

GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S SACRIFICE AS THE CRUSADER OF RELIGIOUS PRACTICES

Dr. Satveer Kaur Gill*

ABSTRACT

This paper emphasizes the sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadurji for the protection of the most fundamental of human rights the right of a person to freely practice his or her religion without interference or hindrance. Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (1621-75) was the ninth of Ten Gurus of the Sikh Religion. He was Born in Amritsar and was the youngest son of the Sixth Guru Hargobind. Guru Tegh Bahadur continued in the spirit of the first guru, Guru Nanak Dev Ji. His 115 poetic hymns are in the text Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed His life for the sake of Hindu community. There was forced conversion of religion; many thousands were killed for refusing to change their religion. The great event which sensitized the world was His martyrdom. This was an extremely important event in Sikh history that had a profound impact on the future direction of Sikhism. Guru Tegh Bahadur was publicly beheaded in 1675 on the orders of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi for refusing to convert to Islam and resisting the forced conversions of Hindus in Kashmir to Islam. 'Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib' and 'Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib' in Delhi mark the places of execution and cremation of the Guru's body. Guru Teg Bahadur symbolised the triumph of good over evil. Guru Ji's martyrdom, unique in the history of mankind, inspired many Sikhs to lay down their lives for noble causes and moral values. The sacrifice roused the Hindus from their passive silence and gave them the fortitude to understand the power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice. Guru Tegh Bahadur earned the affectionate title of "Hind-di-Chadar" or the Shield of India.

Keywords: *Guru Tegh Bahadur, Kashmiri Pandits, Anandpur Sahib, Hind-Di-Chadar and Crusader of Religious Practices.*

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji had a versatile personality, a warrior, family man with social commitment and a preacher of great understanding and vision. His martyrdom broke the myth of Aurangzeb's religiosity. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom has no parallel in history. He gave his life so that the candle of religious freedom could remain aflame in our sacred land for all times to come. The commitment by Guru Tegh Bahadur to protect and support the liberty of all the people of a country was unprecedented. Guru Ji made the critical decision to risk laying down His life if necessary to protect the right of the Hindus to follow their religion freely without interference or duress. This type of supreme sacrifice had never previously been recorded in human history. Guru Ji by this act has set a yardstick by which the Sikh must gauge their devotion to their religion. Real feeling of love means total sacrifice

for the sake of the beloved. Love of God expresses itself in taking upon himself the sufferings of His Children, His Creation. God is love and Love is God. He is altogether compassionate and Merciful. It is in this context that the great sacrifice of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur surpasses all imagination. Guru Ji's martyrdom, unique in the history of mankind, roused the Hindus from their passive silence and gave them the fortitude to understand the power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus earned the affectionate title of "Hind-di-Chadar" or the Shield of India. Gurudwara Sis Ganj Sahib and Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib in Delhi mark the places of execution and cremation of the Guru's body.

Emperor Aurangzeb, whose life is a sharp contrast to that of his predecessors, was a barbaric ruler of the Mughal Dynasty who came to power in

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1658 and ruled for 49 years until his death in 1707. When he came to power in 1658, he killed or had killed his three brothers and imprisoned his father and forcibly converted Lakhs of Hindus to Islam. He is commonly considered the last of the “grand” Mughal emperors. To fulfill this desire of his he had no hesitation in using and wielding sword. The fundamentalist emperor threw to winds the seemingly secular policy of his forefathers replacing it by one of religious harassment and persecution. He re-imposed the “Jazia” (a protection tax paid by non-muslims), which often was as much as 60%. While the entire Indian people shuddered at his manner of building an Islamic state, he implemented a well calculated plan according to which he started with liquidating Hindu scholars in India in general and the Kashmiri Pandits in particular. Not surprising he did not spare his own father. According to him elimination of Hindu scholars was a pre-requisite for the spread of Islam in India.

