

# Life of Guru Gobind Singh



Prof. Kartar Singh

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## PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

In preparing the book for its third edition I have rewritten or overhauled it thoroughly in the light of knowledge and information obtained since the preparation of the second edition. I feel that the overhauling has added much to its value; but the reader has to be the final judge in that respect.

Ludhiana,  
1968

Kartar Singh

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

The first edition of the *Life of Guru Gobind Singh* was exhausted some years ago. A new revised edition was prepared for the press after much study and labour at Lahore. It was being printed when suddenly came out liberation in 1947 and we had to run for our lives. The printed forms, as well as the remaining pages of the manuscript, were left in Pakistan.

As most of my books and papers were also left at Lahore, it was some time before I could get a copy of this book to work upon afresh. I got it at last through the courtesy to my publishers.

I had to toil again. I am glad that the task has been completed at last. In preparing this edition I have tried to profit by the suggestions and criticism of all friends, as also to include all the information that came to me since the publication of the first edition.

No perfection is claimed in spite of all efforts to make the book as complete and accurate as possible. All suggestions to improve it will be thankfully received and carefully considered.

Patiala,  
1950

Kartar Singh

## PREFACE OF THE FIRST EDITION

The main object in writing this book has been to present a picture of Guru Gobind Singh, consistent with his views and teachings. An attempt has been made to examine critically and eradicate the prejudices that, through malice or ignorance, have come to be associated with the name of the Guru. It has been found that the histories written by the Guru's overzealous and unscrupulous admirers are marred by lavish attempts to prove him an equal of the Hindu *Avtars*. In consequence, they have attributed to the Guru's acts and habits, which he condemned in others. On the other hand, the accounts written by the contemporary and later Muhammadan scribes and historians are mostly disfigured by a marked display of bigotry and prejudice. The European writers who relied on these latter, have been let into the same pitfall, and have given currency to wrong facts and views about the Guru. Hence, no single book written by an author belonging to any of these groups can, in itself, be regarded as reliable history. In order to find out the truth, we must compare these books with one another and with the writings of the Guru and his close associates. This is what I have attempted to do in these pages. How far I have succeeded in this difficult undertaking is for the readers to judge.

Guru Gobind Singh's personality is a wonderfully harmonious combination of so many good and manly qualities, as have seldom been found blended together in one person. Consequently, many writer who have attempted to measure him with their narrow scales, have been baffled and dazzled. Not finding his parallel anywhere, they have come to self-consoling conclusion that the stories told of the Guru's many-sided talents and accomplishments are but myths. They have, therefore, presented a very incomplete and highly distorted picture of the Guru.

To the great men of subsequent times he has been a great challenge. Unable to hold him within the narrower compass of their hearts, they grow nervous, and lose even the capacity to understand him. The result is that whenever they have taken up pen to write about the Guru, this nervous irritation has swayed their minds and they have taken shelter behind hard epithets. Hence it is, that Guru Gobind Singh has been always misunderstood. Indeed, he may be called the "Great Misunderstood."

It is with the hope of removing at least a part of this ignorance and misunderstanding, and under the conviction that Guru Gobind Singh, rightly understood, can be a great elevating force in the private, social, and political life of today, that I sent forth this little book into the great world. If it succeeds in its mission, the glory will be the Guru's; if it fails, the faults will lie with my powers of expression and exposition.

My thanks are due to Prof. Niranjana Singh, M.Sc. without whose constant encouragement this work would not have been undertaken; to Prof. Teja Singh, M.A., S. Partap Singh Kairon, M.A. (U.S.A), and S. Darbara Singh Sodhi, M.A. (U.S.A), who very kindly went through the manuscript and gave very valuable suggestion; to S.B. Bishan Singh, Principal, for his kindly giving me facilities to use books on Sikh History, collected at the College; to all authors whose works I have consulted; and to all friends who helped me in the preparation of the book in various ways.

Khalsa College,  
Amritsar  
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KARTAR SINGH



## CHAPTER I

### HIS HERITAGE

#### GURU NANAK TO GURU RAM DAS

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of Sikhs and Father of the Khalsa Panth, completed the work of raising "a new people freed from the debasing corruption of ages", firing their minds with a new nationality, arousing in them sentiments of self-confidence and patriotism, inspiring them with a mighty resolve to uproot tyranny in all its forms, and imbuing them with a passionate yearning for independence. This great work had been begun by Guru Nanak and carried on by his successors in a planned, systematic manner. He took up the work from the point where his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, had left it.

Therefore, in order to fully appreciate the difficulty and magnitude of the work which he undertook to perform, and to adequately comprehend the measure of his achievements, it is essential to make a brief survey of the past, which formed his heritage. We should keep before our mind the objects, explicit and implicit, with which Guru Nanak founded the Brotherhood, and the measure of success achieved by him and his eight successors towards the realization of those objects. Then we shall be in a position to form some idea of the ordeal, which awaited the heroic personality on whom fell the duty and responsibility of leading the Sikh nation through the times which had seen and which followed the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Knowing his difficulties, and the means and material at his disposal to meet and surmount them, we shall be in a position to appreciate rightly what he could do and what he left to be accomplished by his brave and faithful followers.

Guru Nanak had found the Hindus in a really deplorable condition. Centuries of subjection had broken and crushed their spirit. They had forgotten, or were unable to tread the hard but honourable path of personal purity, social freedom, and political independence, in which the lofty ideals and examples of their noble ancestors invited them. The Muhammadan rulers were plundering their homes, lifting their women, desecrating and demolishing their temples, making thousands



of them relinquish their faith, and subjecting them in innumerable indignities and debasing tyrannies. So weak and demoralized had the Hindus become, that this inhuman treatment aroused within them no thoughts of any protest, much less of any resistance. Even the war-like Rajputs considered it a privilege to wed their daughters to the Muhammadan rulers. Self-preservation, in any form and at any sacrifice, came to be their one end in view. They ceased to feel the degradation which had engulfed them, and lived in the faith that God would, some day, end their sorrows. Self-help ideal never entered their minds. 'Those who had escaped conversion had almost lost all that lends dignity and grace to life and distinguishes religion from superstition or cant.'<sup>1</sup> As Guru Nanak says, most Hindus had come to stoop very low in their zeal to please their Muslim masters.

The degradation of the 'high-caste' Hindus manifested itself in other ways also. Because of their caste pride, they, in their homes and temples, scornfully called their Muhammadan rulers *malechha* or 'the defiled', and regarded their touch as polluting. The language spoken by the Muhammadan rulers and the language of their religious book, the Quran, Persian and Arabic, respectively, were declared by the Hindus to be unspeakable languages (*Abhakhia*). But, in order to please their Muslim masters, in their day-to-day external or public life, they did much which they themselves considered to be forbidden by their own religion. They adopted or mimicked their rulers' dress and mode of life; accepted gifts in kind from them, which they consumed in their homes and kitchens and in offering worship to their gods, though such material they described as defiled and defiling (*malechh dhan*); ate the flesh of animals, killed in the Muhammadan fashion i.e., killed while the *kalma* in the "unspeakable language" (*Abhakhia*) was repeated; learnt and used the *malechh bhasha* (the language of the *malechhas*); read their religious books; and bore many an inroad by Islamic injunctions into the precincts of their domestic and social lives. In short, hypocrisy and degradation were rampant among the Hindus everywhere and on every side.

In addition to this external oppression in different forms, the Hindu masses suffered such social tyrannies at the hands of their co-religionists, in the name of religion, as had no parallel elsewhere, and as had no religious sanction. The caste system had lost its original elasticity, and had come to be extremely rigid and a source of a good deal of evil and misery. It was being abused most mercilessly by the privileged classes. The great body of the population were denied the solace of direct approach great body of the population were denied the solace

1. Dr G. C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, p. 4.

of direct approach or appeal to God or gods. The sacred books were inaccessible to them, both because they were in a language which they did not understand, and also because their study was forbidden to them. Their touch, nay, even their shadow, polluted the Twice-born, as the two higher castes called themselves. Persecution was driving the priests to tighten the caste-restrictions in order to preserve the purity of their 'ancient blood', though the blood had lost all its ancient splendour. The lower castes had to serve as chattel to the Twice-born. That was the only way in which they could win sufferance here, and merit here or hereafter. What the higher classes received from their rulers, that very treatment they meted out to those who were under them. Is it any wonder, then, that the lower classes found it far better to join the ranks of the Muslim oppressors rather than bear this manifold yoke?

This Hindu priests, who had, for centuries, been the self-made custodians of 'religious' knowledge, had reduced religion to a mockery, to mere forms and ceremonials, devoid of any sense or meaning.<sup>1</sup> Some still had the scriptures by heart, but these did not affect their hearts in the least; hence, their lives were most often completely divorced from the teachings of the texts, which they repeated in hopes of salvation. The Brahmins not only claimed to be advisers to the multitude of gods regarding the gifts to be bestowed on mortals, or the evils to be averted from their heads, but also pretended to be a mysterious means of goods traffic between this world and the other. In that capacity they undertook to transport money, food, clothing, etc., given them for their own use, to the ancestors or gods of the pious, ignorant, and superstitious people. The Brahmin thus ate sumptuous dinners, and assured his dupes that everything had been passed on to the desired persons in the other world. Of course, the devotee had to pay suitable 'conveyance charges'. Such was the condition of the vanquished Hindu: at the time when Guru Nanak was born.

Thus, religion and the superstitions associated with it had divided the Hindu community, vertically and horizontally, into innumerable water-tight compartments. Each sect had its own objects of worship, which were held by it to be superior to those of its neighbours. Each sect had its own notions about its social status and the nobility of its blood. On that account, all sects had definite rules, prescribing the

1. 'The popular religion about the time of Guru Nanak's birth was confined to peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the forehead, such other mechanical observances... The springs of true religion had been choked by weeds of unmeaning ceremonial, debasing superstition, the selfishness of the priests, and the indifference of the people.'

social relations which could be entered into with only a certain group of the other sects. Thus, religion, instead of acting as a unifying principle, was disrupting the Hindu society.

If the social and religious ideas and practices of the Hindus had become so harmfully low, their political ideals had degenerated still lower. The mutual antagonism of their different divisions rendered them incapable of acting in unison for any common purpose. Hence, they had reconciled themselves to a position of abject slavery to which they had been practically reduced by centuries of Muslim rule. They had come to regard it as a curse from their gods. The only remedy, therefore, was to pray to and thereby appease, the offended deities. In short, the general mass of the Hindus of that time had no political ideals whatsoever.

One by one, all Hindu states had been conquered and annexed. Some small ones, which were still left unmolested in the hilly or far-off regions, had not much of independence, nor any ambition to extend their domain or enhance their power.

On the other hand, the religion of the ruling race was urging its followers to wanton acts of bigoted cruelty. They did not tolerate any dissent from the law, proclaimed by the Prophet. All forms of torture and oppression were being employed to force the Hindus to become Muhammadans.<sup>1</sup> With a great many of the Muslims, too, religion had become a matter of forms, observances, and ceremonies, in many cases just the opposite of those held sacred by the Hindus, the *Mullas* and *Pandits* were entangled in a web of idle controversies and burning with hate and anger. Really, 'true religion had taken wings and flown'.<sup>2</sup>

Some attempts had been made by gifted persons, even before the time the Guru Nanak, to reform this vicious system. But all of them failed to achieve any permanent success because of the defects inherent in their teachings. So strongly were they impressed by the nothingness of this world, that they advocated total renunciation. They did not, at all, concern themselves about the social condition of the masses. They did not call upon their followers to break and throw aside the chains that bound them in social, religious, and political spheres, and thus 'rise a new people free from the debasing

1. 'Pity for the benighted condition of their fellows, that pity which lies at the root of all laudable propagation of one's faith, has scarcely at all, if at all, been exhibited by Moslems....Here converts are made on the field of battle with the sword at their throat. Tribes are, in a single hour, convinced of the truth of the new faith, because they have no alternative but extermination.' M. Dods, *Mohammad, Buddha and Christ*, pp. 101-102.

2. *Adi Guru Granth, Guru Nanak.*

corruption of ages. They perfected forms of dissent rather than planted the germs of nations, and their sects remain to this day as they left them'.<sup>1</sup> The seed which Guru Nanak sowed produced a richer harvest than theirs.... because he realized what they failed to realize, that a religion, if it is to be a living force, must be a practical religion, one that teaches mankind, not how to escape from the world, but how to live worthily in it ; not how evil is to be avoided, but how it is to be met and overcome'.<sup>2</sup>

Guru Nanak, perceiving the true principles of reform, struck at the root of all social and religious disabilities which had crippled the Hindu society. He felt the need and laid the foundation of a new nation which might be able, not only to stand erect and united against oppressors, but also to be the instrument of uprooting political tyranny.<sup>3</sup> This was a task not to be achieved in a life time or two. Hence it was that he deliberately decided upon the system of a succession of Gurus till the work of nation-building was complete. With the true instinct of a gifted reformer, he diagnosed the malady and proceeded with the necessary treatment in a calm, deliberate, scientific way. He realized that much as he resented the oppression of the rulers and the political

1. Cunningham, *History of the Sikhs*, p.38

2. C.H. Payne, *A Short History of the Sikhs*, p.20.

3. It is not correct to say, as S.M. Latif and some others do, that Guru Nanak had no political ideals, and that 'his tenets were misunderstood after his death by his zealous followers, who, from a host of *faqirs*, turned into warriors.....' That the Guru felt keenly the barbarous inhumanities perpetuated by the then Muhammadan rulers, and deeply resented the social and political disabilities of his people, is evident from some of his poems or *Shabads*, wherein he depicts the ghastly scenes being daily enacted before him. His heart melted in agony at the cruel spectacle : but, just then, he could do nothing towards ameliorating the condition of the Hindus by either of the two methods of political work. 'Constitutional agitation would have failed because there was no constitution in India. Active resistance of the ruling despotism was out of the question, because the Hindus were too weak to make any effective resistance.' Narang, *op. cit.*, p.3.

Hence he contented himself, for the time, with planting the germs of his contemplated Sikh nation in the minds and hearts of the people. The work of his nine successors was in strict conformity with his ideals and consisted in gradually giving a 'local habitation and a name' to the ideals of Guru Nanak. 'Govind himself, in fact, as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the foundation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Govind Singh had been sown by Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by Govind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak.....' (Ibid. p.1.)

Moreover, Latif himself says that once Guru Nanak was arrested and imprisoned under the Emperor's orders, on the charge that he was preaching doctrines which might prove dangerous to the state.

bondage of the people, he could not, all at once, prepare the latter to march into the field of battle against their Muslim oppressors. He left that before that wider liberation could be attempted, the masses had to be emancipated from the social and religious oppression of their co-religionists. As long as they were content to bear one sort of slavery, they could not rise to throw off another, which was still more galling, far more degrading, and far harder to throw away.

Hence, he attacked the citadel of caste system by declaring that 'the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes,' 'not by virtue of birth but by devotion and good actions could merit be obtained'. He addressed the people in their own language and declared that the doors of the Father's Mansion were open for all to enter, if they would. He preached that retirement from the world was a confession of failure. One should live in world and serve one's fellow-creatures. Thus alone could honour and position be won in the *Darbar* of the Almighty Father. The best renunciation consisted in being in the world, drawing nourishment from it, and passing the usual course of life in it, yet holding oneself aloof from it in mind and heart, verily like the lotus in water. The world's allurements should not be able to divert the inner attention from the Creator and Sustainer of all. 'Nanak left the Hindus of the Punjab immensely better than he had found them. Their belief had been ennobled, their worship purified, the rigidity of caste broken, their minds emancipated, and they were now more fit to enter on the career of national progress to which Guru Nanak's successors were destined to lead them.'<sup>1</sup>

This work of elevation and emancipation was carried on by his successors. Guru Angad collected and reduced to writing the hymns, as well as an account of the life and travels of Guru Nanak, and took initial steps towards the organization of the budding nation. Guru Amar Das took a practical step towards banishing the caste-restrictions, caste-prejudices, and the curse of untouchability arising therefrom, by making it a rule that all who came to see him must first dine in his *langar* or free kitchen, where all, 'rich or poor, Brahmins or Sudras, dined together without distinction'.<sup>2</sup> He introduced the *Anand*-marriage ceremony, replacing the Brahminical form of marriage. He carried on a vigorous crusade against the practice of *Sati*.<sup>3</sup> By such reforms he purified the society of many evils. All this was designed to distinguish the Sikh ideals and practices from

1. Dr G.C.Narang, *op. cit.*, p.15.

2. *Ibid.*, p.19.

3. C.H. Payne, *op.cit.*, p.3.

those of the Hindus. He sent out a number of his followers to preach and spread the mission of the Gurus, and to organize the disciples in their respective places. Guru Ram Das, realizing the needs of the growing nation, founded a central place of worship and gathering (Amritsar); a capital, so to say, where all could meet from time to time, cultivate mutual love and understanding, and draw inspiration from a common source.

In order to provide and ensure regular, adequate funds for this movement of mass regeneration and national awakening, Guru Ram Das appointed his representatives called *Masands*. They were spread all over the country and functioned in all such places where Sikh congregations existed or came into being. In addition to preaching the Guru's gospel and serving as models of life and conduct for the faithful, it was their duty to receive the voluntary offerings made by the local Sikhs and to convey them, periodically, to the Guru. They were strictly forbidden to use any part of the offerings for their own or their families' needs. As a matter of fact, the persons selected were themselves absolutely against making any such use of the offerings. They were staunch followers of the Guru's principles which enjoined on every Sikh to earn his living with the sweat of his brows, share his earnings with the needy, and remember God every moment of his life. They led exemplary lives, and with precept and example they persuaded others to live and work on the same lines. Of course, as the Guru's representatives, and as embodiments of the Sikh way of life, they spontaneously received great respect and consideration from the Sikhs.

## CHAPTER 2

### HIS HERITAGE

#### GURU ARJAN TO GURU TEGH BAHADUR

As a result of the teachings of the first Four Gurus, there had been set up a distinct community which differed from its neighbours in religious outlook, social customs, and latent political ideals. They had a common object of worship—God-, and a common source of knowledge divine—their Guru. The pride of caste on the one side, and the sense of inferiority on the other, had been replaced by a feeling of love and brotherliness.<sup>1</sup> The rising nation was growing in strength and organization, and was coming into prominence. Guru Arjan, 'who was a born poet, a practical philosopher a powerful organizer, and great statesman'<sup>2</sup> supplied what was wanting. He compiled the Sacred Book for the guidance of the faithful and installed it in the holy Temple at Amritsar. He developed and regulated still further the system for collection of the loveful offerings of the Sikhs, which his father and predecessor, Guru Ram Das, had initiated, so that they might serve the purpose for which they were meant, namely, the advancement of the growing nation's cause. He ordered that all Sikhs were to set aside *daswandh* or one-tenth of their incomes for the community's common fund, and to remit it to the Guru through the *masands* of their respective localities. Every *masand* had to go to the Guru's *darbar* regularly on *Baisakhi* each year, along with a party of local Sikhs, and to present his year's collection to the Guru in person. It must be borne in mind that the offerings were absolutely voluntary. They

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1. 'The spirit of the Sikh religion promised to keep its votaries at peace with all mankind; but such views of comprehensive charity were particularly odious to the bigoted part of the Mohammadans.'

'Nanak preached the gospel of peace; but there was no peace for Sikhs in the empire of the Mughals. Just as the Romans sought, by unremitting persecution, to stamp out Christianity, so the Mughal emperors sought to stamp out the Khalsa. Like Romans, they succeeded only in strengthening that which it was their purpose to destroy.'

C.H. Payne, *op cit.*, p. 30.

2. Dr G.C. Narang, *op.cit.*, p. 31.

were made as a mark of devotion to the Guru and his cause. The Sikhs were everywhere eager to further that cause in every way and to the best of their capacity. There was, and there could be, not compulsion or even coercion in this matter.<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, he laid the foundation of the future Sikh cavalry by encouraging adventure and enterprise among his Sikhs, and inducting them to engage in horse traffic by buying horses from Turkistan and selling them in India. He also exhorted his followers to take to various profitable trades, crafts, and occupations. This raised the economic status of the community. It also taught the Sikhs lessons of self-help, self-reliance, and mutual co-operation.

The teachings of the Sikh Gurus had, from the beginning, attracted converts equally from amongst the Hindus and the Muslims. Whole villages with hundreds of Muslims bowed before the Gurus and became their disciples. Up to the time of Akbar the Mughal emperors had not interfered much with this peaceful movement of conversion by persuasion and demonstration of lofty ideals in actual life. But such of the members of the ruling race as had taken upon themselves the duty of bringing the infidels into the fold of Islam, could not relish the conversion of the 'faithful' to the religion of the 'infidels'. The superb success of Guru Arjan in this direction, and his evergrowing popularity and influence, perturbed Jahangir<sup>2</sup> This Emperor, who had little of the piety, mildness, or tolerance of his father, soon developed a lasting hatred for the Guru, and resolved to put an end to his life and activities.<sup>3</sup> This is what he writes in his Memoirs:-

'In Gobindwal, which is on the river Biyah (Beas), there was a Hindu named Arjan, in the garments of sainthood and sanctity, so much so, that he had captured many of the simple-hearted of the Hindus and even of the ignorant and foolish followers of Islam, by his ways and manners, and they had loudly sounded the drum of his holiness.

1. 'It is Arjan, then, who ought to be deemed the first who gave consistent form to the order to the religion of Sikhs, an act which, though it produced the effect he wished, of uniting that nation more closely, and of increasing their numbers, proved fatal of himself. The jealousy of the Mohammadan government was excited, and he was made its sacrifice.'

Sir John Malcolm, Sketch of the Sikhs p. 32.

2. 'The rapid development of the Sikhs at this time, and the growing influence of their Guru, soon led to trouble with the Mughals, and the persecution of their sect at the hands of the Mughal emperors dates from Arjan's Ministry.'

C.H. Payne, *op. cit.* p.31.

3. The accession of Jahangir restored the forms and tenets of the Mohammadan faith, which had been discouraged by his father, and with them the spirit of persecution.'

Prinsep *History of the Punjab*, Enlarged Edition, p. 95.)



They called him Guru, and from all sides stupid people crowded to worship and manifest complete faith in him. For three or four generations (of spiritual successors) they had kept this shop warm. Many times it occurred to me to put a stop to this vain affair or to bring him into the assembly of the people of Islam'.<sup>1</sup>

Jahangir soon got a ready-made pretext to carry out his evil design. His son Khusrau rebelled against him. Being defeated, the prince fled towards Lahore, pursued by Jahangir himself. During his march from Agra to Lahore, Jahangir held enquiries, and punished all those who were reported to have helped Khusrau or interested themselves in his cause.<sup>2</sup> He passed through Gobindwal, where Guru Arjun was alleged to be residing at the time of Khusrau's passing that way on his journey to Lahore.<sup>3</sup> He even made a halt there. But neither during his halt at that place, nor during his march from the Beas to Lahore, did anybody inform him that Guru Arjan Dev had, in any way, helped or sympathized with Khusrau. He received no report whatsoever against the Guru, from either official or non-official sources, including the Guru's detractors, of whom there was no scarcity there. When, however, Jahangir was about to leave Lahore, the Guru's traducers invented and conveyed to the Emperor the story that the Guru had befriended the rebel prince. In this connexion Jahangir writes in his Memoirs as under:-

"At that time Khusrau crossed the river and passed that way. He resolved to secure the Guru's services. Khusrau encamped in the place where the latter resided. He met him and told him some preplanned things. With his finger he affixed on the Prince's forehead a saffron mark called *tilak* and considered auspicious by the Hindus".

As said above, when this story was received by the Emperor, he was about to leave Lahore. He had neither the time to enquire into this complaint and find out the truth, nor any inner compulsion to do so. He accepted the story as true, nay, he grabbed at it, and acted accordingly. No enquiry was conducted and no trial was held. "I fully knew his heresies", writes Jahangir, "and I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, that his houses and children be made over to Murtza Khan, that his property be confiscated, and that he should be put to

1. *Taziak-i-Jahangiri*, Tr. A. Rogers, p. 72.

2. For example, Sheikh Nazam of Thanessr, who had prayed for Khusrau's success and welfare, was sent to Mecca at State expense.

3. During the time of Khusrau's rebellion, the Guru was not at Goindwal but at Tarn Taran. Hence the story of Khusrau's meeting him at Goindwal is a mere concoction and altogether false.

death with tortures." In accordance with these orders, the Guru was arrested, taken to Lahore, and put to death with unheard of inhuman tortures.

Before his departure with his captors, Guru Arjan Dev gave instructions that after him his son, Sri Hargobind, should be installed as Guru with due ceremony. At the same time he impressed upon his son and successor the seriousness of the situation which had developed in the country. "Hard times are ahead," he added, "the forces of evil are out to crush all vestige of even the elementary human rights. The house of Guru Nanak, from its very foundation, stands for love, truth, freedom, equality, and self-respect. We have tried to carry on our work of emancipation in perfect peace and non-violence. But you see the result. The sight of their own cruel actions has deformed the soul of the Mughals. It may yet be possible to awaken it and make it assume the human nature which it is losing fast. I shall let the Emperor witness the infinite suffering caused by his orders and borne for the love of God and man. This might shake up his soul. But, if even this last measure of peaceful suffering fails, then take it from me, that his soul has been completely brutalized. It would be as unwise to bear further sufferings with the idea of debrutalizing the souls of the Mughals as to throw oneself before a horned beast with the object of making him give up his brute nature. Times are coming when the forces of good and evil must come to grips. So get ready, my son. You have been trained in the use of arms and soldierly feats, purposely. Gird up arms yourself and urge your followers to do the same. Fight the tyrants, till they are reformed or exterminated.'<sup>1</sup>

It need hardly be added that this advice of Guru Arjan was admirably suited to the nature and temperament of Guru Hargobind. He perceived that though the cruel and torturous execution of his father had no softening effect on the stony hearts of the oppressors, yet in the Sikhs it had aroused very strong feelings. There was the risk of a wave of pessimism overtaking and paralysing the Sikhs, and making them forget the high ideals which the Gurus had been setting before them. There was the danger of their losing all faith in the all conquering powers of Truth and Piety; of their taking to renunciation and detachment from the affairs of the world and losing themselves in the same pit of

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1. 'Arjan had seen clearly that it was impossible to preserve his followers without the aid of arms; and his last injunction to his son and successor, Hargobind, was to sit fully armed on his throne, and maintain the largest military force he could muster.'

despair and impotence from which the Gurus had worked to lift them up; of their subscribing to the philosophy of their demoralized and devitalized neighbours, and being content to 'let what is broken so remain', for there could be no pleasure in 'warring against evil' nor any peace in climbing the 'ever-climbing wave'; and of their coming to the cowardly conclusion that, amid all that strife of good and evil, it was best to take no sides, but to sit quietly and listen to the 'inner spirit which sings there is no joy but calm'.

The Guru was convinced that his father's last injunction was right, and that the times called for a band of warrior-saints who would shun or fear no danger, and who would dedicate their lives to the banishment of tyranny and oppression from their land; a new type of soldiers whose faith in the omnipotence of God, Who is all Love and Truth, should be as deep and firm as their resolve to exert and sacrifice themselves in resisting and uprooting evil. But their sword was to strike not in a spirit of anger, hatred, or aggressiveness; kingship or rule was not to be the direct object of their conquest. They had to wield their sword in order to defend the weak victim against the mighty tyrant. Their sword was thus not a sword but a shield, and it was used not for destruction but for protection. Quiet suffering had not produced any change of heart in the oppressors. For centuries countless Hindus—men, women, and children—had fallen under the Muslim sword, but there had not been produced the slightest revulsion in the hearts of the wielders of power against such inhuman deeds. He, therefore, girded arms himself and called upon his followers to do the same. He taught them to rejoice in sport and in exercises involving danger and requiring skill, courage, power, and fortitude. But amid all these activities, their minds and hearts were ever to dwell on God. Four times he had to lead them into the field of battle, and each time he whetted their martial spirit by the relish that victory gave. It should be noted that not an inch of territory was occupied as the result of these victories, nor was any plunder acquired.

His successor, Guru Hari Rai, devoted his time and attention to peaceful organization, which was essential, if the new nation was to play the role of the country's liberator, and to oppose and scatter the imperial forces. He continued to keep with him 2200 soldiers, as enjoined upon him by his father and predecessor, but fought no battles, as no occasion arose to do so. Guru Hari Krishan died soon after his accession at a tender age. The work of organization and training for the future was continued by his successor, Guru Tegh Bahadur, who,

in order to avoid being too much in the sun of the Mughals' attention, chose his abode in a hilly tract. But the Muhammadan rulers smelt a growing menace in the rise of the Sikhs, and the Guru had to suffer for the offence of preparing the downtrodden people to raise their head and achieve liberation.<sup>1</sup> To understand how that happened, we should review the political conditions prevailing at that time.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur succeeded to the *Gaddi*, Aurangzab had been securely established as the Emperor of India for about six years. He had completely reversed the policy of conciliation, initiated by the Great Akbar, and had rigorously re-enforced the camp of relentless oppression which had been re-introduced by Jahangir. His cruel and homicidal treatment of his father, brothers, and their families, on the one hand, and the cold-blooded murders of pious and liberal-minded Muslims such as *Sufis* and *Shias*, on the other hand earned for him the disapprobation of the saner section of the whole Muslim world.<sup>2</sup> In that time of discontent and murmured protests, he made use of his wits, of which he had an abundance, and decided to enlist the sympathies of the fanatic section of his coreligionists. As if to wash away his crimes and sins, he bestowed rich gifts on *Mullas* and *Qazis*, and agreed to follow the religious policy which they would advise and advocate.<sup>3</sup>

Spurred, in part, by his fanatic and short-sighted *Mullas*, but, mostly, by the promptings of his own merciless heart and hardened conscience, which desired to stifle all remorse, he vowed to carry on a regular and systematic '*Jehad*' or exertion in the path of 'God.' His

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1. During the period of 1645 to 1675, the life-time of the 7th, 8th and 9th Gurus, the hostility of the Mughals continued unabated. When in 1658, Aurangzeb ascended the throne, he lost no opportunity of persecuting the Gurus and their warlike disciples. Finally, he seized Tegh Bahadur and caused him to be cruelly executed for refusing to embrace the faith of Islam.'

C.H.Payne, *op. cit.*, p.32.

2. The Sheriff of Mecca refused to receive his envoys although they brought him money presents.....Shah Abbas of Persia hated Aurangzeb and severely condemned him for his treatment of his father and his brethren. He scoffed at the title which Aurangzeb had assumed of "Conqueror of the World", and he threatened to march an army to Delhi, Aurangzeb was in the utmost alarm....."

J.T. Wheeler, *A Short History of India*, pp. 162., 170.

3. After the War of Succession, he planned to drown in a shower of gold any scruples which the headmen and theologians of the Holy City might have felt in acknowledging as lawful sovereign the usurper of a loving father's throne. In November, 1659, shortly after his grand coronation, he despatched Sayyid Mir Ibrahim with six lakhs and sixty thousand Rupees for distribution among the Sayyids, recluses, and servitors of the mosques and shrines, and devotees of Mecca and Medina.'

J.N. Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p.112.

ideal was the extermination of the idolatrous Hindus. He began his task with his wonted vigour and persistence, and in the short span of six years, loud wails of the Hindus were heard from all corners of the Mughal Empire. All the political, economic and social disabilities prescribed by Islam for the non-believers were imposed on the Hindus. *Jazia*<sup>1</sup> or poll-tax, as compensation money for their being permitted to breathe in the Muslim State, *Kharaj* or tax for land; humility of dress and behaviour suited to a subject race; prohibition to ride, carry arms erect new temples, or hold religious processions, fairs, or gatherings, and exclusion from state services; these were some of those disabilities. A general order was issued on 9th April, 1669, 'to demolish all the schools and temples of the infidels and to put down their religious teachings and practices'. Needless to say that these orders were zealously executed.

On the other hand, every inducement was provided, and made known far and wide, for the lower and poorer classes to change their religion without much pressure. Handsome gifts were offered. The converts were raised to a position of social equality with their local officials and the general body of the Muslim community. They ceased to be 'untouchables', so far as their coreligionists were concerned. They had many economic benefits, too. They were exempted from land tax. *Jazia*, and other taxes, which the Hindus had to pay. Against all these inducements of social, political, and economic benefits, their 'ancient religion' had to promise them nothing. Hence a large section of the lower classes needed very little pressure to induce them to embrace the state religion. The main efforts of the rulers herefore, directed against the high-caste Hindus. These people were, not at all, perturbed over the desertion of the lower castes. They were rather glad that a 'polluted and polluting' part of their society was getting out of their way. A Hindu once converted to Islam even under compulsion was lost to the community for ever. Even high-caste converts to Islam were not re-admitted into the fold of Hinduisim. The new converts to Islam, on the other hand, imbibed the spirit and ideals of their new coreligionists with a rapidity which was amazing, and rejoiced in inducing or forcing other Hindus to join their ranks.

Such were the times when Guru Tegh Bahadur was, in 1665 A.D., practically forced to come out from his life of calm meditation at Baba

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1. The officially avowed policy in reimposing the *jazia* was to increase the number of Muslims by putting pressure on the Hindus. As the contemporary observer, Manucci noticed, 'Many Hindus who were unable to pay turned Mohammadan to obtain relief from the collectors....Aurangzeb rejoices.'

Bakala, and take up the duty of preparing the Sikhs for the successful achievement of their mission. He soon found that the task before him was hard indeed, not only because he had to work in opposition to the policy of the great bigot, but also because some of his own near relations were bitterly against him on account of their pretensions to Guruship. Because of these jealousies, he left Kiratpur; the city of his father, and founded a new city of his own, called Anandpur or the City of Immortal Bliss. But his misguided rivals continued to harass and misrepresent him. He did not care much for all that. He taught his followers not to fall in love with the mortal mould of clay, not to put their hearts in worldly joys and pleasures, and to be ever ready to render the last account. As regards their attitude towards neighbours, he enjoined on them the duty of striking fear in none and being afraid of no one. He thus prepared them for self-sacrifice in a noble cause, and we shall see how well his disciples learnt that lesson.

After some time, partly persuaded by his mother to quit the neighbourhood of his short-sighted rivals and to visit the sacred places, but chiefly with the object of spreading his principles and teachings, Guru Tegh Bahadur undertook a wide tour of the eastern part of the country. His family accompanied him. He visited several important holy places of the Hindus, as Guru Nanak had done long before him.

## CHAPTER 3

### BIRTH AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

On reaching Patna, the Guru left his family to stay there, while he himself went further east to Bengal and Assam. It was during Guru Tegh Bahadur's tour of Assam that Guru Gobind Singh (or Sri Gobind Rai or Gobind Das, as he was called till the new baptismal ceremony introduced by him in 1699 A.D.) was born at Patna. This happened on the seventh day of the bright half of *Poh* (or the 23rd of *Poh*), 1723 BK, corresponding to December 22, 1666 A.D. Guru Tegh Bahadur heard the happy news when he was at Dacca.

Guru Tegh Bahadur spent about two years in Assam. When the purpose, for which he had gone there, had been achieved, he hurried back to the Punjab. The reasons for this sudden return are not known to history so far. The urge to reach the Panjab, as quickly as possible, was so strong and peremptory, that he did not go to Patna in order to see his family and his new-born, only son. It seems that because of Aurangzab's policy, the Hindus and Sikhs of the Panjab and its neighbourhood were passing through very hard times. The Guru felt that his right place was with them; he must be in their midst, solacing, consoling, encouraging them in their sufferings, and preparing them to face the coming ordeals with equanimity and fortitude. So he hurried back to the Panjab without even having a look at his new-born, only son. They were all his sons and daughters who were moaning and crying in deep affliction in the western part of the country. He must be with them and be a father to them all, sharing and lighting their burden.

From Gaya he wrote a letter to the Sikhs of Patna, thanking and blessing them for their services to his family, and desiring them to send his family to the Panjab in due course. The Guru's family, therefore, stayed at Patna. The first five years of Guru Gobind Singh's life were spent at Patna, which was then the capital of Bengal.

The little pranks and games in which he indulged all gave a foretaste of the life he was to follow. He would divide his mates into

two groups and engage them in contests of skill, power, and patience. All children recognized him as their leader, and obeyed him as implicitly as his Khalsa did afterwards. An anecdote is told of his early days which shows his fearlessness even at that age. One day, the Chief Officer of Patna was passing by the place where Sri Gobind Singh was playing with his mates. The attendants called upon the boys to salute the *Nawab*. The child Guru told his comrades not to *Salaam* but to make mouths at the officer. They did so and ran away.

During his stay at Patna, Sri Gobind Singh came to be the idol of many; both young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, Hindus and Muslims. There was some magnetic force in this charming child, some indescribable emanations darted forth from this mysterious personality, which bewitched all those who beheld him.

Every day he made some new love-conquests. With an army of over a hundred boys at his heels, he would march through the city like a victorious general parading his troops in a vanquished city. Sometimes, he and his companions would jump into the Ganges and begin splashing water over devotees engaged in concentration before their idols. As they ran off to avoid getting wet, he would laugh at their lack of persistence and tenacity. Some he conquered with his childlike tricks, some with his love and some with a mysterious omnipotence and omniscience which enabled him to fulfil the unspoken wishes of his admirers.

Shivdat *Pandit* had been for long a worshipper of idols and gods. He had grown old in the practice of concentration and renunciation. People regarded him with deep respect, because he was holy and devout. They believed him to have acquired that stage where God is beheld face to face, clearly and steadily, as if with these eyes of flesh. But he had, all along, been feeling a void in his heart. As his faculties got strength and clarity from his devout practices, he perceived that something was wanting in the objects that he had worshipped so far. He felt uneasy, but knew not how to fill the void or to replace the objects of his devotions.

Early one morning, as he sat in a secluded, beautiful spot on the banks of the Ganges, with his eyes closed and his heart and mind soaring aloft in search of God, Sri Gobind Singh walked up to him stealthily from behind, stood near him, bent slightly forward, and putting his charming little mouth near the devotee's ear, said softly and sweetly, '*Pandit ji, Bo !*'

The *Pandit* had, in his meditations, felt himself very near his goal. He had thought that the Lord was coming out to him to dwell ever in



his heart. He had felt Him approaching. Now, he thought, he had heard Him speak in his ear. He opened his eyes, turned his face, and beheld a miracle. In the charming little face which met his eyes, he saw at once the Glory of Sri Ram Chandra and the Energy of Lord Krishna. The bright, round eyes, quivering with childlike mirth, appeared to the *Pandit* as two orbs shedding a light which illumined his heart and lighted the way to His presence. They were founts from which flowed the life-giving waters of Knowledge Absolute and Perfect Realization.

The *Pandit* was conquered. He had found the Beloved in the Child. Therefore, he called him Child-Beloved from that day. His meditations were now full of joy serene; for He now dwelt so near him and came to him in whatever form he wished Him to feast his eyes. Some learned *Pandits* ridiculed him, an old Brahmin, for bowing before a child. But he heeded them not. He had been smitten by the love-shafts of the Master. What cared he for the scorn or praise, the ridicule or applause, of the people who had no eyes to discern the Infinity enclosed in, and emanating from that little frame.

Shivdat was not the only man in Patna who regarded Sri Gobind Singh as God-in-Man. There were many others. Raja Fatah Chand Maini and his wife were even more devoted than Shivdat. The Child had conquered them in a singular manner. The pair had no son. They were always restless, not only because they lacked an heir, but also because they had been taught to believe that only a dutiful son could, with his offerings to the gods, help the deceased parents across a particular region of the other world. They approached Shivdat, one day, as he sat on his usual seat by the side of the Ganges. They told him of the thoughts that allowed them neither rest nor joy. They begged him to intercede on their behalf and get them the boon of a son. Shivdat gave them the joyful tidings that the Great Bestower of gifts was Himself in the world, in that very city, in human form. He directed them to go home, open the doors of their loveful hearts, and invite the Beloved to their bosoms. He assured them that He would come not by search, but by a true yearning of the heart. They did as desired. They would daily bathe and dress themselves in neat attire; they washed their hearts and minds clean of all earthly desires and thoughts, except the one which they had no power or mind to abandon, and waited for Him to come and sit enthroned in the shrines of their hearts, thus held ready for him.

Days passed, yet no sign of Him appeared. They did not lose heart. Thinking that He delayed His appearance because their yearning for Him had an earthly touch, an element of selfish desire, they bade

good-bye to even the one wish of their innermost hearts, the one which had urged them to seek the advice of the *Pandit*. One day they were sitting with their eyes turned inwards and their hearts expanding wider and wider in order to engulf and include Him within their enclosure. Suddenly, two little arms were flung round the queen's neck, which was now clasped in a tight embrace of love, and a sweet, charming voice spoke into her ear, 'Mother, I have come.'

Pandit Shivdat had spoken truly that the Child-Beloved showed himself to his devotees in whatever form they wished to behold him. The king and the queen wanted a son, and he gave himself up to them as their son. They believed with Shivdat that God had come to them as a child. They were happy. They rejoiced. And why should they not? 'God-in-Man' had come to them and called himself their son. Their anxious thoughts about this world and the next were all put to rest by the reassurance which they inhaled from his constant presence in their midst.

There was hardly a home in Patna which did not have Child Guru's admirers. Guru Tegh Bahadur's Muslim disciples were particularly enamoured of this fascinating child. The most distinguished among them were two brothers named Nawab Rahim Bakhsh and Nawab Karim Bakhsh. A village and two gardens, the love-offerings of the two brothers, are still attached to the Gurdwara at Patna.

Among his Muslim admirers was one named Pir Shah Bhikh<sup>1</sup>. He was a *Sayyid* living at village Thaska in the district of Karnal, now in Haryana. It is said that on the day when Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna, Shah Bhikh looked towards the east, in the direction of Patna, and made a deep and reverential bow. The act was rather queer for a Muhammadan because Muhammadans bow towards the west; in the direction of Mecca. When his disciples and servants asked him the reason of this strange act, the *Pir* replied, "In the city of Patna *Allah's* Light has appeared in human form. He will destroy the wicked people; he will fight against evil and irreligion, and make *dharma* (righteousness) flourish in the land. I have bowed to that Manifestation of *Allah* in human form. I am going to that city in order to get a sight of Him and be blessed thereby.

After passing through Delhi, Shah Bhikh arrived at Patna, and squatted in front of the Guru's house. When asked what he wanted, he disclosed the object of his long journey. At first, attempts were made to put him off. But he persisted in his request and said, "I have travelled hundreds of miles to have a look at *Allah's* Glory here. I will not move

1. Some writers mention Shah Bhikh as Sayyid Bhikh or Bhikhan Shah

from this place, nor eat or drink anything, until I get an opportunity to feast my hungering eyes.”

So, his wish had to be granted. As soon as he saw the child, he made a deep bow. Then he placed before the child two small earthen pots containing sweetmeat—one procured from a Hindu confectioner's and the other from a Muslim's shop. The Child Guru covered each with each hand. The *Pir* bowed again. When his disciples asked him the reason of this deeper bow, he said, “I wanted to know whether this Man of God or God-in-Man will favour the Hindus or the Muslims. He has divined my inmost thought and covered both the pots. He has thus assured me that both Hindus and Muslims will be equally dear to him. He will help and protect them both, if they ever be in need of his help.”

In this way, all good people of Patna became his body and soul. To all of them he was the light of their eyes and the joy of their life. So, when a few years later, Guru Tegh Bahadur called him to Anandpur, and preparations for the departure were being made, great was the sorrow which filled the hearts of his devoted admirers. But he consoled them with words which, in a slightly modified form, he was destined to employ many years afterwards in bidding farewell to his companions in weal and woe. He assured them that, though physically far away, they could behold him in their midst at any time with eyes of faith and love. To one he would appear in the morning *Namaz*, to another at *Sandhya*, to another when he would, in his name, distribute roasted grams and *puris* to children of his age, and to the general public when they beheld his cradle which he was leaving there. To all of them he gave suitable souvenirs. Then he bade them all a loveful good-bye in the month of *Phagan*, 1728 BK.

The *Raja* and the *Rani* had converted their palace into a *dharmshala*; a place of worship and charity. They had placed the Child-Beloved's gifts—arms and dress—in a place of honour in the house-temple. They lived in a perpetual paradise of earthly bliss. The *Pandit* had now grown old. He had been daily seeing the Child-Beloved and feeding his heart on the sight of him who was far away to all worldly eyes. All three of them felt a strong urge to see their Beloved once again with the eyes of flesh before leaving this world. So years after when their Beloved had grown up to be a man of twenty-three, Raja Fateh Chand, his queen, and Shivdat went to see him at Anandpur. He was Guru Gobind Singh. Then he came out to receive them. They would fain have bowed at his feet, but he would have none of that. He was to be still the ‘son’ of the king and the queen, and the Child-Beloved of the

old *Pandit*. The *Pandit's* soul was released from its earthly confinement at Anandpur, and conducted to the celestial home by the blessings of his Child-Beloved. The *Raja* and his queen returned to their home with a copy of the Sacred Book as the Guru's gift. They installed it in the same room in which the Beloved's arms and dress had been enthroned, and passed their days and nights in a happy communion with the Lord. While persons greater than this lucky pair in worldly wealth and fame, and having numerous descendants have been forgotten, the names of the king and the queen are kept alive by the *Sangat* of Maini which they set up in their house. The temple exists up to this day. Thus did Guru Gobind Singh prove a true son to this pair, helping them to an eternal life in this world as well as in the next.

## CHAPTER 4

### ON THE WAY TO ANANDPUR

The Guru's family started from Patna in February 1672. The people were naturally loth to part with personages who had so endeared themselves. They all started with the party, meaning to go as far with it as they could. By evening, the whole *Sangat* reached Danapur. The residents of the city, as well as the local agents of Jagat Seth of Patna, lovingly served the whole party. Here an old woman, who had ever been praying for a *darshan* or sight of the Guru and his family, served all with food. To Sri Gobind Singh she gave *khichri*, rice and pulse cooked together. He was delighted with this simple food which had been offered with a heart full of love and devotion. He blessed the old lady. He blessed the *handi*, the earthen pot, in which the food had been cooked. On her praying that she might have his *darshan* even after he was gone, he assured her that she could see him daily by distributing to the poor and the needy *khichri* cooked in that *handi*. After the party had left, she converted her house into a *dharmshala* and passed the rest of her days in remembering God and serving the people in the way that Sri Gobind Singh had prescribed. To this day, the *handi* is preserved as a sacred souvenir and gives its name, Handi Sahib, to the place.

Next day, the Guru's family took leave of the very large crowd which had either accompanied them from Patna or had gathered at Danapur. The party visited all holy places of the Hindus lying on or near the way, and made pretty long halts at Benares, Allahabad, Ayudhia, Lucknow, Kanpur, Mathura, and Bindraban. These were some of the places which they visited, and everywhere love-gatherings were held, both morning and evening, and *Nam-Dan*, or the gift of His Name, was freely bestowed. At places like Benares, the *Pandits* interrogated Sri Gobind Singh about his religious belief and practice; for he refused the sacred thread which they offered him. He refuted and confounded them by quoting and commenting upon the Word of Guru Nanak. In

every place, charity was bestowed on the needy with an open-handed generosity becoming the holy, illustrious family.

In about six months, i.e., some time in August 1672, the party reached Lakhnaur in the district of Ambala. The rains had begun. It was very difficult for the party to travel to Anandpur in that season; for the chos or rainy rivulets abounding in the way were all flooded and were difficult to cross.

Hence Guru Tegh Bahadur had sent word that the party should halt at Lakhnaur and stay there until the rainy season was over, and the rivulets subsided and became fordable. Sri Gobind Singh had not seen his father yet even once; so this order prolonging the period of separation damped his spirits for a while. But that could not be for long in a child of the vivacity and training of Sri Gobind Singh. Sikhs from far and near heard of the arrival of their future Lord and came to get the blessings of his *darshan*. Sri Gobind Singh soon attracted round him as big and devoted a troop of play-mates as at Patna, and the days passed on merrily.

In Lakhnaur, too, he made many love-conquests. Two of them may be described here. One day Sri Gobind Singh was playing with his mates. Pir Araf Din, who was held in high esteem by the people as possessing miraculous powers, passed that way. As he saw Sri Gobind Singh, he stepped out of his palanquin and bowed to him in obeisance. He took him aside and talked to him in a low voice. He bowed again, took his departure, and did not get into the palanquin as long as he was in sight of Sri Gobind Singh. His followers protested against his having bowed to a *kafir*. A *Pir*, said they, should have been the last person to insult the Islamic religion in that way. Pir Araf Din asked them to be calm; for he had *saluamed* none but the Peerless Lord, whom he saw manifest in the divine child. Their protests, said he, were due to their lacking the vision to recognize Him when He appeared to them. 'Shall I', he continued, 'stand rudely erect before the Lord simply because He has chosen to illumine the person of a non-Muslim? No, friends. Give up this narrow mentality. Bow to Him wherever you meet Him. At least I will do that, come what may.' Saying this, he bowed again in the direction of the Master's play-ground.

Pir Bhikhan Shah or Shah Bhikh of Thaska in the district of Karnal had already seen the Child-Guru at Patna soon after the latter's birth there. When he now heard that his Beloved God-in-Men was halting at Lakhnaur, he made haste to have a look at him once again.

The Child-Guru was then playing with his playmates. The *Pir*, on seeing him, bowed seven times before him. His disciples, as before,

asked him the same question as the disciples of Pir Araf Din had asked that *Pir*, and Pir Bhikhan Shah made the same reply.

Even at that age, Sri Gobind Singh displayed a keen interest in archery, fencing, riding, and hunting. He would accompany his uncle Kirpal and others on hunting expeditions and joy-rides. He had his miniature arms which he used with a skill quite unusual for a child of his age.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE FIRST OFFERING

The rain-water rivulets or chos dried up in due course. The paths became open to traffic. Thereupon, in the month of *Magh* 1729 BK/ January 1673 A.D., Guru Gobind Singh's maternal uncle, Bhai Kirpal, arrived with horses and carriages for the party. The Child-Guru had spent about five months at Lakhnaur. Taking leave of his devotees and playmates of that place, he started towards Anandpur. After a few days' journey, the party reached Kiratpur. Here the Child-Guru was received most cordially and affectionately by Sri Gulab Rai and Sri Sham Das, grandsons of his uncle, the late Sri Suraj Mal. They escorted him to their home and treated him with utmost respect. At that place, i.e., Kiratpur, he visited the shrines of his ancestors. After two or three days' stay there, the party left for Anandpur. At their approach, the city poured out its thousands to welcome him. There were great rejoicings on all sides. For days there was a regular *mela* in the city. People came from every direction as do clouds in *Sawan*, the rainy month of India.

At Anandpur, Sri Gobind Singh was now passing the happiest days of his life under the fostering care of his father, mother, grandmother, uncle, and numerous Sikhs, who verily adored him from the bottom of their hearts. Having passed the first five years of his life at Patna, he had picked up the accent and dialect peculiar to that part of the country. The Sikhs who had never been to that place regarded his speech as a charming novelty and were delighted to hear him talk.

He had already learnt Gurmukhi and could repeat from memory many sacred compositions of the Gurus. His regular education began now. In addition to a thorough study of the Sacred Book, he began to learn Sanskrit and Persian. His Persian tutor was Pir Muhammad of Sloh. Special and suitable arrangements were made for training him in horsemanship and in the use of arms; for the Guru knew that the times would soon need persons who should have swords in their hands, the Name on their lips, and love in their hearts. The time which Sri Gobind Singh could snatch from these more serious occupations, he devoted



to games and recreation. His games were the same as at Patna. He would divide his mates into two groups, and with himself at the head of one, engage them in mock battles.

The blissful life at the City of Eternal Bliss was cut short rather abruptly. We have already seen that Aurangzab had vowed to convert or exterminate the non-Muslim population of his empire. His orders had gone round to all his deputies and Viceroy's in the different provinces that no pains, means, or efforts were to be spared in furthering the cause of Aurangzeb's Islam. A saying goes that if a king orders his men to pluck one fruit from a garden, they would, surely, pluck at least a score. The zeal shown by the agents and servants of the Keeper of the Faith was in keeping with the truth of this saying. By 1675, they had succeeded in converting large numbers, and in banishing peace and happiness from numerous Indian homes. Cries, prayers, and curses against the oppressors rose from countless hearts.

As stated already, on coming to the throne, Aurangzab had started a relentless campaign to convert his Hindu subjects to Islam. His ambition was that all non-Muhammadans should be liquidated from the Mughal Empire, by conversion or execution. We have already referred to the order issued by him in 1669 A.D., calling upon all his Governors to demolish the temples and schools of the non-believers.<sup>1</sup> He had ordered all local officials, *Qazis*, and *Mullas* to make it so hot for the Hindus that they should be forced to throw off the sacred thread and embrace Islam. To help them in this religious task, he had appointed moving military columns. These bodies of special troops went about touring the country and enforcing the imperial orders, particularly in the Panjab.

Besides the Panjab, this conversion-campaign was specially severe and unrelenting in Kashmir. The Emperor was particularly anxious to make this 'Paradise of India' exclusively a Muslim preserve, with cent per cent Muslim population. Another reason why special attention was directed towards Kashmir was the converters' belief that if the Kashmiri *Pandits* were made to embrace Islam, the community of the Faithful

1. 'In 1669 A.D. he had issued a general order calling upon his governors everywhere to demolish the temples and schools of Hindus.'

*Maasir-i-Alamgiri*, Urdu, p. 54; Orme's *Fragments*, 85.

According to Khafi Khan, the order was enforced against the Sikhs as well.

According to a very widely current tradition, Aurangzeb would not take food each day until he had removed a seer and quarter (about two and a half pounds) of the Hindu sacred thread off the Hindus' necks, i.e., until so many Hindus had been converted to Islam that the sacred thread removed from their necks weighed that much.

would be enriched greatly by the addition of these intellectual people, and the Prophet's religion would make rapid progress in the whole realm with their help.

Swayed by such motives, Aurangzeb had issued special orders to the Governor of Kashmir, enjoining upon him the need of strict measures in this behalf. The Governor obeyed the imperial orders with the zeal worthy of a true and ambitious soldier of Islam. People belonging to the common or low castes began to be converted in large numbers. Then he turned his attention to the *Pandits* of Kashmir. Reduced to utter extremes because of the rigours of the relentless campaign, the *Pandits* took a deputation to the Governor and begged him to grant them six months' respite in which they could ponder over the matter of bidding farewell to their ancient faith. The Governor granted the request and added, "Mind you, after the lapse of that period, you must quietly and voluntarily give up the false faith and embrace the true one; otherwise, all of you shall be beheaded, and your wives, daughters, and all your properties shall be handed over to the faithful. So you must be careful a great deal. The Emperor's orders must be executed in full."

The hapless *Pandits* repaired to their temples and prayed constantly before their gods. But all prayers of these "gods own people" proved of no avail. The allotted period of respite was about to end. They were verily between the devil and the deep sea. In this perplexity, they cried and bewailed and groaned most bitterly. They asked advice from all and sundry. Some enemies of the Guru and the Sikh faith thought of a novel and sure way of getting Guru Tegh Bahadur out of their way and dealing a severe blow to the religion preached by him and his predecessors. They advised the *Pandits* to approach the Guru for help and guidance, assuring them that he was gifted with divine, miraculous power, and was endowed with a heart which could not refuse anything to people in such distress and woe.

The *Pandits* had heard of the Guru's name and fame. Some had even seen and heard him. They met at the temple of Amarnath to consider the matter in the light of the above-said advice. After prolonged deliberations, they decided to take refuge at the Guru's feet. Having arrived at this decision, they soon reached Anandpur. They narrated to him their tale of woe and suffering, and prayed for guidance and help. They also told him that the respite which they had been granted was coming to an end. They, therefore, implored him to devise some effective steps or remedy before that date. The tale of woe and suffering narrated by them plunged the Guru in deep thought. There was before him the

same problem that had faced Guru Arjan. It was clear that the Muslim rulers had almost lost their souls. They were fast on their way to complete brutalization. Was there any method of shaking up the slumbering humanity of their souls ? The prospects were not at all very bright, but a last effort had to be made. The deaths and sufferings of countless ordinary persons had failed to produce any effect on the hardened conscience of the wielders of power. But if a person, the purest and holiest in the land and most revered by the people, were to lay down life in an attempt to rouse the sleeping soul of the Emperor, it might yet be possible to avert a resort to arms. Such a sacrifice would also have a very ennobling and uplifting effect on the oppressed; for, when they would find a holy man suffering so much for their sake, they would be shamed into courage and action.

The problem, however, was where to find that holiest and purest person. If he had disclosed his thoughts to the Brahmins before him, they would, no doubt, have proclaimed him to be the right man. But their testimony would have been of no weight. He could not himself say that he was the needed person; for there might be living purer men than he. The Guru was absorbed in these thoughts, when a personality, as great as he himself, set all his doubts at rest. Returning from his sport and games, Sri Gobind Singh sat in his father's lap to invite the usual caresses. But he soon discovered that his father was absorbed in some anxious thought and care. The sight of the Brahmins, with their long faces and down-cast eyes, convinced him that the Guru's concern was about these men.

'What is it, papa ?' asked he at last in his fascinating Patna accent. 'Why is this ever bright face enshrouded in care and gloom? What are you pondering over so deeply and anxiously, dear father? What say these good people ? They seem to be in great woe.'

The Guru replied, "A campaign of ruthless tyranny and oppression has been started, rather, has been going on for some time in this land in the name of religion and in hopes of pleasing the Great and Benevolent Father of all. The Muslim rulers have lost all vestige of human nature, and have become totally brutalized, all this is their zeal for Islam. Their hearts have become hard like stone; they have become foreigners to human compassion and sympathy; their souls are fast asleep, or perhaps dead. The Hindus, on the other hand, are completely demoralized. They seem to have become lifeless. They are suffering all this tyranny and humiliation with meek submission. The hearts of the Mughals have to be leavened with fear of God and sympathy for man. The spiritually dead Hindu have to be re-inspired with life and manliness, are to be

prepared to fight against tyranny, manfully and dauntlessly. This two-sided task has to be performed. It is a hard task, indeed, fit to be undertaken and accomplished by a Great Soul. What is needed is that some eminently lofty and pure personality should offer to sacrifice itself; should throw himself before the heartless tyrants, and tell them to please themselves to the utmost by exhausting all their armoury of torture and tyranny. The only possible method of rousing their slumbering nature and releasing it from the jaws of brutality is that the purest and holiest person alive in India should throw himself before these misguided people. Perhaps a sight of their own brutalities practised on the holiest man of God might change their hearts and awaken their souls. But I do not know where to find such a one.'

'That is easy, papa,' replied Sri Gobind Singh. 'Who can be holier than you, and who more pure ?'

Here was the testimony of one who was not only his equal in the depth and height of his soul, but who had also to be the greatest loser as a consequence of what he said. This was the most disinterested and reliable testimony that could be had. So Guru Tegh Bahadur resolved to go to Delhi and do what he could towards reforming the Great Bigot.

It is often said that the reason why the Guru sacrificed himself for the sake of the Hindu religion was that it, in itself, was dear to him, or, in other words, because he himself was a devout Hindu. But this is not the case. The Guru saw that his neighbours were being forcibly deprived of something which they held very dear and which was an elementary right of every man. They were being denied freedom of worship and conscience. These people were too weak to do anything for their own safety, and had approached the Guru for help. To help the weak had ever been the principle of the House of Guru Nanak. So if the Guru decided to help them even at the cost of his life, it was not because he was a Hindu or because Hinduism, in itself, was dear to him, but because his oppressed neighbours were dear to him. If Muslims had been in a like predicament and had approached him for help, he would, surely, have done for them what he did for the Hindus. He would not adopt the religion of the Hindus or the Muslims, because he found both of them defective and in many ways opposed to his ideas and ideals, but he would certainly die rather than let the devotees of any religion be deprived of their right of free worship. The Guru's was thus an altogether new example in the

civic life of India, namely, to die in defence of what is dear to one's neighbours and the fundamental right of every man as man.<sup>1</sup>

Hence, addressing the Brahmins, the Guru said, "Go and tell your Governor and your Emperor as follows :— "Guru Tegh Bahadur is our religious head. If you convert him, if he should embrace Islam, all of us will follow suit." Say this to them, and let God do the rest." The *Pandits* went away and informed the Governor accordingly.

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1. That the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur was in defence of the Hindus' religion is borne out by what Guru Gobind Singh wrote about it in his autobiographic poem—the *Yachitra Natak*. He says that his father had protected the sacred frontal mark and the sacrificial thread of the Hindus.

## CHAPTER 6

### GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S MARTYRDOM

On hearing what the Kashmiri Pandits had to say, the Governor was doubly glad. He had always regarded the growth of the Sikh community as an ever-increasing menace to the Muslim rule. He also knew that the Emperor wanted only a plausible pretext to give effect to his burning hatred for the Guru and his followers. Against the Hindus the pretext was ever ready. They worshipped gods and goddesses whom they represented as sharing power with God. This was infidelity. The Quranic injunctions against the infidels were clear and peremptory.<sup>1</sup> But the Sikhs believed in One God, set up no rivals by His side. So, as far as their religion was concerned, there was nothing very objectionable. They were, however, not only firm and unshakable in their faith, and would not part with it even to save their lives, but they also encouraged the Hindus to follow their example. Thus they were a great nuisance. Their conversion or extermination would spread the glory of the Prophet's religion. Their political ideas, too, which were gradually becoming visible, could not be tolerated for any length of time. Unless the Guru committed some offence against the laws of the state, religious or secular, there could be no plausible pretext for hauling him up. But here was an opportunity for involving him and bringing him within the purview of the Quranic injunctions against the infidels. Though not

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1. 'And when the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other deities with God, wherever ye shall find them....But if they shall convert,....then let them go their way.' (*Quran*, ix, 5,6), 'Say to the infidels, if they desist from their unbelief, what is now past shall be forgiven them. But if they return to it....fight then against them till strife be at an end, and the religion be all of it God's.' (*Quran*, viii, 39-42).

'With regard to the idolators of a non-Arabic country, Shafi maintains that destruction is incurred by them also: but other learned doctors agree that it is lawful to reduce them to slavery, thus allowing them, as it were, a respite during which it may please God to direct them into the right path, but making, at the same time, their persons and substance subservient to the cause of Islam.'

Huges, *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, p. 710.

exactly an infidel himself, he was standing as an obstacle in the path of the progress of Islam. He was abetting infidelity and merited punishment as severe as the infidels. If the Guru could be made to yield, all his Sikhs and countless Hindus would, of their own free will, come into the fold of Islam. What a glory ! The Governor was glad that all his dreams were, at last, going to be realized. He would get rid of a dangerous person, win the pleasure of Aurangzeb, and secure for himself a seat in Paradise, by bringing into the fold of Islam a very large number of high-caste Hindus. So he lost no time in informing the Emperor of what the *Pandits* had said to him, having added his own notes to heighten the effect.

On receipt of the report from the Governor of Kashmir, Aurangzeb despatched some soldiers to inform the Guru that he desired his presence at his court. The Guru had already started towards Delhi of his own accord. He had decided to interview the Emperor and try to dissuade him from oppressing his Hindu subjects. He wanted to see what peaceful persuasion and representation could accomplish. He could not sit still and lead a life of peace and meditation when the weak and the poor were being denied the elementary human right of religious freedom. He would rather try to reform the oppressor, and, if necessary, lay down his life in the attempt. Accordingly the messengers were, informed of the Guru's departure and destination. They were asked to tell the Emperor that the Guru would soon be with him.

The Guru did not go straight to Delhi. He wanted to make the maximum possible use of his time in furthering the cause so dear to him, namely, that of regenerating and revitalizing his people and preparing them for the call which his son and successor was to make for the liberation of the land. He undertook a long and hurried tour of the Malwa tract, visiting his Sikhs who lived in scattered villages and hutments, and instilling in them a spirit of sacrifice and suffering for the sake of God, God's creatures, Truth, and Liberty.

In due course, he reached Agra. There he revealed his identity. He was arrested, put in irons, taken to Delhi under a heavy military guard, and thrown into a strongly guarded prison. The Emperor was not in Delhi at that time. He had gone towards Rawalpindi (now in Pakistan) to quell a rebellion. He had, however, left orders about how the Guru was to be dealt with, when arrested. According to those orders, he was offered the alternative which, "as the learned Qazi Mughis-ud-

Din had declared to Ala-ud-Din Khilji, all Muslim theologians, except the great and liberal Imam Hanifa, laid down for the Hindus, namely, Islam or death."<sup>1</sup> He could save himself in another way, too, it was added, namely, by showing some miracle. The Guru refused to embrace Islam or to perform a miracle. Thereupon, he was placed under a still stronger guard and confined in an iron cage. The Emperor was informed of all this and his orders were sought about what to do. His final orders were received in the beginning of November, 1675 A.D. In accordance with them, the Guru was beheaded in the Chandni Chauk, Delhi, on the fifth day of the bright half of *Maghar* (or eleventh *Maghar*) 1732 BK/, November 11, 1675 A.D.

