



## The Ten Gurus of Sikhism

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**EN ONKAR - THE ONE GOD**

Sikhism is a monotheistic religion, which was founded during the fifteenth century in Punjab. This philosophy is based on the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji and the ten successive Sikh Gurus. Hence, this system of religious philosophy is traditionally also known as the Gurmat, which literally means, "of the Gurus".

Sikhism, said to be the fifth-largest organized religion in the world, is also one of the main religions of India.

Sikhism bases its faith in Waheguru, who is embodied in "Ek Onkar" , which means, One God. The final goal of Sikhism is the pursuit of salvation through discipline, devotion and meditation on God.

Sikhs or the practitioners of Sikhism follow the teachings of the ten Sikh gurus or enlightened leaders. They also regard their holy scripture, the Guru Granth Sahib Ji as God. This Granth or text, decreed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji as the ultimate text, includes some works of many devotees from different religious and socio-economic backgrounds.

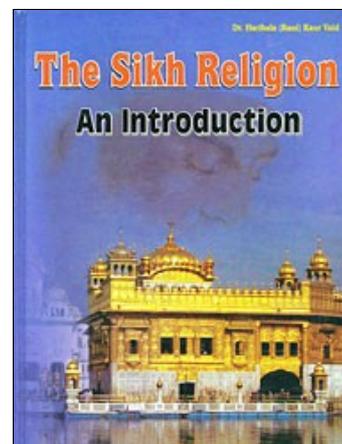
Sikhism's traditions are rooted in Punjab. Most Sikhs live in Punjab, though they are also vastly spread out worldwide. This, in fact, is known to be one of the fastest growing religions in the world, with over 25 million practitioners in different parts of the world. Until the Indo-Pak partition took place, most Sikhs inhabited Pakistani Punjab.

## Sikh philosophy

The entire Sikh philosophy is based on Guru Nanak's teachings and those of his successors. The Guru sums it up thus: "Realisation of Truth is higher than all else. Higher still is truthful living."

Sikh teaching propagates equality among all human beings and rejects discrimination on the basis of caste, creed, and gender. More than religious and ascetic practices as a means to attain salvation, Sikhism stresses on leading life as an honest and upright human being. Sikhism also focuses on developing strong family values and bonds.

Waheguru, the Sikh concept of God is nirankar (formless), akal (timeless) and alakh (sightless).



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**THE SIKH RELIGION - AN INTRODUCTION**

Sikhism does not give any gender to God. This religion believes that God is infinite and omnipresent and it was He who created everything that is there in the entire cosmos. Guru Nanak stressed that everyone must try to see God from their inward eye and that meditation was a necessary step towards attaining enlightenment.

## The Sikh concept of salvation

Sikhism does not believe in either heaven or hell, like Hindus and Christians do. Sikhs instead believe in a more spiritual union with God, finally resulting in the attainment of salvation. An attachment to illusory worldly pursuits or Maya is what takes people on the endless vicious cycle of birth and death.

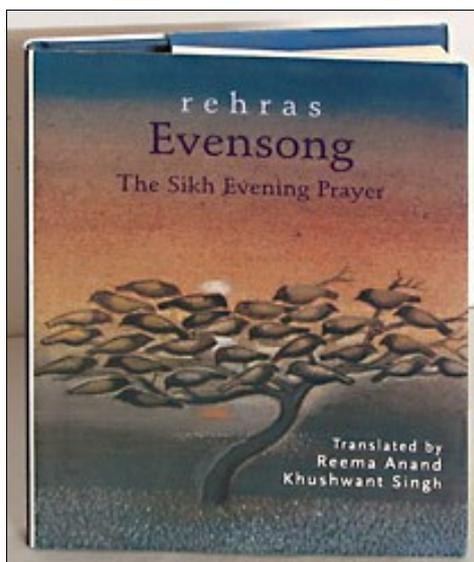
Guru Nanak states that the Five Evils, namely, ego, anger, greed, attachment and lust, are dangerous hindrances to the spiritual evolution of a human being. These negative influences distance one from God and stop him from his final mission of attaining Godhead. Nanak says that this situation can be tackled only with intense prayer and devotion to the Lord.

## Naam Simran

A vital aspect of Sikhism is naam simran or remembering the name of God. Verbal repetition of God's name or a sacred chant is already a part of Indian religious culture, but Nanak gave more importance to inward personal observance. Nanak described naam simran as "growing inward and toward God". This would happen in a process of five stages, the last one being, the "sach khand" or the Realm of Truth, wherein the devotee would finally attain God.

Sikhism also encourages seva (charitable services) and free distribution of food at Sikh Gurdwaras (places of worship), also called "langars".

## The Shabad



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**REHRAS - EVENSONG - THE SIKH EVENING PRAYER**

The Shabad, which is very much like a Hindu Bhajan (song or hymn in praise of God), forms an important part of Sikh culture. The term Shabad literally means "word". Taken from the Guru Granth Sahib, the Shabad is also commonly referred to as "Gurbani" or the "Message of the Teacher".

Profoundly philosophical in nature, the Shabad is believed to take a tremendous amount of study, devotion, and meditation for the follower to actually understand its underlying significance.

The Shabad is performed very traditionally, with each song set in a particular Hindustani Classical raags (melodies) and taals (rhythm). Needless to say, there is a special set of performers to sing these Shabads. These artists are known as raagis.

## The Gurmat Sangeet

There was a recent trend of people performing the Shabad in a lighter, less classical style. It could have been due to ignorance on the part of the raagis concerned or even the need to entertain a not-so-informed audience.

But taking into consideration that the Guru Granth Sahib had prescribed particular raags for meditative purposes, a movement called the "Gurmat Sangeet" arose in order to protect the ancient, original, Shabad tradition. This movement had tremendous influence not only on Sikh culture, but also on world music in general.

With Gurmat Sangeet, the world awoke to the actual beauty of the Gurbani. Today, raagis are taking far less liberties with the Shabad style of singing. Additionally, musical instruments which were declining in popularity, such as the dilruba, tar shehenai and seni rabab, have now started to be used as well, at Shabad performances. Such instruments are being revived today, thanks to the Shabad.

## The Ten Sikh Gurus of Sikhism

Sikhism was developed and established by the ten Sikh Gurus within a 239-year period, from 1469 to 1708. These enlightened masters came with the uniform mission of bestowing spiritual and moral well-being on the masses.

They preached by example of living a holy and worthy life through meditation and recitation of the Shabads. The Gurus taught not only the people of India, but the whole world as well, to live spiritually fulfilling lives with dignity and honour. Each of the Gurus added to his predecessor's teachings, thus resulting in the creation of the religion called Sikhism.



