



SHAHEED BHAI MANI SINGH JI GATKA AKHARA

FREE DRINKS – NO CATCH – WHY?

Sikhs the world over are commemorating the martyrdom anniversary of their fifth Divine Teacher and Guru, Guru Arjan Dev Ji.

Guru Arjan Dev Ji was instrumental in the construction of the holiest Sikh shrine, the Golden Temple. The most revered centre of Sikh worship is specially built with, a temple within a pool of water with four doors, one on each side of the cubed building – a representation, that this holy place is open to all and closed to none – regardless of caste, colour, creed, faith or gender. Even today, the shrine is visited by over a million people, every single day.

An important step in the separate consolidation of the religion was the compilation of the Sikh Scriptures and everlasting Guru, Guru Granth Sahib. Besides the contributions from eight of the ten Sikh Gurus, the scriptures contain the hymns of Hindu and Muslim saints.

This compilation is a landmark in the history of Sikhism. It is a clear testimony of the fact that the Guru took this vital step to emphasise that their message and mission were prophetic.

This fact comes out in all its glaring singularity when we see that, in the entire religious history of man, no other prophet felt it essential to authenticate his message so as to secure its purity and exclude the possibility of interpolation and misinterpretation. In fact, in most cases the utterances of the prophets were compiled by their devotees long after their ministry. This authentication of the scripture by the Guru himself once and for all ensured its separate identity and purity.

Owing to the growing religious and political influence of the Gurus, the Sikhs had got a clear consciousness of their religious and socio-political identity. Consequently, the position of the Gurus had naturally given rise to hostility, both in the religious and political quarters. It was due to his religious and political practise that the Guru was immorally imprisoned at Lahore fort for no wrong doing. He was chained to a post in an open place and exposed to the sun from morning to evening in the months of May through to June. Below his feet a heap of sand was put, which burnt like a furnace. Boiling water was poured on his naked body at intervals. His body was covered with blisters all over. In this agony the brave Guru refrained from slander or violence, but instead uttered the words: *"Your actions are sweet to me, Oh Lord."*

The Guru was ordered to be executed. In addition a fine of 200,000 Rupees was imposed on him. The Sikhs offered to pay the fine themselves but the Guru forbade them to do so. He replied to the Emperor, *"Whatever money I have is for the poor, the friendless and the stranger. If you ask for money you can take what I have; but if you are to impose a fine, I shall not give you a single penny."*

The Guru accepted death by torture and suffered the first great martyrdom of the Sikh Faith. His sacrifice further steeled the faith of the community in the mission of the Gurus.

Due to the nature of the Guru's sacrifice and the heat of his torture, Sikhs the world over will distribute cold drinks, on a hot summer's day – **free of charge** – in both remembrance and reverence of the sacrifice of their fifth master.