



Guruship Succession in Sikhism: A Legacy of Spiritual Dedication and Equality

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Abstract

This paper delves into the intricate process of Guruship succession in Sikhism, tracing the lineage from Guru Nanak Dev to the final Guru, Gobind Singh. It explores the spiritual dedication and equality upheld by the Sikh Gurus, highlighting instances where the leadership was passed based on merit and devotion rather than lineage. The narrative reveals challenges faced by the Gurus, including opposition from family members and societal pressures. The study emphasizes the core Sikh principles of equality, dismissing the influence of caste and social factors in spiritual leadership. Ultimately, the paper explores the transition from personal Gurus to the Guru Granth Sahib, signifying a shift in religious authority while upholding the principles of the faith.

Key Words: Guruship, Guru Granth Sahib, Khatri, Jatt, Masands, Udasi, Gurugaddi, Sangat, kirtans, Akal Takht Sahib's

Introduction

Sikhism, with its roots deeply embedded in the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev, stands as a beacon of spiritual enlightenment and equality. Central to this profound faith is the unique system of Guruship succession, a tradition that defies conventional norms and exemplifies the essence of spiritual dedication and egalitarianism. This paper embarks on a captivating journey through the annals of Sikh history, meticulously tracing the intricate tapestry of Guruship succession. From the early days of Guru Nanak Dev to the transformative era of Guru Gobind Singh, this exploration delves into the lives of the revered Gurus, their disciples, and the challenges they faced, highlighting the enduring principles of Sikhism that have shaped the faith into what it is today.

The foundation of Sikh Guruship succession is rooted in the visionary wisdom of Guru Nanak Dev, who, despite having his own sons, chose his disciple, Bhai Lehna, as his spiritual heir. This paradigm-shifting decision, emblematic of the Sikh commitment to spiritual merit over lineage, set the stage for a tradition defined by its refusal to bow to the shackles of societal hierarchy. As we journey through the subsequent Gurus, each transition reveals a unique facet of spiritual dedication and resilience. Guru Angad Dev's peaceful acceptance of Guruship despite familial discord underscores the humility and wisdom embedded in Sikh succession practices. Guru Amar Das, faced with familial opposition, stood as a beacon of unwavering belief, emphasizing that Guruship is a mantle carried by those capable of shouldering its profound responsibilities.

The narrative extends to the transformative period of Guru Arjan Dev, whose martyrdom under the rule of Jahangir symbolizes the resilience of Sikh principles against external pressures. Guru Hargobind Sahib's emergence as a warrior Guru highlights the community's steadfast dedication to preserving its core values amidst external threats.

Furthermore, this paper delves into the monumental shift in Sikhism - the transition from personal Guruship to the Guru Granth Sahib, the revered scripture that encapsulates the spiritual wisdom of the Gurus. Guru Gobind Singh's visionary decision to conclude the line of personal Gurus marks a pivotal moment in Sikh history, emphasizing the enduring nature of Sikh principles even in the face of transformative change.

In exploring the saga of Guruship succession in Sikhism, this paper aims to unravel the intricate interplay of spiritual dedication, equality, and transformative evolution within the Sikh faith. As we navigate the lives of these revered leaders, we unravel the spiritual legacy that continues to inspire millions, making Sikhism not merely a religious tradition but a profound philosophy that resonates with the very essence of humanity.

Guru Nanak Dev

Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, had two sons, Baba Shri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Das. Guru Nanak Dev did not pass on his spiritual leadership to his sons; instead, he picked his disciple, Bhai Lehna. In Sikhism, all Gurus are believed to belong to the *Khatri*¹ caste. This topic has been criticized by many because Guru Nanak Dev, the first Guru, had two disciples: Bhai Lehna, who belonged to the *Khatri* caste,

¹ "Khatri" refers to a Punjabi ethnic group historically involved in trade, commerce, and administration in the Indian subcontinent.

and the other disciple, Bhai Budha, who belonged to the *Jatt*² caste. Guru Nanak Dev passed on the Guruship to Bhai Lehna. Guru Nanak Dev called him Angad³ and stated that he is a part of him.