In this way Guru Tegh Bahadur made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of protecting the Hindu religion and with the object of preparing his people to free the country from the yoke of the foreign oppressors. In this way did Guru Gobind Singh take the first significant, heroic step in his great career of sacrificing his all for the sake of his people and his motherland, and made the first sacrifice in that cause. In his autobiographic poem, the *Vachitra Natak*, Guru Gobind Singh has written about his father's supreme sacrifice as follows :

"The Master thus protected the frontal mark and sacrificial thread of the Hindus;  
He performed a great historic deed in the Kalyuga;  
He made the supreme sacrifice for the sake of holy men;  
He gave his head but uttered not a groan;  
He performed a great historic deed for the sake of dharma;  
He gave his head but swerved not from his resolve;  
He refused to perform a miracle;  
For God's people would ever be ashamed to perform the tricks of mountebanks  
and cheats.  
Having broken his potsherd on the head of Delhi's King,<sup>2</sup> he  
departed to Eternal Abode of God.  
None other ever performed such a deed as Guru Tegh Bahadur did.  
A he departed hence, there was deep mourning in the world;  
Cries of grief rose from this earth, while those of welcome and joy were raised  
in the abode of gods."

Some Sikh *Gianis*, for reasons and out of motives not far to seek, i.e. in order to please the then British rulers of India, gave rise to a story the hollowness of which may well be exposed here. It was proclaimed by them that once, during his imprisonment in Delhi, Guru Tegh Bahadur was drying his hair on the roof of the prison with his face to the west. Thinking that the Guru was looking at his harem, the Emperor remonstrated with him. In reply the Guru said, "I am looking

1. J.N. Sarkar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p. 150.

2. That is, having made the king of Delhi responsible for his death.



not at the ladies of your harem, but for my hat-wearing Sikhs who will come from the far-off West and destroy your harem and your empire. ”

The lesson which the Sikhs were asked to draw from this story was that the English had come into India at the Guru's bidding, and hence, it behoved all Sikhs to be respectfully loyal to the English *Raj* under all circumstances and at all consequences. The story, which is a downright fabrication, has had its day. Now let us give it the quiet burial that it deserves.

The Guru was not permitted such freedom of movement as the story would have us believe. He was not a prisoner of State as understood now-a-days. He was kept in a narrow cell, and, afterwards, in an iron cage. His place of confinement was closely guarded, night and day. Moreover, even Aurangzeb could not have accused him of directing lustful glances at his ladies. He had heard and seen too much of the Guru's purity of life and morals to have entertained such thoughts about him. He had offered to make him the highest *Pir* of the whole of Muslim India. We know how pure and strict the Emperor was in private life, and what great zeal he had for Islam. Could he choose as the supreme *Pir* of Muslim India one who had been suspected of and charged with casting impure glances at the ladies of his harem ? Or, conversely, could he suspect a person, whom he fain would place in the position of the highest religious authority, of such ignoble conduct as he is stated in this story to have done ? Above all, Aurangzeb was not in Delhi during the period of the Guru's imprisonment or at the time of his martyrdom. He was away to Rawalpindi side to quell a rebellion there. No conversation could have taken place between him and the Guru. Whether hat-wearing people could be called Sikhs is a question which need not be discussed. All that need be said is that the Sikhs are forbidden to wear caps or hats.

After Guru Tegh Bahadur's execution, his head and body were left exposed in the street to serve as a lesson to those who would resist the imperial decrees or the Islamic injunctions. Strong guards were placed to prevent their removal. At night, however, one Jaita<sup>1</sup>, a Ranghreta Sikh, belonging to the sweeper class, succeeded in eluding the vigilance of the guards and taking possession of the Guru's head. He hurried with it to Anandpur. There he presented it to the Guru's son, Guru Gobind Singh. The latter was deeply touched with the dauntless courage and devotion of the Ranghreta. Flinging his arms

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1. Bhai Jaita was later baptized and re-named Bhai Jiwan Singh. He proved a brave fighter and took a heroic part in all battles fought by the Guru. He died fighting in the battle of Chamkaur.

round Bhai Jaita's neck, he declared, "Ranghretas are the Guru's own sons. Here, through you, I embrace them all."

Guru Gobind Singh cremated the head with due Sikh rites. A Gurdwara, called Sis Ganj, Anandpur, marks the site.

The Guru's headless trunk was, on the following day, cleverly removed in a cart by a daring Labana Sikh, named Lakhi Shah. He took it to his hut outside the city, erected a pyre within the hut, placed the Guru's body on the pyre, and set fire to his hut, in order to make out that it was all an accident. The place is marked by a Gurdwara called Rikab Ganj.

After the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur, some Sikhs from Delhi brought his last orders regarding Guruship, that is, regarding the appointment of his successor. In accordance with those orders, Guru Gobind Singh was formally installed on *Gur-Gaddi* some time in Maghar 1732 BK/ November, 1675 A.D. Baba Ram Kanwar, a descendant of Baba Buddha, performed the ceremony.

The Guru was deeply grieved to learn from Lakhi Shah and others who had come from Delhi, that the execution of the ninth Guru had so thoroughly staggered and demoralized the Sikhs of Delhi, that none of them came forward to claim the dismembered body of the martyred Guru. Only a Ranghreta Sikh from Anandpur had the daring to pick up the head and a Labana Sikh, to carry away and cremate the body. No body from the 'high-class' Sikhs had shown the courage of his convictions. On the contrary, when questioned by the officials whether they were Sikhs, they had all, except the Guru's immediate followers, denied their religion.

The Guru saw in this a danger of backsliding among the Sikhs. "It is possible", he thought, "that the Sikhs may fall back into the great sea from which they have been taken out." Hence he vowed that he would give such form and appearance to the Sikhs that even a single Sikh mixed up with lakhs of others would be at once and easily recognizable, without any enquiry or interrogatory. A distinctive form and appearance would serve another purpose, too. The Sikhs would have to be true and pure in order to maintain the dignity of their distinctive guise, so that none might have an occasion to say, "Fie ! You are a Sikh and you are behaving in such an un-Sikhlike fashion !" In this way, the Sikhs would stand out distinct from others not only in external appearance, but also in internal virtues and day-to-day life.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE GREAT RESOLVE-I

On assuming Guruship, Guru Gobind Singh looked back and ahead, looked all round him and above, and pondered on what he had to do and how. The great task to accomplish, for which he had come into the world, had been enjoined upon him by the Lord above; it had been clearly marked out by Him. In this connexion Guru Gobind Singh says as under in his autobiographic composition called the *Vachitra Natak* :

'God sent me forth into the world after saying to me as follows:  
"I install and cherish thee as My son,  
And create thee in human form to spread My religion;  
Go forth, spread true religion there,  
And restrain people from evil and senseless acts."—  
I came into this world for this reason,  
The Great Father sent me forth for the sake of true religion, saying,  
"Spread righteousness in all places.  
Seize and destroy the evil, the wicked, and the sinful."  
For this purpose did I assume birth,  
Understand ye, holy men, full well in your souls:  
To spread *dharma*, to lift and save the saints,  
And to uproot and finish up tyrants, one and all."

Thus Guru Gobind Singh was deputed by God to restrain people from doing evil and committing sins, and to bring them on to the path of goodness and piety; to root out sin, tyranny, high-handedness, injustice, and brutality; and to plant, instead, the sweet virtues of justice, mercy, all-embracing love, brotherlines, and purity; to reform all sinners and evil-doers, to extirpate the oppressors and tyrants who were spreading terror in the world; and to help and lift the righteous, the good, and the kind, those who contended against evil and the doers of evil.

What was the position in which Guru Gobind Singh found himself after having sacrificed his father for the sake of the poor and the oppressed ? Imagine a child of less than nine called upon to face the might of the Mughal Empire at its zenith, verily the tiniest sparrow

before the mightiest hawk. He knew that Duty called him to the holy, yet extremely hard, task of destroying a system of government under which heart-rending inhumanities could be perpetrated in the name of God and His Prophet; in which holy and innocent personages, like Guru Tegh Bahadur, Bhai Mati Das, and Bhai Divala, could be tortured and killed for their refusal to abjure their faith; in which all sorts of inhuman brutalities were perpetrated against human beings in hopes of winning Grace of Him, whom they called the loving and merciful Father of all. The very thought of the tremendous odds which faced him makes one nervous with uncertainty about the choice he would make. The heroic sublimity of his resolve, and the magnitude of the undertaking, fill one's heart with awe and admiration.

But what were the means at his disposal ? Most of his kith and kin were divided against him on the question of succession to Guruship. His followers were mostly of the poor classes. He had no equipment and no army to match against the imperial might. He had no store of wealth. The high-caste Hindus were, at best, but lukewarm supporters of his mission, while some were openly hostile. The Hindus had become so degraded that nobler sentiments and an urge for freedom had ceased to inspire them. They were divided into mutually antagonistic groups. It was impossible for them to unite in a common cause. They refused to make common cause with him; for while 'they were idol worshippers, he was an idol breaker'. How, then, was he to accomplish his noble and patriotic resolve ?

Constitutional agitation was out of the question, as there was no constitution and no agitation was tolerated. Peaceful persuasion and representation had failed. Passive resistance or non-violence could not accomplish much in those days. Has it accomplished anything substantial even in these days of enlightenment in similar circumstances ? But of that later. The object of the *Satyagrahi* is to oppose evil by self-suffering and self-immolation, if need be, in the hope that these sufferings will, one day, produce a change of heart in the oppressor. But there are hearts and hearts. Since the beginning of Islam, crores and crores of 'infidels' had perished beneath the Muslim sword in different countries. Centuries of plunder, oppression, and slaughter, had not quenched, nay, had only whetted, their zeal for *Kafir-Kushi* or killing of infidels. The hunters and butchers, all their lives, kill birds and animals without feeling the least compunction. This taking of life for the sake of food and pleasure began with the world and will, most probably, endure with it. It is only in those rather rare places where a finer sentiment has developed sanctifying all life, that we find this carnivorous spirit

to have abated to some extent. Still, the larger section of humanity, with all its sacred lore and inspired prophets, has not given up the 'murder' of birds and animals for pleasure. The spirit which worked in the hearts of sons of Islam at that time regarded the non-believers as worse than the filthiest hog.<sup>1</sup> It was as impossible for the average Muhammadan of that time to feel any softer feelings for the victims of his zeal for Islam as it has been for the average man even up to the modern times to notice any sanctity attaching to the lower life found in the victims of his palate and leisure.

The slaughter of the Indian *Kafirs* had begun centuries before that time. Thousands of their women and children had been sent to Kabul, Kandhar, Gazni, etc. and sold for a few annas each. Even the otherwise mild Ferozshah Tughlak had not relaxed his campaign against the idol-worshippers. For centuries the Hindus had suffered unspeakable tortures and miseries with perfect non-violence. Was there any change of heart in the strikers? Was there any abatement in their zeal for *Kafir-Kushi*? No, not the least. No amount of further suffering on the part of the non-believers could, therefore, have produced any change of heart in the people who were drunk with power and were mad with a fanatic zeal for *Jehad*.

If political sagacity had induced Akbar to follow a policy of conciliation, religious fanaticism impelled Aurangzeb to launch a

1. This spirit is not altogether extinct even in the twentieth century. It sways not only the ignorant and illiterate masses, but still inspires the acts and thoughts of responsible and educated people. An instance of its recent exhibition in such an advanced country as Egypt is given by J.N.Sarkar. He writes, 'When, in 1910, Boutros Pasha was murdered by an Egyptian Muhammadan for no personal provocation but for the political reason that he had presided over the court that sentenced the Denshway villagers, and the guilt of the murderer was conclusively proved by evidence, the Chief *Qazi* pronounced the judgment that according to Islam it is no crime for a Muslim to slay a non-believer. This is the opinion held by the highest exponent of Islamic laws in a modern civilised country.'

A Short History of Aurangzeb, p.151.

Add to this the testimony of the blood-curdling horrors and inhuman atrocities committed by Pakistani Muslims against the Hindus and Sikhs in 1947, in 1950, and many times afterwards. That campaign of murder, arson, rape, rapine and abduction was planned, organized, and directed by responsible and educated Muslims. Their leaders, from Mr. Jinnah downwards, all scrupulously abstained from even the mildest condemnation of these terrible excesses. Nay, some even publicly applauded them as acts of laudable service to Islam. All this would show that at least with the Pakistani Muslims and others of their way of thinking, Islam does not enjoin upon its followers any tolerance towards Hindus and Sikhs.

If such was the state of the Muslim mind in this land in the middle of the twentieth century, it is easy to believe that the conditions must have been far worse during the period which we are speaking of here.

vigorous campaign to convert the entire population, and to liquidate every form of dissent. A change of heart could have been possible if there had been even the slightest admission by the oppressors that from their hearts they disliked all their deeds of oppression, but the exigencies of state-policy necessitated condign punishment for offences against the State. The punishments were mostly for the mere offence refusing to embrace the State-religion and they were inflicted in hopes of winning Divine pleasure and registering seats of Paradise.

Much as the Guru would have liked the advent of love, peace, and goodwill among the militant sections of humanity; great though his desire was for the dawn of a new era when the people in every place would conform to the sublime codes of morality preached by gifted personages from time to time, when no one would usurp another's right, when every one would learn the great lesson of all-embracing love, the lesson:

'Never to blend our pleasure or our pride  
With sorrow of the meanest thing that feels;'<sup>1</sup>

When a resort to arms and brute force would cease to be the means of settling differences between individuals and nations, when the sufferings of one would arouse the active sympathy of the rest; but there did not appear to be much hope for the world to jump into the Utopian atmosphere for some time to come. Is that hope a whit brighter now? Nowhere in the world, at any stage or time, has passive suffering been the direct means of any great progress or political advancement. Even in this century, when there appears to be a powerful world—opinion and a gradually developing worldconscience, passive suffering or peaceful negotiation had not been able to achieve much. The Maories of New-Zealand, the Red Indians of North America, and the Negroes of Africa, were, in the recent past, hunted down like wild animals in their own homes so that their lands might be available for the 'civilized' nations of Europe. Did the cries and pangs of these 'uncivilised creatures' rouse the Chirstian conscience of their exterminators? Again, was the League of Nations able to preserve peace and amity among its members? Could it banish war from the surface of the earth, and replace it by

1. Compare the following words of the Guru said to Bhai Nand Lal:

'Remembering that all living beings are God's creatures and belong to Him, one should not give them pain or sorrow;

'For believe me, O Nand Lal, when His Creatures have to suffer, the Creator feels the pang and is displeased.'

friendly discussion and peaceful arbitration ? It failed in the very first trial. Japan could defy the world with impunity. She was followed by Italy in Abyssinia and Germany in Poland. Then there was the World War II. Almost at the heels of the cessation of that war came the alarming news that the nations were preparing for a Third World War. Even the U.N.O had failed to hold in leash for long the war-dogs spoiling so much for a clash. Undeclared wars are going on in so many lands.

Such has been the course of events among people who have ever professed compassion for human suffering and repugnance to man-slaughter. Things had a different outlook in the times which we are here speaking of .There was then no effective public opinion, no world opinion, or world conscience, which could have exercised any restraint on the wielders of power. Do they exist and function even now ?

Moreover, think of the hell which was let loose on the non-Muslims in the Muslim majority areas of India in the years of grace 1946, 1947, and in Pakistan in 1950, and quite often thereafter, when barbarous acts were committed with the express object of 'shaming the deeds of Halaku and Changez Khan'. Was the aggressors' fanatic zeal to surpass their barbarous ancestors in barbarity, in the least damped or abated by the spectacle of the immense suffering inflicted by them on their innocent and unresisting victims ?

It was, indeed, very prudent of Mahatmaji to have refrained from a practical test of the efficacy of his 'never-failing weapon' of Ahimsa or non-violence by marching, all alone or with a band of his unarmed disciples, into the midst of the fanatic Muslim murderers in the Panjab or Bengal in 1947.

In those days hopes were entertained of winning paradise and Divine grace with such cruel deeds. God's own word delivered through the Prophet was then held to enjoin such cold blooded murders. The execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur had clearly demonstrated that the soul of the Emperor had lost all traces of humanity and had become completely brutalized. It was impossible, therefore, to bring about any change of heart in the tyrant with any amount of further suffering. The method of dealing with him had, accordingly, to be changed. It was clear that power of the Muslim state had to be broken up, and the sword had to be wrenched from the tyrants' hands before the Muslims here could be taught to live peacefully with

their non-Muslim neighbours. Silent suffering had been helpful only in so far as it had aroused resentment and a desire for liberation in the hearts of some of the oppressed. Unless these sentiments were timely sublimed into action, they would evaporate.

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1. Alas, most of them did not learn that lesson even after centuries of close association. The creation of Pakistan and the systematic mopping up of all non-Muslims found there amply prove that they have not yet learnt to live in peace with non-Muslims in places where they themselves are in power.



## CHAPTER 8

### THE GREAT RESOLVE-II

Thus, if the tenth Guru, after anxious thought and close observation, decided upon the only effective course left to him, namely, active and armed resistance, it was not because he was, as Mahatma Gandhi was reported to have said, a 'misguided patriot', but because he was an inspired patriot and true lover of humanity. One cannot help wondering what epithet the Mahatma would have applied to Sri Ram Chandra, who, in order to rescue Sita, waged a terrible war on Ravan, or to Lord Krishna who took a bitter revenge on his maternal uncle, and urged the unwilling Arjun to slay his own kith and kin in the great battle of Mahabharata.

Nor can the profound and exclusive faith of the Mahatma in the *Gita* be reconciled with his fad of a doctrine that, whatever the conditions or circumstances at any time, armed resistance could or can be offered only by misguided people. He proclaimed his reverence for the *Gita* occasionally. On the November 4, 1932, he wrote as follows :

"It (the *Gita*) is the one open book to every Hindu who will care to study it, and if all the other scriptures were reduced to ashes, the seven hundred verses of this imperishable booklet are quite enough to tell one what Hinduism is and how one can live up to it. And I claim to be a Sanatanist because for forty years I have been seeking literally to live up to the teachings of that book."<sup>1</sup>

Now, everybody knows that the *Gita* embodies the dialogue which took place between Arjun and Lord Krishna on the great field of battle. It depicts the transformation and disillusionment of the former, who, on seeing the mighty hosts 'longing for battle' and ready to kill and get killed, suddenly developed a strong aversion to war and a leaning towards *ahimsa*. Stationed in his war-chariot, 'in the midst, between the two armies', the great archer deeply moved to pity, thus uttered in sadness :

'Seeing these my kinsmen, O Krishna, arrayed eager to fight, my limbs fail and my mouth is parched, my body quivers and my hair stands on end, the

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1. Vide, '*The Harijan*,' Vol. I. No.3, dated 25th February, 1933.

Gandiva slips from my hand, and my skin burns all over; I am not able to stand, and my mind is whirling... Nor do I foresee any advantage from slaying my kinsmen in battle....

'If the sons of Dhritarashtra, weapon-in-hand, should slay me, unresisting unarmed, in the battle, that would for me be the better'. (I: 28 to 31, and 46).

Lord Krishna then exhorted Arjun to shake off 'the perilous, ignoble, and infamous dejection, this paltry faint-heartedness', and urged him not to 'yield to impotence'. (II. 2, 3)

Below are given a few of the exhortations bearing on our immediate subject :

'Further looking to thine own duty, thou shouldst not tremble; for there is nothing more welcome to a Kshatriya than righteous war. (II: 31)

'But if thou wilt not carry on this righteous warfare, then, casting away thine own duty and thine honour, thou wilt incur sin. (II: 31)

'Happy the Kshatriya, O Partha, who obtains such a fight, offered unsought as an open door to Heaven'. (II: 32)

'Slain, thou wilt obtain heaven; victorious, thou wilt enjoy the earth; therefore stand up, O son of Kunti, resolute of fight'. (II: 37)

'Taking as equal pleasure and plain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, gird thee for the battle; thus thou shalt not incur sin.' (II: 38)

'Surrendering all actions to Me, with thy thoughts resting on the supreme Self, from hope and egoism freed, and of mental fever cured, engage in battle.' (III: 30)

'Whenever there is decay of righteousness, O Bharata, and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I Myself come forth.' (IV: 7)

'For the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to age.' (IV: 8)

'Therefore stand up ! win for thyself renown.

Conquer thy foes, enjoy the spacious realm.

By Me they are already overcome,

Be thou the outward cause, left-handed one.' (XI: 33)

The effect of the discourse was that Arjun nerved up courage and said, 'Destroyed is my delusion. I have gained knowledge through Thy grace, O Immutable One. I am firm, my doubts have fled away. I will do according to Thy word.' (XVIII: 73)

The conditions prevailing in India at the time of Guru Gobind Singh were admittedly far more hideous and disheartening than those which existed at the time when the Immortal *Gita* was proclaimed from the great field of battle. If the 'Blessed Lord' could find in those earlier and less ugly times a necessity for his 'divine birth and action,' then surely the times which we are writing of here were far more suited to the fulfilment of the hope and promise held out in the verses quoted above (IV: 7, 8). There was then an unmistakable 'decay of righteousness and exaltation of unrighteousness'. The Master who came forth then 'for the protection of the good, for the destruction of evil-doers, for

the sake of firmly establishing righteousness' in the dark age, might, in the light of *Gita*, be considered the Lord Himself in human form. This time, however, he had chosen not to act only as a charioteer and guide to a great archer, engaged in a civil war against his own kith and kin, but to play the role of a divine leader, able general, wonderful archer, and heroic warrior, in a fight for the liberation of a people from the tyranny of savage oppressors. How could a person declare that in offering armed resistance to the forces of evil arrayed against him, devastating the land and devouring the people, the tenth Master acted as a misguided patriot, and, at the same time, maintain that he had ever been 'seeking literally to live up to the teachings of the *Gita*, and had been always a genuine devotee of Lord Krishna'? In fact, such profound faith in that 'Blessed Lord' and his divine utterances, as the Mahatma professed to cherish, fitted ill with his views about the Master, his mission, and his methods.

Moreover, the Guru's was a far loftier cause. The liberation of a people being trodden and crushed under foot was his ideal. To rescue not one closely related lady, but to save the honour of crores of non-Muslim women of India from the ravages of brute tyrants was the Guru's mission. He took up the sword not to take revenge for any personal wrongs or injury. He had willingly sacrificed his father in the cause of preserving righteousness, and was preparing to sacrifice his all for his lofty ideal. He did not advocate spilling of blood for obtaining heaven or a spacious realm. If he wanted to drive out the tyrants, it was out of his unbounded love for the down-trodden humanity and not for the sake of 'enjoying the earth'. He was intent upon extracting the vipers' fangs and breaking the ferocious tigers' teeth.

On seeing the indiscriminate, slaughter of weak and unarmed people by Babar's soldiers, Guru Nanak, who had no army at his back to oppose the cruel invaders, had poured out the agony of his bleeding heart in an invocation to the Creator of both the slayers and the slain. In this he had said :

'O Creator, Thou belongest equally to all.

'If a strong man were to attack and fight another who is his equal in force and might, there need no sorrow or anguish be;

'But when a fierce tiger falls on and destroys a herd of cattle, then the master of the herd should show his manliness.'

The sight before Guru Gobind Singh's eyes was as ghastly as that before Guru Nanak's. The same emotions surged in his breast. But he had the benefit of the work and achievements of his nine predecessors. Though he did not have, yet he could get ready, an army, because a

desire for liberation had been produced in the hearts of the sufferers, and because his grandfather Guru Hargobind had infused the martial spirit in the Sikhs and had led them to victory against the imperial armies. He saw that in the circumstances narrated by Guru Nanak—a tiger doing havoc among herd of cattle—, fear of God and love and compassion for His creatures urged a man of religion to rush to the rescue of the weak from the clutches of the strong. The act was as merciful and necessary as the amputation of a poisoned limb to save the whole body. The surgeon is not unkind or cruel when he uses his knife to shed the blood that is causing, harm. Will you condemn him as cruel and heartless who shoots a mad dog lest it should bite and harm others ? Verily, there are circumstances when to take life means of protect and preserve life; and when the sword acts the shield.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Gobind Singh had to choose between falling a victim to the 'tiger' quietly, watching him doing havoc among the helpless and innocent people, and raising his arm in self-defence and in the defence of his fellow-creatures. He chose to be the redeemer and martyr, rather than to be the silent sufferer or unmoved spectator. Was this misguided patriotism ?

No. He had felt the pulse, diagnosed the malady, and selected the only effective remedy. People sitting at such a long distance of time and spirit, as his present critics are, should be a bit more cautious in passing sentence on a person whom even his enemies at the time regarded to be endowed with special spiritual powers. History justified his choice. Politically he did in the North what Shivaji was doing in the South. The spell of the Mughal power was broken. The Muslims could then lay aside the arrogance which their rule had engendered in them, and the non-Muslims could shake off the slavish mentality which centuries of subjection had developed in them. They acquired confidence in themselves and in their capacity to oppose and defeat the dreaded *Pathans* and *Mughals*. The two communities could then all live side by side as neighbours and think of political unity.

Thus, though even at that tender age the Guru had, after a thorough analysis of the situation, decided upon armed resistance as the only effective means of achieving his ideals, yet he had mostly to create his soldiers. The martial spirit infused into the hearts of the Sikhs by his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, had, though the essentially pacific policy

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1. Even Mahatma Gandhi expressed himself in favour of killing mad dogs. Nay, he went further. In the '*Young India*' of October 21, 1926, he wrote, 'At times, we may be faced with the unavoidable duty of killing a man who is found in the act of killing people.....To believe that mere killing is '*Hinsa*' is ignorance.

of the later Gurus, gone to slumber. The iron hand of Aurangzeb had smitten the general people with terror. If the Guru had, at the time, directly called upon them to take up arms and follow him into the fields of battle, they would have shuddered and kept quiet. So the Guru realized that he had to infuse a new life into the dead bones of the people, and to produce in them 'a will to do and soul to dare'. Until the minds of the people were filled with a passionate longing to hardships and perils, and to return blow for blow in face-to-face encounters; until the mutually hostile groups into which the people had been split up were welded into one composite brotherhood, able and determined to face all foes and dangers together; until all this and much more was done, it was impossible to win freedom or achieve liberation. Until then, all efforts in that direction would be premature and foredoomed to failure. He himself was yet a child. He had yet to grow in body and mind in order to execute his plans with the thoroughness that was needed. He himself needed training and practice. So he quietly set about preparing himself and his people for his great mission.

## CHAPTER 9

### PREPARATION FOR THE GREAT UNDERTAKING

The Guru realized that he had to turn the spiritually and physically emasculated people around him into a nation of saint-soldiers, strong in body, mind, and spirit. He had to turn them away from their innumerable gods and goddesses, and bring them to the worship of one God. He had to purify their hearts of the ages-old caste prejudices. He had, in short, to generate in them a sense of nationality and to unite all conflicting sects and castes into a nation. He knew the odds which faced him. He felt the necessity of instilling into the people's hearts manly virtues like courage and bravery. He had to teach them what true religion was? They were to be made to feel that life 'at any cost and sacrifice' was, at best, a low and ignoble ideal; that there were things which men in all ages had held dearer and more sacred than life; and that there were times when to part with life for the sake of high principles was to live for ever. They had to be taught to stand erect and refuse to tolerate any humiliating treatment. A sense of self-respect and self-reliance had to be produced and nourished. But all this could not be accomplished at once. It meant years of calm and steady preparation and training. But, as we shall see, he was not allowed to live in peace for long.

Before undertaking, in the only effective manner, his heaven ordained hard task, Guru Gobind Singh started developing his mind and body, and equipping himself with the essential accomplishments. On the one hand, he began to practise use of arms, horsemanship, and other physical feats and exercise; on the other, he began diligently to educate himself. During his childhood spent at Patna, he had learnt Gurmukhi from his mother. His father had later made ample arrangements for his instruction at Anandpur; as he himself says in the *Vachitra Natak*, his father "had given him instruction of various kinds". He had learnt Persian from a Mohammadan teacher named Pir Mohammad of

Sloh. His composition in Persian verse called *Zafarnama* shows clearly how high a proficiency he had acquired in that language.

Now he began to learn Hindi and Sanskrit. He became very proficient in them in a very short time. He went through the whole range of epic literature in Sanskrit, and learnt to compose poetry in Hindi and Panjabi.

Having thus soaked himself in epic literature, and having acquired and developed a fine, lofty style in Hindi poetry, he turned his attention to the creation of literature which should be easily intelligible to the people, and which should inspire them with the lofty ideals that he wanted them to own and cherish. He was fully conscious of the uplifting, inspiring, and ennobling influence which literature, especially poetry, exerts on the human mind and heart. He found that there was no literature worth the name in a language which could be understood by most people. All great works were in Sanskrit or Persian. He set himself to the task of supplying that want. For this purpose, he collected around him an army of poets and scholars, and assiduously learnt from them all that they could teach. The result of his learning and his natural gifts was that he developed 'a style of Hindi poetry which has remained unsurpassed since his times'. He employed his court poets to render into Hindi poetry the warlike deeds of Rama, Krishna, Arjun, etc.<sup>1</sup> Of course, his own productions surpassed theirs. In this way, he held up before the people the brave and noble examples of their illustrious ancestors, and called upon them to follow in their footsteps. His purpose in creating this literature was to infuse a new spirit among his followers, to prepare them to engage heroically in his righteous wars, and to steel their hearts against all injustice and tyranny. He says in one place :

"I have cast the tenth section Bhagwat into Hindi  
With no other object than to inspire ardour for religious warfare."

The soul-inspiring and heart-stirring effect of these martial narratives was heightened by their being sung by the court bards. Such poetry wedded to martial music could not but go straight to the hearts of the listeners, and stir them to high resolves of mighty deeds. In a short time, a marvellous change had taken place. Men who had never seen a sword or handled a

1. 'These stories read in the light of existing tyranny and oppression on the one hand, and weakness and innocence on the other, made him feel that the time was again ripe for the fulfilment of Sri Krishna's promise for the appearance of one who would come to the rescue of the helpless and strike down the arrogant oppressor. And, like all great men who have helped in the advancement of humanity, he felt that he himself was the man required by the times.' Dr G.C.Narang, *op. cit.*, p.74.

gun became imbued with martial spirit, and longed for opportunities to lead the soldier's life.

The city of Immortal Bliss (Anandpur) thus presented a unique spectacle. The lowly and the despised, peasants and farmers, confectioners and barbers, *dhobis* and sweepers came and with a touch of the Master, lost all the degrading distinctions and disabilities which priestcraft had heaped on them in the course of ages, and became members of a brotherhood of Saint-Soldiers, equal partners in the joy of His love and devotion. Their bodies drank bliss through every pore. The Guru's *langar* ministered to their bodies' hunger as freely and liberally as his discourses banished the soul's craving for the knowledge absolute. In fact, Anandpur became for the Sikhs of that time what Kartarpur, Khadur Sahib, Goindwal, and Amritsar, had been to their forefathers.

While the minds and hearts wore being thus emancipated and set to soar on high, the bodies were not neglected. He procured all sorts of weapons and arms, and not only himself practised their use, but also made his followers do the same. His *darbar* soon resembled a strange military camp, where mornings and evenings were devoted to divine worship and the days were passed in narration of martial exploits, hunting, shooting, racing horses, and other soldierly exercises.

The news of the Guru's foundness for warlike pastimes soon spread far and wide. Persons whose fathers and grandfathers had fought Guru Hargobind's battles flocked to the Guru's *darbar*. His orders went forth that of all presents the most welcome to him were horses, arms, ammunition, and other materials for military equipment. These orders were zealously obeyed. The Guru's army grew apace, and his armoury became full of weapons of various types.

On the occasion of Baisakhi in 1680 A.D., the *sangat* from Kabul, Kandhar, Balkh, Bukhara, and Ghazni, brought many presents peculiar to that part of the world, such as rugs, carpets, and woollen blankets. The costliest and most magnificent of the presents was a woollen tent on which were embroidered, in gold and silver, numerous objects and scenes of beauty and splendour. This tent was the humble offering of a Sikh from Kabul, named Duni Chand.<sup>1</sup> Others had helped in its preparation. Its magnificence surpassed that of even the Emperor's tent.

Raja Ram Rai of Assam, who had lived in the time of Guru Tegh Bahadur, had always felt unhappy on account of the lack of a son. He

<sup>1</sup>I. S.M. Latif, with his usual lack of proper study and knowledge, says 'that the tent was brought by a prince from the Dakhan.' (p. 272.)



had approached the Guru for a blessing which might get him a son and heir. His wish had been fulfilled. But he himself had departed from the world when the prince was only a child. His dying injunction to his wife was that the prince was to be brought up as a devout Sikh. The queen always acted on her husband's dying wishes. When Rattan Rai, for that was the prince's name, grew to be a lad of about twelve years, she told him of the Guru and his blessing. The young *Raja*, who had drunk from her a true and deep devotion, expressed a strong desire to see the Guru. She told him of Guru Tegh Bahadur's martyrdom. He wept with grief and disappointment. She encouraged him, saying, 'Don't lose heart, my Jewel. Although Guru Tegh Bahadur's earthly mould is no longer visible, yet his spirit sits enthroned at Anandpur in the person of his son, Guru Gobind Singh. Yes, the Guru lives. You can see him and be blessed.'

This lifted the prince's drooping heart. Preparations began. Orders were given to get ready curious and costly presents for the Guru. An elephant, unique in appearance, was caught and trained to perform various acts of service. He had a white stripe stretching from the tip of his trunk, along the forehead and back, right up to the end of his tail. Otherwise, it was black as coal. Knowing that the Guru was fond of weapons, he got prepared a singular weapon—five-in-one—of which five sorts of arms could be made—pistol, sword, lance, dagger, and club. Five beautiful horses with splendid trappings were also got ready. There were other things, too.

When all was ready, Raja Rattan Rai's heart was greatly pleased at the sight of his intended presents. His mother cautioned him lest he should let vanity enter his heart. 'Remember, my Jewel', said she 'all that we call ours is the *Sat Guru's* gift. It will be ridiculous for us to feel vain at offering to Him a little out of the plenty which He has bestowed on us, as for our gardener to be vain on offering to us a few roses from our garden. The offerings are to be made in a spirit of humble devotion.'

The Raja arrived at Anandpur on the occasion of *Diwali*. His mother and some ministers accompanied him. When the presents were exhibited, the Guru was greatly pleased. The elephant waved a fan or *chauri* over the Guru, held a jug of water in his trunk while the Guru's feet were being washed, wiped his feet with a towel, placed his shoes in order, fetched the arrows shot by him, and did many other things which astonished the spectators. Rattan Rai prayed that his humble love-offerings might ever remain in the service of the Guru alone. The Raja stayed at Anandpur for about five months. He was of the same

age as the Guru, whose company charmed him. He accompanied him on his hunting excursions. It was with a reluctant heart that he took leave of the Guru, for the affairs of the State could not let him be away from the capital and his duties any longer. At the same time, the Guru said to him, "True worship consists in doing one's duty diligently and conscientiously, while, at the same time, keeping the innermost thoughts ever firmly fixed on God. Go, therefore, to the scene of your duties, perform them promptly and rightly, and think of God all the time. If you do that, you will find me ever with you."

The Guru gave him suitable parting gifts which were held in great respect by him and his successors.

## CHAPTER 10

### RELIGION BIDS ME FIGHT THE TYRANTS

Here we may appropriately describe briefly the Guru's programme for a normal day. He got up early, about three hours before dawn, bathed, read *Gurbani*, meditated on and prayed to, God, and then attended the religious gathering or *diwan*. Here *Asa di War* and other hymns were sung in exquisite music by renowned musicians. Aurangzeb had banished music and talent from his court. He had tried to convert persons of special accomplishments to his religion. So, several famous artists had taken refuge and service with the Guru. Everyday they sang the Lord's praises for the benefit of the *Sangat* and for their own uplift. As they finished, the Guru gave a discourse and showered *Nam Dan* on the assembly, and exhorted them all to follow the path to righteousness and prepared to fight and, if need be, to die for a noble cause. He then received such Sikhs as had newly come from outside places, and blessed them with the fulfilment of their desires.

By this time the *langar* would be ready. A drum was beaten. Food was distributed to all who came, without distinction or discrimination between the high and the low. All sat in rows. The four castes mingled there and lost all their pride, prejudices, and all sense of superiority or inferiority. The Guru supervised the distribution of food to his dear people and took as great a delight in watching them as a mother does in seeing her sons fed on dainties. Then he took food himself.

A few hours' rest, and the activities of the day began again. The bards would sing the glorious deeds of heroes of the past, the poets would read their poems, and the stalwarts would perform feats of valour and skill in riding and the use of arms. The general army was then drilled. The Guru had invented a form of drill suited to his men and times.

In the afternoon, the Guru went out on hunting. The evenings were devoted to *kirtan* or divine music and to prayers. *Langar* was again served and the whole *Sangat* retired for the night.

Everyday new recruits enlisted in the Guru's army. He felt the want of a big drum like the one which was generally carried with armies in those days. His military equipment, he felt, was incomplete without it. So he gave orders for the construction of a big war-drum, entrusting the work to Diwan Nand Chand.

In those days only kings or chiefs could beat a drum in their territory. No king or chief would allow another to march through his territory with the beat of drum. *Masands* and others, who had fattened themselves in peace and were afraid of losing their ease and comfort, felt agitated over the Guru's decision to construct the drum. They felt certain that Raja Bhim Chand, in whose territory Anandpur was situated, would be offended on hearing its beat. It was true they said that the land had been purchased by Guru Tegh Bahadur from the Raja, on the condition that it would be independent and outside the bounds of his rule, still the beating of the drum might be taken to mean that the Guru intended to set up as a rival chief. The *Raja* would not tolerate such a step, and war would break out in no time.

Moreover, it was known that the hill-chiefs were opposed to the Guru's mission also on religious grounds. They disliked his amalgamation of the four castes, and resented his satires against their gods and goddesses. They had also been pitted against the Guru by the clever Emperor of Delhi, who himself was away in the Deccan, and had planned the annihilation of the Sikhs by making the hill-chiefs his tools. The latter were too afraid of the Mughal to resist him. In fact, the air was thick with rumours that the *Rajas* would gladly avail themselves of the first opportunity that they could get of opening hostilities with the Guru. All this was greatly disquieting for those who wanted to feed from the Guru's *langar* and feel 'the joy that is in calm.'

Anxious as these people were to dissuade the Guru from what they thought were his war-like propensities, they had not the courage to address him on the point. They went to his mother and so wrought upon her fears, that she agreed to speak to the Guru. When he returned home for rest and sleep that night, she explained to him what might be the unhappy consequences of the policy that he had embarked on. She advised him to devote himself to religion and not to take up arms.

The Guru replied, 'Mother dear, my religion, which is the religion of Guru Nanak and my father, tells me to take up arms. I assure you that in all that I do, I am solely guided by a truly religious spirit. How can I sit in seclusion, wrapped up in calm meditation, while before my eyes a thousand atrocities are committed on the poor, unarmed, and

innocent sons and daughters of God. God sent me not for such irreligious inaction and ignoble retirement. He bade me uproot the tyrants and uplift the downtrodden. I must remain concealed no longer; for Guru Nanak's mission has to be accomplished. The tyrants have to be disarmed and dethroned. The evil-doers have to be destroyed; the good have to be protected. Believe me, mother, that while fighting against the country's enslavers, my soliders will have God on their lips and Love in their hearts. You say that the hill-chiefs might take alarm. Well, I bear them no malice. I intend them no harm. I don't want a kingdom or kingship. I don't want to conquer or occupy anyone's territory. But I do mean to do good to the people, to uplift and free them, and to make their lot better in all respects. I want the rulers to become just, merciful, and benevolent; I want them to improve the condition of their subjects. I would urge them to give up their evil ways, to make their subjects feel secure, happy, and contented; I shall try to persuade them to join hands with me in fighting and finishing up the common enemy. If they refuse to respond, well, I will then do my duty towards man and God with the help of my Saint-soldiers. I am sure that He will help me and lend me His infinite, unsubduable strength.

I will not attack the hill-chiefs or molest them in any way. I will not provoke any war or conflict. If, however, anyone should try to interrupt me in the performance of my heaven-ordained duty, if anyone should attack me unprovoked and causelessly, I will not stand before him with folded hands and bowed head, but will show him what use I can make of my God-given strength. The result, of course, will be in His hands.

So ask me not dear, brave mother, to sit calm and quiet when my countrymen are being brutally treated and murdered in cold blood. Ask me not, mother to evade the Divine Decree which daily and hourly visits my heart. Ask me not, mother, to forget and ignore my Father's orders which He gave me while sending me out into his world, and which always ring in my ideas both in sleep and waking. I must not forget that, mother. Afflicted humanity calls me to be its redeemer and liberator from tyranny and bondage. The people must come to their own. The tyrannical system must be broken. The Father and Sustainer of all will help me. So banish all fears and bless me.'

The mother bowed before his son's mighty resolve and prayed to God for his safety. The masands then made a direct representation to the Guru who replied to them even in stronger words.

At last the great drum was ready. The Guru celebrated its completion with prayers and distribution of Karah Parshad. He named it Ranjit: 'Victorious on the Battle-field'. When beaten, its thunder was heard far and away in the country.

## HILL CHIEFS FIND A PRETEXT FOR WAR

One day Raja Bhim Chand, Ruler of Kahloor, heard the thunder of the Guru's drum near his capital. He asked his minister whose drum it was. The minister, who was a true and God-fearing man, and had leanings towards the Sikh faith, replied that Guru Gobind Singh was enjoying a hunting expedition. The minister then spoke very highly of the Guru's spiritual powers, the magnificence of his *darbar* and the strength of his army. He advised the *Raja* to be on good terms with the Guru.

Raja Bhim Chand had, no doubt, often heard much of the Guru, but had never visited him. So, he despatched his minister to him in order to arrange for an interview. The Guru gave the minister a robe of honour and told him that all were welcome at the Guru's house. Raja Bhim Chand came and was received with honour. At his request, the Guru showed him the Kabuli tent as well as the presents from the Raja of Assam. The hill-chief was dumb with amazement at the splendour of the tent and at the skill displayed by the elephant. The magnificence of the Guru's *darbar* dazzled his eyes, turned his head, and burnt his heart. As he returned, he revolved plans for taking possession of at least the elephant. War or stratagem, he would employ any means for the fulfilment of his desire.

On reaching home, he disclosed his designs to his minister. It was ultimately decided to ask the Guru for a loan of the elephant on the occasion of the betrothal ceremony of his son, Ajmer Chand. The minister himself went to ask for the loan. The Guru saw clearly that the Raja did not mean to return the animal, when once he had got possession of it. Moreover, he remembered the prayer of the Raja of Assam and his own promise made to him in this connection. So, he informed the minister that, at the time of presenting the animal and other offerings, the Raja of Assam had wished, and he had promised, that they were ever to remain in the Guru's service. All offerings were made by the Sikhs not to him in person but to the Guru's *gaddi*. So

it was not in him to go against the wishes of his Sikhs in order to please the *Raja*. If he liked, he could have his pick of the other elephants which the Guru had himself purchased.

When Bhim Chand heard of the Guru's refusal, he was greatly incensed. The minister tried to calm him by saying. 'The Guru is not an ordinary man. He has great spiritual powers. If we had gone to him with pure hearts, he might have acceded to our prayers. If you become his Sikh with a true heart, he will give you anything that you may wish you.'

Raja Bhim Chand did not relish his counsel. 'How can I', said he, 'forsake my idols and gods and bow before one who is never weary of scoffing at them ? People will say that I abjured my ancient faith for the sake of the elephant. Moreover, how can I, a Rajput by descent, agree to mingle with the peasants, barbers, washermen, cobblers, and the low miscellaneous rabble that form the Guru's followers ? No, minister, I shall take by force what has been refused to me by peaceful means. I know what views the Emperor has regarding him. He has nothing to gain by offending me. He is yet a lad and needs chastisement. He will have it from me and will then come to his senses.'

Saying this, he gave orders that preparations for war should begin. The minister pleaded for another effort at persuasion. Accordingly, a very clever man, called Chatru, was sent to the Guru's *darbar*. He had a very sweet and persuasive tongue. But all his craft could not deceive the Guru, who said, 'Well friend, here you say that the elephant will be returned; but your counsel to your *Raja* was far different'. Chatru soon found that no deceit could succeed with the Guru and returned.

Bhim Chand's wrath knew no bounds and he got ready for war. His queen, however, advised him not to spoil the nuptial rejoicings, but to wait till the betrothal and the marriage of prince Ajmer Chand were over. Her brother, Kesari Singh of Jaswal, proposed to make a last request to the Guru. But the latter was firm. Kesari Singh returned and vowed eternal vengeance against the Guru.

It was known far and near that Raja Bhim Chand had been refused the loan of the elephant. All the hill-chiefs held a meeting and agreed that his prestige and dignity demanded that not only the animal but also the tent must be obtained by force. The following letter was addressed to the Guru :— 'We have refrained from molesting you so far on the consideration that you occupy the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak. But we cannot tolerate your ways any longer. If you wish to live at Anandpur, you should behave as a loyal subject. We call upon you



to readily surrender whatever we may desire to have, and to beg our pardon for your past deeds. Otherwise, leave our territory. If you refuse, war and its consequences will follow.'

The *Masands* and other pacifists were greatly perturbed when they learnt of the contents of Raja Bhim Chand's letter. They again went to the Guru's mother and begged her to advise him to return a soft answer, and not to provoke war. She repeated her old arguments that a man of religion should devote himself to peaceful observance of the rules of religion, to calm meditation on God, and to performance of acts of piety and charity. The Guru humbly, but strongly, repeated what he had said on the previous occasion and added, "The hill-chiefs are determined to fall upon us. They are spoiling for a fight. To live as subject people of Bhim Chand will be to lower the dignity and honour of Guru Nanak's *gaddi*. I do them no harm; I mean them no harm. I wish to live as a good neighbour. But their hearts are replete with evil. They are sure to start an open conflict. The only way for me to avert it would be to forget the Divine orders and to make an abject surrender. This I cannot and will not do, come what may. I must do my duty towards man and God, fearlessly, unmindful of the consequences. To sit idle in such times would not only be the height of irreligious impiety, an act of unpardonable cowardice, but also a demonstration of inexcusable lack of foresight and discretion.'

Accordingly, with the consent of Diwan Nand Chand and the Sikh *Sangat*, the following reply was sent :-

'I do not live in your territory, but in a place which my father purchased with gold on the clear condition that it would be exempt from all taxes collected from subjects and would be outside the bounds of the *Raja's* rule. So, do not flatter yourself by thinking me to be your subject. I have told you that the wishes of my devoted followers are dearer to me than life itself. I cannot let the elephant go into any other's service. As for your threat of war, you may please yourself as you like. You will find me always ready to meet you.' Having despatched this reply to Bhim Chand, the Guru ordered Diwan Nand Chand to make due preparations for the imminent war.

On learning of the contents of the Guru's reply, the *Rajas* were red with rage. Bhim Chand burst out. "We shall have the marriage later. We must first settle scores with the Guru." But Raja Kirpal of Katoch did not like the idea of getting involved in war just then. He was, in reality, a double dealer. At the initial stage of the dispute, he had written a letter to the Guru, saying, "Remain firm, don't yield or

budge. Bhim Chand has no allies; no hill-chief will assist him against you. I myself shall fight on your side.'

At the same time, he had said to Bhim Chand, 'Fear not and waver not. There can be no real or lasting peace until the Guru is made to go away bag and baggage. We all hill-chiefs are with you.'

In reality, Raja Kirpal was dancing to the tune set by Emperor Aurangzeb. He was inciting the hill-chiefs against the Guru as a part of the game, which he had agreed to play in order to please the Emperor. But, at the same time, he did not wish to involve himself in any war. So he made the following suggestion, "All preparations for the marriage have been made. All hill-chiefs will be joining the marriage party. Our armies will be with us. Raja Fateh Shah will also be there to join and advise us. We shall seek and follow his advice. Let us not spoil the joy of this auspicious occasion."

The *Rajas* accepted this suggestion, and the idea of war with the Guru was given up for the time.

Such was the ostensible beginning of the Guru's quarrels with hill-chiefs. The real cause was far deeper. One of these causes, which was given by the Guru himself in his letter to Aurangzeb, was that they were idol-worshippers, while he was an idol-breaker. They resented his religious and social reforms. They could not relish his levelling of all castes and raising of the Shudras to a position of equality with the Brahmins and Kashatriyas. If they could not fall in with the Guru's religious and social views, his political ambition was to them still more repugnant. Long subjection had demoralized them and had reconciled them to their fate. They were content to bear the galling yoke of the Mughal rule for the sake of the pleasure and satisfaction which they derived from their autocratic sway over the destinies of their own people. They knew that Aurangzeb was anxious to annihilate the Sikhs. He had thrown out several hints that he would much appreciate the services of the hill-chiefs if they would fight against the Guru and destroy him and his forces, or, better still, if they would bring him a captive to the Emperor's presence. Raja Bhim Chand was the leading chief. He had, in his heart, the desire to win the pleasure of his gods as well as that of his Emperor. Hence he was bent upon war, and nothing but war. He did not have the foresight to see the consequences of this suicidal policy. Most of the hill-chiefs were one with him on this point. To strike a blow in the cause of their country's freedom could never enter their brains. They who live by tyrannizing over the weak and the downtrodden do not, for they dare not, countenance a movement calculated to rouse and emancipate their victims. It was true,

that the Guru had no intention to establish a kingdom for himself, that his fight was against the system which crippled the people with mental, social and political bondage, and not against the hill-chiefs directly. But, all the same, they were a part of the system which he wanted to end. The natural leaders of a people, the propertied and privileged classes, the capitalists and the aristocrats, have always sided against all such popular movements as are likely to interfere with their privileges.<sup>1</sup> The hill-chiefs too were actuated by such selfish motives and played into the hands of the common enemies, the Mughal rulers of the land. If they had joined their forces with the Guru, and had accepted him as their guide and liberator, the subsequent history of at least the Panjab and its present day problems, would have been far different indeed. The Mughal power would have been broken here as effectively and as easily as it was destroyed in the South by the Mahrattas, and the later-day atrocious deeds and the intensive conversion campaigns of Mir Mannu, Furrukhsiyar and others of that would have been impossible. Nay, there would have been no such holocausts and blood-baths as we had in the West Panjab and Pakistan in 1946, 1947, and several times more since then. Nor could the Pakistanis have taken away such a big and valuable slice of our dear Panjab as they have done on the strength of their numbers.

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1. 'Again, though the ordinary Hindus were under a ban, and were excluded from government service, Hindus of position and rank were not wanting who had thrown in their lot with the government of the day, and in return for the protection and favour they received or for merely being suffered to retain their lands, always sided with the government of the day, and, at the slightest disturbance of the peace, came forward with declarations of loyalty and offers and active support. This means that although the masses of the Hindus were bitter against the galling yoke of tyranny, the so-called natural leaders of the people were most officiously loyal to the throne and most bitterly hostile to all progressive movements, because they feared the loss of court favour and, ultimately, the loss of land and power which their neutrality as well as supposed complicity was sure to bring in its wake.'

## CHAPTER 12

### AT NAHAN AND PAUNTA SAHIB

Raja Medni Parkash, chief of Nahan State and Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar were mutual enemies. The latter had occupied some of the former's territory and contemplated still further aggressions. Medni Parkash did not know whom he should turn to for aid and advice. Fateh Shah was known to be a close friend of Sri Ram Rai, who had great occult powers and who had, by their exhibition, acquired great influence at the Emperor's court. Fateh Shah's daughter was to be betrothed to the son of Bhim Chand, the strongest of the Hill-Chiefs. So Fateh Shah had, as his allies, persons who owned spiritual as well as military strength. Medni Parkash was anxious for his safety. He has a strong desire to acquire equally strong allies. But where to look for them was the question.

He consulted with his courtiers. One of them told him of Guru Gobind Singh and said, "He occupies the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak and is, hence, in possession of that ocean of miraculous powers out of which Ram Rai has received a few drops. He has, at his command, an army of dauntless warriors, ready to lay down their lives at a nod from him. He himself is a marvellous archer, excelling even Arjun of the Mahabhartar fame. The people of Majha and Malwa, nay, those of the whole Panjab, are his devoted disciples. If he could be made an ally, all our worries would end. In these days Raja Bhim Chand and some other hill-chiefs are intent on a war with him. Hostilities are about to begin. If the Guru could be prevailed upon to come and dwell among us for some time, that war would be averted, and, perhaps, he may be pleased to better our condition. He, by himself is, stronger than Ram Rai, Bhim Chand, and the rest, put together.'

This relieved Medni Parkash a good deal. He decided to invite the Guru and seek his advice and aid. He sent his minister to the Guru with the following request, "This land abounds in beautiful natural scenery; there is plenty of game, too. Also, we are yearning to have

the bliss of your *darshan*. Do graciously come and spend some time in our midst.”

What with the love and devotion professed by Medni Parkesh, and what with the manifold entreaties made by the minister, the Guru became inclined to go, but he added, “Bhim Chand and his friends are all ready for a war with us. We, on our side, are equally prepared to meet them. Not until do they get a taste of our steel, will they come to their senses and agree to live in peace. Therefore, I fain would settle scores with them before going to Nahan. Now, when all preparations for the coming conflict are made, it is not wise to leave our base and our strong position.”

The *Masands* and others of their way of thinking thought within themselves, “Bhim Chand is pre-occupied with preparations for his son’s marriage. If the Guru were to go to Nahan, he might get so engrossed in hunting expeditions that he might cease to think of war. In this way the war may be averted, for the time being at least.”

Thinking thus, they went to the Guru’s mother and explained their thoughts and views to her. They begged her to persuade the Guru. She agreed to try. To begin with, she won over prominent Sikhs like Bhai Sango Shah, Diwan Nand Chand, Munshi Sahib Chand, and her own brother, Bhai Kirpal. Then, taking them with her, she went to the Guru, and urged him to accept Raja Medni Parkash’s invitation. She also reminded him of his filial duty to obey his mother. After hearing all this, he agreed to accept the invitation.<sup>1</sup> He gave orders for preparations to be made for the journey. He had another reason, too, for going thither. A certain love-force was drawing him in that direction. We shall see what it was.

As a matter of precaution, and in order to be ready for all eventualities, he decided to take with him a band of his choicest soldiers and five hundred *Udasi* Sikhs. He started towards Nahan in the beginning of Baisakh 1742 BK (April, 1685 A.D.) Visiting his ancestors’ shrines at Kiratpur and passing through Ropar etc., he reached Nahan on Baisakh 17, 1742 BK (or April 14, 1685 A.D.). The Raja gave him a royal and hearty welcome.

When Sri Ram Rai heard of the Guru’s visit to Nahan, he counselled Fateh Shah to be on good terms with him. Raja Fateh Shah, thereupon,

1. That the stress of circumstances had a share in persuading the Guru to be away from Anandpur for some time is shown by his own account of the event in the *Vachittar Natak*. There he simply says, “Then we had to leave the place and pay our attention to Paunta.” He fain would avoid a conflict as long as, and as far as, it was possible to do so without compromising his position and principles.

sent a messenger with suitable presents and a letter addressed to the Guru. In this he described himself as a devoted admirer of the Guru, and expressed a strong desire for a sight of him. The Guru knew that Fateh Shah and Medni Parkash were mutual enemies. He decided to effect a reconciliation between them, so that they should cease to molest each other, and let the people live in peace. He sent his uncle, Bhai Kirpal Chand, to Raja Fateh Shah. He explained to the *Raja* the ideals of the Guru. 'He has no earthly ambition', said he. 'He wants to fight the enemies of *dharma*, the foreign oppressor who have enslaved our motherland and are tyrannizing over our countrymen. It behoves you to help him in this noble cause. There are scores of kings and chiefs like you with armies at your back. But you are all fallen out with each other. This mutual animosity has made you slaves of the Muhammadan oppressors. If you were to unite your forces, you would attain independence and bring peace and prosperity to your land. Be counselled, O *Raja*, and give up these suicidal quarrels. Return to Medni Parkash the lands which you have forcibly annexed and be friends with him.'

Sri Ram Rai also advised him to bow before the Guru's wishes. Fateh Shah accepted the advice, went to the Guru, and got reconciled with Medni Parkash. The latter was profuse in his protestations of love and gratitude. He urged the Guru to choose his abode in his territory just as his father had done in the State of Kehlur.

The Guru selected a beautiful spot on the banks of the Jamuna, and erected there a fortress which he called Paunta. The days which he passed here were of the greatest earthly happiness. He devoted himself to the composition of poetry and to the diversion and pleasure of the chase. Hearing of his sojourn at Paunta, his devotees flocked to the place from far and near. Anandpur was, so to say, reproduced at Paunta Sahib. Religious gatherings were held in the morning and evening, exploits of heroes were sung by bards, and feats of valour and physical strength and skill were exhibited by the Sikhs during the day. Much attention was paid to literary creation. His court poets also came down there. Besides other poetical works, the tenth section of the *Bhagwat* was rendered into Hindi and completed here on the seventh day of the bright half of *Sawan*, 1745, i.e., some time in July 1688 A.D.

Sayyid Budhu Shah, a *faqir* and *jagirdar*, lived at Sadhaura, about fifteen miles from Paunta. He had heard of Guru Nanak's mission and of the work that his successors had been doing. He had learnt that Guru Nanak's *gaddi* was then occupied by Guru Gobind Singh and that the latter was then staying at a place quite near him. The Sayyid

had lived a life of austerities. He had read many religious books, had associated with *sufis* and *faqirs*, and had done all that he could think of as leading to that stage of spiritual enlightenment at which God stands revealed in all His glory. Still, he had felt a want, a void. His heart longed for one who could tear the veil which separated him from the All-Light.

The presence of the Guru in his neighbourhood made that inward longing take a definite direction. Something in his heart told him that what he was in need of could be had from none but the Guru. He went. He had with him a band of his followers. Though inwardly already a convert, he was too conscious of his dignity to bow before the Guru. He knew not that greater *pirs* than he had been conquered and enslaved by the love-shafts of those deep, serene eyes. The Guru seated the Sayyid near him. The Sayyid desired to know how one could obtain union with the Almighty. The Guru said, 'God dwells in every heart. But we, in our ignorance and shortsightedness, get entangle in our love for our own world—our sons, our lands, our followers, our dignity, and so on. This wall of self or ego comes in between us and the Lord. He is thus concealed from our view. When we awake to the reality of our separation, and come to think of Him, we feel ourselves lost. We run about in search of Him. Some torture their bodies, some worship this or that object, and some sit lost in concentration. But the wall of self or ego gets thicker and thicker. These austerities only heighten their sense of ego and self-importance. It is only when we conquer self, and learn to bear ourselves in conformity with the Divine Will, when we attune ourselves to the Infinite, that the screen is torn asunder and He whom we had vainly searched for in forests and mountains, is revealed enthroned in our own hearts. We lose ourselves in Him and find Him in ourselves. Then we are His and He is ours for ever.'

These words, falling from those lips, and accompanied by the look of those eyes, went straight to the heart of Sayyid Budhu Shah. He lost all pride, fell on the Guru's feet, and rose with light in his eyes and hitherto unknown bliss in his heart. Here was another love-conquest. We shall see later that the conquest was quite complete, in mind, body, and spirit.

During the time that Raja Fateh Shah was staying with the Guru at Paunta Sahib, news was brought that a white lion was doing havoc among the hill people. The Guru set out towards the place where that lion was said to have his lair. The *Rajas* of Srinagar and Nahan accompanied him. The lair was reached. The fierce beast sat up, waiting

to be attacked. The Guru called upon the two *Rajas* and the rest to kill the lion, single-handed, with the help of a sword and a shield. None came forward. The *Rajas* said that it was impossible to slay him with the sword. The Guru got down from his horse, took his sword and shield, advanced towards the lion, and challenged him to come out and fight. The lion sprang forward, and with his forepaws made for the Guru's neck. He received him on his shield. While his left hand held steady the shield on which the lion's weight was pressing, his right hand cut the lion in twain.

All this was done in the twinkling of an eye. All who saw this, acknowledged the extraordinary prowess of the Guru. They said that it was no mere human power that had killed the terrible beast. It was, rather, the power of the Almighty which worked through the Guru. Many wavering hearts were subdued that day and filled with faith and devotion.

Sri Ram Rai, who was a son of Guru Har Rai and had aspired for th *Gaddi* in place of younger brother, Guru Hari Krishan, had ever thought himself to have been wronged. As explained already, he had won over Aurangzeb with display of his wit and occult powers. He had set himself as a guru at the place now called Dehra Dun. This place was near Paunta. Guru Gobind Singh was his uncle and occupant of Guru Nanak's *gaddi*. On both these accounts, the Guru was entitled to his homage. But he remembered his own animosity and feared the Guru's treatment of him. Besides, he had many followers who would not even look upon the Guru. All the same, he wanted to see the Guru, yet would not go to him, lest his followers should think him weak and desert him. He could not expect the Guru to come over to his place. Hence he desired the Guru to see him at some intermediate spot. The latter gladly consented.

He, who had come with reluctance, and with a heart full of pride and self-importance, found himself dwindled to insignificance before the Guru, verily like a candle in the face of the dazzling sun. He bowed, and his followers murmured dissent for his doing obeisance to his rival. But he did not mind what they said. He implored the Guru to help his wife when he would be gone; for his *Masands* were getting too powerful. All the time that the two stood conversing, the followers of Sri Ram Rai stood with their backs to them, lest they should see the face of the Guru.<sup>1</sup> Unlucky people ! They had come to a fount of immortalizing water, but in their blindness had refused to touch it. A stone may be

1. 'Thus, while Sri Ram bowed before the Guru and won his blessings, his followers held aloof from, and in open opposition to, the Guru. It is on that account that the Sikhs are enjoined to have no dealings with the followers of Sri Ram Rai or the Ramraiyas, as they are called.



immersed in water for centuries, still the moisture will not penetrate below the surface. These men had similar hearts.

In the seclusion of the mountains at Paunta Sahib, the Guru evolved his plans for the accomplishment of his heaven-ordained task. He wanted to prepare the people for his contemplated campaign of national liberation. With that end in view, he once visited Kapal Mochan during his stay at Paunta Sahib. He did so on the occasion of the annual full-moon fair held there in the month of *Katak*. To the people assembled there he gave the message of Sikhism and exhorted them to get ready for achieving liberation from the political, social, economic, and religious bondage which was cramping them from all sides. He urged them to throw off all weakness of body, mind, and soul, and to imbibe a passion for freedom and equality.

As we have seen, Sri Ram Rai had met and paid homage to Guru Gobind Singh. During the interview he had said, "My *Masands* are getting too powerful and headstrong. When I am gone, to protect my family and property from being ruined at their hands."

The *Masands* did really prove to be too strong and wilful even for Sri Ram Rai. Some time after the Guru's visit, Sri Ram Rai fell into a trance. When he was in that condition, the *Masands* declared him to be dead. They cremated him forthwith in defiance of the wishes, prayers, and entreaties of his wife, Panjab Kaur. She vainly declared that he was not dead. This happened on the eighth of bright half of Bhadon, 1774 BK (July, 1687 A.D.). Then they proceeded to take possession of his property, the offerings intended for him, and his temple. Each began to proclaim himself to be Sri Ram Rai's successor.

Panjab Kaur appraised Guru Gobind Singh of her trouble and invited him to the deceased's obsequies to be performed on the seventeenth day after the death. The Guru went to Dehra Dun with a strong body of his troops. He held enquiries into the conduct of each rebel *Masand* and gave condign punishment to all of them. He also suitably rewarded those of them who had remained faithful to Panjab Kaur, and were otherwise good men. He then returned to Paunta Sahib.

The spot where the Guru sat when judging and punishing the *Masands* is the site of a memorial building.

## CHAPTER 13

### BATTLE OF BHANGANI

Sayyid Budhu Shah returned to Sadhaura after a fairly long stay at the Guru's *darbar* at Paunta. A few days after his return, there came to Sadhaura a band of five hundred *Pathans* of village named Damla. They said to the *Pir*, "Our profession is military service. We have been turned out of the imperial army by Aurangzeb for some petty fault. He has issued orders that none should employ us. If we remain unemployed for long, we shall be reduced to extreme straits. Help us, O *Pir*. Find us some employment somewhere. We shall be faithful servants and shall bring no discredit to you." Sayyid Budhu Shah was greatly touched. He took them to the-Guru at Paunta Sahib and told him their whole story. He requested the Guru to employ them in his army.

The Guru agreed. He took them into his service and fixed five rupees a day as the salary of each of five *Sardars* (Commanders) and one rupee a day, as that of the soldiers. The names of the five *Sardars* were : Hiyat Kahan, Kale Khan, Najabat Khan, Umre Khan, and Bhikhan Khan.

Soon after, Raja Fateh Shah invited the Guru to his daughter's wedding with Bhim Chand's son. The Guru felt that his presence at the same place as Bhim Chand might spoil the marriage festivities. So he sent Diwan Nand Chand with costly marriage gifts for the princess. Raja Fateh Shah received him most ceremoniously and offered him suitable quarters within the city. But the *Diwan* thought it prudent to put up outside the city, so as to be better able to escape, if treacherously attacked.

