Martyrdom of Younger Sahibzadas (Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh as Reflected in *Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth* by Bhai Santokh Singh)

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Abstract

In the present paper a modest endeavor has been made to study ‘Martyrdom of Younger Sahibzadas (Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh as Reflected in *Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth* by Bhai Santokh Singh’.

For this the contemporary and near contemporary primary sources have been examined. The main purpose of this research work is to understand how Bhai Santokh Singh represents the life and times of Guru Gobind Singh and the manner in which it differs from other sources. Bhai Santokh Singh occupies a prominent place in Sikh historiography. He was an erudite scholar, a master craftsman of poetry, an acute observer of men and matters and a champion and crusader of distinct Sikh sensitivity and sensibility. Bhai Santokh Singh compiled his magnum opus *Sri Gurpartap Suraj Granth* on the basis of available Sikh chronicles and historical traditions. He ‘filtered the entire existing impurities from Sikh history and made the clean Sikh religious stream flow unpolluted and unhindered’. He refers to the malicious attempts of those schismatic conglomerates who wished to contaminate the Sikh religion. In fact, Guru Gobind Singh is the ideal, hero and Sikh icon of Bhai Santokh Singh. The verses of Bachittar Natak and of Guru Gobind Singh’s court-poets about the Guru’s charismatic personality, character, role and contribution had left an indelible impression on the poet’s mind and he has portrayed Guru Gobind Singh on the basis of those impressions.

Keywords- *Chet, Sahibzada, Nazim, Saka, Baba, Magh, Banya, Chaudhari, Khalsa, Suba-i-Sirhind*
Bhai Santokh Singh is one of the important personalities of the early nineteenth century. A number of monumental works are to his credit. Among them are *Sri Nanak Prakash* and the *Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth*. The latter narrates the history of the ten gurus as well as the life of Banda Bahadur. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyze the martyrdom of younger Sahibzadas (Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh) from the view point of Bhai Santokh Singh. This incident has prime importance in the Sikh history. Bhai Santokh Singh can be credited for providing a detailed account of martyrdom of Sahibzadas in his work *Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth*. He writes about the martyrdom of Sahibzadas in *Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth* under the title of *Mahi nu Sarhind Behjna, Mahi ne aw ke Sahibzadayan Da Saka Sunaona, Mahi ne Saka Sunaona, Mahi ne Saka Sunaona Jari, Rai Kale nu Kirpan Bakshi, (Rut 6, Ansu forty nine (XLIX), fifty (L), fifty one (LI), fifty two (LII, fifty three (LII)*.

The records/statements recorded by Bhai Santokh Singh have been compared with other contemporary and near contemporary writings viz. *Sainapat’s Sri Gur Sobha, Koer Singh’s Gurbilas Patshahi 10; Giani Gian Singh’s Twarikh Guru Khalsa, Bhai Saroop Singh Kaushish’s Guru Kian Sakhian, Giani Gian Singh’s Sri Gur Panth Parkash, Bhai Kahan Singh Nabha’s Mhankosh*. Guru Gobind Singh had four sons. Out of respect they are called *Sahibzadas* and the epithet ‘Baba’ is attached to their names. The name of four Sahibzadas were Ajit Singh, born to ‘Sundri’ in Magh 1743 B.K, Jujhar Singh born to ‘Jito’ in Chet 1743 B.K, Zorawar Singh, born to ‘Jito’ in Magh 1753, B.K, Fateh Singh, born by ‘Jito’ in Chet 1755 B.K. The elder Sahibzadas were martyred in the battle of Chamkaur and the younger ones were martyred in Sirhind. When the Guru and his party were treacherously attacked on the banks of Sirsa stream, Zorawar Singh, along with his younger brother Fateh Singh, and their aged grandmother, Mata Gujari were separated from the Guru. They were betrayed by a Brahmin and handed over to the Nawab of Sirhind. On the refusal of the Sahibzadas to embrace Islam, they were bricked alive and then beheaded on December 27, 1704. Baba Zorawar was hardly eight years of age at that time.

