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Martyrdom

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What is martyrdom?

The word Martyr has its origin in the Greek word '*Martus*' and means a witness; so also connotes the term *Shahid*, its Arabic equivalent. Both these terms are employed in a special sense for one who is a witness to the truth of God. In order to be a witness to it one must first have recognized and clearly understood its distinction from falsehood. One gripped by Divine truth, can never give it up, even at the pain of death. That is why by the example of his life and the manner of his death he becomes a criterion, a standard for judgment between right and wrong. The exemplary act of a martyr strengthens people's courage to bear their daily tribulations with greater fortitude. It also serves to unleash the anger of people against the cruel, murderous adversary. Bystanders probably most keenly feel the torments of martyrdom.

Deeper the understanding of faith, and the firmer the conviction of the martyr about it, the greater becomes the value of the witness. It is men of the greatest worth in terms of proper knowledge, mature understanding and appropriate practice of their faith who are the most intently aware of their responsibility. They are the ones who carry out their submission even to death. It is thus that he chooses to die or suffer rather than renounce his faith or principles. The term has however expanded in meaning and connotes even a person who is put to death or torture or both because of his/her religious or other beliefs. The martyr may avoid death by conceding to the adversary, but nevertheless accepts, affirms or even seeks death.

Martyrdom is a movement from inner realization to outer fulfillment; from inner conviction to observable sacrifice. Thus in the theological parlance, a martyr is a person who defends his faith or principle even though it means sacrificing many things, perhaps even his/her own life.

A soldier, ordinarily, is not a martyr, because he, as a gladiator strives to defeat the adversary without having hurt or killed. If death occurs, it is an accident of the situation. Only when the situation is sacralized as in the case of *Jihad* (in the case of Muslims) or *dharma yudh* (in the case of Sikhs) does the term slain soldier becomes a martyr.

The actions of a true martyr reflect the principles of his faith in his life as well as in his death. Such principles and values are brought into focus by the martyrs of history. Through their blood they revitalize even a fearful, frustrated and demoralized people. Even though they lose their lives, they are able to present un-rebuttable proof of the strength of their conviction as well as the worth of their faith.

Thus, it is martyrs who create faith as much as faith that creates them.

What martyrdom is not:

Martyrdom is treated by moral theologians as the chief act of the virtue of fortitude. Yet, the heroism is elicited from man's emotional organism. It is there that the pain and terror is mastered by the commanding virtues of religion and faith and the intensity of love experienced for these.

Suicide, being self inflicted, cannot be considered as martyrdom either even when it is sanctioned by a culturally accepted custom. *Hara-kiri* of the Japanese warrior class, or samurai, is an outstanding example. In *hara-kiri*, the warrior cuts a gash in the abdomen according to the prescribed manner and an assistant, then cuts off the warrior's head from behind. The ceremonial rite is termed *Seppuke* by the

Japanese. During the feudal period in Japan, the samurai considered it a duty to sacrifice them through hara-kiri than submit to public disgrace.

The Hindu custom *Suttee*, once widely practiced in India also stands on a similar ground. Its name comes from the Sanskrit word 'Sati', which means faithful wife. By the custom of *Suttee*, a widow plunges herself on the husband's pyre or is forced to do so. This custom was barred by the Sikh Guru's among their followers. Guru Amardas, The third Sikh Guru said:

Hardly any religion sanctions suicide. The Qoran says: "...do not with your own hands cut yourselves into destruction (4)".

The Political aspect of martyrdom:

Apart from religious import, martyrdom often assumes political significance also. It often aims to reduce political authority to in-effectiveness by challenging the sacred basis of the legitimacy of the adversary's authority. The early Christians who would not honor the Gods of the state or even the Roman Emperor, so they were declared traitors and atheists. The Christian ideal then became the martyr – a person who suffered persecution or even death rather than abandon his faith.

The first Sikh martyrdom, as that of the Fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev, also had clear political overtones. Jahangir, the Mughal Emperor, who ordered his execution himself, records in his memoirs thus:

It may often be that a revolt by a community is seeking a degree of cultural independence. Such a community may even go to offer paradigmatic martyrs.

