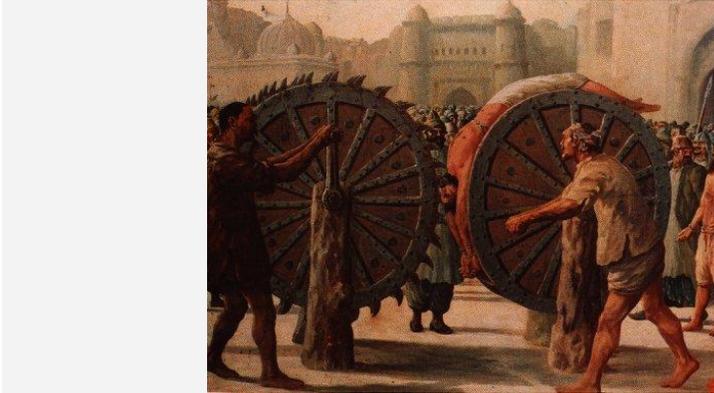


## Bhai Subeg Singh, Shahbaz Singh



Bhai Subeg Singh, Shahbaz Singh

Sardar Subeg Singh was an influential zamindar of Jambar, in the district of Lahore. He was also a government contractor. He was great scholar of Persian, a wise and upright man. He proved useful to Zakriya Khan on a number of occasions. For many years the Mughal government pursued a policy of persecuting the Sikhs. It was determined to root them out completely. Thousands and thousands were murdered in cold blood. But the Sikhs just continued to grow. They never thought of giving up their faith to save their lives. The martyrdom of persons like Bhai Taru Singh produced a wave of indignation among Sikhs of the Majha. They decided to retaliate. They resolved to take revenge. They began to fall on government treasuries and caravans. Parties coming with chests of revenue meant for Lahore were waylaid and looted. As a result for some years no money from revenue could reach the government treasury. The forces of government tried to punish the offenders. But they were unable to contact them; for the Sikhs did not live in houses or forts. After each attack, they used to run away to their camps in the forests. The story of persecution and revenge went on for some time. The government, at last, felt tired of this method of dealing with rebels. It decided to pacify and conciliate them. Accordingly, in 1733 Zakriya Khan represented his difficulties to the Delhi government. He suggested that a policy of conciliation should be given in a trial. with that end in view, he proposed that a grant be made to the Sikhs and a title be conferred on their leader. The proposal was accepted. The next thing needed was to persuade the Sikhs to agree to the proposal. Zakriya Khan felt that to persuade them would not be an easy task. He turned to Sardar Subeg Singh for help. He said to him, 'If you succeed in bringing them round, you will receive good service to me and my government. It will be remembered, appreciated and duly rewarded.'

Sardar Subeg Singh agreed to do his best. He agreed to meet the Sikhs and try his skill. At that time the Khalsa had assembled at the Akal Takhat, Amritsar. He went there and held discussion with them. He informed them of the offer made by the government. He offered them the title of 'Nawab' for their leader, along with a Jagir of about one lakh rupees. They would not accept the offer. They were about to reject it outright. But Sardar Subeg Singh succeeded in overcoming their objections. Then they accepted the offer. In this way, some sort of peace was made between Mughal government and the Sikhs. Zakriya Khan felt relieved a good deal. He appreciated the part played by Sardar Subeg Singh in bringing about the reconciliation. But after some time, the campaign of persecution was started once again. In the heat of that campaign even Sardar Subeg

Singh was not spared. He was arrested along with his son, Sardar Shahbaz Singh. This is how it happened. Sardar Subeg Singh had a son named Sardar Shahbaz Singh. He used to read in a Muhammadan school under a qazi. The boy was usually handsome, bright and promising. The qazi took a fancy to him. He wished to convert him to Islam. He wanted to marry his daughter to him. The qazi tried his utmost. He used all his skills. But Sardar Shahbaz Singh was firm in his faith. Neither threats nor tempting offers could make him change his resolve. Because of this, the qazi's fondness for the bright, handsome boy diminished. He became determined to finish him. He reported unfavorably to the government against him. He said, 'The boy has used disrespectful words against his prophet. He has said foul thing against Islam. This kafir deserves no mercy. He deserves death.'

