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Abstract

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Key Words: Sikh-Muslim Relations, Mughal Era, Harmony, Co-Existence, Rivalry, Animosity

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Title

Sikh-Muslim Relations during the Mughal Era (1526-1801)

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Contents

Abstract

This research paper delves into the Sikh-Muslim relations during the Mughal Era (1526-1801) in Punjab. Along with exploring and evaluating the factors that had shaped the relations between these two religious communities, this research study also aims to investigate and appraise the events that took place during this course of time and their subsequent impact on determining the Sikh-Muslim relations. To answer this pertinent question, a qualitative content analysis of both the primary and secondary sources has been made. The findings suggest that initially, the relations between the two communities were cordial, whereas they, due to largely political reasons, turned out to be toxic. For instance, two of the Sikh Gurus were killed by the Mughals. Subsequently, rivalry and hatred replaced harmony and co-existence.

Keywords: Sikh-Muslim Relations, Mughal Era, Harmony, Co-Existence, Rivalry, Animosity

Introduction

Punjab, the land of five rivers or five waters, is a multicultural, multi-religious, multi-ethnic and multi-linguistic society. As history is evident, it has seen and experienced plenty of invasions and migrations (Gandhi, 2013, p. 1). Interestingly, the invaders and the migrants settled down here, and Punjab welcomed them wholeheartedly (Chopra, 2011, p. 1). Coupled with this, it not only welcomed the religions of the invaders and the migrants but also gave birth to three important religions, i.e., Hinduism, Buddhism, and Sikhism (Soofi, 2014). Therefore, it is known as a land of peace, tranquility, and co-existence where multiple cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic groups have lived together for centuries (Nayar, 2012, p. 7). Their co-existence has

seen and experienced several ups and downs, ranging from harmony to rivalry and co-existence to animosity (Chhabra, 1972, p. 320). Against this backdrop, this research paper delves into the Sikh-Muslim, two important religious communities living together for centuries, relations during the Mughal Era (1526-1801) in Punjab. Along with traversing and analyzing the factors that had shaped the relations between these two religious communities, this research study also aims to explore and evaluate the events that took place during this course of time and their subsequent impact on determining the Sikh-Muslim relations during the Mughal Era between 1526 AD and 1801 AD. The research question demands attention for four specific but important reasons: 1) both religions Islam and Sikhism – preach for religious harmony and co-existence; however, there were certain precedents of rivalry and animosity between these two religious communities; 2) Both Muslims and Sikhs hold Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, in high regard; the former regard him as a Muslim Sufi, while the latter assert that he is the creator of a new religion, namely Sikhism; 3) Sikhism had emerged during this era; and 4) the relations between these two communities during this era had shaped not only the fate of these communities but also the course of the history of this region known as Punjab, which was ultimately partitioned in 1947. To answer this pertinent question, qualitative content was examined, as well as primary and secondary sources.

Sikh-Muslim Relations during the Great Mughal Era (1526-1707)

Relations between Muslims and Sikhs began with the cooperation of Muslims and Hindus living in Talwandi, Talwandi is the old name of Nankana Sahib, situated in the west of Pakistani Punjab. Nankana Sahib is now an independent district in the Lahore Division. where Nanak Dev (also known as Guru Nanak and Baba Nanak) the founder of Sikhism was born in 1469. Guru Nanak (1469-1539), the founder of Sikhism, was born in Nankana Sahib District, Punjab Province, Pakistan. He was the first of the ten Sikh Gurus. He gave a message of devotion to one God, equality, and social justice. His teachings emphasized the importance of truthfulness, honest living, and service to humanity. Guru Nanak's spiritual legacy laid the foundations of the Sikh faith Nanak always preferred to be in the company of low-income people. His disciple and lifelong companion, Bhai Mardana, Bhai Mardana (1459-1534) was a close associate of Guru Nanak and played an important role in spreading his teachings. An accomplished musician and a Muslim by birth, Mardana played the rabab (a stringed instrument) on his journey with Guru Nanak as the Guru sang hymns. Their deep friendship and cooperation were a symbol of harmony between different faiths and communities. was the first Muslim who converted himself and adopted Sikhism as his new religion. Following this development, several others, such as Allahyar of Delhi and Ibrahim of Chityana, converted themselves to Sikhism (Archer, 1946, p. 177; Bhatia, 1992, p. 14). The environment under the influence of the communal majority affected their mental makeup, as claimed by many in West Punjab. The reactions of ordinary Muslims and Hindus to the conversion of their fellow human beings to Sikhism varied over time and in different regions. Conversion to Sikhism from Hindu and Islam sometimes strained interfaith relations, especially in cases where families were divided, or communities experienced social upheaval (H. Singh, 2002, pp. 35–36). Initially, some members of both communities viewed Sikhism as a syncretic movement that borrowed elements from both Hinduism and Islam, while others viewed it as a distinct religious identity (McLeod, 1984, p. 57).