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**THE TEN SIKH GURUS AND  
THE GOLDEN TEMPLE AT AMRITSAR**

Guru Nanak Dev Ji was the very first Guru and Guru Gobind Singh Ji, the final Guru. Guru Gobind Singh made the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the ultimate and final Sikh Guru, before leaving to his heavenly abode.

The Guru Granth Sahib is much more than a holy treatise for the Sikhs - this book is regarded with the same respect and reverence as a living Guru.

The Sikh Gurus laid down the rules and regulations to lead an honest and righteous life, to be practiced by the followers of Sikhism. The Gurus also clearly outlined rituals, practices and beliefs that were not appropriate and were not to be followed by the faithful disciples.

Now, we bring you details on each of these ten Gurus of Sikhism.

## Guru Nanak Dev Ji (1469 - 1539)



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**GURU NANAK**

During his life tenure, Guru Nanak had become revered as a spiritual master not only throughout India, but also in Arabia, Iraq, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Turkey, Burma and Tibet. Guru Nanak Jayanti or the Guru's birth is celebrated on the full moon day in November every year.

Guru Nanak also referred to as Satguru Nanak, Baba Nanak, Nanak Shah Faqir, Bhagat Nanak, Nanak Kalandar and so on.

Incidentally, the term Nanak was used by all subsequent Gurus. Hence, the second Guru, Guru Angad is also called the "Second Nanak" or "Nanak II".

Guru Nanak Dev mastered Sanskrit, Punjabi and Persian at an early age and travelled through the length and breadth of India and also overseas, to Arabia, Persia, Baghdad and Mecca. He believed in the equality of all religions and spoke to peoples from all backgrounds and religions, such as Hindus, Muslims, Parsees, Jains and Buddhists.

Guru Nanak never regarded himself as a part of any particular religion. Instead, he considered himself a brother to all those who believed in truth and in God. Even from childhood, he revolted against rituals, caste discrimination, sacrifice of widows and societal hypocrisy. Guru Nanak never asked his listeners to be devoted to him either. He merely asked everyone to be devout and honest people and maintain their own culture and traditions.



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**GURU NANAK TRANSFORMS INTO FLOWERS AFTER SAMADHI  
FROM THE BOOK  
NANAK - AN INTRODUCTION**

When Nanak attained Samadhi, Hindus and Muslims debated as to whether his mortal form should be cremated as per Hindu tradition or buried as per Islamic culture. When they took off the sheet covering him, they found only beautiful, fragrant flowers. While

the Hindus burned their flowers, Muslims buried theirs.

### Three guidelines set by Guru Nanak

Guru Nanak formed the three main principles of Sikhism, namely:

1. Naam Japna - singing in praise of the Lord and practising Dharam or righteousness
2. Kirat Karni - earning by honest means and accepting all good and bad equally, considering them to be God's blessings
3. Vand Chakna - sharing one's wealth with the poor and needy and follow the tenet of "Share and Consume Together" with the Sadh Sangat (or community of devout folk)

### Nanak's main contributions

- Nanak was very much against discrimination based on class and caste. He professed the brotherhood of all mankind. He also asked everyone to shed their ego and to conquer their minds by way of prayer and meditation.
- Nanak believed in showing equal respect to women. He asked his male followers to understand the true divine nature of the woman, who was responsible for giving birth to him. He also made them understand the importance of having the companionship of women throughout the various stages in their lives - as a sister, mother, friend, fiancée and wife. He therefore propounded women's rights and equal status in society.
- Guru Nanak also preached secularism and showing equal respect to all religions. He interacted with people from all religions, thus breaking the tradition of that time. He asked everyone to maintain their own sanskaars (tradition), while also having due consideration for someone else's beliefs.

### Guru Angad Dev Ji (1504 - 1552)

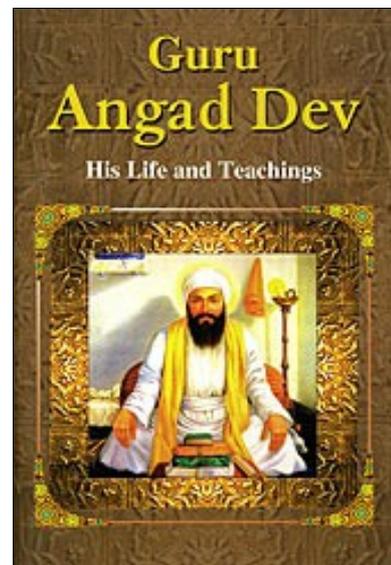
Guru Angad Dev Ji, the second of the Sikh Gurus, was born in 1504, to Bhai Pheru Mall Ji and Mata Sabhrai Ji. He attained Samadhi in 1552. He married Mata Khivi Ji and had two sons, Baba Dasu Ji and Baba Dattu Ji and two daughters, Bibi Amro Ji and Bibi Anokhi Ji. He became a master in the September of 1539. His mission was to make people aware of the value of Nishkam Seva or selfless service to all humanity. Guru Ji also formalized the present Gurmukhi script, which became the medium of writing the Punjabi.

Not only did this give the common people a language to read and write, but it also helped the community to dissociate itself from the then-prevalent Sanskrit script.

### The establishment of Langar

Guru Angad made another important contribution - he established the institution of Langar, of feeding the poor and the needy. Mata Khivi personally worked in the kitchen for this purpose and also served food to one and all.

The Guru earned his living by twisting coarse grass into rope used to tie cots. This money went to the common community fund.



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**GURU ANGAD DEV**

## Education

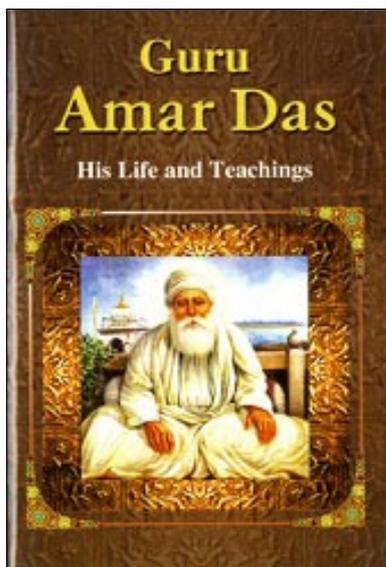
Guru Angad also started schools in order to make education available to the downtrodden and the underprivileged. He personally taught Punjabi in Gurmukhi script to children. He provided education to other folk who had not been previously educated. This was his way of empowering people to have higher goals in life.

## Other contributions

Guru Ji also took a keen interest in physical fitness. He encouraged his followers to be involved in sports after their morning prayers. According to him, only physical fitness would help you pursue higher goals in life, because a sound mind could exist only in a sound body.