Certain religious martyrs may refuse to inflict physical violence on an adversary, however, as a political act it is never a passive submission. The non-violent martyr strikes the enemy psychologically. When, in 1922, during the British rule in India, the Sikhs started the *Satyagriha* of *Guru Ka bagh*. C.F Andrews, a British Christian missionary went to witness it. He was so struck with the perfect example of non-violence presented before him that he recorded his impressions in a series of communications to the press. In one of those he says that what he saw reminded him of the shadow of the Cross, the same passive suffering and the same calm holiness of the atmosphere. (6).

One may remark here that such non-violent martyrdom succeeds in its purpose only if the adversary possesses a sensitive conscience. While Mahatma Gandhi always succeeded in moving the British Conscience with his fasts unto death, the Sikh Jathedar Sohan Singh Pheruman could not move the conscience of Indira Gandhi with his fast unto death over the formation of the Punjabi linguistic state. She let him perish without a whimper. An additional reason in this case might well have been that the course for which martyrdom was sought was not perceived honorable enough to justify down one's life for it.

When the justification for the martyrdom is not clearly or adequately perceptible, the intent of laying down one's life for it is perceived ore as foolhardiness.

Martyrdom: Monopoly of no single religion

Although martyrdom is not the monopoly of any single religion, yet it may be said that by large it is the monopoly of spiritual religious and divine systems. Followers of materialistic schools of thought can hardly claim martyrs. A strong tradition of martyrdom has prevailed in Christianity, Islam and Sikhism. (7)

Christianity took its birth with the martyrdom of Jesus Christ. His Crucifixion and trial created an exemplar of Christian martyrdom. Although Christians spoke of the treasures that the Church enjoyed in its martyrs (9), "the cult of martyrs had a comparatively late and slow development" (10). The first martyr

whose bones received known veneration with a yearly commemoration was Polycarp of Smyrna. (de 155 or 165).

In Christian theology, martyrdom is enduring suffering or having undergone death for a cause, or having been put to death specifically as a witness to Christ. Theologians have stressed three conditions to be accepted as a Christian martyr:

The physical life has been laid down and real death undergone.

That death has been inflicted in hatred of Christian life and truth, and

That death has been voluntarily accepted in defense of these. (10).

These conditions however, have received variable degree of stress from various theologians. Clement-I describes the endurance of suffering by Saints Paul and Peter as a result of their faith and not truth. (10). Ignatius of Antioch, however, considered one a martyr if he perfectly imitated Christ in his suffering and death. (12). Some, such as Tertullian, considered martyrdom, The Second Baptism (*secunda intinitis*), since it removed all sins and assured the martyr of his eternal crown. (13).

An aggressively proselytizing religion, Christianity has treaded heavily upon his sensitivities of various faiths. Even ones the past decade itself several plans have been promoted "for total comprehensive evangelization - or at least, the planting of an initial indigenous church within each of the un-evangelized people groups as a sort of 'beachhead'". Justin Long has collected data and case studies of the consequential persecution of Christians in the middle-east and North Africa at the hands of Islamic fundamentalists; in Eastern Asia at the hands of Chinese communists; in Latin America by the various structures of Sin-drug lords and terrorists; in Africa, specifically in Rwanda, Burundi and South Africa in ethnic conflicts. He laments:

With the end of the "Cold War" and disintegration of the

Soviet Union, many have thought that persecution or to be specific, martyrdom is a thing of the past. But, it isn't so.

He then asks, "if we have five times the evangelism among the un-evangelized, are we ready for five times the martyrs?" he estimates that by available indication, martyrs may rise dramatically, reaching 400,000 by 2010. He concludes by saying, "Martyrdom, while it should not be sought, is nevertheless a possibility for every believer".