It was a common belief among people that the *Khatri* community has been following a long-lasting policy within Sikhism. However, as the history progressed, it was observed that when *masands* (official representatives or administrators in Sikhism) were appointed, a majority of them were from the *Jatt* caste.⁴ It was also noted that not all of them were effective preachers. This observation suggests that the effectiveness of individuals in preaching and administrative roles cannot be solely determined by their caste, but rather by their dedication, knowledge, and skills. Sikhism emphasizes equality and does not support discrimination based on caste or any other social factors.

The Bestowal of Guruship to Guru Angad

The rise of Guru Angad Dev to the Guruship was challenged by Guru Nanak Dev's two sons. They did not, however, participate in any battles or confrontations. Baba Shri Chand adhered to his own *Udasi*⁵ sect and afterwards met with many other Sikh Gurus.⁶ Lakhmichand the second son of Guru Nanak Dev was not interested in spiritual activities.⁷ Guru Angad Dev stayed at the home of a disciple for about six months after receiving the Guruship to avoid any conflicts with Baba Lakhmi Chand and Baba Sri Chand. Then Guru Angad Dev took on responsibilities at the request of Bhai Budha.⁸ Guru Angad Dev Ji was the father of two sons, Baba Dattu and Baba Dassu, as well as two daughters, Bibi Anokhi and Bibi Amro.

Guru Angad Dev, unlike Guru Nanak Dev, did not pass on the Guruship to his sons. Instead, Guru Angad Dev handed on the Guruship to Guru Amar Das, who further spread Guru Nanak Dev's teachings and enhanced Sikh discipline and traditions. Guru Amar Das was 25 years old when Guru Angad Dev was born. It clearly indicates that Guru Amar Das Ji was 25 years older than Guru Angad Dev. Bibi Amro, Guru Angad Dev's daughter, married Bhai Jasoo, the nephew of Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das, upon hearing the words of Guru Nanak Dev from the mouth of Bibi Amro, was deeply moved. He inquired about this hymn, to which Bibi responded that this hymn had been passed down to her from her father, Guru Angad Dev.

² "Jatt" refers to a Punjabi ethnic group and a farming community native to the Punjab region in South Asia. Jatts are traditionally associated with agriculture and are known for their expertise in farming.

³ The term "Angad" is Punjabi in origin and is popular in Sikh culture. "Ang" means "body" in Punjabi, and "Angad" can indicate "a part of the body" or "a limb." In Punjabi, the word "Angad" refers to a bodily portion or limb.

⁴ Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. p. 131

⁵ "Udasi" refers to a religious sect in Sikhism. Followers of the Udasi sect are ascetics who practice a life of detachment, renunciation, and meditation. The term "Udasi" itself translates to "detachment" or "dispassion" in Punjabi. Udasis are known for their austere lifestyle, meditation practices, and dedication to spiritual pursuits. While the Udasi sect has historical connections to Sikhism, it represents a distinct religious tradition within the broader Sikh framework.

⁶ Singh, Sangat. (1996). *The Sikhs in the History*. New Delhi. p 22-23.

⁷ Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. P 113.

⁸ Macauliffe, M. A. (1909). *The Sikh Religion: Its Gurus, Sacred Writings, and Authors*, Vol. 2. Oxford At The Clarendon Press. p 13-14.

The Selection of the Third Guru: Amar Das

The desire to meet Guru Angad Dev arose in the heart of Guru Amar Das. He soon set out for Khadur Sahib, where he became one of the devoted followers of Guru Angad Dev. Guru Amar Das served Guru Angad Dev diligently, and pleased with his devotion, Guru Angad Dev bestowed Guruship upon Guru Amar Das. In this incident, Guru Angad Dev's elder son, Baba Dattu, expressed his displeasure. Once, when Guru Amar Das, who was in his old age and preparing for *Gurugaddi*⁹, was imparting teachings the *sangat*¹⁰, Baba Dattu confronts Guru Amar Das aggressively. He kicked Guru Amar Das, causing the throne to tilt, and boldly declares, "You were our servant yesterday; today, you have become the Guru. I am the rightful heir to the throne, being the son of Guru Angad. I will sit on the throne."

