru Nanak's tours followed by prominent Sikh parcharaks sent by later Gurus, were being revived and increased in numbers.

The Buranji record mentions *30,000 Nanakpanthi Sipahis* with the Guru at Dhamtan (now in Haryana near Indian Panjab border next to Sangrur District of Panjab). Clearly, this is an exaggerated misunderstanding about countryside people who would have flocked to see the Guru and hear his discourses close to the Diwali festival in 1665. The Guru's keen interest in hunting expeditions and stately lifestyle would have also attracted official attention.

As will be seen later, it was this first arrest of the Guru at Dhamtan following complaints by the Brahmins and the Ulema that the Guru was preaching against their respective religions (as interpreted and/or practised), which subsequently led to the Guru's martyrdom in 1675.

The role of the Brahmin needs further examination in that context. For, it was also the plea of the Brahmin deputation led by Kashmiri Brahmins to the Guru in 1675 to save the Hindu *dharam* from Aurungzeb, which resulted in the direct confrontation between the Emperor and the Guru.

Yet, no matter what the background machinations and intrigues, the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was the inevitable consequence of the perpetual war between true *dharam*, the righteous God-centred cause, and the reign of terror perpetuated by the tyrant and the totalitarian state to suppress freedoms and human rights which diversity demands. For, in a just society, a human right is not granted but assured so that no-one can take it away.

Intervention by the Rajput princes

Raja Jai Singh of Amber and his son Raja Ram Singh had close relations with the Mughals and they were also devotees of the *Guru-ghar* (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 Guru Tegh Bahadur 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.

According to the Assamese Buranji, the Emperor was *furious* when he heard that Raja Ram Singh had released the Guru shortly afterwards to allow him to proceed on yet another prolonged preaching tour of the northern and eastern regions and to re-join his family settled at Patna city in Bihar from 1656. However, he needed military help from the Rajputs and for tactical reasons he decided to delay any action. That would come later.

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 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, Etawa along river Jamna, Kanpur along river Ganga, Fatehpur, Allahabad, Mirzapur, Banaras, Bodh Gaya (Bihar) and crossed the *Karamnash* river.

The Guru took a bath in this river, rejecting 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. Guru Nanak too ridiculed Brahmanic ritualism by throwing Ganges water in the opposite direction to the sun, towards his dry farm fields in Panjab!

There were also discourses with the Brahmins, Muslims and Budhists at their centres. It is not surprising that the Brahmins and the ulema of these areas were unhappy with the Guru's *Sikhi* parchar at their holy places and, therefore, their earlier complaint to the Emperor mentioned in the Assamese Buranji.

It can be safely assumed that the Brahmanis always had influential contacts in the royal court through opportunist Khatri ministers and officials living dual lives, mentioned in Guru Nanak's *Asa ki Vaar*.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ "Wearing blue clothes he becomes acceptable [to the Islamic rulers to hang on to his well-rewarded position in their service]. SGGS 472. There is much more

Whilst the Buranji evidence cannot be regarded as conclusive, nevertheless, it is highly significant that a contemporary source, located hundreds of miles from Delhi, mentions the complaint. Later on, in 1675, the Brahmins had no problem conveying the Guru's message to Aurungzeb almost immediately after getting the Guru's assurance that he would talk to Aurungzeb to adopt a more tolerant approach towards other faiths. It is even possible that the message got distorted in transition to sound more like a "challenge" from the Guru to the Emperor.

Returning to the story so far, 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 Gujri and the family had settled here since the earlier tour which started from 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 Gaon. 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

and the Guru has not spared the Hindu Khatri official of the Mughal tyrant who betrayed his own people.

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 well 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 somewhere near Munger (Bihar) 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.

According to one account, *the Ahom chiefs invoked Goddess Kamakhya and employed various spells and incantations to destroy the enemy. When none succeeded, the failure was attributed to the presence of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Raja Ram Singh's camp. Then the magical skill of the most famous sorceress of Kamrup, Neta Dhoban, was pressed into service but no better result could be achieved.*⁶⁷

The Guru drew large crowds. Even soldiers and commanders from both sides attended his sermons. Soon the warring armies accepted his advice to stop further blood-shed and accept earlier boundaries.

So, an accord was reached between Raja Ram Singh for the Mughal empire and the Ahom ruler Chakradhwaj Singh (Raja Surg Dev of *Guru Kian Sakhian*), his General Lachit Barphukan and the Commander Raja Indradaman Singh at a place which is called Hajo or after his name Teghpur or Tegh Parbat. Guru Tegh Bahadur brought peace between the warring parties on the basis of the *previously existing boundaries*. A high mound of earth was raised by them jointly in memory of Guru which may be seen even now.

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

⁶⁷ Dr Fauja Singh and Gurcharan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahdur – Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi Uni Patiala 1975.) p 41

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*⁶⁸. 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)

⁶⁸ *Dharamsal* is a place of worship and for rest of travelers or visitors.

and Kurukshetra. Mata Gujri's elder brother, Mehar Chand lived in this village. Sikhs from far and wide came to see child Gobind Rai.

From Delhi, the Guru and his Sikhs reached Lakhnaur after stopping at Rohtak, Kurukashetra, Pehova and other Sikh centres. Saif Khan accompanied the Guru to ensure his safety⁶⁹.

The Guru, now united with the rest of his family including Gobind Rai 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 aat p 42 as follows:

(Broad translation by the author):

*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]..... (Paity 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). Jai akhet so bibidh machaavay(n). Nirbhai jai(n) tahn 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

⁶⁹ *Muasar-i-Alamgir* and the Guru's *Hukamnamas* to the sangats published by Dr Ganda Singh.

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 Rai, 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 Bhai 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 Des⁷⁰

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

⁷⁰ 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.

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 him⁷¹.

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 Mullowal about 80 KM west of Patiala for 5 days. Next on the route were the villages of Sekha, Handiaya, 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.

⁷¹ 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”⁷² 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 Jahan⁷³ 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 to Assam in fear of Aurungzeb and died some time later in Arakan, Burma (Myanmar). 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

⁷² Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p70

⁷³ “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 Martyr*, p 97.

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 for sinners to deceive themselves and the world by hiding behind the garb of piety and religion⁷⁴.

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."*⁷⁵

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 Hazari⁷⁶ 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."*⁷⁷

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."*⁷⁸

⁷⁴ "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

⁷⁵ Harbans Singh, p70

⁷⁶ Literally, one entitled to command 6 thousand troops.

⁷⁷ Kapur Singh Sirdar, *Saachi Sakhi*, English translation by Satjit Wadhva, pp 92-93

⁷⁸ Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p70

"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 resumed [?]....In 1679 the emperor re-imposed the jizya⁷⁹ 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. "⁸⁰

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 1674.⁸¹

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 Kashmiri 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

⁷⁹ Per capita tax imposed on non-Muslims by some Islamic states before 20th century. It is possible that the Taliban and ISIS are trying to re-impose it.