Guru Nanak started preaching his beliefs publicly in Multan. It angered the authorities in Delhi, and subsequently, the Guru was imprisoned during the reign of Ibrahim Khan Lodhi (r. 1517-1526), the last Sultan of the Delhi Sultanate. However, he was released by Zahiruddin (r. 1526-1530), the one who established the Mughal dynasty in India, after his victory over Ibrahim Lodhi at Panipat in 1526. Historians suggest that Guru Nanak and several other fakirs who were imprisoned during the rule of Ibrahim Lodhi had undergone physical torture by the rulers of the Muslim world (McLeod, 1968, p. 8).

Conversely, Babur released Guru Nanak and other fakirs who were imprisoned by the Sultan of Delhi, while on the other, Babur's commander, Mir Mughal, captured Saidpur (near Emanabad, Gujranwala) in 1520 and ravaged the surrounding countryside. This massacre, as is suggested by the historians, was a political move because Babur and

his commanders did not want anyone to stop them from conquering the lands of the Indian subcontinent. Therefore, they crushed all those who stood before them or resisted them, irrespective of religion, ethnicity, or language. Responding to this carnage or massacre, Guru Nanak advised his followers to stay calm. He prohibited them from taking revenge for this massacre from the Muslims and told them that it was not a religious but a politically motivated incident. Even Baba Nanak himself avoided rising against the rulers or others on the basis of religion or politics. He not only practiced but also preached to his followers that it was the essence and spirit of Nanakism to spread love, tolerance, harmony, and co-existence (Khalid, 2017; Sharma, 2022).

It suggests that the Sikh-Muslim relations had ups and downs in the early years of the Mughal Empire. However, they started deteriorating later on. One of the most triggering points or factors was the murder of the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, in 1606 AD with the orders of Mughal Emperor Nur-ud-din Muhammad Salim (r. 1605-1627), popularly known as Jahangir. The killing of Guru Aran changed the whole scenario as this tragic incident showed to be a rotating point in the times of Sikh-Muslim affairs. Responding to this tragic incident, the 6th Guru, Hargobind, recognized a Sikh army to take revenge to safeguard his father and the Sikh faith's holiness (Lal, 1981, p. 34). Across decades, this unfortunate death has had horrific consequences and is still able to be seen and unforgettable. Relations between the two religious communities became strained due to these and some other tragic events, including Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, was assassinated in Delhi, and Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, was killed along with himself and his son Gobind Singh in a battle with the Mughals (M'Gregor, 1846, pp. 103–104).

Controversy Surrounding Guru Arjan's Assassination and its Impact on Sikh-Muslim Relations

The following passages attempt to explore and evaluate the controversies surrounding Guru Arjan's death—background, causes, events, and their subsequent impacts on the relations among the two communities.

It is believed that following Akbar's demise, Mughal-Sikh relations deteriorated, and the Guru Arjan was imprisoned and subjected to torture at Jahangir's behest, the succeeding Emperor (Latham, 1985). The cardinal reason behind the deterioration of their relations was, as is deemed, the assassination of Guru Arjan when he sided with Prince Khusrau Mirza against Jahangir. The story goes as the Mughal Emperor, Jalal-ud-Din Muhammad Akbar, appointed or nominated Prince Khusrau Mirza rather than Jahangir as his successor for the Mughal throne in Delhi. Despite this nomination, Jahangir ascended the throne as the Mughal Emperor after the death of his father Akbar in 1605. Refusing to accept his father as the ruler of the Mughal Empire, Prince Khusrau conquered Punjab and Afghanistan, which Jahangir was not willing to accept and tolerate. It led to a revolt by Prince Khusrau against his father in 1606. During this course of time, Prince Khusraur met Guru Arjan at Tran Taran near Amritsar. It was not their first meeting. They had already met several times before this historic meeting. Prince Khusrau used to say that Guru Arjan was his spiritual guide. Seeing the Prince's misfortune and humility, Guru Arjan took pity on him and decided to help and support him. Using this meeting as an excuse, Jahangir decided to crush the rebellion of his son on the one hand and teach a lesson to the Guru on the other (Yasmin, 2023, p. 29).

After revolting against his father, Prince Khusrau Mirza was on the run after Jahangir. He wanted to defeat and kill his father to get control of the Mughal Empire in Delhi. In this regard, he reached Gondwal (the city where Guru Arjan was residing) to request the Guru to pray for the victory of Prince Khusrau Mirza and his army. The Guru not only welcomed the Prince and his army but also prayed for their victory and offered unconditional support and help. Coupled with this, the Guru also preached and convinced several other people to join hands with Khusrau against Jahangir. It, in turn, further fanned Jahangir's anger (Grewal, 1972, p. 4). Responding to this, Jahangir directed his army to Gondwal to seize Khusrau, except the latter had already left the place for Lahore before the army's arrival. Still, the army captured Guru Arjan, took control of his domain, and gave his son over to Murtaza Khan (Salim, 1864). The captivated Guru was brought to Lahore, where he was tortured to death.