Guru Amar Das, with great humility, would rise and touch Baba Dattu's feet. He would say, "My body is frail and rigid, while your feet are soft. I do not feel any pain." Baba Dattu would sit on his throne and declare to the people, "I am your true guru. Whatever offerings you want to make, give them to me. The *sangat* left the place one by one, and in a fit of anger, Baba Dattu, who had challenged Guru Amar Das regarding the offerings, forcibly took away the offerings which Guru Amar Das received from the *sangat*. On his way, he was looted and beaten up by hooligans his same leg was injured with which he kicked Guru Amar Das. During the era of Guru Amar Das, Sikhism made significant progress."¹¹

Guru Ram Das

Guru Amar Das had two sons, Baba Mohan and Baba Mohari, and two daughters, Bibi Bhani and Bibi Dani. Bibi Dani married Bhai Rama, a regular Sikh, whereas Bibi Bhani married an orphaned little lad named Bhai Jetha.¹² The couple had three sons: Baba Prithi Chand, Baba Maha Dev, and (Guru) Arjan Dev. Bhai Jetha's modest demeanour pleased Guru Amar Das. Guru Amar Das passed over the Guruship to Bhai Jetha, in 1574. It was the first time in Sikh history when Guru Amar Das appointed a relative, Bhai Jetha, to the position of Guruship. Bhai Jetha later became famous as Guru Ram Das, and he continued to uphold the teachings and traditions set by Guru Amar Das. Baba Mohan, the son of Guru Amar Das, objected to Guru Ram Das becoming the Guru because he thought he deserved the position.

Guru Amar Das: Legacy of Family Guruship

Guru Amar Das, happy with the service of his daughter Bibi Bhani, gifted her with the knowledge that the Guruship will remain within their own family lineage. As a result, Guru Ram Das had to choose between his

⁹ "Gurugaddi" refers to the formal installation or succession of a Guru in Sikhism, symbolizing the transfer of spiritual leadership and authority from one Guru to the next.

¹⁰ "*sangat*" means a gathering or congregation of devotees in Sikhism, where people come together for religious activities and communal worship.

¹¹ Banerjee, A. C. (1993). *The Sikh Gurus and the Sikh Religion*. New Delhi, p. 182.

¹² *Sankhep Itihas Das Guru Sahiban* by Sikh Missionary College Ludhiana. p 27.

three sons. After careful consideration and consultation with important Sikhs, the Guru appointed his youngest son, Arjan Dev ji, as the 5th Guru.

The choice was accepted and honoured by the Guru's middle son, Mahadev, while the Guru's eldest son, Prithi Chand, believed himself the natural heir to his Guru father. He squabbled with his Guru father, who said, "Gurgaddi is not a matter of inheritance." It is only conferred on those who are capable of shouldering its duties." But Prithi Chand refused to relent or reconcile, instead keeping the problem alive. Finally, the Guru labelled him as 'meina' (ambitious to the point of cunning and deception) and banned him to face him (the Guru) again. As his death approached, the Guru and his family relocated to Goindwal and, on September 2, 1581 A.D., bestowed Guruship to Sri Arjan Dev before departing for the heavenly abode.¹³

Guru Arjan Dev

Guru Arjan Dev was the Sikhs' fifth Guru, and he erected the Sri Harmandir Sahib in Amritsar. Amritsar, like Mucca for Muslims and Banaras (Varanasi) for Hindus, became a major centre for Sikhs.¹⁴ When the guru built his stronghold in Amritsar, Guru Arjan Dev was visited by Mughal Emperor Akbar. At the age of thirty-five, Guru Arjan Dev pleased Akbar much with his mild demeanour.¹⁵ Baba Pirthi Chand visited his in-law's hamlet, Hera, in what is now Pakistan, at the period when Harmandir Sahib was being built. There, he established himself as a Guru and constructed a Gurudwara akin to Harmandir Sahib. Pirthi could not stand the Sikh community's greater dedication to Guru Arjan, though. After his return to Amritsar, he began to pester Guru Arjan Dev.

