



Succession of Sikh Gurus

&

Controversies related thereto

Hi Family

- We are now on our third webinar on Sikh History series. The first two covered Maharaja Ranjit Singh, General Hari Singh Nalwa and General Zorawar Singh.
- Sikh history is just 550 years old. It started with the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469. We had ten living Gurus and their period of Guruship stretched to two and a half century. Let us today talk about the succession of the Gurus, the concept of Jyot and Jugat, the Spiritual Succession and Transformation and lastly about the 'Kintoos' and 'Prantoos' ie the controversies raised by some misguided lot. This talk is not religious but certain religious aspects have had to be brought in for better understanding.

There is an article by S Gurmukh Singh of Sikh Missionary Society UK, about the concept of **Jyot** and **Jugat**. It is important to understand this concept so as to be able to appreciate better the succession process of Gurus.

The Guru Granth Sahib in Bhatt Savaiyay at Ang 1408 states:

“Jyot roop Har aap Guru Nanak Kehaayo” translated it means

‘The Embodiment of Light, the Lord Himself is called Guru Nanak’

So what we understand is that Guru Nanak himself is Jyot roop,
Embodiment of Light

The same Jyot , the Embodiment of Light, was in the nine Guru-
persons after Guru Nanak.

Thus the start of the Guru Succession process is described in
Granth Sahib at Ang 968 as:

“Nanak thoo Lehna Thoohai Gur Amar thoo Veechaariaa” --
translated it means

*You are Nanak, You are Lehna(Angad) and You are Amar Daas , so
do I recognize you.*

They all Nanak 1 to Nanak X carried the same Jyot.

Jyot is a divine source of light that shows the way to ultimate reality – *Sacch*.

Through Naam, Jyot leads us to the acceptance of Divine law - *Hukam Razaee*.

Jyot leads to inner detachment from life, which is a passing phase, and attachment to the Timeless reality – Sacch.

Jyot teaches us One-ness of the ‘Creator being’ and the ‘created’
and

to see God in all and ultimately Jyot is WaheGuru.

According to the Sikh belief, the Jyot now resides in Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the *Shabd* or Word Guru.

The tenth Guru transferred the eternal spirit of the ten Gurus into the Bani of the Sikh scripture Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Succession of Guru-ship from one to the other was thus a ***Spiritual Succession*** and always proceeded by ***Spiritual Transformation***.

In most cases, the succeeding Guru had long spiritual training under the stewardship of the existing Guru.

The spiritual transformation was the passing of the Jyot, in a sense that the Gurus were one in spirit all attuned to the same word, the *Shabd*- the word of Guru Nanak.

In addition to Jyot, ***Jugat*** also was a part of the Succession process.

Let's understand Jugat, which basically is a way or method and in some cases also a technique.

This refers to engaging with life in the Guru's way.

Jyot disengages a Sikh from the duality of life caused due to self centricity ie *Haume*, and Jugat re-engages the Sikh through social activism to serve the creator and the created.

In Guru Nanak's teaching, disengagement from life of Duality was through *Naam Japna*, the path of Jyot and re-engagement with life was through the Jugat of *Wand Chakna* and *Krit karni*.

The ten Guru persons were the embodiment of both the ***Jyot*** and ***Jugat*** and their succession has to be viewed from this aspect.

The tenth Guru, the Nanak X, Guru Gobind Singh transferred the ***Jyot to Sri Guru Granth Sahib*** and passed on the ***Jugat to the Khalsa Panth.***

So that was the succession process of Sikh Gurus

Before we proceed to the Controversies, which in Punjabi we say as the 'Kintoo' and 'Prantoo', in succession of Sikh Gurus, let us understand the 'Banaswali' ie the Family Tree of the Sikh Gurus and the time period of each of the Ten Guru-persons.

Also it is worthwhile to know the family members of the Gurus who were in some manner connected with the Succession of the Sikh Gurus

Guru Nanak : Mehta Kalu Ji, Mata Tripta, Mata Sulakhni, Bebe Nanki, Jairam Ji, *Baba Sri Chand*, Baba Lakhmi Chand, Baba Lehna.

