

The Seventh Nanak

GURU HAR RAI JI

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**By the
Dedicated Sewadars
of
Sri Hemkunt Foundation**

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Preface

Sri Hemkunt Foundation Inc. was established in 1980 in New York, U.S.A., over four decades ago. The Foundation's primary objectives are to help children and youth ages 6-25 years old raised in the Western Hemisphere learn Sikhi, develop public speaking skills, and feel proud of being a Sikh.

We do this through educational books on the Sikh Gurus' lives, Sikh history, and Sikh philosophy; and by providing youth opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of Sikhi and skillfully communicate their understanding to others. The Sikh faith is virtually unknown in the west. Ideally, any Sikh would be able to share the values and practices of the path effectively should an occasion arise.

The main Foundation-sponsored event is an annual Symposium. The Symposium encourages participants to critically examine assorted topics and answer a set of questions in a specified time from a podium. Participants compete in five age groups: 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-17 years, and 18-25 years. For each group, an age-appropriate book is prescribed. Participants are graded for content and oratory skills.

Every year, there is a three-tier competition. In the first tier, nearly 2,500 children and youth participate in local competitions in the U.S.A., U.K., and Kenya. In the 2nd tier, about 400 participants compete. These are the 1st and 2nd position holders in the local competitions. The final and international level is the 3rd tier, where nearly 125 participants compete. These are the 1st position holders of the 2nd tier competition.

For many years, the Foundation had used books published in India, the U.K., etc. However, the Foundation received valid criticism from parents, participants, and judges almost every year that some of the books used for the Symposium competition were unsatisfactory. The English vocabulary, sentence structure, and context were inappropriate for the Western participants and audience. Many of the stories and Sakhees inappropriately highlighted miraculous aspects rather than logic and common sense.

To remedy this situation, a few years ago, the Foundation decided to venture into authoring the books itself so that suitable books are used for the Symposium and annual competition. Dedicated Sewadars of the Foundation volunteered for this Seva.

The current book is meant for the 9–11-year-old age group. An attempt has been made to present Guru Ji's teachings logically. The book uses simple, easy-to-understand language and avoids references to events and places that would not usually be familiar to the intended Western school-age participants. It is crucial to ensure that the students' focus is on key concepts and messages within the book. The teachers and parents are expected to be fully involved in helping students understand the depth of the material, rather than remembering only historical facts. The Foundation aims to use this book for the annual Symposium - Speech Competitions. Detailed information about the yearly International Symposium is available at the website www.hemkunt2.org.

Both English and Punjabi versions of the books have been posted on our website. Sunday Schools run by Gurdwaras are welcome to use these books for free, and no permission is needed from the Foundation for using the books.

Any suggestions and comments for improving the book are always welcome.

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1. Early Life

1630 (birth): Har Rai Ji (later Guru) was born on January 16, 1630, at Keeratpur. He was the son of Baba Gurditta (son of Guru Hargobind Ji and Mata Kishan Kaur, also known as Mata Ananti).

	Sons	Sons
Guru Hargobind Ji (6 th Nanak)	Baba Gurditta	Baba Dhir Mal (Guru) Har Rai Ji (7 th Nanak)
	Baba Atal Rai	
	Baba Sooraj Mal	
	Baba Ani Rai	
	(Guru) Teg Bahadar Ji (9 th Nanak)	(Guru) Gobind Singh Ji (10 th Nanak)

1635 (age 5): In 1635, Har Rai Ji's grandfather, Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Nanak, moved to Keeratpur. Har Rai Ji spent the next nine years in the company of Guru Ji. The Sixth Nanak greatly influenced his childhood.

During his childhood, Har Rai Ji received training as a soldier. Bhai Bidhi Chand taught him horse-riding, sword-wielding, archery, and other martial arts. By the age of thirteen, he had become well-versed in martial arts. He also had a good command of Gurbani. The Sikhs visiting Keeratpur were impressed by his spiritual dialogues with them.

Har Rai Ji had a sensitive and compassionate nature. Once when Har Rai Ji was walking in the garden, his loose-fitting clothes struck a flower, and some petals fell on the ground. The petals falling disappointed him since the leaves would soon perish. The Sixth Nanak was watching this. Guru Ji went over to him and asked him not to be disappointed and recommended that he accept it as God's command.

Har Rai Ji used to treat plants as if they were living beings. He asserted that one should enjoy the living flower rather than holding a dead flower in hand or the garland or even as an offering for worship.