In his work, Bhai Santokh Singh mentions the date of birth of the Sahibzadas but he has mixed up their names. He mentions the name of Sahibzada Ajit Singh as the eldest (which is correct) Zorawar Singh (instead of Jujhar Singh) Jujhar Singh (instead of Zorawar Singh) and Sahibzada Fateh Singh (which is also correct).
Bhai Santokh Singh mentions incorrectly that Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Zorawar Singh were martyred in the battle of Chamkaur while Sahibzada Jujhar Singh and Fateh Singh were martyred in Sirhind. Sukha Singh in Gurbilas Patshahi 10 has given the same sequence of names. But Sau Sakhi mentions that the sons of Mata Jito were Baba Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh, Fateh Singh while Ajit Singh was the son of Mata Sundari. He mentions that Baba Jujhar Singh was the elder one and Ajit Singh the younger. Sainapat mentions the sequence of names as Baba Ranjit Singh or Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh. Twarikh Guru Khalsa mentions as Baba Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. Mehma Prakash mentions as Baba Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. Macauliffe the later British historian follows the sequence of names as given in Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth. The sequence of names of Sahibzadas as Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh has been traditionally endorsed and accepted.

The hill chiefs had already fought against Guru Gobind Singh and knew his strength. They appealed to the emperor of Delhi for help. Aurangzeb was at that time in the Deccan. He ordered the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore to march against the Guru. They attacked Anandpur in 1701. The Sikhs fought as they had never fought before, and held their ground for three years against the repeated attacks of the Hindu and Muslim armies, but all supplies being cut off, they were put to great hardships by hunger and thirst. Some of them felt that they could hold out no longer. They were signs of discontent among them. Forty of them signed a ‘disclaimer’ and were allowed to go away. The rest remained as loyal as ever, but the sight of the suffering Khalsa and the solemn promises of the enemy for a safe exit moved him to leave the town, which he did in the winter of 1704.

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2 Ibid, p.4846.
3 Ibid, p.4847, Rut 2, Ansu 44.
5 Teja Singh and Fauja Singh, A Short history of the Sikhs (1469-1765), Publication bureau, Punjabi University, Patiala, 2016, P. 71
Twarkih Guru Khalsa and Mehma Prakash mention the correct sequence regarding the name of Sahibzadas.

As soon as the Guru came out, however, he was set upon by a large force on the banks of the river Sarsa. The Guru was separated from a part of his family, but he was able to make his way to Chamkaur. They chose a mud-built double-storied house with a large open compound. The Guru and his Sikhs hurried into it in the evening of December 21, 1704. The battle of Chamkaur was fought on December 22, 1704. Sahibzadas Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh and other Sikhs died in this battle. Only five Sikhs were left to defend the place. They persuaded the Guru to go away and save himself. He did so in disguise.

Guru Gobind Singh moved to Macchiwara, twenty seven kilometers away. He stopped at Jhar Sahib twelve kilometers away. Gani Khan and Nabi Khan met the Guru. On the Guru’s request Rai Kalha sent a messenger to Sarhind to bring news about his family members. The emissary returned in few days. Noora Mahi informed Guru Gobind Singh that Mata Gujari, and the two Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh had had been done to death.

On December 24, 1704 the children were produced before Wazir Khan (Wazid) Suba-i-Sirhind (Governor of Sirhind) in Public Durbar. The Nawab’s courtier Sucha Nand Khatri remarked that 'these young ones were equally poisonous like their father as they are sons of snake.' Wazir Khan asked Sher Muhammad of Malerkotla to take charge of the boys and kill them, but he declined to do so.

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6 Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 113. Mata Gujari: (1624-1705) was the daughter of Bhai Lal Chand Subhikhi and Bishan Kaur, a pious couple of Kartarpur, in present day Jalandhar district of Punjab. Lal Chand had migrated from his ancestral village, Lakhnur, in Ambala district, to settle at Kartarpur where his daughter Gujari was married to Guru Tegh Bahadur on 4 February, 1633. The betrothal had taken place four years when Tegh Bha

7 Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 438, Wazir Khan: d. 1710. A resident of Kunjpura, near Karnal now in Haryana was founder of Sirhind under the Mughals in the opening years of the eighteenth century. He was died on 12 May 1710. A fierce action took place at Chappar Chiri near present day Chandigarh. In this battle, Wazir Khan was killed and his army completely routed.

8 Wazid Khan, Bhai Santokh Singh mentions Wazid Khan but actually it is Wazid Khan.

9 Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 258, Sucha nand (d. 1710), a khatri official in the court of Nawabwazir Khan faujdar of Sirhind was instrumental in the execution of younger Sahibzadas. In January 1710, when Banda Singh Bahadur invested Suchanand too met his enemies and done to death.

10 Harbans Singh, Encyclopedia of Sikhism, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 106 Sher Muhammad Khan an Afgan feudatory of the Mughals was the chief of Malerkotla and held a high military position in the Sarkarpur division of Sirhind. He had participated in the battle of Chamkaur and was present in the court of Sirhind when NawabWazir Khan, the Faujdar pronounced death for Sahibzadas Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh. the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh who were nine and seven years of age, respectively, SherMuhamad Khan pleaded against the death sentence on the ground that the boys were too young to be given such a harsh penalty and could not in any case be held responsible for the objection and the Sahibzadas were brutally executed.

