

GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism

Gurmat | Education | Youth | Community Development & Welfare

Website: www.GurmatStudy.com E-mail : gurmatstudy@gmail.com

SHAHEED BHAI MEWA SINGH Ji

Shaheed (Martyr) Bhai Mewa Singh was martyred on January 11th and was the first and only Sikh to be executed in Canada. He sacrificed his own life for his beliefs to fight against injustice to the poor and community.

Leading up to execution of Shaheed Bhai Mewa Singh were many different acts of injustice and harsh discrimination against the Sikhs. The song sung by most Canadians at the time was, "White Canada Forever", discriminatory acts by the government of the time such as the Election Act of March 1907, which deprived East Indians from provincial and municipal elections, 1908 Act to ship Sikhs to British Honduras, the laws that prevented the children and wives of Sikhs from coming to Canada and then the unforgettable Kamagata Maru incident and the denial of fresh water and food to the passengers and subsequent disastrous consequences for the passengers once they ship was sent back to India was on the minds of all Sikhs at that time.

Amongst the local Sikhs a few spoke up against this injustice, one of them was Bhai Mewa Singh a simple but religious-minded Sikh who was a reciter of the Guru Granth Sahib and came from the village of Lopoke, in Amritsar, India.

The last straw in these discriminatory incidents came on Sunday September 6, 1914 when Bela Singh Jain an informer and agent of Inspector Hopkinson, pulled out two guns and started shooting at the Khalsa Diwan Society Gurdwara Sahib on West 2nd Avenue. He murdered Bhai Bhag Singh, President of the Society and Bhattan Singh and Bela Singh was charged with murder, but Hopkinson decided to appear as a witness in his case and made up much of his testimony at his trial and subsequently Bela Singh was acquitted.

On October 21, 1914, Bhai Mewa Singh, Granthi of Khalsa Diwan Society shot William Hopkinson in the Assize court corridor with two revolvers because he believed him to be unscrupulous and corrupt, using informers to spy on Indian immigrants.

At the trial in the court of Judge Morrison, Mr. Wood the attorney of Mewa Singh in his statement said, "The Sikh community felt that Hopkinson was in part responsible for the failure of the plans to land the Sikhs aboard the Komagata Maru. He was born in India (English Father and East Indian mother). He could speak Indian languages fluently. He established a ring of informers to report about the activities of the Sikh community. Bela Singh Jain was his chief informer and an employee of Immigration department. He acted as a victorious lord over his community and was backed by his boss Hopkinson". Mewa Singh made a historical statement in the Court:

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GurmatStudy Team

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“My religion does not teach me to bear enmity with anybody, nor had I any enmity with Mr. Hopkinson. He was oppressing poor people very much. I, being a staunch Sikh, could no longer bear to see the wrong done both to my countrymen and Dominion of Canada. This is what led me to take Hopkinson’s life and sacrifice my own life. And I, performing the duty of a true Sikh and remembering the name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as a hungry babe goes towards his mother. I am sure God will take me into His blissful arms.”

In addition Bhai Mewa Singh also paraphrased the Tenth Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singh Ji “He is truly a hero who fights on the side of the weak, gets quartered and cuts limb by limb, but does not flee.”

On October 30th 1914, Mewa Singh was found guilty and at 7.45am, Jan 11, 1915 in New Westminster B.C., Mewa Singh became the first and the only Sikh to be executed in Canada. After his execution, his body was taken in a procession through the city by Sikhs and was cremated with great honor

GurmatStudy Team pays homage and Floral Tribute to Great Sikh Martyr who sacrificed his own life for his beliefs to fight against injustice to the poor and community.

Requesting readers of this article to print and display the same in their Gurdwara Sahib’s to make Sadh-Sangat aware of same especially youth...

-- GurmatStudy Team

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