Raja Bhim Chand now decided to play a ruse upon the Guru. He sent the following message to the latter: "You know that my son's marriage party has to proceed to Srinagar. You also know that the most convenient route from Bilaspur to that place passes by Paunta. The marriage party, quite large by itself, will be accompanied by a large army. It may happen that some dispute might arise between your army and mine at Paunta and it might lead to an open conflict. Or my army,

getting out of restraint, might loot your camp and the city. In order to avoid these mishaps, it will be advisable for you and your army to get aside from the route for the time. If my advice is not heeded, the responsibility for what may happen will rest on your shoulders. You have been warned."

The *Raja's* design was this. After prevailing upon the Guru to leave his fort and defences and encamp in the open, the *Raja* wanted to take him by surprise and to wreak his vengeance.

The Guru was far-sighted enough to see through the design. So he replied that it was not at all necessary for the marriage party to be accompanied by an army. He would not, therefore, permit the army to pass that way, except in such numbers as might be absolutely necessary to ensure a safe journey on the rest of the route. As far as the Guru and his people were concerned, there would not be the least violence or attempt at creating trouble. The *Raja* should have no fears on that score. He would be allowed to pass in perfect peace. If, however, it was deemed altogether necessary for the army to be at Srinagar on the occasion of the marriage, it could take a different route, or it could fight its way through Paunta.

But that did not suit the *Raja's* plans. At the same time, he thought that his prestige would suffer if, after all that fuss, he agreed to the Guru's suggestion. If he had no evil designs, he would not have hesitated to accept the Guru's proposal. That he feared no treachery from the Guru's side, is proved by his subsequent decision to send the bridegroom with a small party by way of Paunta and to take the main party and the army by a longer route. He meant trouble. We shall see that he soon managed to create it.

If the bridegroom were to take the longer route, he was sure to be too late for certain essential preliminary ceremonies. Hence, after due deliberation, it was decided that the bridegroom, with a minister and a small party, be sent via Paunta. The rest of the marriage party would go by the longer route.

When the bridegroom and his party reached Paunta, they asked the Guru's permission to pass. He smiled and said, "Well, prince, if I were to act on the policy pursued by your father, and take you captive, what would be the good of sending the army and the rest of the marriage party by the longer route?"

The bridegroom and the minister said with humility, "We have full trust in you. You always help those who seek refuge at your feet." The Guru had no enmity with any man as such; he wanted never to engage in any offensive war and his wars had to be for the defence

and help of the poor and the weak. Hence, he not only permitted them to proceed unhampered, but also gave some suitable gifts to the prince, and treated him as his guest.

When the bridegroom and party reached Srinagar, they told Raja Fateh Shah how they had come via Paunta, whereas the rest would be coming by the longer route. Raja Fateh Shah was sorry, no doubt, at this, but he felt that what the Guru had done was perfectly legitimate, wise, and within the accepted rules of policy. He, therefore, did not feel annoyed. That he did not consider the Guru to have acted wrongly, is shown by his acceptance and public announcement of the Guru's gifts to his daughter.

The Guru's gifts to the bride were announced. They exceeded in price and excelled in quality and magnificence the presents from all the hill-chiefs put together. Raja Bhim Chand was enraged. He said, "What is all this ? The Guru refused to let me pass by Paunta. He is my enemy. But Raja Fateh Shah is accepting his gifts !"

Raja Kirpal of Katoch added fuel to the fire by saying: "Your anger is justified. An enemy's friend is always an enemy. If Raja Fateh Shah is a friend of an enemy of yours, how can he call himself a friend of yours ? Why have relations or ties with him ? You should tell him that he should lead an attack on the Guru, when you decide to take the field; otherwise, you would refuse to accept his daughter for your son."

Raja Bhim Chand accepted this advice. He sent a message to Fateh Shah accordingly. The latter remonstrated: "How can I show enmity against the holy person that the Guru is ? He is my friend. He has done me a very good turn. He had effected reconciliation between me and Raja Medni Parkash. He wants peace with all. Tell the *Raja* to have patience. I shall act as a mediator, and remove all misunderstandings between him and the Guru."

But Bhim Chand did not relish this advice. He ordered his men to prepare for departure. Horses began to be saddled. Raja Fateh Shah's courage failed him. He thought, "If Bhim Chand were to leave my daughter here now, it would be a matter of extreme dishonour and shame for me. He will also become a sworn enemy of mine. My friendship with the Guru will prove too costly to me."

Thinking thus, he sent his minister to Bhim Chand with the message: "I agree to your conditions. I shall lead the attack on the Guru, if you decide to attack him."

Diwan Nand Chand heard of all this and made good his escape with all his things, including the Guru's unaccepted marriage gifts. Raja

Bhim Chand sent men to intercept and kill him, but the Sikhs fought valiantly, and reached Paunta safely. It was certain that the hill-chiefs would take the offensive without much delay. Preparations were, therefore, made for the coming encounter with the crafty hillmen.

When Bhim Chand heard that Diwan Nand Chand had managed to defeat his men and escape with all the gifts, he was red with rage and indignation. He addressed his brother-chiefs thus: "Fie upon us, brothers, that we allow ourselves to be thus bearded by these despicable cobblers, sweepers, and peasants. Their audacity is unbearable now. If we do not curb them in time, they will, one day, turn us all out of our very homes. We should all combine our forces and either kill the Guru or send him captive to the Emperor. Right glad will he be to smother this cobra with the heel of his power."

All the hill-chiefs unanimously resolve upon immediate war. They knew that the Guru's main army was far off. The bride and the bridegroom were sent to Bilaspur and the chiefs marched upon Paunta. Bhim Chand, Fateh Shah, Gopal Chand of Guler, Kirpal Chand of Kangra, Bir Sain of Mandi, Kesri Chand of Jaswal, Dial Chand of Kathgarh, Hari Chand of Handur, Karm Chand of Bhambore, Umaid Singh of Jaswan, Daya Singh of Nurpur, Bhag Singh to Tilokpur, Gurbhaj of Indore, Sansar Chand of Nadaun, Hari Chand of Kotiwal, Lachhu Chand of Kasauli etc., all the chiefs marched at the head of their armies. The war-drums beat as do thunder clouds before a hail-storm. This was towards the middle of April 1689 A.D.

As stated above, the Guru had, on the recommendation of his friend and admirer, Sayyid Budhu Shah, taken in employ five hundred *Pathan* soldiers who had been dismissed by Aurangzeb, and whom no one had the guts to engage because of fear of the Emperor's wrath. They were under five officers, namely, Haiyat Khan, Kale Khan, Najabat Khan, Bhikhan Khan, and Umre Khan. When it was announced that the Hill-Chiefs were marching against the Guru, the *Pathans* wanted their accounts to be settled, as they had 'pressing affairs at home requiring their immediate personal attention'. All counsels proved useless. They were mere mercenaries, and had no sense of honour or loyalty. In reality, they had secretly made up with the Hill-Chiefs and had deliberately decided upon this treachery. They had thought that they were the only regular soldiers that the Guru had. The rest were only a miscellaneous rabble (*Sadhus*) who had never seen war, and who would run away at the first shot. On the other hand, they coveted the wealthy splendour of the Guru's darbar and intended to plunder it. One of the officers, Kala Khan, tried vainly to dissuade the rest from

this faithless action. So they were paid off. The four officers with four hundred soldiers joined the enemy. When Budhu Shah heard that the Guru was about to be attacked by the treacherous Hill-Chiefs, he hurried to the Guru's aid. He took with him his two brothers, four sons, and seven hundred disciples. He heard of the treachery of the Pathan soliders, recommended by him and resolved to wash away that personal disgrace.

Five hundred Udasi Sadhus, who had been fattering themselves on the rich food served in the Guru's kitchen, were deeply dismayed on hearing the news of the impending battle. They feared that the Guru might ask them to take the field. So all of them, except Mahant Kirpal of Hehar, ran away during the night. When, in the morning, the Guru saw the Udasis' camp deserted by all except Mahant Kirpal, he smiled and said, "It is well and all right. The root of the Udasi Sikhs has been saved." The Guru patted the Mahant and said, "You will prove a valiant warrior."

The news of the coming battle spread like wild fire and Sikhs thronged from all sides, rejoicing at the prospect of winning the Guru's pleasure and eternal happiness. Several Rajputs, royal rebels, had taken shelter with the Guru. They remained true. The Guru's army was five thousand strong. The enemies far outnumbered them. But they had not the same spirit of sacrifice, the same enthusiasm for the nobility of their cause, not the same devotion to their leaders, as the Sikhs had.

The Guru stationed his troops on an eminence seven or eight miles north of Paunta and near the village Bhangani.<sup>1</sup> A severe and bloody battle was fought there in which many brave soldiers were killed on both sides. The Sikhs did wonders on that day. The treacherous Pathans were astounded to see confectioners and cattle-grazers, who had never handled sword or shield, fighting like trained soldiers and killing many a haughty Pathan and hill-man. Mahant Kirpal killed Haiyat Khan with no weapon but a club. Several of the hill-chiefs were

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1. The Guru's choice of his ground shows his skill in the craft of war. The eminence on which he stationed his troops to receive the enemy was at the farther end of a level stretch of ground beside the river Jamuna, and commanded the field over which the enemy had to advance. His skill in the choice of his ground and in the use of his bow, as also the firm devotion of his followers and their adamant resolve "to win or die but never to fly", enabled him to rout an army which was far superior to him in both number and strength. That formidable soldiers armed *cap-a-pie* were vanquished by mere 'laymen' with such 'weapons' as clubs, shows what success the Guru had achieved in a short time in revolutionizing the whole life and character of his people. We should remember that he was a little above twenty two years of age at that time.

either killed or wounded. After three days' bloody fight, the Hill-Chiefs took to their heels. The Guru has secured a complete victory over the combined armies of the Hill-Chiefs. This was on Baisakh 18, 1746 BK. April 16, 1689 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

As the Guru saw the field strewn with the dead and the dying, his heart melted in divine compassion. His men went about the field picking up and nursing the wounded of both sides. The *Ranis* of the Hill-Chiefs approached the Guru with the prayer that their husband's corpses might be made over to them for cremation. He accepted their request on the condition that they should not burn themselves as *satis*. They undertook to obey him, but the force of custom and their misguided sense of honour and marital fidelity proved too strong for their feeble resolves. They perished in the flames, thus committing a sin which with the Sikhs was, and has always been, "the murder of the soul".

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1. Some writers, like Gian Singh, Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, are of the view that the battle of Bhangani took place "towards the end of February, 1686". In support of this date the latter two advance the argument, "The *Suraj Parkash* says that, nine months after the return of the Guru from Paunta to Anandpur, his first son, Ajit Singh, was born. The date of Ajit Singh's birth is accepted on all hands unanimously to be *Magh Sudi* 4, 1743 BK/ Nov, 9, 1686. This would place the battle in the month of February, 1686. Further evidence may be adduced from a letter of appreciation given by the Guru to Pir Budhu Shah of Sadhaura. This letter is dated *Phagun Sudi* 12, 1742 BK., which corresponds to Feb. 25, 1686. This letter must have been given soon after the battle." (*A Short History of the Sikhs*. p.64)

If Baba Ajit Singh was born nine months after the Guru's return to Anandpur and on November 9, 1686, the Guru must have returned in the first week of February 1686. Admittedly, the battle was fought before the Guru's return. It could not have been fought "towards the end of February, 1686".

Moreover, the writers say that the battle took place about nine months before the birth of Baba Ajit Singh on *Magh Sudi*, 4, 1743 BK. But *Magh Sudi* 4, 1743 corresponds not to Nov. 9, 1686, but to January 7, 1687.

That would place the battle in April, 1686. The letter of Feb. 25, 1686 cannot have any connection with a battle fought in April 1686; it could not have been given "soon after the battle".

But we possess far more, rather absolutely, reliable evidence in favour of the date given above, i.e. April 1689. According to the Guru's own words (vide *Krishna Avtar*, 2390), the tenth chapter of *Bhagvat* was completed at Paunta on *Sawan Sudi* 7, 1745 BK., or some time in July 1688. As the Guru returned from Paunta to Anandpur soon after the battle of Bhangani, and did no literary work at Paunta after the battle, the battle must have been fought after *Sawan Sudi* 4, 1745 (July 1688). The date given by Kahan Singh in his *Mahan Kosh Encyclopedia of Sikh Literature* is Baisakh 18, 1746 or about April 16, 1689. Sukha Singh's *Gurbilas* also gives the year 1689 as the year of the battle.

It may be added that when this view was placed before Dr Ganda Singh, co-author of the above-said book, in October 1958, he agreed with this view and wrote that the date given by Kahan Singh 'may be taken as correct.'

Sango Shah, the Guru's Commander of the Forces, Jit Mal, and many other brave Sikhs had served the Guru with their lives. He took their heads in his lap, wiped their faces with a loving grace, kissed their foreheads, and blessed them all. Two of Sayyid Budhu Shah's sons had fallen on the field never to rise in their physical frames. Several of his disciples, too, had joined the ranks of the martyrs. Budhu Shah now came to the Guru to take leave of him. The Guru blessed him with *Nam Dan* or the gift of His Name, a gift which was far more precious than the most precious earthly gifts. Besides that, the Guru gave him a robe of honour, a sword, a turban, and a *Hukamnama*, an order to his Sikhs to treat the Sayyid and his descendants with respect and consideration. The Guru was, at the time, combing his hair, Sayyid Budhu Shah begged the Guru to give him the comb with his loose hair as a sacred souvenir. The Guru's comb, hair, and kirpan were, later, preserved as relics in the Sikh State of Nabha, having been acquired from the Sayyid's descendants by Raja Bharpur Singh.

When Budhu Shah returned home, his wife and other relatives began to mourn for his two sons who had fallen on the field of battle. Budhu Shah bade them banish all woe. 'We should weep', he said, 'for the faithless and the cowards who have to go round and round the cycle of births and deaths. Why weep for those who have gone to their real Home above? They are blessed. They have served the righteous cause of the Guru. Great is our luck that our sons have won eternal life. To eat, drink, sleep, and enjoy ignoble, or even in the heart, to live in a consciousness of His constant presence, to die in defence of God's people, that is what I call life. I am glad that my sons lived that life and have now obtained the freedom of the Great City where there is no sorrow, no anguish, no rivalry, and no fear. Dear Nasiran, rejoice at the good luck of thy sons. They are not dead. They live and will live for ever'. Nasiran blessed her sons and, in that action, was herself purified and blessed. She became a devout disciple of the Guru and preserved that spark of love and devotion ever bright till the end of her earthly days. Long afterwards, she and her husband were killed by the minions of the bigoted Emperor for their having faith in, and devotion for, the Guru. Like a true soldier-disciple, she died with the sword in her hand, firm, faith in the Guru in her heart, and the Name of God on her lips.

The Guru's army, now elated with victory and enraged at the treachery of the Hill-Chiefs, specially that of Raja Fateh Shah, sought the Guru's permission to attack Fateh Shah, conquer his land, and bring him captive before the Guru. Some suggested that the tract lying between



Anandpur and Paunta should be taken under possession. But the Guru did not desire such conquests. He had no ambition to establish any kingdom. He had come to restrain people from senseless acts. He wanted to make them banish the beast from their bosoms. He yearned to rid the land of oppression. He did not desire to conquer any territory. He would, rather, conquer men's hearts and reign there forever. So he restrained his army. Not even an inch of the territory of his vanquished foes did he occupy. Not even a pice did he exact by way of reparations.

After a few days' stay at Bhangani, which was necessary for the disposal of the dead and the care of the wounded, he decided to return to Anandpur.

Indeed, he was anxious to return to Anandpur as soon as possible. He had his reasons and very good ones, too. It was already over three years since he had left that place. He had hoped that his change of abode would avert a conflict with the Hill-Chiefs. It had come all the same. He knew that the Hill-Chiefs, chafing under the blow which they had received at Bhangani, would not let him live in peace for long. They might even try to take possession of the city, while he was yet away. That must be prevented at all costs. Moreover, during his absence, the town must have been deserted by many. Its defences must be in need of repairs. He must fortify the place, strengthen its defences, and restore it in other ways before the Hill-Chiefs could muster courage and forces to attack him.

## CHAPTER 14

### AT THE MASTER'S FEET

The *Rani* of Raipur, a small state in the present district of Ambala, was a devoted disciple of the Guru. Her ministers advised her to give up her new faith on political grounds. The Guru was at enmity with the main body of the Hill-Chiefs, who were her neighbours and who were, just then, chafing under the crushing defeat which he had inflicted on them. They would surely resent the *Rani's* sympathy for their enemy. They might invade her capital and annex her land. So, discretion and policy counselled caution.

The *Rani's* heart was not hers. She had offered it at the shrine of sacred and divine love. Her soul had partaken of the bliss that lies in His name, and she was living in expectation of a sight of His servant and men's Master. She felt that her counsellors had, at their hearts, the welfare of her body, and concern for her worldly possessions. They were no friends of her heart and soul. She had to make her choice. She made it with a heart firm as steel. Millions of kings and queens had been in the world, renowned in their times for grandeur and might. Where were they ? They had mingled with the dust. What difference, then, would it make if she were to become a beggar from a queen ? The *raj* was His gift; beggary would also be His gift and equally dear. Why should they fear who believe the Lord of the world to be real and for ever true ? She would not give up her faith. She did not waver in her attachment to the Guru. She knew that he was returning to Anandpur. Though her city did not lie on the direct route from Paunta to Anandpur, yet something within her assured her that, if she loved the Master's feet with true faith and unselfish devotion, her love would surely attract him to her city. He would surely come and bless her.

From Paunta Sahib the Guru went to Sadhaura to meet and bless Sayyid Budhu Shah and his wife. Thence, passing through Laharpur, he reached near the village named Toka. This place, about eight miles from Nahan city, was in the Nahan state. It had a very good situation. Near it was a dense jungle which abounded in game. The Guru decided

to stay there for a few days and divert himself in chase and hunt. Here a messenger arrived from Medni Parkash with a message that the *raja* would be coming to pay his homage at that place. But in reality he was too afraid of his neighbouring chiefs, on whom the Guru had inflicted a severe defeat, to show openly his friendship with the Guru. So he procrastinated. At last, on the advice of his *Wazirs*, he sent word to the Guru that he was too busy to come himself, but would send his minister to pay him respects on his behalf. The Guru knew what thoughts were working in the *Raja's* mind. So he moved on without waiting for the minister.

On the site of the Guru's camp near Laharpur and Toka, there is a gurdwara called Toka Sahib. A religious fair is held there each year on the tenth day of the bright half of *Jeth*. From this it would appear that the Guru was at that place on that day in 1746 BK.

The Guru next halted at Tabra in the state of Ramgarh. The *Raja* of Ramgarh received and served him with great devotion in and hospitality, and presented suitable offerings. The Guru gave him a sword with a jewelled handle.

The *Rani* of Raipur had thrown all her 'wisemen's' counsels to the winds and had declared, 'Let go my *raj* and my wealth, but stay, grow, and prosper, my faith in the Master.'

One day the people of Raipur saw clouds of dust rising and approaching their city from the direction of Ramgarh State. All were alarmed, thinking that the *Raja* of Ramgarh had, at the instigation of, and perhaps in conjunction with Bhim Chand and Fateh Shah, come to invade and conquer Raipur. The *Rani* was called out from her palace. Soldiers were marshalled. Arms and ammunitions were served out. Fort guns were loaded; their muzzles were directed towards the 'invaders'. Generals ran hither and thither, issuing instructions and encouraging the men to prove their salt and mettle. Children cried and women sobbed. The general people prostrated before their stone-gods and cried out for help. But the gods showed no signs of life, gave no assurance, and infused no confidence in their votaries.

Amid all this confusion, the *Rani* felt a strange agitation and a certain elevation as of supreme joy. She felt that the invader had a deeper intention than that of conquering merely the worldly wealth of her people. He would enslave them with chains which none would be able to see, yet which all would feel, and none would have the power to break.

The 'invaders' were now only a few miles from Raipur. The beat of their drum was audible. With its every beat the *Rani's* heart beat a

wider beat. She told her soldiers to keep quiet until she ordered them to move. A close friend of the *Rani*, an old lady, who had once been to the Guru's *darbar*, assured her that the drum and the clarions were those of the Guru. So, there was no room for fear, but an occasion for joy.

'My sagacious advisers', said the *Rani*, 'we shall surrender to the invader, body and the soul. Let us all march out to receive him. Mind you, no adverse remark ! Put down the arms. They are not needed. Open the gates of the city. Let him come in, friends. Pray that he may enter.'

Saying this, she marched in the direction of the approaching 'conqueror'. The ministers and the Generals were amazed at the *Rani's* action, but they obeyed. Soon all doubts were removed. The 'invader' was the Conqueror of Hearts, come to make fresh love-conquests. She bowed to him. The ministers bowed to him. The Generals and their armies bowed to him. The whole city bowed to him.

The Guru's camp was set up in the *maidan* before the fort. The *Rani* entertained the Guru and his men with her best. She attended the evening *diwan*, listened to the chorus of heavenly music, and partook of the immortalizing Word and His Name. Her body, heart, and soul drank deep, now that the Fount of Bliss had been placed at their disposal. At the conclusion of the gathering, the *Rani* begged the Guru to hold the morning *diwan* within her fort and palace, and also to dine there.

In the *Rani's* household none slept that night. All were busy, arranging and decorating the halls where the *Sangat* had to sit. After the morning *diwan* the beloved guests were served with food. The Guru then expressed his intention to depart. Whatever might have been the yearnings of her heart and soul, she had not the heart to oppose his will. She presented to him a beautiful horse with costly trappings and purse of elven hundred rupees. Every one of his followers received two rupees. The Guru gave her son a robe of honour, a sword and a shield. To the *Rani* he gave a priceless gift. It was a book of Divine Word. He blessed her and advised her to let her son's hair grow its natural growth. She was afraid of the 'Turks'. He told her to have no fears. Her race would endure. The Turks had only a short time more to rule, he added.

The Guru departed from the city but not from the citadel of her heart and soul. She erected a Gurdwara in each of the places where the Guru had held his Name-gatherings.

From there the Guru passed through various villages, like Toda, Nada, Nabha,<sup>1</sup> and Dhakauli in all of which he was lovingly served. At Dhakauli he found that the people suffered great inconvenience on account of scarcity of water. 'Food to the hungry and water to the thirsty', had ever been the Guru's advice to his Sikhs. He ordered the construction of a *baubi*, a well with steps going to the level of the water. It exists up to this day. The *Pathans* of Kotla near Ropar served him with great zeal and devotion. He gave them a sword which they treasured as a priceless gift. At Kiratpur he visited the shrines of his ancestors.

When the Guru had left Anandpur and taken up residence at Paunta, the place had lost much of its bustle and prosperity. The Guru's prolonged absence would, in itself, have been a cause potent enough to produce such depletion. To that was added the news that Raja Bhim Chand was preparing for a show-down with the Guru. It was feared that he might attack and ransack the city at any time.

But on hearing the news of the Guru's victory at Bhangani and his contemplated return, a large number of those who had gone away returned to Anandpur. As the Guru approached the city, all its inhabitants poured out with enthusiasm and joy to receive and welcome him. Every street, every lane, and every hut and house presented a gala-day appearance. The whole city was illuminated at night.

The Guru returned to Anandpur after absence of about four years. Now the city was again full of bustle and activity. The deserters had all returned. Many others had also come to settle there. The Guru took special measures to add to its prosperity and to make it grow in every way. In order to reassure the people and to ensure the safety of the city against possible attacks from the Hill-Chiefs, he strengthened its fortifications. Soon after his return in 1746 BK (1689 A.D.), he constructed five fortresses, namely, Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Fatehgarh, Keshgarh, and Holgarh. Soon the place grew to be even more populous and prosperous than before.

Anandpur had now grown into a big city. Besides the Sikhs, who formed the Guru's standing force and household, several shopkeepers had come and settled there. The fame of the Guru's victory spread far and wide, and disciples came in large numbers from every part of the country. Each day appeared to be a market-day. Anandpur was now the city of earthly, as well as immortal bliss.

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1. The village Nabha is in Rajpura tehsil, about four miles to the west of Ghaggar railway station on the Ambala-Kalka line. Outside the village is a Gurddwara at the site of the Guru's camp during the visit

After his severe repulse at Bhangani, Raja Bhim Chand thought it better to secure peace with the Guru; for he was too afraid of maintaining open hostility with one who had completely routed the combined hill armies. A messenger was despatched to sound the Guru. The Guru had enmity with no one. He wanted to be a friend of all. His doors were open to all. His arms were ever in readiness to lift the fallen; they were ever open to receive the repenting sinner; his soul ever yearned to console and soothe the inflicted. The messenger was told that all aggression in the past had been on the *Raja's* side, that at the Guru's *darbar* people met their deserts, and that if the *Raja* really intended peace, he need have no fears on account of the Guru. Soon Raja Bhim Chand came and asked forgiveness for the past. The Guru assured him of his friendship and help if he would behave well.

## CHAPTER 15

### BATTLES OF NADAUN AND GULER

About a year passed in peace. The Guru utilized this interval in creating literature, in instilling a new life and spirit in his followers, and in perfecting his plans for the creation of a nation of Saint-Warriors. But the peace was broken after about a year. He had to engage in a fight once again in 1747 Bk (1690 A.D.).

The Hill-Chiefs had not paid the tribute to the Emperor of Delhi for a number of years. In 1690 A.D. Mian Khan, Governor of Jammu, received orders from Delhi, calling upon him to take active steps to collect the arrears of tribute from the Hill-Chiefs. He sent Alif Khan, a military commander of his to make and enforce the demand. The commander reached Nadaun via Kangra. From there he sent word to Raja Bhim Chand and others that they should either pay the tribute due from them; or get ready for battle. The *Rajas* met to consider the matter. They did not wish to re-shoulder the burden which they had thrown off and which had been off their shoulders for some years. Accepting the advice of Raja Bhim Chand's Chief Minister, they sought the Guru's advice and aid. He counselled them to resist the demand; for if they paid it once, more and more would be demanded afterwards. 'Peace at all cost', said the Guru, 'always ends in war. So pay no tribute to the Turks. Prepare for the fight, I shall be with you.'

With the Guru's assistance the invader was repulsed after a bloody battle at Nadaun in 1690 A.D.<sup>1</sup> The Guru utilized this event for preaching to the chiefs the advantages of offering a united front to the tyrants. He urged them to lay aside all fear and hesitation, and to champion the cause of their country's freedom. If they remained inert or compromised with people who had vowed to annihilate either them or their faith, sorry, indeed, would be the plight of the Hindus in times to come. The *Rajas* were elated with victory and they promised to abide by the Guru's advice, in future.

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1. Raja Bhim Chand abdicated in 1691 A.D. so the battle of Nadaun, in which he did participate, must have been fought some where in 1690 A.D.

The battle of Nadaun had been fought and won by the Guru and the Hill-Chiefs together; but the victory was regarded by all as being that the Guru, After the defeat of Alif Khan, Dilawer Khan, Governor of Lahore, decided to defeat and suppress the Guru and the Hill-Chiefs. He sent his son, Rustam Khan to do this. Rustam Khan decided to deal with the Guru before turning his attention to the Hill-Chiefs. He directed an attack upon Anandpur. The Sikhs prepared to withstand the attack with all their might. Because of the rains, a small tributary stream of the Sutlej, flowing by Anandpur, was in high flood. It acted as a strong obstacle in Rustam Khan's way. Partly because of this obstruction and partly because his army was struck with fear on hearing the loud war-cries of the Sikhs encamped on the other side on the stream. Rustam Khan turned back with out giving battle to the Guru. As this stream helped the Sikhs at this juncture, it was named *Sahaiti Nala*: the Helper Stream.

After that, Dilawar Khan's slave, named Husaini or Husain Khan, boasted that if he given an army, he would plunder the Guru's city and exact tribute from the Hill-Chiefs. He said that he would return either with the full amount of the tribute or with the heads of the recusant chiefs. Accordingly, Dilawar Khan gave him the command of two thousand men. With them he promptly marched towards Anandpur.

Raja Ajmer Chand, who had succeeded Raja Bhim Chand in 1691 A.D., Raja Kirpal Chand of Katoch, and many other Hill-Chiefs forgot all their promises given to, and their treaty with, the Guru. They at once threw their lot with Husaini. They paid tribute to him and proceeded with him towards Anandpur, intent upon attacking, sacking, and destroying it altogether. But before attacking the city, they decided to finish with Raja Gopal of Guler. The latter sent an envoy to the Guru to pray for help. The Guru sent a strong contingent of his choicest warriors under the command of Bhai Sangtia Singh. A bloody battle ensued. Husaini, his two officers named Himmat and Kimmat, Raja Kirpal Chand of Katoch, and some prominent officers of the Hill-Chiefs' army were slain. A great part of the army was also killed. The rest fled in terror. Ajmer Chand saved his life by taking to his heels. Bhai Sangita Singh and seven of his companions were also slain. The battle was fought in 1751-52 Bk or 1694-95 A.D.

Although the Guru had been only a helper in the battles of Nadaun and Guler, yet the victories at both places were considered to be his. They caused a lot of anxiety to the Emperor. He had already heard of the Guru's military preparations and his victory over the Hill-Chiefs at Bhangani. In consequence, he had, on November 20, 1693, issued



orders to his *Faujdar*s that the Guru should be admonished and prevented from assembling his Sikhs.<sup>1</sup> When or in what form the above said admonition was conveyed to the Guru is not clear. But it is recorded, 'This does not seem to have produced much effect. It was soon reported to the emperor that the Sikhs had caused a good deal of disturbance round Lahore and a general order for massacre was issued.'<sup>2</sup>

The news of these repeated disasters to the imperial armies had caused anxiety to the Emperor. He himself was too busy in the Deccan. Therefore, he sent his eldest son, Prince Muazzim, afterwards known as Bahadur Shah, to set right the matters in the Panjab. This was in 1696 A.D. The prince himself took up his position at Lahore. He sent Mirza Beg with a strong force to chastise the Guru and the Hill-Chiefs. The latter were severely punished, but the Guru was left alone. That was owing to the intercession of Bhai Nand Lal, who was a devout Sikh and a secretary to the Prince.

Bhai Nand Lal seems to have brought about some sort of understanding between the Prince and the Guru. On hearing from Bhai Nand Lal about the spiritual greatness and lofty cosmopolitan principles of the Guru, the Prince became a friend and admirer of the Guru. He arranged matters in such a way that, for the time-being at least, the Guru made up his quarrel with the Mughal government. He advised his followers to render unto Caesar what was due unto him. This is clear from the following verse from his *Vachittar Natak* :

'The House of Baba Nanak and that of Babar,  
Both derive their authority from God Himself.  
Recognize the former as supreme in religion,  
And the latter, as supreme in secular affairs.'<sup>3</sup>

This would show, in the first place, that the Guru had no political motives or ambitions. He did not want to exercise control over the secular affairs even of his own Sikhs. He was prepared to recognize the Mughal government's supreme authority in secular affairs even over his own followers, provided that government recognized him as having supreme authority over his followers in religious affairs, that is, if the government agreed to permit full religious freedom to him and his followers. He knew that, if such freedom and authority were guaranteed, he would be able to make his followers so strong that they would be able, ultimately, to put

1. *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* (R.A.S., London), Vol. I, 1677-95. Entry dated November 20, 1693.

2. *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri*, 15 a, quoted by S. R. Sharma in *The Religious Policy of the Mughals* p. 16T.

3. Chapter 9 : xiii.

an end to the Mughals' oppressive bigotry and their campaign of forcible conversion. Secondly, it shows that at that stage at least, the Guru did not want to open hostilities with the Mughal government. He needed time to mature his plans in peace, and to equip his growing community in such a way and to such a degree that it would have no difficulty in vanquishing and liquidating the hated tyrants.

## THE MASTER'S DARBAR IN PEACE

*The Nirmalas*

The next five or six years passed in peace. The Guru devoted his time and attention to improvement of his disciples in mind and body; for he was anxious that his Sikhs should be not mere warriors, but also saints, scholars and men of practical wisdom. He, therefore, requested Pandit Raghunath, who had been engaged by him to give public expositions of Sanskrit books, to teach Sanskrit to some of his Sikhs. But the *Pandit* refused to do so on the ground that they belonged to the lower castes who were forbidden the study of *Vedas* and *Shastras*. Thereupon, the Guru said, "Well *Pandit*, a day will come when Brahmins will consider it an honour to sit at the feet of my Sikhs and learn from them". The Guru was determined to wrest the monopoly of learning from the priestly class. So he sent Ram Singh, Vir Singh, Ganda Singh, Karm Singh, and Sobha Singh, five of his Sikhs, to Benares to study Sanskrit there. They were dressed as Hindu monks and were instructed to behave in that city as other pupils did. The Guru assured them that what others learnt in years, they would learn in months. When, after seven years, they returned to Anandpur, having qualified themselves, the Guru was highly pleased with the diligence and devotion to study which they had exhibited, and blessed them by saying that their names would live. These five taught others. All these Sikh scholars then translated into easy Hindi the *Mahabharta*, the *Puranas*, the *Upanishads*, etc.

A few years later, when the Guru introduced his new baptismal ceremony, all of these scholars took Amrit and became Singhs. Till then the word Nirmal (the Pure) had generally been applied to the Sikhs. In 1756 the Guru selected a new word to name his followers, namely, Khalsa : God's Own or the Pure. Both of these words have the same meaning and were both freely used for a time. Later on, the term '*Nirmal Panth*' came to be applied exclusively to such persons

as the above-mentioned saint-scholars and their pupils, who had taken the *Amrit* but were prone to keep aloof from the wars and struggles of the world. Up till now, the Nirmalas are generally among the most learned among the Sikhs.

### *Bhai Nand Lal*

As stated already, the Muhammadan rulers, in their heart of hearts, did not wish to brook any non-Muslim in their territories. If the infidels were allowed to exist, it was as a necessary evil; for, in spite of all their efforts, it was impossible to convert all the millions over millions of the non-Muslim people. Still men of merit, in any field, were not allowed any respite until they were made to accept Islam or death. Great poets, scholars, spiritual leaders, wrestlers, etc., who distinguished themselves by their talents and attainments, and happened to the infidels, were looked upon as a standing reproach to the sons of Islam. Guru Tegh Bahadur, Guru Arjan, several Sikhs, and many Hindus had fallen victims to this spirit and policy. Many Hindus of fame and learning had been circumcised. Several others had taken refuge with Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhai Nand Lal was one of the latter class of scholars. His father, Shri Chhajju Ram, a great scholar of Persian, was a secretary of the *Nawab* of Gazni in Afghanistan. Bhai Nand Lal was born at Gazni in 1633 A.D. In 1652 A.D., on the death of his father, he came to India and settled at Multan. There he was married to a girl from a devout Sikh family. From her he imbibed a love for Sikhism. He visited Anandpur in 1682 A.D. and formally entered the Sikh fold. Of course, he returned to Multan after that.

Prince Muazzam, afterwards known as Bahadur Shah, heard of Bhai Nand Lal's learning, intelligence, and accomplishments. He invited him to Agra and appointed him his *Munshi* or Secretary. Bhai Nand Lal, thereupon, went to Agra in 1683 A.D. and began to live there.

Bhai Nand Lal was a great scholar of Arabic and Persian, and renowned Persian poet. One day, a discussion arose in Aurangzeb's *darbar* about the proper interpretation of a certain verse in the holy *Quran*. All the state-scholars did their best, but the exposition of none of them satisfied the Emperor, who was himself a diligent student of the Prophet's words. On returning from the *darbar*, the Prince talked of the difficult verse of Bhai Nand Lal, who gave his own interpretation of it. Finding it altogether original and better than any that had been placed before the Emperor, the Prince repeated it to his father on the

following day. Aurangzeb was highly pleased. He wanted to know and honour the scholar. When he learnt that the scholar who had won his pleasure was a Hindu, he gave orders that such an able man should not be allowed to waste his life as a kafir (infidel). That was the way in which he intended to honour Bhai Nand Lal for his learning.

The news leaked out, and Bhai Nand Lal, who knew what choice he would be offered, fled to the only place where such refugees could find an asylum. Giasuddin, a Muslim admirer and friend of Bhai Nand Lal, accompanied him. They reached Anandpur and bowed at the Guru's feet. He blessed them with Nam-Dan. They became attached to the Guru, body and soul. Bhai Nand Lal wrote eight books of exquisite poetry in Persian, praising the Guru and expounding his message of love and good will.<sup>1</sup> They are a standing testimony to the very great and deep love which the Guru inspired in the clean and poetic heart of Bhai Nand Lal. When the Guru evacuated Anandpur, Bhai Nand Lal returned to Multan, where he preached Sikhism till the end of his earthly pilgrimage.

### *The Guru Tests His Sikhs*

Though the Guru's langar (free kitchen) was open to all who came, yet several Sikhs of Anandpur ran their own langars, of course, on a smaller scale than the Guru's, from where food was served to pilgrims and strangers. Bhai Nand Lal, too, kept such a langar. One day the Guru learnt that some of the Sikhs were not observing his rules for free kitchens. He decided to test them. He disguised himself as a *Sadhu*, one evening, and went about the city to each and every langar, asking for food in the Guru's name. Some said that it was not ready yet and that he should come later; some gave him stale bread; some said that no food could be given to anyone until the Guru had been served. When the Guru called at Bhai Nand Lal's door, the Bhai Nand Lal took him in, offered him what was ready, and said: 'Fortunate am I that a Sikh of the Guru's has blessed me so early. Butter, sugar and milk are ready. The pulse is but half-cooked. The flour is yet half-kneaded. If you are in a hurry, they are at your disposal as they are. If you can wait a little, I shall get them ready and serve them to you in the name of my 'Master'. Diwan Nand Chand, and Munshi Sahib Chand, the supposed *Sadhu* was welcomed and served with what was ready. No one recognized him.

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1. They are :- (1) *Zindagi Nama*, (2) *Tausif-o-Sana*, (3) *Ganj Nama*, (4) *Jot Bigas*, (5) *Diwan-i-Goya*, (6) *Insha Dastur*, (7) *Arz-ul Ilfaz*, and (8) *Tankhanama*.

In the morning diwan, on the following days, the Guru narrated his experience of the previous evening. The boasters were put to shame. The Guru said, 'If a hungry person calls at your door and you turn him away, remember that you are turning out not him but me. He who serves the poor and the needy serves me. The mouths of the poor are the Guru's receptacles for all gifts.'<sup>1</sup>

### *Sanyasis and the Guru*

A band of sanyasis once came to the Guru's darbar. Its splendour dazzled them. They had a discussion with him in which they extolled the necessity and benefits of renunciation for a seeker after Truth. They deprecated the magnificence of the Guru's court, and a mayadhari or the mammon worshippers' spirit which was evident in his Sikhs. The Guru told them that his Sikhs practised a higher and harder type of renunciation—namely, renunciation in the midst of joys and pleasures. 'Their souls', said he, 'are wide awake in divine meditation; their bodies consume and enjoy what is needed and what is obtained with honest labour. They share their earnings with others, readily and freely. They are not mayadharis, because maya is that which makes one forget God and get entangled in the meshes of worldly desires and attachments. They are Nirmals or the Pure. So ease yourselves, good *sanyasis* ! All is well with my Sikhs and myself.'

They would not give in easily. They again began to eulogise their freedom from all attachment to the world of possession and pleasure. The Guru invited them to take food and rest. At his bidding, red hot charcoals were placed on the lids of their cocoanut bowls. The lac in the joints melted. They bowls were shaken. And lo ! Gold *mohars* (coins) dropped out and went rolling on the floor. Their hypocrisy was exposed. They felt ashamed and vowed to behave better thenceforth.

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1. '*Garib ka munh, guru ki golak*' were the words of the Guru. That the Sikhs considered it their religious duty to feed and serve all who called at their door is confirmed by the testimony of Munish Sujan Rai of Batala, who began his book, the *Khulasatut Twarikh*, in 1695-6 A.D., and finished it in 1697-98, or a year or two before the introduction of the new Amrit ceremony.

'The faith', writes he, 'which the Sikhs have in their Guru is seldom met with in other religions. They consider it an act of devotion to serve the passers-by in the name of Guru, whose Word they repeat every moment of their life. If a person turns up at their door at midnight and calls in the name of Baba Nanak, though he may be a stranger, or even a thief, robber, or scoundrel, they serve him accord' to his need, as they would serve a brother and friend.'

### *Masands Chastised*

For the propagation of the Faith and for the guidance of congregations in various places, Guru Amar Das had established twenty-two centres for missionary work. They were called *manjis*. Each *manji* was under the charge of the devout Sikh whose duty it was to preach the Guru's religion and keep the local *Sangat* in touch with the centre, i.e. the Guru. He was not a paid worker. All his work was a labour of love. He did not accept any offerings from anyone for his own use. He devoutly and strictly lived up to the Guru's three-fold injunction for his Sikhs—to earn one's living with honest labour, to share one's earnings with the needy, and to meditate on God.

In order to make the system more effective, Guru Ram Das had appointed in each division a *masand* or the Guru's representative. A *Masand* had to perform two-fold duty. He was to preach the Guru's mission in his division or diocese. Secondly, he was to receive, keep in his custody and, convey to the Guru, the voluntary offerings made by the local Sikhs for the Guru's cause, which was the whole community's cause. The *Masands* were essentially devout Sikhs of unimpeachable character. They had to serve as models for the Faithful. They lived on their own honest earnings, and performed the two-fold duty of theirs with scrupulous care and diligence.

Guru Arjan Dev had elaborated the system in order to make it serve the common cause still more effectively. He sent forth orders that every Sikh should set apart *daswandh* or one-tenth of his income for the Guru's fund, and remit it regularly through an accredited *masand*. The *Masands* were required to come regularly every year at Baisakhi with their *sangats*, and to present their collections to the Guru.

In the beginning, these *Masands* were centres of light for the Sikhs of their districts. They were pious and honest. They conveyed faithfully to the Guru all the offerings that were entrusted to them. In later times, however, the lure of gold overcame their zeal for their Guru and the honesty of their purpose. They began to misappropriate to their own use what was meant for the Guru. This ill-gotten wealth brought about a speedy decay in their morals. In the course of time, they became addicted to all the vices to which wealth and position tempt the ordinary frail men. They became profligates and debauchees. As representatives of the Guru and acting in his name, they began to practise manifold villainies and oppression.

The *Masands* had been kept under proper vigilance in the time of the sixth and seventh Gurus. Their corruption and fall started after that time. The eighth Guru died soon after assuming Guruship. Guru Tegh Bahadur was allowed little time to sit in one place and to organize and supervise the *Masands'* work, or to check them from falling into evil ways. He spent years in his tour of eastern India, and then went to Delhi to be martyred there. Consequently, the *Masands* were left free, all this time, to do and live as they pleased. So they went on falling lower and lower.

By the time of Guru Gobind Singh, their life and conduct had become a regular scandal. They led lives of ignoble pleasures and sinful luxury. They would go about from place to place with their concubines, servants, and horses, demanding the hospitality due to the Guru's viceregents. The slightest failure on the part of the faithful to please their kingly palate or their sinful covetous hearts, would make them mad with rage. They would threaten to curse the host and depart in wrath. Very often the Sikhs were put to the necessity of selling their 'wives' ornaments to meet the exhorbitant demands of the *Masands*. All this was, on one side, inflicted in the Guru's name, and was, on the other, gladly and meekly borne for the Guru's sake.

We have seen that *Masands* of Sri Ram Rai had become so headstrong that he had to appeal to the Guru to help his wife against them after he was gone. The Guru had, afterwards, come to know that Sri Ram Rai had been burnt by them while he was in a trance, and that the widow was being put to great trouble and torments. He had gone to Dehra Dun, heard all that they had done, and punished them according to the gravity of their crimes.

Since that day, the Guru had lost all confidence in the *Masands*. It was in order to replace them that he had taken steps to create the new band of preachers, the *Nirmalas* or the *Pure Ones*. But as yet he had not, except in a few isolated cases, which had been properly dealt with, received adverse reports against his own *Masands*. A company of wandering mimes, however, who visited his *darbar*, with their dramatic performance exposed the tyranny which the *Masands* were then inflicting on the faithful Sikhs. The Guru was much impressed and sorely grieved. He was an inveterate enemy of tyranny and high-handedness. He sent forth orders that the *Mansands* should be arrested and brought into his presence, held by the beards. The Guru arraigned them, made them admit their crimes and sins, and then punished them, each according to the gravity of his offence.



One of the *Masands*, Bhai Pheru, was so honoured by the Sikhs of his diocese that none would come forward to catch him by the beard. Still, they wanted to take him to the Guru. Bhai Pheru would not tolerate the slightest disobedience of the Guru's orders. He caught his long beard in his own hands and appeared before the Guru, who smiled to see him and, on knowing the reason of the Bhai's conduct, blessed him, 'Take off thy hands from thy noble and true beard. No arrears are due from thee.'

The Guru's accountant cried out, 'But, my Lord, my books tell a different tale. Not a pie, not a grain, has been received from him.'

The Guru smiled and said, "Everything is all right. He has been sending everything to me direct. He helped the needy, fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and gave shelter to the shelterless. I received all, yes all, that was thus bestowed by him on the poor and the needy. Remember, the poor man's mouth is a receptacle for offering meant for the Guru. Give him a robe of honour. Go, Bhai Pheru of the True Beard (*Sach-dari*), and continue to serve God and Guru in the same way in which you have been doing that so far."

A few more were found to have acted honestly and to have behaved properly. Their conduct was also approved. Realizing, however, that the *Masands* were liable again to fall victims to the same failings, the Guru abolished the institution of *Masands*, and ordered that all Sikhs should bring their offerings direct and personally to the Guru, whenever possible, or send them through local *Sangats* when they visited him.

## CHAPTER 17

### THE GURU'S HOUSEHOLD-I

#### *His Marriages*

Now we come to another matter connected with the Guru's life regarding which absence of authentic historical records has given rise to conflicting statements. It has been stated by some that the Guru had three wives. His detractors have, on the basis of that statement, been busy in measuring him with their own standards of moral values, and insinuating that he was swayed by lust.

Now these critics, in their blind zeal to throw mud on great personages, not belonging to their own sect or community, have built up too wide conclusions from very narrow premises. Three marriages, even if they were proved to be undeniable facts, cannot, in themselves, be taken to be proof of the alleged flaw. His whole life was one of great and steady struggles and sacrifices. It was the most rare and unique example of an idealistic detachment from the world's pleasures. It gives a lie direct to the vilifiers who would measure the infinite with their finite standards.

There is, besides these hostile critics, another set of sceptics who feel a good deal of difficulty in reconciling the Guru's conduct with their modern notions of social morality and marriage. Persons of this class are invited to study calmly and dispassionately, the following pages and see if their scruples have any firm basis or justification.

First, there is, as stated already, a deplorable lack of authentic records about the Guru's life. The accounts given by contemporary Muhammadan writers are prejudiced and openly malacious. Even these do not ascribe three marriages to the Guru. The writers who state that he had three wives state a large number of other things which no one can regard as facts of history, and which discredit their writings as full of inventions of their own fertile brains.

Secondly, there is a great conflict in the dates of the first two marriages as given by different writers. Some writers say that the first marriage took place on the 15th of *Jeth*, *Samvat* 1730, i.e. when he

was only seven years old, and the second, in 1741. Another set, including Macauliffe, say that the first marriage took place on 23rd of *Har, Samvat* 1734; and the second, a year or two later. What is most probable is that the betrothal ceremony took place in 1730 and the marriage, four or five years later. Both the occasions having been celebrated with great pomp, they became confused in later-day popular narrations, and each came to be regarded as an occasion of marriage.

Thirdly, there is a tradition that Jitoji was the original name of the Guru's wife; and that, in accordance with the usual practice which persists to this day, she was, after her marriage, re-named Sundri. As is usual even now in all such cases, some, especially those connected with her father's family or hailing from that side, continued calling her Jito, while others called her Sundri. In after times, the two names occurring in popular accounts came to suggest two different persons, and it was inferred that the Guru had two wives. Macauliffe also mentions this tradition which was brought to his notice by a 'learned Sikh'.

Fourthly, the reason for the second marriage given by one set of writers, the other being silent on the point, is that the first marriage had, in the past eleven years, yielded no issue. The Guru's mother, in her anxiety to have grandsons, and despairing of having them from Jito's womb, prevailed upon him to marry another wife. If we look at the dates, we find that this set places the second marriage in 174 Bk., or in the Guru's 18th year. Now that is not an age at which any body may become despaired of having sons. We should also remember that the Guru's mother had given birth to her only son when her husband, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was over forty five years old. It is inconceivable, therefore, that she should have come to be despaired of having grandsons when his son was yet in his teens.

Fifthly, the dates of birth of Guru's four sons also lead to the same inference. These are :-

1. Baba Ajit Singh, borne by 'Sundri Ji' Magh 1743
2. Baba Jujhar Singh, borne by 'Jito Ji' Chet 1747
3. Baba Zorawar Singh, borne by 'Jito Ji' Magh 1753
4. Baba Fateh Singh, borne by 'Jito Ji' Chet 1755

The fairly long interval between the birth of the first and second sons, and the fact that the first and third sons were born in *Magh*, and the second and fourth in *Chet*, make it probable that Ajit Singh was borne by the mother who bore the other three.

Sixthly, another tradition has it that the second marriage took place after Mata Jito Ji had died. All the four sons are ascribed to Jito Ji. If this tradition were accepted as true, there could be nothing in the

second marriage which could possibly trouble the scruples of the present-day social moralists.

The Guru's so-called third marriage was performed with Mata Sahib Devi, daughter of Bhai Ramu, Bassi Khatri of Rohtas in the district of Jehlam, now in Pakistan, on Baisakh 18, 1757 Bk. But this was no marriage in the ordinary sense of the term. The Guru created the Khalsa on the Baisakhi day of 1756 Bk (March 30, 1699 A.D.). A good time before that historic event the Guru had been absorbed in thinking and planning about this great undertaking. After the event, he was busier still in organizing and strengthening the new-born Khalsa, and in making preparations for the liberation of his country. More than a year before the creation of the Khalsa, he had adopted a completely continent life; for he wanted to devote all his time and energies, his body and soul, to the heaven ordained task. This vow of *Brahmcharya* he continued to observe even afterwards. In view of this, where was the need for another marriage about a year after the creation of the Khalsa ?

But a marriage did take place, all the same. What happened was this. On the occasion of the annual Baisakhi gathering of 1757 Bk, Bhai Ramu of Rohtas came to Anandpur to pay homage to the Guru. He brought with him his youthful daughter in a *palki* (palanquin) and said to the Guru: "O Guru, since her infancy Sahib Devi has been betrothed by us to you. Be pleased to accept her as a your wife and servant." On the Guru's refusal, the Sikh said, "Having been dedicated to you since her very birth, she is called *Mata* or mother by all Sikhs. No one would wed her now. There is thus no place for her except at your feet."

The Guru then said, 'Well, let her then be the mother of my Khalsa and serve them with a motherly affection. Let her pass her days in such service and in meditation on God's name. If she agrees, she is welcome to stay, and you may leave her here.'

She readily agreed to remain a virgin all her life. The Guru agreed to take her into wedlock, and did so. She is always referred to as *kanwara dola* (virgin wife) in Sikh and non-Sikh literature.

She remained with the Guru. To serve the Guru and his Sikhs, and to keep absorbed in divine meditation, such was her ambition. So great was her devotion to the Guru that she would not take food until she had seen him and performed some act of personal service. One day the Guru asked her if she had any desire in her heart which longed for fulfilment. She replied that the only desire she had was for a son. The Guru replied, 'Cheer up then ! I have given thee a son that will live for ever. I have put the whole Khalsa in thy lap as thy son.'

The view that the alleged second marriage with Sundri Ji never took place, that the union with Sahib Devan was altogether of a unique and higher type in which souls and not bodies enjoyed each other's embraces, is also supported by Dr Gokal Chand Narang. He writes : 'The Guru attached a great importance to a continent life which he had himself adopted before entering upon his warlike career. His second wife, Sahib Devan, showed an anxiety for a child but the Guru consoled her by saying that the whole Khalsa would be as a child unto her. Every convert accordingly is told at the time of baptism that henceforth his caste will be Sodhi, (Guru) Gobind (Singh)'s caste, and his parents (Guru) Gobind Singh and (Mata) Sahib Devan.'"It should be noted that Sahib Devan is called here the 'second' and not the 'third' wife.'

So, the union with Mata Sahib Devan was not a physical union at all. It was a knitting of two souls in bonds of divine love. Up to this day, on the occasion of their baptism, the Sikhs are enjoined to give Anandpur as the name of their village, Guru Gobind Singh as that of their father, and Mata Sahib Devan as that of their mother. Sahib Devan is, therefore, the Mother of the Khalsa.

On her taking *Amrit*, her name became Sahib Kaur. When the Guru evacuated Anandpur in December 1704, she got separated from him in the confusion which resulted from the Mughals' and the Hill-Chiefs' treacherous attack near the Sirsa stream. She and Mata Sundri stayed for a night at Ropar and, on the following day, the two proceeded to Delhi in the company of a devoted Sikh.

She joined the Guru at Damdama Sahib. Still later, when he decided to proceed towards the Deccan, she prayed for permission to accompany him and serve him to the end in accordance with her vow. She arrived at Nander with him and began to pass her days in serving her lord and meditating on God.

When the Guru felt that the time of his return to his Eternal Abode was at hand, he prevailed upon her to return to Delhi. He gave her five weapons which had belonged to his grandfather, Guru Hargobind Sahib.

She lived in Delhi with Mata Sundri and died earlier than the latter. Her body was cremated near Guru Hari Krishan's shrine, called Bala Sahib.

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1. Dr Gokal Chand Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*.

## CHAPTER 18

### THE GURU'S HOUSEHOLD—II

#### HIS SONS : SAHIBZADAS

As said already, Guru Gobind Singh had four sons. Out of respect they are called *Sahibzadas*, and the epithet 'Baba' is attached to their names.

#### *Baba Ajit Singh*

The Guru's eldest son, Baba Ajit<sup>1</sup> Singh, was born on *Magh Sudi 4* (23rd of *Magh*), 1743 Bk., corresponding to January 7, 1687 A.D. From childhood he obtained the sort of training that befitted the saint-soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh. He acquired wonderful proficiency in the use of all weapons, especially the bow and the arrow. He was also an excellent swordsman.

He was a strong and brave warrior. He began to take part in the Guru's wars very early in life and performed astonishing deeds of valour on several occasions. No danger could ever daunt him or deter him from his path of duty. Once a Brahmin came to the Guru and complained that his newly wedded wife had been snatched away from him by *Pathans* of Bassi, near Hoshiarpur. The Guru desired Baba Ajit Singh to help the woe-afflicted Brahmin. Baba Ajit Singh took with him a band of brave Sikhs, marched upon Bassi during the night and returned to Anandpur on the following morning with the Brahmin's wife and the offending *Pathans*. She was restored to the Brahmin and the *Pathans* were punished suitably.

When the Guru evacuated Anandpur on the night between the 20th and 21st of December, 1704, and was treacherously attacked by the Mughals and the Hill-Chiefs, Baba Ajit Singh, with a party of Sikhs, held up the enemy, while the rest were crossing the rain flooded Sirsa. When all had crossed the turbulent stream, he and his companions followed and joined the main party.

Baba Ajit Singh accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur Sahib. There he died a Saint-soldier's death on Poh 8, 1761 Bk./ December 22, 1704 A.D.

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1. Ajit' means 'unconquerable'.

### *Baba Jujhar Singh*

Guru Gobind Singh's second son, Baba Jujhar<sup>1</sup> Singh, was born to Mata Jito in *Cher* 1747 or March 1689. He, too, got the same training as his elder brother. Like him, he accompanied the Guru to Chamkaur Sahib, where he died fighting against heavy odds, immediately after his elder brother had done so, on December 22, 1704 A.D.

### *Baba Zorawar Singh*

Guru Gobind Singh's third son, Baba Zorawar<sup>2</sup> Singh, was born to Mata Jito in November 1696. When the Guru and his party were treacherously attacked on the bank of Sirsa stream, Baba Zorawar Singh, along with his younger brother, Baba Fateh Singh, and their aged grandmother, got separated from the Guru. They were betrayed by a Brahmin and made over to the *Nawab* of Sarhind. On the two brother's refusal to embrace Islam, they were bricked alive and then beheaded on December 27, 1704. Baba Zorawar Singh was hardly eight years of age at that time.<sup>3</sup>

### *Baba Fateh Singh*

Guru Gobind Singh's fourth son, Baba Fateh<sup>4</sup> Singh, was born to Mata Jito in February 1699. As said above, he was bricked alive and then beheaded along with his elder brother on December 27, 1704. He was then less than six years of age.

Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib marks the site where the two *Sahibzadas* achieved victory over death, that is, where they were bricked and beheaded for refusing to renounce their religion and embrace Islam.

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1. 'Jujhar' means 'fighter, warrior'.

2. Zorawar' means 'mighty, powerful'.

3. There is a difference of opinion about the names of the Guru's sons who were killed at Chamkaur and those executed at Sarhind. But the consensus of opinion is in favour of what has been said above, i.e. Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh, the elder sons, who could accompany the Guru to the battlefied, died fighting at Chamkaur on December 22, 1704, while Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, the younger ones, were taken to Sarhind, where they were tortured and bricked up alive, and, finally, beheaded on December 22, 1704.

4. The word 'fateh' means 'victory'.

## CHAPTER 19

### THE BUBBLE OF DURGA WORSHIP

Since time immemorial, India had been the home of idolatry. Countless gods and goddesses had been set up as objects of worship. Their number was as large as that of their votaries. The faith and thoughts of most people were confined to these inferior deities and did not go beyond them to the Lord of them all. Believers in gods and goddesses ascribed all their ills and woes to the wrath of their deities, and the only remedy which they could think of to ameliorate their hapless condition was to appease their gods by offering worship and suitable offerings. In this way their belief in gods, pre-destination, and fatality, had destroyed their self-confidence. They had, therefore, been easily enslaved by those who believed in the might of their own arms. Could there be a sorry spectacle in history than that of countless worshippers of Somnath crying and bewailing before their idols, while the soldiers of Mahamud, far less in number, were not only ruthlessly murdering the people, plundering their homes, outraging their wives and daughters, and enslaving their women and children, but were also desecrating and breaking the very idols at whose feet they sought help and protection? They had forgotten the simple yet eternal truth that God helps those who help themselves.

Guru Nanak had taught the futility and senselessness of praying and paying homage to the servants when the Master Himself was ever accessible. The later Gurus had done all they could to drive home the same lesson. But the public mind is essentially conservative in such matters and hugs the very chains that bind it. It was not easy to wean the people from their ages long superstitions. This belief was still strong in the time of Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikhs had shaken it off, but their Hindu neighbours were still sunk in the mire. After the Guru had embodied himself in the Word and ceased to be visible in the human form, the Sikhs caught again the contagion of polytheism and idolatry from which the Gurus had rescued them. The result has been that, with a view to justifying their own degradation in religious belief, and in



order to please their numerous and powerful neighbours, later Sikhs have ascribed similar beliefs and practices to the Gurus. They have done so even at the risk of grave inconsistency and self-contradiction. While in one place they represent the Gurus as inveterate and irreconcilable opponents of any belief in god and goddesses, in another they represent them as paying homage to the same deities.

Nearly all the Gurus have had their names associated with one or other practice or belief disowned and denounced by them; but Guru Gobind Singh has suffered the most from such short-sighted misrepresentation. Among other things, he is represented as a great devotee and adorer of goddess Durga. He is said to have performed a *havan* or *havan*, or made burnt offerings to her, in order to please her and make her appear to him in person.

However, although all these writers agree that the *havan* was completed towards the end of March 1699, yet they differ widely as regards all essential particulars about the ceremony, e.g., the date of its beginning, duration, site, object, result, etc. The duration of the *havan*, according to some, was ten months; according to others it was eleven months; still other aver that it went on for three years; and some maintain that it lasted four years. As regards its site, some say that it was performed on the top of the Naina Devi hill; while others maintain that it was started at the foot of the hill, but after two years, its site was shifted to the top of the hill.

As regards the Guru's object in undertaking all the expense, botheration, and ordeal involved in the *havan*, there is no unanimity or near unanimity among the writers. Some say that the Muslims used to waylay and rob the Sikhs. Therefore, the Guru decided to instil the warriors' or martial spirit in his followers, so that they should be able to fight the aggressors in self-defence. To achieve that object, he decided to win the blessings of goddess Durga by performing a *havan*. Others say that some Brahmins represented to the Guru that the prowess and valour exhibited by Bhim Sain and other heroes of the *Mahabhartā*, were due to their having obtained the blessings of Durga Bhawani. The Guru is said to have readily believed all this, and to have decided 'to secure for himself the aid of the goddess'<sup>1</sup> by performing the requisite *havan*, so that he might be successful in founding a nation of Saint-soldiers, and in winning battles with their help. Another set of writers, like Giani Gian Singh and Macauliffe, say that the Guru did not believe the Brahmins' assertion about the goddess and the heroes of the *Mahabhartā*; he refused to believe that any god or goddess could bestow

1. S.M. Latif, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

any such gifts. But, as the Brahmins had been able to win over some Sikhs to their view, the Guru decided to expose the hollowness of their belief, and, thereby, to inculcate a spirit of self-reliance in the people in general, and in his Sikhs in particular. Still others say that the Brahmins declared that the goddess could not be made manifest in the *Kalyuga*. In order to show that they were wrong, and in order to demonstrate his own powers, the Guru ordered that a *havan* be performed with all the requisite formalities.

Again, some writers do not give the names of the *Pandits* who actually performed the *havan*. Those who give such names are far from unanimous. Some who give such names maintain that *Pandit* Kesho of Benaras was their leader. Others say nothing about that. There is also a complete lack of unanimity about the *mantras* which were read during the performance of the *havan*.

It is said that rupees two lakhs and a half had to be spent on the *havan* material, while an equal sum had to be paid to the *Pandits* as their fee. The feeding expenses of the *Pandits* and their assistants are said to have aggregated to a like amount. The Guru, it is said, was required to undergo several severe austerities during the performance of the *havan*. Consequently, it is said, he became extremely weak and lean.

Now, what, according to these writers, was the result of all this expense, ordeal, and expenditure of time ? Some say that all was a huge waste and utter failure; for the goddess did not appear. Others say that she did appear, but they differ widely as regards her form or appearance. Some say that she had eight arms and held a different weapon in each of her eight hands. She, they say, was dazzlingly bright like the mid-day sun. Others are altogether silent about her form or appearance. They say that she shone like the sun.

How did the Guru behave on seeing the goddess ? There are widely different statements about that, too. Some say that he was so dazzled and overcome that he shut his eyes and stood pale and motionless out of benumbing fear. Others declare that, while all the priests fainted at the sight of the goddess, the Guru stood unaffected and undaunted; nay, he was delighted to behold her.

The various writers also differ as regards the offering which was demanded by and given to the goddess on her appearance. Some say that she asked for none, and the Guru did not offer any. Some say that she demanded the head of his eldest son; but the Guru begged and implored her to spare his son, and in instead, to accept another person's head. She is said to have accepted the head of Bhai Sangtia Singh as

well as some he-buffaloes. Some say that she demanded blood, and the Guru gave her a few drops by making an incision on his little finger. Still others say that others say that Bhai Sangtia Singh's hands were cut off and offered to her<sup>1</sup>. Yet others aver that when the Guru refused her demand for his eldest son's head, she was displeased and grew angry. She cursed him in consequence.

Again, the writers differ widely as regards the gift which the goddess gave to the Guru on becoming manifest. Some say that it was a table-knife, some maintain that it was a short dagger, and others declare that it was a sword. Some say that before disappearing, she had placed a *khanda* (two-edged sword) in the firepit, and it was taken out when the fire had cooled. Others say that she disappeared after granting him blessing and a boon, and giving him a sword at his special request.

As said already, a set of writers declare that the Guru undertook to perform a *havan* in order to expose the hollowness of the claims made by the Brahmins regarding the goddess, and to wean away his followers from believing in, and paying homage to, gods and goddesses. They say that when, even after every detail of the ceremony had been completely performed in accordance with the wishes of the *Pandits*, the goddess still delayed her appearance and the Brahmins could not carry on the imposture and longer, they told the Guru that a holy person's head must be offered to the goddess before she could be made to show herself. They had one of the Guru's sons in view. They felt sure that the Guru would not agree to sacrifice his son, and they would, then, have excuse for the non-appearance of goddess.

The Guru, however, turned the tables on the Brahmins by saying, 'Who can be holier than the presiding *Pandit* here ? Let us sacrifice him so that I may get invincible powers using which I may liberate my country and crown my people.' Saying this, he is said to have placed his hand on the hilt of his sword. *Pandit Kesho* is represented to have been drenched with perspiration at the thought of his impending fate. He begged permission to answer the call of nature. He went and never returned. The other Brahmins followed suit, one by one.

When all had gone, the Guru is said to have ordered that the rest of the *hom* material be thrown into the *hom* pit, all at once. A great flame shot towards the sky, and was seen by the people far and near.

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1. In this connection it should be remembered that, according to the Guru's statement given in the *Bachittar Natak*, Bhai Sangtia Singh had been killed in the battle of Bhangani about ten years before, i.e. in April 1689. How could his head or hands be offered to the goddess in March 1699 ?

