

# COMMEMORATION OF QUADRICENTENNIAL MARTYRDOM OF GURU ARJAN Recognition of Nanak as Guru

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The Quadricentennial (400<sup>th</sup>) Martyrdom of Guru Arjan is being commemorated during June, 2006 and will continue during July or later through out the world with great pump and show. A lot of money is being spent to organize as big *Nagar Kirtans* as possible. A few seminars or conferences are also being arranged at some places. There was again a lot of tension between two great institutions of the Sikhs in India, e.g. Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar and the Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee (DSGMC), Delhi. This time the bone of contention was who will arrange biggest Nagar Kirtan (rally) from India to Lahore, Pakistan. This was not an unexpected drama since there have always been such conflicts on every Sikh centennial. In continuation of such conflicts the celebration of quadricentennial of the Foundation of Akal Takht would go down in the history of the Sikh Panth as the "blackest day" as turbans of SGPC chief, Mr Avtar Singh Makkar, president, Shiromani Akali Dal (Amritsar), Mr Simranjit Singh Mann, and some other Sikh leaders fell off in the presence of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib and Sikh high priests, at Manji Sahib inside Golden Temple Complex on July 2, 2006. Some were brandishing naked swords also. Nevertheless, on all such centennials the so-called custodians of Sikhism failed to portray the true picture of every centennial commemorated or celebrated so far.

During the commemoration of martyrdom of Guru Arjan at Taran Taran, Punjab Senior BJP leader Sushma Swaraj remarked that a Hindu courtier, Chandu had little role in the execution of Guru Arjan ordered by Emperor Jahagir. When objected by DSGMC Chief Harvinder Singh Sarna, she reiterated, "I did not concoct a story. I quoted excerpts from a book, *Pancham Guru, Jeevani Guru Arjan Dev*', by Satbir Singh. It clearly states that Jahagir was primarily responsible for the execution of Guru Arjan Dev as Sikhism was becoming popular fast because of its principles and teachings." "Is Sarna trying to belittle such a great sacrifice by linking it to a tiny courtier like Chandu who had some grudge against the Guru because he turned down a matrimonial proposal from him for the Guru's son," Swaraj said.

Akali parties also threw their weight behind Swaraj as they criticized the DSGMC Chief for what they called

"politicising" the Guru's sacrifice. "The martyrdom was not an ordinary event. It should be seen in its right perspective. There's no denying that it was the Mughal emperor who put the Guru to death," Akali Dal (Panthak) leader Manjit Singh, also a DSGMC member, said.

It was evident that by the time Guru Arjan succeeded to the House of Nanak the roots of Sikhi (Sikhism) were well established in the soils of the whole India and Middle East through the extensive traveling by Guru Nanak and through discussions with Pandits, Sidhs, Jogis, Sufis, and peers of various sects and religions of India and Middle East. Guru Arjan compiled the Bani of the Sikhs Gurus and of some Bhagats, Sufis, Sants, etc into a Granth, Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS). Since the AGGS contains the universal philosophy, therefore, its philosophy was being accepted by majority of the people irrespective of their religion. People were flocking to Amritsar to hear the universal philosophy from the AGGS at Darbar Sahib. However, its philosophy rankled with both the leaders of the Brahmin establishment and the Muslim Ulema under Emperor Jahangir. The scene was set for confrontation [4].

The emperor himself writes in his memoir entitled *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri* as follows:

*"So many simple-minded Hindus, nay even foolish Muslims too, have been fascinated by the Guru's ways and teachings .... Many times the thought had been presenting itself to my mind that either I should put an end to this false traffic, or that he be brought into the fold of Islam."* [4]

There is no doubt that under the orders of the Emperor, Guru Arjan was arrested and given the choice of torture followed by death or conversion to Islam, however, the role Chandu, Diwan of the Emperor Jahagir, in connivance of Brahmins cannot be ruled out entirely since the Brahmins were also not happy the way the universal philosophy of Guru Nanak was being accepted by the people of India, especially, by the Hindus, who were slipping away from the grip of the Brahmins. The above statement of the Emperor, "*So many simple-minded Hindus, nay even foolish Muslims too, have been fascinated by the Guru's ways and teachings...*" clearly indicates that it could be only Chandu, who might have

advised the Emperor that many Hindus are being fascinated by the Guru's way of teachings and mentioning of Muslims is a secondary issue. Now the role of Chandu is being buried under pretension of 'only a petty personal grudge' by many Sikh as well as Hindu writers and entire blame is put on Muslim Emperor.