Hargobind Sahib, son of Guru Arjan Dev, was born. Pirthi became even more envious and began to scheme as a result. He makes four attempts to kill young Hargobind Sahib. In Guru Granth Sahib, even, Guru referred to Pirthi Chand as 'Mina', (the greedy one).¹⁶

After Akbar, Jahangir ascends to the throne, and numerous adversaries against Guru Arjan Dev begin to surface. In this endeavour, Pirthi Chand, Chandu, and Birbal played significant roles. During Khusro's rebellion, Jahangir falsely accused Guru Arjan Dev of supporting Khusro and ordered Guru Arjan Dev's execution on fabricated charges. On May 30, 1606, Guru Arjan was martyred.¹⁷ Before his martyrdom, Guru Arjan Dev had already appointed his only son, Hargobind Sahib, as his successor.

¹³ Goraya, M. S. (2015). *THE SIKH GURUS Lives, Works and Teachings*. Dr. Inderjit Kaur, President, All India Pingalwara Charitable Society (Regd.), Amritsar.

¹⁴ Singh, Khushwant. (1963). *A History of Sikhs: Volume 1*. USA: Oxford University Press. p 57.

¹⁵ Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd. p. 134.

¹⁶ Bhai Gurdas, *Vaar 26, Pauri 33*.

¹⁷ *Sankhep Itihas Das Guru Sahiban* by Sikh Missionary College Ludhiana. p 32.

The Chosen Successor: Hargobind Sahib

Guru summoned Hargobind Ji and other well-known Sikhs before departing for Lahore, saying, "After I leave, Gurgaddi be bestowed to Hargobind ji." In addition, he counselled Hargobind ji to organise a large armed force and appropriately occupy Gurgaddi in light of the evolving situation. Up to now, the nonviolent methods of Guru Nanak Dev's Gurughar have protected the truth, religion, love, dignity, and independence. But it seems like things have changed recently.¹⁸

Following the news of his death and his father's final message, Bhai Budha carried out the guruship succession ritual. On Hargobind's forehead, he put tilak. Then, brandishing a sword, the Guru commanded Bhai Buddha to honour him. The Guru pointed out the error when the Bhai, who had never handled a sword, tied it on the right side of him. The Bhai desired to place it across from it. He was forbidden by the Guru to do so. On the left side, he requested Bhai Budha to affix a second sword. As a result, the Guru was always carrying two swords. The two swords, he said, represented *Miri* and *Piri*, *Shakt* and *Bhakti*, *deg* and *teg*.

He built *Akal Takht*, or God's throne, in front of Harimandar in 1606. There, dressed like a prince, he sat on an elevated platform that was 12 feet high.¹⁹ In the vicinity of Punjab, Guru Hargobind befriended Yar Khan, the faujdar, and pledged loyalty to the newly crowned emperor. However, he was quickly embroiled in a dispute.²⁰ The Battle of Sangrana (1628), the Battle of Amritsar (14 April 1634), the conflicts of Lahra and Gurusar (December 1634), the Battle of Kartarpur (26 April 1635), and the Battle of Phagwara (29 April 1635) were the five conflicts in which Guru Hargobind battled the Mughals. After leaving Amritsar, Guru Hargobind lived out the final nine years of his life at Kiratpur, where he attended *kirtans* and took care of the *sangats*. The reason Guru spent so much time at Kiratpur is related to an incident involving the deity Naina Devi²¹ which is near Kiratpur.²²

Then Pirthi Chand's heir ruled over *Akal Takht Sahib's* management as well as Amritsar's overall government. It was run by Meharban, the son of Pirthi Chand, and for fifty-five years the Amritsar government was governed by the heirs of Pirthi Chand. Guru Teg Bahadur also visited Amritsar during his time, but Pirthi Chand's heirs did not allow him to enter. Guru Gobind Singh also did not visit Harmandar Sahib due to these conflicts.