When Banda Singh Bhadur advanced on Sirhind in 1710, NawabSher Muhammad Khan at the head of his Malerkotlacentigent, formed part of Wazir Khan’s army. He was killed in the action that ensured the battle of ChapparChiri fought on 12 May 1710.
Thereupon they were beheaded on December 27, 1704 A.D. A local Banya named as Todar Mal, who was a rich banker and a devout Sikh cremated their bodies.

**RaiKot Jagrawan**

Bhai Santokh Singh mentions that the Guru reached Rai Kot Jagrawan where he met Rai Kalha. They went to the village Lmma (Lmma Jatpura) and sent a person, Noora Mahi, for getting information regarding the younger sahibzadas and Mata Gujari from Sarhind. He came back and gave the news that the younger sahibzadas had attained martyrdom.

The purchase. The Seth promised to take the land he needed. He went to the village Lmma (Lmma Jatpura) and sent a person, Noora Mahi, for getting information regarding the younger sahibzadas and Mata Gujari from Sarhind. He came back and gave the news that the younger sahibzadas had attained martyrdom.

**Twarikh Guru Khalsa** and **Panth Prakash** more or less give the same information. *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* states that the Guru was in the village of Brars when he got the news about the death of the sahibzadas and Mata Gujari.

11 Harbans Singh, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 358, Todar Mall, Seth a wealthy merchant of Sirhind, according to tradition, performed the last rites for the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh martyred on 12 December 1706 under orders of Wazir Khan, faujdar of Sirhind and the Mata Gujari the Guru’s mother who died of the shock on the same day. It is said that landowners around the Sirhind fort would not permit him to hold the cremation in their fields, until one Chaudhari Atta agreed to sell him a plot. The seller’s stipulation was that the buyer (Todar Mall) will take the land only as much he would layout for the purchase. The Seth produced the coins and brought the piece of land he needed. He cremated the three bodies and putting the ashes in an urn buried them there. Modern historians have tried to identify Seth Todar Mall as a son or later descendent of Raja Todar Mall of Sirhind, who won renown as an administrator under the Mughal emperors, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb to perpetuate the memory of the noble minded Seth, aroad in Sirhind town and a hall in Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib have now been named after him.

12 Gurbilas Patshahi 10, ed. K.S. Raju, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, pp. 1025-1026.


15 Twari Khalsa 16 and Panth Prakash 17 more or less give the same information. *Gurbilas Patshahi 10* states that the Guru was in the village of Brars when he got the news about the death of the sahibzadas and Mata Gujari. 18

16 Harbans Singh, *Encyclopedia of Sikhism*, Punjabi University Patiala, vol. iv, p. 358, Todar Mall, Seth a wealthy merchant of Sirhind, according to tradition, performed the last rites for the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh martyred on 12 December 1706 under orders of Wazir Khan, faujdar of Sirhind and the Mata Gujari the Guru’s mother who died of the shock on the same day. It is said that landowners around the Sirhind fort would not permit him to hold the cremation in their fields, until one Chaudhari Atta agreed to sell him a plot. The seller’s stipulation was that the buyer (Todar Mall) will take only as much he would layout for the purchase. The Seth produced the coins and brought the piece of land he needed. He cremated the three bodies and putting the ashes in an urn buried them there. Modern historians have tried to identify Seth Todar Mall as a son or later descendent of Raja Todar Mall of Sirhind, who won renown as an administrator under the Mughal emperors, Shah Jahan and Aurangzeb to perpetuate the memory of the noble minded Seth, aroad in Sirhind town and a hall in Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib have now been named after him.

17 Gurbilas Patshahi 10, ed. K.S. Raju, Language Department, Punjab, Patiala, pp. 1025-1026.


Saroop Singh Kaushish mentions that the Guru reached Lmma Jatpura where he met Rai Kalha and his son-in-law Alam Khan (Kotla Nihang Khan) Bhai Daya Singh also reached there and stated that Bhai Dunna Singh (Sheri) had met him and given him the news that both the younger sons and mother of the Guru had attained martyrdom at Sirhind. Rai Kalha sent Nooran Mahi to Sirhind who confirmed the news. Macauliffe writes that both Lmma and Jatpura are different places not one as stated in the Gurmukhi sources. The Guru met a Muhammadan called Kalha, a rich and important Chaudhari of Jagraon and Raikot, two considerable towns of the Ludhiana district at Jatpura. The Guru requested him to send a messenger to Sarhind to inquire the fate of his mother and his two sons. He only mentions that Guru met to Rai Kala but don’t mentions the name of the place where Guru had met him. The Guru sent a messenger named Mahi to Sirhind to brought news about the Guru’s family.