Guru Angad also worked for the cause of equality of women. He set an example by making Mata Khivi play an important role in the fulfilment of his own mission. She did her job in a skillful and selfless manner, characteristic of her, and evoked spontaneous respect among the people. This was unique and revolutionary because women were usually not seen in the forefront of the society at the time.

## Guru Amardas Ji (1479-1574)



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**GURU AMAR DAS**

Guru Amar Das became a Sikh Master in April 1574. He the eldest son of farmer and trader, Sri Tej Bhan Ji and Mata Lachmi Ji. Later in his life, he was married to Mata Mansa Devi and they had four children, Bhai Mohan, Bhai Mohri, Bibi Dani Ji and Bibi Bhani Ji. Incidentally, Bibi Bhani later married Bhai Jetha, who became the fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das.

Before Guru Ji became a master, he was a pious Vaishnavite Hindu. One day, Bhai Amardas Sahib Ji heard some hymns of Sri Guru Nanak being sung by Bibi Amro Ji, the daughter of Sri Guru Angad Dev. Bhai Sahib was so moved by these Shabads that he immediately decided to go to meet Guru Angad Dev Ji. Bhai Sahib became involved in Seva and became a devout Sikh.

### The Manji system

Guru Amar Das propagated the Sikh faith in a systematic manner. He visited and sent Sikh missionaries to different parts of India to spread Sikhism. He also divided the Sikh

Sangat area into 22 branches called Manjis and appointed a local Sikh preacher at each place.

The preacher used to sit on a Manji (or cot) and the congregation sat around him to listen to his discourses. Guru Ji appointed 22 such Manjis to rapidly carry forward the movement.

## Emperor Akbar visits Guru Amardas Ji

Guru Ji had made the Langar system compulsory for all visitors. He believed in feeding hungry stomachs before preaching any spirituality.

Once the emperor Akbar came to see Guru Sahib and had to eat the coarse rice in the Langar too, before he could meet with Guru Sahib. Very impressed with the system, he expressed his wish to grant some royal property for 'Guru ka Langar'. Guru Sahib,

however, politely declined the offer and instead, persuaded Akbar to waive off pilgrims' toll-tax for non-Muslims while crossing Yamuna and Ganga. Akbar happily agreed.

### **Important contribution**

Guru Amardas Ji revolted against Sati (ritual of a widow immolating herself in her husband's funeral pyre) and encouraged widow remarriage. He removed the Purdah (veil) movement prevalent at the time. He introduced new birth, marriage and death ceremonies and also fixed three Gurburbs for Sikh celebrations, namely, Dewali, Vaisakhi and Maghi.

When the Raja of Haripur visited Guru Ji, he asked him to partake of the Langar first. When one of his queens, however, refused to lift the Purdah off her face, Guru Amardas refused to meet her.

Guru Amardas Sahib also built Baoli (sacred well) at Goindwal Sahib, with eighty-four steps. This became a pilgrimage centre for the first time in the history of Sikhism. He then went on to compose more verses for the Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Amardas Ji chose his own son-in law, Guru Ram Das, to succeed him. His daughter Bibi Bhani and Ram Das had truly understood the spirit of Sikhism and very right for the post.

### **Guru Ram Das Ji (1534 - 1581)**

Guru Ram Das, originally Bhai Jetha, became a Master in 1574. He was born to Haridas Ji and Mata Daya Ji. He got married to Mata Bhani Ji and had three sons, Baba Prithi Chand Ji, Baba Mahadev Ji and Guru Arjan Dev Ji. One of his major contributions, among other things, was the 688 Shabads he gave to the Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Once Bhai Jetha was named Guru Ram Das Ji and took on Gurudom, he put himself to the task of building the city of Ramdaspur (the abode of Ram Das). He dug the second sacred pool as instructed by Guru Amar Das Ji. Pilgrims arrived in hordes to hear the Guru and to help in the excavation work of the tank.

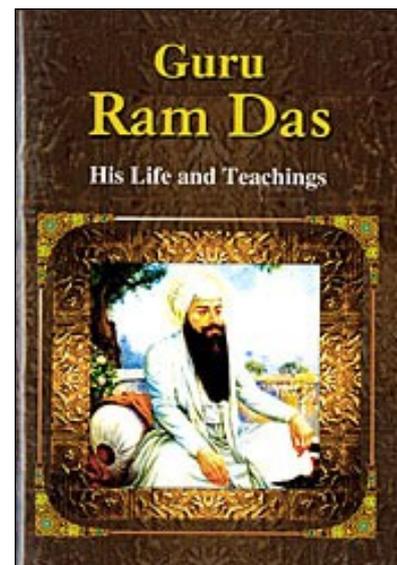
### **Building the city of Amritsar**

This second holy tank was to be called Amritsar, meaning, "pool of nectar". Today the city of Ramdaspur, which is at present the holiest center of Sikhism, has come to be known as Amritsar. This was his second greatest contribution to Sikhism.

### **The Anand Karaj**

The Sikh marriage ceremony is called the Anand Karaj. This ceremony is centered around a four-stanza hymn composed by Guru Ram Das Ji. Guru Ram Das Sahib composed a beautiful bani called Laavan, about the meaning of marriage to a Sikh couple. These verses define a Sikh marriage thus: "They are not said to be husband and wife who merely sit together. Rather they alone are called husband and wife, who have one soul in two bodies."

As the bride and groom circumscribe the Guru Granth Sahib Ji, each stanza of this Laavan is read out, each one having its own relevance in the marriage ceremony.



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**GURU RAM DAS**

## Guru Ram Das Ji sends his son to Lahore

A follower invited Guru Ram Das Ji to visit Lahore in connection with his son's wedding. But the master, being too busy, asked one of his sons to oblige him. His youngest son, Arjan Dev went on to Lahore to attend the function.

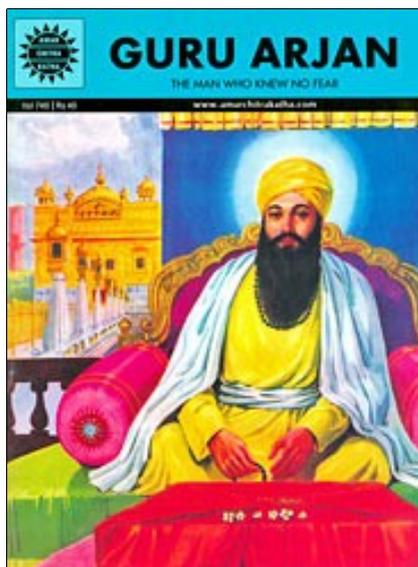
Arjan Dev left for Lahore, where his father had asked him to stay on until he called for him. The young lad was asked to take care of the education of Sikhs residing in Lahore. There, he penned down two poems oozing with love and devotion to his father. But his other brother, Prithi Chand, intercepted them and made sure they never reached their father.