Baba Attal Rai was the youngest of Guru Hargobind's five sons; the other four were Baba Gurdita, Baba Ani Rai, Baba Suraj Mal, and Baba Teyag Mal. Baba Attal Rai died quite young. Religious

¹⁸ Macauliffe, III, 99.

¹⁹ Singh, Trilochan. (1967). *Guru Teg Bahadur: Prophet and Martyr*. Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee Sis Ganj, Chandni Chowk, Delhi. 12, fn., 16.

²⁰ Shea, David, & Troyer, Anthony (1843). *The Dabistan, or School of Manners*. Printed by the Asiatic Societies of London, Paris, and Calcutta, 46, Rue St-Louis, Paris.p 243.

²¹ Ibid, 235.

²² It is near Shimla and is incorrectly called Taradevi by Trilochan Singh in his book "*Guru Tegh Bahadur*" p. 82.

endeavours did not pique the interest of Baba Ani Rai or Baba Suraj Mal. Gurditta, Guru's eldest son, had passed away in 1638, leaving behind two sons: Har Rai, the younger, and Dhir Mal, the older. The two surviving sons of Guru Hargobind were Tegh Bahadur and Suraj Mal. While the latter was a loner, the former enjoyed sensual pleasures.²³

Dhirmal believed that he was the most suitable candidate to succeed him, but Guru Hargobind disagreed. Rather, Dhirmal's 14-year-old younger brother Har Rai was selected by Guru Hargobind to be his heir. Dhirmal put poison into the Guru's evening meal that day since he could not bear this choice. He grabbed the genuine *Adi Granth*²⁴ copy right away and hurried to Kartarpur.²⁵

Dhirmal went to Emperor Shah Jahan in a fit of anger to file a complaint. However, Shah Jahan, in a straightforward manner, did not interfere in such matters. He told Dhirmal, "Become my courtier." Dhirmal then became a courtier in the court of Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan. Shah Jahan happily gives Kartarpur's land to Dhirmal. Dhirmal always supported the Mughals, especially for the ascension of the Guru's seat. Dhirmal considered himself the 7th Guru and began residing in Kartarpur. Meanwhile, Pirthi Chand's son Mehraban also declared himself a Guru and sat in Harimandir Sahib. For twelve years, Guru Har Rai resided in Nahan, though he frequently travelled to Kiratpur.

During his Guruship, Guru Har Rai faced significant challenges, notably when he withdrew support from the Mughal prince Dara Shikoh due to Dara's indecision and Aurangzeb's pursuit during a civil war.

Passed on Guruship to Sri Harkrishan Ji:

Guru Har Rai had two sons, Baba Ram Rai and Sri Harkrishan Ji. Baba Ram Rai was deeply involved in devotional practices, but he did not receive the Guruship. This was because Guru Har Rai Ji resided in Kiratpur Sahib, and Baba Ram Rai had established the largest pharmaceutical centre in India there. At that time, Aurangzeb was the emperor, and his brother Dara Shikoh was severely ill. Aurangzeb learned about this pharmaceutical centre and obtained medicine from there, which ultimately led to Dara's recovery.

Aurangzeb summoned Guru Har Rai to his court. Guru Har Rai sent his elder son, Baba Ram Rai, to Aurangzeb's presence. Aurangzeb told Ram Rai that he had heard that *Guru Granth Sahib* contained negative remarks about Muslims, which were incorrect. Upon hearing this, Ram Rai altered a line from

²³ Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.p. 173.