Bhai Santokh Singh narrates the whole episode about the martyrdom of younger sahibzadas in detail. One Brahman (Gangu), a greedy masand of the Guru, took the mother and younger sons to his village Kheri. In the darkness of night, He stole the ashrafis that Mata Gujari was carrying with her and when Mata enquired about the robbery, he became aggressive and shouted at the Mata for accusing him. Enraged he met the Chaudhari of the village and both went together to Morinda and conveyed the information about the location of the sahibzadas and the Mata to the authorities assured them that they would be duly rewarded. The troops marched to Kheri and brought the Sahibzadas and Mata on to Sirhind. The troops of Wazid Khan were along and took them to Sirhind where they were kept in Buraj.

Bhai Santokh Singh, Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth, p.5946, Rut 6, Ansu 50.

22 Bhai Santokh Singh, Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth, p.5946, Rut 6, Ansu 50.
Wazir Khan then ordered his soldiers to follow the orders of Wazir Khan (Wazid Khan), the grandfather. All the Hindus and Muslims present in the court were astonished to hear this. After their refusal, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh also refused their offerings too. They followed the path of their brothers too were dead. He asked both of them to salute Wazir Khan. The Ranghar Sardars informed the Sahibzadas that their father had been killed in the battle of Chamkaur and their brothers too were dead. He asked both of them to salute Wazir Khan. Sahibzada Jujhar Singh (name incorrectly given) replied that their father had not died and that their heads would only bow in the front of their Guru. They also refused to change their religion and practice shariat. Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh refused their offerings too. They followed the path of their grandfather. All the Hindus and Muslims present in the court were astonished to hear this. After their refusal to follow the orders of Wazir Khan (Wazid Khan), he pronounced death sentence on them.

23 Ibid, p.5947, Rut 6, Ansu 50.
27 Sukha Singh, Gurbilas Daswin Patshahi, Language Department, Punjab, pp.330-331.
28 Saroop SinghKaushik, Gurukian Sakhian, p.154, Sakh No.84.

Twarikh Guru Khalsa mentions that Gangu was not a masand as stated by Santokh Singh but a cook at the Guru’s court.  

Panth Prakash mentions about the martyrdom of Sahibzadas and regarding the evacuation of Anandpur fort by the Guru. This statement has been endorsed by Giani Gian Singh and also Gurbilas Daswin Patshahi. Gurukian Sakhian gives a different version. He states that the Sahibzadas and the Guru’s mother were residing at the home of one Karim Baksh. Two masands took them to their own village and stole the money of Mata and then informed the Mughal authorities in Morinda about their location. Macauliffe and Bhagat Lakshman Singh are of the same view.

According to Bhai Santokh Singh in the court of Suba Wazir Khan Mughals, Pathans, Khatri, Banias all were present. Rangar Sardars of Morinda were also present. When Wazir Khan called the sahibzadas to the court Mata Gujari refused to send them while they were in prison. Wazir Khan then ordered his soldiers to bring them to the court. The Ranghar Sardars informed the Sahibzadas that their father had been killed in the battle of Chamkaur and their brothers too were dead. He asked both of them to salute Wazir Khan. Sahibzada Jujhar Singh (name incorrectly given) replied that their father had not died and that their heads would only bow in the front of their Guru. They also refused to change their religion and practice shariat. Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh refused their offerings too. They followed the path of their grandfather. All the Hindus and Muslims present in the court were astonished to hear this. After their refusal to follow the orders of Wazir Khan (Wazid Khan), he pronounced death sentence on them.
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Religion but they did not agree. At last he gave the orders to kill them.

Giani Gian Singh states that 'Nazim' of Sirhind gave many options to the Sahibzadas like to change their religion but they did not agree. At last he gave the orders to kill them. Panth Prakash mentions that when the Sahibzadas were called to the court they declared that "they will give their heads, but will never change their religion". They followed their grandfather’s path. He had sacrificed himself for the protection of freedom, to practice their faith and for the protection of Hindu religion. Wazir Khan gave orders to kill them. Sukha Singh supports this view and mentions that they also refused to salute Nawab Wazir Khan. Saroop Singh Kaushish mentions that both the sahibzadas and Mata were arrested and kept in the 'Thanda Buraj'. Macauliffe and Bhagat Lakshman Singh also give the some narrations of the incident.