They thought that in that flash the goddess had appeared. The Guru brandished his naked sword aloft and cried aloud, 'O ye misguided people, the true goddess is this. This can work miracles. This will end your miseries. This will give you power and liberty in your land and peace in your homes. Come, therefore, and be its devotees.'

After this ceremony the Guru is said by the first set of these writers to have founded the Khalsa in obedience to, and in accordance with, the orders received from the goddess. In one place it is written, 'The Guru venerated Durga Bhavani, the goddess of courage, by whom he was directed to unloose his hair and draw his sword. The Guru, in consequence, vowed he would preserve his hair, as consecrated to that divinity, and directed his followers to do the same.'<sup>1</sup> The writer mentions and then forgets that the Guru had let his hair grow before the goddess 'directed him to unloose' it. What was the meaning of his vow to preserve what he had already preserved for the past thirty and odd years of his life, and what had been held sacred by all his predecessors?

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1. Latif, *History of the Panjab*, p. 264.

## THE BUBBLE PRICKED-I

### *His Views and Writings*

We see that there are different and conflicting accounts of an event which is said to have preceded the 'birth of the Khalsa'. It is necessary to find out the actual facts. Now, it is an accepted principle of historical research that if more than one conflicting version of an event in the life of a historical personage is current, the historian ought to weigh each of these versions with that personage's general views on allied topics, and with the tenor of the rest of his life. He should reject those which are in violent conflict with the accepted views of the subject of study and do not otherwise fit in with the rest of his life, unless, of course, there are irrefutable historical proofs in favour of another, or there are unanswerable arguments to prove that the personage had special compelling reasons to act in contravention of his general views, and to do something inconsistent with the general career of his life. If the historian is a votary of truth, and has an earnest desire to winnow out what is true from what has erroneously got mingled others with it, he should weigh all evidence with the impartiality of a judge and then decide in favour of one or other of the versions, or even reject them all as mere conjectures.

Next, we should give due weight to any autobiographic pieces left by him, unless it is proved, beyond all doubts, that he was given to mis-statements about himself.

Then we should look into the works of some eye-witnesses, if available, and compare their account with the conclusions deduced from the above two sources. Of course, in studying the works of the contemporaries, due regard should be paid to the opportunities that they had or that they lacked of correct and intimate knowledge of the subject in dispute, and also to their prejudices and pet notions.

Let us consider the alleged incident of Durga worship in the manner indicated above.<sup>1</sup>

### *Testimony of the Guru's Views*

All historians, even those who declare him to have been a worshipper of Durga Bhawani, agree that the Guru advocated the worship of One God. A few extracts from his compositions given below will speak for themselves :-

(i) 'I speak the truth, hear ye all. Only they who love Him do find the Lord. Some worship stones and put them on their heads, some suspend *lingams* from their necks;

Some see God in the south, and some bend their heads to the west.

Some fools worship idols and images, some are busy in worshipping the dead;

The whole world is entangled in false ceremonials, and hath not obtained the true knowledge of God.'

(ii) 'Why performest thou this penance to gods ? It is altogether futile.

How can they protect thee when they could not save themselves from the stroke of Death ?

They are suspended in the fiery pit of terrible wrath, and will suspend Thee along with themselves in the same place;

Think, O think, even now in thy heart, O fool; without the favour of God naught can avail thee'.

(iii) 'He who night and day meditateth on the Enduring, Unconquerable Light, who harboureth not in his mind any but the one God: He who hath in his heart a perfect love for God and a thorough trust in Him, and who believeth not even by mistakes in fasts, toms, places of cremation, or sepulchres;

He who doth not recognize any but the one God the putteth not his confidence in pilgrimages, alms on auspicious occasions, non-destruction of life made into a fetish, penances, and austerities;

And he in whose heart the light of the Perfect One shineth for aye, and flickereth not, he alone is to be recognized as a pure member of the Khalsa.'

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1. The learned reviewer of the *Calcutta Review* in his very appreciative review of the first edition of this book complained that I had brought in 'evidence of a negative character to fortify the contention that the story is a mere invention.' He wanted some 'stronger positive proofs.'

I wonder what he means. To prove that an event being associated with a historical personage did not take place in his life-time, only negative proofs can be adduced. All that we can and need do is to show that the alleged event does not find mention in such and such contemporary of easy account & of the life and doings of that personage. We cannot expect from those early writers a 'positive' contradiction of an assertion which came to be associated with their subject a long time afterwards. then we have to find out what authority is quoted by the writer who is the first to introduce that event in his account. If we find that he had no adequate authority, we must reject his assertion.

This had been done. Nothing more 'positive' is possible or even necessary.

In all his writings, as in those of his predecessor, there is not a line or verse which could be construed to advocate or even countenance any homage to gods. Again and again gods and *avtars* are declared to be incapable of fully knowing to Lord or rendering any help to human beings. Prayers are sent up direct to the feet of the Almighty Father, without the intermediation or recommendation of any god or goddess. The Guru clearly and strongly denounced all worship of and offerings to gods and goddesses, and forbade any homage being paid to any such deities. How could he, then, have acted against the declared tenets of his Faith and have, all the same, continued to command the respect and unquestioning obedience of all people, both learned and the simple? We should remember that among his followers he had persons imbued with a daring independence of spirit. As we shall see, once in his later life, he saluted the shrine of a saint with his arrow. He was at once interrupted by his Sikhs and asked to explain why he had violated his own and his predecessors' teachings.

### *Evidence of His Writings*

Our task is further facilitated by the existence of a lot of the Guru's own writings. As stated already, he translated several epics and classics into magnificent Hindi poetry. His object in doing this, as stated by him again and again, was to hold up before the people the magnificent, heroic deeds of their glorious ancestors, and to produce in them a passion to emulate them.<sup>1</sup> All these are, however, to be treated as translations of other's works, and not as his own productions embodying his own views and convictions.

These stories of 'the doings of the mythical heroes of the *Puranas*' are apt to cause some misconception in the minds of the simple and the ignorant, and to lend themselves to be abused by jealous opponents and detractors for creating misunderstandings. In stories like *Bhagauti ki Var (Ode to Bhagauti)*, words like *Bhagauti* and *Bhawani* are used in more than one sense. While *Bhagauti* is the name of goddess *Durga*, it is often used by the Guru for God Himself. In the very beginning of the above-said Ode to *Bhagauti*, there is an invocation to God addressed as *Bhagauti*—'May *Bhagauti* be my helper', and then, 'Having first remembered *Bhagauti*, meditate on Nanak.'

1. 'The main theme, however, of the whole collection is either the glorification of God to the exclusion of all other objects of worship, or the glorification of arms with the object of encouraging the Sikhs to fight bravely. The accounts of the doings of the mythical heroes of the *Puranas* have all one and the same purpose, the incitement to war and the eulogy of strength and courage.' Dr. G.C. Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*.

This use of *Bhagauti* by the Guru is cited by some in support of their contention that he was a votary of Durga; for *Bhagauti* is one of the names of that goddess. But it should be remembered that the word '*Bhagauti*' occurs a number of times in *Guru Granth Sahib* also, where it always stands for God. Even in this *Ode to Bhagauti*, *Bhagauti* is described as the Creator of Durga, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, Rama, Krishna, etc. Therefore this word cannot stand for *Durga*. In the story to goddess Chandi, the goddess is not even once named '*Bhagauti*'. In the Guru's original writings the word '*Bhagauti*' stands either for 'sword' or 'God'; and God is often addressed as the 'Sword'. In the *Ode to Bhagauti*, also, the word is nowhere used for Durga, but it is used somewhere for the sword and in some places for God. The context always shows clearly in which of the two senses the word is being used.

Moreover, the stories are to be treated as means of infusing martial spirit in the readers. The Guru himself has left no room for any doubt on that score. At the beginning or the end of every one of these pieces, he gives his own views regarding the hero or the heroine of each story, and states his object in having undertaken the translation. For example, at the end of *Chandi Chritra*<sup>1</sup> he says that his object in translation the piece is that 'hearing it the cowards and the weak may fight with firmness in the field of battle.' At the end of the *Krishna Avtar* he says that in undertaking the translation, he had no desire but to promote the 'joy and elation of war.' In the same piece he writes :-

'I do not, at the outset, propitiate Ganesh,  
Never do I meditate on Krishna or Vishnu;  
I've heard of them but I recognize them not;  
It is only God's feet that I love.'

Again, in the *Parasnath Avtar* he writes :

'O thoughtless fool, why dost thou forget thy Maker ?  
O man, why dost thou not remember God ?  
O thoughtless brute, engulfed in delusion and worldly love, they in whom  
thou puttest trust,  
Rama, Krishna, and the prophet, whose name thou utterest ever on rising.  
Where are they now in the world ? Why then dost thou sing their praises ?  
Why acknowledgest thou not Him who exists and ever shall exist?  
Why shouldst thou worship stones ?  
What good will they do thee ?

1. '*Chandi Chritra* or the "Exploits of Chandi" 'the goddess, (was) translated from the Sanskrit, according to some, by Guru Gobind Singh himself. The wars of the goddess with demons are described in epic verse of a kind which had no parallel in the Hindi literature.'



Worship Him by Whose worship thy work shall be accomplished.  
And by uttering Whose name all thy desires shall be fulfilled.<sup>1</sup>

Such quotations could be given in any number. But those cited above should be enough to show that the Guru advocated the worship of One God. This worship meant a filling of body, heart, and soul with the love of Him and His creatures; it meant the cultivation of an attitude and the development of a personality, rather than the performance of any mechanical acts. At the end of the *Rama Avtar* he writes :

'Since I have taken shelter at Thy feet I have paid no heed to any other, Ram, Rahim, the *Purans*, and the *Quran* speak of various systems, but none of them do I accept;  
The *Simrities*, the *Shastras*, and the *Vedas*, all expound different doctrines, but I accept none of them;  
O holy God, all that I have said hath not been spoken by me; but by Thy favour, it hath been said by Thee.'

In a translation which was completed in *Samvat* 1753, when the *havan* is said by some to have been in progress, the Guru exposes and ridicules the clever tactics employed by *Pandits* who used to claim that they could help laymen to make a particular god or goddess become manifest and grant all their wishes. 'The *Pandits*', says the Guru, 'would go to a simple-minded rich man and tell him, "If you want a ready fulfilment of all your wishes, we can help you. We shall give you a *mantra*. If you repeat it in the proper way, such and such god will appear to you and grant all your wishes." They told a *mantra*, of course, after having filled their pockets. When no god appeared even after their dupe had followed their instructions for a pretty long time, the *Pandits* would come and say, "Surely, you must have made some error displeasing to the god. Otherwise, our *mantra* could have never failed. Now you must propitiate the god by due ceremonies and charities. When that is done, we shall give you a *mantra* to make manifest even a more powerful god." In this way the ruse was continued until the dupe was rendered penniless. Thereupon, the *Pandits* went away in search of other victims.'

At the end of the composition the Guru expresses his own views on this matter in a couplet which may be translated as follows, "If

1. In the *Akal Ustat*, after enumerating various gods and goddess, the different rites and penances performed by their worshippers to win their pleasure, and the divers other mechanical acts like the reading of texts, the performance of *hom* and sacrifice, etc., the Guru says :—

'Know that all these performances are futile,  
All these "religious" practice are of no avail;

Without the love of, and a reliance on, God and His name, consider all such practices to be mere superstition.'

there were any such power in *mantras* and *jantras*, those who knew them would sit like kings in their own palaces, Why should they be begging from door to door ?

We should remember that all this was written when the alleged *havan* was either going on or was to begin shortly. Could the Guru, in spite of such clear and strong views, have let himself become a dupe of those whom he was all time ridiculing and exposing as cheats? If, on the other hand, he had been roped in by the cheats, could he have ridiculed himself and them as he actually did ?

### *His Autobiography*

Secondly, the *Vachittar Natak* describes in spirited verse the chief events of the Guru's life. The accounts given by him do not contain errors of facts. If he had worshipped the goddess Durga in the alleged manner and derived power from her, or had exposed the people's belief in her powers, at a considerable expense, it is not conceivable that he could have omitted to mention in his autobiography such an epoch-making event of his life.

The Guru's motive in making her manifest is stated to have been to seek her aid in infusing a warlike spirit in his Sikhs. A little examination will show that this hypothesis is altogether untenable. The warlike spirit had been infused in the Sikhs by Guru Hargobind, who had, on four occasions, led them successfully against the attacking imperial armies. Even Guru Gobind Singh himself had fought the battles of Bhangani, Nadaun, and Guler, in which confectioners, cobblers, ploughmen, and an *Udasi Mahant*, had been enabled to vanquish warriors of name and fame—Rajputs, Pathans, and Mughals. What need, then, had he to call in the aid of Durga or any other of that class whom he had always denounced as impotent and insignificant?

Again, in all his writings he never invokes the aid of Durga, nor does he thank her after achieving victories. On the contrary, at every step he prays for help to the Almighty, the Deathless, the All-Steel, the Creator, and the Peerless Lord of the Universe. At the conclusion of his description of each of his battles, he raises a voice of thanks-giving to the Lord-Creator of the Universe.

It has been alleged that it was the goddess who directed the Guru to found the Khalsa nation. But the Guru himself tells a different tale. He says that his own unembodied soul reposed in bliss in the Father's Mansion, wrapt in meditation and His life-giving *Darshan*. But God called him forth, and much against his will, for he did not wish to

leave the Divine presence, sent him into this world, charged with the following mission :

God : 'I install and cherish thee as my own son;  
And create thee to form and spread the *Panth*,  
Go and spread the law of *Dharma* in every place,  
And restrain people from senseless acts.'

The Guru : 'I stood, clasped my hand, bowed my head, and prayed, "If thou vouchsafest Thy assistance to me, then will Thy religion prevail in the world.'

If he had been a devotee of Durga and had received orders from her to found the Khalsa, he would certainly have mentioned the fact somewhere in his writings, particularly in some of those which were being composed in those very days when the worship of Durga is alleged to have been going on.

#### *Further Evidence from the Ram Avtar*

Thirdly, there is another fact considering. The Guru himself gives the date of the completion of the translation of the *Ram Avtar* in the following words :

'On the first day of the dark half of *Har*, a day of pleasure to me,  
In the *Samavat* year seventeen hundred and fifty-five,  
At the base of the lofty Naina Devi, on the margin of the Sutlej waters,  
Through God's help I finished the history of Ram.'

Now, all the writers who have described the *hom* and Durga worship agree that the *hom* was in progress in the Samvant year 1755. The words which the Guru wrote at the conclusion of the *Ram Avtar* have been given on an earlier page (112). Just imagine a person spending lakhs of rupees and years of his precious time, and undergoing hard and irksome ritual to worship a goddess, and, just at the same time, declaring that he did not put any faith in any such deity. His grave inconsistency, the huge distance between his words and deeds, would have startled the people, and totally shaken their faith in his sincerity. If, for some special reasons, however, he had thought it fit to worship the goddess, he was not the man to hesitate from putting it down in his autobiography. On the contrary, he should have taken special pains to justify this violent departure from the practice and precept of himself and his predecessors.

#### *The Zafarnama*

Lastly, on a later date, he wrote a letter, *Zafarnama*, to Aurangzeb in

which he accused him of having one thing on the lips and quite another in the heart. Could Guru Gobind Singh have exhibited the same weakness of character, and yet have written such words to the Emperor? In the same letter he gives the cause of his quarrel with the Hill-Chiefs, viz. 'they were idol-worshippers and I an idol-breaker.' Could a devotee of Durga, Kalka<sup>1</sup>, or Naina Devi have written thus?

Thus all his writings make it absolutely clear that he was opposed to the worship of gods and goddess. Hence it is incredible that he should have acted against his cardinal principles and worshipped Durga.

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1. There is in the *Vachittar Natiak* a passage a wrong interpretation of which might have given rise to the idea of the worship of Durga or Kalka by the Guru. Speaking of his pre-natal existence, he refers to God as *Maha Kal Kalika*, Whom he worshipped for long until he attained union with Him, and the two, i.e., the worshipper and the worshipped, became one. The word *Kalka* occurring there seems to have been taken by some writer to refer to the goddess *Kalka* or Durga, and the worship to have taken place in the Guru's postnatal life on this earth as Guru Gobind Singh. That writer seems to have thought that the expression *Maha Kal Kalka* stands for two personalities, *Maha Kal*, for God, and *Kalka*, for the goddess. But he forgot to consider that in that case there would have been three personalities in the picture—the worshipper, the goddess, and God. When speaking of the union, the Guru should then have said that the three became one. His saying, however, that the two became one, shows clearly that *Maha Kal Kalka* stands for personality. The context leaves no room for doubt that such personality is no other than God.

## CHAPTER 21

### THE BUBBLE PRICKED-II

#### CONTEMPORARY EVIDENCE

##### *Bhai Nand Lal*

He was a devout Sikh and ardent adorer of the Guru. He was a great scholar of Arabic and Persian, and a distinguished Persian poet. He was with the Guru when the goddess is said to have been worshipped. He wrote several works on Sikh religion. Nowhere in them has he given the slightest hint about the worship of the goddess. Such a unique event in the Guru's life, as the hom is alleged to have been, could not and should not have been omitted. Bhai Nand Lal used to read his poems before Guru Gobind Singh. In one of these he says, 'Thousands like Dhru, thousands like Vishnu, many like Rama the king, many goddesses, and many Gorakhs, offer their lives at his (Guru Gobind Singh's) feet.'

If the Guru had been a devotee and adorer of the goddess, could Bhai Nand Lal have composed such a poem and read it before him ? And could the Guru have allowed the object of his devotion to be thus slighted and made to look as his servant ?

##### *Sainapati*

There were fifty two poets at the Guru's darbar. Their names are preserved. Among them was Sainapati, who, in Samvat year 1758, i.e. three years after the alleged worship of the goddess, began writing his Gur Sobha: the 'Guru's Glories'. He has given detailed descriptions of the Amrit ceremony and other events. But there is not a word about Durga worship. On the contrary, he writes that 'all gods and goddess took refuge at Guru's feet'. If the Guru had worshipped the goddess, Sainapati, as one of the poets at the Guru's darbar, should have been an eye-witness of the worship. How could he have, then, described the goddess to be a suppliant at the Guru's door ?

### *Testimony of Aurangzeb's Newswriter*

Emperor Aurangzeb's official newswriter sent to him a report on the day when the Guru created the Khalsa and performed the new baptismal ceremony. In the report he gave a gist of the Guru's address to his disciples on the occasion of administering baptism. In this the Guru is reported to have exhorted his followers to pay no heed, to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the 'Shastras', nor 'to adore incarnations such as Ram, Krishan, Brahma, and Durga, but to believe in Guru Nanak and the other Sikh Gurus'.

Could this have been the public utterance of a man who had just then completed a costly and lengthy ritual in honour of Durga, and had derived all his power from her? Would he not have, rather, sung the praises of the deity who had blessed him, and have exhorted his Sikhs to reverence her? Could the people have paid to him the homage that they did, if his words had thus violently conflicted with his deeds? If, on the contrary, he had just undergone a huge expense and great trouble in order to expose Durga, he would have certainly mentioned that event in plain words, and held up to ridicule and satire the impotence of Durga and the hollowness of any belief in her powers.

### *Munshi Sujan Rai's Testimony*

He began his *Khulasatut-Twarikh* in 1695-96 A.D. (*Samvat* 1752-53) and finished it in 1697-98 (*Samvat* 1754-55). This means that he was engaged in writing his book during the time when the alleged *hom* was in progress. He has given a brief account of the ten Gurus and has, in two places, described the manner of worship prevalent among the Sikhs. He writes, "Guru Gobind Rai, the son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, has been occupying the Guru's *Gaddi* for the last twenty- two years<sup>1</sup>....In short, most of the disciples and followers of Baba Nanak are well-to-do persons, whose words are readily believed in by all, who are great devotees, and whose prayers to God are believed to be always accepted. With this class, worship consists in repeating their Guru's Word which they sing in exquisite tunes and with charming music....'

We have thus seen that neither in the Guru's own writings, nor in those of his contemporaries, Sikhs and non-Sikhs, most of whom

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1. As Guru Gobind Singh became Guru in 1675 A.D. after the death of his father, it means that Munshi Sujan Rai wrote his account of the Sikhs in or about 1695 A.D. Note also that as the new *Amrit* ceremony had not yet been introduced, the tenth Guru's name given by Sujan Rai is Gobind Rai and not Gobind Singh.

wrote from personal observation, do we find even the least evidence to show that either a *hom* was performed or worship of Durga was undertaken by the Guru. On the contrary, we find much in them which proves that the Guru positively forbade his Sikhs to worship any god or goddess whatsoever.

### LATER ACCOUNTS

If we turn to the accounts of the Guru's life written after his death in 1708 A.D., we find that the first of them is *Mehma Prakash* (in prose). It was written in 1741 A.D. It does not contain even a mention of any such event as worship of Durga by the Guru. This shows that up to thirty-three years after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, his name had not yet been associated with worship of Durga. At the same time it is put down in this book that 'all gods and goddesses, all *Siddhs and Munis*, came to see and pay homage to the Guru.'

This book, however, contains two sentences which might have later served as the proverbial molehill for the making of a mountain thereon. They may be translated as follows, 'Once the Guru sent for *Pandits* from Benaras. He had a *hom* performed by them and then founded the Khalsa Panth.'

Most probably it is these two sentences on which the later writers based their fancied and fanciful accounts of Durga worship.<sup>1</sup>

The first account which gives the story of Durga-worship was written either in *Samvat* 1808 (1751 A.D) or *Samvat* 1819. According to it the worship of Durga began in *Samvat* 1742 (1685 A.D.) and lasted for four years, i.e. till 1746 Bk. But we know it as a historical

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1 Another explanation can be given of the rise of this story of *hom* and Durga worship. As we shall see in the next chapter, the Guru called a historic gathering of all his disciples on the eve of his founding the Khalsa Panth. Many *Pandits* also attended it as we know from the Guru's own testimony. It is possible that these *Pandits* might have sought permission and facilities to offer prayers to God in their own way and to invoke his blessing on the momentous step which the Guru was about to take. An advocate of complete freedom of conscience and worship that the Guru was, might have readily acceded to their request and even supplied the material. The *Pandits* might have performed a *hom* or *havan* on the eve of the birth of the Khalsa Panth.

It is possible to that some writer, like that of the above said book, coming to know of the *havan* might have thought that the *Pandits* had been specially invited by the Guru for that set purpose. We know that Durga been very much in the hilly region round about Anandpur. The popular mind there, working on this little incident of a *havan* on the eve of the birth of the Khalsa, might have developed it into stories of Durga-worship as undertaken by the Guru to invoke her help and blessings before launching such a momentous movement to uproot tyranny.

fact that during those years the Guru was at Paunta Sahib, near which the battle of Bhangani was fought in *Samvat* 1746 (1689 A.D.). Hence this account deserves no credence. Moreover, the writer also says that the goddess paid homage to the Guru.

The next book which narrates the story of Durga-worship is *The Mehma Prakash* (in verse) by Bawa Sarup Das Bhalla. It was written in *Samvat* 1833 (1776 A.D.), i.e. seventy eight years after the termination of the alleged worship. No authority is quoted. Moreover, the writer himself concedes that the Guru was not a worshipper of gods or goddesses. Nay, he says that 'the whole humanity, all gods and goddesses, own the Guru as their lord and pay homage to him'. One wonders how the said writer could say such contradictory things. He seems to have stumbled upon a tradition to that effect and to have set it down without weighing it in the least.

The story set afloat in this way was taken up by subsequent writers. who embellished it with all sorts of such details as their brains could invent. Naturally, therefore, the accounts given by all of them differ in material details. As stated already, all the different writers give conflicting accounts of important points in their story of the *havan*—the duration of the ceremony, the *mantras* read, the offering demanded by her and given to her, her gift to the Guru, the Guru's behaviour on her appearance, the names of the Brahmins who performed the ceremony, etc. The mutual contradiction of these writers on such points as to a historian will appear fundamental for deriving any conclusions, throws too dark a doubt on the veracity of all of them. From all that has been said above—and more can be said to the same affect—it will be clear as day that the alleged worship of Durga by the Guru, and all the stories based thereon, are mere fictions, inventions of clever, yet un-Sikhlike people, who desired either to justify their own degradation from the lofty principles proclaimed by the Gurus, in order to please their idolatrous neighbours, or, perhaps, to lend to the Guru's name a lustre which was in reality false, by showing to the Hindus that he could make the goddess show herself and grant his wishes. In reality, they have only helped to detract from his fair name, and no words of condemnation can be too strong for them and their action.

The other group of writers, who could not believe it possible for the Guru to have worshiped Durga, tried to explain away the alleged fact by saying that the Guru did all that has been attributed to him in order to expose the hollowness of the people's faith in gods and goddesses. Evidently, these writers did not question the alleged fact, but only put a different intepretation thereon. The violent contradictions



in the accounts of the other set did not set them thinking whether any such thing did ever happen. They did not exert themselves in that direction, and patronized a mere fiction as a historical fact.

## CHAPTER 22

### THE LOWLY LIFTED UNTO EMINENCE

According to the Guru's own testimony cited in the last chapter, he was, in *Samvat* 1755, engaged in poetical compositions and translations. He had retired to the seclusion of Naina Devi hill,<sup>1</sup> where he divided his time between divine meditation and literary work. He gave up gay pastimes. He would speak to none; he remained wrapt in deep and apparently anxious thought, and forbade people's coming near him. There was a visible change in his exterior. His mind appeared to have been pressed by some strong and invisible burden. He was so unlike what he had usually been, that his devotees and friends were deeply concerned about his mental equilibrium. Some were sure that he was on the way to some form of mental derangement. But those whose faith was firm, deep, and unshakeable, would not subscribe to any such views. They were certain that the Master was about to enact some new wonderful scene in the drama of his life. They knew what load it was that lay heavy on his heart.

This state is said to have lasted for about a year. He had already sent orders to his Sikhs that all of them, even those who till then were in the habit of shaving their heads, should let their hair grow its natural length, and that all Sikhs should wear arms and practise their use. After the conclusion of his deep and sustained reveree, he returned to Anandpur. He then issued a general invitation to the Sikhs to muster stronger than usual on the occasion of that year's Baisakhi festival. He had to deliver to them, he said, some message of his Lord, which was, undoubtedly, the net product of his prolonged meditation.

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1. 'The Peak of Naina Devi is held in sacred estimation by the Sikhs, because Guru Gobind Singh ascended to its summits, and there, surrounded by a few faithful followers, concerted measures for the propagation of their faith.' G.T. Gigne', *Travels*, ii p. 55)

It would seem that the act of the Guru's retirement to the seclusion of the Naina Devi's summits was interpreted by some as engagement in Durga worship.

We have already seen that the ideal which Guru Nanak and his successors had before them was not only to purify the people's faith and lead them to the worship of one God, but also to release them from all crippling social evils like the caste-system, to reorganize society on the basis of common belief and common aspirations, and to create a nation which would have the courage and capacity to oppose and eradicate all forms of social, economic, and political injustice. They attacked the citadel of the caste-system with no mean success. But the corruption which had taken centuries to gather could not be uprooted easily or at once. We find that even Islam and Christianity, with their far greater and more varied resources, have not achieved complete success in breaking the steel frame and effacing caste-distinctions. Still, the Sikh Gurus did make considerable headway in the beginning. Hosts of Muslims and low-castes were assimilated in the fold of Sikhism. But the progress in that direction was later retarded by the religious persecution started and relentlessly carried on by the Mughals, particularly against the Sikhs.

Guru Gobind Singh resolved to complete the work begun by Guru Nanak and carried on by his successors. He decided to create a body of men, self-contained and compact, who would be strong enough to free themselves from the oppression of priests and rulers, and to maintain the freedom thus achieved. In doing this he was not, in any way, departing from the principles taught by his predecessors. On the contrary, he was simply building on the foundations laid by them. In fact, he considered the mission of his predecessors to be one and the same, and regarded his own as the consummation thereof. He says in the *Vachittar Natak*, "The generality of people take them as different from one another; very few recognize them as one in spirit. But only those realize perfection who recognize them all as one."<sup>1</sup> Hence, as Dr Narang puts it in his *Transformation of Sikhism*, "(Guru) Gobind(Singh) himself, in fact, as well as his work, was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the foundation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by (Guru) Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword that carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly, forged by (Guru) Gobind(Singh), but the steel had been provided by (Guru) Nanak."

We have seen that as a result of what had been done till then by the Sikh Gurus, a distinct community had been created which stood distinguished from the mass of the Hindu society not only by its faith and form of worship, but also by the martial spirit and intense patriotism

1. See also Bhai Nand Lal's *Jot Bigas* and Teja Singh's *Sikhism*.

which filled the breasts of all its members. They had been taught to fear none and to strike fear in none. Still, the Guru saw that unless a distinct form and appearance were given to the nation, which had been so long in the making, they might gradually merge into the great sea from which they had been taken out.<sup>1</sup> He felt that the time had come to complete the structure begun so long ago, and to apply the finishing touch. This was the subject of his thought at the top of the Naina Devi hill. He was not worshipping Durga. He was forging the shape and form of his future Khalsa. He was devising the best ways and means of carrying out his Father's orders.

These orders have been mentioned in the last chapter. Further on in the *Vachitter Natak* he again expounds his mission thus :

'As bade the Lord, so do I proclaim,  
 What care I for aught besides ?  
 No religious garb doth please my heart,  
 I sow the eternal seed of the Supreme Name;  
 To the worship of stones I'll never stoop.  
 As bade the Lord, just so shall I act and speak.  
 On the Eternal One will I ever meditate.....  
 For this purpose have I come into this world,  
 To uphold and spread righteousness in every place,  
 And to seize and destroy the doers of sin and evil.  
 Understand, ye holy men, full well in your souls,  
 That I took birth in this age, so that  
 Righteousness may flourish, the good, the saints, be saved,  
 And the villainous tyrants be all uprooted from the land'.

It was the infinite weight of this task which was pressing upon his bosom, which had greatly affected his mood, and had changed his behaviour. His tender heart melted in compassion at the sight of the millions of poor and innocent people suffering terrible and unmerited hardships. His blood boiled within him when he saw the hellish deeds of the tyrants. He felt that there was but one way of rescuing the world around him from the fire of hate, pride, and aggressiveness, on the one side, and the miry pit of abject slavery, suffering, and demoralization, on the other. He had made up his mind to proceed at once with his task in the only way which he thought was efficacious, and, executed his design with the systematic spirit of a Grecian law-givers<sup>2</sup>.

1. That the Guru tried to separate the Sikhs from the Hindus is clear from Nur Muhammad's *Jangnama* (Ganda Singh's translation, *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirim*, 400; Malcolm's *Sketch of the Sikhs; History of Sikhs* (Calcutta, 1846); *History of the Punjab* (Allen & Co. 1845)

2. Elphinstone. *History of India*

As the Baisakhi Day approached, *Sangats* began to arrive from every part of the country. A few days before that festival the Guru held a great feast. But contrary to the practice in vogue at the time, he did not invite the Brahmins to form the first batch of the feasters. Only a general invitation was issued for all to come and dine. His Sikhs and the rest were served as they came. When most of the people had dined, the Guru sent a special invitation to the Brahmins; for they had not responded to the general invitation. They felt slighted. So they refused to come; but their leader, Kesho, was later prevailed upon to at least see the Guru. The latter tried by soft words to assuage the fire of anger which raged in the Brahmin's heart. When he complained of not having been invited on time, the Guru assured him that he would not be the loser on that account; for there was enough of every article of food in the *langar*, and all Brahmins could have their fill. Kesho got very angry at what he thought to be a slight and insult offered to his inviting them to dine after the *Shudras* had partaken of the food and thus polluted it. He threatened to curse him.

'You know well, O *Pandit*', said the Guru, 'that the good old days when you successfully duped the ignorant people, are gone for ever. Why not accept the facts as they are, and be reconciled to the change that has come about? Human touch does not pollute food of anything else. It is impurity within that pollutes both the high and the low. As for your curses, you know quite well what little harm they can do. So, come, accept what is offered. Wise people do not look a gift-horse in the mouth.'

The *Pandit* was irreconcilable. What occurred after that is narrated by the Guru in a poem which can be translated as under:

Guru :                    O Brahmin, you have got what was ordained in your destiny.  
                               Why then this regret ?  
                               It is no fault of mine that I forgot to invite you; so do not  
                               think of anger.  
                               As you are a stranger in this place and live on alms, be sure  
                               that I'll send you clothes and bedding to-day'.

Brahmin :                All Kashtryas derive their fame and honour from the Brahmins.'

Guru :                    Will you please to look at these my Sikhs with a bit of care?  
                               Through their favour have I win victories in battles;  
                               Through their favour have I bestowed gifts and charity;  
                               Through their favour have all my troubles been averted;  
                               Through their favour have I obtained wealth and prosperity;  
                               Through their favour have I acquired the knowledge that I do  
                               have;  
                               Through their kindness have all my enemies been slain;  
                               It is through their favour that I am thus exalted,

Otherwise there are crores of poor mortals like myself;  
 It is in serving them that I find my greatest joy,  
 The service of none else is acceptable to my heart;  
 To bestow gifts on them is most proper;  
 To make gifts to others doth not appeal to me as of any avail;  
 The bestowal of gifts on them will bear fruit in the next world

And bring honour in this; to bestow on others is of no use  
 whatsoever;

As for me, my body, my soul, my head, my wealth,  
 Nay, my all, is dedicated to their service'.

The Brahmin got angry, and in the fire of his anger His heart  
 began to burn like dry grass.

The thought that his occupation was gone and a comfortable means of living was going from him, plunged him in sorrow and bitter were the tears that he shed.

In this way the Guru taught that none were to be held holy or polluted simply on account of birth in this or that family. 'All men', writes he, 'have the same eyes, the same ears, the same human nature, and the same body—a compound of four elements—earth, air, fire, and water. They are all alike; for it is the one God who created them all.'<sup>1</sup> It was good actions and virtuous, useful life that elevated human beings and distinguished them from one another. Hence, there were to be no castes among the new warrior-race which he was founding. There were to be no untouchables among the Sikhs.<sup>2</sup> He had raised the lowest to a position of equality with the highest.

While on this subject, one cannot but ponder in regret and anguish over the curse of 'untouchability' which has persisted even among the Sikhs to this day. It has rather developed new and strange forms. Sects have arisen among even the Sikhs belonging to the so-called high castes whose adherents do not take drink or food from one who does not belong to their sect. The writer knows of families where a brother's touch is held to pollute the sister's food and vice versa. As for the untouchables, so designated by the Hindus, very strong aversion to them or their touch is still felt in most places. The treatment meted out to Sikh sweepers and *chamars* by the 'high-caste' Sikhs is very much against the Guru's teachings. They have remained among the Sikhs

1. *Akal Utsav*

2. When a person is once admitted into that fraternity, they make no scruples of associating with him, of whatever tribe, clan, or race he may have been hitherto; nor do they betray any of those scruples and prejudices so deeply rooted in the Hindu mind.' (*Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin*, Colonel John Brigg's Translation, p. 73.)

what they were among the Hindus: the out-castes, the polluted, the untouchables, and the eternally damned. The Sikhs were to be brothers of all. What a misfortune that they do not treat as a brothers even those who have come into the circle of the great Brotherhood founded by Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. The teachings of the Gurus and the liberalizing Western education have equally failed, so far, to uproot completely the ages long prejudice against the low-born.

The Singh Sabha movement and the Akali movement achieved some success in elevating the belief and practice of the Sikhs, who had fallen back exactly into the same old rut as their Hindu neighbours. But very much, alas how much, yet remains to be done if the ideal of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh is to be achieved. Unless timely efforts are made to admit these good people into the Khalsa Brotherhood, not nominally but actually, and to elevate them to that position of equality which the Gurus designed for them, the future of the Guru's Khalsa would be sorry indeed.

All the same, it is undeniably true that the Sikhs in general are far more liberal and advanced in this matter than the generality of their Hindu brethren.

But signs of a wholesome, widespread change are manifest all round. There is a great awakening among the wronged as well as among the wrong-doers themselves. All this leads one to hope that soon this evil will disappear not only from amongst the Guru's Khalsa but also from amongst their Hindu brethren.

## CHAPTER 23

### AN AMAZING CALL

Anandpur was now all astir and crowded. Sikhs had come in numbers larger than ever before. Big groups poured in everyday. The Guru felt elated on seeing the mighty host which had gathered and was still gathering, day by day.

As most of the Sikhs in the past had not been distinguishable in appearance from the Hindus, they had not attracted much notice on their way to the Guru. But on this occasion, because of their uncut hair and beard, they met with great molestation and had to employ the sword in more than one place. All this was narrated to the Guru, who utilized the occasion for impressing upon his Sikhs the need and benefit of girding arms and remaining ever ready for self-defence.

A day before the first of Baisakh *Samvat* 1756 i.e, on March 29, 1699, a great gathering was held at Kesgarh, in Anandpur. A large and beautiful tent was set up. Divine music lifted the mortals to heights celestial. As soon as the chanting of *Asa-di-Var* was concluded, the Guru went inside the tent. He remained there for some time. At last he came out; his eyes shone like fire; his face was flushed with the glow of a mighty resolve; his naked sword glistened in his uplifted arm; and his whole body was transformed like that of a warrior stepping forth into the field of battle. In a voice as of thunder, and brandishing his sword aloft, he addressed the assembly as follows : 'My devoted friends, this goddess is daily clamouring for the head of a dear Sikh. Is there any one among you all, ready to lay down his life at a call from me ?'

What an amazing call from one whose anxiety had so far been to serve and preserve his followers ! Some thought that his 'insanity' had advanced a step further. For months and months he had been quiet, gloomy, and morose. Now he was uttering he knew not what. The thought made them tremble. There was a dead silence for a moment. The Guru called forth twice, but there was no response. Who should agree to be killed for nothing and by a 'mad man' for no reason? His



eyes flashed fiercer; his voice grew more terrible; and his sword quivered still more angrily. For the third time he asked for a true follower of his, who would lay down his life at a call from him. What a trial ! He wondered whether his Sikhs would act up to his teachings. At last, Bhai Daya Ram,<sup>1</sup> a Khatri of Lahore, aged thirty, stood up and said, 'O True King, my head is at thy service. Thou hast taught us :-

"Desirest thou to play the game of Love with me ?  
Then come, but thy head on thy palm should be:  
If choosest thou to tread this path, be ready, O friend.  
To part with thy head in absolute joy and serenity."

'I have been preparing myself to follow that order of thine. But Master, there has been a bit of wavering. Pardon that, my Lord; make perfect what is imperfect, and let me taste eternal bliss; for under thy steel is the highest bliss.'

The Guru took him by the arm and dragged him into the tent with apparent hurry and violence. A blow and a thud were heard; a stream of blood rushed out; and the Guru, his sword dripping with fresh-drawn blood, called for another head. Now the crowd felt convinced that he was in earnest, and that he had killed Bhai Daya Ram. There was a dead silence again. At last, on the third call, Bhai Dharm Das<sup>2</sup>, a Jat of Delhi, aged thirty-three, stood up, and offered his head. He was also dragged into the tent. Another blow, another thud, and a fresh stream of blood convinced the horror-stricken people that the second Sikh, too, had been killed. Many fled for their lives. The Guru came out and called for another head.

The gathering became thinner and thinner. Some went and complained to the Guru's mother that he had gone 'mad' and was killing

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1. Bhai Daya Ram was the son of Shri Sudha Khatri of Lahore. His mother's name was Shrimati Diali. He was born in 1726 Bk. After taking *Amrit*, he became Bhai Daya Singh. He accompanied the Guru to the end of his life and participated heroically in the Guru's religious wars. When the Guru was prevailed upon to leave Chamkaur Sahib in December 1704, the five "Dear Ones" assigned to Bhai Daya Singh the duty of going with the Guru. It was Bhai Daya Singh that took the Guru's letter, called the *Zafarnama*, to Aurangzeb in the Deccan. He later went with the Guru to Nander in Deccan, and continued to serve him most devoutly. He died there in 1765 Bk.

2. Bhai Dharm Das was born at Hastnapur (Delhi) in 1723 Bk. His father's name was Shri Sant Ram, a Jat by caste. His mother's name was Shrimati Sabho. On taking *Amrit* he became Bhai Dharm Singh. He remained with the Guru to the end of his life and participated heroically in his religious wars. When the Guru left Chamkaur Sahib, the five "Dear Ones" assigned to him the duty of accompanying the Guru. He went with the Guru to Nander (Deccan), where he continued to serve him most devoutly. He died there in 1765 Bk. Some say that he died at Chamkaur.

his Sikhs like goats. They requested her to depose him and install his son as the Guru. Pallor was on every face that was still seen in the Guru's presence. All lips were dry, and all eyes were downcast. On the third call, Bhai Mohkam Chand,<sup>1</sup> a washerman of Dwarka, aged thirty-six, offered himself as a sacrifice to please the Master. He was dragged into the tent and the horror-stricken people again heard the sword fall and saw the blood flow out.

He came out again. The same sword dripping with blood, the same blood-red eyes, and the same stunning demand for another head 'O My Sikhs,' said he, 'You know not what great need have I for the heads of my Sikhs. Come on, my sons. Taste the cup of life giving death.' But all were dumb with terror and amazement. For a time it appeared that no one would get up to go the way that the other three had gone. At last, Bhai Sahib Chand<sup>2</sup> of Bidar, a barber by caste, aged thirty-seven, got up, advanced to the Guru's feet, and said, 'O Master ! I have taken too long to make up my mind. But what could I do, Master ? Thou hast taught us to lead a householder's life. The household had captured by feeble heart. I struggle, Master, but the grip proved too tight for a time. It is with thy grace that it has been relaxed and I have shaken off the chains of mundane love that bound me. I confess it is a grave short-coming to have tarried so long. But thou art merciful and kind. Pardon my past failings and accept this head. It is already thine. What shall I lose in rendering to thee what is thine already ?

The Guru dragged him in. Another blow, another thud, and fresh stream of blood stupefied the people who had the courage to keep their seats in the *darbar*. Another had been killed ! They prayed to the Almighty Father to cure the Guru of the strange malady. They prayed that he might be satisfied with the four heads that he had got, and test their patience no further. It was getting too much. Still he came out and called for a fifth head. The call was repeated. No response. On the third call Bhai Himmat Rai<sup>3</sup> of Jagannath, a Kahar (water carrier)

1. Bhai Mohkam Chand was born to Shri Tirath Ram, a washerman of Dwarka, in 1720 Bk. His mother's name was Shrimati Devanbai. On taking *Amrit*, he became Bhai Muhkam Singh. Thereafter he remained with the Guru and took a heroic part in his religious wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704 A.D.

2. Bhai Sahib Chand was born to Shri Chamna, a barber of Bidar, in 1719 Bk. His mother's name was Shrimati Sonabai. On taking *Amrit*, he became Bhai Sahib Singh. He remained with the Guru to the last and participated heroically in his religious wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704 A.D.

3. Bhai Himmat Rai was born to Shri Gulab Rai, a Kahar or *Jheewar* (water carrier) of Jagannath in 1718 Bk. His mother's name was Shrimati Dhanno. On taking *Amrit*, he became Bhai Himmat Singh. He remained with the Guru to the end of his life and took a hero's part in his religious wars. He died fighting at Chamkaur Sahib on December 22, 1704 A.D.

by caste, aged thirty-eight, rose, and bowed his head before the Guru. 'Strike, Master,' said he, "and ferry me across this ocean of the deluding world. This body will not endure. It will fail and fall under the stroke of death. Take this, Master, said he. 'and ferry me across this ocean of the deluding world. This body will not endure. It will fail and fall under the stroke of death. Take this, Master, and, in return for it, grant me one that will endure for eye.' He was treated like the other four. There was heard the same sound of a falling sword and a falling body, and a similar stream of blood was seen to flow from the tent.

This time the Guru stayed longer in the tent. People began to breathe a bit more freely. Perhaps he had finished, and would not repeat the amazing call. At last he came out. But, O heavenly bliss, what a change ! His sword was sheathed, his face was beaming with joy and satisfaction, and his eyes were drunk with the cheer which filled his heart. Any Good Lord ! Who were they that came after him, looking strangely like him ? They had been killed; had they been revived ? Were they in mortal frames or in celestial ones ? They were the Five who had cheerfully offered their heads to the Guru. They were all dressed like the Master in saffron-dyed garments. Their faces, their dress, and their whole appearance, were all like the Master's. There was, on their faces, a glow which appeared to be a reflection of the light that illuminated the Guru's face. They had given him their heads, and he had given them himself and his glory.

There were exclamations of wonder and sighs of regret on all sides. Every one was sorry that he had not offered his head. One came up and said, 'Master, I failed in the trial and merit punishment. The heads of these my brothers thou hast accepted and made thine own. Throw this one into the gutter ; for it is unworthy to stand on these shoulders.' Another got up and said, My Lord, I was all the while making up my mind. I thought you would call for a sixth head. I had prepared myself to be the sixth. But my bad luck, Master! Thou didst not call for that. I took too long to decide, but decide I did. So be kind, and let me die for this tardiness in responding to thy call. It was a grievous fault Master ! So strike this unworthy head off these ugly shoulders.'

The Guru then addressed the assembly saying : 'My dear Sikhs! Be of good cheer. The power to make a prompt response to the call of the hour is not given to all. Yet blessed are thy who rise equal to the occasion. When Guru Nanak tested his followers, only one Sikh—Guru Angad—stood the ordeal successfully. Now five Sikhs have proved their devotion to the Guru. This is a matter of joy for us all. Now I feel certain that the true religion will flourish well and long. My Sikhs will ever be foremost among the winners and defenders of their and their country's freedom, and protectors

of the weak and the oppressed. All hail ! All hail to these five Dear Ones who have given me an earnest of the future glory of my people. Some, whose love was shallow and weak, thought that I was mad and fled from my presence. They are *Manmukhs*, wilful people who prefer to follow their own unilluminated will. My Sikhs who did not desert me, though they had not courage to respond to my call, are *Sanmukhs*, and are dear to me. They have not turned their backs on the Guru. These five, who have resigned themselves to the Guru's will, are *Gurmukhs*. Be ye all of good cheer. This is yet the beginning. I shall need the heads of almost all of you in the course of time. So wait, get ready for that call. Beware, lest you should fail again.

Shouts of *Sat Sri Akal*: "Glory to the Eternal Lord," went up to the sky. The Guru had, in this novel manner, tested the fidelity and courage of his followers. He had ascertained that his Sikhs had learnt well the lesson of self-sacrifice and unflinching, unquestioning obedience to their leader, the soldier's obedience which pauses not 'to ask the reason why' which lingers not 'to make reply', and which only yearns 'to do and die'. He had also shown to his Sikhs that the path over which he meant to march them entailed hardships and demanded ample sacrifices. The subsequent history of the Sikhs stands witness to the excellent manner in which they lived up to the lofty ideals placed before them by their Gurus.<sup>1</sup>

Full of joy, the Guru went to his mother in the evening, and told her all that had occurred. She heard it all with delight and blessed her son's projects.

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1. 'If Cromwell's Ironsides could have been inspired with the Jesuits' unquestioning acceptance of their Superior's decisions on moral and spiritual questions, the result would have equalled Guru Gobind's Sikhs as a fighting machine.'

J.N. Sankar, *A Short History of Aurangzeb*, p.167.

## CHAPTER 24

### BIRTH OF THE KHALSA

OR

### THE GURU'S MIRACLE OF CREATION

The next day was the day of Baisakhi, the first of Baisakh 1756 Bk., corresponding to March 30, 1699 A.D. The *sangat* assembled again at the same spot. The hearts of all were throbbing with inquisitive anxiety about the role which the Guru would choose to play that day. Dressed all in white, the Guru came, sat on the throne, and thus addressed the gathering, 'The manner of initiation in the past has been for the disciple to drink water which the Guru had touched with his toe. It developed humility. But times have changed. Fearless bravery and skill in arms are now needed for the defence of the Faith and for the maintenance of the nation which from today will be called the Khalsa Panth. So, for *Charam Pahul* I shall substitute *Khande ka Amrit*, the system of baptism by water which has been stirred with the two-edged sword. This *Amrit*, with steel, Divine Word, and my spirit dissolved in it, shall work a miraculous change in those who partake of it. They shall shed all weakness of body, mind, and heart, and become brave as lions. They shall call themselves not mere Sikhs or disciples, but also Singhs or lions. They will be as braver as, nay, braver than, the Rajputs whose names alone end in 'Singh' so far. I shall change jackals into lions. All castes are equally welcome; for I mean to make all castes actually lose themselves in a single Brotherhood where the lowest is equal with the highest.<sup>1</sup>

Thereafter, the Beloved Five were made to stand up and, fixing their gaze on the Guru, to concentrate their thoughts on God. The Guru

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1. 'The object of Nanak was to abolish the distinction of caste among the Hindus, and to bring them to the adoration of that Supreme Being before whom all men, he contended, were equal. Guru Govind, who adopted the principles of his celebrated predecessor, as far as religious usages were concerned, is reported to have said, on this subject, that the four tribes of the Hindus, the Brahmin, the Kshatriya, the Vaishya, and the Sudra, would, like *Pan* (beetle leaf), *Chuna* (lime), *Supari* (beetle-nut), and *Katha* (*terra aponica* or Catechu), become all of one colour, when well chewed.'

Sir Jone Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, f. n., p. 45.

took pure water in an iron vessel kneeling beside it, he kept stirring the water with a *Khanda* or two-edged sword, and repeating the sacred verses which he had prescribed for the ceremony. When the Nectar, in which the Divine Song and the steel of the Master had been dissolved, the Immortal Draught, was ready, the mother of the Khalsa came with sugar crystals called *patashas*, and stood waiting before the Master. Soon, he raised his eyes and said, 'Sweet lady, thou hast come in at a very opportune moment when thy gift is needed the most. Power and courage, which a draught of the Nectar can infuse, are a dangerous gift without the sweetness of soul which thou wilt bestow. Pour thy sweets into it, so that our disciples may be blessed not only with power and courage, but also with the grace of womanly sweetness.'<sup>1</sup>

The Master then stood up with the steel vessel of sacred Nectar in his both hands. The disciples knelt on their left knees in the soldierly fashion, and looked into the Guru's eyes as he was about to give them 'himself dissolved in that Immortal Draught'. The Guru gazed into the eyes of each disciple, turn by turn, and threw showers of *Amrit* on his face, calling him, at each shower, to speak aloud, '*Wah-i-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wah-i-Guru Ji Ki Fateh*': the Khalsa, God's Own people, the Body of Pure and Selfless Servants, belongs to the Wonderful Lord; may all triumph and victory be the Lord's !' The knot of hair on the top of the head of each disciple was then anointed by the Guru with the *Amrit* 'Thenceforward every hair of the disciple's head was filled with his Nectar; every hair was a tongue which was to sing the song of the Master. Every hair of the disciple

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1. 'The Guru, in order to show his Sikhs the potency of the baptismal Nectar which he had prepared, put some of it aside for birds to drink. Upon this two sparrows came and filled beaks with it. Then flying away they began to fight, the chronicler states, like two *Rajas* struggling for supremacy and died by mutual slaughter. The inference was that all animals which drank the Guru's baptismal water should become powerful and warlike.' Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. V, p.94.

In the time of the Guru, as well as for long afterwards, this warlike temper of the Sikhs was sweetened by a deep sentiment of love and regard for all in general, and for their brothers-in-faith in particular. At the time when the Sikhs were on the way to power and sway, and were making themselves masters of the Panjab, a simple declaration of a prior right by a Sikh or by someone else on his behalf, was enough for another to waive his claim over whole villages without the least feeling of jealousy. In our own times, however, our people seem to have imbibed the spirit of the two sparrows mentioned above. Deplorable consequences of this spirit of mutual slaughter are already visible everywhere. Will this war be pushed to the bitter extreme ? Or will better sense prevail soon enough to undo the evil already wrought, and restore the *Khalsa* to its pristine glory ?

is thus sacred for all time.<sup>1</sup> The Beloved Five were thus baptized by the Guru. He then asked them to take deep draughts of the Nectar from the same steel vessel so that they might be totally transformed into the Guru's lions and be knit together in unbreakable bonds of brotherly love. Then the Master spoke as follows : "From today you belong to a new race of Kashatriyas—the Khalsa nation. From today you are born in the Guru's house, my house, All your previous castes are completely erased from this day. You all belong to one family; for you are my sons, in flesh as well as in spirit. All of you are *Khalsas*, God's own people, a nation of Saint-warriors and Warrior-saints. *Khalsa* is your caste, *Khalsa* is your brotherhood. It is by an intimate union or all castes that the Khalsa has been formed. Like true saints, you have to be pure and true in thought, word, and deed; you are to be kind and compassionate, lovers of God and man. But, at the same time, you have to be brave, fearless, strong, and firm like ideal soldiers. To help and serve the needy and the weak, the helpless and the downtrodden, shall be your sacred, bounded duty. To feed the famished in body and spirit shall be your vocation. You must not betray, nor fail to help, him who comes to you for shelter. You are not to oppress or strike fear in any; at the same time you shall not cow down before any in fear; you are not to tolerate oppression— be it on yourselves or on your neighbours, be it from aliens or from those who are said to be yours. Keep true to the ideals preached and upheld by your Gurus and your predecessors in Faith. In moments of trial, remember what Guru Arjan Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur bore for the sake of their Faith—which is your Faith and mine. Practice in the use of arms and other soldierly exercises shall be your concern. As I have said before, you are to be Saint-Soldiers, worshipping God and Steel. You are to be servants of Man and the Tyrant's foes. You shall live by the sweat of your brows and avoid all occupation. Pursuits, and practices likely to soil the soul or pollute the heart. The essence of your religious life shall be, as heretofore, to earn your living with honest endeavour, to share your earnings with the needy, to meditate on God, and to lovingly persuade others to do the same. To set apart *daswanah* (one tenth of his income) for the Guru's cause, which is the cause of god and humanity, shall be incumbent on every Sikh. You shall worship none but God. You shall bow your head to your Master and God alone. Ye shall not worship stones, idols,

1. Puran Singh, *The Book of Ten Masters*.

tombs, gods, or goddesses. Ye shall refuse to be slaves and shall not beg alms or charity. Ye shall preserve your god-given form intact and shall always wear the uniform that I, from today, prescribe for my Khalsa. *Kesha* or long, uncut, unshaven hair; a *kangha* or comb to keep the hair tidy and clean; a *kachh* or breeches reaching up to the knees; a *kara* or steel bracelet on the wrist, and *kirpan* or sword hanging from the waist— these shall constitute the uniform of my Khalsa, my Warrior-saints. Ye shall keep these ever with you. The sword shall be your rosary with which to worship and salute God. It shall strike terror into the hearts of tyrants and oppressors, and infuse courage and confidence in the downfallen, the victims of tyranny and oppression. Ye shall wield it for the defence of the true *Dharma*, but never aggressively in forcing your faith on others. Each of you shall love his wedded wife with ever-increasing love, but shall not approach any other woman's bed even in dream. Ye must not smoke or take any other intoxicants, nor shall ye take the flesh of an animal killed in the Muhammadan fashion. Ye shall have no dealings with those who kill their infant daughters or advocate the practice of *Sati*.<sup>1</sup>

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1. 'The carrying of arms was commanded as a daily duty : and the spirit of brotherhood was still further emphasized by the institution of a distinctive dress and the wearing of five k's. Female infanticide, a custom prevalent then and for many years after in the Panjab, was strongly forbidden, as also the practice of *Sati*.'

C.H. Payne, *op cit*, p.35.

The Persian historian, Ghulam Muhai-ud-Din, has given the text of the report which the official news-writer sent to Aurangzeb on that occasion. Its text and translation are given by Bhagat Lakshman Singh and the translation alone is given by Macauliffe. Because of its historical importance Macauliffe's translation is reproduced here in full : *The Guru said, "Let all embrace one creed and obliterate differences of religion. Let the four Hindu castes who have different rules for their guidance abandon them all, adopt the one form of adoration, and become brothers. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Let none pay heed to the Ganges, and other places of pilgrimage which are spoken of with reverence in the Shastars, or adore incarnations such as Ram, Krishan, Brahma, and Durga, but believe in Guru Nanak and the other Sikh Gurus. Let men of the four castes receive my 'baptism', eat out of one dish, and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."*

'When the Guru had thus addressed the crowd, several Brahmins and Khatrias stood up, and said that they accepted the religion of Guru Nanak and of the other Gurus. Others, on the contrary, said that they would never accept any religion which was opposed to the teaching of the *Vedas* and the *Shastars*, and that they would not renounce at the bidding of a boy the ancient faith which had descended to them from their ancestors. Thus, though several refused to accept the Guru's religion, about twenty thousand men stood up and promised to obey him, as they had the fullest faith in his divine mission.'



After that the Guru asked his Beloved Five to prepare the *Amrit* as he had done, and administer it to others in a like manner. The Guru stood near them and assisted them with his concentration. When they had prepared the Nectar, the Guru stood before them with clasped hands, and begged for the Immortalizing Draught from his Beloved Five. They hesitated, but the Guru said, 'Why do you hesitate ? I have given you my form, my glory, and my appearance. I name you the Khalsa, the Pure, the King's Own. The Khalsa is the Guru, and the Guru is the Khalsa. Ye and I are one for ever. I am now your *chela* or disciple. Therefore administer the baptism to me without any hesitation.'

The Guru then received *Amrit* from the Five in the same manner as they had received it from him. Like the names of his Beloved Five, his name, too, was made to end in 'Singh' or lion. It was changed from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh. The Guru then invited others to receive baptism. The first five who responded to the call were : Ram Singh, Deva Singh, Tahil Singh, Ishar Singh, and Fateh Singh. These were named the *Panj Mukte*: the Five Saved Ones. After them many thousands more were baptized. The sky resounded with loud and joyous shouts of *Sat Sri Akal*: Glory to the True and Immortal Lord. From meek and humble disciples the Nectar changed them into lion-hearted Khalsa, with the naked sword as the symbol of their devotion to God and of their love for man, brothers for all, defenders of the weak, and uplifters of the downfallen. Their souls were to be as fervent in God's *simrin* as their arms were to be ready and strong in wielding the sword in a righteous cause.

For days and days the city of Eternal Bliss presented a unique appearance. A new nation of Saint-Soldiers, servants of man and the tyrant's foes, had arisen, and was growing apace. Inaction, sloth, and slavish disposition were flung away. All weakness of heart, mind, and spirit had vanished. In every heart now throbbed a passionate longing to be free and make others free. The Saint-Soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh were to lust neither for the beauty of women nor for the lustre of gold. They were not called upon to spread their religion with the sword. On the contrary, they were forbidden to use their sword in that or any other oppressive way. They were promised not nymphs and other means of enjoying the pleasures of the senses in the life to come, but an eternal union with God. Their sword was to be lifted neither in self-aggrandizement nor for the spread of their faith, but for the defence of their own and other's freedom, faith, honour, and life. They were to die for their faith and principles, and in defence of the weak and

the down-trodden, with God on their lips and swords in their hands, and with their faces turned to the enemies of Truth and Liberty.

A draught of *Amrit* completely transmuted the disciples, whether drawn from the 'high' or the 'low' castes. They lost the old distinctions based on caste and became a nation of brothers, with Guru Gobind Singh as their Father. Guru Nanak's mission was fulfilled. The duty charged with which Guru Gobind Singh had been sent into the world had been successfully discharged. The Divine Orders had been fully carried out. This was the Master's great miracle of creation—'his Khalsa which he brought out ready-made from his brain as Jupiter had brought out Minerva.'<sup>1</sup> It was the Master's type of the future universal man of God, brave and fearless as a lion, sweet and loving as a woman, holy and pious as a saint, brother of all, striking fear in none, and himself afraid of none.

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1. Puran Singh, *The Book of Ten Masters*.

## INSIGNIA AND CODE OF CONDUCT

As stated already, the new form of baptism introduced by Guru Gobind Singh effected a thorough-going, miraculous change in the mind, heart, and spirit of the Sikhs. We may aptly pause here a while to examine more in detail the need, significance, and effects of this new form of initiation, as well as the Code of Conduct, prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh for the Khalsa.

The form of initiation ceremony introduced by Guru Gobind Singh admirably suited the need of the hour and the fulfilment of the ideals he had in view. A spirit of submissiveness and humility, which the older form generated in the neophyte, was no longer sufficient. It had proved ruinous for the Hindus. The Word and the two-edged sword, which admitted a person into the stronghold of the Khalsa, could not but command his reverence and love. Having drunk 'steel dissolved in water,' he imbibed the spirit of steel-framed Patriotism. Even God he addressed as *Sarb-Loh* or All-Steel. Through his baptism, the Guru poured his life and spirit into his Sikhs and invested them with his characteristic olympian air. His impress not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but also did something which went contrary to the experience of all ethnologists. It operated also materially and gave amplitude to their physical frames.<sup>1</sup> They came to be looked upon as models of physical prowess and beauty, and statelines of manners. The whole tone of national character had undergone a tremendous, marvellous change. Sweepers, barbers, water-carriers, washermen, and confectioners, who had never even touched a sword or shouldered a gun, and who had, for countless generations, lived as grovelling slaves of the so-called higher classes, were, under the Guru's leadership, converted into doughty warriors, ready to rush into the jaws of death at the bidding of their Guru, and leaders of armies before whom the *Rajas* and the *Nawabs* cowered with terror.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Burne's *Travels*, i 285, and ii, 39; Cunningham's *History of the Sikhs*.

2. Dr G.C. Narang. *Transformation of Sikhism*.

This change was not confined to menfolk alone ; it extended to womenfolk as well ; for the Guru declared the latter to be eligible for his *Amrit* equally with the former. In Sikh history we find many women exhibiting feats of bravery and warriorship which surpassed even men's performance in that field.

There is another aspect of the *Amrit* ceremony which shows what thought and foresight the Guru had exercised in this matter. He declared that any five Sikhs who observed *Rehit* and lived the life of a true Sikh would, thenceforward, be competent to baptize others. No particular class or set of people was to hold the monopoly in such a vital matter. He had seen what evils the system of making one class the custodian of religious knowledge and religious rites had been responsible for in Hinduism. He wanted to found a high type of democracy where all would be equal in all respects and in all spheres of life. To have appointed a few selected persons to go about baptizing people, would have cut at the very root of his deeply cherished ideals. It would have been an obstacle in the free growth of his Khalsa in all lands. No one was to arrogate to himself the position of a Guru of the Sikhs in future. His giving to any five Sikhs the right to baptize others, as he himself had baptized the Five, shows that he had decided, even at that time, that he would be the last of the Gurus in human form. What a pity that, even in spite of this clear injunction, people have sprung up in modern times who claim to be gurus, and make this claim a means of amassing wealth, gaining influence, and enjoying all sorts of earthly comforts and pleasures ! What a pity that there are Sikhs who have been easily roped in by these arrogant pretenders ! They have set very narrow limits to what was intended to be wide as the universe.

The psychological effect of the new manner of naming the Sikhs is quite evident. A person belonging to the lowest caste took *Amrit* and became a Singh. He felt that he was as good and high as the famous Rajputs of whose valiant deeds he had heard very often. He shook off all fear and cowardice. He was a 'lion', for that is the literal meaning of the word 'Singh'. He was no longer a *das* or slave. A person having such thoughts about himself could not but be brave and fearless.<sup>1</sup>

As stated already, in order to give the Sikhs distinct form and appearance, Guru Gobind Singh prescribed a special uniform for them.

1. 'All who subscribed to his tenets were upon a level, and the Brahmins who entered his sect had no higher claims to eminence than the lowest Sudras who swept his house. It was the object of Gobind to make all Sikhs equal and that their advancement should solely depend upon their exertions and, well aware how necessary it was to inspire men of low race, and of grovelling minds, with pride in themselves, he changed the name of his followers from Sikh to Singh, or lions,

He made it incumbent upon them all to wear five *kakars* of five signs with the sound of the letter 'K' :- *kesh* (unshorn hair), *kangha* (comb), *kachha* (a pair of shorts), *kara*(steel bracelet), and *kirpan* (sword). A few remarks about the *kakars* will be quite apt and useful in this place.

As regards *kesh* or unshorn hair, it should be remembered, in the first place, that preservation of hair was not an innovation introduced by Guru Gobind Singh. The Sikh Guru had all let their hair grow its natural length. Their devout followers and close associates did the same. Of course, they had not insisted that all their followers should preserve their hair. They had relied on example alone in this matter. Feeling the necessity of giving the Sikhs a distinct appearance, Guru Gobind Singh ordained that all his followers should preserve their hair. The injunction was meant to achieve the consummation of the scheme of reorganization planned and begun by Guru Nanak and diligently furthered and pursued by his successors.

Secondly as all know, originally Hindus also used to preserve their hair. The heads and faces of their *rishis* and *munis* used to be adorned by knots of hair and flowing beards just like those of the Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh. As a matter of fact, in ancient times it was the universal custom to wear one's natural hair. Cases of Shri Ram Chandra, Shri Krishana, holy christ, and prophet Muhammad can be instanced here.<sup>1</sup> Even in these days men of religion in the East and the West are seen with long hair and flowing beards.