In Islam, the concept of martyrdom (*Shahada*) "can only be understood in the light of Holy Struggle (Jihad). The concept of Jihad may only be appreciated if the doctrine of the enjoining right and discovering wrong (al-amr bid-maruf), If the source of goodness, the one God (*twahid*), of prophet-hood (*rasue*), the model of guidance (*inama*) is properly recognized... (In other words) the concept (of *Shahada*) in Islam is linked with the entire religion of Islam". (15)

Islam, from the Arabic root *Salama* which means (peace and surrender) is supposed to be a peaceful submission of the Will of Allah. (16). This means being prepared to die (martyrdom) in the course of the submission. Thus the concept of martyrdom can be fully and wholly appreciated in the light of the Islamic doctrines of *twahid* or the absolute unity of Allah and fully submission to his will and command.

However, Islamic *Shahada* (martyrdom) "cannot be explained purely in terms of intercession and meditation... Islam rejects the Christian concept of meditation without the personal responsibility for the salvation of oneself." (15). One's actions must be appreciated within the framework of causality and not solely as spiritual meditation (17). Everybody must be responsible for his own action. (18)

The concept of martyrdom and holy struggle in the course of Jihad being inter-related, "there is no martyrdom without struggle in the cause of Allah and for the cause of truth." (15). "Thus one is a mujahid while one lives and a martyr if he dies or is killed for it."(15)

Islam is known to have produced important martyrs during the internecine conflicts between Sunnis and Shi'ites centered around the leadership of the Islamic community after the death of Mohammad's prominent disciples was elected as Caliph (leader or successor) and his supporters were the Sunnis. However a minority group wanted leadership to have gone to Ali, Mohammad's cousin and the closest surviving male relative. This group called the Shi'ites accused Abu Bakr and two of his successors of wrongfully seizing power from Ali. They set up Ali as their first Imam (Guide). Following his assassination in 661, his son Hasan succeeded him and him in return by his brother Hussain. However Imam Hussain was martyred on the Ashura day at the hands of the troops of Caliph in 680 in the desert land of Karbala. This event plays a crucial role in the life of the Shi'ites who commemorate it as a day of mourning every year and flagellate themselves to empathize with the suffering of Hussain.

The Sikh concept of martyrdom stands at variance from both the Christian and Islamic concepts. First of all, in it there is no room for intercession or meditation. The guru empathetically asserts:

That hand alone is liable which performs a deed,

For none shall be held in another's place. (19).

No martyr, however exalted, has claimed to atone for the sins of others. Personal responsibility in unexceptionable:

Do not blame another, our own deeds are worthy of blame. Whatever we sow, that alone we reap. So don't indict another. (20)

Secondly, Sikhism neither sanctions Jihad type Holy Struggle nor encourages aggressive proselytization. Converting others through terror is alien to the creed; A Sikh must neither terrorize others, nor yield to terrorizing by others.

Who fears none, nor frightens others
He alone, says Nanak, be reckoned wise. (21).

A Sikh must not do injustice to anyone. Nor must he yield to any injustice without resistance. That clearly, would be cowardice. But, cowardice has no place in Sikhism. A coward can never be a martyr. Sikhism is a faith for the valiant and of the valiant who fear not death. Rather:

Death is right of valiant men

Through righteous death, approval they gain. (22).

Martyrdom in Sikhism is the coveted instrument for bringing one's life to its finest fulfillment and seeking divine glory through altruistic death.

The following hymn was a favorite prayer of Guru Gobind Singh.

Grant me this boon, O lord, that I
may never from doing good refrain
Of no enemy should I have fear,
With full faith may I victory attain.
Let me but take the counsel of my mind
That I may ever Thy praises sing.
And when time comes to lay down my life,
In the battle, I valiantly die fighting. (23).

The battle alluded to here is no struggle for supremacy, even for one's faith. Not is it a struggle for power or material gain. It is use of force for altogether altruistic reasons – to protect the oppressed and to repulse the oppressor. It is a compassionate battle for ensuring people's fundamental freedoms and human rights, foremost among which are the right to Life and freedom of faith.

Martyrdom, unique perhaps in the entire World history, and contributed by the Sikh faiths is that of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the Ninth Guru of the Sikhs. On account of its unique significance, it merits a relatively detailed account.