Guru Angad: Pheru Mal Ji, Mata Daya Kaur, Mata Khivi, *Bibi Amro*, Bhai Jasu Ji, *Bhai Datu Ji, Bhai Dasu Ji*

Guru Amar Das: Tej Bhan Ji, Mata Lakshmi, Bhai Gurdas, *Bhai Manak Chand*, Mata Mansa Devi, *Bibi Bhani*, *Baba Mohri Ji, Baba Mohan Ji, Bhai Jetha*

Guru Ram Das: Mata Daya Ji, Har Das Ji, *Prithi Chand*, Mahadev, Arjun Dev

Guru Arjun Dev: Mata Ganga, Hargobind

Guru Hargobind: *Bhai Gurditta*, Teg Bahadur, Mata Nanki, *Dhirmal*, Har Rai

Guru Har Rai: *Ram Rai*, Har Krishan

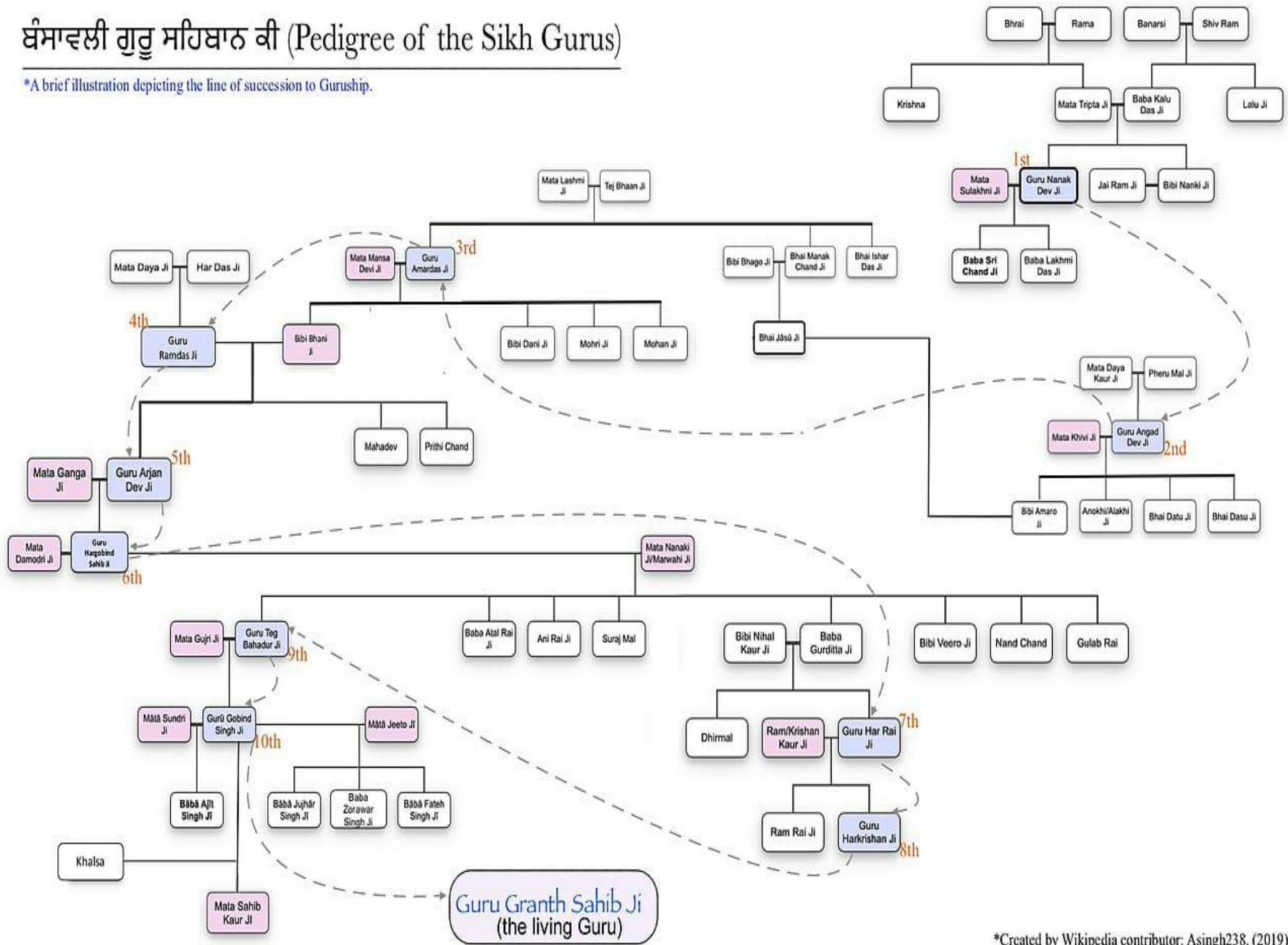
Guru Har Krishan:

Guru Tegh Bahadur: Mata Gujri,

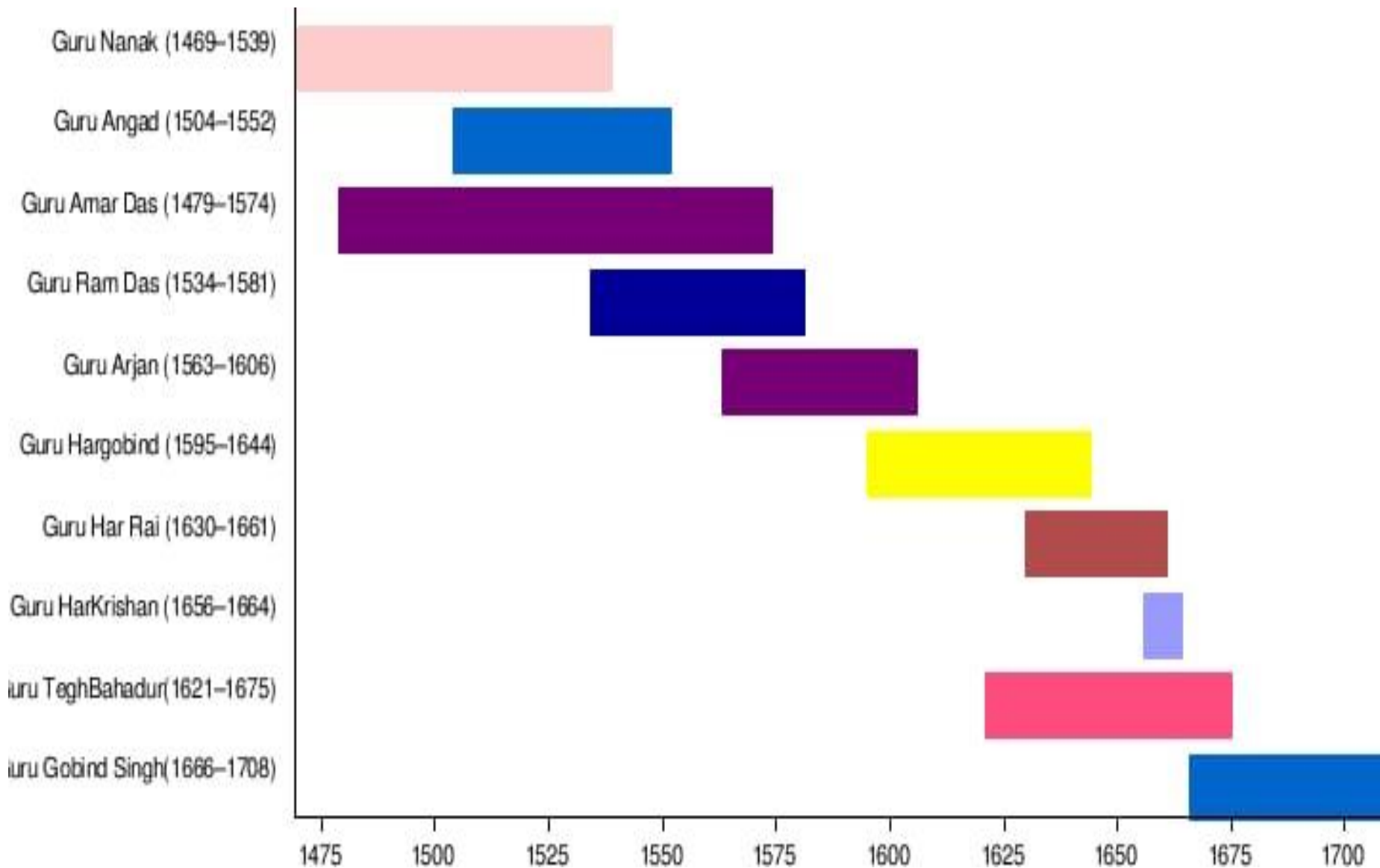
Guru Gobind Singh: Mata Sundri, Baba Ajit Singh, Mata Jeeto, Baba Jujhar, Baba Zorawar, Baba Fateh Singh

ਬੰਸਾਵਲੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਹਿਬਾਨ ਕੀ (Pedigree of the Sikh Gurus)

*A brief illustration depicting the line of succession to Guruship.



*Created by Wikipedia contributor: Asingh238. (2019)



Transfer of Guruship from Nanak 1 to Nanak 2

The first of the Sikh Gurus, Guru Nanak chose his disciple Lehna as his successor and named him Guru Angad, literal meaning one's own limb. Some Historians have written that Guru Nanak chose his most favoured disciple over his two Sons, Baba Sri Chand and Baba Lakhmi Chand. Others have disputed this and state that there was never a claim from the sons of Nanak for the Guruship. Baba Sri Chand started the Udasi Sect and himself was a great celibate ascetic. Baba Lakhmi Chand also known as Lakhmi Das led a householder's life and all Bedis owe their lineage to him.