Another local Lahori tale presents that an old foe of the Guru, Chandu Shah—popularly known as Chandu Lal, an affluent banker and revenue official

of the Mughal rulers hailing from Lahore, Chandu Lal not only requested but also paid for the custody of the Guru. So that he may settle his old scores with him, it is narrated that Chandu Lal was an old foe of Guru Arjan. This animosity started when the latter refused the marriage proposal of the former's daughter for his son. Subsequently, the former teamed up against the latter and appealed to the Mughal Emperor Akbar to punish him for likely false allegations of conspiracy. However, Akbar did not pay heed to his appeal. It went unheard and unaddressed (Chhabra, 1972, p. 14).

Nevertheless, Chandu Lal, after the death of Akbar, kept appealing to the newly throned Emperor Jahangir against Guru Arjan. Finally, his efforts bore fruit, and the Guru was captivated, brought to Lahore, and tortured to death (Chhabra, 1972, p. 14). It suggests that the personal enmity between the Guru and Chandu Lal caused Jahangir's move against Guru Arjan. Secondly, it was politically motivated rather than religiously motivated. So, Rather than being a religious affair, Guru Arjan's assassination was a political one. It is evident from Jahangir's claim made in his book Tuzk-e-Jahangiri, where he bluntly claims that this horrific act was caused by Guru Arjan's support of Prince Khusrau Mirza and his fame between Muslims and Hindus (Salim, 1864). It infuriated Emperor Jahangir (Fenech, 2000, p. 21; Grewal & Habib, 2004, p. 57; Kapur & Singh, 2009, pp. 117–118).

Some historians suggest that the teaming up between Chandu Lal and Prithi Chand, the son of Guru Ram Das, who was his elder son and big brother of Guru Arjan, caused the arrest and subsequent killing of Guru Arjan. The saga goes as Prithi Chand wanted to become a Guru after his father. However, his father, Guru Ram Das, chose a younger child, Guru Arjan, as the next Guru. Getting furious with his father's decision, Prithi Chand went against Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan. Therefore, he kept plotting against Guru Arjuna even after the death of his father. He made a false complaint against Guru Arjan to the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. Sensing this animosity, Chandu Lal joined hands with Prithi Chand against Guru Arjan largely to settle his scores with the latter. Therefore, they played a key role in misleading Jahangir against Guru Arjan. They kept pleading against the Guru. They made wrong accusations besides Guru Arjan writing a manuscript that mixed up the teachings of Hinduism and Islam. Teachings (Chhabra, 1972, pp. 169–170). Further, they complained to the Emperor that Guru Arjan, who appeared to be pious, was not a pious person in reality. He had been gathering people who would harm the Mughal Empire (Grewal & Habib, 2004, p. 4; Tamimi, 2007, p. 30). After the assassination of the Guru, Prithi Chand took charge of the Guru Granth, believing that if he took control of the Holy Book of the Sikhs, he would be capable of claiming Guruship. However, his dreams could not bear fruit as the Sikh community refused to accept him as their Guru. Subsequently, the followers of Guru Arjan continued to guard the Granth and were called Manas (Salim, 1864, p. 72).

The assassination of Guru Arjan was one of the major and the initial Sikh-Muslim confrontation involving the Mughals. The former considered this sacrifice as a sacrifice for truth. Therefore, Guru Arjan's killing had an extremely reaching significance in the history of the Sikh-Muslim relationship—for it changed the Sikhs into a resilient and steadfast nation and, subsequently, played a dynamic role in influential the course of the history of the Indian subcontinent in general and Punjab in particular. Following this tragic incident, many other unwanted episodes took place between the Sikhs and the Muslims, which, in turn, enlarged the gulf between the two communities. For instance, the sixth Guru founded the Sikh army to avenge his father on the one hand and to protect the sanctity of Sikhism on the other (S f , 1974, pp. 707–708).

Deteriorated or Toxic Relations between Guru Hargobind and the Mughal

After his father—Guru Arjan's unfortunate death, Guru Hargobind replaced him as a Guru when he was only 11 years old (Chhabra, 1972, p. 199). He requested the public (his followers) to take him donations of horses and arms to strengthen and empower the Sikhs to compete with the Mughals. He explained to his followers that this was the only way to avenge the unwanted death of their previous Guru. With the help and support of his followers, Guru Hargobind constructed an iron fort and the Akal Takht, a Sikh gathering place, and furnished Amritsar (Bhatia & Bakshi, 2002, p. 22). Its new vision had extensive importance and laid the foundation of the Sikh organization in the years to come.