²⁴ *Adi Granth*, which translates to "First Book," refers to the original compilation of Sikh scriptures initiated by Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Guru of Sikhism, in 1604. Guru Arjan Dev Ji collected the hymns and teachings of Sikh Gurus, along with compositions of other spiritual leaders, and compiled them into a sacred volume. The *Adi Granth* served as the central religious scripture for Sikhs.

²⁵ *Ibid*, 173-74.

Guru Granth Sahib to please Aurangzeb. By doing this, he manipulated the text to win Aurangzeb's favour.²⁶ This all distressed to Guru Har Rai.²⁷ Guru Har Rai selected Sri Har Krishan as his successor.

When the Guruship is passed on, Guru Har Krishan was only a child of five years old. This fact deeply saddened Ram Rai because he wanted that position for himself. His disappointment led him to seek special favour from Aurangzeb, and he stayed close to him during that time. Ram Rai claimed the Guruship and lived in Delhi. Aurangzeb, busy with state affairs, initially ignored the matter. In 1662, he fell ill and went to Kashmir for recovery, returning in 1664. Aurangzeb, skilled in diplomacy, saw an opportunity in the rift between the brothers. He aimed to exploit the situation, using Ram Rai to weaken the Sikh movement. Aurangzeb summoned Har Krishan to Delhi to justify his claim and enlisted Mirza Raja Jai Singh to ensure the Guru's presence.²⁸

Guru Har Rai and Guru Har Krishan's mother was extremely worried about Ram Rai's political ploys and Emperor Aurangzeb's harsh and autocratic rule, which had already resulted in the deaths of numerous of his male kin. But no one dared to disobey Aurangzeb's demands throughout his rule.

When Guru Har Krishan had smallpox in Delhi, he was taken in by Mirza Raja Jai Singh and kept at Raisina. Aware of Sikh norms, his followers begged him to designate his successor during his serious sickness. Weakened, he said, "Baba Bakala," pointing to his granduncle Teg Bahadur as the legitimate successor in Bakala. However Dhirmal benefited from this issue as well. He also arrived and took up residence with Baba Bakala.²⁹ Dhirmal was not the only one who desired to take advantage of this chance. In Baba Bakala at that time, there were twenty-two thrones that each identified as Guru Dass.

Sadly, on March 30, 1664, Har Krishan passed away from the illness at the age of eight. His brief but significant life is remembered by the Gurdwara Bala Sahib³⁰, which is located near the Yamuna River, where his mourning followers cremated him. Later, the Bangla Sahib Gurdwara was built in Raisina in his honour, keeping alive the spiritual importance of the young Guru.

Guru Teg Bahadur from 1664 to 1675:

The great trader bhai Makhhan Shah Lubana³¹ had contributed to the discovery of the true Sikh Guru. With his help, the Sikhs subsequently located Guru Teg Bahadur, their ninth Guru. This had infuriated and inflamed Dhirmal, who felt that he had once more lost the Guruship via his own efforts. For him, becoming

²⁶ According to Trilochan Singh, "up until this period, the Emperor was favourably inclined towards Sikh movement." *Guru Tegh Bahadur*, p 100-101.

²⁷ Inderjit Prasad Singh, *The Sikh Review*, March, 1978, p. 62-63.

²⁸ Kanhiya Lal. 38; Trilochan Singh, 112.

²⁹ Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.p. 188.

³⁰ At Bala Sahib, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi, the two wives of Guru Gobind Singh, were also cremated.

