

“SHAHJAHAN’S RELATION WITH SIKH GURUS”

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After the death of Jahangir, his son, Shahjahan, ascended the throne at Agra on 4th February, 1628, with the title of Abul Muzzaffar Shahabuddin.¹ The Mughal court during Shahjahan’s reign was the meeting place of the adherents of different religions and cultures. There were a large number of Hindi poets present at the Mughal court, who were patronized by Shahjahan. One of the prominent Hindi scholar and poet was ‘Jagannath Pandit. He was patronized by both Jahangir and Shahjahan and was a close friend of Asaf Khan and Darashikoh. He was honored with title of ‘*Mahakaviraj*’ by Shahjahan.²

Jagannath also translated Arabic work *Almagest*, on Astronomy, in to Sanskrit, title, ‘*Siddhantasara Kausulbha*’, during Shahjahan’s period.³ One of the poet was *Kavindracharya Saraswati*, a learned scholar of Sanskrit, was a respectable person at the court. He wrote so many books in Sanskrit for Dara Shikoh. Shahjahan conferred him the title of ‘*Sarvavidhyandhana*’ and also granted for him a pension. This *Kavindracharya* led a delegation of the Pandits of Benaras to Shahjahan’s court in order to seek the abolition of pilgrimage tax on Hindus visiting their sacred places of worship. He addressed the emperor in a very flattering language, that ultimately softened the heart of the emperor, and he ordered the abolition of pilgrimage tax on Hindus.⁴ Another Hindi poet patronized

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by Shahjahan was Sundar Das Brahman of Gawalior. He was also given the title of Kavi Raj by Shahjahan.⁵ Another Hindi poet *Chintamani* was associated with Shahjahan's court.⁶

Dara Shikoh was the most liberal figure of the time. He was himself a profound scholar of Persian and Sanskrit and patronized many Sanskrit Scholars as well. Dara translated fifty two '*Upanishidas*' in to Persian with title of '*Sirr-i-Akbar*' (The great secret) in 1657 A. D.⁷

Dara also attempted to bring the followers of Islam and Hinduism by writing an important treatise entitled '*Majma-ul- Bharain* (Intermixing of tow seas), around 1656.⁸ Many Sanskrit works were also translated under Dara's patronage. His Munshi Banwali Das, translated the famous philosophical drama, '*Prabodh Chandrodaya*' in to Persian with the title '*Gulzar-i-Hal*'. Har Karan translated the '*Ramayan*' in to Persian.⁹ Dara used to wear a ring with the word '*Prabhu*' in Hindi, inscribed on it.¹⁰ He had good relations with the non-sufi saints and Hindu ascetics of the time.

Shahjahan was not found of Punjab as his father jahangir was found of Punjab. But he paid a number of visits to the Punjab. In 1633, he visited Lahore and again in 1638, while on his way to Kabul, he spent some time in the Punjab. For most part of his reign, the Punjab held by Ali Mardan Khan. It was also at the residence of Ali Mardan that Shahjahan celebrated the *Nauroz* of 1641. During his governorship, there occurred two serious famines, one in 1642 and the other in 1646. Contemporary European writers tell us that Shahjahan and Ali Mardan administered famine relief on a very large scale. Besides opening free kitchens and remitting land revenue, they distributed food for worth Rs. 200/- a day among the famine sufferers. After Ali Mardan, the Punjab was for some time held by

Shahjahan's favourite son, Dara Shikoh. In the war of succession, Dara Shikoh was defeated at *Samugarh*, he fled to the Punjab fully confident that the Punjab nobles would give him full support.¹¹

Shahjahan's court historian Abdul Hamid Lahori in *Badshah Nama*, tells us that Shahjahan ordered the destruction of all temples which were under construction or were still incomplete.¹² Three temples were demolished in Punjab and mosques were raised in their place. The Boli of Guru Arjun situated in *Dabbi Bazar*, Lahore, was filled up with rubbish and the kitchen (Langar) building attached to it was converted in to a mosque.¹³

EMPEROR SHAHJAHAN AND GURU HARGOBIND:

Guru Hargobind was born at Wadali in 1595.¹⁴ A new era began in the history of the Sikhs with his accession to the guru ship. The sad and disquieting news of the painful death of Guru Arjun was conveyed to him with an inspiring message, "To bid him not mourn or indulge in unmanly lamentation, but to sing God's praise." He was exhorted to "sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain an army to the best of his ability."¹⁵ Hargobind took to heart the dying injection of his father. Unlike his father, he constantly trained himself in martial exercise. He issued an encyclical letter to the *Masands* to the effect that he would be pleased with those who brought offerings of arms and horses, instead of money.¹⁶ The martyrdom of his father proved to be a turning point in the history of the Sikhs, inasmuch as it enjoined on the Sikhs anew charter to include deliberately and develop methodically righteous militancy, and to make Sikhism a church-militant and Hargobind a soldier-saint. "He infused military ardor in to his disciples, and soon a formidable body of fighting men was at his command. At the times he

found it expedient to place his force at the service of the Emperor; but his general attitude towards the Mughals of this province was uncompromising.”¹⁷