To begin with, after strengthening and empowering the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind refused to pay the heavy fines that were enforced on his father by Emperor Jahangir. Though the fines were imposed on Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind was forced to pay them. Interestingly, Guru Hargobind refused to pay these fines to the Mughal Empire. It infuriated the Mughal Emperor and instigated him to chase the Guru. However, the waging of the wars against Guru Hargobind was not caused merely by this reason. Coupled with this, the Guru had started wearing two swords, signaling revolt and war against the Mughal Empire. Furthermore, Guru Hargobind completed two more new buildings at Ramdaspur: 1) In front of the Harmandar, he had constructed a tall platform that he dubbed Akal Takht, where he (Guru Hargobind) acknowledged his court; in addition, he built the fort known as Lohgarh for defensive purposes. Moreover, the Guru had already started attacking and hunting the Mughal army with the help of his followers—the Sikh army (Grewal & Habib, 2004, p. 4; Lal, 1981, p. 34; Syan, 2013, p. 21). These developments instigated the Mughal Emperor to wage war against Guru Hargobind. Subsequently, the Guru was arrested and imprisoned in the fort of Gwalior. The Guru kept trying to satisfy the Emperor for his steps and developments. After a long time, the Guru was successful in convincing the Emperor. Subsequently, he was released and permitted to carry on with his actions (Grewal, 1998, p. 64). Many scholars hold that the imprisonment of the Guru by Emperor Jahangir and Emperor Shah Jahan also caused irreparable damage to Sikh-Muslim relations during the Mughal Era in particular and afterward in general.

The killing of Guru Tegh Bahadur and its Impact on Sikh-Muslim Relations

He lived in total seclusion with his mother and wife for 20 years following the death of his father in 1621 (Bhatia & Bakshi, 2002, p. 27). Aurangzeb was a highly traditional Muslim monarch (Grewal, 1998, p. 145; Kapur & Singh, 2009, p. 145). He invited Guru Tegh Bahadur to his capital city of Delhi and requested that he either work a miracle or accept Islam. The Emperor ordered the Guru's head to be severed from his body since he refused to act in that manner. The Hindu priests and the nine-year-old son of the Guru played an important part in the Guru's assassination (Grewal, 1998, p. 72; R. Singh, 1965, p. 212). The Hindu priests manipulated the nine-year-old son of the Guru. The nine-year-old son of the Guru persuaded his father to give up his holiness and righteousness for this admirable cause at the demand of the Hindu priests. Guru Tegh Bahadur wrecked his life upon hearing the screams of the Hindu priests and seeing his son's innocent demeanor (Grewal, 1998, 2009).

Contrary to this, Gregor, a historian, claims that Ram Rai, the son of the seventh Guru, Har Rai, had already complained to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb that his father had usurped his right to become the Guru. Therefore, his grievances should be addressed, and justice should be given. Responding to the complaint, Aurangzeb had summoned thrice to Guru Har Rai to appear before him in his court. When the Guru appeared in the court of the Mughal Emperor, his son Ram Rai demanded him to perform a miracle if he wanted to become and remain the Guru—if he could not perform the miracle, he would not have any right to become and remain the Guru. On the insistence of Ram Rai, a paper was tied around Guru Har Rai's neck. The Emperor was then requested to command someone to cut the piece of metal with a sword. His neck was shattered as a result, and he collapsed to the ground. In a poem penned by the final Guru, Gobind Singh, Gregor even goes so far as to excuse his father's execution and death in front of the Mughal Emperor on the grounds that Ram Rai had complained (M'Gregor, 1846, pp. 66–96). Thus, in the court of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, a succession conflict led to the execution of Guru Har Rai. So, it was not a religiously motivated incident that left an indelible imprint on the Sikh-Muslim relations.

Disagreeing with Gregor and the others, Syed Muhammad Latif records another interesting reason for the ninth Guru's murder. According to him, the ninth Guru began stalking Punjabi citizens, especially the wealthy Muslims and Hindus (Latif, 1891, p. 519). It was mostly carried out in Punjab's affluent agricultural regions. Many notorious and dangerous individuals broke free from Mughal rule and allied themselves with the Guru. Emperor Aurangzeb dispatched his army to apprehend the miscreants, fugitives, and the Guru. As a result, the Guru and his friends were taken into custody. As the Guru was being transported to Delhi, he designated his son Gobind Singha as the final Guru of the Sikh faith and his heir (Latif, 1891, p. 520). Why did he

do so? It is believed that he appeared to have known his fate (Court & Ram, 1888, p. 35; S f , 1974, p. 703).

All the theories mentioned earlier and reasons that have been put forth to give details about the killing of Guru Tegh Bahadur point to a conspiracy. Examining each conspiracy study in-depth, We can readily see that the Sikh, Hindu, and Muslim vested interests formed or imposed the circumstances surrounding the murder of Guru Tegh Bahadur, whatever they may have been. Regardless, this regrettable episode had worsened the already strained ties between Sikhs and Muslims. Coupled with this, many other similar stories – for instance, the tossing of Bhai Dayal into the boiling water and the murder of Matidas, a 9th Guru companion. The skinning of Bhai Mani Singh and Bhai Taro Singh – also played their part in enlarging the gulf between the two communities (Chhabra, 1972, p. 21).