31 Bhai Santokh Singh, Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth, p.5949, Rut 6, Ansu 51.
32 Ibid, p.5950, Rut 6, Ansu 51.
33 Ibid, p.5951, Rut 6, Ansu 52.
34 Ibid, p.5952, Rut 6, Ansu 52.
36 Giani Gian Singh, Panth Prakash, pp.296-297.
37 Sukha Singh, Gurbilas Daswin Patshahi, p.331.
38 Saroop Singh Kaushish, Gurukian Sakhian, p.154, Sakhi No.84.
The Khatri Nand (Sucha Nand) motivated Nawab of Sirhind to pronounce the death sentence. But the Nawab of Malerkotla opposed the decision. Both the sahibzadas were beheaded and died a martyr’s death. Todar Mal, a devoted Sikh of the Guru gave the news of the martyrdom of the Sahibzadas to Mata. Mata was shocked and taking the diamond from Todar Mal’s ring, she swallowed it and died. Todar Mal cremated the three bodies. After that the Turks arrested Gangu Brahman and his family. They were punished and killed. When the Guru was told about the whole incident he replied that the Nawab of Malerkotla would live long and always be part of history while the Turks would be destroyed.

Twarikh Guru Khalsa gives a different view regarding the martyrdom of sahibzadas and says that they were bricked alive in a wall. The Nawab of Malerkotla tried to stop Wazir Khan from doing this heinous crime but he did not agree with him. In fact the Nawab was advised to take the revenge of his brothers who were killed by the Sikhs in a battle but he declined the offer saying that ‘if he wanted to take the revenge he could fight with the Guru in a battlefield but was ‘not ready to commit the sin of killing the children and Mata’. However, both the Nawab of Sarhind and Sucha Nand did not agree with him. Wazir Khan ordered them to be bricked alive and then they were martyred. When Mata Gujari heard about it and she also died. When the Guru got the news he stated that the Turks would be uprooted. Panth Prakash mentions that both the sahibzadas were bricked alive and as they did not die Wazir Khan gave the order to execute them by slitting off their throats and Sanshal Beg and Banshal Beg performed the duty (sin) of executing the Sahibzadas.

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41 Bhai Santokh Singh, Sri Gurpratap Suraj Granth, p.5953, Rut 6, Ansu 52.
42 Ibid, p.5954, Rut 6, Ansu 52
43 Ibid, p.5956, Rut 6, Ansu 52.
44 Ibid, p.5957, Rut 6, Ansu 52.
46 Sukha Singh, Gurbilas Daswin Patshahi, pp.332-333.
When Mata heard this news, she also passed away. Todar Mal gathered their bodies and cremated them at Jyotisar. A somewhat similar account is given in Gurukian Sakhian and other Gurmukhi sources. Bhai Santokh Singh however mentions that the Sahibzadas were beheaded and not bricked alive.

To conclude we can say that Bhai Santokh Singh has created misunderstanding regarding the names of Sahibzadas, and the martyrdom of the younger sahibzadas. Bhai Santokh Singh mentions the name of Sahibzadas as Ajit Singh, Zorawar Singh, Jujhar Singh and Fateh Singh.

But according to other Gurmukhi sources like Twarikh Guru Khalsa and Mehma Prakash and Sikh tradition the name of Sahibzadas is as follows Ajit Singh, Jujhar Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. Other than the sequence of names, he also mentions that Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Zorawar Singh were martyred in the battle of Chamkaur and Sahibzada Jujhar Singh and Fateh Singh were martyred in Sirhind. But according to Sikh tradition and historical sources like Twarikh Guru Khalsa, Mehma Prakash mentions that Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh were martyred in the battle of Chamkaur and Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were bricked alive at Sirhind. Apart from primary sources renowned historians like Teja Singh, Fauja Singh, Bhagat Lakshman Singh are also of the view that Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh were martyred in the battle of Chamkaur and Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were bricked alive. Bhai Santokh Singh goes against the well accepted oral tradition regarding martyrdom of Sahibzadas that first 'they were bricked alive and when that wall fell down, then they were beheaded'. He states that they were not bricked alive but only beheaded. He also writes that when Mata Gujari heard about the martyrdom of Sahibzadas from Todar Mal, Mata was shocked; she took the diamond from Todar Mal’s ring, swallowed it, and passed away. But Sikh tradition does not acknowledge the view of Bhai Santokh Singh regarding the death of Mata Gujari.