He laid the foundation of the *Akal Takhat* in 1606. The city of Amritsar was strengthened by a small fortification, which he called Lohgarh. His fame as a patron of martial spirit attracted the best warriors and wrestlers, from whom he selected his bodyguards and fighting men.¹⁸ The author of *Dbistan-i-Mazahib* was a close friend of Guru Hargobind, he narrates that, Guru Hargobind had seven hundred horses in his Stable and 300 experienced horsemen and 60 musketeers were always in his service and among them a group of persons occupied themselves in trade service and work on his behalf.¹⁹ So Hargobind collected a standing army and under his the Guruship transformed in to one, spiritual as well as temporal leadership.

According to ‘*Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, after the death of Jahangir in 1627 A.D. Guru Hargobind remained in attendance on his majesty Shahjahan and for some he was in the service of yar Khan the Eunuch, the *faujdar* of Punjab.²⁰

The official reporters and the enemies of the Guru, Particularly Chandu shah,²¹ pointed out to Jahangir the implication of this new policy of Hargobind. The Emperor called the Guru and asked him to pay the fine which was imposed upon his father but Guru refused to pay. Thereupon he was arrested and sent as a state prisoner to the fort of Gwalior,²² where generally the important political offenders were kept. *Mohsin Fani* states that “Guru Hargobind had to remain as a prisoner in the fort of Gwalior for twelve years, on scanty rations.²³ *Indubhushan Banerjee* states that at the most of time the Guru imprisoned for five years, from 1607 to 1612.²⁴ Sikh writers, most of whom confine the Guru’s imprisonment to a period only forty days, states that a pious Sikh named *Bhai Jetha*, who went a

mission to Delhi to secure Gurus release, succeeded in soothing the Emperor, who had been troubled with fearful vision. As a result of the pleading of Wazir Khan, a noble, the Guru was released from the fort of Gawaliar.²⁵ After this Hargobind took care to avoid 88 outright clash with anybody particularly with the Mughals. But a new epoch in the career of Hargobind started with the death of Jahangir. The author of the *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, writes that the growing military strength and royal pomp of the Guru his worldly spirit and tastes made a conflict between him and the Mughal government inevitable and it broke out after Shahjahan's accession.²⁶ "That the Guru was becoming a potential source of disaffection, was clear from his alleged recruitment of rebellious and flying from justice and the asylum that he extended to disaffected chiefs."²⁷ Besides his Owen regular followers, he had also enlisted band of Afghan mercenaries. The recruitment of the Afghan mercenaries like Painsa Khan made the Emperor realize that the Guru's aim of taking such people in to his fold could beano other than but political.

This state of affairs brought about an open quarrel between the Guru and Shahjahan. The cause of the conflict was insignificant. It so happened one day in 1628 Shahjahan was going from Lahore towards Amritsar, Guru also happened to be in the vicinity. The Emperors hawk in to the Guru's camp and was seized by the Sikhs.²⁸ The royal huntsmen and troopers pushed themselves in to Guru Camp and threatened serious consequences if the hawk was not returned. The Sikhs refused to yield to this threaten behavior and the troops returned to the Emperor empty handed. On hearing this Emperor was enraged and ordered his general Mukhlis Khan²⁹ and a cavalry of 7000 to bring the Guru and the hawk to him. The imperial army was defeated near Amritsar and returned to Lahore after the losing the many, killed and wounded. "This was the first combat in the annals of the Punjab. This was fought between the great Mughals and the Sikhs."³⁰

This success, however, did not elate the Guru with pride. He retired to the jungles of Bhatinda, knowing the strength and resources of Shahjahan better.

BATTLE OF LAHIRA- 1631:

One Bidhi Chand, a notorious freebooter known afterwards as Baba Bidhi Chand, stole of two Shahjahan's best horses from the imperial stables at Lahore and brought them to the Guru. This inflamed the anger of the emperor. Military preparations were made on a large scale and the command of the Mughal forces was entrusted to Iqbal Beg and Lal Beg the royal forces moved towards the barren country of Bhatinda and both the armies met at Lahira, a small village situated in Bhatinda. "Lack of provisions and the difficulties of the march had a disastrous effect on the Mughal forces. They were reduced to great straits and, being defeated by the Sikhs, fled to Lahore, leaving its commanders slain in the battle."³¹ Hargobind having twice beaten the Mughal army in the open field, now began to entertain some degree of confidence in his own power, and in the powers of his followers. He, therefore, crossed the Beas and established himself at Kartarpur where he collected a large army and patiently awaited a favorable opportunity for renewing hostilities with Shahjahan. According to *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, the Guru fled to Kartarpur and the various Sikh accounts appear to lend some credence to this view.³²

BATTLE OF KARTARPUR- 1706:

After a short spell of three years of peace, war again broke out between the Sikhs and the Mughals. Painda Khan, the Afghan ex- general of the Sikh troops, had left the service of the Guru after quarrel and joined Shahjahan.³³ The Emperor sent another big expedition against the Guru, commanded by Painda Khan and Kale Khan. Baba Bidhi Chand Gurditta gave them a tough fight. Kale

Khan and painda khan were both killed in the battlefield. Thus the Mughals failed to gain a single decisive victory against the guru.

