

Taajudin Diary: Travels of Baba Nanak Shah Fakir

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In the month of June, Bhai Harbans Lal (USA) made a revelation about the book written by Sant (Syed) Pirthipal Singh, nee Mushtaq Hussain Shah, available online as English version, translated and edited by Devinder Singh of Toronto. The original Punjabi version was borrowed from Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi, son of Pirthipal Singh, now living in London. Who was Sant Pirthipal Singh? Who was Taajuddin? These queries have been answered by the original author and the translator.

Sant (Syed) Pirthipal Singh, alias Mushtaq Hussain Shah, was born in a well-to-do Muslim family of Mirpur (Kashmir state) in 1902. His grandfather, Pir Bakur Shah was a Minister in the kingdom of Maharaja Partap Singh of Kashmir. His father, Mujafar Hussein Shah, was a renowned scholar of Persian and Arabic and known as a 'Pir'. Both father and son went to Mecca for Hajj pilgrimage in 1927. From Mecca, they moved on to Medina as Mushtaq was ordained to undergo training for a Maulvi in Mina university at Medina. While studying Islamic theology at Medina, Mushtaq came across a Persian manuscript "Sihayato Baba Nanak Shah Fakir" in the library which was based on the travels of Guru Nanak to Mecca, Medina and several other cities on the way to Baghdad.

Taajuddin Naqashbandi, the original author of "Sihayato Baba Nanak Shah Fakir" met Guru Nanak in Iran during Baba's sojourn after crossing the border of Afghanistan. He was highly impressed by this chance meeting with Baba Nanak and accompanied him along with Bhai Mardana to Mecca, Medina and Baghdad, recording the daily diary (*Roznamcha*) of events. Nothing is known about the family of Taajuddin and the purpose of his mission. He spent two years in the company of Baba Nanak.

Reading Taajuddin's diary of travels of Guru Nanak, Mushtaq felt some sort of transmutation in his psyche. He wanted to adopt Sikhism as his creed. He spoke about his intentions to his father who discouraged him to adopt Sikh faith. He called Guru Nanak, a *Kafir*, who had a status much lower than the Prophet Mohammed. Despite his father's pleadings, Mushtaq was recalcitrant to follow Guru Nanak's path. Ultimately, father reconciled with his wishes and bade him to return to India. But Mushtaq was adamant to rediscover the path traversed by Guru Nanak and visit monuments erected in memory of Guru Nanak's visit to the holy cities of Islam.

Mushtaq stayed for three years in Saudi Arabia and compiled his notes in Persian. He found two other sources on Guru Nanak: '*Twarike Arab*' by Zainul Abidin and '*Guniyat-ut-Salehin*' by Abdul Rehman. Both these authors claim themselves to be followers of Guru Nanak. On return to India, Mushtaq was feeling restless to adopt Sikhi but his family was creating hurdles. One night, he escaped with his wife and son to Lahore and reached Gurdwara Dera Sahib. He met head granthi, Giani Achhar Singh, who later on became Jathedar of Sri Akal Takhat, and pleaded to accept him in Sikhi. Jathedar wanted to test his

intentions and sent him to Amritsar where he was not baptised at Akal Takhat due to late arrival. For three months, both husband and wife served the Sikh Sangat of Lahore with utmost humility, only then they were administered Amrit and admitted into the Khalsa fold. He became a Khalsa Sikh in May 1935 and from Mushtaq Hussain Shah, he became Pirthipal Singh.

Pirthipal Singh was a great Persian-Arabic scholar and commentator of Quran. He started learning Punjabi in Gurmukhi script and soon became proficient as a *Kathakar* (exegete) of Gurbani of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. He had to face many challenges from Islamic fanatics who knew his origin but his popularity among Sikh congregations was on the rise. When Giani Gurmukh Singh Musafir became the General Secretary of SGPC, he used the acumen of newly convert to Sikhi, Pirthipal Singh, to resolve the controversy of Gurdwara Chuna Mandi Lahore. Pirthipal Singh convinced the court by his arguments based on some Arabic documents and the case was decided in favour of Sikhs of Lahore.

Pirthipal Singh had no source of income except the paltry sum paid by the congregations for his lectures and *katha*. After partition of India, he settled in Patiala city. On the bidding of his friends and Sikh sangat, he wrote his Memoirs in Punjabi at Bibhor Sahib on the banks of river Satluj, sanctified by the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh Jee for writing his own memoirs. This manuscript remained unpublished. Prof. Himmat Singh of Punjabi university, Patiala made a reference to it in his presentation at Guru Nanak Dev university during a seminar when I was working in the university. Mohinder Pal Singh Bedi took this copy to London after his immigration. With the efforts of Bhai Harbans Lal and Inderjit Singh, this manuscript was retrieved for presentation as a gift to the Sikhs during 550th anniversary of Guru Nanak.



