

Gurū at Kurukshetra (ਕੁਰੁਕਸ਼ੇਤ੍ਰ)

The Gurū reached Kurukshetra on the occasion of solar eclipse. He was received with great honor and distinction by all the holy men present there. During his stay he preached about truth. From there he went to Bānī Badarpur (ਬਾਨੀ ਬਦਰਪੁਰ) where he contributed money for the excavation of a well.

He proceeded to Mathurā (ਮਥੁਰਾ) and then Āgrā (ਆਗਰਾ). Moving through Itāvā (ਇਟਾਵਾ) he reached Kānpur (ਕਾਨਪੁਰ) and then Prayāg (ਪ੍ਰਯਾਗ) (today's Alāhābād - ਅਲਾਹਾਬਾਦ). He stayed about six months at Prayāg and proceeded to Mirzāpur (ਮਿਰਜਾਪੁਰ). From here he reached Banāras (ਬਨਾਰਸ) and stayed in Resham Katrā (ਰੇਸ਼ਮ ਕਤਰਾ). All these places have a *Gurduārā* to mark the memory of the Gurū's visit.

He arrived at the village where lived a very devout disciple called Cācā Phaggū (ਚਾਚਾ ਫੱਗੂ) who had built a mansion and within it placed a superb couch for the Gurū. Every morning he used to perfume it and then would close the doors declaring that he would not live in it until the Gurū had come, entered and hallowed it with his footsteps. Cācā Phaggū's desire was fulfilled and he had the happiness to entertain the Gurū in that mansion. Then the Gurū proceeded to Gayā (ਗਯਾ) where the Brahmans met him in a body and explained the virtues of pilgrimage of Gayā. They said if barley rolls were offered to Brāhmans at Gayā for the souls of ancestors, they would go to heaven even if they were already in hell. So they pressed the Gurū to give money to perform such a ceremony for him. He refused to accept their argument rather exhorted them to remember Vāhigurū and instructed them on divine knowledge and wisdom.

The Gurū then reached Paṭnā (ਪਟਨਾ) and encamped at first in a garden outside the city. That place is called Gurū kā Bāg (ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਬਾਗ). Bhāī Jethā (ਭਾਈ ਜੇਠਾ) a devout disciple, took the Gurū to his residence. Gurū Sāhib gave religious instructions to the people. One day he told his mother, Mātā Nānakī that many Sikhs were waiting for him in a distant land, so he must go to them. He wanted the family to remain at Panṭā.

Gurū Teghbahādar Sāhib brought about peace between Rājā Shankar Dhvaj (ਰਾਜਾ ਸ਼ੰਕਰ ਧ੍ਵਜ) of Āsām (ਆਸਾਮ) and Rājā Rām Siṅgh. As a result the fighting forces of both Rājās erected a monument of peace with their weapons lying down, thereby vindicating the Gurū's exhortation that hatred divides and love unites; and all disputes can be settled through mutual discussions and peaceful negotiations.

Gurū Teghbahādar Sāhib's Shahīdī (ਸ਼ਹੀਦੀ) (Reading 2)

Auraṅzeb's (ਔਰੰਗਜ਼ੇਬ) campaign of religious persecution

As Auraṅzeb ascended the throne of South Asia by imprisoning his father and murdering his brothers, he decided to enlist the sympathies of the fanatical section of his co-religionists. His idea was to exterminate the idolatrous Hindūs and to convert the whole of South Asia to Islām. In order to achieve this objective he employed four fundamental means to deal with them. First he made peaceful overtures; secondly, he offered money; thirdly, he threatened punishment; and lastly, he tried to cause dissention among them. When all these measures failed, he resorted to forcible conversion. Orders were issued to the governors of all the provinces that they should destroy the schools and temples of the infidels (Kāfir - ਕਾਫ਼ਿਰ) and thereby put an end to educational activities as well as the practices of the religion of the Kāfirs (non-Muslims or non-believers). Many temples at Mathurā (ਮਥੁਰਾ) and Banāras (ਬਨਾਰਸ) were destroyed. Even a Sikh *Gurduārā* in Buriā (ਬੁਰਿਆ) in Khizrābād Pargnā (ਖਿਜ਼ਰਾਬਾਦ ਪਰਗਨਾ) of Sarhind (ਸਰਹਿੰਦ) had been demolished and a mosque was built on the site. Such incidents had become common occurrences. In order to force conversion to Islām, all possible means were adopted. In the field of taxation, the policy of discrimination was launched with great vigor. Pilgrimage taxes were levied. Five percent custom duty was levied on Hindūs while Muslims were charged only half of that.

The forced conversion zeal of the officials, with their campaign of religious persecution and their conversion at the point of the sword, had sent a wave of terror throughout the country. Sher Afgān Khān (ਸ਼ੇਰ ਅਫਗਾਨ ਖਾਨ), the Emperor's viceroy in Kashmīr (ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰ), set about converting the Kashmīrī (ਕਸ਼ਮੀਰੀ) Hindūs by force and massacred those who refused to embrace Islām. Even Muslims, who in any way assisted the Hindūs, were mercilessly put to death. In extreme agony of too much slaughter, the Brāhman priests of Kashmīr prayed to their gods.

