

GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism

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GURU HAR RAI SAHIB

The seventh Guru of the Sikh faith, Guru Har Rai Sahib, was the son of Baba Gurditta ji and grandson of Guru Hargobind Sahib (6th Nanak). He was born on 16 January 1630 at Kiratpur, in present-day Ropar district of the Punjab. In 1640, Guru Sahib was married to Bibi Sulakkhani, daughter of Daya Ram ji of Anupshahr, in Bulandshahr district of Uttar Pradesh. He was gentles by nature and had a devout temperament. He was Guru Hargobind Sahib's favorite grandchild, and he had been given the name of Har Rai by the Guru Sahib himself.

Once, record old texts, Har Rai was returning home after his riding exercise. From a distance he saw Guru Hargobind Sahib sitting in the garden. He at once got off his horse to go and do him homage. In this hurry, his robe was caught in a bush and a few of the flowers were broken from their stems. This pained Har Rai's heart. He sat down on the spot and wept bitterly. Guru Hargobind Sahib came and consoled him. He also advised him: "Wear your robe by all means, but be careful as you walk. It behooves God's servants to be tender to all things." There was a deeper meaning in the Guru Sahib's words. One must live in this world, and yet be master of oneself. It had a greater impact on Har Rai, he followed the instructions and never ever left his robe loose, always kept holding.

Guru Hargobind Sahib knew Har Rai to be the fittest to inherit the "light" from him. He nominated him as his successor and consecrated him Guru before departing this life on 3 March 1644.

Guru Har Rai Sahib kept the stately style Guru Hargobind Sahib had introduced. He was attended by 2,200 armed followers, but no further conflict with the ruling power occurred. He established three important preaching missions called "*baksheeshes*" for the spread of Guru Nanak's teaching. First was that of Bhagvan Gir, renamed Bhagat Bhagvan, who established missionary centers in eastern India. The second was that of Sangatia, renamed Bhai Pheru, who preached in Rajasthan and southern Punjab and third was that of Suthre Shah Ji. Guru Har Rai Sahib also sent Bhai Gonda to Kabul, Bhai Nattha to Dhaka and Bhai Jodh to Multan to preach. The ancestors of present day families of Bagarian and Kaithal Preached in the Malva region. Guru Har Rai Sahib himself traveled extensively in this area and a large number of people accepted his teaching. Guru Sahib confirmed the blessing earlier bestowed by Guru Hargobind Sahib on a poor boy, Phul, who became the founder of the families of Patiala, Nabha and Jind. These families ruled in their territories in the Punjab until recent years.

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Kiratpur was Guru Har Rai Sahib's permanent seat. Here disciples and visitors came to seek blessings and instruction. The Guru Sahib kept the daily practice of his predecessors. The institution of *langar*, community eating, continued to flourish. Guru Sahib chose himself the simplest fare which was earned by the labour of his own hands. In the morning, Guru Sahib sat in the *sangat* and explained the Sikh doctrine. Guru Sahib did not compose any hymns of his own, but quoted those of his predecessors in his discourses and often repeated to his followers the following verses of Bhai Gurdas ji, *Varan*.

A true Sikh rises before the night ends, and turns his thoughts to God's Name, to charity and to holy bathing. He speaks humbly and humbly he walks, He wishes everyone well and he is joyed to give away gifts from his hand.

*He sleeps but little, And little does he eat and talk.
Thus he receives the Guru's true instruction.
He lives by the labor of his hands and he does good deeds.
However eminent he might become, He Demonstrates not himself.*

*He sings god's praises in the company of holy men.
Such company he seeks night and day.
Upon word is his mind fixed, and he delights in the Guru's will.
Unenticed he lives in this world of enticement.*

Guru Har Rai Sahib was at Goindval when Dara Shukoh, heir apparent to the Mughal throne, entered the Punjab fleeing in front of the army of his brother, Aurangzeb, after his defeat in the battle of Samugarh on 29 May 1658. At Goindval, where he arrived in the last week of June 1658, he called on Guru Har Rai Sahib, and sought the consolation religious disposition, and had a natural inclination for the company of saintly persons. He was especially an admirer of the famous Muslim Sufi, Mian Mir, who was known to the Sikh Guru Sahib's. Sikh tradition also recalls how Dara Shukoh had once been cured of a serious malady with herbs sent to him by Guru Har Rai Sahib. In his affliction now he readily took the opportunity of having an audience with the Guru Sahib. According to Sarup Das Bhalla, "*Mahima Prakash*", Guru Har Rai Sahib deployed his own troops at the ferry to delay Aurangzeb's army which was pursuing Dara Shukoh close at his heels.

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Guru Har Rai Sahib left Goindval on a tour of the districts where the Sikh faith had taken root in the time of his predecessors and traveled further on to Kashmir. The Baisakhi of 1660 was celebrated at Sialkot in the home of Nand Lal Puri, grandfather of Haqiqat Rai ji the martyr. The journey was resumed in the company of Sikhs such as Makkhan Shah ji Lubana, the Lubana trader and Aru Ram ji, father of Kirpa Ram Datt ji who later led to the presence of Guru Tegh Bahadar Sahib a group of Kashmiri Pandits driven to dire distress by State persecution. Guru Har Rai Sahib arrived at Shrinagar, via Martand, on 19 May 1660, and visited Mota Tanda, the village to which his disciple, Makkhan Shah belonged. On his way back, Guru Sahib stopped at Akhnur and Jammu. At the latter place, the local *masand*, Bhai Kahna, waited on him with the *sangat*.

Dara Shukoh's meeting with Guru Har Rai Sahib was misrepresented to Emperor Aurangzeb. Highly coloured stories were carried to him. His officials and courtiers reported to him that Guru Har Rai Sahib was a rebel and that he had helped the fugitive prince, Dara Shukoh. Further, that the Sikh Scripture contained verses derogatory to Islam. The Emperor asked Raja Jai Singh of Amber to have Guru Har Rai Sahib brought at Delhi. The Raja's envoy, Hari Chand, who reached Kiratpur on the Baisakhi day of 1661, presented the royal summons. Guru Har Rai Sahib wondered why he had been called to Delhi and, to quote Bhai Santokh Singh, "*Siri Gur Pratap Suraj Granth*", he said, "I rule over no territory, I owe the king no tax, nor do I want anything from him. There is no connection of teacher and disciple between us, either. Of what avail will this meeting be?"

Guru Sahib sent instead his elder son, Ram Rai Ji, his minister, Diwan Dargah Mall, escorting him. According to the "*Guru Kian Sakhian*", Guru Har Rai Sahib blessed his young son as he seated him in the carriage and exhorted him: "Answer squarely and without fear any questions the Emperor may ask. Exhibit no hesitation. Read the (Guru) Granth Sahib attentively as you make halts on the way. The One Almighty Guru (Waheguru) will protect you wherever you might be. "Bhai Gurdas ji, of the family of Bhai Bahilo ji, was asked to accompany Ram Rai Ji with a copy of the (Guru) Granth Sahib.

In order to please the Emperor, Ram Rai deliberately misread one of the lines from the (Guru) Granth Sahib. This was reported by the Sikhs accompanying him to Guru Har Rai Sahib, who anathematized him for altering Guru Nanak Sahib's utterance. Debarred from presence before the Guru, Ram Rai retired to Dehra Dun. Guru Har Rai Sahib chose his younger son, (Guru) Har Krishan (Sahib), to be his successor and had him anointed as Guru before he left for his heavenly abode at Kiratpur On 6 October 1661.

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