



# ਸਰਬਤ ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ

## Sarbat Khalsa

ਗੁਰਮਤਿ ਸਿਧਾਂਤ

ਪੰਚ-ਪ੍ਰਧਾਨੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ

Date: 10 September 2025

**Subject: The 350th Anniversary of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji's Martyrdom – To be Celebrated as the Legacy of Srisht Di Chaadar, the Defender of Human Rights**

Dear Sikh Sangat Ji,

As we observe the 350th anniversary of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji's martyrdom, it is our moral duty to ensure that this supreme sacrifice is not remembered merely as a historical episode, but as a living legacy for the defence of human rights and freedom of expression. Contemporary poet Senapati beautifully wrote: *"Pragat bhae Guru Tegh Bahadur, sagal srisht pai dhapi chaadar"* – meaning, Guru Sahib manifested as the shield of humanity.

Guru Sahib's martyrdom was not a conflict with any religion; it was a stand against tyranny, forced conversions, and state oppression. Sikhs must remain vigilant not to fall prey to divisive or Islamophobic propaganda that distorts this truth and diminishes the universal spirit of Guru Sahib's sacrifice.

In this spirit, the Sarbat Khalsa Jathebandi warmly appreciates the efforts of the Indian Islamic Centre, Delhi, for organizing the Sikh-Muslim Unity Seminar on 24th August in remembrance of Guru Sahib's legacy.

History teaches us that Aurangzeb was a tyrant ruler who seized power by killing his brothers, imprisoning his father Shah Jahan, and weaponizing caste divisions in society. Non-Muslims were subjected to the jazia tax and prohibited from keeping arms. It is noteworthy that Brahmins were exempted from jazia and Rajputs enjoyed military privileges, forming the backbone of Aurangzeb's army. The oppressed classes (shudras) bore the heaviest burden—facing both state tyranny and caste-based exploitation.

Amid this political turmoil, in 1671, Iftikhar Khan, the Governor of Kashmir, unleashed persecution upon the Kashmiri Pandits. Renowned for their Vedic scholarship, the Pandits held significant influence throughout North India. Aurangzeb believed that their conversion to Islam would spark a wider wave of conversions across the region. Yet, despite their eminence, no Rajput ruler or general had the courage, compassion, or selfless spirit to defend them. At that moment, Pandit Kirpa Ram and his companions turned not to Rajput rulers, but to Guru Sahib at Anandpur for help. Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji chose the path of martyrdom—not for his own people, but for the right of others to freely practice their faith, even when it represented an opposing Brahmanical ideology. His sacrifice stands as the highest example of defending freedom of conscience. As Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji himself teaches:

*"One who does not frighten anyone, nor fears from anyone, says Nanak, listen O mind, call that person truly wise."* (Guru Granth Sahib, p.1427)

As Professor Noel Q. King (University of California) has rightly said: *"Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom was the first ever martyrdom for human rights in the world."*



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In this same climate of oppression, Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Anandpur Sahib instructed Sikhs, irrespective of caste, to carry the sword and learn the art of warfare. This was not only a military step but also a profound social revolution—breaking caste barriers and empowering the downtrodden to resist tyranny. The Rajput rulers of the nearby hilly states, envious of Sikh empowerment, were the first to attack the Sikhs. They instigated Aurangzeb and later allied with him, launching wars that brought immense hardship upon Guru Sahib, his family, and the Sikhs.

Sadly, even today we witness similar patterns of oppression. The marginalized classes, religious minorities, human rights defenders, and independent journalists continue to face persecution and silencing. The legacy of Aurangzeb still echoes in modern forms of authoritarianism.

Therefore, the 350th commemoration of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib Ji's martyrdom must not remain a mere ritual of remembrance. Sikhs must stand united against oppression, shoulder-to-shoulder with all the oppressed, and embody Guru Sahib's eternal legacy as *Srisht Di Chaadar*.

In the interest of the Kaum, guided by Gurmat,

### **Panch-Pardhani Council:**

S. Nirmal Singh (Victoria Canada), S. Gurpreet Singh GP (Bahrain), Dr. Khushhal Singh (Chandigarh), Giani Amritpal Singh (Ludhiana), S. Satbir Singh (Delhi)