Guru Gobind's Deteriorated or Toxic Relations with the Mughal

The Sikhs' tenth and final Guru was Guru Gobind Singh. He was an excellent writer, theorist, and soldier. He succeeded his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, at the tender age of nine. He primarily gave the Sikh community a clear identity and formalized the Sikh religion (Cole & Sambhi, 1995). He restructured Sikhism into a military structure. Gobind Singh was a talented leader and born administrator. Like his grandfather Hargobind, Gobind also taught his supporters to use weapons and fighting techniques. Gobind built four forts, namely Anandgarh, Keshgarh, Lohgarh, and Fatehgarh (K. Singh, 1977, p. 72). Moreover, In 1699, he established the Sikh Khalsa (Grewal, 2009). The creation of the Khalsa initiated a remarkable transformation of Sikh society

In the 1680s, the Sikh Gurus had expanded their influence and power significantly. Their followers from far and wide used to bring them essential gifts (M'Gregor, 1846). These developments were closely and anxiously watched by the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, who considered them a serious challenge to the Mughal Empire. Therefore, he immediately dispatched his son to impose Mughal supremacy in the region (G. Singh, 1979). Responding to this move, the Sikhs unsuccessfully tried to win the support of the Hindu Rajas of the Shivalik hills. The reason for this failure was the differences between the Sikhs and the Hindus towards the caste system. The former believed in a casteless and classless society, whereas the latter believed in a caste-based and class-based society. Therefore, the Hindu Rulers of the Shivalik hills joined themselves against the Sikhs to get rid of them and their Guru (Syan, 2013, p. 219). Thus, they repeatedly requested the Mughals to send their armies to crush the Sikhs. Subsequently, Painda Khan and Dina Beg, two Mughal generals, were dispatched to aid the Hindu Chiefs of Shivalik hills. Local Hindus also supported the Mughal armies in this cause (Banerjee, 1963, p. 25).

With the help of the Hindu Kings, in March 1704, the Mughal army invaded Anandpur; because it, strategically, was thought to be an ideal time for the Mughals to launch an assault on the Khalsa army because most of the Guru's disciples were farmers who had already departed for the harvest season. Therefore, the Khalsa army was defeated brutally despite the help of some Muslim followers such as Memon Khan and Syed Beg. Subsequently, Anandpur had to give up the Guru (Kapur & Singh, 2009, pp. 128–147). Following their conquest of Anandpur, the Mughal army advanced on Sirhind. The Khalsa army ambushed the Mughal forces by surprise during their journey to Sirhind. And took away from them the valuables they had collected on the eve of their victory at Anandpur. This success motivated Guru to return to Anandpur (Yasmin, 2023, p. 33).

With time, Aurangzeb wished to meet the Guru in person. Therefore, he ordered the removal of all the restrictions that had been enforced on the Guru and his followers. Moreover, He instructed his Prime Minister to ensure that the Guru's travel was comfortable. In addition, he sent Muhammad Beg Gurzbardar and Sheikh Muhammad Yar Mansabdar to honor the Guru (D. Singh, 2002, p. 286). The Guru was traveling to Rajasthan's Ahmednagar, the Emperor's camp. However, after receiving the news of the death of the Emperor in March 1707, the Guru returned from Bagur and advanced towards Punjab via Shahjahanabad (Yasmin, 2023, p. 33). After the death of Aurangzeb, his son Bahadur Shah ascended the throne.

Bahadur Shah wrote to the Guru during the dispute over succession to ask for his blessings. The Guru fought directly for the Emperor and helped Bahadur Shah with his gifts (D. Singh, 2002, p.

290). On July 23, 1707, Guru Gobind Singh met Bahadur Shah at Agra. The title of "Hind Ka Peer" was given to the Guru as a mark of distinction. In addition, he was given 50,000 in cash, a diamond scarf, and a regal robe. Mata Sundri was bestowed with costly garments, ornaments, and trinkets (D. Singh, 2002, p. 294). Up to November 1707, the Guru resided at Agra with the Emperor. He centered his preaching efforts around Dholpur, spending many days traversing the nearby villages before moving on to the Deccan. The Mughal Emperor also proposed that he be the military commander. A piece of land where the Guru's temple will eventually be built was also given to him (S f , 1974, pp. 707–708). Guru Gobind Singh, however, had doubts about Bahadur Shah's closeness to Sirhind's Wazir Khan. He believed that Wazir Khan's diabolical rhetoric had won the Emperor over and that the Emperor now meant to fight him. Therefore, Banda Singh was proposed by the Guru to lead the Khalsa army (Noor, 2004, p. 23). He was requested to march to Punjab. A Pathan named Gul Khan, whose father the Guru had killed, ambushed Guru Gobind Singh in the meantime. One of the attackers was killed instantly by the Guru, while his followers killed the other (S f , 1974, p. 704). On his deathbed, just before he passed away, the Guru named the Granth Sahib the Sikhs' next Guru (Kapur & Singh, 2009, p. 158).

