

GURU TEGH BAHADUR

by

Raja Sir Daljit Singh

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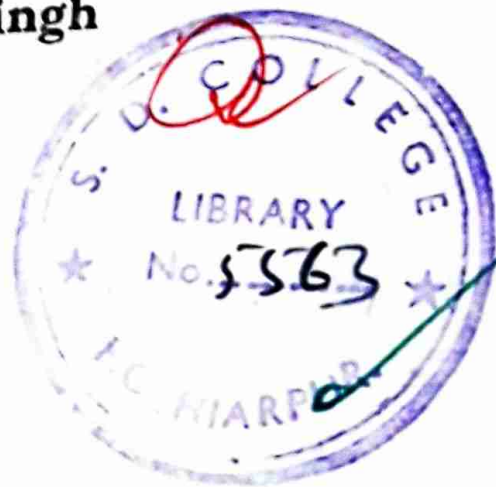
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LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT, PUNJAB.

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Guru Tegh Bahadur was ninth in succession from Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh religion. Special mention is to be made of Guru Tegh Bahadur for he was the first and perhaps the only one who sacrificed his life for the sake of the millions suffering under the rule of the bigoted emperor Aurangzeb ; and completely observed the spiritual rule of non-retaliation, non-violence and ready suffering.

This Guru was the youngest son of Guru Har Govind the sixth Guru and was born in 1622 A. D. (Baisakh Krishna Paksh Samvat 1679). Guru Har Govind's eldest son Baba Gurditta had predeceased his father. Gurditta's son Har Rai was appointed Guru when he was almost of the same age as Tegh Bahadur.

Guru Har Rai died at the age of thirty. He had appointed his young son Har Kishan as the Guru but the boy had passed away at the age of eight. Tegh Bahadur was Har Kishan's grand uncle, being the brother of Har Kishan's grandfather. On his death-bed Guru Har Kishan appointed Tegh Bahadur as the future Guru. He could only utter these words about the future Guru, "Baba is at Bakala". Since Guru Har Kishan had not pronounced

the name of Baba, the Sikhs were naturally confused as to who the "Baba" was. Many other descendants of the Gurus then lived at Bakala. On hearing these words uttered by the dying Guru each one of these descendants proclaimed himself the Guru. The Sikhs were still more confused. Tegh Bahadur however did not proclaim himself the Guru.



One Makhan Shah, who originally belonged to the Punjab, was a rich merchant carrying on business in Gujrat (Daccan) and his boat full of merchandise was caught in a storm at sea. Now this Makhan Shah was a Sikh by faith and in that critical moment he prayed to the Guru and promised to make an offering of five hundred gold coins to the Guru if his ship were saved from being destroyed. Eventually the ship reached the shore safely. The merchant came to the Punjab to see the Guru and offered him his 'bheta' (promised offering). When he arrived in the Punjab he heard the sad news of the demise of Guru Har Kishan and the instructions left by the Guru as to his successor. On this Makhan Shah along with his men went to Bakala in search of the future Guru. On reaching Bakala he heard that twenty-two persons proclaimed themselves as the Guru. He thought over the matter ; then consulted other Sikhs who had also come there to find the real Guru. Then Makhan Shah devised a plan to test who the real Guru was. He decided that he would go and offer one gold coin to each of these self-constituted Gurus and even to other descendants of the Gurus, and he who demanded five hundred coins, the amount of the offering promised by him must be the real Guru. Accordingly

Makhan Shah visited each of these and offered one gold Mohar to each and every one of them. None of these demanded the five hundred gold mohars. Makhan Shah and the other Sikhs were much disappointed. Then on making further enquiries Makhan Shah was told by the local men that there was a son of the late Guru Har Govind who also lived in Bakala, but that he seldom came out of his house and was of a very retiring disposition. Nor did he proclaim himself the Guru. Makhan Shah decided to try him also. The next morning he went to the house where Tegh Bahadur lived. He requested an interview which was granted. Makhan Shah went in, saluted Tegh Bahadur and made an offering of one gold mohar. Tegh Bahadur smiled and asked Makhan Shah where the rest of the promised offering was. On hearing this Makhan Shah fell at the feet of the Guru and offered the remaining 499 mohars. Then he went to the top of the house and proclaimed "I have found the Guru." All the Sikhs who were in Bakala hearing this announcement rushed to the house and surrounded the Guru. Then they all realised that indeed Guru Tegh Bahadur was the 'Baba' of the late Guru Har Kishan. Thus with due ceremony Tegh Bahadur was installed as the ninth Guru. The Guru was very reluctant to accept the Guruship, but on further consideration he said that he would accept it as he had to perform a duty, in performing which he would have to make a great sacrifice and of course he could not disobey the wishes of the late Guru.

