

English Section



Editor : Diljit Singh 'Bedi'

DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS
(16th February to 15th March)

16 February	The British Government announced formation of a committee to draft an act for the management of Gurdwara. (16-2-1921)
17 February	The Sikhs took over control of the shrines at Mukatsar. (17-2-1923)
18 February	Battle of Guler, Bhai Lehna (brother of Bhai Mani Singh), Bhai Sangat Rai and Bhai Hanumant (son of Bhai Sangat) and others embraced martyrdom. (18-2-1696)
20 February	More than 150 Sikhs killed at Gurdwara Nankana Sahib by Mohant Narainu and his hired men. The martyrs included Bhai Lachhman Singh Dharowali, Bhai Dalip Singh, Bhai Waryam Singh etc. (20-2-1921)
21 February	(a) Government handed over the control of Shri Nankana Sahib to the Sikhs. (21-2-1921)
	(b) Shaheedi Jatha fired at by the police forces at Jaito. More than 100 killed and about 200 injured. (21-2-1924)
	(c) Canadian Shaheedi Jatha offered arrest at Jaito. (21-2-1925)
25 February	Birth of Sahibzada Baba Fateh Singh Ji. (25-2-1699)
27 February	(a) Guru Har Rai Sahib was annoited as 7th Guru. (27-2-1644)
	(b) The Indian British Government hanged six Babbar Akalis in Lahore Jail. (27-2-1926)
3 March	Guru Hargobind Sahib immersed with divine light. (3-3-1644)
5 March	Establishment of Khalsa College at Amritsar (5-3-1892)
6 March	188 Sikh prisoners released from Jodhpur jail. (6-3-1989)
9 March	Anglo Sikh Treaty. (9-3-1846)

- 10 March Dewan Lakhpatt Rai, a Mughal General ordered the murder of more than one thousand Sikhs, Bhai Subeg Singh and Bhai Shahbaz Singh were executed on wheels. (10-3-1746)
- 11 March The Sikh army hoisted Sikh Safron Flag at the Red Fort Delhi under the command of S. Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Baba Baghel Singh and Jassa Singh Ramgarhia. (11-3-1783)
- 12 March S. Udham Singh killed Michael O'Dwyer, the former governor of the Punjab (during Jallianwala Bagh Massacre of 13-4-1919) at London. (12-3-1940)
- 14 March Martyrdom of Akali Baba Phula Singh. (14-3-1822)

Appeal

The devotees are requested to bring the 'PAVAN BIRS' of Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Old ones for SANSKAR) to Sri Guru Granth Sahib Bhawan, Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib complex near Gurdwara Shaheed Ganj Baba Deep Singh Ji 'Shaheed' only instead of Sri Akal Takhat Sahib. This has been decided to facilitate the 'SANGAT' for the Holy Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Newly published) are available at the same venue.

-Guru Panth Da Das-

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Amritsar.*

In continuation with the last edition:

SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR SAHIB JI (1621-1675)

-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'

We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book '*History of the Sikh Gurus*' by S. Surjit Singh Gandhi former Head of Sikh History Research Board (SGPC).

Popularity of Sikh Religion being a creative response

This type of reaction among the people increased the popularity of the Sikh Religion. The people began to look upon it as a creative response to the various challenges they were to reckon with. Almost all the sections of society liked the Sikh Religion. The down-trodden Hindus found in it the much-needed liberation, as it did not recognise exploitation on the bases of caste, birth and wealth etc. Workers liked it for its bias in their favour. Peasants found in it the solution to their problems since, in its social content, it was anti-feudal or anti-jagirdari. The emerging merchant class also liked it because firstly it was anti-feudalistic and secondly it was against social taboos, as these being impediments to the social mobility did not cater to the interests of the merchant class.

Creation of the Khalsa

As the execution of the Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji strengthened the resistance against Aurangzeb's policy, it prepared the way for the final stage in the evolution of the Khalsa. This event convinced the Guru Ji that the tyranny had myriad layers and in order to end it, all-out effort would have to be made. He had to forge instrument to achieve this purpose. With this end in view, he inaugurated the order-of the Khalsa, a brotherhood of the persons committed to ending the tyranny of all kinds, even to employ force as last resort. But certainly, the permission to the Khalsa to use force should not be confused with imbibing the spirit of militarism. In militarism, force is employed for the sake of force, aggression or self-aggrandisement, but in Sikhism it was made subject to some major qualifications viz. (i) it must be for a cause legitimate and noble, (ii) it must be a remedy of the 'last resort.

Awakening among the Hindus

The martyrdom of the Guru Ji had another effect. It kindled a new spirit among the Hindus, especially of the northern India for whom the Guru Ji apparently, made sacrifice.

