

Time to invoke the Sufi culture

The conversion of the Lal Khoohi gurdwara, historically recorded as a gurdwara, into a Muslim shrine makes one regret that the pluralistic culture and tradition of the subcontinent is being violated. We must revive universal love preached by Baba Farid.

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I come from a village, just outside Tarn Taran, the city founded by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth master, who compiled the *Adi Granth*, built the Darbar Sahib, Amritsar and installed the *Adi Granth* in it. Guru Arjan Dev lived in the city he founded for 25 years, almost the period of Jahangir's reign. Jahangir used to pass Tarn Taran, as did Akbar, by Goindwal *Pattan*. Akbar is said to have eaten in the *langar* there. Jahangir was an easy-going man, and would certainly have met Guru Arjan Dev during those two decades.

What led to the Guru's torture and brutal killing? *The Tribune* story on the Lal Khoohi in Lahore published recently refers to Chandu and Jahangir's daughter's hand being offered to Guru Hargobind. Chandu was a minister of the Lahore governor, not the *diwan* of the emperor. The story, that Chandu offered his daughter for Guru Hargobind, the father of Guru Tegh Bahadur and the grandfather of Guru Gobind Singh is the stuff of village gurdwaras, which I heard in passionate ballads, as a child in the village. Jahangir's daughter's hand was never offered to the Guru. It was Chandu who was refused and felt insulted. He tutored the emperor, and built a sudden strong negative opinion of the Guru. The rest followed. As children, on June 6, when the temperature touched 44 degrees and more, we ran around the bazaar, drinking *sharbat* at every shopkeeper's *chabeel*. The Sikhs blame Chandu for the maltreatment of the Guru but the orders came from on high.

There are only two emperors that I know in the world, who have written their own autobiographies; Babar and Jahangir. *Babarnama* mentions every village that Babar passed on his way to Panipat in 1526. The villages in Ropar, around Chandigarh and Ambala, all still exist today. Jahangir did even better. In *Tuzke-Jehangiri*, he kept a daily account of his office work, as a chief executive. Both these books were translated by British scholars in the 1920s. Jahangir has made an entry, about Guru Arjan Dev, which gives his version. He wrote that it was brought to his notice that a sadhu/*fakir* was misleading the people in the wrong direction. He directed that this sadhu be brought into the fold of the true religion; else he should be dealt with. The Mongol ways of death were extremely cruel and are well recorded.

I have read Jahangir's memoirs twice over. I have been in administrative positions and it seems to me that the emperor, in his daily management, was somehow misguided and persuaded by Chandu and others of the necessity to take action against Guru Arjan Dev. How many times have we seen this happen to prime ministers, chief ministers and chief secretaries? Else, Jahangir might have carried on, in his past easy ways and taken no notice of the Guru and his increasing following.

Two other facts, from his autobiography, interest me, and point to his beliefs and ways. Jahangir often travelled to Burhanpur, beyond the Tapti river, to control his empire. He had to pass through Indore always, and halted there. He has record-



Babar's visit to Gurkhattri in 1519. *Babarnama* chronicles the times, travels and feats of Babur.

ed that in Indore, he was told of a Hindu sadhu, in a *kutiya*, outside the town. He went to visit him, sat with him for a long period, and was impacted by his personality and views. He further records that everytime he passed Indore, he looked for the sadhu. Finally, he lost him, as sadhus wander away. Jahangir was unhappy. He looked for him and years later, found him in Mathura. The Mughals, travelled from Agra to Delhi, by boat. So Jahangir, stopped at Mathura to meet his sadhu, for the last time.

Another fact amazes me. Every day Jahangir recorded the promotions and demotions, in his empire, by name like any chief minister. I marked and counted them. It looked to me that more than 60 per cent of his high officials were Hindus, Kayasthas and Rajputs. The truth is simply that to rule this vast land, this minority of Muslims had to carry the large population with them. It could not be done by sheer bigotry and the hatred of the other. Akbar had shown the way.

The Lal Khoohi gurdwara is a recorded historical Sikh gurdwara and as far as its conversion into a Muslim shrine is concerned, I have to say with regret that the rulers of Pakistan need to go back to the Sufi love of all, preached by Sheikh Farid. I was disappointed that in Nankana Sahib, the local Muslims had provocatively built a huge mosque, right next to and overlooking the Sikh shrine. They used loudspeakers pointing into the gurdwara. Muslims who went with me, privately expressed their shame at this. In Punjab, I observe that for security and employment, Muslims from Uttar Pradesh have come in considerable numbers. New mosques have come up in many towns, and in Chandigarh, Friday prayers show the numbers. And in our Punjab, even in the villages people are happy to help.

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