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It is wrong to attribute that there was any controversy in the Succession of Guru Angad from Guru Nanak.

It is also a wrong belief that Baba Sri Chand, the older son of Guru Nanak was on a different path of Udasin and hence left out. Bhai Gurdas in his writings has stated that Baba Nanak was so very saddened by the atrocities being inflicted on human kind that he took on the Udasi Bana and started the Udasi reet. He travelled far and wide spreading the message of ek onkar and Oneness. Nanak's philosophy was not just for one faith but for all faiths and benefit of all mankind. He did four udasis and finally after thirty years of udasis, on return to Kartarpur he handed over the Udasi Bana to Baba Srichand as he strongly felt that to mould the minds of ascetics to the philosophy of Naam, one had to be in their fold and that's how Baba Srichand continued the Udasi reet and throughout his life only spread the philosophy of Naam, the message of Guru Nanak.

The Guru himself started a community at Kartarpur and spread **Jyot** through *Naam* and **Jugat** through *Wand Chakna* and *Krit Karni*. He found his disciple Lehna fully involved on the path of Jyot and Jugat and totally devoted to Sewa.

That earned him the Guru-ship from Guru Nanak, who said

***Tu Lehna assi Dehna** and Nanak passed on his Jyot to Angad, whom he called as his own limb.*

So that was the succession of The Second Nanak

Transfer of Guruship from Nanak 2nd to Nanak 3rd

Guru Angad had two sons, Bhai Datu Ji and Bhai Dasu Ji and two daughters, one of whom Bibi Amro was married to Bhai Jassu, son of Bhai Manak Das, brother of Baba Amar Das. At this point in time, Baba Amar Das was following Vaishnavism tradition of Hinduism. One day he heard Bibi Amro reciting a hymn of Guru Nanak and was deeply moved by it. He persuaded Bibi Amro to introduce him to Guru Angad and in 1539 at age 60, Baba Amar Das became a Sikh and a disciple of Guru Angad and served him relentlessly for 13 years with total devotion, before being selected by Guru Angad to succeed him as The Third Nanak in 1552. Guru Angad followed in the footsteps of Guru Nanak, he introduced Gurmukhi, scribed the hymns of Nanak in Gurmukhi and added 63 Saloks and passed on the Jyot to Guru Amar Das. Some historians have written of the dissent of the sons Dasu and Datu, for which Guru Amar Das shifted to Goindwal.

Transfer of Guruship from Nanak 3rd to Nanak 4th

Guru Amardas had two sons, Bhai Mohri Ji and Bhai Mohan Ji and two daughters, one of whom Bibi Bhani got married to Bhai Jetha, a dedicated disciple of Guru Amar Das. Bhai Jetha later came to be known as Ram Das. He displayed utmost devotion, piety, complete understanding and assimilation of Shabd, the word of Guru. In line with the practice followed by the previous Gurus that the spiritual throne must go to the most deserving, Guru Amar Das chose his son in law, Ram Das to succeed him. Of his sons, Mohri ji accepted the decision, but Mohan Ji dissented and retained the Pothis of hymns of Guru Amar Das. This Mohan Pothis were acquired by Guru Arjun from Bhai Mohan Ji, when he compiled the Adi Granth.

Transfer of Guruship from Nanak 4th onwards

Guru Ram Das and his wife Bibi Bhani had three sons, the eldest being Prithi Chand, then Mahadev and youngest being Arjun Dev. By her selfless service to her father Guru Amar Das, Bibi Bhani had earned a blessing that may God fulfill her wish for the Guruship to remain within her progeny. He had then cautioned her too that this would also entail extreme sacrifices. Though hereafter the Guru-ship attained the hereditary mode but yet followed the process of Spiritual Transformation. The Gurus from the Sodhi Family were unequalled and unsurpassed in their assimilation of Guru Shabad. They strove hard to achieve spiritual heights and the Gur Gaddi only went to the most deserving. Guru Ram Das side stepped his older sons and chose his youngest son Arjun Dev to be the next Guru of the Sikhs – **Nanak 5th**

Bibi Bhani, herself very highly spiritually awakened, was daughter of Guru Amar Das, wife of Guru Ram Das, and went on to be mother of a Guru ie of Arjun Dev, grand mother of a Guru ie Har Gobind, great grand mother of a Guru ie Teg Bahadur and great great grand mother of Guru Har Rai and Guru Gobind Singh and great great great grand mother of Guru Har krishan.