Since the martyrdom of Guru Arjan has been viewed differently by different historians, writers, philosophers, scholars and theologians, therefore, it was imperative for the SGPC, Amritsar and/or the DSGMC, Delhi claiming to be the so-called custodians of Sikhi (Sikhism), that the truth about the martyrdom should have been documented before the Commemoration of Quadricentennial Martyrdom of Guru Arjan.

### NANAK IS THE GURU

It is not only that the involvement of Chandu and Jahagir in execution of Guru Arjan remained unresolved but a very important principle of Sikhi, 'Nanak is the Guru', has also been ignored for the last 400 years. It was Guru Angad who was the first to recognize 'Nanak is the Guru' then Guru Amardas and Guru Ramdas admitted that fact, and finally this recognition was confirmed by Guru Arjan. Although 'Nanak is the Guru' has already been discussed by Prof Chahal [2] and Dr Baldev Singh [3], however, it is being explained briefly as an addition to the long list of contributions of Guru Arjan.

The following verses of the Sikh Gurus indicate that 'Nanak is the Guru':

ਦੀਖਿਆ ਆਖਿ ਬੁਝਾਇਆ ਸਿਫਤੀ ਸਚਿ ਸਮੇਉ ॥  
ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੈਸੀਐ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ<sup>੧</sup> ॥

AGGS, M 2, p 150 [1].

*They, to whom the instructions (of Nanak) has taught and put on the right path, remain imbued in the praises of God. What instructions can be imparted to them, who have Guru Nanak as their Guru<sup>1</sup>?*

The next Guru, Amar Das, also says that 'Nanak is the Guru':

ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨੁ ਕਉ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਤਿਨੁ ਕਾ ਲੇਖਾ ਨਿਬੜਿਆ ॥

AGGS, M 3, p 435.

*Those to whom Nanak, the True Guru, has imparted his philosophy their deeds have been accounted for.*

Then the following Guru, Ram Das, also says the same thing:

ਧਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਮਦਰਸੀ ਜਿਨਿ ਨਿੰਦਾ ਉਸਤਤਿ ਤਾਰੀ ਤਰਾਂਤਿ ॥

AGGS, M 4, p 1264.

*Blessed is Guru Nanak, who treats everybody equal, and has himself crossed and helps the others to cross the stream (instinct) of slander and praise.*

In the following phrase Guru Arjan addresses 'Nanak is

the Guru:

ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਪੇਖਿਆ ਸੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਗਰਭਾਸਿ ਨ ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ ॥  
AGGS, M 5, p 612.

*Those, who have heard and analyzed the philosophy of Guru Nanak, are liberated.*

In the following phrase Guru Arjan supports that God entrusted Nanak with the treasure of wisdom/philosophy for dissemination:

ਭਗਤਿ ਭੰਡਾਰ<sup>੧</sup> ਗੁਰਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਕਉ ਸਚਿਪੇ ਫਿਰਿ ਲੇਖਾ<sup>੨</sup> ਮੂਲਿ ਨ ਲਇਆ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 612.

*God entrusted Guru Nanak with treasure of wisdom/philosophy<sup>1</sup> (for dissemination) then (Almighty) never took any account<sup>2</sup> of this treasure.*

Then Guru Arjan admits that Nanak is the greatest Guru of all:

ਸਭ ਤੇ ਵਡਾ ਸਤਿ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਲ ਰਾਖੀ ਮੇਰੀ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 750.