⁸⁰ 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

⁸¹ J S Grewal, *The Sikhs of Punjab*, p 68.

discarded *jeneus* daily⁸² 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.

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 Singh⁸³, 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

⁸² 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*".

⁸³ Harbans Singh, *The Heritage of the Sikhs*, p71

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 led by 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).

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 Datt⁸⁴, who had been the tutor of Guru Tegh Bahadur's son, Gobind Rai. 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.*"⁸⁵

The Pundit's dream of seeing the vision of Lord Siva (or a visiting *sadhu*⁸⁶ mistaken as Lord Siva) would have been a convenient form of persuasion which also gave credit to Siva for showing the way!

It is significant, that in addition to Brahman representatives from Kashmir, there were also representatives from many Hindu centres in India like Hardwar, Mathura, and Kurukashetra. These were probably the same Brahmins mentioned in the Assamese Buranji who had complained to Aurungzeb that the Guru's message of equality of all before One Creator Being, was *vitiating* their convenient socio-

⁸⁴ 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.

⁸⁵ Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p71

⁸⁶ Suraj Parkash p. 485

religious system which secured their top position. Guru Nanak referred to them as “*Benares ke thhagg*”!⁸⁷ (the thugs of Benares).

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, 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

⁸⁷ *They are not called Saints of the Lord - they are thugs of Benares* (SGGS 476)

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 Kaul⁸⁸ (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 Rai, 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.*" 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.⁸⁹ 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.

⁸⁸ Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p 62

⁸⁹ Koer Singh, *Gurbilas Patshahi* 10, p49

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.⁹⁰

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.⁹¹ 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*) aimed at creating one religio-centric totalitarian state at the expense of freedom of religion and the rich human diversity⁹².

⁹⁰ 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>

⁹¹ “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

⁹² 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.

Gobind Rai 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 Brahmins had approached the Guru (as indeed, their own Lord Siva had allegedly told one of them in his dream).

Gobind Rai 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 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."⁹³

So the issue was resolved when the Guru's own son, Gobind Rai, 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 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.

⁹³ J S Grewal, *The Sikhs of Punjab*, p72

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 Brahmin deputation led by the Pandits of Kashmir conveyed 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)⁹⁴. 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 Afganistan.

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

⁹⁴ Ratan Singh Bhangu, Sri *Guru Panth Parkash*, builds on this theme of “Babar ke and Babay ke” in his 18th 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.

Aurangzeb was receiving regular reports about what went on at Chak 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 Aurungzeb which was midway through its proselytization program*"⁹⁵. Aurungzeb 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.⁹⁶

*"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."*⁹⁷

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 Aurungzeb.

Aurangzeb at Hasan Abdal

Emperor Aurungzeb 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 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

⁹⁵ Sangat Singh, *The Sikhs in History*, p 61.

⁹⁶ Syed Ghulam Husain Khan in his *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* quoted by Sangat Singh p61.

⁹⁷ Sangat Singh pp 61-2

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.⁹⁸ 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 life⁹⁹.

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

⁹⁸ Composition attributed to Bhat Kesho with opening line, "Chit charan kamal ka aasra...." sung at Sikh weddings.

⁹⁹ 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.

departure of the Kashmiri delegation, having made due arrangements, he anointed Gobind Das as the next Guru after him on 8 July, 1675¹⁰⁰. 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 12th 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."*¹⁰¹

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 Singh¹⁰²) have confused this Shaikh of Sirhind with Nawab Saifuddin of Saifabad, the Guru's

¹⁰⁰ 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.

¹⁰¹ Translation by Harbans Singh p.72. Also account by Kesar Singh Chhibar, *Bansawli Nama*, verse 9.

¹⁰² Trilochan Singh pp 306-307.

devotee and 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 months¹⁰³. 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, 1675¹⁰⁴. Some accounts mention Agra as the city from which the Guru was arrested¹⁰⁵. 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*¹⁰⁶, to show how Aurungzeb, following his extreme religious policy, replaced the secular sun-based calendar (*Shamsi-san*) introduced by Akbar, by Hijri calendar.¹⁰⁷ The confusion of dates

¹⁰³ Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi 29, Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi, Khata Jalhanay Balaote ka.

¹⁰⁴ Harbans Singh gives the date of the Guru's arrival in Delhi as 4 November and Sikh Missionary College as 3 November, 1675.

¹⁰⁵ Trilochan Singh pp 308-9 based on *Suraj Prakash Ras* 12, Ansu 38-39

¹⁰⁶ Kapur Singh, *Sikhism and the Sikhs* pp 290-306

¹⁰⁷ '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

places Aurungzeb 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.

Aurungzeb's governor or Subedar of Delhi was Saffi Khan appointed in April 1674. The commander at Delhi Red Fort was Mutlakit 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 official¹⁰⁸.

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.

Aurungzeb 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

that Aurungzeb, in this, had no other motive but that of religious fanaticism to change the entire face of India into a Muslim state and a Sunni Muslim society.' (Kapur Singh p301)

¹⁰⁸ According to J N Sarkar, History of Aurungzeb, p 48 Vol III "He was the most corrupt and heartless quazi of the reign."

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.

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.¹⁰⁹

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

¹⁰⁹ 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*.

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 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 Bohra¹¹⁰. These choices were:

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 people¹¹¹.

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

¹¹⁰ Sir Jadunath Sarkar quoted by *Sikh Missionary College* p58.

¹¹¹ 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.

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 Chandni Chowk Kotwali¹¹². 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*¹¹³) 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.

¹¹² 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.)

¹¹³ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simaryai* p 60 Bhat Vahi Talaonda, Pargna Jind no. 24)

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.

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 him¹¹⁴, 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 liquid¹¹⁵. 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."¹¹⁶

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,

¹¹⁴ "*Be prepared to give your life before your beloved [Guru]*" SGGS p83

¹¹⁵ Some accounts mention water while others, oil.

¹¹⁶ *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi* 30 p83.

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.¹¹⁷

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 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, intact¹¹⁸. 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 [Aurungzeb] 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]"

¹¹⁷ *Twarikh Guru Khalsa* p.281

¹¹⁸ *Guru Kian Sakhian, Sakhi 31* pp 83-4

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.

*‘Since then the Delhi Kingdom became progressively weaker, it is since then that the Muslim [Mughal] power began to decline’.*¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ 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 Delhi¹²⁰.

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 body¹²¹.

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

¹²⁰ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p 39.

¹²¹ According to *Bhat Vahi Yadobansia ki* (Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, 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).

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".

Both, Jaita and Udha, took Amrit (Khalsa initiation) 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 Chamkaur¹²² (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, 1678¹²³.

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*

¹²² Prof Sahib Singh, *Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji*, P48

¹²³ Piara Singh Padam, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Simaryiay*, p. 41

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.