The Kashmiri Brahmins were Hindus renowned for their high intellect and education. They had a good relationship with the Sikhs and their Gurus. Guru Nanak Dev met Pandit Brahm Das who was an ancestor of Pandit Kirpa Ram in Mattan. Kripa Ram had known the Ninth Guru and also taught Sanskrit classics to the young Gobind Rai. During the reign of Jahangir, Guru Hargobind came to Srinagar and met Kashmiri saintess Mata Bagh Bari, who lived at Rainawari. It is interesting to note that Mata Bagya Bari’s spiritual interaction with the sixth Sikh Guru is incredibly well preserved in the Sikh religious tradition. In Pandit tradition, Mata Bagya Bari is a person renowned for her high spiritual merits.

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

In early 1675, the Kashmiri Brahmins

approached Guru Tegh Bahadar to seek his assistance in their acute hour of need as they had faced stiff taxes, atrocities, cruelty under muslim Mughal governor of Kashmir. Honour of their daughters was being lost and they were losing their religion to the fanatic zeal and forced conversion activities of Islamic crusaders. These Hindus from Kashmir had been given a deadline by Emperor Aurangzeb to convert to Islam or be killed. Pandit Kripa Ram with his large delegation met Guru Tegh Bahadur at ChakNanki, Kahlur (now known as Anandpur Sahib). He explained their dilemma to the Guru in the open Sangat at the place where today stands Gurudwara Manji Sahib, in Anandpur Sahib “The Emperor had given us some time to decide to convert to Islam or to be executed. The time for deciding has expired. Now, we have to convert to Islam or die. What shall we do? Guru ji, we have no one else to turn to. We don’t have an army to protect us - We need your help. Please assist us”, said Kripa Ram.

Guru ji is said to have gone into deep thought after Pandit Kripa Ram’s request. At this point, it is said that Guru ji son, Gobind Rai walks into the Sangat to see Guru ji deep in thought. Guru ji, I see the acutely sad faces of the Sangat and you are silent and in deep thought. What is the problem?” asked Gobind Rai to his father. Gobind is about 9 years old at this stage. Guru ji slowly turn to his son and explain the situation as concisely as possible.

“Baita (Son), this is sangat from Kashmir. They are Hindus who have been friends of Sikhs since the time of Guru Nanak. They have a very serious problem on their hands” said Guru ji. Gobind Rai replied, “Pitaji, you are the Guru of the entire world “Jagat Guru”. You will know of a solution to all problems.

“Baita, Emperor Aurangzeb has given them an ultimatum, If they do not become Muslims, he will kill them all, explained Guruji. Guruji continued, “Some well-known Religious person (“Mahapurakh”) will have to make a sacrifice to stop this butchery. We have to find a supreme soul who will die so as to awaken the sleeping consciousness of the people of Hind. “Pitaji, there is an easy answer to this problem. You are the most spiritually

aware person in whole of Hind. You can make that sacrifice”, answered Gobind Rai.

Guruji was pleased to hear these words as it confirmed that his son had reached a suitable age to become the next Guru, and that Guru ji's work on Earth had been completed.

Guruji addressed the Pandits, “Go and tell Aurangzeb that if he can convert Guru Tegh Bahadar to Islam, they will all convert. Otherwise he should leave them alone”. Already prejudiced against Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Emperor hated the word Sacha Patishah ‘used by the Sikhs for the Guru. The words meant the Guru to be a true King while the ruler of India was a false King. He also hated the word Bahadur’ in the guru's name, as this was reserved for the nobility of the Mughal court only. He directed his courtiers to summon the Guru to Delhi and force him to adopt and accept Islam or be prepared to lose his life. He anticipated from his institution that his end was near. He composed four stanzas marked as Nos. 53, 54, 55, 56. In which He delineates his difficulties and trials in Nos. 53 and 55 whereas in Nos 54 and 56 He describes hope and faith in God's succor.

Dohira No.53: “Bal Chhuty bandhan pare Kachuna hot upae Kah Nanak abo Hari Gaj Tiyon hot sahae”.

My strength is exhausted, I am in shackles, there is no way out. Sayeth Nanak ‘O God, Thou art now my only hope who will save me as Thou didst save The drowning elephant that prayed’. But Guru Tegh Bahadur replies the same himself in.