Factors that Influenced Muslim-Sikh Relations during the Great Mughal Era (1526-1707)

During the Great Mughal period (1526-1707), Muslim-Sikh relations were shaped by a complex interplay of political, religious, and socio-cultural factors. Early Mughal rulers, such as Babur and Akbar, adopted policies of religious tolerance, fostering relatively cordial relations with the Sikh leaders. However, tensions arose during the reigns of the later Mughal Emperors, particularly Jahangir and Aurangzeb. Aurangzeb's strict Islamic orthodoxy created rifts that led to conflict between the Mughal state and the Sikh community.

Influence of Islam on Baba Guru Nanak and Sikhism

The Hindus, the Sikhs, and the Muslims have different views on the religious identity of Baba Guru Nanak. Some Hindu scholars and groups claim that Baba Nanak should be considered a Hindu because he was born into a Hindu family, and his engagement with the Hindu scriptures and his visits to the Hindu pilgrimages qualify him as a Hindu (Ahmad, 1964). On the other hand, the Muslims hold that Baba Nanak was a Muslim, mainly pointing to his interactions with the Sufi saints, his pilgrimage to Mecca, and Islamic influences in his teachings (Sikand, 2004). However, the Sikh tradition primarily considers Baba Nanak as the founder of Sikhism, emphasizing his distinct theological and philosophical contributions such as belief in a universal God, rejection of caste distinctions, and formation of the Sikh community known as the Panth. Despite these diverse claims, Baba Nanak's legacy transcends religious boundaries, and his teachings emphasize universal truths and the unity of humanity.

When one studies the Shaluk of the Guru Granth and Baba Nanak's teachings, it appears that he was a Muslim. His philosophy, ideology, and beliefs are akin to 'Sufi Islam'. It is claimed that the Guru Granth Sahib and Baba Nanak's teachings merely referred to "Hindu mythological figures and mystical concepts" in order to accommodate local Islamic beliefs (Sikand, 2004). Because of this, a lot of Muslims in Punjab think Baba Nanak is a Muslim. This expression of love and respect is expressed in the phrase "Baba Nanak Shah Faqir Hindu da Guru Musliman da Peer" (Duggal, 1994, p. 12). Muslim mystical tradition states that many Muslims consider Baba Nanak to be a friend of God (Duggal, 1994). Following Guru Nanak's passing, Muslims and Sikhs clashed over who should perform his last rituals (Chhabra, 1972, pp. 77–78). Historians disagree over whether Hinduism and Islam affected Baba Guru Nanak and Sikhism. According to certain Muslim historians, Hindu rituals and beliefs profoundly impacted Sikhism, and the notions of Guru and Avatar are inextricably linked (Ahmad, 1964, p. 152). Some historians, however, think Guru Nanak was inspired by the final Muslim prophet, Muhammad (PBUH) (Chand, 2006, p. 169).

Khwaja Hasan Nizami identified several parallels in The connections between Sikhism and Islam. He found similarities between the two religions and concluded that Sikhs and Muslims are similar (Nizami, 1923, p. 21). The teachings and ideals of Sikhism were geared toward Muslims and Islam (Grewal, 1972, p. 17). Both religions promote

unity, equality, tolerance, and love for humanity. A new religion founded by Guru Nanak resulted from the fusion of Islam and Hinduism, guided and motivated by these principles (McLeod, 1984, p. 57). Recognize all humanity, Hindu or Muslim, as one. There is just one Lord who created and sustains everything; there is no distinction between Men, mosques and temples, and Muslim and Hindu prayer. These parallels laid the groundwork for harmony between the two religions. Many underprivileged and destitute elements of society accepted a new philosophy of life and faith (Yasmin, 2023, pp. 16–17). For the most part, the two communities were maintained separate by social order, economic necessity, and political expediency. Though the people and Sufis shared similar beliefs and social aspirations, Sikhism was viewed as a threat to the state by the powerful politicians. The evidence suggests that the "egalitarian and monotheistic doctrine" of the Sikh Gurus also drew Muslims. Many Muslims risked their lives and made sacrifices to uphold their beliefs. As a result, Mughal-Sikh interactions were shaped largely by political, social, and economic realities rather than religion. Baba Farid's Influence on Guru Nanak and Sikhism (Chahal, 2008, pp. 43–54).

Baba Farid's Influence on Guru Nanak and Sikhism

Fariduddin Masud Ganjshakar (1173-1266), often known as Baba Farid, was a celebrated Sufi mystic and poet who lived in the twelfth and thirteen centuries. His teachings and spiritual legacy had a major influence on Sikhism and Sikh-Muslim relations. Farid's teachings highlighted the significance of devotion to God, love, and compassion, which aligned with Sikhism's essential principles. Inspired by both gurus and followers, his poetry can be found in the sacred scripture of the Sikh religion, the Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikh holy book has several songs credited to Farid, demonstrating the spiritual wisdom's effect on Sikh thinking and practice. Farid's teachings and spiritual inspirations had a major impact on Sikhism, influencing its theology and instilling a sense of inclusivity and tolerance. His legacy is vital to Sikh-Muslim relations, promoting understanding and harmony between the two communities (G. P. Singh, 2003, p. 55).