He was in Anandpur, when a deputation of learned Pundits from Kashmir to wait upon him, to tell him their tale of woes and to seek his advice and assistance. They represented to him, "We are being subjected to atrocities by the Muslim rulers. Our people are being forcibly converted to Islam, even at the pain of death. Our sacred threads are being removed – by the mounds every day – and tramped under heels. We beg you to seize our hand in our distress and help us out".

Hearing the tale of their woes, the Guru was touched to the heart and became thoughtful. At that time, his son, Gobind Das (later Guru Gobind Singh), then barely 9, happened to come there. Seeing his father in a pensive mood, he asked him what was weighing upon his mind. The Guru Said, "Great misery has befallen our land. People are being denied freedom of faith at pain of death. The situation can only be redeemed if a truly worthy person comes forward to lay down his life." "Who would be worthier than your own self for this noble act?" remarked Gobind Das. Pleased to hear from his son such spontaneous confirmation of his own resolve, the Guru told the visitors, "Go and tell the emperor that if he can convert Tegh Bahadur, you will accept Islam." Before they departed, he consoled them, blessed them and counseled them to have faith in God. Reassured, the Pundits departed to take his message to the rulers.

Resolved to court execution, the Guru set out from Anandpur after making a prayer to the Almighty God to bestow upon him the gift of martyrdom. He was still on his way to Delhi to meet the emperor, when he was arrested and cast into a steel cage and taken to Delhi along with his three followers who were attending on him.

In Delhi, he was given three choices:

- To accept Islam for which he would be amply rewarded
- To perform some miracle to prove the divinity of his mission
- To accept death.

The Guru responded by saying, every religion is noble. We must not respect only our own religion, but also those of others. Your faith is the best for you, mine is the best for me, and the Hindu's is the best for the Hindus. I see no reason why I should abandon my faith even if I have to lose my life for it. It hurts me to see that you are converting people's faith at pain of death. Everyone should be free to worship one's God as one wish. So, as far as performing a miracle is concerned, I deem it improper to intervene in the Will of GOD. I have explained to you my position. Now you may do as it pleases you.

The Guru's tormentors had already given enough evidence of their cruel intentions – having executed his three companions in front of his eyes. One of the companions was fixed between two planks of wood and sawn into two from head downwards. Another was immersed in a cauldron of boiling water. The third was wrapped in cotton-wool and burnt to death.

The following day, the Guru himself was also beheaded in the main square, *Chandni Chowk* of Delhi. His mutilated body was left in the square unattended, but no one dared to claim it for fear of reprisal. A great dust storm came to blow following the Guru's execution as if nature was expressing its sorrow at what had happened. In the cover of darkness provided by it, one daring Sikh took away the Guru's head and hastened away to Anandpur to make it over to Guru's Son. Another two succeeded in removing his

headless trunk in one of their carts and deposited it their own home which they set on fire in order to cremate those remains of the Guru.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's Son, Guru Gobind Singh in his autobiography has commented on his father's martyrdom thus:

His 'clay pot' he smashed over the emperor's head
and heavenward himself repaired.
To equal Tegh Bahadur's deed, no one shall dare,
Or ever has dared.

He saved the Hindu's sacred thread,
and the Saffron mark of their brows.
O what a wonderful valorous feat,
an act the whole age knows.

It would be pertinent to state that the same sacred thread, Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism had declined to wear. (25). It was thus an alien vesture, a symbol not pertinent to his own faith which Guru Tegh Bahadur sought to safeguard for those who paid it allegiance. This indeed was an altruistic martyrdom, voluntarily performed to safeguard what he rightly believed was fundamental human right.

It is relevant here to recount that the Guru had earned the title 'Tegh Bahadur' for having shown great swordsmanship during a battle he had to fight during his father's time. He was not valorous in life alone; he was valorous also in his martyrdom as well. The meaning of his martyrdom was continuous with the mission of his life. He was benevolent in life, benevolent in death; true in Life, true in death.