However, Arjan wrote a third poem and marked it with the number 3, giving strict instructions to the messenger to personally hand it over to the Guru. The Guru Ji enquired to Prithi Chand, but the latter initially feigned ignorance. Finally, the Guru sent someone to check his son's quarters and found the missing poems. He was immensely touched to see the immense love and devotion in his son's compositions.

Guru Ram Das ji immediately asked Arjan Dev to return and declared him his successor. Prithi Chand was upset and he continued to misbehave with Guru Arjan Dev ji. Finally, Guru Ram Das ji publicly condemned Prithi Chand for his actions.

Shortly thereafter, Guru Ram Das Ji breathed his last.

## Guru Arjan Dev Ji (1563 - 1606)



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**GURU ARJAN DEV**

Guru Arjan Dev Ji contributed a total of 2218 Shabads and also finalized the Guru Granth Sahib. Also the author of Sukhmani Sahib Bani, he compiled the Adi Granth, the first ever holy Sikh Book.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji also built the Golden Temple at Amritsar as it stands today and developed the city of Amritsar as a Center of Excellence.

He also contributed towards the welfare of the society and even sacrificed his own life, thereby attaining a unique martyrdom in the history of mankind. Guru Arjan Dev Ji was born with the mission of spreading peace.

Though he ascended the throne of Guru Nanak at the tender age of 18, his thinking and wisdom were far beyond his age. Guru Arjan Dev was married to Mata Ganga ji. Sikhs celebrate this day every year by organizing a great fair held here over 3 days. On the last day, the holy clothes of Guru Sahib are shown to general public before the closing ceremony of Diwan.

## Completing the Harmandir Sahib

Guru Arjan Dev Ji invited Mian Mir, a Muslim Saint from Lahore, to lay the cornerstone of the foundation of the Harmandir Sahib, or the present-day Golden Temple. The doors on all four sides of the building symbolize its acceptance of all the four castes and all religions of the world.

The floor of the Harmandir Sahib was kept lower than the surrounding area - just as water flows downwards, so would the seekers of God's blessings. The city of Amritsar came up along with the building of the Harmandir Sahib.

## Completing the Adi Granth

Guru Arjan Dev Ji also finished compiling the Holy Book, the present Guru Granth Sahib. Among the hymns, he also included utterances of Sheikh Farid and Bhagat Kabir, Dhanna Namdev, Ramannand, Bhagat Ravi Das, Trilochan, Jai Dev, Beni, Pipa and Surdas. Interestingly, all these saints belonged to different religions, castes and creed.

## Strengthening the Masand system

Guru Ram Das had introduced the institution of Masands (or representative of the Gurus at remote places). He had also established the principle Dasvand of a Tenth of an individual's income payable for the Guru's Langar.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji toiled day and night to strengthen this system, thereby taking the religion to further heights, much faster too.

## Guru Arjan is arrested

Emperor Akbar's grandson, Khusro was a pious man, who had been considered by Akbar as the next in line to head the kingdom. But due to the domination of Muslim clergy, Khusro had to flee for protecting his own life. While passing through Punjab, Khusro visited Guru Arjan Dev Ji at Tarn Taran and sought his blessings.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji had become very popular among both the Hindus and the Muslims. This angered the orthodox Muslims, who hatched a malicious plan against him.

Sheikh Ahmad Sarhindi was highly respected among Muslim. But he was highly egoistical and asserted that his status was higher than the Sikh Gurus. This was emphatically rejected by Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Sheikh Ahmad, who had a great influence on Jehangir, instigated him against Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

Jehangir summoned Guru Arjan Dev Ji to Lahore and exhibited dissatisfaction with the Guru's explanation of Khusro's shelter. He labelled the Guru as a party to rebellion, ordering death as the Guru's punishment.

On the recommendation of Pir Mian Mir, though, Jehangir modified his original death sentence to a fine of two lakh rupees plus an order to erase a few verses from the Granth Sahib. Guru Arjan flatly refused to accept the terms and though the Sikhs of Lahore urged him to pay off the fine, he stood firm on his ground.

## Guru Arjan becomes a martyr

The Guru was imprisoned and cruelly tortured beyond endurance. He was made to sit on the sand on a burning hot day and boiling hot water was poured on his naked body. Though Pir Mian Mir tried to intervene and stop the torture of this holy soul, the Guru Ji refused to budge and unflinchingly bore all that he was put through.

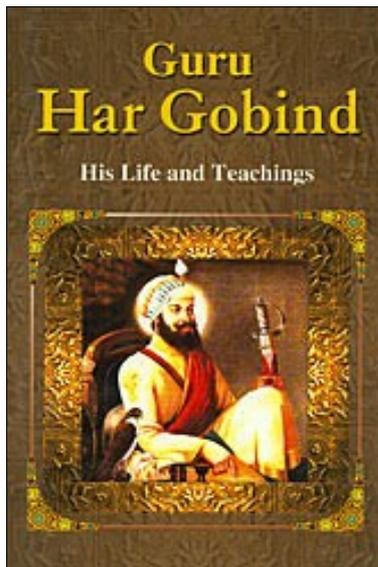
Guru Arjan Dev Ji finally left his mortal shell in May 1606, attaining the unique honour of becoming a martyr for his cause.



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**GURU ARJAN DEV IS TORTURED  
FROM THE BOOK  
NANAK - AN INTRODUCTION**

## Guru Hargobind Ji (1595 - 1644)



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**GURU HAR GOBIND**

Guru Hargobind Ji's ceremonial rites were performed by Baba Buddha ji. Guru Hargobind ji asked Baba Buddha to adorn him with a sword rather than the Seli of Nanak, which had been used so far by the earlier Gurus. Guru Ji then put on two swords and stated that they signified "Miri" and "Piri", that is, "Temporal Power" and "Spiritual Power". While one would attack the oppressor, the other would defend the innocent.

On his turban, Guru Hargobind Ji wore a Kalgi, an ornament, which was only worn by Mughal and Hindu rulers.

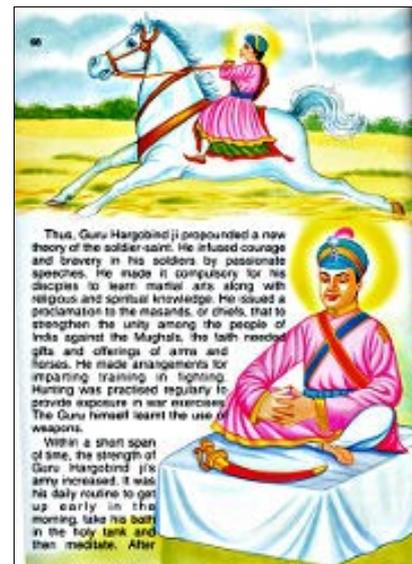
Guru Hargobind sahib ji also invented the Taus, a musical instrument, mimicking the sound of a peacock.