Part 5

***Gurbani* of Nanak IX, Guru Tegh Bahadur**

Note: In Gurbani (*Guru's Word*), "God" means the unborn Creator Being, the Doer, the Self-aware Timeless Form (Entity) which does not exist in time (*Akal Moorat*), yet, is everywhere all the time. That is the "God" described by Guru Nanak in the "root composition" known as the Mool Mantar¹²⁴, the introduction to Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy Scripture.

Introduction

Guru Tegh Bahadur understood the plight of the enslaved populace during his time and offered hope:

The social situation described by Guru Tegh Bahadur:

The strength is drained and [humanity] is in shackles; there is no solution [to this human condition]. Says Nanak, now, the Lord is the [only] Support; He will help, as He did the elephant [in Vedic lore].
||53||

The Guru's response and reassurance: *The strength [the will to resist oppression] has been restored, and the bonds have been broken; and the means [to liberation] are available. Nanak: everything is in Your hands, Lord; You are the Helper and Support [of all].*

(Guru Teg Bahadur, SGGS 1429 Salok 54)

Guru Tegh Bahadur offers hope to those in helpless situations. All Bani of the Guru needs to be understood bearing in mind the pitiful

¹²⁴ One interpretation of Mool Mantar is: ONE Supreme Being, Eternal Truth, The Creator, Without Fear, Without Animosity, Timeless Form, Un-incarnated, Self-existent, Achieved through the Grace or Shabad of the [True] Guru. This root formula is repeated 33 time in Guru Granth Sahib. Much has been written about each of the Attributes of "God" e.g. the first attribute is Numerical 1 followed by open *ooda* – the first letter of the Gurmukhi alphabet. Therefore, also some confusion about pronunciation and interpretation of this Attribute.

condition of the Indian society at the time, summed-up in the Gurbani quoted above and recited with such devotion during “Paatth da *Bhog*” (completion of the recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib) at Gurdwaras.

People of the Indian subcontinent had lost their direction and the will (inner strength) to resist oppression because, misled away from their true religious paths by the Brahmin and Muslim clergy, they were following false ways. Crushed between exploitative ways of the greedy priesthood – Hindu and Muslim - who colluded with the cruel rulers of the day, the people had lost hope.

The Guru showed them the way to free themselves through total faith in the Creator Being: to fear none and be frightened by no-one:

One who does not frighten anyone, and who is not afraid of anyone else

Says Nanak, listen, O my mind: call him spiritually wise. (Guru Tegh Bahadur, SGGS 1427)

It is not co-incidental that Guru Nanak Sahib preached freedom from the ways of the priest – both, Hindu and Islamic at the time - before proceeding on to freedom from the oppressive rulers. For, only spiritual freedom (of thought) can lead to fearless action against oppressive regimes. Both, the priest and the rulers of the day were alert to this threat to their corrupt life-styles from the egalitarian Sikhi movement.

Therefore, martyrdoms of Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan, and Ninth Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur, while not unexpected, empowered the Sikhi movement to lead the popular freedom struggle.

The detachment preached in Guru Tegh Bahadur’s Bani has to be understood as the pre-condition to a fearless disposition to be able to do one’s duty in life. It is not a message which preaches opting out of society like earlier Indian belief systems. In fact, the Guru shows the falsehood of such life-negating ideologies.

A study of Guru's life shows that he was a *raj-yogi*¹²⁵ i.e. he remained fully engaged in worldly affairs while practising inner detachment. He was named Tyag Mall after his birth on 1 April 1621. At the age of 14 years he took part in the battle of Kartarpur (April 1635) with such valour as to earn the title of *Tegh Bahadur, the fearless master of the sword*, from his great saint-warrior father, Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind.

He was destined to earn the title of the invincible warrior: the martyr who defies death and conquers self to remain witness to the righteous cause, the truth, to the end. He laid down his life but kept his word to set an example for the Khalsa warriors who followed in his footsteps to defend *dharam* (righteous conduct) and human freedom.

In the words of Bhai Gurdas II, the Guru "stabilized the world". (Vaar 41, Pauri 23)

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani is sometimes misinterpreted with a bias towards traditional Indian asceticism or renunciation. That the Guru's Bani is *bairagmaee*. A closer study shows that His Message does not preach any opt-out life style of the Indian tradition. Through detachment from the world-play (*jagat tamasha*) as a passing phase, He encourages full commitment to avail the opportunity offered by this human birth, for God-centred activism (*dharam nebhaona, sewa and simran*) which leads to salvation. In fact, He specifically rejects opt-out way of life:

*Why do you go looking for Him in the forest?
Although he is unattached, he dwells everywhere. He is always with
you as your companion.*
(Guru Tegh Bahadur, SGGS 684)

Like the example of the elephant (*ga*) used in the Gurbani quotation above, Guru ji gives numerous examples from popular Indian folklore which people were able to relate to. They were told how, according to the Vedic parables, those in hopeless situations were given hope and

¹²⁵ Literally *raja and yogi*. In Sikhi, another expression for *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) twin track way of life.

freedom. The society felt helpless like the elephant which according to Vedic lore was caught in the tentacles of a giant octopus and was freed through meditation on the Lord's Name. Other such examples are those of Panchali (Princess of Panjab, Dropadi), Ajamal, Ganika and others. They all symbolize a fearful and helpless Indian society. The Guru shows the way how to overcome fear by seeking the protection of the Timeless Creator Being while doing what is right.

He introduces the concept of the *mar-jeevda* – one who first accepts death as a reality and then lives a life of fearless dignity. The ordinary people who understood this message were prepared for the great struggle and sacrifices which lay ahead.

They sang the verse of Keso Bhatt: *Do not betray trust. Give your head but do not fail in your duty to do what is right. (Bah Jinahn di pakariye.. Sar dije bah na chhoriye.. Tegh Bahadur bolya. Dharr payiae dharam na chhodiya.)*

Otherwise too, Guru Tegh Bahadur was a Raj-Yogi who took full interest in family life.

Both Guru martyrdoms show that only martyrdom for the righteous cause, for *dharam yudh*, is acceptable in Sikhi. The Sikhi concept of *dharam yudh* is very different from, for example, the concept of *jihad* as understood in Islam. [See Gurbachan Singh Sidhu and Gurmukh Singh, *Sikh Religion and Islam*, published by various diaspora organisations, 2001, pp 75-78.¹²⁶]

Approach

The approach to interpreting and understanding Guru Tegh Bahdur's Bani is from three overlapping aspects:

Firstly, to study the Guru's Bani in the context of Sri Guru Granth Sahib to show progressive continuity of Guru Nanak's message and mission through the ten Guru-persons.