Hargobind totally changed the Peaceful character of Nanak followers, who now laid aside their rosaries and buckled on the sword in defense of their faith. He first formed the Sikhs in to a military body.³⁴

Although the stage had arrived for a show-down between Sikhs and the Mughal state, Sikh Gurus decided to give respite to the community to prepare and augment its limited resources. More ever, Dara Shikoh exercised his influence on the Emperor to mellow his hostility towards the Sikh Gurus. Accordingly, Guru Hargobind spent his years from 1635 to 1644 at kiratpur, a city in the foothills of the Himalayas. Guru Hargobind died in 1645 installing his grandson Har Rai as a Guru.

EMPEROR SHAHJAHAN AND GURU HAR RAI:

Guru Har Rai (1630-1661), after being chosen successor to his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, lived at kiratpur. Raja Tara Chand, the ruler of Bilaspur, in whose territory kiratpur was situated, was having trouble with the imperial government and Har Rai feared that in the operations against the Raja the Mughal governor might turn on the Sikhs as well. According to *Dabistan-i-mazahib*, in 1645 A.D., Najabat khan invaded the land of Raja Tara Chand under the orders of Shahjahan, and made him a prisoner. Guru Har Rai be took himself to thapal, a town situated in the territory of Raja karam Prakash.³⁵ For the next thirteen years, Har Rai lived in comparative seclusion.³⁶

The relation between the Sikhs and the Mughal Government remained cordial till 1657, when after the war of succession, Shahjahan was imprisoned and Aurangzeb succeeded to the throne of India.

- ¹ Elliot & Dowsen, *The History of India*, Calcutta, 1877, p. 6.
- ² Jahangir, *Tuzuk-i-Jahangiri*, Eng. Trans.(Rogers & Beveridge), vol. 1, Delhi, 2006, p. 20.
- ³ K. R. Qanungo, *Dara Shikoh*, Calcutta, 1952, p. 275.
- ⁴ D.N. Marshal, op. cit; p.247.
- ⁵ Mishra Bandhu, *Mishra Bandhu Vinod*, lucknow, 1972, vol. II, p. 457.
- ⁶ Ibid, vol.II, p.457-59.
- ⁷ Bikramjit Hasrat, *Dara Shikoh, Life and works*, New Delhi, Munshiram Manoharlal, 1982, pp. 254-287.
- ⁸ Ibid, pp. 216-232.
- ⁹ Banarsi prasad Saksena, *History of Shahjahan of Delhi*, Allahabad, 1958, p. 257.
- ¹⁰ J. N. Sarkar, *History of Aurangzeb*, Calcutta, 1912, vol.I, pp. 298-99.
- ¹¹ Ibid, pp. 218-19.
- ¹² Gurmit Singh, *Guru Nanak's Relationship with the Lodis and Mughals*, New Delhi, 1987, p- 142.
- ¹³ Ibid, pp- 142-43.
- ¹⁴ Sujan Rai Bhandari, *Khulasat -ut- Tawarikh*, Delhi, 1918, p. 49.
- ¹⁵ Macauliffe, M. A., *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus Sacred writings and Authors*, Oxford, 1909, p. 99.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, vol. IV, p. 3.
- ¹⁷ Payne, *A short History of the Sikhs*, Londen, p. 32.
- ¹⁸ Archer, John Clark, *The Sikhs in relation to Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Ahamadiyyas*: Princetone, 1946, p. 173.
- ¹⁹ Mohsin Fani, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Lucknow, Nawal Kishore, 1904, pp. 235-36.
- ²⁰ Ibid, p. 234
- ²¹ Macauliffe, op.cit; vol. Iv. P. 10
- ²² Ibid, vol. Iv, p. 21.
- ²³ *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Eng. Trans. (David Shea), vol. II, P. 274.
- ²⁴ Indubhushan banerjee, op.cit; vol.II p. 10
- ²⁵ Macauliffe, op.cit; vol. Iv, pp. 24-26.
- ²⁶ J. N. Sarkar, op.cit; p. 310
- ²⁷ G. C. Narang, op.cit; p. 106
- ²⁸ Bakhshish Singh Nijjar, op.cit; p. 89
- ²⁹ Saksena, op.cit; p.64.
- ³⁰ *Dabistan-i-mazahib*,op.cit; vol.II, p.275.
- ³¹ Sayed Mohammad Latif, *History of the punjab*, p. 256.
- ³² *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, op. cit; p. 275
- ³³ *Sujan Rai Bhandari*, op. cit; p. 53
- ³⁴ Ibid, p. 53.
- ³⁵ *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, op. cit; vol. II, p. 282.
- ³⁶ Bakhshish Sing Nijjar, op.cit., p.91.