Shabad Guru is Ever Alive

One of Har Rai Ji's favorite verses from the Sri Guru Granth Sahib is on page 479 of the Sikh scripture. It says:

ਪਾਤੀ ਤੋਰੈ ਮਾਲਿਨੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਪਾਤੀ ਜੀਉ ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਪਾਹਨ ਕਉ ਪਾਤੀ ਤੋਰੈ ਸੋ ਪਾਹਨ ਨਿਰਜੀਉ ॥੧॥
ਭੂਲੀ ਮਾਲਨੀ ਹੈ ਏਉ ॥ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਜਾਗਤਾ ਹੈ ਦੇਉ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥

Transliteration: Pātī torai mālini pātī pātī jīo || Jis pāhan kao pātī torai so pāhan nirjīo. |1| Bhūlī mālnī hai eo. Satgur jāgtā hai deo. |1| rahāo ||1||

Metaphoric Message: The garden-maid plucks flowers from the garden to offer petals to the idol. She does not know that there is life in every petal. She does not realize that the stone idol for which she tears off those flowers, that stone idol is lifeless. The garden-maid is mistakenly worshipping the lifeless stone idol. The true Guru is ever alive.

Every Guru had emphasized treating Shabad as Guru and had preached the futility of idol worship (of a lifeless object). As a Muslim, the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan was against idol worship. He had ordered recently built Hindu temples to be demolished and did not allow older ones to be repaired because they were used for idol worship. He did not issue such orders against Sikh Gurdwaras as no idol was worshiped there.

2. Har Rai Ji's Family and *Gurgaddi*

1640 (age 10): Har Rai Ji was only ten years old when his father, Baba Gurditta (the eldest son of Guru Hargobind Ji, the Sixth Nanak), died. So, Har Rai Ji grew up in the company of his grandfather. On January 14, 1640, Har Rai Ji married Bibi Sulakhani. They had three children, Ram Rai (1646), Roop Kaur (1649), and Har Krishan (1652; later, Guru).

1644 (age 14): The Sixth Nanak, Guru Hargobind Ji *joti jot samaey* on March 3, 1644, after appointing Har Rai Ji as the Seventh Nanak. Har Rai Ji had taken part regularly in all the activities of Guru Ji's *darbar* (court) while he was in the company of the Sixth Nanak.

As a result, the Seventh Nanak had developed an excellent understanding of the functioning of the organizational system of the Sikh Panth. He had also gained a deep knowledge of Sikh philosophy and history from his grandfather, the Sixth Nanak. Guru Ji faced two critical issues. One was the severe infighting between the various contenders to the Mughal throne. The second was an attempt by *Minas* (Prithi Chand's descendants) to divide the Sikhs with numerous focused attempts to dilute the Sikh teachings.

3. Guru Ji's Dispensary (Pharmacy)

As the Seventh Nanak (after 1644), Guru Ji opened a dispensary at Keeratpur, employed skilled physicians, and obtained medicines from all over the country. Needy persons were given free treatment. Guru Ji ordered free clinics to be run in all places of worship alongwith free meals. The dispensary at Keeratpur became famous throughout the country. Guru Ji also set up an Ayurvedic herbal medicine hospital and a research center at Keeratpur.

The Sikh religion respected everyone and promoted service to others irrespective of their religion or caste. It attracted followers from both Hindu and Muslim communities since the time of Guru Nanak Ji. But Emperor Shah Jahan could not tolerate this. He did not want the religion founded by Guru Nanak Ji to continue to flourish.

Emperor Shah Jahan had a great love for his elder son, Dara Shikoh. At one point, Dara Shikoh became extremely sick. Despite the best treatment by the royal physicians, he did not get well. Physicians suggested that the Emperor get medicine from the Sikh dispensary at Keeratpur. As no other medication was effective, Emperor Shah Jahan sought help from Guru Ji in desperation. The Emperor did not want to seek help from Guru Ji as he was trying to suppress the Sikh religion. But he also knew that Guru Ji helped and served everyone without any discrimination. Guru Ji supplied the necessary medicine, which promptly cured Dara Shikoh.

Upon getting well, Dara Shikoh personally came to Keeratpur with valuable gifts to thank Guru Ji. Shah Jahan also whole-heartedly thanked Guru Ji and offered to grant some land to support *langar*. Guru Ji respectfully declined the offer as he wanted the *langar* to be supported by the hard-earned offerings of ordinary people.

4. Dara Shikoh Visits Guru Ji

1658 (age 28): The Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan had four sons. The eldest was Dara Shikoh, and the youngest was Aurangzeb. In 1657, when Shah Jahan fell sick, he appointed Dara Shikoh, his favorite son, as the next Emperor. Aurangzeb conspired with his two other (older) brothers, and together they defeated Dara Shikoh in a battle. Dara Shikoh escaped to Lahore to save his life.

Aurangzeb cunningly tricked the two brothers and got himself installed as the Emperor. When Shah Jahan recovered from his illness, Aurangzeb imprisoned his father and the two brothers who had previously helped him defeat Dara Shikoh, the rightful heir to the Mughal throne.