Moreover, modern scientific research has shown that the hair on the body and head absorb solar energy and convert it into a form that can be used for the growth of the body. In this way, the hair constitutes

(Cond from page 133)

thus giving to all his followers that honourable title which had been before exclusively assumed by the Rajputs, the first military class of Hindus, and every Sikh felt himself at once elevated to rank with the highest, by this proud appellation.'

Sir Johu Malcolm, *Sketch of the Sikhs*, pp. 46- 48.

1. Several texts from Hindu writings can be cited on the importance and sanctity of hair. Thus, in the institution of Manu it is put down, "Even should a man be wrath, let him never seize another by the hair. When a Brahmin commits an offence for which the members of other castes are liable to death, let his hair be shaved off as sufficient punishment." In the *Mahabharata* it is stated that when Arjan was, according to the laws of warfare, on the point of killing Aswathama for murdering the children of the Pandavs, he appeased his wrath by merely cutting off Aswathama's hair. And when Krishan defeated Rukmini, who had resented the abduction of his sister Rukmini, he merely cut off his hair—a punishment deemed worse than death itself. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* Vol. 5, p. 90.

That up to as late as the reign of Bahadur Shah, the Hindus grew beards is proved by the fact that on December 7, 1707, the Emperor issued an order that all Hindus in his realm must shave off their beards.

an important means of providing a special and essential form of food to the body. It is for this reason that long-haired races are stronger and braver than those who cut their hair. Some Western thinkers and research scholars even go so far as to say, "Our research and study tell us that generally our women are superior to our men in mental power. To us the only cause of this superiority seems to be that the former do not cut or shave off their hair, while the latter do so. It is our conviction that if women begin to cut their hair like men, then after a few generations, their mental superiority will begin to vanish."

It will thus be seen that the practice of the ancient *Rishis*, *Munis*, leaders of religion, and the Sikh Gurus, in preserving the hair was not only in conformity with the laws of Nature, but also helpful towards the growth of the body and mind.

*Kesh* or long hair is, thus, not only natural but also beneficial for the body and mind. The *kangha* or comb is needed to keep the hair clean. The *kirpan* or sword is for self-defence and for the protection of the weak and the oppressed. The Guru wanted the Sikhs to revere the sword and to use it in a good cause. The sword has been, at all times and in all places, an emblem of dignity, power, and self-respect. Even in these days kings don the sword on all ceremonial occasions, even though they possess numerous other weapons. Guru Gobind Singh wanted that his Sikhs should be rich in the qualities of dignity, power, and self-respect also; for without them man can neither win nor maintain honour and independence. It was in order to arouse this sense of dignity, power, and self-respect in his Sikhs that he enjoined upon them the duty of never going without a sword in their belt.

The *kara* or steel bracelet on the Sikh's wrist serves to make him remember, at all times, that he is a Sikh of the Guru, that he must not use his hand in doing anything which might bring discredit to the Guru and the Faith. The *kara* is a symbol of dedication and resolve. Whenever a Sikh thinks of extending his hand to do something ignoble, the *kara* on his wrist will remind him that such an act is against the Guru's injunctions and will displease the Guru. Thus it keeps him from going wrong and helps him to overcome temptations towards sinful acts.

The *kachha* or a pair of shorts was prescribed to cover the lower part of the Sikhs' bodies in place of the slovenly and unwieldy *dhotis* of the Hindus. This dress was far better suited to the life of activity and adventure which the Sikhs had to lead.

The Guru wanted his Sikhs to strictly follow the rules of conduct prescribed by him. He ordained that those who broke any of them should be suitably punished. Breaches of the rules were put into two

categories—major and minor. Cutting of hair, eating flesh of animals killed in the Muhammadan fashion (*Halal or Kutha*), using tobacco, and having sexual intercourse with a Muhammadan woman were to constitute the four major breaches of the rules. Any one guilty of one or the other of them was to be deemed to have fallen away from Sikhism or to have become *patit* (apostate). Such a one must seek baptism afresh in order to become a Sikh again. Putting off of *kacchha*, *kara*, *kirpan*, or *kangha*, commission of any immoral act, and performing of rites and ceremonies prohibited by the Guru, constitute minor breaches. Any one guilty of one of the other out of them becomes *tankhahiya* or liable to some penalty. He has to make a confession before an assembly of Sikhs and accept the punishment awarded by it.

For the proper guidance of the Sikhs, the Guru laid down further or prescribed four fundamental tenets for them. His Khalsa, he said, must be *kirt-nash*, *dharm-nash*, *kul-nash*, and *karm-nash*. Let us explain what these tenets mean to the Sikhs.

The Guru enhanced the dignity of labour by declaring that his Khalsa was to be *kirt-nash*, i.e. no honest profession in itself was to be deemed ignoble or exalted, and no classes were to be set up on the basis of professions followed by the Sikhs.

The Khalsa was to be *dharm-nash*, i.e. every person, on becoming a Sikh, was to give up completely the beliefs and rituals that were not in strict accord with the Guru's teachings. This injunction was intended to prevent the growth of sects among the Sikhs. All were to have one faith, one form of worship, and one code of rules to guide them in social and religious life. It is a matter of genuine regret that some persons have, all the same, succeeded in founding petty sects with doctrines often in violent conflict with the basic principles of Sikhism.

The Khalsa was to be *kul-nash*, i.e. no pride of high descent was to puff up, and no stigma of low birth was to hold down, those who accepted *Amrit*. Actions, and not descent, were to determine the position of a Sikh in the nation. If a person ceased to lead the life becoming a Sikh of the Gurus, birth in a Sikh family alone would not entitle him to the position or privileges of a Sikh.

The Khalsa was to be *karm-nash*, i.e. was not to get entangled in the countless rituals and ceremonials enjoined in the Hindu religion. No rituals could by themselves help a man in his spiritual advancement or avert the dire consequences of his evil deeds.

A little thought over the tenets and symbols discussed above will show that all of them had one object, namely, the welding of the different sections into a distinct nation, and eliminating the germs of

future disruption. If these lessons had not been neglected afterwards, but had been followed in the right good spirit, and steady progress had been made in the direction indicated by the Guru, most of the present-day difficulties in the growth of the Indian nation would have never been there. Now, too the sooner the Indians grasp the true significance of the reforms advocated and introduced by the Sikh Gurus, and further them with all their might, the better it will be for the future of the country.



## THE HILL-CHIEFS' JEALOUSY

The Guru had thus introduced a democracy in which there was no place even for a self-made or self-elected leader or chief. He had to be elected or accepted by the followers. There was thus complete equality. The Guru did not reserve for himself any privileges which were denied to the Sikhs. Nay, he even declared that he derived all his power from them and their acceptance of him.

His amalgamation of the existing four castes into one—a new race of Kashatriyas—was keenly resented by the Brahmins, because it aimed at destroying the privileges which they had enjoyed since the time of Manu. The Kashatriyas were offended because they could not bear the thought that low-caste people, whom they had scorned and trodden under foot, should be placed in a position of equality with them. The previous Gurus had preached the equality of all human beings and had worked for eradicating caste prejudices, but Guru Gobind Singh had gone a step further.<sup>1</sup> The high-caste people had, by precept and example, learnt to mingle with persons of the lower-castes in the *langars* and *diwans*; yet they had never been called upon to eat or drink from a vessel which was, at the same time, being used or had been used, by a person of another caste. But Guru Gobind Singh now introduced an initiation ceremony in which persons of all castes had to drink from a common vessel.

This was more than the high-caste people could bear. The Brahmins went to the Hill-Chiefs and incited them against the Guru. The *Rajas*, who were already burning with jealousy, visited the Guru. They intended to remonstrate with him against his departure from established usage.

1. 'The latter (Guru Nanak), though he denounced caste distinctions, had never actually forbidden their observance by his followers, many of whom laid as much stress on them as the Hindus themselves. The Brahmin Sikh continued to wear the triple thread.... Gobind took the bull by the horns. He not only reaffirmed the absolute equality of every Sikh in the eyes of God, but he altogether prohibited the observance of caste distinctions within the Khalsa. This action gave offence to those who claimed to be of high caste, and not a few Brahmin Sikhs preferred to leave the community rather than discard the sacred thread.' C.H. Pane, *op cit*, p. 34

But his presence over-awed them. They bowed and were mute. The Guru read their thoughts and knew what was passing in their minds. He treated them with due regard, gave them seats of honour in his *darbar*, and addressed them as follows, '*Rajas*, sons of illustrious ancestors, just contrast your unenviable position with that of your forefathers, who were beloved of their subjects, on the one side, and had no master above them, on the other. They lived as brothers and friends, and no foreigner could subdue them. But later on, innumerable sects were introduced, and petty jealousies and mutual hatred were the result. The curse of caste restrictions fanned the flame of disunion. What is the position now ? Sons of Islam have taken advantage of your divided state, and have enslaved the land. What is the secret of their success? What is it that has made them victorious over the far greater number of the opposing Hindu- ? Unity and self-reliance, which their opponents lack. What are the consequences? Your caste pride forbids you even to dine with a low-caste person of your own race and religion, but your fallen condition bids you rejoice in giving your daughters to tyrants of an alien race and religion. Could there be anything more pitiable ? Why not embrace as brothers all of the Aryan race and all others that would come in, and thereby create a united force that would drive the oppressors from the sacred land ? Come, then, and partake of the Immortal Draught, the Nectar, which makes lions of jackals, and unites all into one race of Warrior-saints, defenders of the faith and the country.

But to the *Rajas* all that was gall and wormwood. Their lives of ignoble ease were to them too dear to be relinquished in favour of a life of danger and prolonged warfare. Ajmer Chand, who had succeeded Bhim Chand as the Raja of Bilaspur,<sup>1</sup> and who was the spokesman of the Hill-Chiefs, said, 'O Guru, all this sounds well from the lips of a *faqir* such as you. But we are *Rajas* and men of the world. We cannot quit this land and go anywhere else as you can. You are asking too much. You ask us not only to give up lives of peace and pleasure in return for war and its accompaniments, but also to renounce our ancient faith. We can neither give up our gods and practices recommended by our ancient *Rishis*, nor take up arms against our Muslim masters. Who can withstand the Pathans and the Mughals ? Every one of them can eat a whole goat. We are nothing before them. Your low-caste soldiers are, at best, as cats contending with lions, or as tiny sparrows, with mighty eagles. There can be no hope of breaking the power of the

1. 'Raja Bhim Chand had abdicated in 1691 A.D., soon after the great reverses at Nadaun.

accursed "Turks". So, why not make a virtue of necessity, and bear with humility what we cannot get rid of with our efforts ?

The Guru flared up and said, 'O *Rajas* ! you have lost the true Kashatriya spirit. Long subjection has made cowards of you all. It is cowardice, which has grappled your hearts, that makes you so pessimistic. Where are your much vaunted Aryan blood and valour? Why shame your ancient name and fame ? Come, be champions of your country's freedom ? What can the bits of stone which you call your gods do for you ? I attach you direct to the feet of Him who is the Lord of all men as well as of all gods. Come, have a draught of the Nectar. From jackals you shall become lions. Come, *Rajas*, be leaders in the Khalsa *Panth*, and, getting rid of the foreign yoke, set your rule on a firm footing. I have no desire to found a kingdom. I shall win you independence and then retire to the sweet Presence from where I came with a heavy, unwilling heart. Cast off all fear. The Nectar will infuse a new life in you, as it has done in my Sikhs. They are no cowards. These sparrows of mine shall pluck the imperial eagles; cats shall vanquish lions. Come, shake off all weakness, become members of this Brotherhood of the King's Own (the Khalsa), champion the cause of human equality and freedom of worship, safeguard the honour of your women, and liberate your down-trodden countrymen.

But his words fell on deaf ears and on dead and dull hearts. The *Rajas* went away determined to oppose the Guru's defiling their ancient *Dharma*, and, for this purpose, to call in, if necessary, the aid of his inveterate enemy, the Emperor of Delhi. They forgot that Aurangzeb was as much their own enemy as his, and that their real safety lay in offering a united front to the common enemy of the non-Muslims. They were thus playing into the hands of one who was, at heart, as opposed to their existence as they were to the spread of the Guru's teachings.

The Guru sent Sikhs in all directions with orders to baptize as many as possible. It should be noted here that the Guru's method of spreading his religion was that of loving persuasion. People saw the beauty of his life, the grandeur of his personality, the sweet reasonableness of his teachings, and the supreme heights of virtue and nobility to which he lifted all who called him their own. They were drawn to him as steel is attracted to a magnet. They were bewitched by the atmosphere of love and piety, devotion and service, manliness combined with saintliness, valour and sweetness, courage and compassion, that pervaded the Guru's *darbar*. An exquisite joy filled their souls, their hearts, and every pore of their bodies. They bowed

and yielded, and became the Guru's disciples. No force of aggression whatsoever was ever employed. The sword was ever there, but it was never unsheathed or rattled in order to force the Sikh faith down the throats of unwilling or helpless people. Even in later times, when the Khalsa was supreme in the Panjab, no coercion was employed to spread religion, though its use that way by the Sikhs would have been but following the precedent created and well established by their predecessors in power.

Every Sikh, in his own place, was a spring from which continuously flowed the life-giving waters of *gur-updesh* or the Guru's teachings; a bright lamp shedding the light of knowledge and bliss all round. He lived as a Sikh should live, with God enthroned in the heart, sweet words or love and charity on the lips, and with hands busy in easing some suffering brother's condition. There was no distinction of caste or creed. Muhammadans as well as Hindus were served with the same zeal. Every Sikh was inspired with a wish to dissuade as many as possible from the wrong path, and bring them on to the noble way of life shown by the Guru. Enemies, who came to strike, plunder, and kill, bathed in the waters of love, charity, and forgiveness, which freely flowed from the hearts of their victims of intended victims; their eyes were opened; they saw their true selves in the light of the "Guru's lamp" before them; they shuddered at the sight; and begged that a spark of the light might be bestowed on them, too. They got it. Thus, one live spirit infused life and light in another, and the whole land was gradually getting free of the darkness of brute passions and enslaving superstitions which had smothered all light from this land of *Rishis*.

As stated before, the Guru's mission was to spread the law of *dharma* and toleration in the land. The government of the time was bitterly hostile to all religions except the state-religion.<sup>1</sup> The non-believers, or *kafirs* as they were derisively called, had everywhere fallen in thousands in the past, and more were being daily despatched after them. Do what the Guru might, he could not avoid an open conflict with the rulers, unless, of course, he renounced his mission and agreed to be an indifferent spectator of atrocities which blackened the face of

1. Aurangzeb had resolved, says Latif, 'that the belief in one God and the Prophet should be, not the prevailing, but the only religion of the empire of Hindostan.'

the country. He knew that the Hill-Chiefs were acting as tools of Aurángzeb, and would allow him no peace. So, he set up foundries to prepare weapons for his soldiers. The regular army was increased. Orders went round for all his Sikhs to keep ready with horses and arms.

## PEACEFUL ORGANIZATION AND REJOICINGS

*Birthday Celebrations*

The splendour of the Guru's *darbar* was ever on the increase. Sikhs came from all parts of the country, basked for a time in the sun of the Guru's *darshan*, and then departed for their homes. Every Sikh had an ambition to see the Guru at least once a year. The occasion which was chosen for this purpose by most of them was the birthday of the Guru. To many, the whole year was a period of preparation for the great function at Anandpur.

As the day of rejoicings approached, large groups started towards Anandpur, and so arranged their marches as to reach there a day or two before the auspicious day. They were lovingly served on the way by their brothers-in-faith, for to serve them was to serve the Guru and God. Sometimes they were molested by Muhammadan officials, and sometimes waylaid and plundered by rowdy Muhammadan villagers. But, as the Sikhs took to arms and stood up bravely in self-defence against the aggressors, such occasions became rarer day by day.

The scene at Anandpur was glorious, indeed. Big tents on the great open were a splendid sight. To witness the spirit of love, service, and devotion, that was manifest everywhere, was to have a glimpse of the heaven itself. Every face was bright with joy, and every heart was brimful with exquisite pleasure. The Guru visited every hut and tent, and went about showering and enjoying supreme bliss.

Early on the morning of the auspicious day, *Sangats* from every camp came to the place of gathering, singing songs of joy. Poets, bards, and musicians; *masands* and preachers; Sikhs from different parts; all took their proper seats. The Guru then came on his noble, blue steed. His tall, slender and active body, decorated with shining armour; his haloed head shining under the brilliance of the plume; his angelic face beaming with love and glory; his white hawk perching proudly on his uplifted arm; his powerful thighs pressing against the flanks of the nimble animal — it was sight that charmed all beholders. Fort guns and muskets fired salutes. The military band gave him a royal welcome.

When he reached the place of gathering, the whole congregation stood up with their heads bowed in deep reverence, and remained thus until he took his seat. Hymns were sung for a long time. The poets then presented their compositions, the preachers gave an account of their activities; and all Sikhs, one by one, presented their love offerings and birthday presents for the Guru's acceptance.

Some had prepared with their own hands cotton, woollen, and silk garments; some had copied the Gurus' hymns in small booklets; some had bred and brought horses for the Guru's cavalry; some presented guns, muskets, swords, spears, and other weapons; all humbly offered *daswandh*: a tenth part of their honest earnings; some offered themselves or their sons for the Guru's army; and some brought to him presents which were more precious than the rest—souls rescued from sin and darkness, and made fit suppliants for the Guru's *Amrit*.

The afternoon was spent in sundry sports, games, and feats of power and skill. The army had its manoeuvres and mock fights. In the evening, all assembled again to listen to music and *gurupdesh*. At night, countless lamps and fire-works illumined the city. Hymns of joy and thanks-giving were sung throughout the night. Thus was the Master's birthday celebrated at Anandpur.

### *Hola Mahalla*

Every country celebrates, in its own way, the end of winter and the advent of milder days. India has had a way of celebrating this festival, which has suited her climate and her condition in the different periods of her history. In the days of her glory, the *Holi* was a period of innocent mirth and grand rejoicings. With her degradation, the festival assumed the disgusting form which we generally witness in these days. Truly, the manner in which a country celebrates its festivals depends upon, and is indicative of, her lofty or fallen condition. It is a country sunk deep in all-round degradation where filth and rubbish constitute the means of such festive celebrations.

The Guru saw this and devised his own method, suited to the heights to which he wanted to lift the people. Big *Nam*-gatherings, musical and poetical contests, feats of power and skill, sports and games, martial display, playful showers of rosewater and sweet-scented saffron powders such was the Guru's programme for the celebration of *Holla*, as *Holi* had been renamed by him.

On the last of these days, the Guru divided his troops into two groups, distinguished by the colour of their dress. One of these was put in

charge of an enclosure which represented a fort. The other group, with the Guru at its head, started from the *darbar* to defeat the garrison and capture the fortress. Killing or wounding was forbidden on both sides. The generals of both sides displayed their knowledge of warfare, and there were attacks and counter-attacks. At last, the citadel was stormed and taken. The victory was celebrated by the Guru in an equally unique way. A large quantity of *Karah-parshad* was placed on wide, white sheets in clean, open place. The Sikhs were ordered to rush to the heap, all at once, and eat as much of it as each could get. This furnished a good deal of fun and mirth. This celebration was called the *Holla Mahalla*.

### *Bibi Dip Kaur*

The Guru's *Amrit* and his spirited teachings were infusing valour in all hearts. The process was not confined to men alone; for the Guru had lifted women also to a position of equality with men. They were no longer regarded as mere shoes to be thrown off when worn out or grown disagreeable, or to be unfeelingly replaced when lost. The Sikh pair was required to regard itself as one soul in two bodies. Men and women partook of the Guru's Immortalizing Draught together, and a spirit of heroism descended on them and filled every nook and corner of their hearts, every nerver and muscle of their bodies.

There are numerous examples of Sikh women displaying, what is commonly called, manly strength and courage. One of them may be set down here.

Once a company of *Majha* Sikhs was on its way to Anandpur. On reaching a village called *Talabban*, the Sikhs, men and women, halted round a well in order to refresh themselves. A young woman continued to march on. Some way off, four armed Muhammadans, finding her all alone, closed round her. She displayed the true Sikh spirit. She did not lose her presence of mind, nor was she afraid in the least. She threw one of her gold bangles on the ground. One of the ruffians bent down to pick it up. *Dip Kaur*, for that was her name, drew her sword and severed his fiendish head from his shoulders. The other three, who were not prepared for such an adventure, were completely stunned. Before they could draw their weapons, two of them were despatched by the brave daughter of *Guru Gobind Singh*. She wounded the third, felled him, and sitting on his chest, pierced him through the heart.



Just at that time, the rest of the party arrived on the spot. They marvelled at the courage and the skill in using the sword displayed by Bibi Dip Kaur. The corpses were thrown into a well, and the party proceeded on their way.

The incident was narrated to the Guru. One of the party said, 'O True King some friends here have some objections against Bibi Dip Kaur's conduct. They say that she has touched one who was not only not her husband, but a Turk to boot. They say that she has polluted herself. They also do not like her having used the sword'.

The Guru smiled and said, 'It is this unmanly attitude that has made the people imbecile, impotent, and cowardly. She has acted rightly. She saved her honour and life. She has ennobled herself. No pollution can approach her. She will raise others. Her example will infuse courage in others. Bravo, my daughter, I may well feel proud of thee.'

## COMBINED ARMIES REPULSED

The Guru did not want war, It was peace that he needed most for the spread of his mission. But that very mission rankled in the Godless and uncharitable hearts of his neighbours. War was forced on him at a time when his need for the peaceful organization of his newborn Khalsa, universal Brotherhood of Saint-soldiers, was the keenest. Although war suited neither his programme nor his convenience, yet it was not for him to shun it at all costs. He would not budge an inch from the position which he had taken up. He could not let evil have a further sway till his neighbours were advanced enough to appreciate the justness of his demands on their social and religious conscience. It was not mere patriotism that guided his actions. It was rather a deep and selfless love for his fallen and trodden countrymen, and for his misled fellow-creatures that urged him on. God and humanity pointed out to him the same uneven and risky path of uncompromising war with evil. He knew what odds he had to face. But what of that ? He had to do his God-ordained part. All that lay with him was to do so with a becoming grace, ungrudging heart, unwavering courage, and steady resolve. He could not pause to calculate the probable of possible consequences of his action. He was God's soldier on earth or, as he himself says, 'a servant of the Eternal Lord, come to witness the drama of this world'. Such niggardliness would not suit him, he knew that Truth could not be crushed for long. Trusting in the ultimate triumph of Truth over falsehood and of good over evil, Guru Gobind Singh decided to sacrifice his all in the service of the sacred cause entrusted to him by the Master.

As we have seen already, the Guru always kept ready for war; for he knew that his enemies were ever on the look-out for an opportunity to surprise him. He knew that what to him were inhuman, irreligious, and unbearable evils in Hinduism of the time, were to his Hindu contemporaries most sacred and essential part of their ancient religion.

He also knew that the high-caste people round about him, especially the Hill-Chiefs, were all fretting at the liberating, equalizing, and anti-untouchability movement which he had so vigorously set on foot. Their 'religion was in danger' This danger, they thought, was worse and more subtle than that of forcible conversion to Islam. They could not let the apostle of such revolutionary ideals remain in peace for long.

As usual, peace was broken by the Hill-Chiefs. Open hostilities began in *Samvat 1757* (1700 A.D) and, with but slight pauses, continued to the end of the Guru's earthly life. The Hill-Chiefs, and later, the imperial armies, made repeated attacks on Anandpur, got repulsed and came back in larger numbers. Only a brief account of what the Guru and his Sikhs did, bore, resisted, and suffered, will be given in the narrative that follows.

One day, as the Guru was out on a hunting excursion with only a small detachment by his side, he was suddenly attacked by two Hill-Chiefs. They had been lying in ambush for him. They had counted on an easy victory on this occasion. How long, thought they, could a handful of low-caste, untrained people stand against their large and well-equipped army of Kashatriya soldiers? They felt certain that they would either kill or capture the Guru. But they had miscalculated. The Sikhs had something which was totally lacking in their opponents; a firm faith in the Omnipotent God whose soldiers they thought themselves to be, and unshakable resolve to win or die but never to fly. At their head was one who was a host in himself.

Neither the suddenness of the attack, nor the over-whelming number of the enemies, perturbed the Sikhs. Everyone of them fought like a contingent. The Guru's gold-tipped arrows never missed their mark and pierced through many a breast at a time. One of the chiefs was killed. The right arm of the other was chopped off. He fled for his life. The 'Kashatriya' soldiers also stood to their heels, leaving the 'low-caste rabble' masters of the field. After the battle the Guru resumed his usual course of peaceful life, not having occupied even an inch of the defeated enemy's territory.

This signal defeat aroused the fears of the Hill-Chiefs. They assembled in one place to make plans for concerted action. Their thoughts were turned all in one direction. They regarded the Guru, his Sikhs, and his teachings, as an ever-growing menace to their power and religion. They had convinced themselves that until the Guru was either expelled from their neighbourhood, or made to submit as a humble subject, they could have neither peace nor security. His power

was daily increasing. The audacity of his Sikhs was becoming unbearable. In a few years more he would grow too strong for them.

But what was to be done ? His soldiers were, no doubt, fewer in number and far less trained and equipped than theirs, but still they had vanquished their armies in all occasions. It was clear to them that even the combined armies of over a score of the Hill-Chiefs could not withstand the Guru. So they decided to call in the aid of the imperial army through the Governor of Sarhind.

Accordingly, a messenger was despatched to Sarhind with a petition in which the Guru was represented as the common enemy of the Hindus and the Muhammadans, with ambitions to found a large kingdom for himself, 'He has vowed', wrote they, 'to avenge the death of his father. He wants us to join him in his seditious projects. On our refusal to prove false to our most merciful and just Emperor, he has sworn eternal enmity with us and our people. He has founded a new sect which he calls Khalsa or the pure, but which, in reality, is a polluted medley of sundry low-castes in the world. To these low-born people he holds out hopes of power and sway in this world and of salvation in the next. Their heads are turned. They allow us no rest. We, Your Majesty's most humble slaves, have tried our combined strength against them, but have not been very successful. We are in a sore plight. To whom should we turn for help but to our benign Emperor ? Kindly recommend our case to him and persuade him to send a large army. We shall pay all its expenses.'

The degradation and lack of vision exhibited in this petition by the Hill-Chiefs need not be dwelt upon here. The reader knows what justice and mercy the non-Muhammadan subjects received from the rulers. He has also seen that the Guru had enmity not with Hindus or Muhammadans as such, but with such of them as tyrannized over the weak and the poor.

The Governor of Sarhind lost no time in getting the Emperor's sanction. An army of ten thousand was despatched under Din Beg and Pinda Khan. The Hill-Chiefs joined them with their own armies which numbered above twenty thousand. The Guru had only seven thousand men; but they were men of an altogether different type.

As the combined armies approached Anandpur, the Guru offered prayers to the Lord of the Hosts and led his men to meet the advancing foe. A bloody battle began. Prince Ajit Singh fought with wonderful skill and courage. The Guru discharged his arrows with fatal effect. The Sikhs fell on their foes like tigers on a herd of cattle. The invaders were falling fast before the onslaught of the Sikhs. Pinda Khan advanced

and challenged the Guru to a single combat which should decide the issue of the day's action. He asked the Guru to strike the first blow, but the Guru declined to be the aggressor even in such an encounter. Painda Khan shot two arrows in succession, but failed to hit or hurt the Guru. He was about to retreat when the Guru challenged him to stop. The whole of his body except the ears was covered with steel. The Guru shot his gold-tipped arrow through Painda Khan's ear and brought him dead to the ground.

This encouraged the Sikhs still more. Soon the Hill-Chiefs fled from the field. Din Beg got several wounds. Finding himself deserted by the people to whose help he had come, he, too, beat a retreat and was pursued by the Sikhs as far as Ropar.

The Guru continued to increase his army and to collect weapons and ammunition. He kept himself in readiness for war; for he knew that the Hill-Chiefs would allow him no respite. The *Rajas* gathered again in a place to devise plans for the annihilation of the Guru and his Sikhs. Another representation to the Emperor was considered unavailing. At last they decided to attack the Guru with their combined forces, and to invite to their assistance the *Ranghars* and *Gujjars*, who were their subjects and has long-standing enmity with the Guru.

In *Maghar*, 1757 Bk/ November 1700, a letter was sent to the Guru, giving him the option to either pay rent for the land he occupied or vacate it. If he agreed to do neither, he should get ready for war. The Guru replied that the land had been bought by his father and so no rent was due. If they wanted real peace, the best thing for them to do was to embrace Sikhism and acquire a leading position among the Khalsa and the fight for the country's liberation. They could then rule in peace, security, and independence. But if the *Rajas* were bent upon war, well, he was ready to give them a taste of his steel once more.

On hearing the news of the Guru's victories and of the approaching war, Sikhs from Majha and Malwa flocked to Anandpur with arms and horses. Both sides were reinforced by a very large number of *Ranghars* and *Gujjars*.

As the invaders approached the city, Prince Ajit Singh with four thousand Sikh fell on the *Gujjars* and *Ranghars*, who were advancing in great force. Their ranks were soon broken. They could stand their ground no longer and had to fly for their lives. The Majha Sikhs, under Daya Singh, Alim Singh, and Udhe Singh, directed their attacks against the hill armies. Such was the dash and vigour displayed by them that the hill armies, though far superior in number and equipment, were reduced to a sore plight and, towards the close of the day, were forced

to retreat. Thus in the first day's engagement the Guru had the upper hand. The next day's fighting yielded the same result.

The Hill-Chiefs were now convinced that they could not defeat the Khalsa in the field; so they decided upon a blockade. For over two months they invested the city, but with no great success. At last, an intoxicated elephant, with his body covered with steel and with a spear projecting from his forehead was directed against the gate of the fort. He was followed by the Hill-Chiefs and their armies, all confident that before night-fall they would occupy the Guru's fort.

The elephant was severely wounded by Bachitter Singh, in spite of the steel armour. The furious animal turned round, and ran about, killing, wounding, and treading under foot the soldiers who had relied on him. They were thus hoisted with their own petard.

The Sikhs then fell on the hill armies. Severe and prolonged was the fight. Several noted Chiefs lay dead on the field. But at last, finding themselves greatly out-numbered, the Sikhs thought it best to retire to the fort. At night the Hill-Chiefs again held a council of war. Severe and prolonged fighting had tired them and shattered all their hopes of victory. Their army was diminishing rapidly. What should they do to escape the chagrin of another defeat? One of them said, 'We are, after all, fighting not solely for our own sake. The Emperor is to gain as much as, if not more than we, from our victory, why not call in the imperial army, invest Anandpur, and compel the Guru to surrender or die of starvation?' Another urged them to give up fighting against the Guru and sue for peace. But such a step was considered too derogatory.

Ultimately, it was decided to employ a little craft. A letter to the following purport was written, 'O defender of the weak, true Kashatriya, we have sinned greatly in having picked a quarrel with you. We are now convinced that you are unconquerable. But we have not the courage to admit open defeat once more. So, in the name of the sacred cow, the ancient *dharmā*, and the true Kashatriya spirit, we beseech you to save us from the shame and humiliation involved in retreat. Quit Anandpur for a day; we shall then go home with apparent satisfaction that we have effected what we intended. We swear by the cow that we shall not harm you. If you thus save our honour this time, we shall be your slaves for ever'.

This letter was placed near the gate of the Guru's fort on a spot plastered with cowdung. On the paper was placed an image of the cow. In the morning, some Sikhs noticed the letter and took it to the Guru. He said that no reliance could be placed on the hillmen's words. But,

as some were not convinced and were anxious to end the fighting, the Guru agreed to comply with their wishes, and thereby expose the hypocrisy of the Hill-Chiefs.

Leaving a body of brave soldiers to defend the fort, and taking a small band of selected warriors with him, the Guru went to a place called Nirmoh, about two miles from Anandpur, and stationed himself on an eminence. The Hill-Chiefs threw all their vows to the winds and fell upon him. But the Sikhs resisted the attack with such dash and vigour that the *Rajas* had to retreat again ignominiously.

Then they hired a Muslim gunman who, for a large sum of money, undertook to kill the Guru with his heavy gun. He loaded his gun and fired. The Sikh who was waving a fan over the Guru was killed. The Guru took his bow and arrow and, before the gunman could reload, pierced him through the heart. The gunman's brother then came forward and began loading the gun. Another arrow from the Guru laid him dead by the side of his dead brother.

The Hill-Chiefs had broken their vows and had had another repulse in the fight. They had no alternative but to return to their homes with hearts full of shame and sorrow.<sup>1</sup>

But they could have no rest until the Guru was defeated. They now applied again to the Governor of Sarhind for assistance against the Guru. The Governor had also received orders from the Emperor to proceed against the Guru in conjunction with the Hill-Chiefs. Consequently, in Assu 1758 (September-October 1701), he mobilized his troops and marched on Anandpur. The Hill-Chiefs were now too impatient to wait for him. They attacked the Guru, who had stationed his troops on an eminence a few miles from the city. On the arrival of the imperial army, the Guru found himself almost surrounded by the enemies. His Sikhs, however, fought with their usual dash and vigour.

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1. It was a usual practice with the hillmen that when they found that fighting in the open field was not yielding the desired result, or when they found that they were suffering too great losses, they tried to play this sort of trick on the opposing forces. An example of such a treacherous trick being employed by them against the Sikhs is given by Hutchinson and Vogel in their *History of the Panjab States*. It is as follows :-

"In 1839 Kulu was invaded by the Sikhs under General Ventura. The *Raja* submitted.... and was made a prisoner.... The people of Kulu determined on attempting a rescue, and force was soon got together which ambushed the Sikhs and released the *Raja*. Escape being impossible, the Sikhs were in great straits, and the hillmen resorted to treachery to effect a surrender. Four or five low-caste men, dressed as Brahmins, were sent into the Sikhs camp, who, with their hands on a cow's tail, gave assurances of safety. Such a promise was not regarded as blinding, and, on their surrender, the Sikhs were massacred to a man." (Vol.I, pp. 85-86).

Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind, was dumb with amazement at the heroic resistance offered by the Sikhs to the far more numerous and better-equipped allied army. His enthusiasm was damped. His army was rapidly falling. He lost all hopes of victory. The *Raja* of Basoli offered to take the Guru to his own (*raja's*) capital, if Wazir Khan undertook not to attack him from behind. This was agreed to as a convenient manner of escape from the embarrassing position.

On receipt of invitation from the *Raja* of Basoli, the Guru ordered his troops to march towards Basoli. He placed himself with the pick of the army at the rear of the column. As the Guru had expected, the allied armies were soon on him. But they could not do much harm. The Khalsa army was successful in crossing the Sutlej with their baggage. The Hill-Chiefs were overjoyed at having, as they thought, got rid of the Guru. They made suitable presents to Wazir Khan and went rejoicing to their homes.

After a short stay at Basoli and then at Bhabaur, the Guru returned to Anandpur. None offered any resistance to his return. Sikhs in large numbers began pouring in from all sides. *Raja* Ajmer Chand and other Hill-Chiefs thought it expedient to be at peace with the Guru. So they sued for peace and forgiveness. The Guru, who desired nothing better than peace, and who was ever ready to forgive, accepted their prayers.

The Guru knew that the Hill-Chiefs were only biding their time and that all their repentance was only skin deep. So he kept increasing his army and equipment and strengthening his position.



## THE MASTER'S GLORY INCREASES

*The Sikhs' Devotion*

The Guru had returned from Basoli and Bhabaur. Ajmer Chand had sent to the Guru's *darbar* a Brahmin called Pamma, apparently in the capacity of an ambassador, but, really as a spy. One day, at the instance of his master, Pamma requested the Guru to go to Rawalsar, where all Hill-Chiefs would gather on the occasion of the Baisakhi festival. It would be an excellent opportunity, he added, for heart-to-heart talks and establishment of peaceful relations.

The Guru, who was ever anxious for peace, did as requested. This was in the *Samvat* 1758-59. For several days the Guru and the Hill-Chiefs remained at Rawalsar. He exhorted them to join forces with his Khalsa in order to free their land from the foreigners' galling yoke. But they declined to run any such risks. One day a Sikh brought to the Guru a number of weapons of his own make. There was a two-barrelled gun among them. The *Rajas* greatly admired the weapons and the skill of their maker. The Guru loaded the gun and said, 'Let a Sikh stand at a distance of a hundred yards. I want to see whether the gun can shoot a man so far off.'

Several Sikhs rushed to serve as the target for the gun, each trying to be in the front. On seeing this struggle, the Guru said, 'Well, let all of you stand in a line where you are. Let us see through how many of you the bullet will pass. Scores of Sikhs stood quietly in line. The Guru levelled the gun, took aim, slowly and deliberately, and pressed the trigger. The Sikhs stood firm as a rock. The bullet passed above their heads; for the Guru had meant only to test and demonstrate their faith. The Hill-Chiefs were dumb-founded. 'How can we', thought the *Rajas*, 'vanquish one whose soldiers serve him with such marvellous zeal and such unquestioning fidelity?'

Innumerable other anecdotes are preserved as illustrating the Sikhs' wonderful devotion to the Guru. Truly, they held themselves as mere puppets in the Master's hand, and were ever ready to lay down their

lives on sudden call all Sikhs, in all places, dedicated some of their sons from birth to the Guru's cause, and brought them up as his soldiers. Such dedicated ones were trained in the use of different weapons of offence and defence. When they became of age, they were humbly presented to the Guru. These soldiers, who had sold themselves, life and soul, to the Guru for no price, vied with one another in serving him in peace and war. We have seen how, on hearing of an impending outbreak of hostilities, Sikhs used to throng to the Guru from all parts, especially from Majha and Malwa. Ladies joyously sent their husbands and sons to serve the Guru by fighting for his righteous cause. When the news would come that they had served him with their lives, the ladies would rejoice and thank the Almighty Father for having accepted their humble offerings. Of the innumerable such anecdotes two or three are set down here for example's sake.

One day, an old Sikh lady came to the Guru's *darbar*, weeping and bewailing. The Guru beckoned her to approach, and enquired what mishap had reduced her to that sorry plight. 'Unbearable is the woe', replied she, 'which has fallen to my lot. My husband gave himself up to thee, Master, and when he fell bravely fighting in defence of the noble cause, I thanked the Lord for His kind acceptance of him. My two elder sons followed the example of their father, joined the ranks of the Saint-soldiers, and, by thy supreme grace, were ferried across the ocean of births and deaths. I heard of their martyrdom and was right thankful to thee and the Lord above. But the third son, who has always reckoned on following his father and brothers, lies sore ill. My grief is unbounded. It is not that he is about to die so young that pains me; rather my woe is that such youthful strength, valour, and attainments, are about to be plucked and ruined by sickness, disease, and death. I bewail not his going, but the manner in which he is about to be forced to go. Cure him, Master, make him thy soldier, and let him die a saint-warrior's death, with god and Guru in the heart, and the sword and shield in the hands. Such is my woe, and such is my prayer, my Lord'.

The Guru was greatly pleased, 'Go lady', said he, 'God will surely accept such noble prayers. Thy son will get well and be a hero in my army; She went away rejoicing that her son's life would not be wasted.

From early youth Joga Singh was living at the Guru's *darbar* as his soldier. His parents came and begged the Guru to grant Joga Singh a short holiday. His marriage could not be postponed any further. Although war clouds were hanging on the horizon and the Guru needed every one of his soldiers, yet he could not refuse such a request. Joga Singh promised to return soon after the marriage.

Joga Singh had gone. An outbreak of war became imminent. The Guru despatched a messenger to Joga Singh, charged with the message that Joga Singh was to leave for Anandpur at once on receipt of the word. He was informed of the Guru's order when the marriage ceremony was yet but half complete. He bowed before the Sacred Book and started, leaving the rest of the family to complete the ceremony as well as they could.

### *Dignity of Labour*

The Guru's injunction to his Sikhs was to live by the sweat of their brows. He did not countenance mendicity. He always deprecated anyone's sitting idle, reading holy texts, and living on other people's earnings. Service and merit, not birth or caste, determined a Sikh's position at the Guru's *darbar*. Persons performing such menial duties as those of scavengers in the Guru's stables, and leading lives of piety, devotion, and usefulness, were held especially dear. On the other hand, persons priding themselves on high birth were reprimanded and corrected of their weakness.

Several anecdotes are current, illustrating the Guru's attitude towards idlers. One day he asked for water. The Sikh who usually performed such personal service to the Guru was away. A Khatri youth, who was sitting close by, rose, fetched a cup of water, and offered it to him. The Guru noticed that his hands were very delicate. It appeared that they had been carefully preserved against use, toil, or labour. 'Well, Youth', said the Guru, 'your hands are very soft and tender. Haven't you ever employed them in any work, in any service?'

'No, my lord', replied the youth. 'This is the first time that I have used them in the service of another.'

'Then', said the Guru, 'it is not meet to accept water from these hands. They are polluted. Dead and untouchable is the body which is not used in serving God's people. It is not the Sikh, but his life and conduct, that is dear to me.'

The youth's pride of high birth and privileged position got a thorough shaking. From that moment he vowed to lead a life that became a Sikh. To the end of his days he diligently served in the Guru's *langar*. Needless to say that he won the Guru's pleasure.

### *Guru to the Rescue*

One day, there came to the Guru's *darbar* a man beating his breast and crying in sore distress. It transpired that he was a Brahmin of

Hoshiarpur. He had been on his way to his native city, along with his newly wedded wife, when a Muhammadan chief of a place called Bassi had fallen on them and forcibly taken her away. The local officials had all refused to help a 'kafir' against a 'believer'. He had vainly sought the aid of leading Hill-Chiefs. They dared not offend their Muslim masters. At last, he had come to the Guru, whom he knew to be a friend and helper of the helpless victims of high-handedness.

The Guru at once despatched Prince Ajit Singh with two hundred soldiers. He was instructed to bring the offender and his victim to the *darbar*. Ajit Singh crossed the river and fell upon the Pathan before day-break. The Brahmin's wife was rescued. The haughty Pathan who had wronged her was duly punished by the Guru. The pair went away in great happiness, praising the Guru and his Sikhs.

On another occasion, during the course of a war, the young wife of a Muhammadan *Amir* fell into the hands of a troop of the Guru's army. The bearers of her *palki* were ordered to change their course and take her to the guru's *darbar*. When the Guru saw the *palki*, the first question that he put to the soldiers was whether anyone had, in any way, molested her. No, they had not even cared to lift the flap and have a look at her. 'That is right', said he, 'my soldiers must not raise their arm against a woman. She is our sister. Even in war, the Khalsa must not lose sight of its lofty ideals.' She was taken to the ladies' apartments. Particulars about her home etc. were ascertained. She was then conducted to her place. Let the reader pause and imagine what would have been the fate of a Hindu or Sikh lady, if she had, even in times of peace, thus fallen into the hands of Muhammadan soldiers of that time.

## VICTORIES OF WAR AND PEACE

Once the Guru visited Kurukshetra on the occasion of solar eclipse. He had two objects in view. First, he wanted to dissuade people from the senseless, superstitious acts which were usually performed by Hindus on such occasions. Secondly, he wanted to purchase horses for his cavalry from the horse-fair which was held there. Most of the Hill-Chiefs had also gone there. They came to see and hear the Guru, and renewed their promises of genuine peace and faithful friendship.

On hearing the Guru's discourses, a large number embraced Sikhism and numerous others renounced their superstitions. Several scholars and Yogis came to have discussions with him. A leading Yogi, named Madan Nath, who came among them, spoke thus on seeing the Guru's glorious face: "Yours exterior is that of a lion; but internally you are a perfect saint. It is a strange combination." The Guru explained to him that he had assumed that exterior in order to strike terror in the hearts of the Turks who had occupied and were misruling the country, and had plunged the people in woes and sufferings; and that he aimed at liberating his country from the oppressive, tyrannical rule by bringing about national awakening and unity among the people.

Although the Hill-Chiefs had just then renewed their promises of friendship and faithfulness, yet their hearts were as evil and malicious as before. They had seen that the Guru had, at the most, a hundred soldiers with him. So they decided to waylay, surprise, and capture or kill him on his way back to Anandpur.

Although all, with but a few exceptions, were anxious to utilize the opportunity, yet some were averse to an open breach of promises just then renewed. The question was under hot discussion when news was brought to them that two Muhammadan generals, Sayyad Beg and Alif Khan, who, with an army to ten thousand, were marching from Sarhind to Lahore, were nearby. It was decided to hire them and send them on against the Guru.

The General demanded two thousand rupees a day. The Hill-Chiefs

agreed. The Guru was near Chamkaur when the Muhammadan hirelings fell upon him. He was not the man to lose heart even in face of the heaviest odds. His Sikhs were always joyfully ready to die fighting for him. They fought for their faith, their Guru, and God. How could hired mercenaries, guided by low motives and under the influence of ignoble impulses, stand against such soldiers of God?

The battle was long and severe. The news of the Hill-Chiefs' intended treachery had reached Anandpur. Consequently, four hundred Sikhs arrived from there when the battle was yet raging. The Guru's fast-pouring and unfailing arrows, and the dauntless fighting put in by his Sikhs, had already begun to make the enemies waver in their resolve. This unexpected reinforcement made their hearts sink still further.

One of the Generals, Sayyad Beg, had been a mild admirer of the Guru. He had heard much, but he now saw more. He fought for a time; but all the while, he was really busy in taking in the miracle that he saw before him. After a time, he laid down his arms and watched the fight in mute admiration. But his heart would not rest at that. It was not enough that he should desist from fighting against the *Faqir*-soldier of *Allah*. He should go over to him, kneel to him, accept him as the lord of his body and soul, and aid him actively against the aggressors. What the heart desired, the mind approved, and the body accomplished. Some of his followers, who held the same views, accompanied him. Soon after, he was seen fighting against the Guru's enemy.

Alif Khan had been wounded. The desertion of Sayyed Beg took away what little courage he still had. So he ordered a retreat. He was hotly pursued by the Sikhs. Sayyed Beg gave his all to the Guru, and remained with him as a faithful disciple and ally.<sup>1</sup>

The disaster which overtook the hired army made the Hill-Chiefs very nervous. They took counsel together and directed a combined attack on the Guru at Anandpur, but had again to take to their heels. Thereupon, they sent another representation to Aurangzeb in which they informed him that, anxious as they were to please him by killing the 'heretical' Guru and extirpating the turbulent nation founded by him, yet he was proving too powerful for them. They had repeatedly failed in their attempts. The imperial armies from Sarhind sent to their help in the past had fared no better. They had been forced to the conclusion that until the Emperor's own army took the field, that thorn in their bosoms could not be plucked and destroyed.

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1. Some historians give Sayyad Beg's name as Sajda Beg or Sayyid Beg.

Aurangzeb was conscious of the serious effects that the Guru's activities and teachings were producing in the Panjab. His empire was being undermined. Now that the Hill-Chiefs, on whom he had so far relied for getting rid of the Guru, had expressed their inability to suppress him, it was time for the Emperor to lay aside the old mask, give up the policy of pulling the wires from behind the screen, and depute his own men to chastise the Guru.

So, at the Emperor's bidding, Saiyed Khan came at the head of a large imperial army to conquer and capture the Guru. He was joined by the Hill-Chiefs with their armies. The huge army at his back gladdened his heart, and raised in him hopes of a sure, complete, and speedy victory.

The Guru had only five hundred regular soldiers to oppose this mighty host. But they fought far more valiantly and with greater skill and endurance than Saiyed Khan had imagined. He marvelled at their martial heroism. He wondered what power could there be in the word of their Guru which gave them so much strength, such fearless courage, and such unyielding and unshakable spirit. His wonder was still greater when he saw Maimun Khan, Sayyad Beg and, others, who were his co-religionists, but who had bought the Guru's love with their souls, making a huge slaughter of the imperial army.

Saiyed Khan was the brother of Sayyid Bhudhu Shah's wife. He had heard from the pair of the spiritual powers and lofty principles of the Master, but had been a little incredulous. He wondered why the Guru, who was reputed to be a perfect *faqir*, should engage in killing his fellow-men. On the battle-field, he saw Muslims in the foremost ranks of the opposing army. The sight of these and the memory of his sister's and her husband's words, were beating against the citadel of his heart. But he was not the man to give in so easily. He, a reputed General, had come to conquer. What would the world say if he exhibited 'the white feather' on the field of battle? The Master smiled and came forward. Saiyad Khan noticed the smile of love and light, yet he kept steady. He aimed a shot at the Guru, but missed. He had never missed before. There was a tremor in his heart. He advanced and, at the Master's invitation, took aim twice. Yet missed again. He was perplexed. The Guru's appearance had dazzled him. The love shafts darting from his loving eyes were slowly cleansing his heart and mind of enmity and harsh thoughts. Love was begetting love. The Guru advanced. Saiyad Khan shivered and levelled his gun, but could not pull the trigger. He stood transfixed on his horse. The Guru said, 'Come, Saiyad Khan ! Fire thy gun. I am so near thee.' He, who had come to conquer,

was himself conquered. He got down from the horse and begged for the gift of His Name. He touched the Guru's stirrup with his head, and rose with light in his eyes and love and joy in his heart. He fought no more against the Master, nor against anyone else. At the Guru's bidding, he retired to a lonely cave near Kangra and passed his days in Divine meditation. When the Guru went to the Deccan, later on, Saiyad Khan followed him and remained with him to the last.

There were many other Muhammadan soldiers who had, for love's sake, placed themselves at Guru's disposal and fought his battles. Their presence in the Guru's army gives a lie direct to the assertions of persons like Latif who would have us believe that the Guru was an 'irreconcilable any inveterate enemy of every Muhammadan'. He had no ill-will against any individual of whatever caste or creed. It was the evil system that he wanted to destroy, and it was against its authors and defenders that his efforts were directed.

When Saiyad Khan entered the path of discipleship and retired from the field of battle, the command of the imperial army was taken up by Ramzan Khan, who led the charge with renewed vigour and fury. The Sikhs could not long withstand the furious onslaught of the overwhelming forces of the enemy. So the Guru slowly retired to the fort. The imperial army plundered a part of the city, and encamped for the night a few miles off. The Muhammadans were in high spirits. A good half of the night they spent in feasting and merrymaking. Then they lay down to sleep. The Sikhs having been defeated, no need was felt for keeping any night-watches. So, they slept, totally careless of the enemy.

The Khalsa army, on the other hand, keenly felt their reverse. They obtained the Guru's permission to fall upon the imperial army at night. Prince Ajit Singh was at their head. The Turks were taken unawares. When these 'soldiers of Islam' were enjoying sound sleep and dreaming of paradise and its damsels, the Sikhs fell on them. A scene of wild confusion followed. Hundreds were killed. Others fled in hot haste for their lives in different directions. All the booty which they had brought from Anandpur, as also their camp, fell into the hands of the Sikhs.



## CHAPTER 31

### THE WAR OF ANANDPUR

When the Emperor learnt how the imperial army had fared, he was in high rage. He called upon his fugitive troops to account for their cowardice. They said that they had been waylaid by the Sikhs and attacked unawares. This softened him a bit. He then asked what sort of person the Guru was and how much army he possessed. One of the soldiers spoke very highly of the Guru's beauty, sanctity, and powers. He said. "He is a handsome youngman, a living saint, the father of his people, and, in the battlefield, he matches one lakh of soldiers."

Aurangzeb was enraged to hear this. He ordered that the panegyrist of the Guru be driven out of his presence and excommunicated. His wrath against the Guru was aroused to the highest pitch. He said that such open and daring opposition could not be, and would not be, tolerated any more. It must be crushed at once and for good. The court *Qazi*, however, advised that the Guru should be brought to the Emperor's court by some stratagem; for, if he could be won over, he would be an excellent and trustworthy ally. Accordingly, the Emperor sent him the following message, "There is only one Emperor. Thy religion and mine are the same. Come to see me by all means, otherwise I shall be angry and go to thee. If thou come, thou shalt be treated as holy men are treated by monarchs. I have obtained this sovereignty from God. Be well advised, and thwart not my wishes."<sup>1</sup>

The Guru did not want any political alliance; for he had no ambition to carve out a kingdom for himself. There could be no compromise with the arch supporter of the evil system. Hence he sent back the following reply, "My brother, the Sovereign who hath made thee emperor hath sent me into the world to do justice. He hath commissioned thee also to do justice, but thou hast forgotten. His mandate and practisest hypocrisy. In persecuting the non-Muslims with hate and bigotry, thou art acting most unjustly, flagrantly violating God's mandate, and in a manner most

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1. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol., p. 165.

unbecoming a true believer in God. Until thou desistest from ill-treating God's children, I cannot meet or see thee, or seek friendship with thee." While dispatching this reply to the Emperor, the Guru conferred a robe of honour on the Emperor's envoy.

The news quickly spread among the Sikhs of all places that, under the instigation of the Hill-Chiefs, Emperor Aurangzeb was about to wage war against the Guru. The Sikhs from all places, particularly from the Majha and Malwa districts, thronged to the Guru in great numbers. He began to train them in the art and science of war, so as to make them ready to meet the coming challenge.

Now, Raja Ajmer Chand of Kehlur was deeply distressed on seeing the power and glory of the Sikhs increase, day by day. He incited the other Hill-Chiefs against the Guru and persuaded them to join him in sending another petition to the Emperor, entreating him to despatch a strong army against the Guru and expel him from the hilly region.

Accordingly, a joint petition was drafted. In it they stressed their own loyalty and obedience to the Emperor, and represented the Guru as a mortal foe of the Mughal rule, of all loyal supporters of the Mughal rule, and of Islam and the Hindu religion. "The Guru compels us", said they, "to renounce our religion in favour of his own, to give up our loyalty to Your Majesty, and to join him in his fight against Your Majesty's forces. We have tried our combined strength against him with the assistance of the *Nawab* of Sarhind as well. But we have failed to defeat him. The imperial army alone can exterminate this dangerous common enemy of us all."

Aurangzeb was, at the time, in the Deccan. Ajmer Chand proceeded thither in person to present the petition of the Hill-Chiefs to him. On reading this petition and hearing the hue and cry of the Hill-Chief, Aurangzeb felt that the Guru was becoming a real and potent danger for the Mughal rule. He was also uneasy about the state of unrest prevailing in the Panjab. So he ordered that all available troops under the *Nawabs* of Delhi, Sarhind and Lahore should be despatched against the Guru. He also called upon the Hill-Chiefs to assist the imperial army in every way. At the same time, he ordered that, at the conclusion of the campaign, the Guru should be captured and brought before him.

Oh his way back, Raja Ajmer Chand met the Viceroy of Delhi and made him a special request for the despatch of army from Delhi. But he

replied that the defence and safety of the capital were of greater importance; hence he had no army to spare for being sent to the Panjab.

In accordance with the orders of the Emperor, Wazir Khan, Viceroy of Sarhind, marched towards Anandpur at the head of all his available troops; Zabardast Khan, Viceroy of Lahore, also came at the head of an equally large and formidable army. This was in the beginning of 1761 Bk. The two armies met near Ropar. The armies of the Hill-Chiefs also joined them at that place. The chief among them were : Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur, Ghumand Chand of Kangra, Bir Singh of Jaspal and the *Rajas* of Kullu, Kainthal, Mandi, Jammu, Nurpur, Chamba, Guler, Srinagar, Bhijarwal, Darauli, and Dadhwal. The *Ranghars* and *Gujjars* also joined them. These, by themselves, formed a formidable host. But the army which Wazir Khan brought into the field, was double their number; Zabardast Khan of Lahore had also come at the head of an equally large and formidable army.

The Guru was thus faced with heavy odds. But he was fighting for no earthly end. His was a fight against evil and its votaries. On such occasions, the hero never weighs the chances of defeat or victory. He is urged on to do his best, and, if need be, to fall in defence of his righteous cause; so that, though he may go, yet the cause may live and prosper.

The Sikhs had full confidence in the Master. To die fighting for his cause, which was the cause of humanity and elementary human rights, was for them the unfailing means of gaining eternal bliss. The battle raged long and fierce. The two Viceroys were greatly astonished to behold the slaughter of their armies at the hands of the Sikhs. They had counted on an easy victory. Nine hundred Muslims and an equally large number of the hill people lay dead on the field as a result of the first day's engagement. The allied armies fared still worse on the following day. The Guru was ever in the hottest part of the battle. Every effort was made to kill him, but he was, as he said, 'wearing the armour of the Immortal Lord'. Bullets whistled past his ears but did not hurt him. Fierce fighting went on for a long time. Both sides suffered heavy losses; but the Guru's enemies were the worse sufferers. It began to look impossible for the combined armies to defeat the Sikhs in the open battle-field. Still the fighting went on.

At the conclusion of one day's fighting, a few Sikhs com-

plained to the Guru that a Sikh called Kanhaiya<sup>1</sup> had gone about the field of battle, giving aid and water to the wounded Turks and Sikhs alike. They accused him of helping their enemies. The Guru called the man into his presence and enquired if he had done what the Sikhs were ascribing to him. 'Yes and no, my Lord. It is true that I gave water to persons who are called Turks quite as freely as to those called Sikhs. But I served no Turk or Sikh. Thou hast so enlightened my eyes that I beheld thee in every human body which I saw lying wounded on the field, panting for water. So, I gave water to none but thee, O Master.' The Guru was pleased with the spirit of all-embracing love and service shown by Kanhaiya, and blessed him with the gift of His Name and Service.<sup>2</sup>

When Wazir Khan and Zabardast Khan found their soldiers being slaughtered in great numbers, they got despaired of defeating the Sikhs in the open battle-field. They, therefore, decided to besiege and blockade the city, cut off all supplies, and thereby force the Sikhs to capitulate. The siege of Anandpur began in the summer of 1704 A.D.

'Wazir Khan and Zabardast Khan, who commanded the Emperor's army employed at this period against Guru Gobind Singh, deputed at the commencement of the siege, an envoy to the Sikh leader, with the following message :- "This army is not one belonging to *Rajas* and *Ranas*: it is that of the great Aurangzeb Show, therefore, thy respect, and embrace the true faith," The envoy proceeded, in the execution of

1. Bhai Kanhaiya was a resident of village Sodra in the district of Gujranwala (Pakistan). He was a devout, peace-loving Sikh, with a tender and compassionate heart. Because of his love for peace and service, and his tender-hearted disposition, he was averse to becoming a soldier and engaging in bloodshed. Therefore, he had not joined the Guru's army of Saint-soldiers by taking *Amrit*. But he was far from being a coward or drone. He learnt the art of rendering first-aid to the wounded. He also gathered around him a band of persons eager to engage in such service, and organized them into an ambulance corps. Whenever fighting took place, he would take his ambulance band into the battle-field, and go about serving water and giving other help to the wounded, dressing their wounds, and carrying them to his camp for further service and treatment. "His followers, called *Sewapanthis*, form an orthodox and honourable sub-sect of Sikhs who live by honest labour and accept no alms or offerings of any description. The *Sewapanthis* are also called *Adanshahis* from Adanshah, a rich banker who devoted his wealth and his leisure to the propagation of their doctrines."

Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, V.p.174.

2. That Guru Gobind Singh and his Sikhs were not 'the irreconcilable and inveterate enemies of every Mohamadon' as alleged by S.M. Latif, or even of any man, is confirmed by Munshi Sujjan Rai, who in 1697 A.D., wrote about Sikhs as follow: 'Most of them have cleaned their hearts of the pollution arising from worldly connexion and have torn as under the screen of worldly strife and wrangle from their bosoms. Relatives and strangers, friends and foes, are all one to them. They treat them alike. With friends they live harmoniously, and with their foes they live at peace.'

his mission, with all the pride of those he represented, "Listen," said he, from himself to Guru Gobind [Singh], "to the words of the *Nawabs* Leave off contending with us, and playing the infidel, for it is evident you never can reap advantage from such an unequal war." He was stopped by Ajit Singh, the son of [Guru] Gobind [Singh] from saying more. That youth, seizing his scimeter, exclaimed, "If you utter another word, I will humble your pride; I will smite your head from your body, and cut you to pieces, for daring to speak such insolent words before our chief." The blood of the envoy boiled with rage, and he returned with this answer'.<sup>1</sup> Stricter orders were issued for a complete blockade of the city.

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1. Malcolm, p.66.

## FAREWELL TO ANANDPUR

Soon, the effects of the siege began to be felt inside the fort. The disciples began to starve and, with them, starved the Master, his four sons, his wife, mother of the Khalsa, and his own aged mother. The *Parshadi* elephant, which Bhim Chand had coveted, the blue steed, and many other noble and precious animals, died lingering deaths for want of food. Sometimes, the Sikhs would make night sorties and take supplies from the enemies' camp, but such supplies could not last long. Anandpur presented a deserted appearance; for most of the inhabitants had left. Provisions became excessively scarce and dear. The disciples bore hunger and hardships for a long time. At last they besought the Guru to save himself, his four little ones, their mothers, and grand-mother. But the Guru was adamant. Overcome by hunger and fatigue, some of the Sikhs threatened to desert him, if he would not listen to their 'counsel of discretion'.

The besiegers heard of the discontent in the Guru's ranks. They decided to take timely advantage of it and thus end the war. At the suggestion of the *Rajas*, who, as we have already seen, were well-versed in such treacherous tricks, two envoys—a Brahmin and a Sayyid—were sent to the Guru, charged with the message that if he evacuated Anandpur, they would not molest him in any way. He might even return to the city after some time. They swore on the cow and the *Quran* that the promises were made in genuine sincerity and would be kept in true faith. But the Guru knew the thoughts that had dictated this plan. He told the envoys that their masters were too vile to be trusted. Their oaths were meaningless; for they had no character and no conscience. The oaths of the hillmen have been tested and proved false and unreliable already. The servants of Aurangzeb, who had practised deceit and cruelty against his father and brothers, cannot be trusted to keep their word of oaths. I cannot be taken in by these tricks."

A number of Sikhs, whom hunger and hardship had made desperate, went to the Guru's mother and begged her to induce him to accept the

offer. She pressed him with all the force at her command to accept the enemies' offer made on such solemn oaths, and to save himself, his family, and his Sikhs. But he told her that no reliance could be placed on the words and oaths of the idolatrous hill-men and the evil-minded Turks. He, however, could not convince his mother or his Sikhs. They renewed their requests and protests. At last, the Guru agreed to demonstrate to them the correctness of his opinion about the hill-people and the Turks.

Accordingly, he told the envoys that he would evacuate, if the allied armies would first allow the removal of his property. They agreed and re-assured the Guru of their sincerity. When the envoys had gone, old shoes, torn clothes, bones, horse-dung, sweepings of the streets, and such rubbish, were collected and filled in sacks. This was to be the Guru's 'property' intended for removal. The sacks, all covered with brocade, were placed on the backs of bullocks which were led out of the fort at the dead of night. Torches were attached to their horns so that their departure might be easily observed. As the animals approached, the allied armies fell on them to plunder the supposed property.<sup>1</sup> Their thoughts and feelings on discovering what they had obtained for their treachery can well be imagined.

'At last, came an autograph letter from Aurangzeb—"I have sworn on the *Quran* not to harm thee. If I do, may I not find a place in God's court hereafter ! Cease warfare and come to me. If thou desire not to come hither, then go whithersoever thou pleasest." To the above the Emperor's envoys added, "O Guru, all who go to the Emperor's court praise thee. On the account the Emperor feeleth certain that an interview with thee will add to his happiness. He hath sworn by Mohammad and called God to witness that he will not harm thee. The hill *Rajas* have also sworn by the cow and called their idols to witness that they will allow thee safe conduct. Bear not in mind any thing that had occurred. The attack on thine oxen was not prompted by any *Raja*. The attackers have been generally punished and the ring leaders are in prison. No one now, O True Guru, dareth so thee harm. Wherefore evacuate the fort, at any rate for the present, and come with me to the Emperor. Thou mayest afterwards do what thou pleasest."<sup>2</sup>

To the *Qazi* who had brought Aurangzeb's letter the Guru said, "Friend, no reliance whatsoever can be placed on the oaths and pledges of the hillmen and the Turks. They took oaths in the past and broke them without the least compunction. As for your Emperor, his past

1. The Guru refers to this plunder in his *Zafarnama*.

2. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion* Vol., p.179.

doings inspire no confidence. To place reliance on his oaths would be a silly blunder. We have faith and confidence in the Almighty Father. All will happen as it pleases Him. We shall accept His will as being for our ultimate good."

The Guru was determined to bear everything with unswerving fortitude. A good many Sikhs were also firm in their resolve to bear every sort of hardship and remain with the Guru to the last. But the state of things had actually become desperate and almost beyond human endurance. Hunger and hardships of the war and the siege had exasperated many Sikhs. They urged the Guru to accept the Emperor's offer. He again told them that the oaths of those people were not worthy of reliance. But the Sikhs were in despair. They insisted on the Guru's acceptance of Aurangzeb's offer. On the Guru's refusal, they sought his permission to go. The Guru said to them, 'My sons' don't lose heart. Those who go out will be killed by the crafty enemy. Stay here for but a month more, and all your woes and hardships will vanish for ever.<sup>1</sup>

But the famished Sikhs who had suffered so terrible hardships for a long time refused to wait so long. The Guru then said, 'Well, wait for five days more and God will send us succour.' The Sikhs shook their heads. Thereupon, the Guru said, 'All right, I would not be responsible for the fate of those who leave against my wishes. Therefore, such of you as wish to go away should write down that they disown me as their Guru.'

