

BHAI SAHIB ARDAMAN SINGH BAGRIAN

Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh ji Bagrian was an eminent person in the realm of Sikh religion and Punjabi culture, a blend of grand human qualities and a great exponent of Sikhism.

He was born on 20th September, 1899, in village Bagrian, Distt. Ludhiana (now in Distt. Sangrur) and passed away in Chandigarh on 25th December, 1976. His father, Bhai Sahib Bhai Arjan Singh, was a famous *Raees* and was honoured among the Sikhs with the title of *His Holiness*. Mata Devinder Kaur was the mother of Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh. He had his schooling in Ludhiana and passed his B.A. degree from the Khalsa College Amritsar, in 1918. In the college he came into contact with Baba Gurdit Singh of Kamagata Maru fame. He helped the Baba (incognito) by getting him employed in the college. Baba Rori Singh was also given shelter at Bagrian where Sardar Sardool Singh Cavisher was living disguised as a *sadhu*.

Bagrian House at Shimla became the confluence of many enlightened Sikh scholars, thinkers and statesmen. Bawa Hari Krishan Singh, Principal Teja Singh, Giani Gian Singh, and Baba Prem Singh Hotimardan, used to stay there during the summer months. Bhai Kahn Singh of Nabha was almost like a member of the Bagrian family. Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh was nurtured and nursed in the company of such great Sikh scholars and in an atmosphere of soul stirring *Gurmat Sangeet*. He was an evolved soul and enlightened person of outstanding stature and eminence, completely committed to the cause of Sikhism.

Bhai Sahib was vehemently against idol worship. He has revealed through his writings and speeches that all the *banis* in *Dasam Granth* were not composed by Guru Gobind Singh ji. He

often used to say that Sikhi was being eroded by Brahminical rituals and that the vitals of Sikh way of life were being destroyed. He would exclaim, "If there are no Sikhs then how would Sikhi render service to humanity?"

Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh was essentially a man of religion. He never dabbled into the dubious intrigues of politics. For this very reason he was held in high esteem by all the political pundits of the day and the heads of other religions as well. The President of India, Dr Rajinder Parsad, the Prime Minister of India, Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri, all the Governors of Punjab, and even the Viceroy of India, graced the Bagrian House with immense pleasure.

The House of Bagrian has been in the service of the *Panth* almost for four centuries. The Gurus have blessed the House to render service to humanity and spread the teachings of the Gurus far and wide. Bhai Sidhu and Bhai Roop Chand, through their devotion and service to the Guru, brought the House into eminence. The benediction of *langar* was bestowed upon Bhai Roop Chand by the sixth Nanak, Guru Har Gobind Sahib. The House of Bagrian has been held in high esteem by all the Sikh Maharajas. From cradle to the cremation, all ceremonies of the Sikh Royals are performed by the Bhai Sahib of Bagrian.

Sewa (service) is one of the cardinal virtues of Sikhism. When the Guru bestowed this on Bhai Roop Chand he flourished beyond expectations. Bhai Roop Chand offered to Guru Gobind Singh services of his five sons, who were initiated as Khalsa. Two of them, Bhai Param Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh accompanied the Guru to Nanded. Bhai Dharam Singh had a son, named Dayal Singh, who founded a village, Dayal Pura. After Bhai Dayal Singh, Baba Guddar Singh and Mai Rajji brought glory to the House of Bagrian. The *langar* became famous as *langar* of Mai Rajji. As the story goes, on the advice of Baba Guddar Singh, Raja Gajpat Singh of Jind took the girl out of the pitcher marked for burial in the earth. He made the prophecy that the girl would give birth to a very brave man. Maharaja Ranjit Singh was her son and he visited Bagrian in 1807 in order to pay homage to Bhai Sahib Mohar Singh. Bhai Sahib Arjan Singh, on the request of Raja of Kapurthala, laid the foundation of Gurdwara Ber Sahib at Sultanpur Lodhi in 1937, and on the invitation of Sant Baba Attar Singh, he laid the foundation of Mastuana in 1919. The religious ceremony of Benaras Hindu

University was performed by Bhai Sahib Arjan Singh and the foundation stone of the religious wing was laid by Sant Attar Singh.

Singh Sabha movement owes a great debt to the House of Bagrian. When the movement gathered momentum then it was firmly established in Bagrian in 1895, and the Chief Khalsa Diwan was the outcome. Bhai Arjan Singh became its first president and remained so for 15 years. The SGPC set up a committee for the centenary celebrations of the Singh Sabha movement. Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh became the senior Vice-President of the Committee. Bhai Sahib also had the honour of being the President of the newly constituted Gurmat Academy which was an important organ of Kendri Singh Sabha. Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh actively participated in the drafting of the *Rehat Maryada* for the Khalsa Panth. He had profound knowledge of Sikhism, and was considered an authority on Sikhism. He was a brilliant exponent of Sikh identity and Sikh Panth.

Bhai Sahib Ardaman Singh was deeply interested in *Gurmat Sangeet*. Under his guidance, the Punjabi University, Patiala, recorded and preserved the traditional and modern modes of *kirtan*, and a book containing 492 *shabads* in old compositions (ਗੀਤ) was researched and published by the University. Bhai Sahib authored many tracts on *kirtan* and chaired several seminars. He was given the unique honour of being the chairman of the selection committee for the *granthis* and *ragis* of Harmandar Sahib. He was an excellent speaker in English as well as Punjabi language. Whenever we think of Bhai Ardaman Singh of Bagrian, we are reminded of the following famous lines of Shakespeare :

*His life was gentle, and the elements
So mix'd in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, 'This was a man !'*

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