Since his martyrdom, Sikh history has become replete with his uncountable martyrs.

Suppression of Martyrdom:

The oppressor finds it hard to exploit the public meaning of martyrdom. He fears further martyrdoms. Hence often unleashes strategies for the suppression of martyrdoms. The Mughal rulers also employed a battery of suppression strategies.

One of the strategies they employed is to co-opt a sympathetic sector of the victim community thereby attenuating its resistance. The Mughal emperors had already co-opted the Guru's nephew Ram Rai and gave him imperial support to confound the Sikhs. This approach, however misfired because the Sikhs were able to insulate themselves against any assimilation by Ram Rai's sect.

Another strategy often employed is to declare the victim community illegal. The Mughal rulers declared the Sikh faith illegal and ordered a 'witch hunt' of the Sikhs. Their heads were priced. Producing them dead or alive was rewarded. That drove the Sikhs to seek shelter in the hills, forests and sandy deserts.

Penalty for martyrdom was raised by inflicting extremely painful death. More and more cruel devices were innovated for it. These included cutting the body of the victim joint by joint (28), by shredding him on the wheels (29), de-scalping him (30), boiling him to death and so on. Even women folk were not spared nor even infants, whose bodies were cut into pieces thrown in their mother's laps

Such increased viciousness was seen by the Sikhs as an act of desperation on the part of the rulers. Its very horror further realized the Sikhs in their thrust against the cruel rulers.

Three phases of martyrdom:

A nascent community passes through three phases in terms of its political independence. These are 1.) Crescive phase 2.) Self-determining phase and 3.) The phase of decadence. These engender different profiles of martyrs also.

The Crescive Phase: The crescive phase is one in which the community is politically powerless, but beginning to stir. The example, given alone, i.e. of Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Tegh Bahadur and the large number of Sikhs who were subjected to "unspeakable atrocities" all happen in the crescive phase.

The martyrdoms escalated the struggle, unified the community and enthused it with a zeal and determination to teach the tyrannous oppressors a lesson. The Sikhs began to organize into militant bands.

As if the Mughal oppression was not enough they became victims of Durrani invasions also. The invaders would not only plunder the towns, but also took women to be sold as slaves back home. This, the Sikhs began to perceive as a challenge to their honor. They remembered that they had been taught:

He alone be reckoned, hers who fights for the weak and the poor. And even if cut into pieces, flee not from the battle field.

In 1738, when Nadir Shah of Persia invaded India, he went through in Punjab massacring people, plundering cities. While returning, he was not only carrying looted treasures, but also thousands of men, women and children as slaves. The Sikhs came to know of it and rushed out of their hide-outs and fell upon the rear of the Nadir's army. They not only secured the release of the captives but also brought back much of the invaders booty. Hundred's of Sikhs were martyred in the venture.

Similarly, when after his fifth invasion, Ahmad Shah was returning taking about 2200 Hindu women as captives; the Sikhs fell upon him and got them released, and conducted them to their respective home. Such ventures were undertaken repeatedly again and every time a large number of Sikhs offered heroic martyrdom.

2. *The Self Determining phase:* The Self-determining community is one that has achieved highest control onto life. The Sikhs gradually began wresting territories from the rulers. Gradually the whole of Punjab from the Indus to the Sutlej came to pass into the hands of the Sikhs. However, Ahmad Shah Durrani came down to invade India the sixth time, but this time especially to teach the Sikhs a lesson. During this invasion occurred the Great Holocaust (Wada Ghalughara) during which several thousand Sikhs were massacred. Their sacred temple at Amritsar was blown up with gun powder. This stung the Sikhs to the quick. Within four months; while Ahmad Shah was still in Lahore, they attacked the conquered Sirhind. Subsequently several parts of the Punjab were conquered. They even harassed Ahmad Shah who wondered at their daring. He sent a message of peace, but the Sikhs declined it scornfully. To avenge the insult he attacked Amritsar again where 60,000 Sikhs had gathered on the occasion of Diwali. But he was not only compelled to withdraw his forces, he even fled under the cover of darkness.