The Sikhs, though anxious to escape, were not at all prepared to save their lives at such a heavy cost. They were filled with dismay and agony. The allied armies now directed their envoys to use their smooth tongues in persuading the Guru's mother. They urged her to save herself and her two grandsons. If she departed, the Guru was sure to follow. All the former oaths were repeated and confirmed. She began to persuade the Guru to accept the offer of safe conduct solemnly held out and repeated by the enemies. But the Guru shook his head and besought his mother, to have patience. In a few days, he said everything would be all right. She, however, saw no earthly chance of the advent of better days in the fort. So she wanted to depart with her two youngest grandsons. When the Sikhs heard this, their resolve began to fail. The city had long since been vacated by most of the non-combatants. In the fort food had long been scarce, but, of late, the water-supply had

1. The Guru had received information that Sikhs of Majha and Malwa were getting ready to march towards Anandpur in order to participate in the religious war. With their arrival, the conditions were bound to change for the better.



also been cut off. Their sufferings had almost reached the limit of human endurance. It was true that the Guru held out to them promises of a bright future, but the physical pangs which they had suffered for period, and which had been increasing day by day, overcame their resolve and courage. A large number wrote the disclaimer of disowning document and went away. The Guru was left with only a few hundred soldiers.

It is not possible to say what the exact number of those who chose to serve him with their lives. In some places it is stated that, at Anandpur, the Guru was deserted by all but forty Sikhs. That cannot be the truth; for, as we shall see, when the Guru was later attacked near the Sirsa, the Sikhs stoutly opposed the advance of the Imperial army until the Guru, his family, and the luggage had been carried across the stream. According to the Guru's own testimony in the *Zafarnama*, forty was the number of those Sikhs who were with him at Chamkaur. It is altogether incredible that forty Sikhs could have so successfully obstructed the enemy's advance for so long, and still have escaped unhurt and alive, all of them. Their number must have been much larger, at least, five hundred.

On the other hand, some say that the number of the deserters was only forty and all of them belonged to the Majha. This, too, cannot be right; for, at the outset, the Guru's army is stated to have been five thousand strong. Some, of course, must have been killed, but even after making a fair allowance for the diminution thus caused in the strength of the Guru's army, it is altogether incredible that the desertion of such a small number as forty could have so seriously affected the strength of that army as it actually did. Evidently, the number of the deserters must have been greater than that of the Sikhs who remained with the Guru. We have seen that the number of the latter was far larger than forty.

To say that all the deserters belonged to the Majha is, at best, as correct as the statement that their total number was forty. As stated above, after the deserters had gone, the Guru was left with but a few hundred soldiers. This means that, out of the original five thousand, the rest had either perished or deserted. The number of martyrs at Anandpur could not have been much over two thousand. A number of them must have been from the Majha. So the number of the deserters must have been about three thousand. To say that out of an army of five thousand three-four thousand belonged to the Majha and only a few hundred to the rest of the country, is not very complimentary to the brave people of the Malwa. The truth seems to be that, when once

a few Sikhs decided to renounce the Guru and wrote the disclaimer, others followed suit indiscriminately. In short, the deserters belonged to no particular tract as the Majha or the Malwa, nor was their number so small as forty

Some time after the deserters' departure, the Guru's mother, too, became in favour of going away. She expressed her wish to leave along with her daughters-in-laws and grandsons. The Sikhs in the fort also expressed themselves in favour of evacuating the fort. In view of the compelling circumstances, the Guru decided to go. Placing Bhai Gurbakhsh Singh Udasi in charge of the Gurdwaras in the city, he made preparations for departure. Such of the articles as he could not take away but as he did not wish to let fall into the enemy's hands, were burnt or thrown into the river. The manuscripts, which were the result of years of literary labour, were among the property that was intended to be taken away. When all was ready, the party set out from the fort at the dead of night on the sixth of *Poh*, 1761 Bk/ 20th December, 1704 A.D., and proceeded towards Ropar. The Guru had with him about five hundred Sikhs and his five *Piaras* (Beloved Ones).

As they proceeded, the Guru's sons were seen looking back, from time to time. When the Sikhs asked what it was that they were looking for, they replied, 'We are leaving our place of birth, our play-grounds, and our dear home for ever. We are bidding farewell to all that was dear and precious in Anandpur.' The pathetic words uttered in the fervour of child-like sincerity brought tears to the eyes of the Sikhs. All felt that what the princes had said was true.

The mid-winter night was dark and bitterly cold. It began to rain. A cold wind also began to blow. When the besiegers learnt that the Guru and his Sikhs had gone during the night, they lost no time in getting ready to chase them. They forgot all their oaths on the holy Quran and the sacred cow, and started after the Guru. It seemed that the evil forces of man and nature had entered into a conspiracy against the Guru. The night was dark and bitterly cold. A biting cold wind was blowing, and rain was falling. The path was muddy and slippery. The enemy forces were rushing from behind. But the Guru did not swerve or lose faith in the Almighty Father. He was calm and cheerful. He exhorted all his companions to accept His Will with cheer.

After going by Kiratpur and Nirmohgarh, the Guru proceeded towards Ropar. The party reached the bank of the Sirsa. On account of the rain, the stream was in flood. Here was another obstacle placed in their way by Nature. Plans were afoot how to cross the flooded

stream, when the enemy forces came up. Severe fighting ensued. Many brave Sikhs were killed.

It was early morning by now. It was the hour when morning religious gatherings used to be held at Anandpur. While bullets and arrows were flying about, the rain was falling, a biting cold wind was blowing, and the flooded Sirsa blocked the way, the Guru held his morning *Nam*-gathering, sang His praises, paid Him thanks, and lifted the souls of his companions to the feet of the Father above. After the conclusion the *diwan*, prayers were offered and preparations were made for crossing the stream. Baba Ajit Singh, with a number of Sikhs, stoutly arrested the progress of the enemy, while the rest began to wade through the Sirsa. When they had crossed it as well as they could, Baba Ajit Singh and his companions plunged into the stream, and were soon with the Guru on the other side.

In this confusion, the Guru's mother and his two younger sons—Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh—got separated from the main party. What happened to them will be narrated hereafter. The Guru, along with the surviving Sikhs, proceeded towards Ropar. His two wives, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, stayed at the house of a trusted Sikh at Ropar. Thence they proceeded towards Delhi on the following day in the company of that Sikh. From Ropar the Guru started towards Chamkaur. At that time he had with him his two elder sons, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh and forty Sikhs, including his five *Piaras*. All this happened on *Poh*, 7, 1761 Bk December 21, 1704 A.D.

## CHAPTER 33

### AT CHAMKAUR SAHIB

As said already, on the morning of Poh, 7, 1761 Bk. December 21, 1704 A.D. the Guru crossed the Sirsa stream and proceeded towards Ropar. The enemy forces did not dare to attempt crossing the stream which was then in spate. It was no easy task to wade through the cold water of the flooded stream early in the morning of that winter day, when a cold wind was blowing hard and rain was falling. The enemy forces chafed and bit their lips in impotent rage near the Sirsa, while the Guru proceeded onwards. It was only in the afternoon, when the flood in that hill-stream had spent itself, that the enemy forces crossed the stream and began to hunt for the Guru.

As the Guru was moving on, someone brought the news that a few miles off in front lay a large Imperial army which was coming to help the allied forces against him. The situation in which the Guru found himself would have broken the heart of many a General of greater name and fame, and reconciled him to making a surrender to the enemy. Two equally formidable armies, several hundred times the number of his soldiers, were marching against him from front and behind. He had only forty Sikhs with him. What was to be done. Surrender was not even to be thought of. A meeting on the plain would mean a sure and quick defeat. To flee for life without striking a blow would be an act of weakness. Besides, just then it was almost impossible to escape from the huge armies which were closing around him from both sides. So, he changed his course and hurried towards Chamkaur, where he reached near about sunset.

On reaching there, he occupied the mud-built house or *haveli* of a Jat. It was located on an eminence and was in the shape of a miniature fort.<sup>1</sup> The Guru posted eight of his soldiers to guard each wall of the

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1. Some writers hold that, some time back, the Guru had himself built a fortress at Chamkaur. Others, like Sir John Malcolm, have stated that at Chamkaur the Guru 'was received in a kind and friendly manner' by the Raja of that place. Neither of these statements is correct. The Guru might have known that at Chamkaur there

extemporized fortress, two at the gate, and two to keep watch and go round giving directions. He himself, with two more Sikhs and his two sons, held the top storey. Ammunition was served out and all were ready to hold and defend the place with their lives. This was on the 22nd of December, 1704

At nightfall the Imperial armies came up and surrounded the village. Early next day, a section advanced to storm and capture the fortress. They believed that there were only a dozen Sikhs inside. They, therefore, felt certain that in a few hours the Guru would be killed or captured. As the haughty soldiers of the Emperor approached near enough, they were greeted with a volley of bullets and arrows. Many fell to rise no more. The rest advanced further; another volley laid a good many of them on the ground. This unexpected destruction set them thinking. They concluded that the number of the Sikhs must be far greater than they had imagined, some hundred at least. So they retired to take counsel.

Another group of selected soldiers was now ordered to rush on the fortress. But even it fared no better. The Guru's gold-tipped arrows pierced through many a haughty breast at a time. The bullets and arrows shot by the Sikhs never missed their marks. In short, this section was also repulsed. Annoyed at these unexpected reverses, some officers that were held in great repute or their heroism resolved to take the offensive in person. Nahar Khan and then Ghairat Khan tried to scale the wall but were shot down by the Guru. Khwaja Mohammad<sup>1</sup> saved himself

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(cont. from page 173)

was a mud-house or *haveli* in the form of a fortress, or might have gone thither simple because that was the nearest place where he could find some sort of shelter and means of defence. Whatever the case might have been, there appears to be no manner of doubt that the *haveli* where he entrenched at Chamkaur was no regular fort, and that he did not get there any friendly treatment or assistance from any one. There was no '*Raja*' there; for Chamkaur was not a state.

His defence was formed by the mud walls of *haveli*, his army was composed of his forty Sikhs, his weapons of offence and defence were those which he and his men had managed to bring with them in their flight, and his provisions consisted of the little that he could procure in the interval between his arrival and the arrival of the Imperial armies. It was under such conditions that the siege of Chamkaur began. Let the reader pause and think if he can find, in the history of the world, any instance where such unbending resolve, such undaunted courage, and such heroic and persistent endurance were exhibited under circumstances as dark and gloomy as faced by the Guru and his forty Sikhs. The Spartan heroes of the Dardanelles would gladly yield the place of honour to the heroes of Chamkaur.

1 Or Khwaja Mardud (Dishonoured Chief), as Guru Gobind Singh calls him in his letter called *Zafarnama* addressed to Aurangzeb.

by hiding himself behind a wall. Others who advanced were killed or wounded.

The bullets and arrows of the besiegers had little effect on the Sikhs, who were entrenched behind the mud walls. But the Guru and his Sikhs singled out the most daring of the advancing army and despatched them to the other world. No shot of arrow was ever directed against those who were resting, waiting, or watching at a distance; for the Guru would not kill any human being except when attacked and in self-defence.

At last, the Imperial armies decided to concentrate their efforts on forcing the gate. As they rushed forth in that direction, some Sikhs came out to contend with them and to arrest their progress. They fought very valiantly, killed many, and were, at last, overpowered and slain. Another batch came out and engaged the attackers. In this way, the gate was defended for a pretty long time. The arrows and bullets of the Guru and his Sikhs were falling thick and quick. The enemy had again to retire in dismay and despair.

There was now a slight pause. The Sikhs took counsel and decided to urge the Guru to effect his escape, 'If he goes out safe, he can produce many like us, but thousands of us cannot make one like him'. When they went to him with this object, they found that Prince Ajit Singh was standing with folded hands before the Guru, and beseeching him for permission to go out and check the advance of the enemy in the next attack. 'Dear father', said he, 'thou hast named me Ajit or Unconquerable. So, I shall not be conquered, but, if overpowered, shall die fighting like my brother Sikhs. Refuse me not in this, dear father, for my soul is yearning to kick this body in defence of thee and thy noble cause, and to join my brothers that have gone before me.'

The Guru knew what the end of his son would be. But were not they his sons, in flesh and spirit, who had already fallen in the field? So, he embraced and kissed Ajit Singh for the last time, and bade him go unto certain death. The Sikhs now fell on their knees before him and entreated him to save himself and his two sons. 'If you live, Master, you will raise a fresh army of the Khalsa and uproot this tyrannous rule of the treacherous Turks. Your sons, with your grace, will carry on the struggle for liberty after you decide, in due time, to return to whence you came. So, effect your escape, somehow.' But the Guru would not listen to the advice. 'You are all my sons,' said he, 'have no fears about me. The Eternal Lord is my Protector. There is no time for discussion now. See yonder! The Turks are preparing for a fresh

attack on the gate. We must resist them as long as we can. So, quick to your posts.

Prince Ajit Singh, who was then hardly eighteen, bade farewell to his father, brother, and the Sikhs, and went out. Five Sikhs accompanied him. Their unfailing arrows killed a large number of the attackers. Ajit Singh fought like a hero. Soon, his quiver was empty. By now the enemy had come every near. Ajit Singh took his lance and sprang upon the enemies as an eagle falls on doves and sparrows. He and his companions were wounded. But all of them fought with unrelaxed vigour and boldness. Suddenly, Ajit Singh thrust his lance into the heart of a Muhammadan soldier, who was wearing steel armour. The lance got stuck and, when he tried to pull it out, it broke in twain. He now drew his sword and fell upon the enemy. But how long could six of them withstand hundreds and thousands ? They fell, one by one, and joined the galaxy of the Master's devotees in His Celestial *Darbar*. The Guru had been watching his son from the top storey, admiring and rejoicing at his son's marvellous daring and bravery. He had seen him get wounded and exhausted from exertion and loss of blood. No regret or sorrow entered his heart. On the other hand, when he saw him fall, he thanked God that his son had proved worthy of His cause.

Jujhar Singh, the Guru's second son, now stood before him with folded hands and made the same entreaty as his brother had done. 'Dear Father', said he, 'permit me to go where my brother has gone. Don't say that I am yet too young. I am thy son, father, and have drunk the Immortalizing Nectar. I shall prove a worthy son and true Sikh. So bid me go, father. I shall not dishonour thy blood, thy name, or thy cause. I shall die fighting with my face towards the enemy and with God and Guru on my lips and in my heart.' The Guru took him in his lap, kissed and patted him, and gave him a sword and shield. On his head he placed a small crest such as bridegrooms wear. 'Go, my son, and wed life-giving death. We were here for a while and shall return to our Eternal Home Go, and wait for me there.'

This lad of fourteen, thus armed, went out with five Sikhs. None feared death or thought of personal safety. All their efforts and energies were directed towards checking the advance of the enemy, holding the fortress as long as it was humanly possible, and winning their Master's pleasure. They had resolved to die fighting, but before falling, to kill the maximum number of the foes that they could. Jujhar Singh fought as valiantly as his brother had done. Many fell before the sword of this child-warrior. But the odds were too heavy against him. He was over-powered. He died fighting to the last.

The Guru was watching all this. Imagine the thoughts that would pass through a father's mind at such a time. But Guru Gobind Singh as a father proved as unique and wonderful as he had proved as a son. At the age of less than ten he had sent his father to quench the fire of Muslim bigotry with his blood; and now he had sent 'unto the valley of death' his two eldest sons. When he saw them fall, no sorrow crossed his heart, no pang clouded his brows. Nay, on their fall he rejoiced that they had proved worthy of his love. A strange sort of love, forsooth! Yet, he had a human heart, a tender, loving heart. No doubt, he bore everything as became his position. Yet, as the saying goes, even the plants shed a 'tear' when a leaf is plucked off their branch. He gladly sacrificed his sons and his all for his lofty principles and ideals, and did it with a heroic firmness. Yet, as a loving father, he could not but have felt the void thus created in the deep recesses of his mighty heart.

It was evening by now. The Sikhs again pressed the Guru to make good his escape. They felt that this unequal conflict could not be continued for long. But the Guru drew their attention to a section of the Imperial army which was rushing forward to storm the fortress. 'There is no time to lose. We must be up and doing. Bring me the big quivers of the specially sharp arrows which have been preserved so far. Shoot in the direction in which my arrows fly. Let those at the gate shoot through the holes. God will do the rest.'

Arrows fell like rain. The enemies had seen the princes fighting and dying before the gate. They had concluded that the Guru must be all alone by then. It would be an easy matter to overpower him. But the arrows from that Master Archer and his disciples came so thick and quick, and had such fatal effect, that the Muhammadan officers felt convinced that the Guru had at least a hundred men with him. So, they retired once more and took counsel. It was felt that more fighting would do more harm to them, who were exposed to the Guru's arrows, than to the Guru, who lay entrenched on an eminence. So the best course, they thought, was to lay siege and await the results. In two or three days, they argued the Guru would be starved to submission. Accordingly, a large force was stationed to watch the gate from a safe distance, and the rest of the army was posted, here and there, all round the village.

At nightfall the Imperial army lay down to take rest. By then, besides the Guru's two sons, three out of his five *Piaras*, namely, Bhai Muhkam Singh, Bhai Sahib Singh, and Bhai Himmat Singh, and about thirty other Sikhs had fallen as martyrs. He had only five Sikhs left with him. They took counsel together and said to the Guru, 'Lord, we



have thought long and deep, with God as our guide and witness, and have come to the conclusion that we should entreat you, with all our force, to effect your escape. We say this in all humility, in all sincerity, but with as much force as lies at our command. If you love us as your sons, if you have any regard for our opinion, if you have any compassion for our sentiments, do not disappoint us. Go Master, you will create many like us; the Khalsa will grow and destroy the accursed rule of the faithless, Godless oppressors. This is our *Gurmata*. We make this entreaty in the name of the Great Cause for which you came down among us mortals, which you hold dearer than life and all other dear things, and for which you have already made huge sacrifices. Let this be another sacrifice, to yield to the entreaties of your slaves even against your intentions and resolve.'

The Guru had not the heart to refuse this appeal so lovingly made. At the time of creating the Khalsa, he had declared that the Khalsa was the Guru. The *Gurmata* of the Sikhs was, to him, the order of the Guru Khalsa. He could not but obey. Moreover, there was some weight in their arguments. He was not in despair. He might still be able to rally his men and hurl them against the Muslim tyranny. It was not save his life for its own sake, but to preserve it for the service of his righteous cause, that the Guru agreed to make good his escape. So, he put off his plume, placed it before the five Sikhs, went round them thrice, and bowed before them. 'The Khalsa Panth', said the Guru, 'has stood well the ordeals and deserves to be crowned. From today the Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. Whenever five of you assemble with God in the hearts, there will God and the Guru be with you. The Word is the Guru, and under its guidance, the Khalsa Panth is the Guru.'

The Guru-Khalsa further decided that three Sikhs, Bhai Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, and Man Singh, should accompany the Guru, and the rest should hold the fortress as long as there was life in them. All this happened on Poh 8, 1761 Bk/Dec. 22, 1704 A.D.

When all was ready, the Guru and his three companions went out through a secret exit at the back. The night was pitch dark. Here and there, watchman with torches were standing, half asleep. At some distance from the enemy, the Guru and his Sikhs clapped their hands and said aloud and in one voice, 'The Guru of the Sikhs is going, the Guru is going.' Two torch-bearers rushed in their direction, but two arrows from the Guru's bow extinguished their torches and drove their unclean spirits from their bodies. A great confusion ensued. Some thought that a fresh Khalsa army had arrived to help the Guru. The

Muhammadan soldiers got up hurriedly from their sleep, took whatever weapons came to their hands, and rushed out towards the supposed reinforcements come against them. Many fell by mutual slaughter.

When the Guru and his three companions came out of the *haveli*, at the dead of night, the sky was, here and there, covered with thick clouds, the night was pitch dark, and there were frequent flashes of lightning. He pointed to a star, which was visible and specially bright, and said, 'We shall proceed in the direction of that star.' At this time his foot struck against a dead body. Bhai Daya Singh said, 'True Lord, here lie the dead bodies of the martyrs. We have to walk with care.'

Just then, there was a flash of lightning. Bhai Daya Singh said, 'Guru ji, here is the body of Sahibzada Baba Ajit Singh' The Guru had a look at the body, blessed his martyred son, and went on. His companion then said, 'Here lies Baba Jujhar Singh.' The Guru looked in that direction, blessed his martyred son, thanked God, and proceeded on. Bhai Daya Singh then said, 'Sire, I have a sheet over me. I wish to tear it into two pieces, and cover with them the bodies of these two martyrs. Kindly permit me to do so.'

The Guru said, 'The idea is good and noble. You have my permission, but on one condition. You should first cover the bodies of my martyred Sikhs, who are my sons in spirit and are dearer to me; and then cover the bodies of these two martyrs, my sons in flesh.' He also said, 'The martyrs of Chamkaur have attained salvation, they have become *muktas*, the saved ones, and have been delivered from the round of births and deaths.'

Two Sikhs, Bhai Sant Singh and Bhai Sangat Singh, were now left in the fortress. After mutual consultation, the Guru's plume was put on the head of Bhai Sant Singh, whose face greatly resembled the Master's. A quiver of gold-tipped arrows had been given to him by the Guru. The two stationed themselves in the top storey. When they heard the uproar outside, they beat the drum and let fly a few arrows. Thus they added to the imperial army's confusion.

When it was day, a section of the besieging army advanced on the fortress. The arrows of the Sikhs killed many. But two could not hold on for long against thousands. Their store of arrows was soon exhausted. They waited for the enemy on the walls, ready to pierce anyone who might attempt to scale them. For a time, they kept up the unequal fight of two against thousands. But many ladders had been put up and the enemy poured in at many points. The two Sikhs died fighting to the last.

Bhai Sant Singh, with the plume and the gold-tipped arrows, was taken for the Guru. The officers of the Imperial army were glad that they had killed the Guru at last. His head was cut off for being sent to Delhi to regale the eyes of the Emperor. It was after several hours that they discovered that the Guru had made good his escape. Great was their disappointment at the discovery.

The armies dispersed. The Hill-Chiefs and the Viceroys, tired and wounded, returned to their capitals. But the Viceroy of Sirhind soon despatched small bands of soldiers in all directions with orders to pursue and capture the Guru. All people were warned of the dire consequences of housing or helping the 'royal rebel'.

## HAZARDS OF THE FLIGHT

The wheel of time had taken a woeful turn. The Master, whose court had surpassed that of the Emperor in splendour and magnificence, whose free kitchen had once fed all and sundry, who once had an army of devoted servants ready to lay down their lives rather than let him suffer the slightest pain, that Master, all alone and barefooted, was now a fugitive. The Imperial armies were in hot pursuit. For days he had taken no food. For days he had been without a minute's rest or sleep. The thorns and pebbles on the way lacerated and hurt his bare feet and limbs. The night was pitch dark and cold. The bitter cold wind of mid-winter was blowing. Under these conditions he could not make much progress. A few hours before day-break he reached near the village Kheri. Two *Gujjars* recognized him and raised an alarm. The Guru gave them gold. But they persisted. He was forced to seal their lips with his arrows. Soon, the sun rose. Thirst, hunger, and fatigue had completely exhausted the Guru's frame. To assuage these physical pangs and to stimulate the blood and nerves, he took a little milky juice and some tender leaves of the *Akk* plant. Nothing else was available in that desolate place. As his faculties began to droop, he lay down in a cluster of trees with a clod of hard, cold earth as his pillow. His hands yet clasped his naked sword, which lay by his side. A swoon-like sleep overtook him. At night-fall he awoke and started again, but his limbs were too weary to move. He lay down again. Amid all this agonizing experience his high and patriotic resolve did not flicker; no regret for the past visited his heart; his mind was strong as ever; and his soul was in turn with the infinite as before. Lying under the canopy of heaven in the cold winter night, the Guru sang. His praises as he had done in his days of prosperity. In weal and woe he was His. It was here that he composed his famous hymn, 'The Disciples Message to the Dear Friend', which may be translated as under :

'Convey to our Dear Friend the news of us, His disciples;

Without Thee the luxury of soft beds and sweet rest are depressing  
and painful like a disease;  
Life in a palace is like living among snakes, If Thou art away;  
The pitcher hurts us as the cross,  
And the cup cuts us like a sharp dagger, if Thou art away;  
Yes, without Thee all these articles of joy and comfort kill us as with  
a butcher's knife;  
A pallet made of turf and straw is dearer to us, if the Beloved therebe;  
And palaces burn us like the infernal fire, if Thou be away;

After a few hours rest he started again in the direction of the Malwa. But he was too exhausted to proceed very far. With a water-pot as his pillow, he lay down in a garden near Machhiwara. This garden belonged to a *Masand* named Gulaba. By a lucky chance Bhai Dharm Singh, Man Singh and Daya Singh, having travelled in the direction of the star which, at the time of parting, he had pointed out to them, reached the same garden and found the Guru fast asleep. They awoke him. The Muhammadan army, they said, was in hot pursuit and might be on them at any time. He could not move because of the blisters on his feet. Bhai Man Singh took him on his back and carried him to a well close by. There the Guru bathed for the first time after many days and felt much refreshed.

Gulaba Masand heard of the Guru's presence in his garden and came running to serve him. His brother brought milk for the Guru and his Sikhs. They took it and lay down to sleep. The two brothers guarded their repose. At night, Gulaba took them to his house and locked them in the upper storey. He was anxious to serve the Guru, but, at the same time, he was afraid of being discovered doing so. So, he tried all he could to conceal the Guru's presence in his house. His immediate neighbours, a Brahmin and a Sayyid, however, soon got the scent and made no secret of having done so. Next morning Gulaba, afraid for his safety, besought the Guru to take his departure. What a turn of days ! The Guru, who had sacrificed his father, his sons, his dear Sikhs, his wealth, his home, and his all, who had undergone untold hardships and sufferings, and who had exposed his family to severe trials and grave risks, all for the sake of improving the lot of his down-trodden countrymen, now refused shelter even by one who professed and possessed great love for him. But that great redeemer of humanity was content and cheerful as ever. He felt neither resentment nor sorrow at Gulaba's lack of heart. He gladly prepared to go. But, before departing, he desired to see Gurdevi, an old Sikh lady who had been spinning and weaving cloth for him, and praying that he might visit her village

to accept it. She was all joy at the news that her prayers had been granted, and brought a big piece of *khaddar* for the Guru.

Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, *Rohila Pathans*, had been for some time in the Master's service at Anandpur and had thereafter taken to horse trade. They had sold several good horses to the Guru, who had been always good and considerate to them. When they heard of the sorry plight in which the Guru then was, they were moved to tears and vowed to help him, come what might. The Guru knew of their sympathy with him; so he sent for them. At their suggestion, the cloth presented by Gurdevi was dyed blue and made into robes and sheets in imitation of the dress worn by a sect of Muslim *faqirs*. He and his three Sikhs dressed themselves in these indigo dyed garments, and let their long tresses fall down their shoulders. Thus disguised, the Guru was borne in a litter was lifted by Ghani Khan, Nabi Khan, Man Singh, and Dharm Singh. Daya Singh waved a *Chauri* over him. Whoever questioned them was told that they were escorting the *Uch ka Piran Pir* or the Spiritual Chief of the Saints of Uch. And the answer was literally true. The *Uch ka Pir* had met Guru Nanak at Mecca and had bowed before him. He had visited him again in India. He held the Guru in great esteem and looked upon him as his Spiritual Chief. His successors had been, likewise, duly visiting Guru Nanak's successors from time to time, with faith and reverence. Since the above said meeting with Guru Nanak, the *Pirs of Uch* had let their hair grow its natural length as a mark of their homage to the Gurus. Hence, Guru Gobind Singh was, in truth, the Spiritual Chief of the Saints of Uch. And as it was known far and wide that these *Pirs* wore long hair, there was little room for the enemies to feel suspicious. The plan succeeded admirably. They travelled on in safety.

One day, however, the party was overtaken by a detachment of the pursuing army. Its commander chose to question the bona-fides of the party. He had his suspicions. He interrogated the bearers of the litter very closely and long. They stood their ground calmly and firmly. However, not satisfied with the answers which he received, the commander sent for Qazi Pir Muhammad, who had once been the Persian tutor of the Guru, and asked him to identify the occupant of the litter. He also told the *Qazi* his suspicions. The *Qazi* gave a helpful reply and saved the situation.<sup>1</sup> The commander, being thus fully satisfied, made due apologies to the *Uch ka Pir* for having suspected and inconvenienced him, and begged him to go whither he pleased.

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1. As a mark of his appreciation of the *Qazi's* valuable service at such a critical juncture, the Guru granted him a *hukamnama* (autograph letter) which his family still retains and shows with great respect to those who visit his house.

The party then proceeded on its way. On reaching Hehar in Ludhiana District, they met Kirpal, a successor of the *Udasi Mahant* of that name who had proved his valour in the battle of Bhangani. He welcomed the Guru. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan, though anxious to stay on and serve the Master, were now permitted to go back home. A pair of gold bracelets and a *Hukmnama* (an autograph letter of recommendation addressed to the Sikhs in general) were given to them in commemoration of their opportune service. In the *Hukmnama* it was written that Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were dearer to the Guru than his own sons. It is still preserved by their families and shown with great respect to those who visit them.

Mahant Kirpal Das served the Guru with great love and hospitality. But he had heard the imperial orders against helping or harbouring the Guru. He feared lest some officials should come to know of the Guru's stay with him. The Guru divined his thoughts and decided to move on. Mahant Kirpal Das acted as one of the four bearers of the Guru's litter for some miles and was then allowed to go back home.

From Hehar the Guru moved on to Jatpura and thence to Raikot. About a mile from Raikot there was a pond of clean water with a big *Shisham* tree on its bank. The Guru halted under that tree. Rai Kalha or Kalha Rai; a rich and influential Muslim Jat of Raikot, come to pay homage to the Guru. He was a devout admirer of the Guru. He took the latter to his house and treated him with loving hospitality. He knew of the imperial orders respecting the Guru, but he was not at all afraid. On the contrary, when he heard all that the Master had borne for the sake of the down-trodden people of his land, Kalha wept bitterly and cursed the tyrants. He begged the Guru to let him know if he could be of any service then. At the Guru's instance, a messenger was despatched to Sarhind to find out what had happened to his aged mother and his two little sons. Mahi, the messenger, is said to have travelled to and for in an incredibly short time.

The story which Mahi narrated on his return is given in the next chapter.

## MURDER OF THE INNOCENTS

With eyes melting into tears and a voice choked with sobs of agony, Mahi related the following story :-

In the confusion which followed the fight near the Sirsa, Mata Gujri, with her eight and six years old grandsons, and a faithful attendant, got separated from the Guru and the Sikhs. In the biting winter wind of early dawn, she travelled through a thick jungle as chance directed her. Her aged limbs and the tender bodies of her little ones were benumbed with cold, and her heart was sunk in grief and anxiety about the fate of her scattered family. Some way off, she was accosted by her family cook, Gangu Brahmin. His village Kheri<sup>1</sup> was near by. He offered to give her shelter and protection in his house which was quite near.

He lodged them in the hinder-most room of his house. A straw mat spread on the floor was all that the little princes and the old lady had for beds. She would place their heads in her lap and put them to sleep. As for herself, sleep had refused to visit her eyes. Day and night, the three remained concealed in that dark room. One day, the boys felt weary and entreated their grandmother to take them to the top of the house. She consented. Their attendant had gone to gather news about the Guru. Gangu, who had been all along waiting for such an opportunity, crept in to the room and stole away Mata Gujri's pack of gold and jewellery, which he had coveted ever since the moment of his meeting the old lady. When she returned to the room and found the pack missing, she called Gangu and said, "A pack was lying here but appears to have been removed. If you have removed it to a place of safety, well and good, otherwise steps should be taken to trace it. I wonder who could have come into the room."

The Brahmin feigned indignation. "This, then, is the return." thundered he in rage, "that you propose to make me for my having

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1. This village, Kheri, is at a distance of about a mile and a half from Morinda. It was destroyed by Baba Banda Singh in 1767 Bk, when Gangu was punished.



saved you from certain death. O Lord ! I exposed myself to grave risks in housing these homeless relatives of a rebel, and they falsely accuse me of theft ! Ungrateful lady, this gratuitous insult to a pious Brahmin will be soon and amply avenged." Mata Gujri tried to calm him, but he would not listen to what she had to say, he went to the Muhammadan Chaudhari of the village and informed him how they could both earn a handsome reward by delivering to the authorities the Guru's mother and son. The Chaudhari went and informed the official of Morinda. "The latter soon arrived with a posse of soldiers, arrested the three, and took them away to Sarhind as prisoners. This happened on *Poh* 10, 1761 Bk/ December 24, 1704 A.D.

The *Nawab* of Sarhind confined them in a tower of his fort. With the cold, hard, bare floor as their bed, and without any bedding whatsoever, they had to shiver and lie awake the whole night long. Next day, that is, on December 25, the *Sahibzadas* were summoned before Wazir Khan, Governor of Sarhind. Mother Gujri was loth to part with them. The soldiers assured her solemnly that no harm was intended. The Governor wanted only to see the sons of the Guru. They would surely be restored to her. The princes themselves, afraid of naught, urged their grandmother to let them go. She could not but agree. When they took leave of her, she exhorted them to be true to the ideals of their father and grandfather, and to do or say nothing which might tarnish the lustrous name of the Gurus. She felt that she had seen the last of them, but she did not let her heart droop in the least.

On reaching the court, they shouted in one voice, "*Wahi Guru ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh*". Their slim and handsome persons, their fearless mien, and their calm, bright faces, which shone with the spiritual majesty of their father, drew forth involuntary acclamations of wonder and admiration from all who were sitting in the Governor's court. He himself was perturbed. A Hindu Minister of his, Sucha Nand by name, advised the little princes to bow before the great *Nawab*.

"Not we," replied Zorawar Singh, the elder of the two. "We have been taught to bow to none but God and Guru. We acknowledge not the authority of these ephemeral, temporal lordings."

This daring reply astonished all. The *Nawab* felt slighted, but even he could not exclude from his heart a feeling, however faint and suppressed, of admiration for the little heroes. Still, he controlled his feelings and, in a feigned sweet voice, told them that their father and two elder brothers had been killed a few days back. "They were infidels," added he, "and merited death. Good luck has brought you to

an Islamic *darbar*. Your souls will be washed of infidelity and made fit for paradise in the life to come. In this world you will be given all comfort and luxury which honour, rank and wealth can bring. When you grow up, we shall marry you to beautiful princesses of royal descent. And from this earthly paradise you will, in due course, be ushered by angels to that genuine paradise where Hazrat Muhammad sits deputy to the Mighty *Allah*. If you say 'not' to my proposal, you will be treated as *kafirs* are treated."

Zorawar Singh turned to his younger brother, Fateh Singh, and, in a low voice, asked him what answer he would make. Fateh Singh had seen but six winters, yet in his veins ran the blood of Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and Guru Gobind Singh. So he replied, "Brother, no pleasure of palate or sense, no fear of death or torture, should induce us to forsake the true faith. We should remember the parting advice of our grandmother. We should never think of clouding the fair name of our brave and holy ancestors. What is there so precious in life that we should hug it at the cost of our souls ? What is there so ugly or abhorrent in death that we should shun it, though it may even be coming as a deliverer from the snares of this world ? I am prepared to die."

There was dead silence in the court. So, the words of the two brothers, though uttered in undertones, were heard by quite a large number. All who heard them were filled with awe and admiration at the fate which awaited them. Zorawar Singh said in a clear, loud, and steady voice, "You say that our father has been killed. We can never believe it. He has yet a good deal of work to do in this world. He is alive and we are sure of that. Know that we are sons of him who, at my age, voluntarily sent his father to risk his life in an attempt to cure your Emperor of blind bigotry. You know what happened. How can you ever think of our renouncing the faith which has been preserved and developed at such dear costs ? We spurn your worldly pleasures. We would not live as renegades. Sweet, life giving death is far better to us. Our choice is made."

The words in themselves were enough to inflame the haughty *Nawab*. But Sucha Nand (also called Kuljas) poured oil over the fire.

"Look here gentlemen" said he, "this is their behaviour in childhood. What will it be when they grow up ? Their father alone has given the Government a lot of trouble. What will be the result when these two grow up and take his place ? This progeny of a cobra had better be smothered in time."

The *Nawab* whispered to him. "That is true, of course. But if they may somehow be persuaded to embrace Islam, they will constitute valuable addition to the community. There need be no hurry. They cannot run away. We shall try again tomorrow, with threats and temptations, to make them yield."

Then in a loud and thundering voice he said to them, "I give you time to think over. Be wise and accept my advice; otherwise, you will be tortured thus that your cries will be heard far and wide. Thereafter, you will be hacked to pieces."

They were taken back to the tower. Next day, that is on December 26, 1704 A.D., they were taken to the *Nawab's darbar* again under a heavy guard. Before they left, their grandmother again exhorted them to adhere to their faith, come what might. They assured her that they would act in a way worthy of them.

In the *Nawab's* court the same scene was enacted as on the previous day. The offer of Islam or death was repeated, and, on their refusal to yield, they were again given time to think over, and taken back to the tower.

Next day, that is on *Poh* 13, 1761 Bk/December 27, 1704 A.D., the two brother were again taken to the *Nawab's* court, where the same offer was made again and rejected. When the *Nawab* was convinced that the *Sahibzadas* would not yield, he announced that they should be bricked alive and then beheaded. On hearing this, the *Qazis* and mean people like Sucha Nand cried aloud, "That is right"; but most people sat with their heads bent, and their eyes fixed in the ground. At last Sher Muhammad, *Nawab* of Malerkotla, spoke out that the *Quran* did not permit slaughter of tender-aged, innocent, helpless children; they were too young to commit any offence meriting death; moreover, it was not just to punish them for their father's acts. So, he urged that they should be allowed to go unharmed. But the *Qazis* said, "What do you know of the holy law? How can you pretend to know more of it than we? The holy law gives them choice between Islam and death. Let them choose as they like." The *Nawab* turned to two *Pathan* brothers and said, "You know that your father was killed by the father of these boys. You may avenge his death now."

"We beg your pardon, Sir", said they. "Our father was killed on a field of battle. If these boys were grown-up men, with swords in their hands, it would be fit and honourable to fight with them and kill them. We cannot strike at these innocent children. We would, rather, die than commit this murder."

There could, however, be no lack of executioners for *kafirs* in a Mahammadan court. A part of the outer wall of the fort was dismantled and the children were made to stand in the gap. An executioner, with a drawn sword on his shoulder, and with frowning looks, was standing nearby; *Qazis* with copies of the *Quran* in their hands also stood nearby. An official from the *Nawab's* court was also there to see that the *Nawab's* orders given under the Muslim religious law were duly executed. Masons were ordered to erect a wall round the two children, taking good care that the bricks pressed well against their bodies. After each layer, the *Qazis* urged them to save their lives by accepting Islam. But they stood unperturbed, reciting and meditating on the Word of the Master. When they were buried in the wall up to their shoulders, the *Nawab* himself came there, and urged them to accept Islam. But they calmly shook their heads. Thereupon, at a nod from the *Nawab*, Baba Zorawar Singh's head was severed from the body. Then Baba Fateh Singh was urged to accept Islam, or he would suffer the same fate as his elder brother had done. He replied: "Be quick, despatch me after my brother, so that we may together go unto the lap of our grandfather and into the presence of the Almighty Father." He was also beheaded.

This tragic event took place on *Poh* 13, 1761 Bk/ December 27, 1704 A.D.<sup>1</sup>

A rich Sikh of Sarhind, named Todar Mal, on hearing what was happening to the Guru's sons and what was likely to happen to them

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1. S.M. Latif tries to exonerate the *Nawab* of Sarhind of the blame attaching to this foul murder. He says that the *Nawab*, 'being an orthodox Mohammadan, spared their lives, in accordance with the Mohammadan law, which forbids slaughter of unbelievers who are minors or belong to the female sex. But Kuljas, his Hindu *Dewan*, instigated the murder by telling the *Nawab* that "they were the offspring of one who was the invertebrate foe of the Mohammadans, etc.'" But the *Nawab* would not agree; for he would, on no account violate the rules of his religion, which prescribed that a son must not suffer for the wrongs done by his father and that every one was responsible for his own actions. One day, as the two sons of the Guru were sitting in the Governor's *darbar*, he was much pleased with their graceful appearance and seemingly good looks, and said to them with kindness, "Boys! What would you do if we were to give you your liberty?" The boys answered, "We would collect our Sikhs, supply them with implements of war, fight with you, and put you to death." The Governor said, "If you were defeated in the fight, what would you do then?" The boys replied, "We would collect our armies again and either kill you or be killed." The Governor was enraged at this intrepid and haughty reply, and ordered Kuljas to remove the boys from his presence and to despatch them at his home. The boys were accordingly put to death by Kuljas.'

In a footnote to page 268 the same writer complains that the Sikh authors 'deliberately ignore the fact that the instigator of the crime was a Hindu, Kuljas, who bore a personal grudge against the Guru.'

at the *Nawab's* court, hastened towards the court with the intention of ransoming them and their grandmother. But the two innocents had been already murdered by the time he reached there. He visited the site where they had been bricked and beheaded and paid homage to the martyrs. Then he reported to Mata Gujri in the tower, With eyes melting into tears and a voice choked with sobs, he told her of her grandsons' martyrdom.

On hearing this, she said, "Well ? Have my darlings already gone to their grandfather in the lap of God ? I had taken upon myself the duty of looking after them. They have gone. What have I to do here now ? O my soul, fly after them to their Divine Abode."

Saying this, she closed her eyes, began to repeat, "*Wahi Guru*" (Lord Sublime), and was soon gone to His bosom, where her dear little charges had already gone.

Todar Mal sought permission to cremate the three bodies. He was told that he could have the requisite piece of land by paying as many gold *mohars* as placed closely together, would completely cover it up. Todar Mal made the payment readily and cremated the three there.<sup>1</sup>

The treacherous Brahmin could not long enjoy his ill-gotten gains. When the Muhammadan officials heard that he had acquired great

(contd. from page 189)

Now, even according to Latif's own admission, the Hindu's instigation failed to shake the *Nawab* in his resolve to spare the lives of the two children in accordance with the Muhammadan law. Still, the order for their execution was given by the *Nawab* in a fit of rage which had been aroused by the intrepid and courageous reply of the boys. So, the responsibility for the crime must rest on him. His regard for the rules of his religion, which Latif has tried to make so much of, seems to have been less than skin deep; for it melted away at the slightest provocation. The boys' words would have procured a far different response from a really brave and generous foe. Did the Muhammadan law permit the murder of 'unbelievers who were minors', 'when the instigation for the murder came from an unbeliever', or when the 'orthodox Mohammadan' got enraged at the fearless replies of the victims? And did the fault merit death ?

By the way, Latif does not state what personal grudge Kuljas had against the Guru. More probable is the view that the Hindu *Dewan* was a servile, unscrupulous creature, and all that he did was done in the hope of winning his master's favour.

Forster, whom Latif has no grounds to disbelieve and whom he cites as authority in another connection, supports the version of the 'Sikh writers'. On page 264 he writes :— 'Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sarhind sullied the reputation he had acquired in his service (that of persecuting the Guru), by putting to death, in cold blood, the two younger sons of [Guru] Govind Singh.'

1. On the spot where the bodies were cremated was later erected a Gurdwara (Shrine) called Joti Sarup. At the place where the two *Sahibzadas* were bricked and beheaded stands the shrine called Fatehgarh Sahib. Nearby, at the site of the tower in which the three were imprisoned and where Mata Gujri breathed her last, stands a shrine called Mata Gujri's Burj (Tower).

wealth, they arrested him, deprived him of his treasure, and, in the end, beat him to death.

All the time that Mahi was narrating his painful story, Rai Kalha and the rest of the audience kept weeping copiously. The Guru sat unmoved. With the tip of his arrow he was, in apparent indifference, digging at the root of a shrub. At the close of this painful narrative, the Guru closed his eyes. His hand ceased moving. After some secret communion with the Eternal Lord, He said, 'My sons are not dead. They refused to barter their religion. They have become immortal. They shall live for ever. They have returned to their Eternal Home. They have infused new life into the dead bones of the people. They have lifted the downtrodden, and shown them the way to liberty and independence. They are not dead. The rule of the Turks has been uprooted like this shrub here. The town of Sarhind, where none raised a voice of protest against the cowardly murder, has invited its own doom. The *Nawab* of Malerkotla, who tried to dissuade the Viceroy from this atrocious homicide, has perpetuated his dynasty. So not weep, my sons. Four are gone, forty are gone, hundreds and thousands are gone, but weep not for them. Rejoice that they conquered death and became immortal. Rejoice that my son, the Khalsa, yet lives and will for ever live.'

'Master', said Rai Kalha, 'being ever in tune with the Infinite, thou canst bear all this unmoved. We cannot. We cannot help weeping at murder of the innocent, helpless children. But master, thou hast said that the rule of the Turks has been uprooted. I am also one of them. Save me, my Lord; don't include me among the doomed.'

'Have no fears', said the Guru, 'You have loved and helped me. You have deeply felt the inhuman murder of my innocents. Thereby, you have saved yourself. Take this sword and preserve it in memory of me. As long as you and your successors honour it, your family shall grow and flourish.'

It is recorded that Kalha's grandson disregarded the Guru's injunction and employed the sword in the chase. In an attempt to kill a deer he wounded himself and died of the wound. Bhai Santokh Singh, the author of the *Suraj Parkash*, writes that this actually happened when he was a boy.<sup>1</sup>

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1. This sword is now preserved in the Gurdwara at Nabha called Siropao.

## ZAFARNAMA : THE EPISTLE OF VICTORY

Taking leave of Rai Kalha, the Guru went to Dina, where he was welcomed by three brothers, Shamira, Lakhmira, and Takht Mal.<sup>1</sup> When he warned them of the risk that they ran in housing him, they declared their readiness to sacrifice their all for his sake. The Guru had been there for a few days only, when orders arrived from the Governor of Sarhind requiring Shamira to arrest and surrender the Guru. Shamira remained firm and unperturbed. He returned the answer that he was merely serving his spiritual Master. Surely, the act was as harmless as the Governor's would be in serving the prophet of his religion. He added that he would rather die than hand over the Master to the authorities. Having despatched this reply, Shamira sent one of his trusted men to Sarhind to keep eyes and ears open. If the Governor ordered out troops to capture the Guru, the spy was to give a timely warning. His report was that troops had been ordered to be ready but their despatch had been postponed.

The Guru stayed quite a long time at Dina. Sikhs gathered round him again. Some of them were his Saint-Soldiers, who had partaken of the Immortal Draught and were ready to serve him with their lives. He engaged more on pay in order to be ready for any surprise. He felt certain that the Muhammadan army would soon be after him. He was getting ready to face it. He never thought of surrender. His spirits soared as high as ever. Imagine the ordeals which he had passed through at Anandpur, Chamkaur and afterwards. His Sikhs had deserted him at a critical moment, those who had remained true to him had been killed, one by one, two of his four sons had died fighting before his eyes, the other two had been cruelly murdered, his mother had died, his wife and his spiritual associate had separated from him, perhaps never to meet again on this earth, and he himself had to travel barefooted through

1. These three brothers were grandsons of Bhai Jodh Rai or Rai Jodha, who was a devoted Sikh of Guru Hargobind. Their ancestral village was Kangar, but they had migrated to Dina, which was at a distance of about a mile and half from there.

forests and to pass winter night in the fields. All this had not broken his high resolve. When, at night, he lay for rest on the bare earth in the jungle or in the furrowed fields with a clod of earth for his pillow, his hand always gripped the naked sword by his side. The thought of accomplishing the heaven-ordained task of helping and lifting the pious and the humble, preaching and exterminating the evil and tyrannical, and preaching the true religion of love and service, was always uppermost in his mind.

It was at Dina near the village Kangar, that the Guru wrote his famous letter to Aurangzeb. Two letters from the Emperor had been received at Anandpur. A third, which contained the same invitation to the Guru to see the Emperor, was received at Dina. It is possible that Aurangzeb might have been grieved to hear of the excesses committed by his subordinates on the mother and innocent children of the Guru. He might have resolved to make peace with him.<sup>1</sup> But once a liar, always a liar. The Guru had seen how the oaths contained in his two earlier letters had been violated without the least compunction. Moreover, Aurangzeb had taken no action whatsoever against those who had broken his oaths on the *Quran* and violated his solemn assurances. It was now time to send a reply to the Emperor. The letter which he wrote is in exquisite Persian verse and the tone of the whole is in keeping with its title. He called it *Zafarnama* : The Epistle of Victory. The Guru felt that, in spite of his apparent reverses, he had won a moral victory over the crafty Mughal, who had broken all his vows. He was determined that the Emperor should know this, the whole letter reads like a rebuke addressed by a superior personality to one on a lower place, rebuking him for his weaknesses and excesses.

Here is a translation of some extracts from the *Zafarnama* :-

“I have no faith whatsoever in thine oath to which thou tookest the one God as witness. I do not have even a particle of confidence in thee. Thy treasurers and ministers are all false. He who putteth faith in thy oath on the *Quran* is thereby a ruined man.

“As to what happened at Chamkaur, the thing is this that what could forty famished men do when a million fell on them suddenly and unawares. The oath-breakers attacked them abruptly with swords, arrows, and muskets. I was constrained to engage in the combat; and I did my utmost with arrows and muskets. When all other expedients have failed, it is lawful to have recourse to the sword. Had I been able to repose confidence in thine oath on the *Quran*, I would not have abandoned my city. Had I not known that thou wert crafty and

1. Forster also lends supports to this view.



deceitful as a fox, I would have never on any account come hither. He who cometh to me and sweareth on the *Quran* ought not to try to imprison or kill me. Thine army, dressed in black, came like a swarm of bees and, all of a sudden, charged with loud shouts. Every soldier of thine who advanced beyond his defences to attack my position, received an arrow from me and fell deluged in blood. Such of thy troops as did not come forward to attack me received no injury at our hands. When I saw that Nahar Khan had entered the fight, I quickly gave him the taste of my arrow. All soldiers who had come with him and boasted of their prowess ran away from the battle-field like cowards. Then another *Pathan* officer advanced like a rushing flood, an arrow, or a musket ball. He made many assaults manfully and with a mad zeal. He recieved many wounds and at last, after killing two of my Sikhs, was himself killed. Khwaja Mardud kept hidden behind a wall and did not manfully come out into the open field. Had he shown his face to me, I would have bestowed an arrow on him, too. At last, many were killed on both sides and the earth was covered with blood. Corpses lay in heaps... The brave warriors fought most valiantly, not caring even for their lives. But how could forty, even braver than the bravest, succeed against a countless host ? When the sun set, God, my protector, showed me the way to escape from mine enemies. Not even a hair of my head was touched.

“Did I not know, O faithless man, that thou wert a perjurer worshipper of mammon, and transgressor of religion ? Thou keepest no faith and observest no religion. Thou knowest not God and believest not in Muhammad. He who hath regard for his religion never swerveth from his promise. Thou hast no idea of what an oath on the *Quran* meaneth, nor dost thou have any faith in Divine Providence. Wert thou to take a hundred oaths on the *Quran*, I would not even then trust thee in the slightest. Hadst thou any intention of keeping thine oath, thou wouldst have girded up thy loins and come to me. When thou didst swear by Muhammad and called the Word of God to witness, it was incumbent on thee to observe that oath. Were the prophet himself present here, I would tell him the whole story of thy treachery. Do what is incumbent on thee, and adhere to thy written promise. Thou shouldst have fulfilled that promise and also acted according to what the *Qazi*, who brought your message and letter, said to me orally. Everybody should be a man of word, and not have one thing in the heart and quite another on the lips. Thou didst promise to abide by the words of the *Qazi*. If thou hast spoken

truly, then come to me. If thou desirest to seal thy promise on the *Quran*, I shall gladly send it to thee for the purpose. If thou come to the village of Kangar, we shall have an interview. Thou shalt run no danger in coming here, because the whole tribe of Brars are obedient to my orders. Come to me so that we may speak to each other, and that I may utter kind words to thee.

"I am a slave and servant of the King of kings, and ready to obey His orders with my life. Should His order reach me, I will go to thee with all my heart. If thou hast any belief in God, delay not in this matter. It is thy duty to know God. He never ordered thee to oppress any person. Thou art seated on an emperor's throne, yet how strange are thy justice, thy regard for religion, and thy nature...Promises not meant to be fulfilled injure those who make them. Smite not anyone mercilessly with the sword, or a sword from on high shall smite thee and spill thy blood. O man, be not reckless, fear God. The King of kings is without fear. He is the true Emperor of the earth and heaven. He is the master of both worlds...He is the Protector of the miserable and Destroyer of the reckless...Thou art bound by thy oath on the *Quran*. Bring the matter to a good issue according to thy promises... What though my four sons have been killed, the coiled cobra still remains.<sup>1</sup> What bravery is there to quench a few sparks of life ? Thou art only exciting a raging fire all the more.... I would have gone many times to thee had thy promise been kept when my bullocks were plundered.<sup>2</sup> As thou didst forget thy word on that day, so will God forget thee. God will for certain punish thee for the evil deed thou didst design....I do not deem thou knowest God, since thou hast done acts of oppression. Wherefore the great God knoweth thee not, and will not receive thee with all thy wealth. Hadst thou sworn a hundred times on the *Quran*, I would not have trusted thee in the slightest even for a moment. I will not enter thy presence, nor travel on the same road with thee, but, if God so wills it, I will proceed toward thee.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Opinions differ as regards what the Guru means here. Some think that he applies the term to himself and means to say that he himself is alive and unconquered. Others believe that he alludes here to his young son, the Khalsa. "The Guru here distinctly threatens the Emperor."

Macauliffe, *op. cit*

2. This happened at Anandpur.

3. Here the Guru is clearly alluding to the possibility of his meeting Aurangzeb on field of battle. Yet, in spite of all that the Guru says about the untrustworthiness of the Emperor and his own determination never to trust him. Latif says that, on receiving the Emperor's summons, the Guru said 'that to obey his majesty's command would be an honour to him', and that the Guru started towards the Deccan to see

“Fortunate art thou, Aurangzeb, king of kings, expert swordsman and rider. Thou art well-built and intelligent. Thou art clever to administer thy kingdom. Thou art generous to thy co-religionists, and prompt to crush thy enemies...Exalted is thy position...Thou art monarch of the world, but far from thee is religion.

“I wanted to destroy the hillmen, because they were full of strife. They were idol-worshippers, and I was an idol-breaker. What can an enemy do when God, the friend, is kind?...Thou art proud of thy army and wealth. I repose my trust and confidence in the kindness of the King of kings. Be not heedless; this caravansarai is only for a few days. ... Even though thou art strong, oppress not the weak. Lay not the axe to thy kingdom. When God is a friend, millions of enemies cannot do any harm...”

The letter was entrusted to Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharm Singh, the two out of his Beloved Five who had survived the battle of Chamkaur and accompanied him during his hazardous wandering. They were directed to deliver it to Aurangzeb, who was then at Ahmadnagar in the Deccan. After passing through Delhi, Agra, Ujjain, Burhanpur, and Aurangabad, and meeting with many adventures and hardships on the way, they at last reached Ahmadnagar in the Deccan.

When they entered Aurangzeb's court with the letter, they neither bent their heads, nor uttered any word of salutation. They simply shouted, “*Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh*”, and handed the letter to him.<sup>1</sup>

How Aurangzeb reacted to the *Zafarnama* will be dealt with in another chapter.

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(cont. from page 195)

the Emperor. He adds, ‘Dr Trumpp believed that Guru Gobind (Singh) never obeyed the summons of Aurangzeb to attend the Imperial camp, but he has given neither authority nor reasons for this belief. The whole purport of the *Zafarnama* composed by (Guru) Gobind (Singh), in which he exposed the wrongs of the Moghal Government, tends to show that he proceeded on his journey to visit the Emperor.’

Let the reader peruse the *Zafarnama* and then decide for himself whether it has the purport attributed to it by Latif, or, whether it is not authority enough for Dr Trumpp and others to maintain that the Guru never obeyed the summons.

1. Narang *op. cit.*

## THE BATTLE OF MUKATSAR

The air was thick with rumours that the *Nawab* of Sarhind was marching, or was about to march, in pursuit of the Guru. Considering that if the fighting took place anywhere near the village, the inhabitants would be involved in unnecessary troubles, the Guru decided to move on into the fastness of the jungles where defence would also be easier. He, therefore, moved on from Dina. Wherever he went, the people flocked to listen to the word of the Master. Several took the baptismal Nectar and enlisted in the selfless army of the Khalsa. The Guru also engaged brave warriors as paid soldiers, and collected ammunition and weapons of war.

After passing through Jalal, Bhagat, and several other villages, he arrived near Kot Kapura (Kapura's Fortress). This place was situated on a promontory in a big pond and was admirable suited to stand a siege or attack. When Kapura, the Master of the fortress, came to pay homage to the Master of the Khalsa, the latter said: 'Let me occupy your fortress and give battle to the Turks from there.' But Kapura refused, saying that the Turks might hang him if he agreed to let him in. The Guru smiled and said, 'Your weakness of heart will be your death and ruin.' Kapura went away in anger and the Guru moved on to Dhilwan. There, Kaula, a descendant of Pirthi Chand, presented white robes to the Guru and begged him to put off the blue garments. They were torn and thrown into the fire, bit by bit. All the time, the Guru was saying that he was burning the Mughal Empire, shred by shred. A piece of the blue dress did not fall into the fire. With the Guru's permission, Bhai Man Singh took it up and wrapped it round his head. Thus arose the sect of *Nihangs* with the blue dress.

Kapura soon repented of having displeased the Master. He hastened to beg his pardon. The Master asked him to shake off all fear and become a Khalsa. Kapura begged him to let his sons and grandsons drink the Nectar and become 'Singhs.' His wish was granted.

From Dhilwan the Master moved on to Jaito. Here information was brought to him that Wazir Khan, *Nawab* of Sarhind, was coming with over five thousand soldiers, and would reach there in four or five days. The Guru asked Kapura for a trusty guide who could show him the way to the large, natural tank of Khidrana. This was provided. The Guru moved on, collecting men and material of war as he went.

As stated already, hundreds of Sikhs had deserted the Guru at Anandpur. Some of them were killed on the way but others reached their homes alive. When the deeds and sufferings of the Guru became known in the Majha, such of the deserters as belonged to that tract of gallant warriors repented of their weakness and folly. They had been shamed by their own women who would not let them enter their homes and said to them, 'Either go back and make amends for your cowardly, effeminate behaviour, or exchange your dress with ours, stay at home, and act as housewives in our place. Dressed in your clothes, we will go, fight for the Guru, lay down our lives for him, and wash away with our blood the shame which you have brought on us all, nay on the whole Majha itself.'

No wonder, then, that they resolved to return to the Master and die fighting for him. A band of forty fully armed Saint soldiers from the Majha started towards the Guru under the leadership of Mai Bhago of Jhabal and Bhai Mahan Singh of Sursingh, district Amritsar. As they wended their way together, or more probably, in small groups, they made known the object of their journey to the Sikhs living in the villages by which they passed or where they halted for rest. As a consequence, bands of fully armed Sikhs from various villages started in the same direction, with the same object, as the original forty. Some wise men from Lahore who had, or thought they had, some influence at the Mughal *darbar* also joined them on the way.

The party met the Master between Ramiana and Khidrana. The deserters begged his pardon and recommended the new comers to his grace. The wise men then advised him to give up fighting and make peace with the Emperor. They offered to act as negotiators.

With a smile, the Guru replied, 'Friends, you come to advise me, thinking yourselves to be wiser than I. But I am not inclined to accept your advice. You have not rightly apprehended the real spirit of Sikhism. If you had, you would not be advising me, but seeking my advice and carrying out my orders. If you had understood my ideal of life, you would have never thought of making peace between me and the tyrants. Rather, you would have joined my army and fought against them. You advise me to give up fighting and seek peace with the cruel, bigoted

tyrants. I cannot do that. Know ye not that I have no quarrel with, or personal grudge against any man ? People are groaning under tyranny and oppression. It is to rescue them that I have taken up arms. My sword strikes at tyrants, not at men. It defends the weak against the strong. Come and join with me in this holy task of liberating the people. Your policy of co-operation and meek submission has only tightened the chains. What could you, or people like you, do when Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur were put to inhuman tortures and death ? The only sorrow that I feel springs from beholding my countrymen disunited and in chains. The only desire that sits ever alert in my heart is for the unification and liberation of the downtrodden people. If you are my Sikhs, follow my advice. I am sorry I cannot concur with you or accept you as my instructors and counsellors in this matter.”

The wise men from Lahore shook their heads and were quiet. The Master moved on to Khidrana. When he was gone, Bhai Mahan Singh drew a line on the ground and said, ‘Let those who want to die fighting for the Master step forth to this side.’ Very few could resist the appeal. They had come all that distance for no other purpose. Of course, the peace maker returned to their homes.

On reaching Khidrana, they found the tank almost dry. The Master had, for that reason, moved on from the place. Bhai Mahan Singh proposed to engage the enemy there, and thus allow time to the Guru to reach a place of safety. Big white sheets of *khaddar* were spread on the shrubs, so that the enemy might think that the Sikhs were encamping there in great numbers. Soon, the Muhammadan army came up. Kapura was their guide.

Long and bloody was the battle which ensued there that day 21st of *Baisakh*, 1762 of May 8, 1705. The Sikhs from Majha under Mai Bhago, and Bhai Mahan Singh were in the vanguard of the Guru’s soldiers. They bore the brunt of the Mughal army’s onslaught. All the Sikhs soldiers fought with their usual courage and power. Mai Bhago was seen fighting in the foremost rank. The Guru had reached an eminence about two miles away from Khidrana by the time that the battle began. From there he directed a rain of his gold tipped arrows at the most prominent officers and soldiers of the enemy. The Muhammadan army rushed forward several times to overpower the Sikhs and to dislodge them from their places, but had to retire in dismay each time. At last, their bullets and arrows having been all used up, the Sikhs were obliged to have recourse to spear and the sword. Small bands advanced, engaged the enemies in hand to hand fights, killed several times their number, until they were ultimately themselves hewn

to pieces: They were not fighting for victory. They had no thoughts of saving their lives. Their only wish was to win the Master's pleasure by checking, as long as possible, the advance of the enemy against him. In time, all of them lay on the ground. About three thousand of the Turks lay with them on the same bloody bed.

Wazir Khan advanced to take possession of the tank. To his dismay, it was quite dry. Feeling that he would be amply compensated for his troubles if the Guru's body were found among the dead, Wazir Khan ordered his men to make a minute and thorough search. Here again he was disappointed.

It was the month of Baisakh. His army was crying for water. On his enquiry, Kapura told him that water could be had at a distance of thirty miles in front, and ten miles in the rear. He further advised him to turn back and save the surviving army. Abandoning the dead and the wounded where they lay, the Mohammadan army hurried backwards.

After they had gone, the Guru visited the scene of battle, and, with a fatherly affection, went about lifting the heads of the martyrs into his lap, wiping their faces, and blessing them, one by one. When it was the turn of Bhai Mahan Singh to be thus caressed and blessed, the Master found that there was still some life in him. After a while Bhai Mahan Singh opened his eyes, and found himself in the lap of the Master. He was filled with supreme joy. The Guru asked him if he had any desire to be fulfilled. Bhai Mahan Singh said, 'No, Father! I have seen thee. What else or more could I desire? But if thou hast taken compassion on us here, then tear off our disclaimer, and let the broken ties be re-united.' The Guru was highly pleased. He blessed him and said, 'You have done a great deed. You have saved the root of Sikhism in the Majha. You and your companions, all forty of you, are *Muktas* or the Saved Ones, delivered from the round of births and deaths for ever.' Saying this, he took out the disclaimer from under his belt, tore it into tiny bits, and threw them all away, Bhai Mahan Singh saw this, felt immensely relieved, took a long breath, and closed his eyes for ever.

Then the Guru went to the place where Mai Bhago was lying senseless. She had not been severely wounded but had fallen down from utter exhaustion. A little aid revived her. She told the Master what had occurred after he had left the party. He, in turn, told her of the last saving deed of Bhai Mahan Singh, and added, 'he asked nothing for himself. He has done a great deed. He has re-united the broken ties and has saved the honour of the Majha Sikhs. He has saved and preserved the root of Sikhism in the Majha.

The Guru was greatly pleased with Mai Bhago for what she had done. He got her removed from the battlefield, and got her wounds treated and healed. When she was all right, he baptized her and she became Mai Bhago Kaur.<sup>1</sup>

The Guru gave orders to his Brar soldiers to gather dry wood from the jungle all round and prepare a pyre with it. The bodies of Bhai Mahan Singh and other martyrs were placed on the pyre and cremated.

The tank of Khidrana was renamed by the Master as *Mukatsar* or the Tank of salvation. Every year, on the first of *Magh*, Sikhs gather there from all parts of the country to commemorate the heroism of the martyrs and to have a dip in the sacred tank.