Sant Syed Prithipal Singh (1902 - 1969)

What are the contents of Taajuddin's diary reproduced from the copy prepared by Pirthipal Singh, who adopted the title of Sant (Syed) in his later years. Surprisingly, all the accounts of the diary match perfectly with the historical details given by Bhai Gurdas in his Var:

bwbw iPr m`ky gXw nll bsqR Dwry bnvwrl]
 AwsW h`Q ikqwb k`C kUjw bWg mus`lw Dwrl]
 bYTw jwie mslq ivc ijQy hwjl h`j gujwrl]
 jW bwbw su`qw rwq nUM v`l mihrwby pWie pswrl]
 jlvn mwrl lq dl kyVHW suqw ku&r ku&wrl]
 lqW vl ^udwie dy ikauNkr pieAw hoie bgwrl]
 tMgoN pkV GslitAw iPirAw m`kw klw idKwrl]
 hoie hYrwn kryn juhwrl]32]

(Bhai Gurdas, Var 1, Pauri 32)

Taajuddin diary mentions that Guru Nanak was sleeping inside Mecca mosque with his feet stretched towards Kaaba. When maulvi 'Jeevan' comes for morning prayers, he finds a *kafir* (non-believer) sleeping with feet towards Kaaba and drags him away. During this process, he watches Kaaba also moving in the same direction in which Guru Nanak was being dragged. Astonished by this miracle, he rushed back to report this episode to Rukan-ud-din, the head Qazi of Mecca. Rukan-ud-din reaches Kaaba and starts his dialogue with Baba Nanak. He is so much impressed that he decides to follow the path of Guru Nanak. Many others who were witness to this episode of rotation of Kaaba also became Guru's followers.

Rukan-ud-din left home and hearth in Mecca to meditate on 'Sat Kartar' in the cave of mount Umra. Some Muslim zealots reported to Amir of Mecca that Rukan-ud-din had become a follower of an Indian *kafir* and committed a blasphemous act against Islam. A court of enquiry was held and Rukan-ud-din was sentenced to death for his act. He was bricked in a sand wall and stoned to death. It is recorded that sound of 'Sat Kartar' was emanating from every pore of his body. Many who watched this spectacle were converted to Sikhi of Guru Nanak. Pirthipal Singh writes that at one time half of Mecca was converted to Guru Nanak's viewpoint. Japuji in Arabic was recited by these Sikh converts.

The daily diary records that Guru Nanak reached Medina via Amra and made his residence near the tomb of Hazrat Muhammed outside the city. He stayed there for 27 days and recited *keertan* of Asa ki Var early morning. The people of Medina made a complaint to Khalifa (a descendant of Hazrat Mohammed's family) and he along with his followers reached the site where Guru Nanak was resting. When they raised hands for pelting stones, all were frozen as statues. Realizing that Guru Nanak was the Messenger of Allah Himself, they fell at his feet and begged for pardon.

From Medina, Guru Nanak reached Kuffa and stayed put for three months near the cemetery made famous by the battle of Karbala. A monument "Nanak Wali Hind" was erected to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak and the family of Imam Mavia was acting as caretaker of this monument. Bibi Salima of Kuffa became a regular visitor and served *langar* (free kitchen) to all visitors at the congregation of Guru Nanak. When she was thrown out of her

house by the husband, she prevailed upon him to visit Guru Nanak. After the visit there was a change in his heart, and the family became converts to Sikhi.

Guru Nanak visited many holy cities of Islam, for example, Aden, Jeddah, Mecca, Medina, Kuffa and Baghdad. Memorials were raised as a tribute to Guru Nanak in all these cities. However, when Wahabis came to rule over Mecca, most of these monuments were destroyed considering these as anti-Islamic. Pirthipal Singh recorded his visits to some of these monuments and having met descendants of converted Sikh families.

Guru Nanak's visit to Baghdad is well recorded by Sikh chronicles. Taajuddin mentions that Guru Nanak met two important personalities of Baghdad: Pir Abdul Rehman known as Pir Dastgir, a descendant of Pir Abdul Qadar Jilani, and Pir Behlol. Pir Dastgir had discussion on the existence of millions of Planets and Galaxies with Guru Nanak as recorded in Japuji. He was fully convinced after a demonstration was arranged for him through the media of his son. This fact has been recorded by Bhai Gurdas as follows:

bwbw igAw bgdwd nUM bwhr jwie kIAw AsQwnw]
iek bwbw Akwl rUp dUjw rbwbl mrdwnw])
idql bWg inmwz kr suMn smwn hoXw jhwnw]
suMn muMn ngrl Bel dyK plr BieAw hYrwnw]
vyKY iDAwn lgwie kr iek Pklr vfw msqwnw]
puiCAw iPrky dsqglr kOn Pklr iks kw Grwnw] (1-35-6)
nwnk kil ivc AwieAw rb Pklr iek pihcwnw] (1-35-7)
Drq AkwS chUM ids jwnw]35]

(Bhai Gurdas, Var 1, Pauri 35)

There were monuments in the form of a Gurdwara constructed during World War I by the Sikh soldiers of the British army and a slab where Guru Nanak held discussions with Pir Behlol in Baghdad. The inscription on the stone slab reads as follows:



“Behold! How a wish has been fulfilled by God the benefactor. Baba Nanak’s building is suddenly built, Seven Pirs helped and this date 917 Hijri was set [for the building] so that the memory of his fortunate disciple could continue as a holy place established on earth. Year 917 Hijri”

It is unfortunate that the Gurdwara in the memory of Guru Nanak's visit has been destroyed during Iraq war. It may of interest to know that the Chola (robe) displayed by Bedi family of Dera Baba Nanak with inscriptions from Quran was given by Rukan-ud-din and other Sikh followers of Guru Nanak during his visit to Mecca.



Image: 1918 Photograph of Guru Nanak's Shrine in Baghdad