¹²⁶ [SikhReligionAndIslam.pdf \(sikhmissionarysociety.org\)](#)

Secondly, to show how by using popular Indian Vedic lore (stories), the Guru offered hope to those who found themselves in hopeless situations. The Guru chose the ordinary language of the people who were his audience during his extensive tours. There is also a political dimension to the Guru's choice of Vedic lore and popular *Hindustani* language medium. Essentially, the Guru diverted the mind away from attachment to worldly relationships, pleasure and wealth which satisfy the lower urges in general, to God-love and higher human goals.¹²⁷

Thirdly, to understand how the Guru's Bani brings together the best of ancient Indian thought relating to detachment (*vairag*) and the Greek-Abrahamic concept of martyrdom (*shaheedī*) to lay the foundation for an invincible army of *marjeevdas* (the *reborn*) who had conquered self and death: the *Khalsa* of the Timeless Being (*Khalsa Akal Purakh ki Fauj*).

As the topics overlap, so some repetition has been unavoidable.

Continuity of Guru Nanak's Message and Mission

Guru Tegh Bahadur's *Gurbani* (Guru's Word) in Guru Granth Sahib is in 57 *Saloks* (couplets) and 59 *Shabads* (holy hymns) in 15 classical *raags* (musical measures). Some classical music scholars give 17 as the number of raags by the Guru by counting "Kafi" raag (included in Tilang Raag) and "Basant Hindol" (included in Basant Raag), as separate raags.

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

¹²⁷ Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, p97

cause, miss the main 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 Nanak V, Guru Arjan, had already established the institutions which served the spiritual and organisational needs of the community. These educational egalitarian 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, Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind, 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 of *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 had already alluded to this type of regime as *halemi raj*¹²⁸.

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

¹²⁸ SGGS 74

northern and eastern 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'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 Guru *Jote* (Light) continuity in Guru Tegh Bahadur's teaching in the tradition of *Jote Oha, jugat saaee* (Same Guru Light - of Guru Nanak - same methodology¹²⁹). 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 teachings of all Guru persons refer back to Guru Nanak's founding principles. Each Guru builds on the work of earlier Gurus. The underlying ideology and Sikhi activism which implements it, are consistent and seamless. For example, the "*Transformation of Sikhism*"¹³⁰ during the time of Guru Hargobind is only apparent, for it was Guru Nanak who laid the foundation of twin track temporal-spiritual (*miri-piri*) Sikh way of life.

Acceptance of death is a pre-condition ¹³¹ 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 path which demanded the follower's head¹³² when the time came, while remaining attached to the Creator and detached from the world-

¹²⁹ 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 966.

¹³⁰ Also the title of a book Sir Gokal Chand Narang's book (Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1989)

¹³¹ "*Pehla(n) maran kabool...*" SGGS p 1104

¹³² Guru Nanak, "*Jao tao prem khelan ka chao....*" SGGS p1412

play (referred to as “Bachittar Natak” by Guru Gobind Singh). Human life is a passing phase but the opportunity to achieve the God-centred goal of human life is real. Guru Tegh Bahadur’s *Bani* reflects this consistent message of *Sikhi*.

Armed defence is 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 Darkness¹³³) - 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 Padam¹³⁴. 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.

One Guru and One Message: Guru Tegh Bahadur’s *Bani* in the context of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

As mentioned earlier, the *Guru* is a singular concept for the Sikhs. Literally, *jote* means *light*. For the Sikhs the *Jote* or *Guru-Jote* means Self-aware Spiritual Entity or Presence. The *Guru-Jote* teaches through the *Guru’s Shabad* or Word. So, essentially, *Guru’s Bani* or *Shabad* (Word) is the *Guru*. The *Shabad* was there at the beginning, manifested Itself through the teachings and lives (lived-Sikhi by example¹³⁵) of the *Guru-persons* (1469-1708) and now resides in *Shabad Guru*, Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the Sikh holy scripture.

¹³³ The last of the four eons in Indian lore.

¹³⁴ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariay*, Chapter 5 pp 62-75.

¹³⁵ Each *Guru-person* taught by own example and that included two *Guru* martyrdoms of Nanak V, *Guru Arjan* and Nanak IX, *Guru Tegh Bahadur* and, ultimately, *sarbans daan* of *Guru Gobind Singh*. *Sarbans daan* is the ultimate sacrifice of not only of self but of all family so that blood-family line is discontinued; yet, in the spiritual sense, continued forever through those who

All ten Guru-persons from Guru Nanak Sahib to Guru Gobind Singh represented **One Guru-Jote**. The Guru-person succession ended with Guru Gobind Singh and the Guru-Jote passed on to the Guru's Teachings, the Gurbani or Gur-Shabad in the Sikh holy scripture, Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Granth Sahib includes compositions of six of the ten Sikh Gurus and many saints called Bhagats from diverse backgrounds. These enlightened beings had renounced their earlier belief systems to strive towards a loving bond of devotion (*bhagti*) with the One Creator Being of All before Whom all are equal. They were not ascetics or opt-outs from society, but revolutionaries who questioned false practices of religions, sects and cults.

They had risen above caste, creed and duality-creating systems based on superstition, human divisions and discriminations under any pretext.

All Gurbani authenticated by the Guru, as Fifth Nanak, Guru Arjan, is in Guru Granth Sahib. In addition, the Guru also *selectively* approved for inclusion compositions of many *bhagats*. These compositions are called *Bhagat-Bani*. As such, there is no distinction between the Bani of the Bhagats and Guru-persons. All Bani in Guru Granth Sahib is *Gurbani* approved by the Guru.

Later, the Guru, as Tenth Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, included Gurbani of his father-Guru, Tegh Bahadur. Like the earlier Guru-persons, while completely consistent with the foundational theme of Guru Nanak Sahib's first composition, *Japji Sahib*, Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions add another dimension to awaken the dormant spirit of the ordinary people to meet new challenges of the times, and the times to come.

There is sufficient contemporary evidence to show that most of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani was compiled during his extensive preaching

follow in the footsteps of the Mentor, so that thousands live (*jeevat keyee hajaar*.)

tours described in this book. The Bani was with young Guru Gobind Rai in 1675 before Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Delhi on 10 July 1675 after anointing Gobind Das as the next Guru on 8 July 1675.

To quote Dr Gurinder Singh Mann,

"A number of manuscripts compiled between 1604 and 1675 are presently available. Why is this period important? None of these manuscripts have the banhi of Guru Tegh Bahadur. The first one that included the ninth Guru's banhi was dated 1675, and was actually prepared before he left for Delhi." ¹³⁶

Dr Fauja Singh provides more information about the formal inclusion of the Guru' Bani in Aad Granth as follows:

(Full quotation is given with acknowledgement due to the relevance of the passage below to this part of the "True Story", for the benefit of the reader.)

"The earliest manuscript copy of Granth Sahib in which this Bani may be seen to have been incorporated at the appropriate places in the Scripture under the ragas or musical measures in proper sequence as to the composers (Gurus and Bhaktas) is that numbered 97 in the collection of the Sikh Reference Library at Amritsar. This copy bears on the colophon the year 1739 (Bikrami Era) which would work out to the year 1682 of the Christian Era....it is certain that the youthful Guru Gobind Singh commanded a standard and complete copy of Granth Sahib to be prepared, incorporating his holy father's compositions on exactly the same principles on which the Volume, as compiled by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604, had been prepared.