This enabled the Sikhs to organize principalities (Missal) and acquire more territories, extending their suzerainty over the land from Sultej to Jamuna also.

Learning of the Sikhs' activities Ahmad Shah came down again on India. The Sikhs again vanished into the jungles. Ahmad Shah went right up to Amritsar where he expected a large number of Sikhs there but found none except the 30 in the Akal Takht. Determined to die fighting, they fell upon the invaders and achieved martyrdom. The Shah then destroyed the Temple and desecrated the tank.

However, while he was marching homeward with booty and captives, the Sikhs pursued him from a distance falling upon him now and then. On the Baisakhi day in 1765, they re-conquered Lahore and minted the *Nanakshahi* coin which then became the current binder.

Durrani however, came down again two years later to wrest the Punjab from the hands of the Sikhs. He again was disappointed as the Sides had disappeared. He even made an offer of Governorship to one of the Sikh *Sardars* who had governed Lahore, but he declined it. As soon as the invader crossed Indus, the Sikhs captured the fort of Rohtas, recaptured Lahore and from Indus to Sutlej established their dominion.

During this entire struggle, the Sikh that fell fighting while they were defending their holy places can be legitimately considered heroic martyrs. However, those who were part of the forces that rode to conquer the territory cannot be considered martyrs. During the subsequent time especially under the rule of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, there were several massive military expeditions. In these expeditions several Sikhs who gave evidence of martyr like zeal. They may indeed be great heroes, but it would be difficult to consider them martyrs. Sardar Hari Singh Nalua, Sharn Singh and Akali Phula Singh fall into this category.

3. Decadent Period

The decadent period begins for a community, when it starts losing its ability to self determining. After the British defeated the Sikh armies subsequently annexed the Punjab, the Sikh community can be considered to have entered the decaying period. The internecine fratricidal conspiracies between the descendants of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the treacheries of some of the leaders during the Anglo Sikh wars led to tremendous demoralization of the Sikh community.

As the martyrdom becomes latent in decaying societies, so it became in the Sikh community as well. Not just that, some of the Sikhs became collaborators of the British. Still others got converted to Christianity. Such collaborators can be described under two categories; one who were opportunistic turn coats moved by personal avarice; thus who were deeply committed to the foreign ideology. These were the anti martyrs who would also die unrelenting for their ideology. These included families of those Sikhs who had turned Christians.

The decadent period showed again a revival during the struggle for India's independence. The Sikhs had identified themselves with this struggle as much as the national leaders identified themselves with the Sikh struggle for the emancipation of their holy shrines during which thousands had courted martyrdom. Sikh martyrdom during the struggle for independence may be considered martyrs or not is a moot point. They did sacrifice their lives for the country's Independence, but is that tantamount to be witness to truth? Nonetheless, the tradition of martyrdom that had become latent during the decadent period again welled up during this crescive interlude and the Sikh sacrifices far outnumbered sacrifices by the rest of India. Especially remarkable here are the sacrifices offered by the Kukas and the Ghadar party.

However, when partitioned India attained Independence, Sikhs by the millions had to leave their hearths to migrate to Bharat. Gradually it dawned upon them that the partition of the country had not given them any political power. They started a struggle to carve out a state within India where they may have some power. But, this was opposed by the Hindus of the Punjab.

However, decadence again set in as the Sikhs became deprived of political power. They again became a victimized community. Their strength in the Indian army was reduced. Some of the Sikhs were co-opted by offering them high offices. (29). thus attenuating resistance by the Sikh community. Rationalization of the "Secular" social order gave some semblance to a sense of justice and order. That undermined martyrdom in the Sikhs. However, the Sikhs did not give up their struggle.

A religious leader of the Sikhs was picked up, supported, armed installed in the Golden Temple Complex to undermine the Sikh political party that was controlling the Sikh Gurdwaras and was carrying on the struggle for Sikh power. However, soon he realized that he was being exploited against his own community. He turned sides. Thereupon, the Govt. of India led by Mrs. Indira Gandhi put all the major cities of Punjab under curfew and mounted an armed attack with artillery on the Golden Temple complex

killing thousands of pilgrims who had gathered there on a holy day. There were great protests all over by the Sikhs. A company of Sikh soldiers deserted the army. Protests were made from all around the world.