Baba Farid used Sufism and the Caliphate movement to usher in a symbolic revolution. As a result, his shrine is quite popular in Punjab. Every Sikh and Muslim pays a visit to his shrine. Baba Farid's spiritual poetry has earned him widespread recognition among the Sikh community. When Guru Arjan produced the Adi Granth, Baba Farid's 'Shaluk' was honored alongside Kabir and Guru Ravidass. Guru Nanak's remarks on Farid's poems demonstrate that he not only had access to Farid's writings but also thoroughly examined them. Nanak was well familiar with Sufi chants. Farid Bani uses around nine Gur Nanak hymns written in the same Punjabi language. Thematically, Guru Nanak fully supports the emphasis on humanism, and his vocal utterances on Yadgari Maurya topics are regularly recounted. Farid's Sufi songs are well-known among the singers who perform at Sufi events. They impacted the whole population of Punjab, particularly women. At the Punjabi custom, ladies would sing Baba Farid's melodies during the daily chorus at their homes (Schimmel, 1980, p. 2). These Sufi melodies drew Nanak in, prompting him to address fundamental matters with Farid's disciples, such as the supremacy of heavenly grace.

Secular Mughal Rulers

Secular Mughal rulers like Babur and Akbar significantly influenced Sikh-Muslim relations through policies of religious tolerance and inclusive governance. Akbar's emphasis on pacifism or universal tolerance created an environment where the Sikhs and Muslims could coexist relatively peacefully. This period saw cooperation between the Sikh and the Mughal authorities, especially in military endeavors. However, Sikh-Muslim relations were shaped by local factors and power struggles, and later, the Mughal rulers such as Aurangzeb, who diverged from Akbar's policies, led to increased tensions (Rizvi, 1995, p. 287). Overall, secular Mughal rulers were essential in fostering an atmosphere of co-existence and cooperation between the Sikhs and the Muslims. However, the dynamics of these relations were subject to the broader historical context and changes in the Mughal rule.

Many facts and theories indicate that Akbar was among the most secular Mughal Emperors. His policy of reconciliation is clear proof that he was a secular-minded person. A new religion was invented

in the name of Deen-i-Ilahi, and people of all faiths had access to the court of Akbar. Some historians argue that, therefore, unlike his father, Akbar, Jahangir was not a secular ruler and did not back Akbar's Deen-i-Ilahi. Nevertheless, he remained receptive to many faiths. Jahangir persisted in praying and making prostrations, in contrast to his father Akbar, who had little regard for Islam or the Sufis. He once instructed Sheikh Sirhandi to kneel in front of the court. The Sheikh, however, declined and greeted the Emperor in line with Islamic customs. Akbar not only hired Jains and Brahmins and welcomed Jesuits at his court, but he also encouraged interfaith dialogue and abolished the *jizya* (a non-Muslim tax) and forced conversions. He was also the movement's leader, sometimes nicknamed the "Mughal translation movement," which began the Mughal court in the 16th century and provided funds for translation into academic language. The products of this project have often been held up as symbols of religious inerrancy, rational inquiry into religion, or, at the very least, idiosyncratic cosmopolitanism. More than just a symbol of tolerance, the secular state has become nothing less than a popular and scholarly image, a pre-modern model of smooth religious politics to create a liberal ideal (Rizvi, 1995, p. 287).

Sikh-Muslim Relations during the Later Mughals (1708 – 1801)

After the passing of Guru Gobind Singh, relations between the two groups increasingly worsened. Following the passing of Guru Gobind Singh, who designated AdiGranth as the last Sikh Guru, the physical grouping came to an end (Yasmin, 2023, p. 34). Guru Gobind met Lachman Dev (also called Banda Singh Bairagi or Banda Singh Bahadur) when he was in the Deccan. Despite his initial mistrust, Banda Singh eventually converted to Bairagi Guru, and Gobind Singh named him the patron saint of the Sikhs in remembrance of Guru Gobind's sons, who Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, brutally murdered (Chaudhary, 1980; Latif, 1891). The first battle took place in Sonipat in 1709, with the Sikhs defeating the Mughal army. At the Battle of Samana that year, Banda Singh routed the Mughal army, took control of the city, and slaughtered almost 10,000 Muslims. This triumph provided enormous financial rewards to the Sikhs, as Samana was well-known for his coin-forging abilities (T. Singh, 1999, p. 79). In 1710, the Sikhs conquered Sirhind and murdered Governor Wazir Khan, as well as Dewan Sachanand, who was in charge of Guru Gobind Singh's two young children, in Lahore, Punjab's capital. He convinced Bahadur Shah to march against Punjab. Manim Khan's Mughal army arrived at Sirhind before Banda Singh arrived and took control of the city and its surroundings (H. Singh, 2002, p. 27). In their last battle to defeat the Mughal army, the Sikhs marched to Lohgarh. With 60,000 fighters, they attacked the fort after calling in reinforcements (Gupta, 1978, p. 19).