A delegation of 500 Kashmīrī Brāhmans led by Paṇḍit Kirpā Rām (ਪੰਡਿਤ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਰਾਮ) met Gurū Teghbahādar Sāhib at Anandpur Sāhib. Paṇḍit Kirpā Rām told tales of the torture initiated by the orders of Auraṅzeb (r. 1658-1707 AD) for converting them to Islām. *Gurū Sāhib* was deliberating on the issue when the child Gobind Rāi (ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਰਾਇ) happened to be there and asked as to what was the matter. *Gurū Sāhib* told him that the sacrifice of a Great Soul was called for. "Who else besides you can serve this cause?" was the child Gobind Rāi's spontaneous reaction. The *Gurū* replied, "This requires sacrifice, sacrifice of a holy and supreme soul." His son responded, "O dear father, who is more holy than you in this age? Go and offer yourself and save these people and their religion." On hearing this, the *Gurū* asked the Kashmīrī Brāhmans to go to the Emperor and make the following representation to him, "Gurū Teghbahādar, the ninth Sikh *Gurū* is now seated on the throne of the great Gurū Nānak, who is the protector of faith and religion. First make him a Muslim and then all the people, including ourselves, will of our own accord adopt the faith of Islām."

The Paṇḍits obeyed the *Gurū* and conveyed the proposal to the Emperor. On hearing this proposal, the Emperor was very pleased because he thought that it was much easier to convert one person than the whole lot. He retorted, "If the *Gurū* does not become Muslim, he will then at least show us a miracle." He was hopeful that once the *Gurū* was converted, there would be a large succession of Hindū and Sikh converts. The Emperor, therefore, sent his emissary to the *Gurū* to invite him to Dillī (ਦਿੱਲੀ). The *Gurū* received the Emperor's message and wrote in reply that he would come to Dillī after the rainy season.

The *Gurū* took leave of his family and his devoted Sikhs and began his journey to Dillī sometimes in June-July. From Anandpur (ਅਨੰਦਪੁਰ) he passed through Kīratpur (ਕੀਰਤਪੁਰ), Ropar (ਰੋਪੜ) and various villages before reaching Saifābād (ਸੈਫਾਬਾਦ) in Paṭiālā (ਪਟਿਆਲਾ) State to see his Muslim friend Saif-ul-dīn (ਸ਼ੇਫ-ਉਲ-ਦੀਨ). He stayed for sometime with him. Saif-ul-dīn became his disciple. He went to Samāṇā (ਸਮਾਣਾ) where he met another disciple called Muhammad Bakhsh (ਮੁਹੰਮਦ ਬਖਸ਼). The *Gurū* continued his journey through Kaithal (ਕੈਥਲ), Lakhan Mājra (ਲਖਨ ਮਾਜਰਾ), Rohtak and other places, conferring temporal and spiritual favors on his disciples, and finally he reached Āgrā (ਆਗਰਾ) where he encamped in a garden outside the city.

After the rainy season, the Emperor again sent his messenger to hasten the *Gurū's* presence at Dillī. When the messengers were unable to find the *Gurū*, they reported that he had fled. Orders were issued all over the empire to find and arrest him. There are different views about the place of *Gurū's* arrest. There were three Sikhs, Bhāi Matī Dās (ਭਾਈ ਮਤੀ ਦਾਸ), Bhāi Dayālā (ਭਾਈ ਦਯਾਲਾ) and Bhāi Saṭī Dās (ਭਾਈ ਸਤੀ ਦਾਸ) with the *Gurū* who were arrested with him and were brought to Dillī.

The Emperor explained that God appeared to him in a vision and told him to convert the whole world to Islām. Those who were to embrace Islām would be rewarded with wealth, appointments, land revenue grants and lands. The Emperor tried to lure them saying, "In this way you will have many disciples, and you will become a great priest of Islām. Therefore accept my religion – Islām, and you will receive from me whatever your heart desire." The *Gurū* refused.

Upon this it was ordered that the *Gurū* be imprisoned with sufficient guards around him. Again he was sent for and told that if he embraced Islām, every service would be performed for him, otherwise he would be severely tortured. He replied that he would never embrace Islām and so, remained in Dillī jail for eight days. He was given three choices: firstly to embrace Islām; secondly to perform a miracle; and thirdly to prepare himself to court death. The *Gurū* responded that to show a miracle was against the Will of Vāhigurū (ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ) and thus he would not consent to the Emperor's proposals and the Emperor might act as he pleased. He was then put to extreme tortures.

It is said that there was conversation between *Gurū Sāhib* and his disciple Bhāi Matī Dās. He told him that *Gurū Nānak Sāhib* (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ) had blessed Emperor Bābar (ਬਾਬਰ) with the continuation of his empire for a long time. Since the Mughal Emperors started committing great atrocities, their line would be exterminated if he (*Gurū*) laid down his life. In consequence of this conversation which was overheard by a priest, Bhāi Matī Dās was bound between two pillars and his body was sawn asunder. When the executioners put the saw on his head, he began to recite Japu jī (ਜਪੁ ਜੀ). This was a wonder of *Gurū's* grace. Bhāi Dayālā was boiled to death in a cauldron of hot water. The third companion Bhāi Saṭī Dās was roasted alive with cotton wrapped round his body. The authorities thought that these tortures of his Sikhs might shake the *Gurū*. However, nothing could and nothing can shake the Divine Light (the *Gurū*).

The final message was given to the *Gurū*, "You are to accept the religion of Islām or show a miracle. If you work a miracle, you may remain a *Gurū*. If you accept Islām, then you will be advanced to an exalted position. If you fail to accept these offers, you shall be put to death. This is the final decision." The *Gurū* emphasized, I will never abandon my faith. "The threat of death possesses no terrors for me. For death I am prepared and I cheerfully accept it."