In the copies bearing dates earlier than this (e.g. No.3 in the Sikh Reference Library Collection, bearing the date 11th of the Bright Half of Maghar, 1722 B.K. (1665), Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani is found incorporated afterwards, in a different hand. In other copies, such as the one bearing the date 1745 B.K. (1688) also Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani is found added as appendix in one place and in a different hand from the rest of the volume. Other copies from the seventeenth century may be seen, in which this Bani is seen on the clearest internal evidence to be added to the Volume after its text as in Guru Arjan's Volume had been copied out.

This shows that at some period, most probably around 1680, after Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom, the new "Guru" Gobind Singh, (then known as Gobind Rai) Commanded that his holy father's Bani be made a part of the Canon and incorporated in the sacred volume. Hence the preparation of the

¹³⁶ Dr Mann's post of 4 December, 2020, on forum Gurmat Learning Zone.

new, complete Volume, which is now the standard text of the Scripture as recognized and held sacred.”¹³⁷

The above evidence questions traditional dates and related stories about inclusion of Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Ancient Vedic wisdom distorted and exploited by the Brahmin.

In the context of the Guru's use of popular Indian Vedic lore (stories) to which ordinary people could relate, we need to look at the role of the Brahmin class.

The wisdom and heritage of India accumulated by the sages over thousands of years in Indian scriptures, instead of being interpreted and disseminated to bring about egalitarian social reforms to create a just and free society, was distorted and exploited by the Brahmin class (the priest) to secure own predominance through caste-based divisions and superstitious rituals. Fear was used as an instrument to enslave the people.

With the arrival of Guru Nanak on this earth, the time had come to challenge both, the priest and the tyrant. Freedom from fear spread by the unholy collusion of both was a global need. It was the need of the times, the *Kalyug*.

Yet, ancient wisdom was not to be ditched but re-interpreted for the ordinary people in the language and folk lore idiom they understood. In the Indian subcontinent, ancient Vedic lore was well understood by the lay person and that was used in Gurbani.

Guru Tegh Bahadur used the teaching approach but his Message had a certain urgency, for life was short and time was running out.

¹³⁷ Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975 pp 95-96.

His Bani is in simple Hindustani or *Sant bhasha* (also called Braj Bhasha¹³⁸) used by holy men all over India. He hardly used any words of Arabic or Persian languages in his Bani as if he was making a political point against foreign languages of the invading rulers¹³⁹. Otherwise, the Guru was brought up in central Panjab of the time and lived the first 35 years of his life in Panjab. So, his language preference is significant bearing in mind that he was mostly addressing Northern and Eastern Indian audiences. He was speaking to the *Hindostanis* of one nation, *Hindostan*, also referred to by Guru Nanak in his Bani e.g. "*Hindostan draaya*.." How India was terrorised by Babar the Mughal invader).

As discussed above, his use of Vedic lore and use of popular language are important points in the context of his mission to relate to the people of the subcontinent who had lost hope.

In this context too, once again, the Brahmin class had failed in their *dharam* (duty):

"The Brahmin class could have done well to bring the wisdom of the Sikh Gurus to the Indian masses but have instead concentrated in opposing the Sikh Gurus right from the beginning; their first complaint was lodged with the emperor Akbar who threw it out as unworthy. However, the cunning Brahmin succeeded in contributing towards the martyrdom of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev.....Despite that the Guru (Tegh Bahadur) sacrificed his life to uphold the value of freedom of worship for Hindus at the time of Emperor Aurungzeb who was hell bent on annihilation of the Hindu religion. The book Medieval India, by Professor Satish Chandra is a prominent stance of this attitude of misrecording the life of Shri Guru Tegh Bahadur.

*Rather than bringing out the best of Hindu philosophy the Brahmins have focused on condemning Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism in order to divert the attention of the flock to [away from] their own shortcomings. "*¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Along with a variety of Western and Eastern Hindi languages, it was the predecessor to Hindustani, popular language of North-Central India.

¹³⁹ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p 62.

¹⁴⁰ Hakam Singh Dr & Jaswinder Singh Chadha, *Portrait of a Sikh Guru- India's Guru Martyr Guru Tegh Bahadur*, Creative Graphics, New Delhi, July 2003 p. X

The Indian masses were reminded of their own heritage by the Sikh Gurus by *guiding them out of the Brahmanic created maze of hollow rituals – to free the country from the clutches of the tyrannical Mughal rule and in the process provided the country with the invaluable spiritual treasure, Guru Granth Sahib.*¹⁴¹

The unique Sikhi concept of martyrdom (*shaheedi*)

The Guru's Bani brings together the best of ancient Indian thought relating to detachment (*vairag*), albeit, re-interpreted, and the Greek-Abrahamic concept of martyrdom (*shaheedi*).

The Guru preached realization of the higher spiritual and moral truths above material attachments, physical pain, passions and pleasure. That message also resonated with Indian thought leading to the concept of *shanti*, meaning peace.¹⁴²

People could relate to the Indian thought idiom in the Guru's message to start with. Yet, in the final analysis, the Guru preached quite the opposite to an ascetic way of life. The Guru was aware that *vairaag* (detachment), as traditionally interpreted by Indian thought, had enslaved the Indian people to tyrannical rule for hundreds of years.

The Indian idea of *vairag* was based on dislike for worldly life. Shankracharya preached contempt for worldly pursuits and recommended isolation from temporal living. He believed that only such detachment from the world can induce a state of *vairag*.¹⁴³

The Guru's concept of *vairag* was based on love for the Creator Being above worldly attachments and pursuits. God-love was then translated into love and sacrifice for God's creation which, although, a passing phase, is, nevertheless, *durlabh*, a rare long-sought-after opportunity, for God union.

¹⁴¹ Ibid pp X-XI

¹⁴² In both, Hindu and Buddhist, systems, *shanti* is often chanted three times to represent **threefold peace in body, mind and spirit.**

¹⁴³ Piara Singh Padam, *Tegh Bahadur Simariyay*, p 65.

The Sikhi concept of martyrdom, sacrifice in God-love for the righteous cause and assertion of the human right to free choice to seek own path to God is the message of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom.