### Martial training

Guru Hargobind ji excelled in state administrative capabilities. He armed and trained many of his followers. The Guru eventually owned seven hundred horses and in his Risaldari (Army), there were three hundred horsemen and sixty gunners, in a very short period of time. Five hundred more men from the Majha area of Punjab were also taken in as infantry.

Guru Hargobind built a fortress at Amritsar, calling it the 'Lohgarh' (Fortress of Steel). He designed his own flag and war-drum which was beaten twice a day.

Guru Ji became the first master to wage and win four battles against the Mughal Empire.



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**GURU HAR GOBIND TRAINS  
IN MARTIAL ARTS  
FROM THE BOOK  
SIKH GURUS**

### The Akal Takht

The Akal Takht (God's Throne) was built in front of the Harmandir Sahib in the year 1606. Guru Arjan's detractors now tried to convince Jahangir that the fort, the Akal Takht, and the growing Risaldari, would eventually help Guru Hargobind ji to take revenge for his father's unjust death.

The Guru Ji sat there on a raised platform of twelve feet. Much like the Guru's swords, the Harmandir Sahib was the seat of his spiritual authority and the Akal Takht was the seat of

his temporal authority. This period is vital, since it marked the beginning of Sikh militarisation.

Guru Hargobind Ji also awarded honours and meted out punishment, just as any other King would. The Akal Takht was the first ever Takht in Sikh history.

With this, the Sikhs had formed a separate governance of their own and occupied a sort of separate state even while under the Mughal rule.

### **Community prayer**

Guru Hargobind Ji also worked to establish community prayer, thereby strengthening the general power of the prayer and also the unity and brotherhood among the community as a whole. This congregation would jointly pray for anyone who requested the same, irrespective of their caste or religion. Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims were all equally welcome to approach this unique forum.

### **Guru Ji faces opposition from hostile forces**

Guru Hargobind Ji faced stiff opposition from other jealous folk, such as his own Uncle, Priti Mal, who was also the brother of Guru Arjan Dev Ji. Priti Mal had already attempted to kill Guru Ji when he was a child, but failed. He then tried to turn Emperor Jehangir against the young Guru.

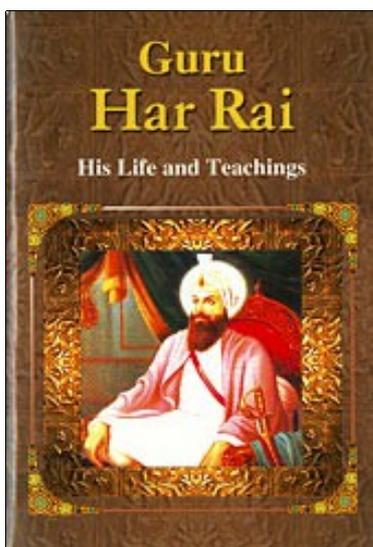
Chandu Shah and Shaikh Ahmad Sirhandi too joined hands with Priti Mal. This made Jehangir fear that the Guru might seek revenge for his father's arrest, torture and death.

### **Guru Ji is arrested too**

Guru Hargobind Ji was imprisoned and held at the Gwalior Fort for a period of one year. They had taken him there claiming that he should go there and pray for the ill Emperor Jehangir. But when Jehangir eventually ordered his release, the master refused to leave until the other 52 imprisoned Hindu Kings were released as well.

The Sikhs still celebrate this day as the Bandi Chorr Divas.

### **Guru Har Rai Ji (1630 - 1661)**



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**GURU HAR RAI**

Guru Har Rai Ji became Guru in March 1644, following in the footsteps of his grandfather, Guru Hargobind Ji. Just like his grandfather, Guru Har Rai Ji also continued the military and warfare training.

Guru Har Rai Ji was born to Baba Gurdita Ji and Mata Nihal Kaur Ji. He later married Mata Kishan Kaur Ji and had two sons, Baba Ram Rai Ji and Sri Har Krishan Ji.

Guru Har Rai Ji was essentially a man of peace, but he never disbanded the armed Sikh Warriors, who earlier were originally maintained by his grandfather. He maintained 2200 mounted soldiers ready at all times.

He never himself indulged in any direct political or armed conflict, though, with the Mughal rulers. Only once Guru Ji helped the eldest son of Emperor Shahjahan, Dara Shikoh, escape safely from Aurangzeb's army during the war of succession.

Guru Sahib was once coming back from the tour of Malwa and Doaba regions. At that time, Mohamad Yarbeg Khan attacked the kafla of Guru Sahib along with a thousand-strong army. A few hundred Saint Soliders of Guru Sahib fought back with great courage and bravery, forcing the offenders to flee the scene.

This act of self-defense was an example for those who professed the theory of so called non-violence or "Ahimsa Parmo Dharma". Guru Sahib regularly awarded various Sikh warriors with gallantry awards.

### **Establishing an Ayurvedic hospital**

Guru Sahib built an Aurvedic herbal medicine hospital and a research centre at Kiratpur Sahib. Dara Shikoh once became critically ill and even the best physicians in the country failed.

At last the emperor requested Guru Ji to treat his son. Guru Ji handed over some rare medicines to the messenger of the emperor and Dara Shikoh was saved from the clutches of death. The grateful emperor wanted to grant him some "Jagir", but Guru Sahib refused to accept the same.

Guru Har Rai Sahib tried to improve the state of the Masands, but faced many difficulties here. Many of the corrupt Masands, Dhir Mals and Minas always tried to put a halt to the advancement of the Sikh religion.

### **Bhai Gonda**

A devout Sikh called Bhai Gonda often came to stay with Guru Ji. He was a saintly person and Guru ji was always pleased with his sincere devotion. Once, Guru Sahib asked him to go to Kabul to spread Sikhism there. Though Kabul was a foreign country teeming with Muslims, Bhai Gonda cheerfully accepted the task given to him. Once there, he built a Gurdwara and carried out all the Guru's instructions.

So great was Bhai Gonda's devotion that he would go into a trance meditating on his master. It is believed that even Guru Har Rai Ji could feel his devotion, though they lived several hundreds of kilometers apart.