*Guru Nanak is greatest of all (other so-called Sat Gurus), who protected my honor.*

Finally Nanak person (ਜਨੁ ) has been addressed as 'Guru' and as the 'Representative of God' in Swayiay (laudation) Sri Mukh Baak Mahla 5 on page 1386-1388 in the AGGS: ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ\* ਭਗਤੁ, ਦਰਿ ਤੁਲਿ, ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਸਮਸਰਿ, ਏਕ ਜੀਹ ਕਿਆ ਬਖਾਨੈ ॥

ਹਾਂ ਕਿ ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ, ਬਲਿ ਬਲਿ ਸਦ ਬਲਿਹਾਰਿ ॥੧॥

*Devotion of Nanak has been accepted by God, therefore, he is equivalent/analogous to God. I*

*(Guru Arjan) cannot describe him (Nanak),*

*I sacrifice myself on him (Guru Nanak). 1.*

\* ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ = Nanak as person or servant not as a 'pen name' used by other Sikh Gurus (Mahla).

Guru Arjan continues to praise Guru Nanak as follows:

ਹਿਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਪਰਸਿਯਉ<sup>੧</sup> ਸਿ ਜਨਮ ਮਰਨ ਦੁਹ ਥੇ ਰਹਿਓ ॥  
੫॥

ਹਿਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨੁ ਪਰਸਿਯਓ ਪਤਨੁ ਸਭ ਕੁਲ ਕੀਓ ਉਧਾਰੁ ॥੬॥

ਹਿਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨੁ ਪਰਸਿਯਓ ਤੇ ਬਹੁਤਿ ਫਿਰਿ ਜੋਨਿ ਨ ਆਏ ॥੭॥

ਹਿਰ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨੁ ਪਰਸਿਯਓ ਤੇ ਇਤ ਉਤ ਸਦਾ ਮੁਕਤੇ ॥੮॥

In these stanzas the word ਪਰਸਿਯਓ means comprehended/understood.

Guru Arjan says in these stanzas that: *Those who have comprehended/understood the philosophy of Nanak, the 'Guru' and 'Representative of God' will not fall into the cycle of birth and death (5); his family is liberated (6); does*

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not fall into so-called cycle of birth and death (7); and is liberated here and hereafter in other world (8).

Final words in the praise of Guru Nanak are as follows:

ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧਾਰ ਮਹਿ, ਸਭ ਕਲਿ ਉਧਰੀ, ਇਕ ਨਾਮ ਧਰਮ ॥  
ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ ਸਗਲੁ ਹਰਿ ਭਵਨ ਮਹਿ, ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ॥੯॥  
*Guru Nanak has appeared on the whole earth as God's image. He (Nanak) is a lamp of wisdom in the darkness (ignorance) as a new religion of One (God) with which the humanity is improving their lives.*

I may add here that the above interpretations are different than those of traditional ones done under the influence of Vedantic philosophy in which the role of Nanak as 'THE GURU' in founding a new religion (Sikhi) of the One (God) has been eliminated. The irony is that no Sikh theologian dared to portray the above truth for the last 400 years.

#### References

1. AGGS = Aad Guru Granth Sahib. 1983 (reprint). Publishers: Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Amritsar. (M = Mahla, i.e., succession number of the Sikh Gurus to the House of Guru Nanak, p = Page of the AGGS).
2. Chahal, D. S. 2004. Sabd Guru to Granth Guru – An In-depth Study. Institute for Understanding Sikhism, Laval, QC, Canada.; Distributor: Singh Brothers, Amritsar, India.
3. Singh, Baldev. 2003. Undermining of Guru Nanak: Are Bhagat Gurus of the Sikh Gurus? Understanding Sikhism Res. J. 5 (2): 32.
4. <http://www.asht.info/291>

## CANADADAY

### Sikh Children's Prayer

*Dr Teja Singh, Edmonton, Alberta*

**Canada, the country of our hopes,  
And the land of beautiful dreams;**

**In the glow of your true sunshine,  
Bright and rich our future seems!**

**Canada, the country we adopted,  
As sweet home of our own;**

**May we live in peace and harmony,  
And be famous and well-known!**

**Let us children all remember,  
The rich and proud, our heritage;**

**Heroic deeds of love and service,  
Fill Sikh history's every page.**

**Grant us strength, almighty Father,  
Bless us all, strong and free;**

**Let the wisdom of great Gurus  
Always a guiding star to be!**