To conclude this topic with a quote, with appreciation, from Gurbachan Singh Talib:

*"In the Guru's teaching an added element, which is the crown of the higher life, is the pursuit of the ideal without flinching uptill the stage where it may become martyrdom. Not the intuitive realization alone (Inan), nor only the ecstasy of joy in divine love (Bhakti), but supreme volition which pursues the vision sublime to facing the tyrant's instruments of torture, if need be. This last experience has not found expression in the spiritual and moral wisdom of India, wherein the resistance of evil by the holy is shown in the mythological adumbration to become the triumphal vindication of God's devotees through Divine intervention, as in the trials of Prahlada or Draupadi or the Elephant in the tales of the Puranic and other devotees. The dimension of the reality of physical evil, which neither prayer nor miracle may avert, but which must execute its potential movement, is what makes Guru Tegh Bahadur's teaching so deeply touching and of such value to our time in which miracles of the kind narrated in mythology are not known to occur. The Guru affirms repeatedly his faith in the ultimate triumph of Divine Justice and in God succouring His devotees. This implies not their rescue from the power of tyrants and oppressors, but the triumph of their spirit and the fulfilment of their ideals despite their physical destruction. This element in the totality of the moral vision is emphasized in the testament to truth coming over from the Christian faith and certain phases of Islam, such as the martyrdom of Imam Hussain. In India, it was the unflinching pursuit of this ideal by Guru Tegh Bahadur and his grandfather Guru Arjan which manifested its true might."*¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Fauja Singh and Gurbachan Singh Talib, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: Martyr and Teacher*, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975 pp 98-99.

Selected thematic quotations from Guru Tegh Bahadur's Bani

Notes:

References: "SGGS number" = *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* Ang (page) number

Gurbani interpretation:

Final *interpretation* is based on author's own humble understanding. The sources used for initial literal translation are:

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Kirpal Singh Chandan & Gurmit Singh Kurali, *Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji*, Sikh Missionary College, Ludhinana, Publication No: 398

True nature of God

The Lord dwells in every heart; the saints proclaim that.

Says Nanak, meditate on Him O my mind, and you shall cross over the frightening world-ocean.

(SGGS 1427)

As there is fragrance in the flower, and the reflection in the mirror,

So the Lord dwells within you, so, search for Him in your own heart, O Siblings of Destiny. (SGGS 684)

The Yogis are tired of searching for Him, but they have not found His limit.

Know that the Lord is near you, but He has no form or feature. (SGGS 703)

No one knows the state of the Lord.

The renunciates, the celibates, the penitents, and all sorts of clever people have failed.

In an instant, He changes the beggar into a king, and the king into a beggar.

He fills what is empty, and empties what is full. Such are His ways.
(SGGS 537)

The Lord is the Giver of all peace and comfort. There is none other.
Says Nanak, listen O my mind, it is by meditating on Him that
salvation is attained. ||9||
(SGGS 1426)

He is the Saviour of sinners, the Destroyer of fear, the Master of the
masterless.
Says Nanak, realize and know that he is always with you.
(SGGS 1426)

Purpose of human life is God union

O saints sing the Praises of the Lord of the Universe. ||
You have obtained this priceless human life; why waste it?
(SGGS 219)

After wandering around for many ages, this human body was obtained.
Says Nanak, this is the opportunity to meet the Lord; why don't you
remember Him?
(SGGS 631)
Sing the Lord's Praises, O mind, for He is your true companion.
The time is passing away so listen to what I say.
(SGGS 727)

If you do not sing the praises of the Lord, your life is wasted.
(SGGS 1426)

Not rituals but singing the praises of God leads to God awareness and union

When the saints became generous and compassionate, they told me
this.
Consider all religious rituals/ceremonies as performed when God's
praises are sung [i.e. no need to perform rituals, sing the praises of
the Lord i.e. recall His virtues.] (SGGS 902)

That person who meditates on the Lord night and day, know him to be the embodiment of the Lord.

There is no difference between the Lord and the humble servant of the Lord; O Nanak, know this as true. ||29|| (SGGS 1427-8)

Looking for God in wilderness is ignorance

Why do you go looking for Him in the forest?

Although he is unattached, he dwells everywhere. He is always with you [as your companion].
(SGGS 684)

The flawless Lord is within you, and yet, you search for Him in the wilderness.
(SGGS 632)

Rituals are useless

O my mind, you have not embraced the Guru's teachings.

What is the use of shaving your head, and wearing saffron robes?
||1||Pause||

Abandoning Truth, you cling to falsehood and waste your life
Practicing hypocrisy, you fill your belly [reference to dishonest living],
and then sleep like an animal. ||1||
(SGGS 633)

Have the courage to question false ritual propagated by the priest [leads to the courage to question ignorance, injustice and the tyranny].

He who bathes at sacred places and keeps fasts, but has no control over his mind.

Be assured that his religion is of no avail to him. I say this truth to him.
(SGGS 831)

Of what use are pilgrimages and fasts, if one does not enter the sanctuary of the Lord?
Know that his yogic practices and sacrificial feasts are fruitless, if one forgets the praises of God.
(SGGS 830-1)

How to sing the praises of the Lord

O my mind, love the Lord
With your ears hear the praise of the Lord and sing his song with your tongue.
(SGGS 631)

This world is a passing phase

The structure of the world is false [i.e. it is a passing phase]; know this well, my friend.
Says Nanak, like a wall of sand it is not permanent.
(SGGS 1428)

[Nothing is forever] So. who has permanent body, wealth or property and with whom should we permanently attach ourselves?
[Because] Whatever is seen, shall all disappear, like the shade of a passing cloud.
(SGGS 1231)

O Holy Saints, know that this body is false.
The Lord who dwells within it - recognize that He alone is real.
The wealth of this world is only a dream; why are you so proud of it?
None of it shall go along with you in the end; why do you cling to it?
[Therefore, dwell on God's virtues and abide by His Commands (Hukam) to the soul i.e. look for inner guidance to live this life.]
(SGGS 1186)

As the bubbles in the water well up and disappear again,
So is the universe created; says Nanak, listen, O my friend.
(SGGS 1427)

No one is permanent companion in this life

Wealth, spouse, property and household
None of them shall go along with you; you must know that this is true.
(SGGS 1187)

No one will be your help and support, except the Lord.
Who has any mother, father, child or spouse? Who is anyone's
brother or sister? ||1||Pause||
All the wealth, land and property which you consider your own
When you leave your body, none of it shall go along with you. Why do
you cling to them? ||1|| (SGGS 1231)

When the soul is separated from the body, then they will cry out,
calling you a ghost.
No one will let you stay, for even a short while; they will expel you
from the house. (SGGS 536)

Worldly relationships are based on wealth and need.

In this world, I have not found any true friend.
The whole world is attached to its own pleasures, and when trouble
comes, no one is with you.
Wives, friends, children and relatives - all are attached to wealth.
When they see a poor man, they all forsake his company and run
away. ||1|| (SGGS 633)

O dear friend, know this in your mind.
The world is entangled in its own comfort; no one is for anyone else.
In good times, many come and sit together, surrounding you on all
four sides.
But when hard times come, they all leave, and no one comes near you.
(SGGS 634)

Life is short and one must not delay Waheguru Simran

If you are self-aware, then be conscious of Him night and day [also], O
mortal.