On the basis of this report, Sardar Shahbaz Singh was arrested and taken to Lahore. He was to stand trial before the governor. At the same time, his father, Sardar Subeg Singh, was also arrested and imprisoned. It was said against him that he supplied information to the Sikhs. But Zakriya Khan died before he could see the end of his victims. He was succeeded by his son, Yahiya Khan. This person was more cruel than his father. He had no soft corner in his heart for Sardar Subeg Singh. He took up his case and pursued it to the bitter end. Sardar Subeg Singh was asked to give up his religion or suffer death at the wheel. He refused to give up his religion. Thereupon, he was put on the wheel and turned on it. The pain was sharp and intense. But it did not break his spirit. Then his son, Shahbaz Singh, was told, 'You can save your life by accepting Islam.' He refused to give up his faith. Thereupon, he was bound to the wheel. He was turned on it before his father's eyes. Both bore the torture with great patience. They went on shouting, 'Akal' all the time. At intervals, the wheels were stopped and the two were asked, 'Do you agree to embrace Islam ?' Every time they shook their heads and shouted, 'NO'. The wheels were set in motion again. The two kept on shouting 'Akal' ! 'Akal'. The wheels had sharp knives arranged around them. They went on working mercilessly. The shouts of Akal grew feebler and feebler. Then they ceased altogether. Both left their bodies. They went away to join the ranks of illustration Sikh martyrs.

This occurred in the year 1745.

**Source - Sikh History Book 5 by Kartar Singh, Hemkunt Press, New Delhi**

## Bhai Subeg Singh and Bhai Shahbaz Singh



**B**hai Subeg Singh was resident of village Jumber district Lahore. He was well educated and scholar of Persian. He was working as a government contractor at Lahore. He mediated between the government and the Sikhs in 1733 A.D., when the Dal Khalsa was given an estate. During 1745 A.D., when the Governor Zakria Khan could not pass urine, Bhai Subeg Singh was sent by him to the Dal Khalsa. As advised by the leader, the Governor had kept on passing urine when hit on the head with the shoe of Bhai Taru Singh.

**A**fter the death of Zakria Khan on the 1st July, 1745 A.D., his son, Yahiya Khan became the Governor of Lahore. To avenge the death of his brother Jaspat Rai, who had died in an encounter with the Singhs near Eminabad in January, 1746 A.D., Diwan Lakhpat Rai said to the new Governor, "Subeg Singh is in league with the Singhs. Your father had to hit himself on the head with a Singh's shoe at his

bidding which caused his death. He should be punished for that crime."

**T**he Governor ordered Bhai Subeg Singh to become a Muslim and spy on the Singhs. Eighteen year old son of Bhai Subeg Singh, Shahbaz Singh, studied Persian from a maulvi. When the maulvi came to know of the arrest of Bhai Subeg Singh, he asked Bhai Shahbaz Singh to embrace Islam so that he may marry his daughter to him as he was handsome and genius. Bhai Shahbaz Singh refused his offer. The maulvi asked the Governor and had him arrested also. The qazi said to them, "If both of you embrace Islam, you will be pardoned . " At their refusal both of them were mounted on rotating wheels in sight of each other so that they might embrace Islam seeing each other suffering. But they did not forsake their faith although both became unconscious due to excessive loss of blood.

**N**ext day, the qazi said to Bhai Shahbaz Singh, "Son ! your father has been executed. I can ward off your death if you become a Muslim even now." Bhai Shahbaz Singh replied, "Death cannot be put off. It must come one day." The qazi sent the son away, called for the father and said to him, "Your son has agreed to embrace Islam and you should also consent to do so." Bhai Subeg Singh said, "I cannot give up my faith at any cost." The qazi again brought the father and son face to face. He again asked both of them to come to the fold of Islam. On their refusal, the qazi ordered both of them to be killed. On the 10th March, 1746 A.D., the executioners beheaded both of them. It was on that day that Diwan Lakhpat Rai had got together the Sikhs of Lahore and handed them over to the scavengers of the city for slaughter in order to exterminate Sikhs. The prominent Hindus of the city pleaded with the Diwan, not to murder innocent Sikhs. He replied, "If God Himself comes and forbids me, I shall not stop."

## **Salute to Great Sikh Martyr Bhai Subeg Singh and Bhai Shahbaz Singh**

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### **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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