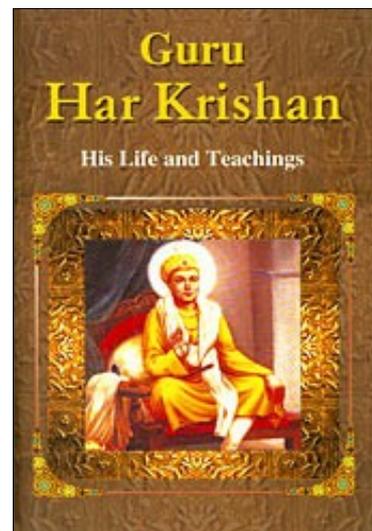
### **Guru Har Krishan Ji (1656 - 1664)**

Guru Har Krishan Ji, son of Guru Har Rai Ji, became a master in October 1661. Har Krishan, though very young, was much more spiritual than even senior practitioners of the religion. He became a master when he was merely five years old.

### **Aurangzeb resents Guru Ji's popularity**

Guru Har Krishan would regale his audience by giving commentaries and explaining passages from the Holy Granth. He had a huge following wherever he went.

Emperor Aurangzeb was not at all pleased about this and invited the Guru visit his Darbar at Delhi along with his father, Guru Har Rai. Leaving for Delhi, Guru Har Krishan also stopped at Ropar, Banur and Ambala. Here, he would freely interact with crowds of devotees who were ecstatic to meet their new Guru.



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**GURU HAR KRISHAN**

## **An illiterate bursts into Salokes**

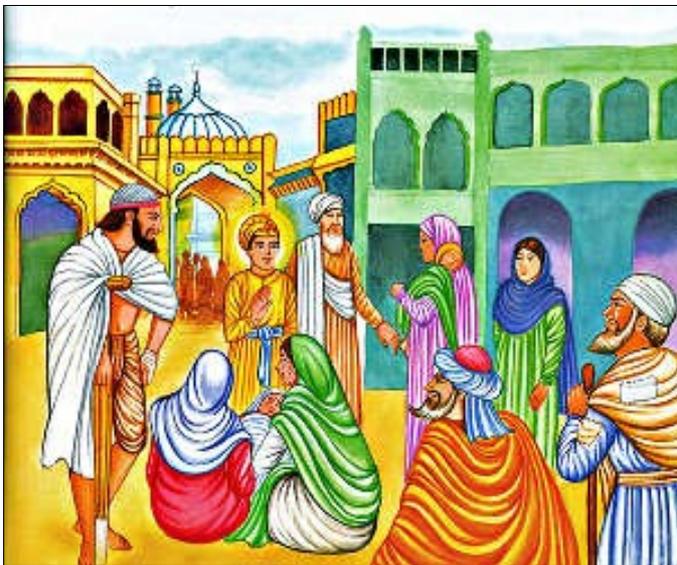
When Guru was near Panjokhara, some Sikhs requested him to stay on there for a day, so that everyone could have his Darshan. Guru Ji readily obliged.

An egoistic Pandit, Lal Chand, lived in that very village. He came to see the Guru and commented that he was too young to know about religion and ancient texts.

Chhajju Ram, an illiterate, low-caste villager, happened to pass by at that very moment. Guru Har Krishan asked Dargah Mall to call him. The Guru Ji then asked Chhajju Ram to explain to the Pandit the gist of the Bhagavad Gita.

Lo and behold! The poor villager astounded everyone by starting off with a cogent commentary on the sacred treatise. Lal Chand was instantly humbled and fell at the Guru's feet. Both these men became the Guru's disciples and travelled with him up to Kurukshetra.

## **Guru Ji visits Delhi during an epidemic**



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**GURU HAR KRISHAN VISITS SMALL POX PATIENTS  
FROM THE BOOK  
SIKH GURUS**

There was a small pox epidemic in Delhi, which resulted in many deaths. Guruji decided to visit the masses to heal them. Guru Har Kishan Ji stayed at the Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, which was originally the palace of Raja Jai Singh. He stayed on there, healing thousands of followers. He was also referred to as the Bala Pir or child prophet.

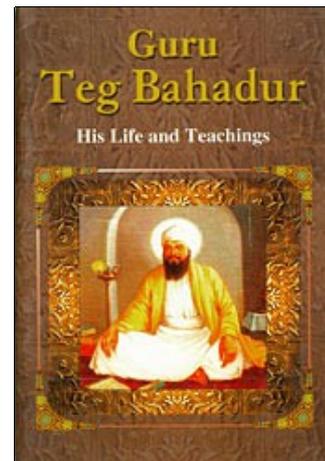
But exposing himself thus made him susceptible to smallpox too. Thus, he undertook great and selfless seva, caring for the sick at the risk of his own life.

## Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji (1621 - 1675)

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji became a Guru in 1664. He was the grand-nephew of Guru Har Kishan.

Guru Ji's original name was Tyag Mal or Master of Renunciation. He spent his childhood at Amritsar. When he was only 13 years old, he asked his father to accompany him into battle with Painde Khan. During the battle, he fought with great elan. Their army finally emerged victorious.

After this Battle of Kartarpur, the residents honored their new hero with a new name, "Tegh Bahadur Ji" or brave sword wielder. The young Tegh Bahadur soon dived into his studies and spent his time in meditation and prayer. He was married to Mata Gujri Ji at Kartarpur in 1632.



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**GURU TEG BAHADUR**

### Visiting the Harmandir Sahib

For two decades, Tegh Bahadur Ji kept up with intense meditation and then went on to become the next Sikh Master. He decided to visit the Harmandir Sahib at Amritsar, along with a party of Sikhs. However on his arrival at this sacred shrine, the Guru was rebuffed by the Sodhi family Sardars who then had control of the Gurdwara. They denied him entry into the main section of the complex. But he could go as far as the Thara Sahib, the "Pillar of Patience".

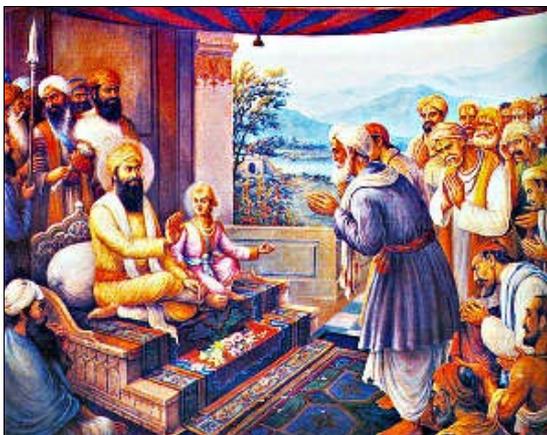
The Guru waited nearby for a little while but when the doors still did not open for him, he went away and stayed in a nearby village of Wala. Sometime later, the women of Amritsar came out and apologized for the shameful behaviour of the masands of Amritsar. Guru Ji was pleased by this gesture of penitence and devotion.