Each and every moment, your life is passing away, like water from a cracked pitcher.
(SGGS 726)

Slipping away - your life is uselessly slipping away.
Night and day, you listen to the Puraanas, but you do not understand them due to your ignorance.
Death has arrived; where will you run?
(SGGS 1352)

Death is certain but one must not fear it

One is anxious when something unexpected happens.
Says Nanak [why worry knowing that] this is the way of the world and nothing is stable or permanent. (SGGS 1429)

Give up vices

O saints shed your mental pride
Lust, anger and the company of evil persons - run away from them, day and night.
(SGGS 219)

The heart of the sinner is filled with unfulfilled sexual desire.
He cannot control his fickle mind. ||1||Pause||
(SGGS 1186)

Fear none and frighten no one

One who does not frighten anyone nor is afraid of anyone
Says Nanak, listen my mind: call him spiritually wise.
(SGGS 1429)

The Guru's clarion call to wake up from the slumber of false world-play and material pursuits.

My mind is deluded, entangled in world-play and wealth attachment.

Whatever I do, while engaged in greed, only serves to bind me.
(SGGS 702)

The mind has gone insane with the intoxication of world-play and wealth; it does not chant the Lord's Praise.
(SGGS 536)

One who remains detached from worldly possessions and attachments and becomes inwardly aloof
Says Nanak, listen, O my mind: God abides in his heart.
(SGGS 1427)

Wake up, O mind! Wake up! Why are you sleeping unaware?
That body, which you were born with, shall not go along with you in the end.
(SGGS 726)

Nature of mind

O saints, this mind cannot be restrained.
Fickle desires dwell with it, and so it cannot remain stable.
(SGGS 219)

This mind does not follow even a bit of my advice.
I have grown weary giving it instructions - it will not refrain from its evil-mindedness.
(SGGS 536)

O mother, I have gathered the wealth of the Lord's Name.
My mind has stopped its wanderings, and now, it has come to rest.
(SGGS 1186)

How to recognise a person who has attained emancipation

One who lays aside both pride and attachment, sings the Glorious Praises of the Lord of the Universe.
Says Nanak, the mortal who does this is said to be 'jeevan mukta' – emancipated in this life.

(SGGS 831)

Renounce your pride and your attachment to world-play and apply your mind to the Lord's meditation.

Says Nanak, this is the path to liberation. Become a follower of the Guru and attain it.

(SGGS 219)

One who is not affected by pleasure or pain and for whom friend and foe are alike

Says Nanak, listen, O my mind. know that such a person to me is emancipated.

(SGGS 1427)

The ideal person

That man, in pain accepts no pain,

Who is not affected by pleasure, affection or fear, and treats gold like dust;||1||Pause||

Who is not swayed by either slander or praise, nor affected by greed, attachment or pride;

Who remains unaffected by joy and sorrow, honor and dishonor;||1||

Who renounces all hopes and desires and remains desireless in the world;

Who is not touched by sexual desire or anger, within his heart, God dwells. ||2||

That man, blessed by Guru's Grace, understands the way.

O Nanak, he merges with the Lord of the Universe, like water with water. ||3||11||

(SGGS 633)

Ardas before Waheguru

O Dear Lord, please, save my honor!

The fear of death has entered my heart; I cling to the protection of Your Sanctuary, O Lord, ocean of mercy.

(SGGS 703)

I never joined the Saadh Sangat, the Company of the Holy, and I did not sing God's praises.
O servant Nanak, I have no virtues at all; keep me in Your Sanctuary, Lord.
(SGGS 632)

I have no merit, and I know nothing about meditation or austerities; what should I do now?
O Nanak, I am exhausted; I seek the shelter of Your Sanctuary; O God, please bless me with the gift of fearlessness [to follow the path of righteous conduct.] .
(SGGS 703)

Evolution of Gurbani *Kirtan-Parchar*¹⁴⁵ and Guru Tegh Bahadur's contribution

Like the evolutionary progress of Sikh *miri-piri* (temporal-spiritual) ideology and institutions through a succession of ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, so too did the Gurbani Kirtan-parchar evolve during that period. It is not realised sometimes that Guru Tegh Bahadur made a significant contribution to that process.

Kirtan is the devotional singing of Gurbani in melody and rhythm to the accompaniment of musical instruments. Gurbani sung in *raags*¹⁴⁶ helps to harmonise the individual soul (*atma*) with the Universal Spirit (*Paramatma*). Sikhi places great importance on Gurbani Kirtan.

Sikh Kirtan tradition followed the singing of holy hymns popularised by the Indian Bhakti movement. Guru Nanak (1469-1539) composed and sang his Divine Message (Gurbani) to the people during his extensive travels. Bhai Mardana, of Muslim musician background, was the

¹⁴⁵ Singing and discourses

¹⁴⁶ Literally, raag in Indian classical music means "that which colours the mind," It is a melodic structure in Indian classical music. T

Guru's companion who played the rabab¹⁴⁷, an older version Medieval European rebec. The Guru would say, "Touch the string of your rabab O' Mardana, I am receiving Gurbani [from the Lord]".

Guru Nanak travelled extensively. He sang to the people outdoors, sitting under the shade of trees or in the open fields. He sang in many different languages and to popular folk tunes (called *vaars* and *dhunees*). He went out there and communicated with the ordinary people using words and music which they understood and loved. Yet, he preserved the essential character of Indian classical raag tradition as well and selected raag bases to enhance the spiritual message of Sikhi.

Thus, while mostly confined to the Gurdwaras these days, Kirtan of Guru Nanak was mostly sung outdoors. During his extensive travels, people would assemble to listen to his divine Message. The unique, Sikhi *Kirtan-parchar* tradition evolved with the Sikh miri-piri (temporal-spiritual) movement through an illustrious line of Rababis, Ragis and Dhadhis. However, after Guru Nanak, it was mainly Guru Tegh Bahadur who did Kirtan-parchar while on the move for many years and covering large parts of northern and eastern India up to Assam.

A brief note about the Rababi, Ragi and Dhadi Sikh Kirtan-parchar evolution would help in understanding parallel developments in the Sikh movement towards an egalitarian socio-political order.

The Rababi tradition started with Bhai Mardana from Muslim singers' background. He accompanied Guru Nanak during his extensive preaching tours. Muslim singers were called *mirasis*. Guru Nanak gave them the name Rababi when they adopted the Sikh way of life. Notable names during Guru period, in addition to Bhai Mardana, are his son Sharhjada and later Balwand and Satta during Guru Arjan's Guruship.

Ragis were the amateur singers. They included some Bhattas¹⁴⁸ (bards) who were encouraged by Guru Arjan to do Kirtan so as not to

¹⁴⁷Hence the traditional *raagi* families who took up the singing of Gurbani from generation to generation are also called *rababis*.

depend entirely on professional Rababis. That move also liberalised the Sikh music tradition to include a wider variety of popular musical instruments and singing styles through improvisation. Ragis did Kirtan-parchar at Sikh centres and continue to this day.

