

## Sant Giani Sundar Singh

Sant Sunder Singh Ji Bhindranwaalay was a great Gursikh who led an exemplary life, did massive parhaar of Sikhi, inspired countless to take amrit and taught Gurbani and Gurbani meanings to countless students, in his short life of 42 years or so.

Sant Giani Sundar Singh ji was born at amrit vela at village Bhindran Kalan, state Firozpur, on **18 August 1883**. His father's name was Baba Khajaan Singh and his mother's name Bibi Mehtab Kaur.

At the age of 6 or 7, his parents who practiced the path of Gursikhi, gave him the duty to milk the buffalos and cows. This was so he could learn and understand the teaching from Guru Ji.

He began reading the Guru Granth Sahib at the age of ten. As he grew up, he learnt Sanskrit from a Brahman at Dharmkot, 8 km northwest of his native village, and

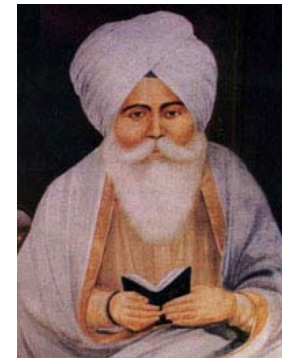
later successively from two Udasi scholars, Pandit Javala Das and Pandit Bhagat Ram.

His father at the same time taught him the banis of: Panj Granthi, Baaee Vaaraa(n), Bhagat Bani, and Das Granthi. Around the age of 9 or 10 he was taught how to read Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, and he became an Akhand Paati by the efforts of his father. It was at this time he joined the Khalsa Panth by taking Amrit from Panj Pyare. Until the age of 17 years he stayed at home learning the understanding of Gurbani and developing his practice of Sikhi.

At the age of 18 Sant Giani Sundar Singh ji left home after doing an Ardas to Guru Ji and seeking a blessing for an improvement in his Sikhi and for increased understanding of Gurbani. After having the sangat (company) of many Gursikhs and spiritualists he came to the sangat of Baba Bishan Singh Ji at Murale. It was here that he gained the complete

understanding of Gurbani (Brahm Gian), within two years.

Before Sant Bishan Singh Ji ascended to Sach Khand he gave Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji the chance to ask for anything he wanted, as he had spent their time at Murale doing selfless service. Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji replied without any ego, "it is up to you to decide" what you grace me with. Sant Bishan Singh Ji declared that he should for the rest of their life preach the word of Guru Ji, teach the sangat the meanings of Gurbani so he may join the path of the Khalsa.



Baba Bishan Singh Ji

Sant Bishan Singh Ji tied the dastar of Damdami Taksal around the head of Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji Bhindranwale.

He visited seats of learning in the Malva region and in the holy city of Amritsar in search of a teacher who could instruct him in Sikh philosophy, and ultimately became the pupil of Sant Bishan Singh of village Murala, in Gujrat district (now in Pakistan). Sundar Singh arrived at Murala, on 8 March 1906 and carried on with his study of the Sikh texts till the death, on 28 January 1908, of his mentor. He now launched on his career of expounding the sacred word and holding special gatherings to administer to the seekers the initiatory rites of the Khalsa. To this end, he travelled extensively in the Punjab, especially in the Pothohar, Malva and Lower Chenab Canal Colony (Lyallpur and Sheikhpura districts) areas.

He went on pilgrimage of principal Sikh shrines outside the Punjab such as Nanded and Patna Sahib

on two occasions. During the summer of 1925, he preached in Kashmir valley.

Sant Sundar Singh also accepted pupils whom he trained in the interpretation of Scripture. At intervals he took out batches of his students with him on his preaching tours which were devoted primarily to delivering katha, i.e. explanatory discourses on the entire Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to end. He conducted 19 such courses during his lifetime, besides two similar full-scale ones on the Dasam Granth. Instruction was similarly provided in the works of Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Santokh Singh.

Sant Sundar Singh also established permanent teaching centres in gurdwaras at several places of which the most important were at his native Bhindar Kalan, at Bopa Rai in Ludhiana district and at Takhtupura, in present-day Moga district. For public instruction, he founded Guru Tegh Bahadur school at the village of Rode, near Moga,

since upgraded into a college affiliated to Punjab University, Chandigarh.