### Guru Ji becomes a father

Guru Ji became a father only after thirty four years of marriage. The little Gobind Rai was born at Patna in the state of Bihar.

Guru Ji then returned to Punjab, where he had stayed and continued with his mission of spreading the religion further.

### Meeting Kashmiri Pandits



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**GURU TEG BAHADUR MEETS KASHMIRI PANDITS  
FROM THE BOOK  
NANAK - AN INTRODUCTION**

Aurangzeb was hell-bent to destroy all Hindu temples and Gurdwaras. He also expelled missionaries from the main cities and towns. His idea was to convert people to Islam. Many of them panicked and went to Guru Ji seeking help.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji decided to stand up for the right of freedom of worship and told the delegation to tell Aurangzeb that if he could convert Guru Tegh Bahadur they would gladly convert.

Guru Ji made his son Gobind Rai the 10th Sikh Guru and left Anandpur for Delhi, to fight Aurangzeb. There, was

arrested by the Emperor, along with some of his other men.

## **Guru Tegh Bahadur breathes his last**

Guru Ji was beheaded on 11th November, 1675. His disciple took Guru Ji's severed head to Anandpur Sahib, where it was cremated by Guru Gobind Singh.

Many of the Pandits converted to Sikhism. Their leader Kirpa Ram, who was baptized as a Sikh, died fighting the Moghuls with Guru Gobind Singh's older sons.

## **Guru Gobind Singh Ji (1666 - 1708)**

Guru Gobind Singh ji became Guru on November 24, 1675, at the tender age of nine. Before this Guru left for his heavenly abode, he nominated Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji as the next perpetual Guru of the Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh gave rise to the formation of the Khalsa fraternity and completion of the Guru Granth Sahib. These were his greatest contributions to mankind and the Sikh religion.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was both a saint and soldier. He tried to fight oppression in order to restore justice and to uplift the down-trodden people in this world.

After the martyrdom of his father, Guru Ji stated that he would create a Panth or Sect that would challenge all tyrant rulers. Unlike many other prophets, he never called himself God. Instead, he called all people the sons of God sharing His Kingdom equally. He merely considered himself to be a slave of God.



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**GURU GOBIND SINGH**

## **Guru Ji's birth**

Pir Bhikan Shah, a Muslim mystic, was one day guided by a divine light. Following this light, he travelled with a group of his followers until he reached Patna Sahib in Bihar.

Gobind Rai was born here to Mata Gujri. It is believed that Pir Bhikan Shah approached the child and offered two bowls of milk and water, signifying both the great religions of Hinduism and Islam. The child smiled and placed his hands on both bowls. The Pir, understanding the true greatness of the little one, bowed in utter humility and reverence.

On the site of the house where he was born, now stands a sacred shrine, Sri Patna Sahib Gurdwara.

## **Gobind Rai becomes a Guru**

Gobind Rai was consecrated as the next Sikh Guru by his father, just before he left to visit Aurangzeb in Delhi. Guru Gobind Singh Ji had a natural inclination for poetic composition.

For the first two decades of his life, Guru Gobind Singh lived peacefully at Anandpur practicing arms and exercises to complete his training as a soldier. He studied Persian and Sanskrit in depth and engaged 52 poets to translate the Hindu epics.

The Guru also penned down many compositions including Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustat and Sawayas during this period. Not only that, he established a Gurdwara at Paonta Sahib on the banks of the river Jamna as well.

## **The Guru resides at Paonta Sahib**

Much of Guru Gobind Singh's creative literary work was done at Paonta Sahib. Poetry for him, however, was a means of revealing the divine principle of the Supreme Being. Through these compositions, he preached love, righteousness and equality.

The sword for Guru Gobind Singh Ji was never meant as a symbol of aggression, but was the emblem of manliness and self-respect and was to be used only in self-defence, as a last resort, when all else failed.

## **The Guru takes up battle**

Guru Gobind Singh had to fight off jealous Mughals. He and his Sikhs were hence involved in a battle with a Mughal commander, Alif Khan, at Nadaur on the left bank of the Beas, about 30 km south-east of Kangra, in March 1691. Among several other battles that occurred was the one fought against Husain Khan, an imperial general. All these resulted in decisive victory for the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh then issued directions to Sikh sangats in different parts not to acknowledge the corrupt masands, against whom he had heard complaints. He asked the Sikhs to send their offerings directly to Anandpur instead, at the time of the annual Baisakhi festival.

## **Creating the Khalsa**

Once, during an open air diwan, at Kesgarh Sahib at Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh Ji drew his sword and asked who would be ready to offer their head to him. There was a stunned, horrified silence, but nobody came forward to sacrifice himself. At Guru Ji's third call, Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore came forward. The Guru took led him inside a tent. A blow and thud were heard. Then the Guru came out, his sword dripping with blood.

Guru Ji asked for another head. Dharam Das, a Jat from Delhi, stepped forward on the third call. The process was repeated again and the Guru Ji again asked for another head. Some people in the assembly felt the Guru had lost reason and went to his mother to complain.

Mohkam Chand, a tailor of Dwarka offered himself as a sacrifice. The Guru took him inside the tent and when he came out, he asked the fourth head. Now, the Sikhs feared he would kill all of them.

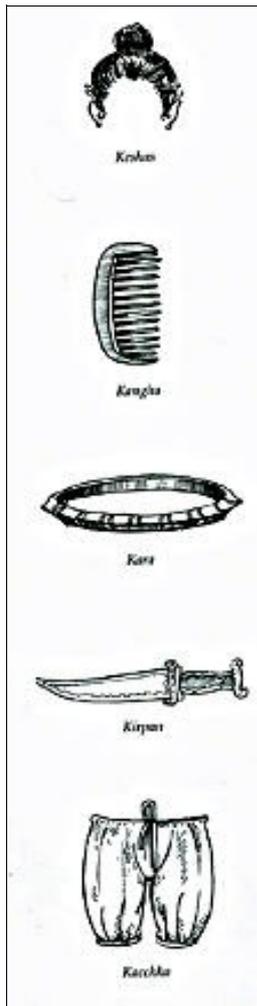
Himmat Chand, a cook of Jagan Nath Puri, stepped forward for the sacrifice. The Guru then made a final call for a fifth head. Sahib Chand, a barber of Bidar, offered his head as sacrifice.

The others breathed a sigh of relief, thanking the heavens that the Guru may have now realized his "mistake".

## **The Panj Pyare (the Five Beloved Ones)**

Inside the tent and unknown to others outside, the Guru clad his five volunteers in splendid garments. When they were brought outside, they were radiant beings. Seeing them, there were exclamations of wonder from all around. People were now sorry for not offering their heads to their master.