The eldest son of Guru Ram Das and Bibi Bhani, Prithi Chand dissented the transfer of Guru-ship to his younger brother Guru Arjun Dev and he set up a parallel Guru-ship. He added his Bani to the Bani of the four preceding Gurus and obtained a sizeable following. Seeing his nefarious acts and in order to retain the purity of Gur Bani, Guru Arjun Dev embarked on the task of compiling Adi Granth. He took the services of Bhai Gurdas Bhalla, son of Ishar Das who was a brother of Guru Amar Das, as the scribe for this gigantic task of writing the Adi Granth.

The followers of Prithi Chand were termed as 'Minnas' by the main stream Sikhs. The Minnas Guru-ship went from Prithi Chand to his son Mehervan and then to his son Harji, where after the sect disintegrated. The descendants of Prithi Chand line of Sodhis are the Sodhis of Guru Harsahai.

Guru Arjun and Mata Ganga had only one son Har Gobind, who was selected by Guru Arjun in May 1606 to succeed him as the next Guru. Soon thereafter in June 1606 happened the martyrdom of Guru Arjun and the Guru-ship transferred and Guru Har Gobind was **Nanak 6th**.

Guru Har Gobind founded the Military tradition in the Sikh Faith. He started the tradition of Miri and Piri. He also established the Akal Takht. Guru Har Gobind's eldest son Baba Gurditta was born of Mata Damodari and another of his sons, Tegh Bahadur was born of Mata Nanki.

It is interesting to note that the elder son of Guru Nanak, Baba Sri Chand lived till the Sixth Guru (1494 b – 1629 d) and was revered by Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjun and Guru Har Gobind, who even agreed for his eldest son Baba Gurditta to succeed Baba Sri Chand in the Udasi Sect. Baba Gurditta had two sons Dhir Mal and Har Rai. Dhir Mal received a jagir from Emperor Shah Jehan in 1643 and staked claim to Guru Ship. He also took possession of the original Adi Granth of Guru Arjun. Guru Har Gobind rejected the claim of Dhirmal and in 1644 just before his death, transferred the Guru Ship to his younger grand son Har Rai who then became **Nanak 7th**.

Dhir Mal continued to have a sizeable following and his followers came to be known as Dhirmalias. His descendants are the present day Sodhis of kartarpur and the original Adi Granth of Guru Arjun is still in their possession.

Guru Har Rai had two sons, Ram Rai and Har Krishan. When Guru Har Rai had been summoned by Aurangzeb, he sent his older son Ram Rai to Aurangzeb's court. Here Ram Rai was asked to explain the verse relating to 'Mitti Musalman ki perhe pai kamiar'. To earn favour of the Emperor, Ram Rai explained to the Emperor Aurangzeb that the original verse was 'Mitti Beimaan ki' and that it was wrongly scribed. This distortion of Guru Nanak's Bani by his son infuriated Guru Har Rai and he excommunicated Ram Rai, who having received a jagir from Aurangzeb, settled down in Dehra Dun, which is the centre of Ram Raiyas. Having excommunicated Ram Rai, Guru Har Rai chose Har Krishan, still a child, to succeed him and thus Guru Har Krishan became **Nanak 8th**. '*Sri Har krishan dhiyaiye jis dithe sab dukh jae*' is attributed to him as he alleviated many from the deadly disease and took that upon himself. Before he passed away he told the Sikh Sangat 'Baba Bakale' an indication of his grand father's brother Tegh Bahadur as the next Guru.

Sikhs found Tegh Bahadur meditating in Bakale and accepted Guru Tegh Bahadur as **Nanak 9th**.

The martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and he nominating his son Guru Gobind Singh to succeed him are well known to all. Guru Gobind Singh, **Nanak 10th** a spiritual master, warrior, poet, philosopher, gave birth to Khalsa, sacrificed his four sons, finalised the manuscript of Guru Granth Sahib by adding 115 hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur to the Adi Granth compiled by Guru Arjun Dev and declared this Shabad Guru to be the eternal Guru for Sikhs.

Guru Granth Sahib, the eternal Guru of the Sikhs spreads the universal message of Oneness – Ek Onkar , that Ek Jyot pervades and interpenetrates every part of the Universe and also extends beyond space and time. Ek manifesting within Ongkar – a unifying message.

That brings me to the end of this talk. Though we are covering Sikh History series, I had to bring in a bit of religious element so as to explain the concept of succession. I hope I have been able to explain adequately. May be the younger lot will read more and educate us further.

Thank You