When his forces were unable to kill or capture Banda Singh, Emperor Bahadur Shah was shocked. Abdul Samad Khan was appointed Governor of Lahore by Emperor Farrukh Sayyar, who succeeded him. Farrukh Sayar asked that the Mughal and Hindu rulers march their men to Lahore to reinforce his army (T. Singh, 1999, pp. 93–94). Banda Singh was in Gurdaspur in March 1715 when Samad Khan, the Delhi-based Mughal Emperor, launched an attack on the Sikh regiment (Jawandha, 2010, p. 82). An iron cage held Banda Singh after he was taken prisoner. After being taken to Delhi, the Sikhs who survived were put in jail.(Hoiberg, 2000; Johar, 1987) Banda Singh was killed in 1716 after a few months in jail (G. Singh, 1935, p. 229). His authority had a long-term negative impact on Sikh-Muslim ties, and the Sikhs found it tough throughout the latter Mughal period. Mir Mano (1748-53), the Governor of Punjab, took exceptional action against the Sikhs, who continued to fight Muslims. A well-known Sikh poem describes Mir Manu's terrible deeds against them (Gupta, 1944):

- Manu Asadi Datri, Asi Manu Day Soey.
- Manu is our sickle, and we are its nails
- Jiyon Jiyon Mannu vadhdaa sidoon sawaey hoey
- As Manu cuts us, our end is certain

The awful management of the Mughals resulted in the development of the Sikhs and their vicious attacks against Muslims. Strong support was given to the Sikhs in their conflict with Ahmad Shah Abdali and the Durrani Empire. Following Ahmad Shah Abdali's attacks on Punjab, the Sikhs fled into hiding among the trees, but they later surfaced and slaughtered the Muslims when he returned to Afghanistan. Ahmad Shah Abdali massacred the Sikhs at Malerkotla in 1762 with brutality. A single day of combat resulted in the deaths of around

25,000 Sikhs, as documented in Sikh history. Ahmad Shah predicted that the Sikhs would be unable to confront it once more for half a century (Latif, 1891, p. 283). He set fire to Harmandir Sahib in April 1762 in protest of the anticipated reprisal; the pond surrounding it was filled with the carcasses of animals (K. Singh, 1977, pp. 154–155). But even this technique was unable to subdue the Sikhs (S. Singh, 1996, p. 106).

Ahmad Shah departed Lahore for Afghanistan on December 12, 1762, and made their ninth invasion of India in 1766. His repeated attacks infuriated the Sikhs, who planned to damage his reputation to the point that he would never set foot in Punjab again. Ahmad Shah, having been beaten in previous attacks, decided to negotiate with the Sikhs as soon as he landed in Lahore. The Sikhs, on the other hand, refused to bargain with him. They were fully aware of his situation, and internal troubles led him to return to his own country. The victory of the Sikhs prohibited any other authority from dominating Punjab, and the threat perception of Ahmad Shah Abdali and his successors vanished. As a result, the Sikhs refused to submit, defeated the Mughals and Durranis, and rose to power in Punjab (Yasmin, 2023, p. 36).

Conclusion

Sikh-Muslim relations during the Mughal period (1526–1801) were complex and varied over time. In the early periods of the Mughal rule, relations between the two communities were peaceful, but tensions arose when Sikhism challenged the political and social order. Tensions with the Mughal government grew as Sikh adherents gained political clout, particularly under the leadership of Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. The competition grew worse after the Mughal Emperor Jahangir executed Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 and killed Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1675. Many military battles resulted from the Sikh resistance to Mughal rule, especially during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb. Conflicts with the Mughal army resulted from Guru Gobind Singh's creation of the Sikh Khalsa in 1699, which increased Sikh militancy and autonomy.

Despite the conflict, there were periods of cooperation between the Sikhs and the Mughals. Some Sikh leaders formed alliances with Mughal governors against rival factions or external threats. Additionally, Sikh soldiers were employed in the Mughal armies, especially throughout the rule of King Akbar. Sikh-Muslim relations also involved cultural exchanges; Sufi and Islamic Sufism influenced Sikhism, and vice versa. The Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book of Sikhs, contains poetry of the Muslim saints, reflecting a coherent tradition. Throughout the 18th century, the Mughal Empire declined, creating opportunities for Sikh expansion. The Sikh leaders, such as Maharaja Ranjit Singh, challenged Mughal rule in the region and established their independent states. Despite the tumultuous history, Sikh-Muslim relations during the era left a lasting impression on both the communities and their course of history. The struggle against the Mughal oppression and the final Sikh autonomy's foundation was crucial to the development of Sikh nationality and identity. Sikh-Muslim relations during the Mughal period were characterized by a complex interplay of conflict, cooperation, and cultural exchange, which shaped the socio-political landscape of the Indian subcontinent for centuries to come.

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