After the martyrdom of Guru Arjan and by the time of Guru Hargobind, started the period of Mughal-Sikh conflict. The time had come to musically inspire the saint-soldiers of the Guru. So, the third type of musicians, the *dhadis*¹⁴⁹ and kavishars, (folk-singers who sang without musical instruments), were employed by Guru Hargobind to sing vaars (heroic ballads). Bhai Abdulla, who played sarangi, and Bhai Natha, who played the dhadh (small hand-drum) became the first famous dhadhis during this period. Through their fervour and singing in higher musical notes interspersed by rousing discourses, the dhadhis and kavishars became very popular in Panjab¹⁵⁰.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's contribution to Gurbani *Kirtan-Parchar*

Guru Tegh Bahadur's contribution should be seen in the context of the above earlier progress in Gurbani Kirtan through the Rababi, Ragi and Dhadhi traditions. Guru Nanak travelled with one music playing companion, Bhai Mardana. After Guru Nanak, Guru Tegh Bahadur was the first Sikh Guru who was on the move for many years with many Sikh parcharaks and musicians. He started the Sikh tradition of mobile groups of parchar *jathas*.

The *vahir* during the Guru's parchar tours mentioned in this account, also suggests that he had many Kirtanias and musicians with many types of string and rhythm instruments¹⁵¹. That tradition paved the way over the centuries to mobile national and global kirtani jathas of today.

¹⁴⁸ Compositions of some Bhattis are included in Guru Granth Sahib.

¹⁴⁹ In a dhadhi group, one plays the sarangi, one or two others play the dhadh, the leader discourses the topic of the songs. They all sing alternatively and also together. They sing vars from the Sikh Scriptures or compose their own.

¹⁵⁰ Most area north-west of Delhi up to Khyber Pass at the time

¹⁵¹ There is mention of one parcharak Kirtania who used only a mardang (mridangam drum) for his Kirtan before large congregations.

Until recently, not many scholars have paid attention to this contribution of Guru Tegh Bahadur. His addition of Raag Jaijawanti is mentioned but not much more.

According to Assames chronicles, wherever the *vaheer* camped, Kirtan was performed by his bards and musicians during Gurbani discourses. Interestingly, it is also recorded that, *although, he became the Guru of a large number of Brahmins and Kshatriyas, "On meeting a disciple of his own faith he would simply say Vah-Guru, Vah-Guru" and nothing else. The Word is a doctrinal affirmation of Sikh faith. He would not utter the name of Rama or Krishna.*¹⁵² That would have not gone unnoticed by the Brahmins pujaris opposed to Sikhi parchar.

As discussed in this account the Guru used popular Indian idiomatic language and folk lore to relate to the people he moved through, albeit, to convey the Sikhi message. His choice of music, including musical instruments too was traditionally Indian. As mentioned earlier, he provided a sort of "bridge" between the Sikh musical tradition from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh, who was a great poet and highly proficient at playing a variety of musical instruments.¹⁵³

After Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur further liberalised and widened the scope of Sikh musical tradition and made it accessible to ordinary people. Guru Gobind Singh opened up the scope of Sikh music introducing many more raags and rhythms. Earlier Gurus had introduced "sur" and "melody". Guru Gobind Singh (through Guru Tegh Bahadur), made 'taal' i.e. rhythm an art form.

We have seen how Guru Tegh Bahadur did Kirtan-Parchar with prolonged stays at Hindu places of pilgrimage. He used popular "Hindustani" language. Otherwise, he was a scholar of many languages including Persian. However, it seems, quite intentionally, as

¹⁵² Trilochan Singh Dr, *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Prophet and Martyr*, pp 220,227.

¹⁵³ Much has been written about Guru Gobind Singh's musical talent.

According a Sikh scholar and musician, Giani Nahar Singh, Guru ji even wrote compositions in "firangi taal" i.e. western beat.

if to send out a political message he avoided using other foreign Arabic or Persian languages, which had taken away Indian self-pride (*swaimaan*) and confidence and independent thought.

Similarly, the musical vehicle for conveying the Message, the raags, rhythm and choice of musical instruments are “Hindustani”. The Guru’s Sikh preachers became proficient at this type of Kirtan-parchar and are mentioned in the history of the Sangats of the places visited by the Guru.

Like the Gurbani language and idiom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the musical medium too follows the Indian tradition. However, the revolutionary egalitarian Message is that of Guru Nanak.

Epilogue

Quite uniquely amongst world religions, Sikhi (Sikhism) has evolved as a way of life from a founding precept revealed to Guru Nanak. It is called the *Mool Mantar* (literally the *root formula*). The Mool Mantar defines the qualities of the Creator Being and the Oneness of the Creator and the creation as *Ik Oankar*.

So, instead of starting with a set of rules or dogma, Sikhi started by defining God-qualities and derived Sikhi-living by emulating those qualities, for example, being *Nirbhao* (without fear) and *Nirvair* (without animosity). The ultimate destination for a Sikh (one who learns from the Guru), is to lose self and be like God, for:

The humble servant of the Lord should be just like the Lord. ||
(SGGS 1372)

Sikhi-living was taught by a succession of Ten Gurus from Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh by own example. So, together with the study (*khoj*) of Gurbani enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib, the study of

Sikhi way of life cannot be completed without a close study of the lives of the Ten Gurus i.e. study of Guru history or *Gur-Ithaas*.

In this monograph, *Guru Tegh Bahadur: The True Story*, we have seen how the life, mission and martyrdom of Nanak IX Guru Tegh Bahadur, harmonised with the Guru Jote-Jugat continuity through the Ten Gurus.

This has been a most remarkable voyage of discovery because much contemporary evidence had been overlooked by early Sikh historians guided more by faith-based fiction than historiographical facts. As we have seen, the ***True Story*** of Guru Tegh Bahadur is stranger than fiction and leaves the reader in a state of wonderment. In the life and martyrdom of the Guru we see the *Guru Jote and Jugat* (Divine Light and Methodology) of Guru Nanak working towards its final goal, the emergence of Khalsa as Akal Purakh ki Fauj on the Vaisakhi Day 1699. The Guru provided the link between 5 Guruships from Nanak VI, Guru Hargobind to Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh.

In 1708, Guru Gobind Singh terminated person-Guru succession and formally passed on the Gurgaddi to Guru Granth and Guru Khalsa Panth.

As we meditate on the unique sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

***Gur Tegh Bahadur simariyaa ghar nau-nidh aavay dha-ay
Let us remember Guru Tegh Bahadur and be blessed with the
nine treasures of life.***

(Guru Gobind Singh, Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki)

**Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa
Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh**

15 May 2021

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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 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. 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 panih. 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 Tegh 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 Aurangzeb*, 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. (Indubhushan 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 Aurangzeb 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."

Indubhushan 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 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 centry."

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 Kashrniri 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.