Aurangzeb then turned his attention towards Dara Shikoh. He wanted to eliminate him before Dara Shikoh could reclaim the throne. When Dara Shikoh escaped from Delhi to Lahore, he passed by Goindwal. The Seventh Nanak was also at Goindwal at that time. He stopped by to pay his respects to Guru Ji. Dara Shikoh had profound respect for the Seventh Nanak. He was also grateful to Guru Ji as medicine from Guru Ji's dispensary had saved his life. He had learned that Aurangzeb was still in Delhi, nearly 300 miles away, and thought there was no reason to panic.

Dara Shikoh had some of the empire's treasury, army, and generals with him while escaping to Lahore. He did not need any material help from Guru Ji. However, he was not a battle-hardened soldier. He feared facing Aurangzeb, a ferocious warrior, in a battle. Dara Shikoh kept moving from place to place to escape Aurangzeb's rage. Eventually, Aurangzeb became convinced that Dara Shikoh was incapable of causing him any harm. He consolidated his rule as the new Mughal Emperor.

5. Ram Rai Disowned

1661 (age 31): Aurangzeb scrutinized everyone who had helped his brother, Dara Shikoh, rebel against him. He killed all those against whom he had even the slightest suspicion. He would kill anyone not fully loyal to him. He pardoned those who promised complete loyalty to him.

Dara Shikoh had not received any material help from the Seventh Nanak when he had met Guru Ji at Goindwal. However, Hindus belonging to the so-called upper caste were disgruntled with Guru Ji's policy of treating everyone as equals. They were also aware that the Mughal rulers had placed restrictions on Hindu temples (because of idol worship) but not on Sikh Gurdwaras. Some Hindu leaders took advantage of the situation and falsely accused Guru Ji of helping Dara Shikoh against Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb was already aware that even the Sixth Nanak had kept a large army. He wanted to check the Sikhs' growing military might. He decided to summon Guru Ji to explain the accusation made by the Hindus that Guru Ji had helped Dara Shikoh in his fight against Aurangzeb.

In March 1661, the Seventh Nanak was at Keeratpur when he received a summons from Aurangzeb to come to his court and explain why he had allegedly helped Dara Shikoh. Guru Ji sent Ram Rai, his eldest son, as his representative to explain to Aurangzeb. Although Ram Rai was eleven at the time, he was well-learned and intelligent. In April 1661, Ram Rai reached Delhi, the capital of the Mughal empire, and he stayed at *Majnu da Tilla*. Aurangzeb tested Ram Rai in many ways, especially on his spiritual knowledge. Ram Rai excelled in every test, and Aurangzeb appreciated his responses. But the *Qazi* (a senior religious leader in Aurangzeb's court) was not thrilled that the Emperor was becoming impressed by a non-Muslim.

The *Qazi* intended to alienate the Emperor from Guru Ji. One day in the court, the *Qazi* instigated Aurangzeb to ask Ram Rai to explain a particular verse from the *Adi Granth*. The verse, on page 466 of *Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, is as follows:

ਮਿਟੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਕੀ ਪੇੜੈ ਪਈ ਕੁਮ੍ਹਿਆਰ ॥
 ਘੜਿ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਇਟਾ ਕੀਆ ਜਲਦੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥
 ਜਲਿ ਜਲਿ ਰੋਵੈ ਬਪੁੜੀ ਝੜਿ ਝੜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਅੰਗਿਆਰ ॥
 ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰਤੈ ਕਾਰਣੁ ਕੀਆ ਸੇ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥੨ ॥

Transliteration: miTee **musalamaan** kee peRai piee kumi(h)aar | ghaR bhaa(n)dde iTaa keeaa jaladhee kare pukaar | |jal jal rovai bapuRee jhaR jhaR paveh a(n)giaar | |naanak Jin karatai kaaran keeaa so jaanai karataar | |2| |

Metaphoric Message: The same earth that a Musalman (Muslim) reveres is put into the potter's wheel, baked in the shape of pots and bricks; it appears to call out in its crackling. It crackles continuously, crying out, and pitifully shedding tears as falling embers. Nanak, I realize the Creator who created the elements of creation and their properties.

In accordance with Sikh concepts, once the soul leaves the body, it does not matter whether the body is burned or buried. While one is alive, the status of one's consciousness is determined by one's deeds.

In Islam, burning the dead body is a sin and the worst punishment for Muslims. Such a reference to Sri Guru Granth Sahib could be considered offensive by a Muslim. To please Aurangzeb, Ram Rai replaced *musalmaan* (meaning Muslim) with *beimaan* (meaning dishonest). In accordance with the Sikhi concepts, changing any word of the *Shabad Guru* (God's Word) in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is blasphemy.