Dohira No. 54: “Balhoa bandhan Chhute Sab Kichh hot upae Nanak sab Kichh tumre hath main Tum hi hot sahae”.

Strength is there by Thy grace, O Lord. The chains of bondage are dropping, Every succour is at hand for liberty and truth. Sayeth Nanak O Lord, everything is in Thy power It is only Thou who can protect.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was imprisoned in an iron cage in chains. There he was subjected to severe mental and physical tortures. In order to weaken the Guru mentally, his companions were taken to some other prison but he was informed that they

had fled away. The darogha of the goal, Sajjid Hasan Abdullah of Mani Majra treated the Guru with consideration as far as circumstances permitted. In these adverse circumstances, the Guru composed two more stanzas, **Dohira No.55: “Sang Sakha Sab taj gal Kou nanibhyo sath Kaho Nanak yeh bipt men Tekek Ragh Nath”.** He answers the aforementioned words in **Dohira No.56: “Nam rahyo sadhu rahyo Rahyo Gur Gobind. Kauh Nanak eh Jagat men Kin Japyo Gurmant”.**

In order to nominate the next Guru, Guru Tegh Bahdur took five paise and a coconut, prayed, bowed before him and sent these articles to his son Gobind Rai through Gurditta. Guru Tegh Bahadur and his life-long companion Bhai Mati Das, a Mohyal Brahmin of Karijala in Jehlam District and his brother Sati Das left for Delhi. Gurditta, a lineal descendant of Bhai Buddha was also there. The fourth one was Dyal Das, the eldest brother of Bhai Mani Singh Shahid. The last and final was Jaita of the sweeper caste who completed the group. They were first taken to the Wazir of the Empire who was staying at Agra. Syed Mohammad Latif writes: “The emperor had many religious disputations with Tegh Bahadur, and asked him to show miracles, if he was true guru, or to embrace Islam.”

The Guru replied that showing a miracle was to interfere in the work of God which was wholly improper. As for embracing Islam he considered his religion as good as Islam, and therefore the change of religion was not necessary. The emperor ordered that Guru be put to the severest tortures. After five day's persecution on 10th November, the most heinous and most horrible scene was enacted before the eyes of Guru who was kept in the iron cage. Aurangzeb thought that the sight of such ghastly deeds might force the Guru to change his mind for embracing Islam.

Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur

Dyal Das, Mati Das and Sati Das as well as the Guru were brought to the open space in front of the Kotwali where now stands a fountain. Jaita, one of the five companions of the Guru, remained free as he had taken to sweeping the front road of the Kotwali. Disguising himself as a senstic, Gurditta escaped to Anandpur. Dyal Das, Mati Das and Sati Das

were brought into the presence of the Guru. (Mati Das and Sati das were brothers; they were former Brahmins and belong to the area of Jammu). First Bhai Mati Das was asked to accept Islam. Saying that his own faith was true determined not to change it, he refused to accept it. He was tied between two posts, and while standing erect, was sown across from head to the joins. But he bore the brutal torture and operation with such tranquility and peace that the Sikh theologians included his feat in the daily prayer of the community.

Then they tied Dyal Das like a bundle and threw him into a huge cauldron of boiling oil. He was roasted alive into a block of charcoal. Sati Das objected and condemned these tortures and brutalities. He, too, was hacked to pieces limb by limb. Jaita, who was present there disguised as a sweeper, collected the remains of these martyrs at night and consigned them to the river Jamuna flowing at a stone's throw.

Guru witnessed all these brutalities calmly and peacefully. He was chanting "Wah-Guru" all the time. The Guru knew that he was the next to immense torture. But even then he kept his calm and remained composed, unruffled and concentrated on God. He knew that his sacrifice would not go in vain. In this holocaust, he saw a new nation of heroes. It was not the nation of British Raj but the Khalsa, the Sikh warriors whose daring heroic deeds were to fill the pages of history later on. His followers were put to death on 10th of November 1675. The Guru was given two options i.e. either to embrace Islam or meet death. He was also asked to show a miracle. On the exhibition of miracles, the Guru turned down the demand with contempt.