³¹ Gian Singh said that Makhhan Shah was a resident of the Jehlam village Tanda. *Twareekh Guru Khalsa, I*, 265; Khazan Singh, *History and Philosophy of the Sikh Religion*, I, p.149

a guru had meant obtaining nothing but riches and notoriety. Dhirmal, who saw himself as a Guru and had his own set of supporters known as masands, had a scheme to assassinate Guru Teg Bahadur. A rogue named Shihan (was one of these masands) who took twenty more hooligans to murder Guru Teg Bahadur. These assassins came and fired at Guru Teg Bahadur as he was addressing the assembly. He fired at Guru Teg Bahadur and the bullet just scraped Guru's shoulder, caused blood to pour³². Here, the "rogues" were engaged in theft and extortion, among other crimes. This tragedy was survived by Guru Teg Bahadur.

On July 8, 1675, Gobind Das was appointed as the tenth Guru:

It dawned on Tegh Bahadur that this was his dying hour. For this reason, at a solemn ceremony, he designated his son Gobind Das as his successor by donning a tilak on his forehead and giving him five paise and a cocoanut. As per Bhat Vahi, "Gobind Das was nominated with a holy mark (Tilak) in the month of Sawan (on July 8), and Teg Bahadur prepared to go for Delhi. Diwan Mati Das, Sati Das (son of Hira Nand Chhibbar), the chef, and Dyal Das (son of Mai Das) from Jalhana Balaut followed him."³³

Guru Ram Rai, the elder son of Guru Har Rai, relocated to Dehradun after previously establishing his throne in Delhi. Similar to his setup in Delhi, he also established his spiritual seat in Dehradun. He had followers and *masands* (local leaders or administrators) in both places. After Guru Gobind Das, who established the *Khalsa Panth*, Guru Gobind Singh emerged. He became the leader of the Khalsa community. There was a clash between him and Raja Bhim Chand from the hilly states. This clash is considered one of the reasons for Guru Gobind Singh's first battle.

Because Raja Bhim Chand repeatedly challenged Guru Gobind, Guru Gobind Singh decided to leave Anandpur Sahib and moved to Paonta Sahib for three years. He took his family with him, as Paonta Sahib was not farther away from Dehra Dun, where Raja Bhim Chand's influence was limited. On the other hand, Ram Rai was frustrated with his own appointed collectors, the *masands*, because they had become rebellious. They were not only collecting offerings for Ram Rai but also pocketing a significant portion for themselves. From escaping his masands Ram Rai met with Guru Gobind Singh.

When Ram Rai met Guru Gobind Singh, who was both a saint and a warrior, Guru Gobind Singh forgave him and advised him to forget his past mistakes. Ram Rai sought forgiveness for his previous sins and returned to Dehra Dun. The news of Ram Rai meeting Guru Gobind Singh spread among the *masands*, making them fearful of potential losses. They devised a plot to kill Ram Rai.

Despite Ram Rai's caution to his wife, Punjab Kaur, not to allow anyone inside while he meditated, a *masand* named Bakhsha Masand forcibly entered by breaking the gate. Exploiting Ram Rai's trance state, Bakhsha Masand falsely declared him dead. Despite Punjab Kaur's protests, they cremated Ram Rai,

³² Gupta, H. R. (2008). *History of the Sikhs, Vol. I: The Sikh Gurus, 1469-1708*. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.p. 190-91.

³³ Singh, F. (1996). *Hukamnamas Shiri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib*. Patiala, India: Punjabi University.p.92, 100.

believing him to be deceased. Ram Rai's wife personally informed Guru Gobind Singh about the betrayal by the corrupt masands. Guru Gobind Singh took action, punishing the masands and sparing Ram Rai's life.³⁴

The Final Successor of Khalsa Panth:

The final and tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, announced the end of the line of personal Gurus before to his death in 1708. From that point on, the Adi Granth, a holy text revered by Sikhs as the Guru Granth Sahib, was thought to hold the religious authority of the Guru, while the elected panth members of the Sikh community held the secular authority. It was believed that the Adi Granth was where the spirit of the Eternal Guru was said to have passed.

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³⁴ Kartar Singh, *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, 70-71; Singh Sagar, 86,93; Shahid Bilas. 63-6", quoted by Gurbux Singh in *The Sikh Review*, January, 1977,42.

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