## Amrit Sanchar



The Guru offered his five most faithful followers sacred Amrit specially prepared in an iron bowl. He gave five palmfuls of Amrit to each of them to drink and sprinkled it five times in the eyes, asking them to repeat aloud with each sprinkle, "Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh", meaning, Khalsa belongs to God and all triumph be to His Name. He then anointed them into the casteless fraternity of the Khalsa.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave all the five of them the appellation of Singhs or Lions, regardless of their original caste or religion. He then collectively addressed them as the supreme, the liberated ones and called them "The Khalsa".

He then ordered them to do the five following things:

1. Kesh - to maintain unshorn hair
2. Kanga - a comb to keep the hair in place
3. Kachha - underwear to indicate virtuosity
4. Kara - an iron bracelet on the wrist
5. Kirpan - sword to symbolize dignity and an unbridled spirit

These men were also ordered never to use tobacco or other intoxicants, not to commit adultery and not to consume Halal meat. A person who would be caught committing such sins would have to pay a fine and in extreme cases, be excommunicated from the Khalsa fraternity.

After having administered Amrit to the Panj Pyare, the Guru himself knelt down and requested them to baptize him in the same way he had baptized them. The disciples were shocked, but at the insistence of their Master, did as they were ordered.

Gobind Rai was thus called Guru Gobind Singh from this time on. The Khalsa was now established and thousands of men and women were inducted into the fold over the next few days at Anandpur.

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**THE FIVE PILLARS  
OF THE KHALSA  
FROM THE BOOK  
NANAK - AN  
INTRODUCTION**

## Attack and siege of Anandpur

The fantastic rise of the Khalsa disturbed the Rajas of the adjoining regions. Hence, they got together under the leadership of the Raja of Bilaspur, in a bid to forcibly evict Guru Gobind Singh from Anandpur.

The Khalsa forces proved to be too strong for the hill Rajas. They then requested Aurangzeb for help, marched upon Anandpur and laid a siege to the fort in 1705.

At one point of time, the Mughals were also running out of resources. Hence, they offered safe exit to the Sikhs if they quit Anandpur. The town was evacuated in December 1705. But as the Guru and his Sikhs ventured out, the battling allies set upon them in full fury.



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**GURU GOBIND SINGH IN A BATTLE  
FROM THE BOOK  
SIKH GURUS**

Many Sikhs were killed most of the precious manuscripts were lost in the ensuing confusion. The Guru was able to make it to Chamkaur, 40 km southwest of Anandpur, with his two elder sons and about 40 other Sikhs. There the imperial army continued to devastate them and finally, the five surviving Sikhs asked the Guru to save himself in order to reconsolidate the Khalsa.

## Guru Ji survives the attack

Guru Gobind Singh reached Dina in Malva. There he enlisted a few hundred warriors of the Brar clan, and also composed his famous letter, Zafarnamah (the Epistle of Victory), in Persian verse, addressed to Aurangzeb.

This letter was a severe indictment of the Emperor and his commanders who had broken their oath. Two Sikhs, Daya Singh and Dharam Singh, were asked to reach the Zafarnamah to Ahmadnagar. From Dina, Guru Gobind Singh continued his westward march until, finding the host close upon his heels; he took position beside the water pool of Khidrana to make a last-ditch stand.

## Sikh women lay down their lives in battle

No matter how hard they tried, the Mughal troops failed to capture the Guru and had to retire in defeat. The wives of the men who had deserted the Guru at Anandpur led their men right back to the battle. The brave women gave up their lives to save their Guru's cause. This site is now marked by a sacred shrine and tank and the town which has grown around them is called Muktsar, the Pool of Liberations.

In the meantime, Aurangzeb, obviously touched by the Zafarnamah, invited Guru Gobind Singh for a meeting. Guru Ji had, however, left for the South by then.

## Attempts to assassinate the Guru

Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind felt insecure and jealous about the Emperor's conciliatory treatment of Guru Gobind Singh. He ordered two trusted men to assassinate the Guru forthwith.

These two pathans Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg pursued the Guru secretly and overtook

him at Nanded, where one of them stabbed the Guru just below the heart as he lay one evening in his chamber resting after the Rahras prayer. In a split second, Guru Gobind Singh struck him down with his sabre, while the other attacker fell under the swords of Sikhs who had rushed in on hearing the noise.

The Guru's wound was stitched by the Emperor's European surgeon and it appeared to have healed soon enough. The Guru had made a good recovery, or so it seemed. However, some days later, when he tugged at a hard strong bow, the wound again burst open and caused profuse bleeding.

It was treated again, but it was now clear that the Guru's time had come closer. He prepared the sangat for his departure and gave his last message to the assembly of the Khalsa. He then opened the Granth Sahib, placed five paise on it and bowed to it as his successor.

Singing a beautiful self-composed hymn, Guru Gobind Singh left for his heavenly abode. The Sikhs made preparations for his final rites as he had instructed them, the Sohila was chanted and Parshad (sacred food) was distributed.

## Sri Guru Granth Sahib - the Eternal Sikh Guru



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**THE GOLDEN TEMPLE OF AMRITSAR, THE TEN SIKH GURUS AND THE GURU GRANTH SAHIB**

Sri Guru Granth Sahib or Adi Sri Granth Sahib Ji is also called the Adi Granth or Adi Guru Darbar. This holy scripture is more than just that for Sikhs, who treat it as their living Guru. The holy text covers 1430 pages and contains the actual words spoken by the Ten Gurus of Sikhism, as also the words of various other Saints from other religions, including Hinduism and Islam.

Ordained Gurudom by the last of the Sikh Masters, Guru Gobind Singh Ji in 1708, the Granth Sahib is treated by Sikhs as their permanent, all-powerful Guru. Hence, Sikhs consider that they have a total of 11 Gurus.

The Guru Granth Sahib forms the main part of the Darbar Sahib or Main Hall in any Gurdwara. It is placed on a raised platform and covered in a beautiful and intricately-worked cloth. The platform is always covered by a canopy, which is also decorated in expensive fabrics.

The living Guru of the Sikhs, this book is held in great reverence and treated with the utmost respect. No Sikh ceremony is complete unless without the presence of Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Granth Sahib is a book of Revelation. It conveys the Word of the Master through His messengers on earth and is universal in its scope. This is the true greatness of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the highest and eternally living Guru of Sikhism.

This article was written by **Saipriya Viswanathan**. Saipriya is a teacher/performer of Bharata Natyam, Carnatic vocal music and Carnatic Veena. She is a recipient of several awards for both dance and music, including the Sur Mani and Singar Mani titles. She is a recipient Govt. of India Merit Scholarship for dance and is a diploma holder in Carnatic vocal music.

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