In the "Bachittar Nanak" an autobiographical fragment composed by Guru Gobind Singh, the Guru is stated to have replied: The performance of theatrical acts is low at which the devotees of God should feel ashamed".

The Guru's resolve to sacrifice His life is expressed in the following words: "Bahenjinahn di pakriye, Sir dijebahennachhoriye Guru Tegh Bahadur boliya Dharpaiyai dharma na Chhoriye". (Give up your head, but forsake not those whom you

have undertaken to protect. Says Tegh Bhahadur, Sacrifice your life, but relinquish not your faiths).

The Guru woke up early on the morning fixed for the martyrdom. After bathing, he sat in meditation, recited the Japuji and Sukhmani. On the appointed day, the government officials, nobles, courtiers and spectators gathered there to witness the supreme sacrifice. At 11.00 O'clock the Guru was produced before the masses. The Guru said before the assembly of the Omerahs that the duty of man was to pray to the lord, but since he had been directed by his Majesty to show a miracle, he had resolved upon complying with the King's orders. He wrote on a piece of paper and declared it as charmed. Then having tied it round his neck briefed that the sword would fall harmless on it by the effect of the charm which was written upon it. The executioner was now summoned to test the miraculous charm. A heavy blow was given and the result was that the head of the Guru rolled on the floor to the amazement of all.

Later on a grand Gurudwara called Sis Ganj Sahib was built at the place where the Guru was executed. Its adjacent building, the Kotwali Prison where the Guru was imprisoned, was acquired by the Sikhs from the Delhi Administration on 11th of October 1968. Guru Tegh Bahadur martyrdom was yet another challenge to the Sikh conscience. It was then realized that there could be no understanding between an insensate power imbrued with blood and a proud people wedded to a life of peace with honour. The sacrifice roused the Hindus from their passive silence and gave them the fortitude to understand the power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice. Guru Tegh Bahadur thus earned the affectionate title of "**Hind-di-Chadar**" or the **Shield of India**.

Gobind Rai became the tenth and final Guru in human form. Guru Gobind Singh writes in the Dasam Granth. He protected the forehead mark and sacred thread (of the Hindus) which marked a great event in the iron cage. For the sake of saints, he laid down his head without even a sign. For the sake of dharma, he sacrificed himself. He laid down his head but not his creed.

"Bachittar Nanak" With regard to the martyrdom of Sri Guru TeghBahadur Sahib, Sri

Guru Gobind Singh Sahib says that such a wondrous feat has never been performed by anyone. **“Tegh Bahadur Si Kirya Kari Na Kinhoo Aan”**

But it does not end here. The people of Delhi were frightened and that's why no one dared to cremate the body of the Guru. But Jaitta, the sweeper somehow stole the Guru's head and reached Anandpur where he presented it to Guru Gobind Rai, who was only nine years of age at that time. The new Guru appreciated this act and lovingly remarked **“Ranghrete Guru ke bete,”** means the untouchables are the Guru's own sons. The Guru's head was cremated at the place where the present **Sis-Ganj Gurudwara** is constructed. **Lakhi Shah, a Labana Sikh** and trader by profession managed to steal the decapitated body in a cart full of cotton and cremated it by setting his hut with all its belongings on fire to shirk detection. Later on the ashes were buried in the **Gagar**. A splendid and **holy Gurudwara Rakab Ganj** has been constructed at this site. The execution of the Guru and his Sikhs in the most inhuman, barbarous, brutal and torturous manner made the Hindus and Sikhs the enemies of the Mughals. The realization came to the people that they themselves must evolve the way to get rid of such a cruel and corrupt rule. And such a brave and fatal task was taken up by Guru Gobind Singh, the son and successor of Guru Tegh Bahadur.

Guru Gobind Singh recorded his father's martyrdom with these words:

“Theekar Fore Dilees Sir, Prabh Par Kiyo Payan, Tegh Bahadur Si Kriya, Kari Na Kinhoo Aan. Tegh Bahadur Ke Chalat, Bhayo Jagat Main Sog. Hai Hai Hai Sab Jag Bhayo, Jai Jai Jai Sur Log”.