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1. Mai Bhag Kaur, dressed in male attire, remained with and served the Guru to the end. Along with ten Sikhs she used to guard the Guru's bed. When the Guru died, she went to Bidar and lived there to the end of her days.



## THE LAKHI JUNGLE

After cremating the martyrs of Muktsar, the Guru continued his onward journey. After passing through Sarain, Nautheha, Tahlian Fattu, Rupana, etc, he reached Chhatiana. In all places he liberated the people's bodies from chains of sins and evil, and their minds and heart from thralom of fear, desire, and passion ; and engendered in them a desire to close their ranks and lilberate their country from the tyrannical rule of the Turks.

It has been stated already that, in addition to his Saint soldiers, who served him for love, the Guru had engaged a large number of Malwa Sikhs, mostly Brars, as paid soldiers. For some time it had not been possible to pay them regularly . They began to grumble and complain. Again and again, they pressed him to clear their accounts and let them go. He would ask them to wait. But they grew impatient. At Chhatiana their impatience made them lose self control. They became ready to go to any length to get their dues settled. One day, as the Guru was about to move on, they held up his horse by the reins and refused to let him proceed until they were paid. 'Wait a little longer.'said he. 'No money is at hand today ; but God will shortly send enough of it. You know the risks that I am in just now. Let us proceed to a safer place. You will have your dues and more.

But those Malwa Sikhs had no regard for the risks that he was talking of. So they said, 'We have waited long enough. We refuse to wait a minute longer. From here we will not move, nor will let you move, until the arrears are paid. If you need us further, promise to double our pay and we shall be at your service as long as you like.'

The Master smiled and said, 'Well, make your choice. Choose between me and the object of your greed. Will you have the Sikh faith or silver coins ?'

'Sikhs we already are,' replied the Malwa Sikhs and Brars. 'The Sikh faith we already have. Give us silver. We desire nothing else.'

Just then, a Sikh arrived with a large load of gold and silver coins. They were heaped on the earth at the Guru's building. He then told the Brars to come, one by one, and get their arrears of pay. There were five hundred cavalry men and nine hundred foot soldiers. They were all paid at the agreed rate. When the Guru asked their leader, Dana, at what rate he should be paid, he begged the Guru to let him ever remain with him as his Sikh. This reply pleased the Guru. 'Well done, Dana,' said he. 'Thou hast preserved the foundation of the faith in the Malwa, as Mahan Singh and his companions did in the Majha. Now drink the Nectar and become a Khalsa, the King's own.'

Dana became Dana Singh. Most of the paid Malwa Brar soldiers were allowed to go. The money which was left over after paying off the Brar soldiers was buried by the Guru at that place. He then moved on at his pleasure, baptizing his Sikhs, and lifting the people from the mire of mundane fears and passions. After he had left, the Brars wanted to dig out the buried treasure, but in spite of their long and diligent search, they could not discover it. At that place there is a gurdwara: called *Guptsar* The Hidden Reservoir.

At Bhai Dana Singh's loving invitation, the Master changed his course towards the village of this faithful saint soldier. About sunset the party was passing through a beautiful green forest. The Master's eyes were slowly moving to right and left, resting, here and there, on the superb display and natural grandeur which invitingly stretched as far as, and beyond the horizon. His mind was calmly absorbed in contemplating the joy-inspiring scenery, and thence ascending to the feet of the Great Master of Craft, its Creator and Sustainer. Suddenly, one of his companions said, 'Master ! pardon my interruption. This is the time of our evening songs and prayer.'

The Master stopped his horse, got down, and ordered all to assemble around him. Dana Singh went to his village and returned with food, bedding and other necessary material. The Master was charmed by the natural scenery of the place, called it Lakhi Jungle, and decided to stay there for some time.

Disciples from far and near come in their hundred and thousands to see the long separated Master. The court poets and bards, who had scattered on his leaving Anandpur, gathered again in the Lakhi Jungle. This reunion after unspeakable vicissitudes and vexations years inspired unbounded joy in all hearts. Secret springs of poetry gushed forth in the bosoms of the poets. Each vied with the others in praising the Master and the Lord above. Verily, Anandpur was reproduced in all its joys and blessings in the Lakhi Jungle. The poems which these love gatherings inspired are very pathetic.

The Master's extempore effusion stands above them all. It may be rendered as under :

'When they heard the call of the Beloved Master, the buffaloes let drop the half chewed grass from their mouths, and lifted in hurry their half slaked lips from the surface of water;

None lingered to wait for the others ; each came running all alone; such was the strange force of the unique fascination that overcame their hearts ;

The period of separation was over and gone ; the Friend, the Master, met and caressed them; it was then that they felt comfort and relief; it was then that they thanked the Lord for this reunion

There were the same *Nam* gatherings in the Lakhi Jungle as they used to be at Anandpur. The same joy inspiring and love breeding atmosphere as created here as it used to be there. Those who saw him here, in the midst of his disciples, found it hard to believe that what they had heard of his sufferings and bereavements, could be even partially true. The radiance of his eyes was undimmed; the majestic glory of his countenance was undisturbed. He made numerous love conquests here again. Many sceptics found all their questions and doubts vanishing at the very sight of him. It was during his stay in the Lakhi Jungle that a Muhammadan *faqir*, Ibrahim by name, came to the Master as a suppliant for Nectar. He was the first Muhammadan to be baptized. By admitting him into the Brotherhood of the Khalsa, the Master showed to the people that his was a Proselytizing, and not an exclusive religion, and that to him Hindus and Muslims were alike. Ibrahim became Ajmer Singh. The Master and his disciples took food prepared at Ajmer Singh's place. Orthodox Hindus were scandalized ; but a Khalsa was a Khalsa, whether before his birth into this family he was a Sayyid, Brahmin or a *Chamar* when the Master wanted to proceed further, Ajmer Singh prayed for permission to accompany him on his journeys and drink daily at the fountain of life which he found gushing from the Master's presence. His wish was granted, and he remained with the Guru.

## SRI DAMDAMA SAHIB

After passing through many villages and showering bliss on large numbers in every one of them, the Master moved on to Talwandi Sabo. Dalla, a disciple of the Master was the most prominent of the inhabitants of that place. He was obeyed by the people of his own village as well as by those of the neighbourhood. At his call, they would lay aside the plough, take up the sword and the spear, and march under him to any scene of battle or conflict to which he might desire to lead them. When Dalla heard of the Master's approach, he came with four hundred armed stalwarts to meet and welcome him to his village. A hundred rupees and a noble steed in full equipment formed his humble offering to the Master. When the party reached near the village, the Master ordered a halt. It was the spot once sanctified by Guru Tegh Bahadur. The camp was set up. The Master's tent was pitched on a little mound. He called it the *Damdama*: the Breathing or Resting Place. Since then, it has become a sacred place for the disciples who call it Damdama Sahib.

At Dalla's suggestion, the rest of the paid soldiers were paid off and dismissed. Disciples came from far and near, in hundreds and thousands. There were the same *Nam* gatherings once again as at Anandpur. Verily, Anandpūr was reproduced once more at Damdama Sahib. One day, after the love gathering had come to a close, Dalla expressed his great grief at the cruel and untimely deaths of the Master's four sons. 'To my eternal regret,' he added, 'I never heard that you were in such a sorry strait. Ah, had I known in time, or had you remembered me then, my soldiers, who are as big and brave as giants, would have given the Turks a good taste of their steel. The world would have marvelled at their daring, and the dear Princes would not have perished.'

'Don't grieve, my friend,' said the Master. 'The Princes have returned to their Eternal Home. They are not dead. As for your soldier, they have strong bodies, but thy lack faith as well as strength of heart. They are wanting in the true martial spirit which the Immortal Draught has produced in the Khalsa.'

'But Sire,' replied Dalla, 'bravery depends on the power of the arms. They have giant-like muscles. Each of them can over power scores of the enemy. But pity it is that I had no chance to prove their valour. I cannot help feeling gloomy at the thought that they could not be called in to save the precious lives of the dear Princes.'

The Master smiled and said, 'What is past is beyond recall. Let us take care about the future, lest, when the time of need and trial should come, we should be found unprepared.'

Further discussion was prevented by the arrival of *Sangat* from Lahore. One of the new comers offered the Master a musket of a new and improved design. The Master was pleased at the workmanship of the artisan. He then looked up to Dalla and said, 'Well you just order two of your brave soldiers to stand in a line about fifty yards apart, the first one standing near that tree over there. I want to test the range of the weapon.'

Dalla was startled at the strange request. His men were stunned. One by one, they began to slip away. Those who still kept their seats sat with their eyes to the ground. Though Dalla could not discover any sense in sacrificing two brave men for the mere testing of a weapon, yet he wanted not only to obey the Master, but also to show him that his giants were no cowards. So he said aloud, 'Let two come out and be a sacrifice unto the Master.' There was no response. All the giants, the pride of Dalla, slipped away to their homes. Dalla sat with his head bent low in shame and vexation. The Master then said, 'Let some one go and announce to those two Sikhs over there that one Sikh is needed to serve as a target for this new musket. Nothing more is to be said.'

As soon as the two Sikhs heard the announcement, they did not wait even to bind their turbans. They ran to the Master, trying, all the time, to wrap the turbans round their head as well as they could. Each claimed a preferential treatment and pressed his claim to priority with simple vigour and humble sincerity. At last the Master said, 'It is difficult to settle your dispute. So let both stand there in line.'

Then began a fresh struggle. Each of them wanted to stand nearer the Master so as to receive the bullet before the other. 'Steady please,' said the Master, and they stood calm and quite with their eyes fixed on the Master's radiant face. He took aim, slowly and deliberately, and pressed the trigger. The Sikhs did not swerve. The bullet had been fired over their heads. Dalla was amazed at their behaviour. He felt convinced that his own soldiers would have deserted the Master at the first approach of danger. They were, he thought, no better than cowards. The thought plunged him in gloom. The Guru encouraged him and said, 'Don't give

way to despair. Your men, and you yourself, possess immense physical strength, no doubt, but, as I said already, you lack what is far more important and powerful—a strong spirit to control and command the body. Constant meditation on God and on the ideals of my Saint Soldiers makes the mind and the heart firm and unshakable. Come, have a draught of the Nectar; become a member of the leonine Khalsa, and have an experience of what true bravery means.

Dalla was not yet ready for *Amrit*. He kept mum. During the night he and his remaining soldiers ran away. In the morning gathering, not finding him present, the Guru asked, "Where is Dalla?" A Muslim *faqir* who was present in the gathering jokingly said, "There is no Dalla or Nalla here. The Guru has been left alone." The Guru replied, "No, *faqir*, you are mistaken. The Guru is never alone; for God is ever with him."

After a short period of doubts and hesitations, Dalla took the *Amrit*, and from a mere soldier became a Saint soldier of the Guru and God. His name was changed to Dall Singh. Thousands more were baptized at this place. The Guru's *darbar* was now as splendid as it used to be at Anandpur. The court poets and scholars, who had gathered in the Lakhi Jungle, were with the Guru at Damdama Sahib. As the news of the Master's stay at that place spread abroad, learned Sikhs flocked round him in large numbers. Soon, the place became a centre of learning. The Guru called it the *Kanshi* or Benaras of the Sikhs. He would throw baptismal water among the bushes and declare that Sikhs would spring there from every shrub. At other times, he scattered pens in different directions, calling the place the *Lakhan Sar*: the Reservoir of Pens. He said that some day the place would become a seat of scholarship and learning, and would be inhabited by learned and expert writers.

While at Damdama Sahib the Guru celebrated *Hola Mohalla* in the same grand manner as he had done at Anandpur. He was as jubilant as ever. Seeing him thus engaged, none could guess, or even believe when told, that he had passed through so much suffering.

During the Master's stay at Damdama Sahib, twice did orders come from Sarhind requiring Dall Singh to surrender the Master to the Muhammadan authorities. On both occasions, he returned a defiant reply. 'I will not,' said he, 'let even a hair on the Master's body be harmed as long as I live. If you come with your armies, we shall retire into the neighbouring jungles, and your armies will, if they dare pursue us, perish for want of food and water.'

At this time, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, mother of the Khalsa, along with Bhai Mani Singh, came from Delhi to join the Master. After obeisance and greetings, Mata Sundri said, 'where are my Four, Master ? Where ?' Her voice was choked; her eyes were brimful with tears. The whole congregation was deeply affected. Except the Master's no eye was dry, and no heart was beating its normal beat. The Guru closed his eyes in divine meditation for a while, and then, in a calm, sweet voice, sang a song of the Master. A certain peace and composure descended imperceptibly on the throbbing hearts. Mata's eyes, too, were now closed; her face assumed a calmer look. The Master finished his song and sat absorbed in divine meditation. The mother saw her Four, dressed all in light, residing in the regions above. Many others, too, had a glimpse of the heavenly sight. Then spoke the Master, 'Thy Four are not dead; they live and play in the lap of the Eternal Father:

'In thy lap and mine lies the whole people, the Khalsa here;  
Yes, thy Four have been sacrificed for the sake of these millions of our sons.  
What, then, if thy Four are gone ? There yet live, and shall live millions of our  
dear, brave sone.'

Rama and Tiloka,<sup>1</sup> the two brothers who had, under great risks, performed the obsequies of the martyrs at Chamkaur, came to see the Master at Damdama Sahib. They brought cartloads of grain and other material. At the Master's bidding, they narrated how they had put on the appearance of madmen, and, thus disarming all suspicion, had collected and cremated the bodies of the martyrs. They also stated that they had found a large number of the martyrs bodies in one place in a half burnt condition. Near the pile lay the half burnt body of a Sikh lady. Apparently, she had tried to perform the sacred duty, but had been detected and killed. The body of that heroine had also been cremated by the two brothers.

The Master was pleased with this service of theirs. They had also helped him at Anandpur with men and horses. So, he said, 'Have you any desire to be fulfilled ? Name it.' Rama replied that they had enough of movable property, but had not yet acquire possession of any land. 'Cheer up,' said the Master. 'Nor land but territories, not possession

1. These two Chaudharis were sons of Phul. The latter's father had died when he (Phul) was yet a child. His uncle, Bhai Kala, took him to Guru Hargobind, who was on a visit to that neighbourhood. On reaching the Guru's presence, Phul began to beat his belly. On the Guru's asking why he was doing so, his uncle replied, 'This orphan is hungry. He is asking for something to fill his belly with.'

The Guru said, 'He is very lucky. His descendants will be rulers. He will himself have a good luck.' This blessing was later repeated and confirmed by Guru Hari Rai.

but dominion and sway, will be yours. The time has come when the promise of Guru Hari Rai and Guru Har gobind given to Phul, your ancestor, shall be fulfilled. Take the baptismal Nectar, become Khalsa, and prosperity will knock at your gates. They obeyed. Rama and Tiloka became Ram Singh and Tilok Singh. The Chief of Patiala is a descendant of Ram Singh, and the Chiefs of Jind and Nabha are descendants of Tilok Singh.

It was at Damdama Sahib that the Guru blessed the Malwa land and said that time would come when instead of *bajra*, moth, *akk*, and reeds, the country would produce wheat, grams, mangoes, and pomegranates, in abundance, and canals of water would flow there. All know that the prophecy has been fulfilled. Those who feel inclined to regard this prophecy as a mere invention of chroniclers should note that the words were said in Samvat 1761. Bhai Santokh Singh, who has recorded them in *Suraj Prakash* died in Samvat 1900 B.K. The canals were constructed in the Malwa in Samvat 1932 B.K. So, we must believe either that Bhai Santokh Singh merely recorded a prophecy made by the Guru, or that he himself was able to look into the future, and ascribed to the Guru what he felt was going to happen about forty years thereafter.

The Guru stayed at Talwandi Sabo, re-named Damdama Sahib, for nearly nine months and a half. While there, he dictated from memory the whole of *Guru Granth Sahib* and gave it the final form which became fixed for all time. The work of writing was done by Bhai Mani Singh. This work of re-editing consisted of completing the *Nitnem* or daily prayers by the addition of four hymns under *Sopurkh*, expunging some pieces which had come to be added somehow at the end of some copies, amending spellings here and there, etc.

This famous volume of the holy *Granth* was lost in February 1762 A.D. at the time of the *Wadda Ghallughara*: the Second Great Holocaust in Sikh history. But, luckily, several copies thereof had been prepared prior to that tragic occurrence.<sup>1</sup>

1. Another instance of lack of proper knowledge and amplitude of jealous sentiments is furnished by Latif in his description of this act of the Guru. On pages 271-72 he writes:— It was the intention of [Guru] Govind Singh to modify the code of [Guru] Nanak as laid down in the *Adi Granth* and with that object he sent his own men to the Sodhis of Kartarpur to bring him the *Adi Granth* signed by Guru Arjun, which was, at that time, in their custody ; but as the Sodhis were averse to the religious belief of (Guru) Gobind Singh, and did not acknowledge him as their Guru, they declined to lend the book to [Guru] Gobind [Singh], making the remark that, if the Guru, who styled himself the true king, had the genius of law giver, he would do well to make a *Granth* of his own. He occupied himself in composing



After a stay of nearly nine months and a half at Damdama Sahib, the Guru decided to continue his journey southwards. Dall Singh and other devoted disciples of his begged him to give up the idea of further travels and stay among them. They submitted that there was, at the time, little or no danger to his person ; for, after the battle of Muktsar, the Governor of Sarhind had ceased to molest him. Moreover, he was in the midst of his devoted Saint soldiers, who would readily protect him with their lives, if need be ; and he was in a part of the country which was not easily accessible to the Imperial armies. All this was represented to him by the disciples in support of their prayers. But he was not eager to save his life or to live in ease and comfort. The task assigned to him by the Father had to be accomplished. For the accomplishment thereof he felt an urge to proceed southwards and make new love conquests. Hence he decided to proceed onwards.

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(cont. from page 209)

the new *Granth* in his retreat at Damdama, and finished it there on Sunday, 8th of *Bhadon Samvat 1753* (1696A.D.). It was named by him the *Daswan Padshash ka Granth*

Guru Gobind Singh never thought of modifying the code of Guru Nanak. There was neither need nor occasion for it. What he wanted was to re-edit it and to incorporate into the Sacred Book the hymns composed by Guru Tegh Bahadur. The custodians of the original volume of the *Adi Granth Sahib* refused to part with their treasure, not because they were averse to the religion of Guru Gobind Singh, for his religious teachings were the same as those of Guru Nanak, but because they did not wish to let go out of their hands a book which had procured them position, honour, and wealth, among the Sikhs. They feared that they might never get it back.

It was the *Adi Granth* that was dictated here by the Guru. This volume was called the '*Damdama Sahib Wali Bir*'. The *Daswan Padshash ka Granth* was not composed by the Guru but was compiled by his Sikhs, like Bhai Mani Singh, after his death, when all the available translations and original compositions of the Guru were put together for the first time.

Another point in Latif's account deserves special notice, for it exposes the shallowness of his knowledge of history. He says that the Guru composed his '*new Granth* in his retreat at Damdama, and finished it there in *Samvat 1753*'. By a little exertion of the mind and memory, Latif could have discovered that in 1753 the Guru was living in peace at Anandpur. The Khalsa was created there in 1756 Bk. Anandpur had to be evacuated in 1761 Bk., and the battle of Mukstar was fought in 1762. It was some time after even that the Guru arrived at Damdama.

## CHAPTER 40

### THE ZAFARNAMA AND AURANGZEB

As stated already, the Guru had deputed Bhai Daya Singh and Dharm Singh to proceed to the Deccan and deliver the Epistle of Victory to Emperor Aurangzeb. Now where and in what state was the Emperor at that time ? From 1681 to his death in 1707 A.D. Aurangzeb was in the Deccan, engaged in a long and unprofitable struggle with the Muslim powers of Bijapur and Golkanda and with the Marathas. From 1700 onwards he was personally directing operations against the Marathas, who were offering unexpectedly stubborn resistance. 'The Imperial army at first succeeded in capturing about half a dozen forts of the outer line of the Maratha defences, but behind them lay many others equally strong and more inaccessible. Moreover, what the Mughals won one day was regained the next by the Marathas, so that war was protracted interminably. Famine, pestilence, and flood caused havoc in the Mughal army, and the "very elements seemed to combine against the Mughals." Speaking of one flood in the Bhima river where the royal camp was pitched, Khafi Khan say, "The water began to overflow at midnight when all the world was asleep... The flood carried off about ten to twelve thousand men, with establishments of the king and the princes and the *Amirs*, horses, bullocks, and cattle in countless numbers, tents and furniture beyond all count. The king wrote out prayers with his own hand, and ordered them to be thrown into the water, for the purpose of causing it to subside,"<sup>1</sup> But these suppliant charms were ineffectual to arrest the course of nature as his arms to stem the human tide of war which he had provoked and which, providence had decreed, was to submerge the empire."<sup>2</sup>

It was during the days of such reverses and calamities that the Emperor had written his third (autograph) letter to the Guru. Later, in the midst of these reverses and calamities he was attacked by a severe

1. Eliot and Dowson, *History of India as Told by Its Own Historians*, Vol, vii, p.361.
2. Edwards and Garret, *The Mughal Rule in India*, p. 153.

illness in October, 1705. 'He was consequently persuaded by his ministers to retire to Ahmadnagar. Pursued by skirmishing bodies of exultant Marathas, "slowly and with difficulty." The Emperor reached Ahmadnagar on the 20th January 1706, "where he had encamped twenty years earlier, filled with hopes of conquest and glory." Here he lingered on for a year—an old man of ninety, with little strength of body, and mind and, at length, gave in on the morning of Friday, 20th February, 1707 and his weary spirit found peace.'<sup>1</sup>

It was at Ahmadnagar, where he lay ill, waiting for Death, the Deliverer, that the Guru's letter was delivered to Aurangzeb. What was the state of his mind and heart at that time? That state was to determine the effect which the *Zafarnama* was to have on him. In the first place, he had 'realized towards the end of his career that his long reign of fifty years had been a colossal failure.'<sup>2</sup> This realization could not but have plunged him in grief and dejection. Memories of what he has done to his father, brothers, their families, to *Sufis* and *Shias*; to Hindus and Sikhs, must all have crowded into his fevered brain and added to its torments. He must have remembered what he had sown and shuddered at the thought of what he was to reap, now that the reaping time was so near. Latif says, 'Before his death, he seems to have felt strongly that his dissolution was near, and the letters he dictated to his sons in the last days are sufficiently indicative of the intense remorse he felt for the past.'<sup>3</sup> In his letter to Prince Azam he wrote: 'The instant which passed in power, hath left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire. My valuable time has been passed vainly. I bought nothing into this world and carry nothing out except the infirmities of man. I fear for my salvation and dread the torments with which I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounties of God, yet, regarding my actions, fear will not quit me.'<sup>4</sup> To Prince Kam Bakhsh he wrote, 'I carry with me the fruits of my sins and imperfections—I have committed numerous crimes and know not with what punishment I may be seized.'<sup>5</sup>

The Guru's letter reached Aurangzeb at a time when he was feeling that his end was near, he was full of intense remorse for his Sins and crimes, and dreaded the punishment that he might be seized with on account of them. The Guru's letter must have conjured up before his fevered, agitated mind vivid pictures of his sins and crimes against the

1. Edwardes and Garret, *op.cit.* p.153.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 155.

3. Latif, *op. cit.*, p.176.

4. Edwardes and Garret, *op. cit.* p.155.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 156.

Guru, committed in violation of his oaths on the *Quran*. It told him what to expect from God and prophet.

The Guru's letter, backed by further details given by the bearer thereof, had a strong effect on the dying Emperor. It softened his heart. It filled him with repentance. It deepened his remorse for the past and his anxiety about the future.

The Emperor treated Bhai Daya Singh and Dharm Singh with kindness and courtesy. He asked them to appeal to the Guru on his behalf and prevail upon him to come, visit him, and speak to him the 'kind words' which he had promised to do in his letter. Having learnt from them how difficult and risky it had been for them to travel all the way from the Panjab, he furnished them with a *parwana* of safe conduct for their return journey.

It is believed that he wrote to the Governor of Sarhind telling him that the Guru should not be molested any more. From *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* we learn that he issued orders that Guru should be provided safe conduct throughout the empire on his way to Ahmadnagar, and, if he so required, given cash to defray his travelling expenses.

Bhai Daya Singh and Dharm Singh returned to the Guru in due course. Because of the *Parwana* of safe conduct which had been furnished to them, their return journey had been quite safe and much quicker. They informed the Guru of all that they had seen and heard. They conveyed to him Aurangzeb's last request. The Guru was deeply moved when he heard of the Emperor's condition. He decided to accept the Emperor's invitation to go to him, to utter kind words to him, and to prepare him for the last journey to meet his Maker.

So he started towards the Deccan. When he reached the neighbourhood of Baghur, he hears the news that Aurangzeb had died in his camp at Ahmadnagar on February 20, 1707. On hearing the news, the Guru retraced his steps to the north. As we shall see, he had to play an important role in the impending war of succession for the throne of Delhi.

## BAHADUR SHAH AND THE GURU-I

When Aurangzeb died in the Deccan in the last week of February, 1707, his eldest son, Bahadur Shah was away in Afghanistan. His younger brother, Muhammad Azim, who was in the Deccan with his father, usurped the throne, took possession of the treasury, and assumed command of the Imperial army. Bahadur Shah hastened to fight for his father's throne. His opposing brother was better equipped. So he had to look out for assistance wherever he could expect to get it. He had heard of the Guru's victories against the Hill Chiefs and the imperial forces. It was true that the Guru's power had been apparently broken and most of his soldiers dispersed, still Bahadur Shah knew that a word from the Guru could bring into the field of hundreds of soldiers who would never desert him or fly from the field. There was nothing low or unusual in his asking for the Guru's help. S.M. Latif gets unnecessarily irritated over the assertion of the Sikh writers that the Emperor sought and got the Guru's assistance in his struggle against his brother. Any sensible man in the position of Bahadur Shah would have looked for allies in all directions, and it was but natural for him to invite the Master of the Khalsa to his aid.

It has been already stated that Bhai Nand Lal, a Secretary of Bahadur Shah, had, for a long time, taken shelter at the Guru's *darbar*, and that, on his advice, the Prince had once sought and obtained the Guru's blessings. When the war of succession began, Bahadur Shah sent Bhai Nand Lal to the Guru and requested him to help him in obtaining the throne. Bhai Nand Lal met the Guru at Bhagaur in Rajputana, explained to him all that had happened, and conveyed to him Bahadur Shah's request for help in the war of succession. To the Guru there appeared to be nothing objectionable or against his ideals in helping a lawful claimant to the throne who was also a better man than his usurping brother. It was as an ally, and not as an employee, that the Guru was to help the Emperor. So, he sent Bhai Dharm Singh along with a band of his chosen Saint warriors. He also sent through them an order

to the Khalsa to render all possible help to Bahadur Shah in the ensuing war of succession.<sup>1</sup>

On June 8, 1707 a battle was fought at Jajau, near Agra, in which Bahadur Shah was victorious. His brother, Azam, was defeated and killed, and he ascended the throne. He then despatched Bhai Dharm Singh to inform the Guru of the victory and thank him on his behalf for his valuable help. He also expressed his strong desire to see the Guru, but pleaded that he himself was too busy to go to Guru, and hence, requested the latter to meet him at Agra.

The Guru accepted the Emperor's invitation. He retraced his steps to the north and met Bahadur Shah at Agra on *Sawan* 23, 1763 Bk/ July 24, 1707. He was received with the honour due to an ally and holy man; for it should be remembered that the Guru had many admirers among the Muslims, and that '*Hind ka Pir*' was the title by which he was known to the Muslim in general. Bahadur Shah gave the Guru a robe of honour and a jewelled scarf (*dhukhdhukhi*) worth 60 thousand rupees. That this was given to an ally and man of religion, and not to an employee or prospective employee, is shown by the fact that the Guru did not put it on there and then, as all honoured servants had to do, but had it carried to his camp by a Sikh.<sup>2</sup> Muslim writers, ever anxious to detract from the Guru's name and fame, take the 'bestowal' of this robe of honour as a mark of the Guru's having entered the service of the Emperor.

The Guru remained with the Emperor for a pretty long time, i.e. from July to November, 1707. Bahadur Shah was of a milder disposition and far more tolerant in religious matters than Aurangzeb. He greatly enjoyed the Guru's company and very often had religious discussions with him. The Guru was hopeful that he might be able to usher in an

1. The act shows the wonderful magnanimity of the Guru's heart. Just think of what he, his ancestors, and his Sikhs had suffered at the hands of the Mughals. Jahangir had, out of religious bigotry, ordered the torture and execution of Guru Arjan Dev, and had put Guru Har Gobind in prison in the fort of Gwalior. Shah Jahan had four times sent the Imperial armies against Guru Har Gobind. Guru Hari Rai and Guru Hari Krishan had been molested under the orders of Aurangzeb. This last had also ordered the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur at Delhi. Guru Gobind Singh's four sons and his aged mother had also been taken away from him as a result of Aurangzeb's hostility. His Sikhs had fallen in thousands. His wife and the mother of the Khalsa had been separated from him. He himself had been pursued and hunted. Think of all his sufferings. Yet when a son of that Aurangzeb and descendant of Jahangir and Shah Jahan, sought his help to enforce his right to the throne, the Guru readily agreed to help him.

2. *Gur Sobha*, xvi.35; *Bahadur-Shah-Nama*, entry dated 4th *Jamadi-ul-Awwal*, 1119 A.H. (July 23, 1707); Guru Gobind Singh's letter to the *Sangat* of Dhaul, dated 1st *Katik*, 1764/ October 2, 1707.

era of peace and better understanding between the Muslims and the non Muslims through persuasion and by using his influence with the Emperor.<sup>1</sup> He constantly impressed upon the Emperor's mind the utter senselessness of the bigotry, animosity, and narrow-mindedness, with which the two great sections of the people regarded each other. He described to him the cruel and irreligious acts which this spirit had urged the Muhammdan rulers to perpetrate. The chief sinner in this respect, as the reader knows, was Wazir Khan, *Nawab* of Sarhind. His deeds had perturbed even the pious though hard-hearted Aurangzeb. Bahadur Shah was greatly moved and he promised that, after he got firmly established on the throne, he would punish the murderer of the innocent children. In the meantime, he offered the Guru a big *Jagir* and large estate.<sup>2</sup> The Guru, however, declined the offer. Its acceptance would have meant an abandonment of his cherished ideal of bringing about an era of liberty and equality, a spirit of all brotherliness in the land. Form a creator and liberator of a nation he would have been reduced to the position of a mere chieftain. The establishment of temporal power for himself had never been his ambition. It was to fight out tyranny from the land that he had taken up the sword. If he had accepted the Emperor offer, all his exertion in the past for the uplift of a vanquished race would have begun to savour of personal ambition which his detractors have even now not hesitated to ascribe to him. So, he contended himself with urging the Emperor to restrain his lieutenants and *Qazis* from irreligious persecution of Hindus and Sikhs and to punish the guilty ones.

Friendly discussions and negotiations were yet going on when, in November, 1707 Bahadur Shah had to march into Rajputana against the Kachhvahas and, there from, to the Deccan to suppress the insurrection of his brother Kam Bakhsh. He invited the Guru to accompany him, if he was so pleased. The Guru had never advocated bloodshed and welfare for their own sake or in aggression. The accession of Bahadur Shah had, at least, suspended the unjust persecution against which the Guru had vowed to fight. It seemed possible now to accomplish by persuasion and discussion what in the past had to be attempted with the sword and the spear. So the Master promised to join him on the march and soon did so. They travelled together through Rajputana.

1. That the Guru was hopeful of ending the age-old differences with the Mughals is borne out by his letter dated October 2, 1707, addressed to the *Sangat* of Dhaul. In that letter he refers to 'other things which were progressing satisfactorily'. These other things were surely his negotiations for peace and goodwill.

2. Daulat Rai's *Life of Guru Gobind Singh* (Urdu); *Twarikh Guru Khalsa*, Gian Singh.

Several Rajput Rajas came to pay homage to the Guru. Passing through such cities as Jaipur, Jodhpur, Chittaur, Poona, etc. they reached in the neighbourhood of Nander on the margin of the Godavari, in the present state of Hyderabad.

The Emperor had his own motives in securing the Guru's company. In the first place he feared that, taking advantage of his absence from the capital, the Guru might gather his forces and start a war in order to avenge his great wrongs. In the second place, he knew the Guru's ability as a General and leader. He had designs to use him in curbing the Marathas. But when he requested the Guru to lead the army of attack, the latter refused point blank.<sup>1</sup> He had helped the Emperor against his usurping brother in the capacity of an ally. There was nothing wrong or unpatriotic in that act. But to help him in subjugating a race of sturdy Hindu warriors would have been not only an act of treachery against his people and country, but also an indefensible abnegation of all his lofty ideals. So, he did what he could never have done if he had been a servant of the Emperor. He refused to comply with his wishes, separated from him, and settled at the place which he called Abchalnagar variously stated by different writers. Some, like Bute Shah and Malcolm, say that he went to the Deccan because, after the terrible reverses and bereavements which had been his lot, the Guru felt dejected and wanted a change. Others declare that he went thither as a servant of Bahadur Shah. Still others believe that the Guru felt that, though the seed of opposition to tyranny had been well sown in the Punjab, yet the Mughal rule was so firmly established there that, for some time to come, it would be difficult to gather afresh an army strong enough to challenge and rout the imperial forces. To sit idle and do nothing towards the furtherance of his ideals was distasteful to him. So he decided to try what could be done in the southern parts of India towards the fulfilment of his mission. He felt that what he had accomplished in the Punjab, eminently yet to a limited extent, could be achieved with greater ease and to a greater extent in the south, because the people there were more accustomed to the use of arms, and the Mughal rule was not so firmly established there. He had hopes of arousing in the Rajputs and Maharattas the will to do and dare for the holy task of liberating their country and uprooting the foreign tyrants rule. It is also said that the successors of Shivaji had made requests to the Guru for help.<sup>2</sup> It was with some such purpose that the Guru went southwards. The Rajputs welcomed him, listened to him, but felt themselves too

1. Lala Daulat Rai', *Life of Guru Gobind Singh*, (Urdu).

2. *Tawarikh Guru Khalsa'*



weak to actively join a movement which was akin to rebellion against the Lord of Delhi. The Guru went still further. All along, he went on delivering his life-giving message to the people<sup>1</sup>. When Bahadur Shah sought to use him as his tool against the Marathas, he refused to oblige him and parted company. Still others, who implicitly believe in the Guru's spiritual powers, maintain that he went to the Deccan to deliver Banda from snares of occultism and austerities, and depute him to the Punjab as the general and temporal leader of the Khalsa. Still others are of the view that the Guru's object in accompanying the Emperor was to bring to a satisfactory conclusion the negotiations begun at Agra, and that, when he found that there was no hope of success in them, he separated from him.

Leaving the 'dejection theory' and the 'service theory' for a later consideration, we may say that it seems most likely that the three last mentioned motives exercised a combined effect in inducing the Guru to proceed to the Deccan. If the preaching of his message to the people had been his only object, it could have been accomplished much better by keeping away from the Emperor and his army. If it had been merely to win over and convert Banda, he would have gone straight to him. If it had been merely to conclude the negotiations begun at Agra, so much time and travelling were not necessary. The Guru stayed with the Emperor at Agra from July to November, 1707. Surely, that time would have been sufficient for that purpose, if the Emperor had been really serious and sincere. There were no complicated questions needing long and detailed examination, study, and thrashing out. If some points were really yet undetermined when the Emperor had to proceed to the Deccan, surely they could not have baffled the two, if the Emperor had meant real business. If he simply wanted to keep the matter hanging fire indefinitely, surely the Guru could have looked through his game much earlier. Altogether, the Guru was with the Emperor for over thirteen months. Should we believe that Bahadur Shah was able to dupe the Guru for so long with vague words and false hopes? That

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1. Contemporary evidence exists to show that the Guru, while travelling with Bahadur Shah, used to deliver to the people of the south his great message, and thereby arouse in them a sense of their duty towards their community and country. The writer of *Tarikh-i-Bahadur Shahi* was at Delhi at the time of Aurangzeb's death. He writes, "At the time the army (of Bahadur Shah) was marching southwards towards Burhanpur, Guru Gobind Singh one of the descendants of (Guru) Nanak, had come into these districts to travel, and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and all sorts of people."—Vide *History of India by its Own Historians*, Vol.7, page 566.

would be an insult to the Guru's keen intelligence. On the other hand, if he had to waste so much time in getting a 'no' from the Emperor, he would have reacted far differently after the final disillusionment and the final breach. He would have himself come back to the Punjab and re-started his campaign against the tyrannical foreign rulers.

The dejection theory does not fit in with Guru's behaviour in the face of his severest losses, trials, and sufferings. Indeed, his whole life is itself a strong, irrefutable contradiction of the assertions of these prejudiced or misinformed critics. Did reverses and bereavements plunge him in gloom and dejection ? As a child of less than ten he pointed out to his father the way to martyrdom for the sake of the wretched people. He lost his father and stood face to face with the formidable Mughal Empire at its zenith. Did that break his tender yet might heart? He saw his dearest Sikhs killed before his eyes. He sent his two eldest sons unto certain death at Chamkaur. He had, by then, to all intents and purposes, lost the whole of his family—mother, sons, and wife. Did that plunge him in sorrow or dejection ? If he had so deep an affection for them as could make him take their loss so much to heart, he could surely have saved them all, by a timely fight from Anandpur. 'As for me,' he had declared, 'my body, my soul, my head, my wealth, yes my all, is dedicated to their (his Sikh's) service.' When his wife asked him where her four sons had gone, his reply was characteristic of his attitude towards the attachments of the world. He was bold and cheerful as ever. He had, said he, sacrificed her four sons for the sake of the sons sitting before them. 'What then if thy four are gone? There yet live, and shall ever live, millions of our dear brave sons'. Is there a trace of grief or down heartedness in all this ?

The whole tone and trend of his *Zafarnama* or Epistle of Victory addressed to Aurangzeb also show that the Guru was not, at all, plunged in despair. In fact, he distinctly threaten the Emperor in the words, 'What though my four sons have been killed; my young son, the Khalsa remains behind like a coiled snake. What bravery is it to quench a few sparks of life ? Thou art merely exciting a raging fire the more.' Wherever the Guru went in his travels, he exerted himself in the propagation of his ideals and in broadcasting his message of liberation. Guru Nanak had preached the Sikh religion as far east as Assam and Bengal, as far west as Arabia and Turkey, and as far south as Ceylone ; Guru Hargobind had made a tour of northern India ; Guru Teg Bahadur had gone on a preaching tour to the east. A similar impulse urged Guru Gobind Sing to carry his message to the warlike Maharattas and Rajputs and other people of the south. In this undertaking there was nothing inconsistent with his doctrines or irreconcilable with the avowed object of his life— the propagation of

righteousness and the restraining of people from senseless acts<sup>1</sup>. He went about baptizing people and adding to the number of his Khalsa<sup>2</sup>. No where did he act or behave in manner incompatible with his faith, teachings, or his own past. How then can it be maintained, as is done by Malcolm, that 'most accounts agree that Guru Govind, after his flight, was, from a sense of his misfortunes, and the loss of his children, bereft of his reason, and wandered about for a considerable time in the most deplorable condition? It was during these 'wandering' that the whole of the *Adi Guru Granth Sahib* was dictated and other works were composed by the Guru at Damdama Sahib, which 'became the Benares of the Sikhs,<sup>3</sup> that the Epistle of Victory was written for the benefit of Aurangzeb, that Anandpur was reproduced in the Lakhi Jungle, at Damdama Sahib, and at Abchalnagar, that millions were baptized, that Banda was selected and deputed to the Punjab, and that the glorious words of consolation and courage were addressed by him to his wife regarding the death of his sons. All this could not be the doings of a man who, 'bereft of his reason,' went wandering about 'in the most deplorable condition.' It should also be remembered that these 'wanderings' extended over only two years and seven or eight months. This does not seem to be the sense of Malcolm's considerable time.'

But the fact is that writers like Malcolm are troubled by the thought that, 'after his flight from Chamkaur.' the Guru 'performed no

1. *Bachittar Natak*.

2. According to Trumpp, at Damdama alone the Guru gained 1,20,000 disciples. (xcii)

3. All are agreed that the Guru's life at Damdama Sahib was full of activity and achievement. Reproduced below are excerpts from books of three writers to show what he achieved there :

(a) 'He settled in a village of Malwa and remained peaceful, only bent on making disciples in which he is said to have been very successful. He built there a large residence for himself, and called it Damdama. This place became the Benares of Sikhs'. (Trumpp, xcii)

(b) 'The Guru went to Malwa and lived there in peace for some time, occupying himself in making proselytes to his religion, not a difficult task, considering that the people about that part of the country were in a state of lamentable ignorance. He built here a spacious house for his residence, which he called the Damdama.' (Latif, page 266)

[So, even this bigoted writer admits that the Guru achieved remarkable success in spreading his Faith while at Damdama. His remark about the ignorance of the people is simply an indication of the brain fever which came on him when he was confronted with Guru's splendour and success.]

(c) 'Secure in his new retreat (at Damdama) [Guru] Govind (Singh) re-established his court, and surrounded himself with all the pomp and circumstance of royalty, Damdama became the centre of Sikhism, and a place of resort for learned men from all parts of the country. Numberless new recruits joined the ranks of the Khalsa and the position of (Guru) Govind Singh became stronger than ever before.' (C.H. Payne, pages, 41-42)

action worthy of record.' As they are unable to believe that a man of his 'enthusiastic ardour of mind, active habits, and valour,' could have remained 'inactive' or could have sunk into a servant of the Emperor.' So they have concluded that 'mental distraction, in consequence of deep distress and disappointment,' was the cause of 'the inactivity of Guru Govind's declining years. In this connection it has to be noticed that these writers have failed to grasp the sublimity of the Guru's ideal. They describe him as fired with an 'insatiable thirst of revenge, which he had cherished through life, against the murderers of his father.' But it was not to take revenge or wreak vengeance that the Guru had taken up the sword. If revenge had been the master passion of his life, he would have treated his enemies and their women and children in the same way as Mir Mannu and Furrugh Siyar treated the Sikhs later on, or as the Pakistanis treated them in 1947 A.D. All his wars had been forced on him. He had never sought them. So, if he had no occasion to engage in battle in the last years of his life, and, consequently, devoted himself to peaceful organization, how can that be taken to prove that the Guru was either 'inactive or bereft of his reason?' By the way, Malcolm forgets that the battle of Muktsar, which is certainly worthy of record, took place after the Guru's flight from Chamkaur.' If the imperial armies had again fallen upon him, he would surely have defended himself with his wonted valour and ability. As he was not attacked, and as he would not fight but in self-defence, the Guru had no occasion to engage in military action during the last few years of his earthly life; but, otherwise, he was the same as ever.

Apart from the Guru's own words, teaching, activities and behaviour, there is grudging, and, on that account, all the more valuable, testimony of writers like S.M. Latif to the effect that the Guru 'Confronted his adversity with firmness,' and that his persevering endurance in the midst of calamities and disasters was equal to his bravery and valour in the field.' Could such a person be plunged in sorrow or despair or sit inactive because of his adversity?

## BAHADUR SHAH AND THE GURU -II

We have seen what little substance there is in the fantastic assertion of some writers that during the last years of his life the Guru suffered from some mental derangement. Now we come to the other statement that the Guru went to the Deccan in the capacity of a servant of Bahadur Shah. This statement is even more injurious to the memory of the Guru than the one whose hollowness has been exposed in the last chapter. Before examining it critically, we shall attempt to trace it back to its origin and see what credence it deserves on the score of that origin.

(A) Cunningham, who wrote his book in 1848, has cited the following authorities for his statement that the Guru 'received a military command in the valley of the Godawari' :—

(i) 'Sikh writers,' who, he says, 'are unanimous in giving to their great teacher a military command in the Deccan' ; and

(ii) Non-Sikh writer :— Forster and Khafi Khan.

(B) S.M. Latif, another enthusiastic advocate of the service theory, writes, 'The fact of his (Guru Govind Singh's) having taken employment under the Moghal Government is fully confirmed by various writers. Vide Sir J.Malcolm's *Sketches of the Sikhs* ; Forster's *Travels*. The latter author states that Guru Gobind Singh had a small command in the Moghal service, which is confirmed by Khafi Khan .'<sup>1</sup> So his authorities for this assertion are Sir John Malcolm, Forster, and Khafi Khan.

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1. Foot-note to page 268. His book was written in 1889. Speaking of the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur and its effect on the mind of Guru Gobind Singh, Latif writes :— 'The violent and miserable end of the martyred Guru, and his last injunctions, had made such a strong impression on the mind of (Guru) Gobind (Singh) that he longed to wreak vengeance on the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race, and became the inveterate and irreconcilable enemy of every Mohammadan.' Page 261.

It has been seen that the Guru had no enmity with Muhammadans as such. Still, it would be interesting to know how Latif would reconcile the 'inveterate and

What are the 'Sikh writers' referred to by Cunningham ? A perusal of the references cited by him, here and there, leads one to the conclusion that he had little or no acquaintance with the original works of any Sikh writer. Wherever he refers to the Sikh accounts of the Guru's life, he quotes non-Sikh writers like the authors of the *Dabistan* and the *Siyar ul Mutakhirn*, and Sir John Malcolm. In one place, following Malcolm and repeating his mistake to some extent, he mentions Bhai Gurdas Bhalla. In another place, he refers to the *Gurbilas* of Bhai Sukha Singh as corroborating the account to some wars described in the *Bachittar Natak*. But both references are cursory, Besides, Sukha Singh does not say that the Guru took service with Bahadur shah, and Bhai Gurdas Bhalla, the second, has to his credit only one ode on Guru Gobind Singh. He, too, does not say that the Guru took service with Bahadur Shah. No Sikh writer do so.

That is why S.M. Latif complains that 'the Sikh authors are always cautious in concealing the weak points of their religious leaders in giving prominence to anything which redounds to their glory.' Thus, he adds, 'they freely acknowledge that (Guru) Gobind (Singh) rendered material aid to Bahadur Shah in the war which that emperor waged against his rebel brother Kam Baksh, and even own that the Guru took the field of action. But they carefully conceal the fact of the Guru's accepting employment under the emperor.

Dr Trumpp whom in words of Macauliffe, never failed to avail himself of 'an opportunity of defaming the Gurus, the sacred book, and the religion of the Sikhs,' writing in 1877, said that the Sikhs were 'loath to concede this appointment of (Guru) Gobind Singh.'

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(Contd from page 222)

irreconcilable' enmity of the Guru against 'every Mohammandan' with his accepting service with 'the murderers of his father and the persecutors of his race.'

Latif seems to have read neither Sir John Malcolm, Forster, Khafi Khan, nor any other of the 'various writers' who 'confirm' his statement. In his preface he does not mention either Forster or Khafi Khan among the authors to whose work he was 'obliged for the portion relating to the Sikhs', or, in fact, for any portion of his history. He has based his note on a foot-note of Elphinstone's *History of India*. That foot-note, however, he has either, misconstrue, or perhaps, in his zeal to throw mud at the Guru, misconstrued. Elphinstone refers to Sir John Malcolm and 'Forster's Travels page 263' in support of his statement that Guru Gobind Singh was 'murdered by a private enemy at Nander, in the Dekhan'. Then he adds the words about 'the Moghal service' ('The latter writer.....Khafi Khan'), which have been copied verbatim by Latif without acknowledgement, as is usual with him. See Elphinstone's *History of India*, 9th. Edition, page 664, f.n. 7.'

So, even on the testimony of these two, by no means friendly writers, it is clear that Sikh writers do not support the theory that the Guru accepted employment under Bahadur Shah. Moreover, Macauliffe, who based his narrative on a discriminate study of the Sikh writers, says that the Guru assisted Bahadur Shah on the mediation of Bhai Nand Lal and accompanied him to the Deccan of his own free will, having been invited to do so by the Emperor.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, we see that there is no truth in Cunningham's statement that 'the Sikh writers are unanimous in giving to their great teacher a military command in Deccan.' In all probability, in his statement about the Sikh writers, Cunningham has relied entirely on Forster, who makes a similar assertion about the Guru on the alleged authority of 'the Sikhs.' To that we shall come later.

Having thus disposed of the alleged corroboration of the service theory by the Sikh writers, we may now turn to the others. Cunningham's authorities are Forster and Khafi Khan, and Latif's, Malcolm, Forster and Khafi Khan.

Of the three writers cited by Latif, Sir John Malcolm is definitely of the opposite opinion. He cannot even 'think' that the Guru could have 'sunk into a servant of that Government against which he had been in constant rebellion.' Here is the whole passage : 'When we consider the enthusiastic ardour of his mind, his active habits, his valour, and the insatiable thirst of revenge which he had cherished through life against the murderers of his father and the oppressors of his sect, we cannot think, when that leading passion of his mind must have been increased by the massacre of his children and the death and mutilation of his most attached followers that he would have remained inactive, much less that he would have sunk into a servant of that Government against which he had been in constant rebellion. Nor is it likely that such a leader as Guru Gobind (Singh) could ever have been trusted by a Muhammadan prince.'<sup>2</sup>

As for Khafi Khan, the contemporary historian we must remember that he cannot, at all, be relied upon as a trustworthy historian for two reasons : First, he had not the independence which a historian must possess, if he is to write true history. He was writing under the eyes of his monarchs and could not examine their actions critically, or even

1. See his *Sikh Religion*, Vol.V, page 232. J.N. Sarkar also writes, 'In 1707, the new emperor, Bahadur Shah I, induced him (Guru Gobind Singh) to accompany him on the march to Rajputana and the Deccan.'

2. *op cit*, pp.71-72.

describe them faithfully<sup>1</sup>. Secondly, his very mental outfit unfits him as a historian in matters relating to the 'infidels,' against whom he vents his scorn and hatred at every occasion. To him the Emperor was the 'Keeper of the Faith'. and opposition offered to him was offered to Islam, to God, and to his deputy on earth. Such minds cannot record history as they lack the necessary outfit. He does not possess even the ordinary human courtesy and decency which make a man refer to his opponents in inoffensive language. With men of his type, abuse and vilification are an argument. When we find Khafi Khan referring to Guru Gobind Singh by extremely undignified and unbecoming appellations,<sup>2</sup> we can at once form an idea of the scant justice which the Guru could have had at his hands.

But what shall we say of Latif's integrity when even such a bigoted and biased writer as Khafi Khan does not at all mention the alleged fact of the Guru's having accepted employment under the Mughal Emperor. All that he writes can be translated as under:

'During the days when Bahadur Shah directed his attention towards Hyderabad or when he started towards that place, one of the leaders of that infamous community, Govind by name, came unto the presence of the emperor, accompanied by two or three hundred *sowars* carrying spears and some infantry and proceeded in the company of the emperor.'<sup>3</sup>

1. Forster has a very instructive passage about these writers of Eastern record. In the foot-note to page 253 he writes : 'Neither the genius of the people, nor the form of their government is favourable to the growth of history, which is rarely seen to flourish on despotic ground. The actions of the Asiatic princes are usually recorded by their own scribes; and we know that a large portion of the annals of India was manufactured under imperial inspection. It is, therefore, scarcely within the verge of probability, that a writer attracted by so powerful an influence, would dare to have thrown the piercing light of history on the reigning monarch, or even to have examined with freedom the actions of his ancestors, who have, for more than two hundred years, maintained an unbroken succession of the Empire of Hindustan.'

2. Vide page. 652.

3. Khafi Khan's *Muntakhab-ul-Lubab* has suffered many mutilations in the course of time. The most authentic text of this work is the one published by the Asiatic Society of Bengal in 1874. This text is also taken to be authentic by Sir Charles Elliot, the writer of the '*History of India as told by its Own Historians*.' According to this text Khafi Khan's actual words, a translation of which has been given above, are :-

*'Dar ayyame kih Bahadur Shah badshah mutwajjah Haiderabad gardidant Goving nam az sargrohan-i-an-quam-i-bad-nam bahazur rasidah, ba do sad sih sad sawar neza-bardar-o-piyadah dar rakab-rafaqat namnd.'*

J.N. Sarkar, who has carried out extensive researches about the History of the Mughals, has also placed reliance on the above text; for he writes :- 'In 1707, the new emperor Bahadur Shah I, induced him (Guru Gobind Singh) to accompany him on the march to Rajputana and the Deccan. The Guru reached Nander on the Godavari, 150 miles north-west of Hyderabad, in August 1707 at the head of some infantry and two or three hundred cavalry, and there, after a stay of more than a year, he was stabbed by an Afghan.'



The Guru is thus described by Khafi Khan as a 'companion,' not a servant of Bahadur Shah. It has to be noted that the Persian words '*rafaaqat*' is the abstract noun from *rafiiq* or companion, and means 'companionship' or 'company.' It does not connote any difference of status between the persons concerned. The service theory seems to have originated from an intentional or accidental mistranslation or mutilation of Khafi Khan's passage. So Khafi Khan also does not corroborate Latif.

Forster, who, according to his own admission, had no 'substantial authority' from which he could deduce the history of the Sikhs, writing in 1783, does state on the authority of 'the Sicques'<sup>1</sup> whom, significantly enough, he does not name, that Guru Gobind Singh 'received marks of favour from Bahadur Shah, who, being apprised of his military abilities, gave him a charge in the army which marched into the Deccan to oppose the rebellion of KamBucksh.' For his account of the Sikhs he states to have relied on 'some large historical tracts,' whose authors he has not named. He is the first writer to give currency to the service theory, but, curiously enough, he has not stated his authority for his strange assertion. Perhaps, he had no authority worth the name, and relied on the statements of some of the mutilators of Khafi Khan or on those of some vilifiers of the Guru. Any how, in the absence of such information, it cannot be maintained that he based his narrative on authentic recorded as unquestionable. In fact, a perusal of his account of the Sikhs leads one to the conclusion that either his authorities were unreliable, or he himself did not study them with the care that should distinguish a writer who would claim credence as an authority.<sup>2</sup>

All that has been said above will, we hope, convince the reader that the story of the Guru's employment under Bahadur Shah is nothing but a myth, 'manufactured,' as Forster would say, by some detractors of the Guru. and accepted by Forster as the gospel truth. His colossal ignorance of the Guru's views and acts precluded him from a critical examination of a statement which was utterly inconsistent with the Guru's ideal, views and acts. Forster's statement is incredible also from

1. We have already seen that Sikhs do not at all 'concede' that the Guru accepted 'service' in Bahadur Shah's army. How could they have told Forster what he writes on their authority ?

2. Forster himself, it may be noted, is conscious of this shortcoming; for, on page 253 of his *Travels*, he admits that he has no 'substantial authority' from whom he could deduce the history of the Sikhs from the time of Guru Nanak, 'their first institutor and law-giver', to the attainment of their present state of national importance.' He deplures 'the irresistible tendency of the Asiatic mind to fiction which makes the 'Eastern record' unreliable as history, and pleads for 'an indulgent scope.' (See Appendix II for some of his astounding errors.)

another point of view. Bahadur Shah could not have been so ignorant of the 'military abilities' of the Guru, about whom Aurangzeb, his father, had always 'felt anxious,' against whom he had to order out the armies of Delhi, Sarhind and Lahore, and whom he had to 'summon to his presence,' as Forster would have us believe. The well known military abilities of the Guru, who had spent all his life in creating and organizing a sturdy race of warriors to oppose and destroy the tyrannical rule of the Mughals, would have been a disqualification for any service under Mughals, even if it had been sought for by that irreconcilable foe of the unjust rule.

It is thus seen that out of that authorities quoted by Cunningham and Latif, the Sikh writers, without a single exception, no where say that the Guru took service with Bahadur Shah ; Malcolm is strongly opposed to the service-theory; Khafi Khan makes no mention of such service; only Forster, relying on mere hearsay, and having, according to his own admission, no substantial authority for him account of the Sikhs, makes the astounding statement that the Guru accepted service. His statement cannot be accepted as true. In fact, he makes many ridiculous errors in his account of the Sikhs, errors which totally discredit him as an authority on Sikh history. In short, the service theory is a concoction of some of the Guru's detractors. There is no historical evidence in its favour.

After having thus exposed the absurdity and untruth of the allegation started by Forster that the Guru accepted service in the expeditionary force led by Bahadur Shah, we shall produce incontrovertible contemporary evidence to refute that allegation. *Tarikh-i-Bahadur Shahi* says as follows : "At the time the army was marching southwards towards Burhanpur, Guru Gobind (Singh), one of the descendants of (Guru) Nanak, had come into these districts to travel, and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and all sorts of people."

It is clear from the above that the Guru had gone to those parts to travel, of his own free will. He was not taken there by the Emperor as military commander. Moreover, no man in government service, much less a military commander proceeding on an important expedition, could have been allowed to indulge in such activities.

Again, J.S. Sarkar, who wrote his valuable historical works after an extensive study and reserach, says, "In 1707, the new emperor, Bahadur Shah I, induced him (Guru Gobind Singh) to accompany him on the march to Rajputana and the Deccan."

To sum up, we may say that the Guru proceeded southwards of his own free will and choice. He joined the company of Bahadur Shah on the latter's invitation and did join as a companion and not as a servant.

The authors of the sevice theory have exhibited deplorable lack of a proper grasp of the subject in having ascribed to the Guru motives which are altogether incompatible with his known views and acts. When we remember that he still had in the Punjab, devoted disciples like Dall Singh, Ram Singh, Tilok Singh, Shamira, and hosts of others, who had importuned him, again and again, to stay on with them as their Lord, and that, if he had so wished, he could have passed the rest of his life in the Punjab in perfect peace and safety, we fail to find what relish the Guru could find in holding a command in the Muhammadan army. A *jagir* and principality, which he was offered but which he declined, would have been far more tempting and more lasting acquisitions. He had, all through his career, defended the weak against the strong and had sacrificed his all for the sake of his ideals. He was convinced that the Muhammadan rule had become a curse for the country. He was exerting every nerve to rid the people and the Country of this curse. How could he have agreed to become a servant in the same rule ?

We should also remember that fighting for its own sake did not possess any attraction for him. By nature, he was far more inclined towards a life of peace and peaceful activity. All his wars were forced on him by those who opposed his campaign for the establishment of an era of justice and equality in social, political, and economic spheres.

Bahadur Shah was no doubt favourably disposed towards the Guru, but still he was a son of his father and a follower of the Prophet. He could not have altogether reversed the policy of his father which had also been the general policy of his past Muhammadan kings. Having no personal enmity with any man such, the Guru found nothing low or wrong in meeting and trying to persuade the Emperor to assume milder ways. But his becoming a part of the very system which he was out to destroy, root and branch, is altogether incredible. The memory of the wrong that had been heaped on him, as well as that of the terrible woes of the people at large, were too fresh in him to have reconciled him to joining the army of oppression. Nor, as Dr. G.C. Narang writes, 'Can the service theory be reconciled with the Guru's commission of Banda Bahadur to the leadership of the Punjab Khalsa and his doings there.' Moreover, the Guru's ideals and political views were so well known, his ability as a general, leader, and teacher of men, had been so amply demonstrated, that no Muhammadan prince could have trusted him with a position in his army.

## BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

As we have seen, when the Guru lost hope of persuading the Emperor to suitably punish Wazir Khan, *Nawab* of Sarhind, who had been responsible for most of the sufferings of the Guru, he parted company with him near Nander. The Emperor did much to win the Guru's favour and to effect conciliation. For example, he had issued an order in favour of the Guru on the *Nawab* of Sarhind for payment of three hundred rupees a day.<sup>1</sup> But, as regards punishing the *Nawab*, the Emperor seemed to have avoided clinching the issue, though the Guru had been with him for more than a year, and no doubts had been left in his mind regarding the cruelty and un-Islamic acts in the *Nawab*.

Hence, finding that no further good could be expected from the Emperor's company and having found the man for whom he had come so far, the Guru separated from Bahadur Shah, and proceeded to Nander.

In a beautiful spot near the river was situated the *dera* or *ashram* of a *bairagi* named Lachhman Dev alias Madho Das. This man was born on *Katik Sudi* 13, 1727 Bk/ October 27, 1670, at Rajauri in the Poonch district of western Kashmir. His father Ram Dev, was a Rajput ploughman. He was named Lachhman Dev. He was very fond of the art of using arms and of hunting. At the same time, he was very tender hearted. Once he shot down a pregnant she-deer. When he went near, he saw it dying and its young ones falling from its womb writhing to death before his eyes. The sight went straight to his heart. He resolved to become an ascetic. Accordingly, he became a disciple of a *Vaishnav Sadhu* named Janki Parshad. The latter gave him the name of Madho Das. Wandering in the company of a group of *bairagis*, he reached the Punjab, and became a disciple of *Sadhu*, Ram Das. Then he travelled to the Deccan, and reaching Nasik on the banks of the Godavri, he entered the hermitage of an old Yogi named Aughar Nath. From him he learnt occultism. After his guru's death, he moved to Nander, in the Nizam's dominions, and established a monastery of his own. With the

1. Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, *op cit*, p.78.

help of his occult powers, he used to practise tricks of magic and to play practical jokes on those who came to see him. He took great delight in doing so.

When the Guru visited his monastery in September 1708, he was away. The Guru went in. He quietly occupied the *bairagi's* couch and asked the servants and *sadhus* of the place to give food to him and to his followers. They refused to serve them until the *bairagi* had been served. Thereupon, the Master ordered his own men to take hold of whatever came to their hands in the *ashram* and prepare the dinner. A goat was killed, cooked, and eaten. This was unpardonable sacrilege. A disciple of the *bairagi* ran off to inform him about the strange intruder.

The *bairagi* was out of himself with anger. 'What,' said he, I shall tell him what it is to profane my place in this way.' He concentrated his mind, uttered some meaningless words, and appeared to be exerting his utmost strength to lift a heavy weight. For a long time he remained in that posture of mind and body. He then shook his head and gave up the effort. He had been trying to overturn the couch on which the Master was sitting. It had shaken a bit, as if by a mild earthquake, but had otherwise remained undisturbed.

The *bairagi* then came to the hut and made another effort at magic. But he failed again. He tried no more. He felt that he found his Master. The following dialogue occurred between them, as recorded in Ahamad Shah's *Zikar-i-Guruan wa Ibtidai-i-Singhan wa Mazhab-i-Eshan* :<sup>1</sup>

Madho Das : Who are you ?

Guru Gobind Singh.: He whom you know.

Madho Das : What do I know ?

Guru Gobind Singh : Think it over.

Madho Das : (after a pause) : So you are Guru Gobind Singh?

Guru Gobind Singh : Yes.

Madho Das : What have you come here for ?

Guru Gobind Singh : I have come to make you my disciple.

Madho Das : I submit. I am your Banda (slave).

Saying this, he fell at the Guru's feet and expressed delight at having, at last, found the Master for whom his soul had been yearning so long. The Master instructed Banda in the tenets of Sikh religion and, in due time, baptized him as a member of the Khalsa. From

1. Taken from principal Teja Singh and Dr Ganda Singh's *A Short History of the Sikhs*.

Lachhman Das his name was changed to Banda Singh. But in history he is mostly known by the name by which he himself was pleased to call himself, Banda, or the Master's slave, or Banda Bahadur.

In the course of time, Banda Singh heard of the events in the Punjab which had preceded the Master's journey to the south. Like every one else, he, too, wept copiously on hearing of the martyrdom of the Princes and that of the Sikhs at Anandpur, Chamkaur, Sarhind, and Muktsar. The Master's Nectar and teachings soon had their effect. The long dormant Rajput spirit of the new disciple obtained a new and more invigorated life. He yearned to be in the battlefield as the Master's saint-soldier, and to punish the perpetrators of wrong and evil. At last, his wish was granted. The Master bade him to go to the Punjab and punish the enemies of the Khalsa. He gave him a drum and a banner as emblems of temporal authority, and bestowed on him five arrows from his own quiver as a pledge of victory. He deputed five of the Sikhs (Baba Binod Singh, Baba Kahan Singh, Bhai Baj Singh, etc) to accompany him and to help him with their advice and prowess. He also gave him *Hukamnama* addressed to leading Sikhs in the Punjab and the general body of the Khalsa, calling upon them to help Banda Singh in every way.

At the time of parting, the Guru enjoined on him to remain pure in conduct and never to touch another's wife; to be true in word and deed; to look upon himself as a servant of the Khalsa, who would be the Guru in future ; to act as the temporal leader of the Khalsa and seek and follow the advice of the five Sikhs being sent with him; not to aspire to be the religious leader or Guru of the Sikhs ; not to set up any sect of his own ; to help the helpless, the poor, and the needy ; to punish the oppressors and tyrants ; not to molest the innocent ; to have full faith in God ; and to act always in accordance with the tenets of the Sikh faith. As long as he would keep true to the Guru's parting instructions, victory would ever wait on his standard. If, at any time, he felt himself to be involved in a helpless situation, he was to think of God and the Guru, and shoot one of the five arrows given by the Master.