IV

In Bakala there lived one Dhir Mall. He was a grandson of the sixth Guru and thus was a nephew of Guru Tegh Bahadur. When he heard that Tegh Bahadur had become the Guru he became very jealous. Dhir Mall had proved disloyal to his grandfather, and was thus condemned by Guru Har Govind. Soon afterwards he conspired with his men to kill Guru Tegh Bahadur and to plunder his house. One night his men attacked the house of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Sihan, Dhir Mall's trusted man, led this dacoity. When they entered the house and began to plunder, Guru Tegh Bahadur did not offer any resistance. Sihan on the other hand fired a shot at the Guru, which hit him near the shoulder. After plundering the house these men took away everything movable and decamped. Next morning, when Sikhs came to the Guru's house, they heard what had happened the previous night. Without another word or without telling the Guru about his intention Makhan Shah led all these Sikhs and attacked the place where Dhir Mall lived. They broke open the doors and plundered the house. They also got hold of Sihan who had shot at the Guru. They tied his hands and brought him before the Guru. They not only brought back the property of the Guru,

but also Dhir Mall's property and the original manuscript of the Granth Sahib which Dhir Mall had taken away from his grandfather's house.

When these Sikhs came into the presence of the Guru they found him meditating calmly. The Guru on seeing these Sikhs said, "My friends what have you done?"

Sihan, whose hands were tied at his back fell at the feet of the Guru and begged to be forgiven. He said, "O True Guru, the protector of the poor, I take thy refuge. I am indeed a sinner, but thou art the redeemer of sinners, therefore give me life by forgiving me my sin. None in this world would forgive such a sin as I have committed except you." The Guru ordered these Sikhs to untie the hands of Sihan, and forgave him his crime. The Master then said to the Sikhs who had brought the property of Dhir Mall, as follows: "Property belonging to Dhir Mall including the Granth Sahib, as that was also in his possession when you took it away, should be returned. O Sikhs, why covet other people's wealth? The holy Guru Nanak has given the wealth of the sacred Name to his Sikhs. You are instructed to lay up the wealth of the Name, which will be useful here and in the next world as well. Everything else is perishable and becomes the cause of pain in manifold ways. The wealth of the Name is imperishable and is superior to all other worldly objects and wealth. My friends, this wealth is obtained in the company of the holy. This wealth can neither be stolen, fire cannot consume it, nor can it be drowned in water. In accumulating worldly wealth sin is involved. We desire to take that which belongs to others, we may acquire more than we deserve. This wealth can be stolen by thieves, can be seized by the King. Fire can destroy

it and earth can rot it ”

“At the time of death the separation from this wealth causes pain and misery. Having his mind fixed on it one goes to hell.”
The Master continued:

“Deluded mind hath been entangled with mammon.

The more actions moved by avarice (greed) are performed, the more one is bound (to the cycle of birth and death).

I did not have understanding and was devoted to the objects (of the senses) and thus forgot to sing the praises of the Lord.

The Lord is ever with you which you did not realise and ran to the forest in search of Him.

The precious gem of the Name is in the heart, but one does not know it.

Nanak, without being devoted to the Lord, life is in vain.”

(Jaitsri Mohalla 9)

Then Makhan Shah approached the Guru with folded hands and thus addressed the Master “O true King, thy words are like Amrit, if we drink that Amrit we are sure to become immortal. Let the property of Dhir Mall be returned to him as thou hast ordered but Sihan must undergo the punishment for his heinous crime. He should not be let off lightly,”

The Guru smiled and said, “My friend, your wisdom is influenced by the worst of passions, Krodh-wrath. Under the effect of anger a man commits the worst of all deeds. He loses control over his senses, mind and intellect, and does not discriminate between right and wrong, good or evil. It is anger which

makes one commit sins against his friends, parents and even the Guru. The angry man's soul burneth. He cannot eat or sleep, and is ever tortured until he can gratify his desire for revenge." And he recited the saying of the fifth Guru from Sukhmani. He said, "Fire of lust and wrath dissolves the body as gold melts under the effect of borax." It does not behove the Sikhs of the Guru to allow anger to affect their senses and mind. If the Sikhs of the Guru are also affected by these passions, then what is left for the path of discipleship. Remember :

"Anger dwells in the heart and under its effect man loses his sense. It (anger) takes away all wisdom and makes one incapable of invoking his understanding (budhi)"

Continued the Master, "My friends, forgiveness is a great virtue. To be able to exercise forgiveness is better than making gifts or bathing at the sacred places and performing other acts of merit, says the holy Guru Nanak."

All the Sikhs impressed by the first sermon of their Guru bowed in reverence to him Guru realising afresh that he was indeed the true Guru.