He burst the bonds of mortal clay and went on to the abode of God. No one ever performed an act as noble as, did Guru Tegh Bahadur. With the departure of Tegh Bahadur, the world was stricken with sorrow. A wail of horror rent the earth, A victor's welcome by the dwellers of heaven. Aurangzeb, the Emperor, became very unsettled ever since the day of Martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadurji; his soul having been shaken by this heinous sin. It is said that he saw before him the spirit of Bhai Matidas every night and that he became extremely frightened of it. Outwardly, his Qazis, Mullahs and other Ministers

tried to flatter him and justified his actions under Islamic law. But only he knew his inner plight. Soon the trouble in the Deccan-South India, started which later proved fatal for him. Soon the time came for the Emperor to die a miserable death at Aurangabad. He who had once forgotten his end had now been “grinded under the molars of death.” It would be of interest to note that just as the two parts of the body of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadurji were cremated separately at two different places, so too were two graves constructed to commemorate the death of Aurangzeb one at Ahmed Nagar and the other at Aurangabad. The difference, however, is that while thousands pay homage at the shrines of Guru Tegh Bahadur every day, only dogs and owls acquaint the tombs of Aurangzeb.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution turned the tide of history of Sikhs and of Punjab. His son and successor Guru Gobind Singh reflected on the history of India as well as history of the Sikhs. Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution hardened the resolve of Sikhs against Muslim rule and the persecution. Pashaura Singh states that, “if the martyrdom of Guru Arjan had helped bring the Sikh Panth together, Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom helped to make the protection of human rights central to its [Sikh] identity”. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom had far reaching political effects. The Mughals had, not long after, to face stiff resistance from the Sikhs. Sikh opposition contributed significantly to the collapse of the Mughal empire.

After the martyrdom of his father, Guru Gobind Singh, took several concrete steps to give a new orientation to the Sikh community. As a true soldier of the people and conscious of the role he had to play in the aftermath of ninth Guru's martyrdom, Guru Gobind Singh did not get overwhelmed by His tragic loss. Guru's public execution had outraged the Indians. From near and far they moved to Anandpur Sahib to be with the young Guru. They looked to him as the promised saviour and the man of the hour. After a most determined meditation on the state of affairs, Guru Ji came to the conclusion that the greatest need of the time was to create a national army. Such an army was to be based on social justice. The unpaid, unequipped and untrained army was to be inspired by the feelings of patriotism and nationalism. Wilfred Smith states that, “the

attempt to forcibly convert the ninth Guru to an externalized, impersonal Islam clearly made an indelible impression on the martyr's nine year old son, Gobind, who reacted slowly but deliberately by eventually organizing the Sikh group into a distinct, formal, symbol-patterned community". It inaugurated the Khalsa identity. In the course of one hundred years, they not only ended the foreign rule but also put a stop forever to the foreign invasions from the northwest.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was particularly meaningful as it reflected two important principles of the Sikh faith. The first is to stand up for not only one's own but also others' religious practices, even when one does not agree with those practices. The other principle manifested in the Guru's martyrdom is: "no one is an enemy, nor a stranger, I get along with all" (**Sri Guru Granth Sahib**). The Sikh principles were clear that anyone needing help must be helped. Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's sacrifice for the Pandits of Kashmir has to be viewed in this background and context. He, being the Jagat Guru, belongs to all, the whole universe. The love and mercy of a Prophet, a Messiah, a Jagat Guru is impartial, it knows no difference. It showers like rain on all alike. When Pandits of Kashmir, subjected to untold persecution and tyranny, approached Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib for protection, the most compassionate Sri Guru had shown an unexampled mercy characteristic of the House of Guru Nanak.

"Jo Saran Awey Tis Kanth Lawey, Eh Birad Swamy Sanda" Sri Guru Granth Sahib (544)

The Gurus believed in One Universal God and in equality of all human beings. Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom has no parallel in history. He gave his life so that the candle of religious freedom could remain aflame in our sacred land for all times to come.

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Holding More than one per cent of the total capital.	Ludhiana - 141104

I, **Harjinder Singh Brar**, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Date: March, 2016


Signature of Publisher