When the Seventh Nanak learned of the incident, he disapproved of the act of Ram Rai and asked him not to come back and visit the Guru. The Seventh Nanak also instructed Sikhs not to associate with Ram Rai. The Sikh Sangat rejected Ram Rai, as Guru Ji had instructed. Ram Rai turned to Aurangzeb for help. Aurangzeb considered it wise to exploit the growing rift amongst Sikhs. He granted Ram Rai some land where he set up his *Dera* (place to live). This place is presently known as Dehradun. It is 150 miles north of Delhi, in the foothills of the Himalayas.

6. Passed on the Spiritual Light

1661 (age 31): The Seventh Nanak, Guru Har Rai Ji *joti jot samaey* (left his body) on October 6, 1661, at 31 years. He had installed his younger son Har Krishan as the Eighth Nanak just before this. He had told his successor not to compromise any Sikh principle even while dealing with as mighty a person as the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb.

The Seventh Nanak was cremated on the bank of river Satluj. After that, this location was used by residents of Keeratpur for cremation. In the second half of the twentieth century, the Sikhs built Gurdwara *Patalpuri* at this site and started immersing the ashes of their dead in the river Satluj. However, one should be aware that the practice of immersing the ashes of the dead in the river water at Keeratpur has no special spiritual meaning.

The Seventh Nanak lived for 31 years, during which he served the Sikh Panth in many ways. He served as the Guru for 17 years. He was a saintly man immersed in the scriptures who traveled extensively to spread the word of Nanak and bring people into the Sikh Fold. He sent his emissaries across eastern India to Rajasthan, Kashmir and Kabul, and all corners of Punjab. Even though the Seventh Nanak did not compose any hymns or *banee* (there is none by him in Sri Guru Granth Sahib), he was knowledgeable about Sikh history, philosophy, medicine, diplomacy, weapon-wielding, and horse-riding. He had friendly relations with several Hindu Rulers and Chiefs. Dara Shikoh, the eldest son of Emperor Shah Jahan, was one of his admirers too and had visited him at Keeratpur.

The Seventh Nanak maintained a big army. However, he never deployed it to attack anyone for land or money. His army only sought to defend the Sikh cities and the Panth. The Sixth Nanak also had an army and never used it for aggression or oppression.

The Seventh Nanak spread Sikh teachings throughout Punjab and other parts of the region, including Kashmir, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Bengal, and Assam. The Sikhs from these areas used to visit Keeratpur regularly to obtain guidance from Guru Ji and learn more about Sikh principles and practices.

7. Highlights of Guru Har Rai Ji

1630 – 1661 C.E.

Born on:	January 16, 1630
Born at:	Keeratpur
Parents:	Baba Gurditta Ji and Mata Nihal Kaur Ji (also known as Mata Ananti)
Children:	Ram Rai (son, born 1647) Roop Kaur (1649) Har Krishan (son, born 1656; later, Guru)
Gurgaddi:	March 3, 1644, age 14 years
Joti Jot:	October 6, 1661, age 31 years
Bani:	None.
Special Contributions	Opened an extensive dispensary in Keeratpur, employed competent physicians, and obtained medicines from all over the country. Every needy person was given free treatment. Established an Ayurvedic herbal medicine hospital and a research center at Keeratpur. He did not pass on Guruship to his older son Ram Rai because Ram Rai had altered one word of Sri Guru Granth Sahib when he responded to Emperor Aurangzeb. Instead, he bestowed Guruship on his younger son – Har Krishan Ji.

8. Significant World Events

Around the period of Guru Har Rai Ji

1632	Galileo publishes his ideas about the universe.
1641	A fort is founded in what today is Montreal.
1642	The Mughal Emperor, Shah Jahan, built the Taj Mahal for one of his wives.
1658	Aurangzeb defeated his brother Dara Shikoh, imprisoned his father and his other brother Murad, and crowned himself.

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4. SGPC website, <http://sgpc.net/ten-guru-sahibs/>
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2. *Second Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 6-8).
3. *Third Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 6-8).
4. *Fourth Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 9-11).
5. *Fifth Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 9-11).
6. *Sixth Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 9-11).
7. *7th – 8th Nanaks* (English & Panjabi, for ages 12-14).
8. *The Ninth Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 12-14).
9. *The Tenth Nanak* (English & Panjabi, for ages 12-14).
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11. *Sikhi for Me – Here and Now*, with Bhupinder Singh and Paramjit Singh Sachdeva (English; & Panjabi, *Sikhi Maere Laee—Aethe atae Hunn*, 2025).
12. *The Message of Bhagats in Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, with Bhupinder Singh and Paramjit Singh Sachdeva (English & Panjabi, 2020).