They became poignant in their criticism of the religious policy of Aurangzeb and

the most potent among them began to think in terms of resisting the tyranny of the Government. The hardened attitude of the Hindus served two-fold purpose. Firstly it saved the Hindu religion and culture from total annihilation and secondly it contributed a lot so far as the downfall of the Mughal Empire was concerned.

Nature of the Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's Struggle-Did the Guru Ji have any political object?

Regarding the true nature of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's struggle, different opinions have been expressed. But before we draw our own conclusion it would be advisable to discuss all the questions connected with the struggle, Was it for the protection of religion? If so, which religion -the Hindu or the Sikh religion or for the religion in general? Could the struggle be viewed as one for the protection of civil rights like freedom of conscience or as one for the freedom of the " country from a foreign yoke? Was there any political motive involved in it ?

No communal considerations seem to have weighed with the Guru Ji in his struggle. The fact that many important Muslims suffered executions at the hands of the Mughal Emperor and many Muslims such as Saif Khan offered support to the Guru Ji in his mission shows that the struggle was not confined to the non-Muslims alone. The ordinary Musalman was also not happy. It is true that he had no religious difficulties like those of non-Muslims but socially, politically and economically, his lot was no better than that of Hindu and Sikh counterpart. Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji seems to be well-congnizant of this fact. Therefore, it would be a rather narrow view if it is argued, as it is often done, that the Guru Sahib's struggle was inspired only by the desire to protect Hindu religion. That such a thing was not absent from his mind may be conceded, because his son and immediate successor Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji had made reference to it in his autobiography. But that it was an independent sole aim with the Guru Ji is open to question. Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji himself, lest his reference to Tilak and Janju should be taken in a narrow sense, had added at the same place that the sacrifice of his father was for Dharma. Here the significance lies in the absence of any prefix Hindu or Sikh. The truth seems to be that the Guru Sahib's lofty object of building up a popular resistance to the tyranny of the Government automatically covered the protection of Hindu religion or even Sikh religion which too, had been dealt with severely. Moreover, the Dharma in the context of our culture, covers almost every aspect of life where the principle of justice or righteousness is involved. Anything done for a noble or righteous cause is something done for Dharma. So when we say that the struggle of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was for Dharma, it does not mean a struggle for religion, much less a struggle for Hindu or Sikh religion. It was called so because the cause involved in it, the fight against tyranny, was a noble and righteous cause.

It is stated, sometimes, that the attempt of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was for the protection of civil rights, particularly the freedom of conscience. "To a modern mind saturated in consciousness of his rights such a statement would be only right and acceptable; but the consciousness of rights is comparatively a recent development in our country. In our civilization till the advent of the British, emphasis used to be more on duties than on rights. And it is this thing which determined our concept of tyranny. Tyranny, then, was no infringement of rights but a departure from duties. The ruler was believed to owe certain duties to his subjects: If he departed from them, the result was tyranny. It was in this sense that the word tyranny was understood by the Guru Sahib's or others in those days."¹

Nor is it correct that the freedom of the struggle of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was for the freedom of the country from a foreign yoke. Perhaps; nothing will be farther from truth than this, for neither the concept of Hindu as we understand it today was there, nor was the Government of the Mughals considered a foreign yoke. The people who were born and died here who looked upon this land as their native land and who had been here for several generations, could not, in fairness, be regarded as foreigners.

Did Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji have any political object? If arousing the people to resist against tyranny is a political object then the answer may be 'yes'. The Guru Ji emphasised the Dharma character of his approach again and again when he was charged with sedition. His repeated statements² that he was a darvesh (recluse) having nothing to do with the overthrow of the Government brings into relief the same dharma aspect. But as it had been made clear earlier that by 'dharma' the Guru Ji meant anything done for a noble or righteous cause, no other cause was as righteous as the resistance to the tyranny of the Mughals. According to Dr. Fauja Singh, the Guru Ji identified himself with the weak and the oppressed and attempted to arouse them to a sense of resistance to the tyranny to which they were subjected.

The approach as well as the struggle of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji exactly fits in with the spirit and general tendency of the Sikh Movement in the past. The movement had already committed itself to resistance to all forms of tyranny including the political. What is more, the employment of force for a purpose like this had been recognised as legitimate. Sri Guru Hargobind Ji and Sri Guru Har Rai Ji had maintained troops and encouraged training in the use of weapons. Hence we can say that the aimed struggle of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji was a continuation and no distortion, of the character of the Sikh Movement. The contrary view depicting the Guru Ji going down before executioner's blow before striking one for his own cause would perhaps be entirely out of line with the previous established character of the movement.

Notes and References

1. Dr. Fauja Singh: Execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur : A New Look.
2. Sohan Lal: Umdat-ut-Twarikh, daftar, pp. 48-9.