Besides his world of letters and theology, Sant Sundar Singh involved himself in the wider issues of religious and social reform then engaging the attention of the Sikhs. He took part in the Akali agitation and helped in having the historical shrines at Muktsar and Hehran brought under the control of the reformists.



Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji

He visited Nankana Sahib soon after the massacre of the Akalis on 20 February 1921 and participated in Guru ka Bagh morcha (1922) and the morcha at Jaito (1923-25).

One day while he was doing Gurbani Katha, by the grace of Guru Ji a Amrit started dripping from a corner of the 'chandoaa' (canopy). The sangat at the Gurdwara noticed this and one or two even tried the Amrit and experienced a great sweetness.

To his students he made it known that besides understanding Gurbani and remembering Guru Ji, one should be efficient in Shastar vidiaa. He would say that each Sikh should be able to defend and protect the needy. He felt it was necessary that every Sikh should follow the command of Sri Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji of being true Saint-Soldiers.

He did much to promote the 5 K's (Kes, Kacchera, Kirpan, Kanga, Kara) he stated that these are not merely uniforms, but on the

contrary are there to develop our outer physical practice of Sikhi and our inner, thought processes. The wearing of the 5 K's is the command of the Guru. Obeying this command many Sikhs have flourished in their Sikhi and will do so in the future.

Sant Sundra Singh also met Sant Sitar Singh Mastuwaney Waley. On the completion of Akhand Paths at Gangsar Jaitu, Sant Attar Singh Ji met Sant Gyani Sunder Singh Ji and told him that, "All are now pressing hard that panth should be united. Sant Ji further asked Sant Gyani Sundar Singh Ji, if he could come to Talwandi Sabo and hold conduct Katha on the whole Guru Granth Sahib. Sant Ji agreed and began doing Katha on Guru Granth Sahib on 5 October and concluded it on 26 March 1926 AD.

The two of them met and discussed spirituality at length.

In 1920 Sant Sundar Singh Jee arrived at Village Akhare on a preaching tour. It was here that young Sant Gurbachan Singh upon meeting Sant Sundar Singh Jee that he gained the inner peace that he was searching for. By listening to the Katha and Kirtan of Sant Sundar Singh Jee, Sant Gurbachan Singh's heart was finally filled with peace and bliss. It was at this point that he felt he should become a part of the Khalsa Panth and he took Amrit.

Even though he became quite ill due to a long-term illness in 1929 Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji forever remained in high spirits. He continually remained in full concentration of Guru Ji at all times. He passed on the selfless service of continuing Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji's Damdami Taksal to one of their students Giani Gurbachan Singh Ji Khalsa.

Sant Sundar Singh Ji narrated the complete Katha of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Jee at Boporai, Sant Gurbachan Singh Ji was the

Paathee throughout the Katha and on the day of the Bhog of the Katha, Sant Sundar Singh Ji honoured Sant Gurbachan Singh Ji with a Siropa) and he said to the sangat, "With us (in the Jatha) we have countless Gurmukhs who have got educated, some have gone on to full-time employment, many have gone on to get entangled in the demands of a householders life (Grahist), but the teachings that were taught to me by Sant Bishan Singh Jee Murale Vale, it is only Khalsa Jee who has met all the teachings of Sant Bishan Singh Jee. Sant Bishan Singh Jee honoured me with many gifts and today I place all these gifts in the keep of Khalsa Jee. The Jathedari of Damdami Taksal started by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Jee is being given to Khalsa Jee – with this Siropa.

On **15th February 1930** in the village of Boparai at Gurdwara Sachkhand, while listening to the kirtan of Asa Di Var at around 8:15am Sant Ji left the world for the charan of Guru Sahib.

During his life, he completed the Katha of Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji 21 times. While completing their seva he had about 1300 students, of whom 1000 became Akhand Paathis; 200 became preachers; and 100 katha vaachiks. Sant ji paid for all the costs incurred by his students.

Sant Giani Sundar Singh Ji spent all his life in the selfless service of the Khalsa Panth.

It can be said that for all practical purposes, the Dadami Taksaal came to the forefront early last century under Sant Sundar Singh Ji. He was a figure of great piety and traditional learning. Sant Ji, like many of his contemporaries, set out to purge diversity in Sikh doctrine, ritual and practice with the desire to engender a uniform religious community.