After few months later, Mrs. Indira Gandhi was assassinated ostensibly by the Sikhs and an officially abetted genocidal onslaught was let loose upon the Sikhs in which thousands were again massacred most cruelly. Quite a number of them died defending their sacred places. They were indeed martyrs. Others were simply political victims of the fury of the rabid rulers.

The oppressors did much to suppress the martyrdom wave. The Sikhs were dubbed as traitors and even declared criminals. Wide public participation in repressing the Sikhs was mobilized. The killings were isolated from public view. Pretensions were made to provide legal order. The Sikhs were deprived of the opportunity to plan against defense. Meaning of the massacre was confounded by circulating myths. Stooges were purchased out of the victim community to denounce the reality. The press was informed by supplying it with misinformation. Destruction of records was undertaken to control later historical reconstruction. The Sikhs were vilified all over the world. There was a wholesale exodus of the Sikhs from India to UK, USA, Canada and other European countries. Some of them sought political asylum there. The community sympathizes with them as political victims. Yet, they cannot be counted as martyrs even in the limited sense.

Remembering the martyrs:

The Sikhs remember their martyrs everyday. Their liturgical prayer involves invocation of the martyrs. Every time they say their prayers, they remember those who laid their lives for righteousness, had themselves cut joint by joint, were broken on the wheel, were sawn alive, had themselves de-scalped, yet they faltered not in their faith.

Remembering them thus, they exclaim "Waheguru!" – Wonderful is the Lord.

References and Notes:

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3. Adi Granth
4. The Holy Qoran: S2, V: 195
5. Tazak-i-Jehangiri:
6. Teja Singh: Sikhs and Non-Violence
7. Among the Jews, a week tradition of martyrdom does exist. They have considered martyrdom a work of individual piety and resistance to evil, perfecting the victim and serving as edification for the chosen people.

In Hinduism (A hybrid between the Aryan and Dravidian cultures) no exact prototype of martyrdom is discernable. More a way of life than a specific religion, Hinduism is inclusive of various kinds of belief systems: Polytheism, Pantheism, Panentheism, monotheism, dualism and monism. Hence, it can absorb and appropriate any kind of faith into it without overt conflict. Without restoring to arms, it may still be able to coerce its adversary (e.g. Buddhism) to emigrate beyond its territorial boundaries.

8. Cyprian: Epistle. 10.5
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10. Clement-I: epistle 5:4 and 5:5, 7.
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15. Ezzati, A: The Spread of Islam (1976) p.s.
16. The Holy Qoran: 2:218, 8:76, 9:115, 143, 13:43
17. Tabatali: Al-Mizan (quoted in Ezzati, A-14)
18. Adi Granth
19. Ibid
20. Adi Granth
21. Ibid: p830 line 3
22. Dasam Granth: Chandni Charitar
23. Ibid: Bachitar Natak
24. A Brahmin had been invited by Guru Nanak's parents to bestow their son with the Sacred Thread. Guru Nanak declined to wear it and told the priest:

From the cotton of compassion, the yarn of contentment,
 Twisted with truth and knotted with care,
 such is the thread one need to put on.
 O Pundit, if you have it, let me wear it.
 Nor shall it be burnt, nor from one part.
 Blessed would be wearer when about to depart – Adi Granth
25. Banda Singh Bahadur, was originally a Hindu Bairagi who, spiritually vanquished by Guru Gobind Singh, surrendered before him and became his disciple. From Nanded, the Guru dispatched him to the Punjab to boost the morale of the Sikhs there. He gathered Sikh forces, defeated the Mughal rulers, and established Sikh rule in a part of the Punjab. However, this did not last long and eventually he, along with hundreds of his comrades, was arrested and executed along with others.
26. Khafi khan: Muntakhib Lubah
27. Adi Granth