Banda Singh agreed to do as ordered and prayed that the Master's help and protection be vouchsafed to him. The subsequent history of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur will be out of place here.<sup>1</sup>

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1. For a detailed account of the life and work of Baba Banda Singh, see Ganda Singh's *Banda Singh Bahadur*.

## RETURN TO THE ETERNAL HOME- I

As said already, Guru Gobind Singh had arrived at Nander in September 1708 and had been so charmed by the loveliness of the place, that he had decided to pass the rest of his earthly life there. A city sprang up round him, and this he called Abchal Nagar, the Eternal city. There were the same divine songs, *Nam* gatherings, and soul-inspiring discourses as at Anandpur. There was a regular flow of God's word, as from a fount, which gave fresh vigour and life to withered hearts. Verily, Anandpur was once again reproduced in the Deccan. After some time, feeling that the time was drawing near when he must return to His Divine Father's presence, he prevailed upon the Mother of the Khalsa, Mata Sahib Kaur, who had joined him some time back, to return to Delhi and comfort and console Mata Sundri. Bhai Mani Singh was deputed to accompany her.

There are many conflicting accounts of the Guru's death. The writers who have described the declining years of the Guru's life as those of dejection and mental derangement, have coined a story in support of their assertion. This story is given, with slight variations, by most of the writers, and is itself a huge mound raised around a grain of truth. That the Guru was stabbed by a *Pathan* at Nander or Abchal Nagar is the actual truth. These writers have, in accordance with their own mental inclinations or prejudices, made up stories about who the Pathan was and why he made the murderous attack.

One set of such writers state that the murderer was a grandson of Painda Khan, whom the grandfather of Guru Gobind Singh, Guru Har Gobind, had slain in battle. The family of Painda Khan is stated to 'have nourished their anger against the Guru's house and mediated revenge. It was a grandson of Painda Khan that could find an opportunity to square the long standing account by stabbing in bed Guru Gobind Singh, a grandson of Guru Har Gobind.

Another set of such writers, including Latif, Malcolm, Cunningham, Mac Gregor, Tagore, and several others, have given currency to the

following story, specially concocted and heartily amplified for the set purpose of vilifying the Guru. It is said that during his wanderings after the battle of Chamkaur, the Guru came across a *Pathan* whom he owed money on account of horses purchased long ago. The Guru had no money. So, he asked his creditor to come at some other time. But the latter insisted on being paid on the spot. The Guru got enraged at this, and, with a stroke of his sword, severed his head from his body.<sup>1</sup> But no sooner had he done this, than his heart was filled with repentance for what he had done in a fit of anger. As a recompense for the fate of victim, the Guru showed special favours to the widow, and brought up her son as a father would do. He trained the *Pathan* in the use of various weapons. When the boy grew to manhood, the Guru is said to have told him the story of his father's murder and exhorted him to avenge that murder. Some writers, like Trumpp, go to the length of saying that the Guru had become disgusted with life and wanted to end it. Hence he gave the *Pathan* boy a dagger and said, "If the murderer of your father were now standing before you, what should you do"? It is written that on one or two occasions the *Pathan* remained silent; but the Guru would again and again taunt him for his failure to avenge his father's murder. At last, the *Pathan* thrust the dagger into the Guru's belly. On receiving the fatal thrust, the Guru is said to have applauded the *Pathan* boy and said, "You have avenged the murder of your father, and proved yourself to be a worthy son." It is further said that the Guru had always felt gloomy over the thought that his father's death had practically still remained un-avenged." So, he envied the *Pathan* boy's luck.<sup>2</sup>

Let us examine these stories a bit closely. According to the first one, the Guru's murderer was a grandson of Painda Khan who had been killed in a fair fight by Guru Gobind Singh's grandfather, Guru

1. Some say that the horses were purchased at Nander from a *Pathan* whom the Guru had taken in his employ. 'The Guru delayed payment. Impatient with delay, he (the *Pathan*) used an angry gesture and his mutterings of violence provoked [Guru] Gobind [Singh] to strike him dead.' (Cunningham). This version is altogether incredible. At Nander the Guru had no dearth of money. He had ever been liberal and generous in his payments, and prompt in the discharge of his obligations. He was not a miser. His 'contempt for wealth' is acknowledged and commented upon by even such writers as Latif. The same writer says that at Nander the Guru had plenty of money or riches. Why, then, should he have delayed paying the dues of the merchant or servant ?

2. The words which Guru Gobind Singh wrote in the *Vachittar Natak* about the martyrdom of his father do not in the least suggest that he harboured any thoughts of revenge. Here is what he writes :



Hargobind. This story is not at all credible. Guru Hargobind had treated and loved Painda Khan as a brother. But the latter deserted the Guru at a critical moment, went over to the enemies, and came among them to attack the Guru. He challenged the Guru to a single combat. He was allowed to try his skill and luck twice before the Guru struck him. When he fell down dead, the Guru covered his body with his own sheet and protected it against the sun. He felt deeply grieved at all this.

Now, if any of Painda Khan's descendants wanted to take revenge for his death by murdering treacherously some descendant of that Guru, surely he could have tried to do so by attacking either the seventh, the eighth, or the ninth Guru, or any of other numerous descendants of Guru Har Gobind. If, for any considerations, the attempt had to be made on Guru Gobind Singh's life, there had been countless occasions in the Punjab when he was alone or accompanied by only a few followers, and anyone bent on murdering him could have fallen upon him with fair hopes of success. Where was the need of waiting for all these years, travelling all the way from the Punjab to the Deccan for the purpose, and then taking the risk of attacking the Guru at a place where he had plenty of Sikhs to guard him ? Moreover, surprising murderous attack is not the usual mode among martial people for avenging the death of one killed in a fair fight ; and the *Pathans* are martial race. The only honourable means of avenging the deaths of persons who fall in the battle has always been a challenged fight. That the murderous attack on the Guru was made after he had met the Emperor, and lived with him for several months, lends support to the view that the Guru's several months, lends support to the view that the Guru's friendship with the emperor had something to do in the matter.

According to the second story, the Guru had killed a *Pathan* on the letter's demanding the price of the horses which he had sold to the

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(Contd from pae 233)

'Thus did the Master protect the frontal mark and the sacrificial thread of the Hindus;

Thus did he bring about a great event in this dark age;

He did so much for God's people

He gave his head but uttered not a groan;

He suffered martyrdom for the sake of religion:—

Having broken his potsherd on the head of the king of Delhi,

He departed to the city of God :—

At his departure there was mourning in the world ;

There was grief through the world, but joy in heaven.'

It is altogether wrong, therefore, to say that the Guru was inspired by any feelings of revenge for his father's martyrdom. We should remember also that it was he himself who had suggested that his father should go to Delhi to intercede and die for the Kashmiri *Pandits*.

former ; after that he had brought up the deceased's son, and when he grew into manhood, exhorted him to avenge the death of his father. In the first place, the very starting point—the demand for immediate payment of the dues—is wrong in fact. A *Pathan*, who had a certain claim on the Guru did meet him, but that not only did he make no demand for the money, but actually refused to do so when reminded of it by the Guru, is shown by the *Hukamnama* which the Guru granted to the *Pathan* for his good and friendly behaviour, and which is still preserved by the descendants of the *Pathan*.

The story falls to the ground as baseless when examined from another aspect. Its advocates appear to presume that the Guru's 'wanderings' after the battle of Chamkaur must have extended over such a number of years as could have suffered to bring up the *Pathan* child to manhood and to train him in the use of arms. But how many years did the Guru actually have ? Now, all these writers say unanimously that the *Pathan* was 'killed' by the Guru after escaping from Chamkaur. The Guru, as we have seen, escaped from Chamkaur, towards the end of December 1704. After that he had to wander about from place to place, being all the time pursued by Mughal armies. Up to Machhiwara he travelled all alone. From there to Hehar he travelled in the guise of *Uchch ka Pir*. Then, after a few day's stay with Rai Kalha, he moved on the Dina. There, too, he did not stay for long ; because news was brought to him that Mughal army was coming up. From Dina the Guru went to Khidrana, pursued by the army. Then occurred the battle of Muktsar. After Muktsar the Guru moved from place to place till he reached Talwandi Saboo (Damdama Sahib) where he stayed for about nine months and a half. Then he started towards the Daccan and reached Nander in September 1708. The murderous attack was made there within a month of his arrival.

Just think when and where the Guru got the time to nourish and train the *Pathan* child, and make a man out of that child, when and where did the *Pathan* family meet Guru. Nowhere it is stated that the *Pathan's* family travelled with the Guru. If, for argument's sake, we concede that the *Pathan* child was taken by the Guru into his keeping after the battle of Muktsar, then we shall have to take it that the child's bringing up and training began in May-June of 1705. The murderous attack was made towards the end of September 1708. It means that in about three years, the *Pathan* child grew into a young man, fully trained in the use of arms, capable of attacking the Guru, who was known to be physically very strong and very skilful in the use of all weapons of offence and defence. Either the child must have been an abnormal one,

or the faculties of the authors of the story must have been definitely subnormal ; for they could not discern the utter untenability of their concoction.

As for the the alleged murder by the Guru, it has to be noted that its inconsistency with the Guru's ideals and life was so apparent even to the versatile advocates of this vilifying story, that, in order to make it look more plausible, they were at pains to invert the theory of dejection and mental derangement. In the last chapter it was shown that this 'mental derangement', existed only in the brains of the writers. The Guru was in complete and unimpaired possession of his mental and spiritual faculties. That the Guru, who, even in his battles, had ever desisted from shooting at the soldiers who did not actually engage in the attack, who had never struck any one except in self defence, and who, some time after, pardoned the *Pathan* murderer of his dear Man Singh, 'one of the surviving heroes of Chamkaur,' should have killed a *Pathan* for no offence but that of demanding his long standing dues, looks, on the face of it, absurd and incredible.

The further statement that so tired had the Guru become of his life that he actually exhorted the *Pathan* boy to kill him is still more absurd and incredible. Such a strong disgust with life as the Guru is said to have been afflicted with, prompts people to commit suicide. With all the weapons that he had on his body, in the rivers and deserts that he had crossed in his journey, and in the turbulent stream on the banks of which he had his last abode, suicide would have been not only quite easy, but also the readiest means of escape from the alleged 'unbearable burden of grief and dejection.' Where was the necessity of taking so much trouble to bring up the *Pathan* child in order to use him for ending his life ? We find that at Chamkaur he sent his two elder sons to fight the Mughal hosts and saw them falling before his eyes. That was the time when an ordinary man would have killed himself. Again, when he heard the story of the murder of his two younger sons and the death of his mother, that was the time when, if he were so disposed, instead of knocking out a shrub with his arrow, he should have thrust that weapon into his breast. He did nothing of the sort. He was not the man to regret the sacrifices which he had made for the country's cause or to commit suicide. He bore all his sufferings placidly ; for they were inevitable consequences of the path, which he had chosen for himself. Moreover, suicide was a sin, which was abhorrent to all religious people and altogether against his religious principles. The truth is that not only did he never think of such an irreligious act, but also, even according to these writers, as soon as he

got the wounds, he had then properly sewn and dressed. If the stabs had been self invited, why should have they been so carefully attended to ?

Furthermore, it may be pointed out here that these writers exhibit a very shallow knowledge of historical facts, and their works, unless they can be corroborated by those of others showing a better grasp of the subject, are not at all worthy to be taken at their face value. Their books are filled with numerous such errors of facts and chronology as would damn any historian.

Moreover, the accounts of the contemporary and later Muhammadan writers, on whose writings the English writers have based their books, are vitiated by a strong and implacable hatred against the Guru, and are, even on that account alone, unreliable as true history. Beside, these writers lived at great distances from the Guru, and had no direct knowledge of his sayings and doings. So, they based their accounts on the necessarily distorted verisons of the Guru's doing received through official, semi official or, at best, private Muhammdan agencies. And whenever they came across an incident a true account of which would bring discredit to the Emperor or any other ruler, they concocted a story of their own, and gave the incident a colouring which would absolve the Emperor and his subordinates of any incriminating responsibility in the affair.<sup>1</sup>

Another version of the story is given by Macauliffe. He writes:- 'More probable is the account given in one of the recensions of Bahadur Shah's History :- The Guru was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics, and attended these meetings, was sitting listening to him, when certain expressions which were disagreeable to the ears of the faithful fell from the Guru's tongue. The Afghan was enragaed and, regardless of the Guru's dignity and importance, stabbed him twice or thrice with a poniard.'<sup>2</sup>

It is a pity that Macauliffe has not given full particulars about the book which could have enabled one to subject it to close examination. All the same, it is clear that the story is a concoction of a zealous and loyal Muhammdan. By inventing this story, he had detracted from the Guru's glory by depicting him as rash and indiscreet in his speech and inimical to Islam ; he has glorified the murderer by representing him as acting in religious wrath aroused by the Guru's words ; and he has completely absolved the Emperor and Wazir Khan of having any hand in the affair. Thus he has killed three birds with one stone.

1. See Forster's note regarding these chroniclers, quoted as a footnote to Chapter.39  
2. *The Sikh Religion*, Vol.V, p. 241.

The truth is that all these versions were set afloat by contemporary Muhammadan authorities and their agencies in order to explain away the Guru's murder in a way that would sully the Guru's name and preclude the possibility of the name of the Emperor, or that of Wazir Khan, arch enemy of the Guru, being associated with the foul deed. Others, not directly interested in the propagation of this false story, but failing to get at another more plausible and convincing, accepted it, and wrote it down in their books.

The Guru had preached his doctrine of peace, good will, and all brotherliness throughout his life and among people of all religions. He had many Muhammadan admirers and followers. It cannot be imagined that a man of his grand cosmopolitan sympathies and his extraordinary common sense and intelligence, could have used derogatory words about the prophet and have, thereby, mortally offended his Muslim hearers. Had he ever done such a thing before?

## CHAPTER 45

### RETURN TO THE ETERNAL HOME- II

What, then, is the version which we would put forth as true and authentic, and what are our grounds for passing it as such? We shall first narrate what appears to us to have been the true course of events leading to Guru's death, and then give our reasons for regarding that account as true.

A young *Pathan* was deputed by the *Nawab* of Sarhind to murder Guru Gobind Singh.<sup>1</sup> The *Pathan* at first went to Delhi and met the Guru's wife. From her he ascertained the whereabouts of the Guru and started for Nander (Abchalnagar). Reaching there, he went to the Guru's *darbar* with murderous intentions. On the first visit he found too many Sikhs around the Guru and returned to his abode disappointed. He repeated these visits day after day. No suspicions arose in anyone's mind; for he seems to have already met and honoured the Guru in the Punjab, and also because there were many Muslims even then with the Guru. All the time, he was studying the situation and making up his mind about the hour that would best suit his nefarious job. From steady observation he concluded that the evening time was the best. So, one evening, he came with two confederates. The Guru did not feel any suspicions regarding the *Pathan's* visit at that late hour. He seated the *Pathan* near his bed and gave him *Parshad* (Some sweets) which the *Pathan* devoured at once.

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1. Daulat Rai, after weighting the various traditions which were current about the motives underlying the murderous assault on the Guru, believes the tradition that the *Pathan* was deputed by Bahadur Shah. The Emperor knew that the Guru had parted with him in no friendly mood. Knowing the military abilities and potential capacity of the Guru, the Emperor could not feel secure as long as the former lived. So he managed to get the Guru murdered.

Macauliffe also refers to a tradition according to which the murderer was 'specially deputed by Bahadur Shah to assassinate the Guru because he had importuned him to fulfil a promise solemnly made. It had been thought that the Emperor believed that if he could remove the Guru from his path, all troubles would be at an end.'

These explanations seem to be quite plausible, but the one given above in the text is more authentic.

Most of the Sikhs had retired for the night. The only Sikh who was near him had fallen asleep. The Guru himself was sitting on his bed. A few minutes after the *Pathan's* arrival, the Guru, too, lay down to rest. This was the *Pathan's* opportunity. Like a tiger, he sprang to his feet, draw his sword, and plunged it into the belly of the Guru. Before the Guru could get up, the *Pathan* made another stab. But then his fate was sealed. With one stroke of his sword, the Guru severed the head of the treacherous *Pathan* from his body. Then he called out to his Sikhs. The Guru's call at that late and unusual hour made them suspect some foul play.

The two confederates of the *Pathan*, who had seated themselves at some distance, now tried to escape. But they were caught and despatched. When the Sikhs saw the body of the *Pathan* lying near the Guru, they were about to hack it in the belief that there was lying another of the suspicious persons. The Guru restrained them saying that the wretch had already had his due.

Till then, no one suspected that the Guru had been wounded. It was only when he got up and staggered, that the Sikhs came to know of the dismal fact. They were struck with grief and anxiety. But the Guru encouraged them saying, 'Have no Fears. The Immortal God has protected me. I am all right.' The wounds were washed and sewn. But when the Guru lifted him self a little, the threads broke. They were sewn again. Next day, they were again treated with ointments and were more properly dressed.

For some three or four days the Guru did not move from the bed. Sikhs from far and near came in large numbers and were very anxious to see the Guru and be sure that he was out of danger. On the earnest entreaties of these Sikhs, the Guru agreed to appear in the *darbar*. Immense was the joy of the Sikhs at beholding their Master again. They returned to their homes with joyful hearts. Others came and, after beholding the Master, returned in peace and joy. Several days passed in this way.

The Guru then felt that the end of his earthly days was near. He retired for the night after taking a little food. About an hour and a half after midnight, he got up and began to recite the Divine Word. He then called aloud to the Sikhs and bade them the last farewell.

Deep were the grief and distress of the Sikhs. They lamented that they had not had the opportunity of taking to the Master before his departure to the Home from where he had come. They felt awe-struck at what had so unexpectedly happened. All of them sat together and decided to cremate the Guru's body before day-break. This was done.

The Master had returned Home. This happened on the fifth of the bright half of *Kartik* (*Kartik* 6) 1765 Bk/ October 7, 1709 A.D.

Such is the account of the Guru's death as given in the *Chatur jugi*<sup>1</sup> and the *Gur Sobha*. Our reasons for regarding it as true history are as follows : The explanation here given of the motives that inspired the murderous attack appears to be the best and most credible.<sup>2</sup> After the accession of Bahadur Shah, active punitive measures against the Sikhs had been suspended. The Emperor was known to be favourably inclined towards the Guru. Now, Wazir Khan, *Nawab* of Sarhind, had been foremost and most active in persecuting the Guru. The story of his excesses against the Guru had shaken even Aurangzeb, and had lowered the *Nawab* in the eyes of the Emperor.<sup>3</sup> Bahadur Shah disliked him even more on that account. On the other hand the Guru had rendered valuable assistance to Bahadur Shah in the war of succession, and the latter had honoured the former in an open *darbar* by conferring on him a rich robe of honour and a scarf (*dhukhdhukhi*) worth sixty thousand rupees. thereafter. They were together for some time and had then proceeded to gather towards the Deccan. the Guru is reported to have urged the Emperor to punish the *Nawab* of Sarhind for his un-Islamic murder of his two innocent children. It was rumoured that the Emperor had asked for time. Whether the Guru actually made such a request or not, the *Nawab* of Sarhind could not but have felt perturbed at the friendship which was springing up between the Emperor and the Guru whom he had grievously wronged. He knew what would happen to him, if full concord were established between the Emperor and the

1. An old manuscript written by Bhagwan Singh and unearthed by the late indefatigable research-scholar, Bhai Sahib Vir Singh of Amritsar.

2. Further support is lent to this version from rather an unexpected quarter. Khafi Khan says that when Bahadur Shah was proceeding to Haiderabad, the Guru joined him with a company of two or three hundred soldiers. Two or three months later, continues Khafi Khan, 'he died of a wound received from a sudden and unexpected dagger-thrust; his murderer could not be discovered.'

So, according to Khafi Khan, the murderer was neither a grandson of Pinda Khan, nor the son of a *Pathan* allegedly murdered by the Guru, nor further, was he exhorted to commit the crime by the Guru. One thing more is significant in Khafi Khan's statement. He says that the murderer could not be discovered. He does not even say that he was a Muhammadan, though, if there is any point concerning the episode on which there is a complete consensus of opinion, it is this that the murderer was a *Pathan*. Khafi Khan seems to be over-cautious in concealing this fact. Does not this very over-cautiousness and reticence lend colour to the view that he had knowledge of the real instigator of the crime ? And that the best method, he could devise, for averting any suspicions from Bahadur Shah or the Governor of Sarhind, was to omit saying that the murderer was a Muhammadan ?

3. *Forster's Travels*.



Guru. The Emperor had already shown an inclination to help the Guru at the expense of the *Nawab*. As said already, he had granted a *farman* in favour of the Guru upon the *Nawab* for payment of three hundred rupees a day. Hence, Wazir Khan came to be in fear of his life. He knew the custom of those days. The offender was made over to the family of his victim for any punishment by which they might choose to satisfy their thirst for revenge. It was but natural that the *Nawab* should have felt anxious lest he should meet a similar fate. He could not rest in security as long as the Guru was alive. It is no wonder, then, that he devised a plan to end his fears and anxiety. This is further supported by the fact that the same *Nawab*, in after years, employed another *Pathan* to do away with Banda Singh Bahadur after gaining his confidence. But the latter proved too much for the would be assassin.

About the *Gur Sobha* and its author reference has been made in an earlier chapter. Saina Pati was one of the fifty-two poets at the Guru's *darbar*. He began his book in *Sambat* 1758 and finished it some time after 1765. His book is the earliest on the subject and, being the work of a contemporary and close associate of the Guru, the most reliable, especially in matter which came in his personal observation and knowledge. No doubt, he was not an eye-witness of the Guru's death. In fact, he says it so. But his account was based on the reports of many Sikhs who, after the Guru's death, returned from Abchnagar to the Panjab. The Sikhs of the Panjab must have naturally been anxious to hear of all facts relating to an event which had immense importance for them. There seems to be no reason for desbelieving the account that became current among them then, and was recorded by Sainapati, at that very time.

Such was the visible cause of the Master's departure from his world. That the end of the period of his separation from the father was coming had been clear to the Guru soon after he had received the wounds. In the few days that he attended the *darbar* after they had slightly healed, the Guru applied the finishing touch to his work. He had already named his successor and also crowned the Khalsa at Chamkaur. He now proceeded to perform the formal ceremony. Having placed five pice and a cocoanut before the sacred Book, he said :

'The *Panth*, the Khalsa, I formed and helped it grow.

'For the Eternal Father had ordained it so;

'Hear ye all my Sikhs, the Father's behests for the future.

'From today, the *Granth*, the Divine Word is the Master.

'The *Guru Granth* is the embodiment in visible form of all the Gurus.

'With a heart pure and clean, with a faith unbounded and serene.

'Let the Khalsa seek the Master in his Word:

'For the Word, the *Granth*, is the Guru, the Master, From today'

He said this and bowed before the *Guru Granth*. Then he turned to his Sikhs and said, 'Grieve not over my departure. It is true that you will not see this body with your eyes. But I shall be ever in the midst of my Khalsa. Whenever you need my counsel and guidance, gather in a true disciple-like sincerity in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, and discuss and decide matters in the light of the teaching of the ten Masters embodied therein. Whenever a group of my Sikhs remember me with true hearts and pure minds. I shall ever be in their midst. Love not this body which is perishable; but love the lofty ideals which, assuming this body, I tried to place before you. Love the Word. Through Word you can have constant communion with my Master and with me. Those who die fighting for the preservation of high principles and of the Khalsa *Panth* will be especially dear to me. They will go straight unto the Lord's presence, freed from the misery of repeated births and deaths. I am returning to the City where there is neither sin, sorrow, strife, nor jealousy. Let none weep after me.'

Thus the last of the Sikh Gurus "merged his personality in the ranks of his disciples. He declared that the Guruship would vest in the general body of the Khalsa, and not in any mortal. The whole."<sup>1</sup>

Sikh community, in its organized form called the *Panth*, was to guide itself by the Holy *Granth*, and also by the collective sense of the community.<sup>2</sup>

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1. *Gur Sobha* ; Suraj Prakash; *Majma-ul-Akbar*, by Harsukh Rai, page 481; Sohan Lal, i.64-65; Forster, i. 263; Malcolm, 76; *History of the Panjab*, Allan & Co.. (1846), 109; *History of the Sikhs*, (Calcutta, 1846), 86; *History of the Sikhs*, Cunningham, 83; *Rahimama* of Prahlad Singh, 24.

2. *Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, A Short History of the Sikhs.*

## THE MASTER AT A GLANCE- I

The 'Wonderful Drama' which began in 1666 A.D. at Patna Sahib, thus closed at Abchalnagar (Nander) in 1708 A.D. The Great Hero, who called himself 'merely a servant of the Supreme Being, come to witness the great drama of the world', but who is believed by his faithful followers to have been God's own spirit manifested in human form, thus parted from the scene of his activities, after having played his role for a little over forty years. We have seen him in the various situation through which he passed. Let us now try to picture the whole of him as he appeared to his contemporaries, and to comprehend, in our limited way, the irresistible charms of that great personality which compelled even his foes to bow before him, and urged his followers to obey him with a constant, unflinching, and unquestioning obedience. The eye is dazzled and the mind is dazed at the brilliance which encompasses the Master. The marvellous variety and fusion of virtues, qualities, and accomplishments, that formed his personality, have seldom been exhibited anywhere else in the world.

Guru Gobind Singh's personality is a wonderfully harmonious combination of so many good and manly qualities as have seldom been found blended together in one person. Consequently, many writers, who have attempted to measure him with their narrow scales, have been baffled and dazzled. Not finding his parallel anywhere, they have come to the self-consoling conclusion that the stories told of the Guru's many-sided talents and accomplishments are but myths. They have, therefore, presented a very incomplete and highly distorted picture of the Guru.

To the people, great and small, of subsequent times, Guru Gobind Singh has been both a great challenge and a great enigma. Unable to hold him within the narrower compass of their minds and hearts, and finding the altitude of his personality beyond the range of their highest ambitions or dreams, they grow nervous and lose even the never

capacity to understand him. The result is that whenever they have taken up pen to write about, the Guru, this nervousness has swayed and gripped their minds, rendering them incapable of discerning and recording truth. Many of them have in consequence, tried to eclipse him in sundry ways or taken shelter behind hard epithets, in order, very often, to make him look inferior to the "Great Ones" of their own faith or conception. Some were led to say that the Guru derived all his power from goddess Durga; some soothed their agitated and baffled minds by saying that he was "a misguided patriot", some said proudly that the Guru sent petitions for mercy to Aurangzeb, and in obedience to the latter's summons, proceeded to the Deccan to lay his grievances personally before him; some declared that the Guru accepted a minor command in Bahadur Shah's army and went to the Deccan as a servant of the Emperor; some said that in his last days the Guru lost his balance of mind and roamed about in a pitiable condition; Some went to the extent of saying that so tired had he become of his life, that he exhorted a *Pathan* to kill him and himself gave him the dagger for the purpose; Some have dubbed him as "an inveterate enemy of all Muhammadans" and some have said that he wanted to found a kingdom and a ruling dynasty.

We have already exposed the utter baselessness of these charges. Let us now look at the Master and try to describe his manifold qualities; for a contemplation of the qualities and virtues of the great ones generates in us the yearning and the power to walk in their footsteps, and to attempt to be like them as much as we may.

### *A Perfect Man*

First and foremost, he was a perfect man. He was endowed with all virtues, powers, and attributes which one should expect to find in an ideally perfect human being. He did not call or regard himself as God-incarnate or the Only Begotten Son of the Great Father. He lived, acted, ventured, enjoyed, and suffered as a perfect man should do. He wanted to create and leave behind him, for human guidance, such footprints as would help his fellow-beings in the days to come to walk his way and achieve the greatness which was his.

### *A Perfect Yogi*

He was a true and ideal Yogi, combining within himself the prominent features of the various forms of Yoga, or, in the words of a Bengali

devotee-scholar, a *sarv-yogi*, and living and practising the ideal renunciation as laid down in the *Bhagvad Gita*. He sacrificed his father, sons, family, friends, wealth, rank, power, home, and all comforts, all at the altar of national welfare. His whole life, from tender age to the last moment, was one long, vigorous, and persistent struggle for the uplift and liberation of his vanquished race. He held back nothing ; he gave all and everything. No sacrifice was to him too dear if it led to a furtherance of his lofty and selfless ideal. He could have, if he had the liking, spent a life of peace, comfort, and honour, among his disciples, or carved out a kingdom for himself, but his heart was set the other way. 'Dwelling in union with the divine, renouncing attachment, balanced evenly in success and failure, controlling the senses by the mind, having an eye to the welfare of the World,<sup>1</sup> like a true *yogi*, he performed 'righteous action'. The lure of titles, honours, *jagirs*, and kingship, thrown in his way by the Lord of Delhi, affected him as little as the threats and prospects of severest physical suffering and tortures. Even in the midst of overwhelming forces of the enemies, he allowed not the current of *Nam* in his followers to ebb or abate. After evacuating the fort of Anandpur, and before crossing the flooded Sarsa, unmindful of all earthly consequences, he did what no mere general would or could ever do; he ordered his soldiers to halt and sing. His praises in the wide open place; for it was the usual time to do so. Later, when he was a fugitive, and exile in the country of his birth, with the Imperial armies in hot pursuit after him, when he was refused shelter by some of the very people for whom he had toiled and suffered, when all his sons and most of his companions had fallen in the struggle, one by one, when he was running or roaming all alone and barefooted through thorns and bushes, passing winter nights in the open fields with a clod of earth or an earthen water-pot as his pillow, he was ever the same. In the midst of all these agonizing experiences he maintained the same mental poise, the same uninterrupted communion with the Lord, as in his days of glory and rejoicings at Anandpur. Such was the spiritual greatness of the Master; such was the *Sarv-Yoga* practised by Guru Gobind Singh.

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1. Bhagwat Gita.

### *Morally Perfect*

He was as great and perfect in moral character as he was high in spiritual life. He taught and practised the highest and noblest form of morality in private as well as in public life. Throughout his career not even once did he stoop to or even countenance unfair means, falsehood, deceit, or lies. In war, as in peace, his policy was the same : truth above every thing else. When a Muslim *Amir's* young bride fell into his hands during a war, she was treated as a sister and conducted to her home, unmolested and untouched. He taught his Sikhs to be continent, as far as possible; in any case never to go near the bed of another's wife even in dream.<sup>1</sup> They were enjoined to be pure in thought, word, and deed; unflinching practice of Truth in all walks of life was the ideal which he placed before himself and his Sikhs.

### *Firm and Unbending*

His perseverance was as wonderful as the firmness of his unbending resolve. Right from the beginning of his career, no vicissitude of reverses of fortune could shake him, or make him waver in the lofty purpose which he had placed before himself. He would take no defeat. He never thought of surrender. A mere *faqir*, without any regular army, material of war, of means of income, he had resolved to strike at the root of one of the greatest powers in the world; and he executed his design with a persistence which is unparalleled in history. Even when he had to flee as a fugitive and rebel, the mission on which his heart had been set, and as a first step towards the accomplishment of which he had, at the tender age of nine, sent his father to Aurangzeb's court to sacrifice himself for the sake of his Hindu compatriots, left not its wonted ardour, and suffered not any abatement. He was ever firm and unbent. When, in the forest of Machhiwara, his body exhausted with fatigue and his feet blistered and bleeding, he laid himself down to take rest of sleep, his hand always grasped his naked sword. After having awakened a sense of national unity and the sentiments of patriotism and nationalism in northern India, he decided to proceed southwards and arouse the same sense and sentiments in the hearts of the people of Rajasthan and

1. Like Guru Nanak, [Guru] Gobind Singh attached the utmost importance of purity of life; but on a level with it he placed brave deeds and devotion to the Sikh cause. There was no higher duty for a Sikh than to die fighting in defence of his faith.' C.H. Payne, *op cit*, pp 34-35.

the Deccan. Even from the extreme South, he picked out the man who was destined to lead the Khalsa army in the Panjab. Up to the last moment, he exerted himself to disseminate his ideals and broadcast his message to humanity.

### *Brave and Fearless*

He was strong, brave, and fearless as a lion. Finding the dreaded Mughal Emperor, the hill-chiefs, and the high-caste Hindus all ranged against him, and finding his own devoted Sikhs falling away or being killed in battles, he did not feel perturbed or afraid. No odds, how-so-ever heavy, damped his valour and resolve; no personal danger made him shirk his duty. Wounds only stirred him to greater exertion.<sup>1</sup> When he prayed to God it was not for any earthly gifts, but for power and opportunity to do good deeds, to face his foes unflinchingly in battle, and to win a victory over them or die fighting. thrice was he summoned by Aurangzeb to his presence. But not only did he refuse to obey the summons each time. But he sent to the dreaded Mughal a letter wherein the wrongs of the government and the perjury of the Emperor and his agents were fearlessly exposed and condemned.

He vowed to make the sparrow hunt and pluck the falcon, to make one fight a legion, and to make the poor and destitute become rulers; and he succeeded marvellously in doing that seemingly impossible feat.

While he was strong in mind and spirit, he had a strong and well-built body. Lions, at whom even renowned warriors and hunters were afraid to shoot from a good, safe distance, were by him pierced to death with a sword. None could string his bow; he shot arrows to surprising distances and with wonderful exactness of aim. He had no equal in military skill and fears.

### *A General and Organizer*

He was an able general and efficient organizer. people, the very dregs of society, who had never handled a weapon for ages, were transmuted by him into the sturdiest soldiers that the world has ever seen. Under his influence, 'men who had never touched a sword of shouldered a gun became heroes. Confectioners and washermen

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1. Jabai ban lagio tabai ros jagio—when the arrow struck, me the war spirit in me got inflamed. (*Vachittar Natak*).

and barbers became leaders of armies before whom the *Rajas* quailed and the *Nawabs* cowered with terror.<sup>1</sup> This low rabble he organized into a well-knit community which was able to survive the deadliest campaign of extermination that has ever been known in the world. He effected an organization which was based on the most modern ideas of democracy and sociology. His marvellous capacity as a general is proved by the manner in which he could, with his handful of soldiers, inflict severe defeats on his enemies, and still more, by the stout resistance which he offered to the Imperial hosts at Chamkaur with but forty soldiers at his side.

### *Of All-embracing Love*

His love embraced not only the whole humanity, but also all living beings. His teaching was :—

“Remembering that all living beings are God’s creatures  
one should refrain from inflicting pain on them;  
For, believe me, O Nand Lal, when His creatures have to  
suffer, the creator feels the pang and is displeased.

He received with open arms all who came, making no distinction between high and low, rich and poor, Hindu and Muhammadan. Learned men of all creeds, who feared Aurangzeb’s bigotry, found an asylum at his *darbar*. Some of his shortsighted Sikhs accused Bhai Kanhaiya helping the enemies by giving water to their wounded soldiers, but the Guru approved his action and encouraged him to persevere in that noble path of love and service of all without distinction. The Guru had to engage in war, no doubt, yet it was not for lack of love and regard for human life, but on account of an abundance of that very love. He wanted to rescue a downtrodden race from the ravages of ferocious tyrants. He did not kill his enemies by surprise attacks. He never shot at such of the enemy’s soldiers as were not, at the time, actually engaged in the fight. Those who were at the back, taking rest, never received any arrow from his bow. Such was he to those who chose to be his foes.

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1. Dr G.C. Narang, *op cit*, p. 84.



## THE MASTER AT A GLANCE- II

## Apostle of Human Unity and Brotherhood

At a time when, because of religious differences, humanity was divided into mutually hostile groups, when in India non-Muslims were, with a ruthless use of the sword and the might of the state, being forced to embrace Islam, when the Muhammadans and the Hindus were filled with mutual hatred and intolerance, when millions of "low-caste people" were being spurned by the 'high-caste people', Guru Gobind Singh raised his voice against all this un-Godly state of things. Here are some of his utterings :—

## (i)

Some, shaving their heads, become Sanyasis,  
Others become Yogis, Brahmcharis, and Jatis;  
Some are Hindus and other are Muhammadans; among the latter, some are *Sunnis*  
and some are *Shias*;  
Still remember that human beings are all of one race of caste;  
*Karta* (the creator) and *Karim* (the Beneficent) are the same;  
*Razik* (the Sustainer) and *Rahim* (the Merciful) are the same;  
Let no man even by mistake suppose that there is a difference.<sup>1</sup>  
Serve and worship the one God who is the one Light-giver for all.  
Know that His form is one, and that He is the one light diffused in all.

## (ii)

The temple and the Mosque are the same; the Hindu  
worship and the Muhammadan prayer are the same;  
All men are the same; it is through error that they seem different.  
Deities, demons, Yashas, heavenly singers,  
Muhammadans, and Hindus adopt the customary dress of their different countries.  
All men have the same eyes, the same ears, the same  
body, and the same build—a compound of earth, air, fire and water.  
*Allah* and *Abhekh* are the same; the Purans and the Quran are the same;  
They are all alike; it is the one God who created them all.

1. That is, there is not one God for the Hindus and another for the Muhammadans.

## (iii)

As from one fire millions of sparks do rise;  
 Though rising separately, they unite again in the fire;  
 As from one heap of dust several dust particles fill the air;  
 As in one stream million of waves are produced;  
 The waves of water will all be know as water;;  
 The waves of water will all be known as water;  
 So from God's form incorporeal and corporeal beings are manifested;  
 And, springing from Him, shall all be united in Him again.

He put these teachings of his into practice and, abolishing all differences of caste and birth, created the Khalsa *Panth*; baptized all by making them drink *Amrit* from the same vessel; and even the "untouchables" he admitted as equals into the new Brotherhood. He exhorted all to love all, without exhibiting any differentiation on account of caste, creed, or country. He proclaimed it vehemently:-

I tell you the truth, hear ye all,  
 Only those who love will find the Lord.

*A Poet and Scholar*

He was poet and scholar. He honoured poets and appreciated fine arts. Besides Panjabi, he was a scholar of Sanskrit, Persian, and Hindi. His Hindi poetry is without a parallel in Hindi literature.<sup>1</sup> A good part of his literary compositions is believed to have been washed away by the Sirsa. Still, enough of them have come down to us to prove the lofty excellence of his genius as a poet and thinker. Speaking of the 'Book of the Tenth King', S.M. Latif writes as follows—'It raised the dormant energies of the Sikhs, who, at that time, were a vanquished race, and urged upon them the necessity of leading an active and useful life. The author infuses into it his own fervour and spirit, kindling the mind of the reader with lofty ideas of social freedom, and inflaming them to deeds of valour. [Guru] Gobind [Singh] possessed a poetical mind, and his description of the heroic deeds of warlike men lays before the reader a vivid and sprightly picture of the fields of battle in ages gone by, and animates him with ideas of military glory and national honour and ascendancy'.

1, Dr G.C. Narang, *op cit*, p.73, and Appendix i,ii.

### *A Peerless Archer*

In archery he surpassed the famous ancient heroes of old. He could shoot his arrows over a long distance and with unerring aim. The great losses which the army of Sarhind suffered at Muktsar were, in no small measure, due to the fast, continuous rain of arrows that fell from the Guru's bow. During the course of a war, his enemies were playing at chess in their camp. Suddenly, a gold-tipped arrow of the Guru struck one of the legs of the bedstead on which they sat. They began to wonder at the miracle displayed by the Guru in having shot so far, and dreaded that, if he had liked, he could have killed them there. Just then, another arrow came and struck another leg of the bedstead. It bore a paper on which was written, 'It is not miracle, but perfection was greater archer than Arjun, the hero of *Mahabharat*, and that the world had never seen another who could bend the bow so well as he.

### *A Prophet*

He was prophet and social reformer. His teachings equal, and in several respects surpass, those of the most famous of the world's prophets. But, unlike some of them, he did not claim to be God, His incarnation, His only Begotten son, or His Deputy on the earth. He did not say, "I am the only Begotten Son of God. If you put faith in me, my Father in Heaven will pardon all your sins." He did never say, "I am God Himself. I sustain the world. I have come to kill the demons." He did not say, "On the Day of judgement I shall be standing beside God. Whoever puts faith in me shall be saved by me from hell and conducted to paradise." He described himself to be but a servant of the Supreme Being.<sup>1</sup> Of course, He did call himself a son of God, but that was in the same sense in which he called all human beings to be his sons. His method was ever of loving persuasion; no threat, direct or veiled, did he ever employ to convince people of the necessity and reasonableness of the course advocated by him, or of his sincerity in his beliefs. On the other hand, no fear of

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1. 'Those who call me God

'Will into the Hell's deep pit fall;

'Regard me as a slave of His;

'And have no doubt whatever of this;

'I am a servant of the Supreme Being.

'And have come to behold the drama of this word.' (*Vachittar Natak*)

opposition from any quarter deterred him from the path of progress that he had chosen for his people<sup>1</sup>

### *A Social Reformer*

Guru Gobind Singh completed the task of eradicating social evils which had been initiated by Guru Nanak. He abolished social distinctions and gave practical effect to the doctrine that 'the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes'. He fused all the four castes into one Brotherhood, the Khalsa *Panth*. He placed women in a position of equality with men, in the religious as well as in the social field. The social reforms which he introduced remain to this day the ideal of many an advanced community.

### *A Statesman and Administrator*

He was a statesman. A warrior and general must needs be a statesman if he is to achieve any tangible success. But the Guru's statesmanship was based on truth and morality, and not on diplomacy. No deceit, no craft, no treachery, and no falsehood, did he ever employ to gain his end. His was not a statesmanship of the moderns who would justify any means and devices, however base and unfair, provided they help in the attainment of the end on view. 'Why care for the means when the end is good?' That was not his method. But if he did not employ craft himself, he was not, on that account, liable to fall a victim to the low designs of his enemies. He was wide-awake and alert. He kept himself well informed of the enemies' moves. He knew the value of forests, streams, and mountains as means of defence, and made the fullest use of them. His fortification of Anandpur was so well designed that it was impossible for an enemy to surprise him or take him unawares.

He was an administrator. His rule was based on love and justice<sup>2</sup>. So well managed was his city that victims of injustice and oppression from their places adopted Anandpur as their home. His followers numbered many thousands. Never was there among the any discord of any semblance of unrest or mutiny.

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1. What the Lord of the Universe bade me that will I surely utter; And will not remain silent through fear of mortals. (*Bachittar Natak*)

2. In the *Vachittar Natak* he writes :

'When the duties of a ruler devolved upon me,  
I promoted righteousness to the best of my power.'

### *A Householder*

He was a householder. He was an obedient son, a considerate father, a kind master, and a loving husband. When his mother, under the influence of the treacherous, crafty *Rajas*' oaths asked him to evacuate the fort, he tried to convince her that their oaths were false; but, when she persisted and declared her determination to go in spite of him, he, like a dutiful son, resigned himself to her wishes, and evacuated the fort. The reader knows what happened afterwards. He brought up his sons like an ideal father. It was by virtue of the training which he had given them that his sons of six and eight preferred the most horrible death to the life of renegades. It was the same training which enabled his elder sons, fourteen and eighteen years of age, to face whole armies with firm and steady hearts, and be hewn down to pieces rather than fleeing from the field or owning defeat. When his mother was gone and his sons were murdered or cut to pieces, he bore these bereavements with a firmness which has no parallel elsewhere. When people showed grief at the death of his sons, he cheered them up by saying, 'No, my sons are not dead. They live in the lap of the Eternal Father. And on this earth live millions of my sons in the form of the Khalsa.'

### *A Patriot and Liberator*

He was a patriot, indeed the first Indian to be inspired with that noble sentiment. He was filled with unbounded grief at the abject slavery to which his countrymen had been degraded. His heart yearned to bring about a true liberation and to break the chains that bound the bodies, minds, and hearts of his people. He had a passion to make his countrymen regain self-reliance and self-confidence. He wanted to raise their character, to make them free and bold, and to teach them selfless sacrifice and service for the country's sake. He aimed at making them love their neighbour better than their own selves, be friends off all, be foes of no man as such, but oppose and resist with their lives any tyrannous and vicious system that debased and degraded humanity. His love for his country did not diminish his insistence on high principles which he placed before the people as the Guru and Prophet.

### *A Nation-builder*

He was a nation-builder. It was Guru Nanak that had conceived the plan of welding the various sections of the Indian populace into a nation; and it was Guru Gobind Singh that accomplished what had been begun by Guru Nanak and promoted by the other Gurus. The sentiment of nationalism had not entered the Indian mind before that time. Guru Gobind Singh created the nation and a feeling for nationality. He taught people to take concerted action against common enemies and at times of common dangers. He taught them people to Take concerted action against Common enemies, and at time of common dangers. He taught them a corporate life in which the common good and welfare were placed higher than individual interests. He established a system of democracy which had never been thought of in India before. After him, he gave the whole community the power to frame rules and laws in conformity with the fundamental principles of the Sikh religion.

### *An Apostle of Democracy*

All the Gurus were apostles of democracy. This was something new at that time. They wanted to develop a sense of power and responsibility in the people. They encouraged them to exercise self-expression and self-reliance. They took care to impress upon their disciples that, among them, claims to seniority or superiority had all to rest on merit. He who took the greatest pains to do even the lowliest service to the people, along with being devout and regular in his prayers, was to be worthy of the highest honour. A memorable illustration of this ideal was witnessed long afterwards when the Sikh power was in the making. The *Nawab* of Lahore, in order to appease and win over the Khalsa, offered the title of "*Nawab*", a *Jagir* of one lakh, and a rich robe of honour to a suitable Sikh. He sent a messenger with the offer to the Sikhs assembled at Sri Akal Takhat, Amritsar, and requested them to choose someone for the purpose. 'Let it go to Kapoor Singh, who cleans the Khalsa's stables and is now fanning the assembly.' This was the unanimous decision.

Guru Gobind Singh completed the development of the Sikh character. He gave his Sikhs many practical lesson in self-rule, self-reliance, and self-expression. We know that after he had baptized the five Dear Ones, he implored them to baptize him in the like manner.

It is on that account that he has been called the Guru who was also a disciple at the same time.'

Once, when on his way to the Deccan, he made a sign of salutation to the shrine of a renowned *Sadhu*, named Dadu. The act was in violation of the principles of Sikhism. The Sikhs at once stood up and protested against the Guru's violation of his own teachings. He gladly conceded that it was a mistake on his part. He agreed to be judged and punished by the Sikhs. They did not hesitate. They sat as judges and fined him. He gladly paid the fine and added that he had committed the mistake purposely. He had wanted to test them.

Later, when he deputed Banda Singh to the Panjab, he sent five Sikhs with him to be his counsellors. Banda Singh was strictly enjoined to pay due heed to their advice. He was also told that he must do nothing in opposition to the wishes of the general body of the Khalsa.

Still later, when he was about to retire to his Celestial Home, he invested the Khalsa under the guidance of *Guru Granth Sahib* with the full authority till then exercised by the Guru. Here was the fullest devolution of power and responsibility among the masses.

The lesson taught by the Guru has gone deep into the Sikh character. They have been always in the forefront of all popular movements against autocracy in any form and in any sphere.

### *Free from Pride and Vanity*

Though endowed with great gifts and noble qualities, he never felt proud or vain on that account. He lifted the depressed and the lowly to a position of equality with the "high caste people", and made them members of his Khalsa on the same footing as the Brahmins or Kashatriyas; yet he never boasted of having done a favour to them. On the other hand, he attributed all his own success and greatness to his Khalsa. "It is through their kindness that I have been so exalted; otherwise there are millions of worms like me."

When he won battles, he did not boast of the victories as being due to his valour; but invariably attributed them all to the grace of God and the bravery of his soldiers.

### *Humorous and Witty*

He possessed great wit and humour and he made use of this quality in driving home the lessons which he wanted to teach, or in clinching a point in argument. For example, one day he secretly dressed a donkey in the skin of a tiger. All animals fled from the supposed tiger in fright,

and soon, complaints were brought to the Guru that a very big tiger was disturbing the people. When a hunting party challenged the supposed tiger, he brayed in terror and ran to his master. Thereupon, the Guru impressed upon his followers the benefit and necessity of their keeping a bold exterior and preserving their form, faith, and observances, distinct from the mass of the Hindus who were then mostly idolatrous, caste-ridden, and superstitious. On another occasion, Bahadur Shah was discussing religious matters with him, and said, 'There is only one God.' The Guru said, 'No, there are three Gods.' The Emperor retorted, 'Even a child knows that there is only one God.' 'No, no,' said the Guru, 'there are three Gods. The first is the one who is called *Allah* or the God of the Muslims; the second is the one who is called *Ram* or *Ishwar*, the God of the Hindus. These two are in apparent and constant strife and rivalry, for each of them appears to have sworn to damn for ever the followers of the other. The third is the one whom I call *Wahiguru* Wonderful Lord, who loves all His creatures, Many other anecdotes could be quoted, but these are enough as axamples.

Such then was the Master—a perfect man, *Sarav yogi*, householder, poet, scholar, thinker, reformer, prophet, lover of truth and purity, fearless as a lion, champion of the weak and oppressed, irreconcilable opponent of tyranny, friend of all; a general, archer, statesman, administrator, patriot, nation-builder, giant in physical strength, and a master of wit and humour. This is the master at a glance. Who can describe a full view of him ? Where can you find the like of him ?



## CHAPTER 48

### HE MASTER'S ACHIEVEMENT

#### *What He Found*

It is now time to consider the extent to which the Master succeeded in bringing about, in his country, a change for the better. In the first two chapters an attempt has been made to describe the condition of the country at the time when, at the tender age of nine he had to take upon himself the duty of leading the Sikh nation. Centuries of oppression had so degraded and demoralized the Hindus, and made them so different from their glorious ancestors, that they had come to consider the Lord of Delhi to be as great as God himself. <sup>1</sup>There could be as little thought of opposing the decrees of the former as those of the latter. Having bid good bye to the glories of their ancient religion, the Hindus had become divided among themselves on grounds of superstitious formalities and artificial limitations. The caste system had lost all its original elasticity and usefulness, and had come to be one of the most inhuman of human institutions. The ruling classes, on the other hand, were brutally arrogant and were ferociously tearing and devouring the poor lambs whose guardians they had constituted themselves. They had come to believe themselves to be as powerful and defiance proof as their God. Religion was leading them to unspeakable tyrannies and inhuman atrocities. It appeared that this state of affairs was past all remedy. The darkness of despair was deepest in the Punjab.

#### *What He Left*

But in the Punjab itself rose a hero who broke the spell of the Mughal Empire. He inspired in the people a faith in themselves and showed them that the Mughal armies were not invincible. He broke the chains that bound them in matters of social and religious rituals, and taught

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1, *Ishwaro va Dillishwaro va*—The Lord of Delhi is as great as God'- had been a maxim with the terrified Hindus. 'Dr Narang.

them how the political bondage was to be ended. He took the dregs of society and made *Rajas* and *Nawabs* quail before them. He aroused in the people sentiments of nationality and patriotism, and taught them how to make sacrifices for the nation's cause, how to put in concerted efforts for the common good. He perfected the organization, started by Guru Nanak, in which each was to be for all and all were to be for each. He created a new type of soldiers, Saint-Soldiers, who would care not for life and its attractions when called upon to face a national emergency and to save the nation's honour ; who would die fighting a tyrant or their country's foe rather than being indifferent spectators of his highhandedness and aggressive excesses; whose motto would be to 'trust in God and do the right; to strike fear in none and to be afraid of none.' In the words of an English writer, 'He engrafted the courage of a soldier upon the enthusiasm of the devotee.' The spirit of devotion was not pushed to the wall in the height of passion for war. The Saint-soldiers maintained, on the field of battle, the same communion with the Lord of the Hosts as they did in the temple, behind the counter, or at the plough. Above all, a spirit was infused in them which would never let them bow before even the most inhuman and persistent oppression and true the most devilish persecution. 'Let go my head, but live for my faith and discipleship' was the motto that he succeeded in engraving indelibly on the hearts of his Khalsa. It was this spirit which enabled them to survive the campaigns of extermination started against them by Furukhsiyar and Mir Manu. It was this spirit, again, which, in our own times, urged the Khalsa on and on, erect and undaunted, under the most brutal and indiscriminate lathi charges, and in the face of terrible showers of grape-shot. Their deeds at places like *Guru ka Bagh*, Jaito, Nankana Sahib, on one side, and Saragarhi, Ypres, Gallipoli, on the other, will stand as lasting monuments in commemoration of the marvellous change that the Guru had brought about in his followers.

Above is given a view of the Master's achievements as they appear to an admiring follower of his ; below are given the opinions of noted writers, Hindus, Muslims, and Englishmen, some of whom are in no way very great admirers of the Guru. The tributes that his hostile or sceptical critics pay him are evidently all the more valuable because they amply confirm the views of his admirers.

*Sir John Malcolm*

'In the character of this reformer of the Sikhs, it is impossible not to recognize many of those features which have distinguished the most celebrated founders of political communities. The object he attempted was great and laudable. It was the emancipation of his tribe from oppression ; and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested. The Muhammdan conquerors of India, as they added to their strength, by making proselytes through the double means of persuasion and force ; and these, the moment they had adopted their faith, became the supporters of their power against the efforts of the Hindus ; who, bound in the chains of their civil and religious institution, could neither add to their number by admitting converts, nor allow more than a small proportion of the population of the country to arm against the enemy. (Guru) Gobind (Singh) saw that he could only hope for success by a bold departure from usages which were calculated to keep those, by whom they were observed, in a degraded subjection to an insulting and intolerant race.'

*S. M. Latif*

'Historians agree in eulogising the great merits of Guru Gobind (Singh). In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a law-giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on the *Masnad*, and a *faqir* in the society of the Khalsa. He was the right man for the needs of the time. Sikhism in the beginning, namely in (Guru) Nanak's time, would soon have been extinguished, had its founder adopted the same plan as that recommended by (Guru) Govind (Singh), viz the free exercise of the sword in defence of religion ... Credit is due to him for having founded a political community of no mean order, for he taught a vanquished people how to obtain political ascendancy and national freedom. His perservering endurance in the midst of calamities and disasters was equal to his bravery and valour in the field, and, although he did not live to see his great ends accomplished, yet it is acknowledged on all hands that the conversion of a band of undisciplined *Jats*(given to rapine and plunder or to agricultural pursuits) into a body of conquerors and a political corporation, was due entirely to the genius of (Guru) Govind (Singh), whose history is closely interwoven with that of the Sikhs as a nation.

### *Cunningham*

'Success is thus not always the measure of greatness. The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty, although fitful, longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by (Guru) Nanak. (Guru) Gobind (Singh) saw what was yet vital and he *relumed* it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of (Guru) Gobind (Singh) has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified, and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity.'

### *Dr Narang*

Though he did not live to see his high aims accomplished, Guru Gobind Singh's labours were not lost. Though he did not actually break the shackles that bound his nation, he had set their souls free, and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for freedom and national ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the Lord of Delhi, and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by the Moslem tyranny. (Guru) Gobind (Singh) had seen what was yet vital in the Hindu race "and he *relumed* it with Promethean fire." He had taken up sparrows and had taught them to hunt down imperial falcons. He was the first Indian leader who taught democratical principle and made his followers regard each other as *Bhai* or brother, and act by *Gurumata* or general counsels. He taught them to regard themselves as the chosen of the Lord, destined to crush tyranny and oppression and look upon themselves as the future rulers of their land.'

### *Daulat Rai*

'Thus ended, alas, the life of the truest friend of the Hindu community, the brave and compassionate patriot, the best and the most genuine helper and guide of the people. But, using his blood and bones as manure, he had planted the tree of Indian nationalism which fructified

in due course. Though his ideal was not accomplished in his life time, yet his labours were not wasted. The work which he began in deep love, with a true heart, and a burning passion, and which he completed by sacrificing his whole family, was not thrown away, though he did not live to see the result of his achievements. Failure had nothing to do with him ; he achieved what had conceived. And before his death, Guru Gobind Singh was fully satisfied that he had done his work well, and had fully carried out the mission with which he had been entrusted by the Eternal Lord. So, at the time of death he was happy. He felt no grief or dejection.

'Shivaji was a contemporary of the Guru. The success of Shivaji is often compared with Guru's achievement and the conclusion is drawn that Guru Gobind Singh was failure. But this is incorrect. In arriving at such conclusions, all facts should be borne in mind. Shivaji's work was no doubt conducive to the community's welfare, but the mainspring of his activities was his ambition for political power. Guru Gobind Singh's ideal was free from any traces of selfish ambition. It is one thing to work for personal power, and quite another to attempt the extermination of the country's foes. While Shivaji toiled for himself, the Guru laboured for the others. Shivaji wrought for political ascendancy, the Guru for social, religious, and political emancipation. For the accomplishment of his design, Shivaji made no scruples to employ lies and deceit ; but Guru Gobind Singh, who was also a religious leader, wanted to conquer, like the true Kashatriyas of old, by the dint of his arms and in the open field of battle. Shivaji's victories attracted soldiers around him ; the Guru had to create men for his victories. Shivaji did not have to face as much opposition from the Hindus as the Guru. Therefore, though the Guru Gobind Singh could not achieve as much apparent success in his life time as Shivaji, yet his work was of a far more permanent nature. The Maharattas lost all when they lost their political power. But Guru Govind Singh's work had a lasting effect, and the fruit of his exertions will be felt till eternity.

### *W.L.M. Gregor*

'If we consider the work which (Guru) Gobind (Singh) accomplished, both in reforming his religion and instituting a new code of laws for his followers ; his personal bravery under all circumstances; his persevering endurance amidst difficulties, which would have disheartened others, and overwhelmed them in inextricable distress, and, lastly, his

final victory over his powerful enemies by the very men who had previously forsaken him, we need not be surprised that the Sikhs venerate his memory. He was, undoubtedly, a great man.'

*R.M. Nair, Editor, The Tribune*

'Of Guru Gobind Singh it has rightly been said that he combined the irrepressible patriotism of Mazzini with the organizing capacity of Garibaldi, the revolutionary idealism of Rousseau with the dauntless intrepidity of Voltaire, besides the noblest qualities of a saint and soldier. A chronicler holds that the Guru belonged to the galaxy of great men like the Buddha, Mahavira, Christ and Prophet Mohammad, who were ushered into the world at times of great peril and who are universally regarded as saviours of humanity. Unlike most other religious leaders, Guru Gobind Singh was also a great poet, a man of letters, and a fearless warrior. He was austere, simple, truthful, courageous, and of unimpeachable integrity. Far from being a devotee of the mere abstract, he distinguished himself as a man of action, a hero of many battles and a lasting source of inspiration to his followers scattered over a wide area. But to describe him as a Guru of a single community would be to ignore his many sided personality and his splendid all round achievements, for he was truly a practical democrat, a benefactor of the entire nation. He derived his immense power from the masses, in whom he had great faith, and initiated the conception of a consensus (*Sangat*) as against the arbitrary decisions of an individual, however high and mighty. Indeed, he infused a new spirit among the common people and brought about an unbelievable transformation at a crucial time.

'These traits of his exemplary character and his remarkable accomplishments during a relatively short span of life (42 years) impart valuable lessons which if faithfully followed, would bring about a resurrection and lift the country out of the confusion now engulfing it. The first lesson, particularly relevant at the present moment, is that of secularism. It was Guru Gobind Singh who, brushing aside all petty considerations of cast and creed, chose humble and lowly persons as the Five Beloved (*Panj Pyaras*). He got himself baptised at their hands, thus signalling the end of social and master-disciple distinctions. The example of equality and fraternity he thus set in the 17th century should help end the many social and communal cobwebs which hamper our progress even in the 20th century. Another lesson which he taught by

effective example was of undaunted courage even in the face of personal tragedies and severe repression (by the then Moghul ruler) and of determination to fight to the end against the heaviest odds. The third valuable lesson we can learn from his life is of sacrifice and selfless service to the people. The Guru struggled valiantly to establish justice and equality, almost a Heaven on earth, but not to wreak vengeance, or build an empire for himself. On the top of it all, he proved by his life of immense constructive activity that, given the will, it is possible to weld weak, frustrated people into a strong, united nation, willing to sacrifice their all for the common goods.' (18-1-67)

APPENDIX

RULES OF CONDUCT FOR THE SIKHS

Bhai Nand Lal's Tankhahnama :—

This *Tankhahanama* or Code of Fines is written in the form of the Guru's answers to questions put to him by Bhai Nand Lal. Here are few extracts therefrom :-

(i) Listen, O Nand Lal, the right conduct for a Sikh is to put his heart in naught besides meditation on God's name, deeds of charity, and cleanliness of body, mind, and heart.

(ii) He who doth not attend the congregation of the faithful every morning, incurreth a heavy fine

(iii) Who, while attending a congregation, lets his mind wander; Who starts conversing when the Lord's praises are being sung; Who doth not invite the pure and the destitute to sit near him; Verily doth he incur a heavy fine.

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(iv) Who casteth impure glances at the mothers and sisters attending a congregation; Who yieldeth himself to anger; Who weddeth his daughter without proper care and fore thought; Who misappropriateth the wealth and property of his sister or daughter; Verily doth he suffer torments in the life to come.

(v) Who robs the poor by deceit or force, No consolation or advantage shall he derive from worship and penance.

(vi) Who doth not employ one tenth of his income in the name of the Guru and God; Who acquires wealth or food by falsehood or deceit, Such a one, O dear Lal, should never be trusted. 'Who gives a word, but keeps it not will find no shelter here or hereafter.

Who takes meat from a Muslim,

Who recites aught but the Guru's Word,

Who starts on a journey or business without a prayer,

Who hankers after a thing once renounced,



Who takes to his bed any but his own wedded wife,  
 Who bestows not food and clothing on the poor and the needy.  
 Such a one shall merit no honour in the Lord's presence.  
 Who fixes not his mind on divine music and religious discourse,  
 Who utters foul words to a man of God,  
 Who speaks evil of others and is addicted to gambling, robbery,  
 or theft,  
 He shall, forsooth, suffer severe torments at the hands of death.  
 Who eats anything without repeating God's name,  
 Who visits the house of prostitute,  
 Who contracts love with another's wife,  
 Such a Sikh liked not by the Guru.'  
 Who combats in the van,  
 Who covets not another's wife or wealth,  
 Whose thoughts dwell ever on God,  
 Who loves his Guru,  
 Who receives the enemy's steel on the front,  
 Who aids the poor and destitute,  
 Who slays the evil-doer,  
 Who ever mounts the war horse,  
 And who remains ever ready for war.'

'Remembering that all living beings are God's creatures and belong to Him, one should not give them pain or sorrow;

For, believe me, O Nand Lal, when His Creatures have to suffer, the Creator feels the pang and is displeased.'

*Selections from Bhai Desa Singh<sup>1</sup> Rahatnama  
or Rules of Conduct for the Sikhs*

(i) The first rule is that at initiation the Sikh should drink the *Amrit* in which a two-edged has been stirred and should not accept any other baptismal water.

(ii) Whatever wealth he brings home should be of own honest earning; Of this he should dedicate one tenth to the Guru's cause; thus alone can he acquire a good name in the world.

(iii) Who regards another's daughter as his daughter, Who regards the wife of another as his mother, Who faithfully loves his own wife, Such a one is a true Sikh of the Guru.

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1. Bhai Desa Singh based his Rahatnama on Bhai Nand Lal's dialogue.

- (iv) Who does not even look at wine, opium, tobacco in any form, or the meat of animals killed in the Muhammadan fashion, is a true Sikh.
- (v) A Sikh should learn Gurmukhi from Sikhs, and should acquire other education from wherever or from whomsoever it may be available.
- (vi) The company of another's wife, gambling, falsehood, theft, and wine. He who gives up these five vices prevalent in the world is a true Sikh.
- (vii) A Sikh should not dispraise or speak evil of any of the various religions current in the world.
- (viii) In administering justice a Sikh should not accept bribe, nor should he bear false testimony.

*Selections from the Rahatnama of Bahi Chaupa Singh*<sup>1</sup>

- (i) Whenever someone dies, Sikh should sing or sung the Guru's Word, and prepare *karah parshad* for distribution among those who accompany the deceased to the cremation ground.
- (ii) A Sikh should regard the mouth of a poor man as the Guru's receptacle. Whatever is put in there reaches the Guru.
- (iii) A Sikh of the Guru should not wear the Hindu thread, nor paint any marks on the forehead.
- (iv) In every Sikh village there should be a *darmsala* or a house of God, where *Nam*-gatherings should be held and travellers and strangers should find food and rest.
- (v) All affairs concerning the Sikh should be settled among the Sikhs; any Sikh who, without the permission of his brother Sikhs, places his affair or dispute in the hands of an official, incurs a heavy fine.
- (vi) Any debtor who tries to evade his obligations is fit for a heavy penalty.
- (vii) Anyone who breaks his promise, or cheats another, incurs a heavy penalty.

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1. Bhai Chaupa Singh was the Guru's personal attendant since his childhood. He was baptized by the Guru personally. His *Rahatnama* mostly repeats the rules of the other *Rahimamas*.

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account of Guru Gobind Singh, not a few errors of fact, e. g. he says that the Guru was at Patna when his father was executed, from there he fled to Srinagar with the chief of which place he quarrelled on 'a pretence of insult being offered'; 'worsted in some future action,' he was obliged to leave Srinagar for the Panjab where he got the dependencies of Mackoval' from a prince; Banda attended the Guru to the Deccan; etc. Forster's description of the *Amrit* ceremony is ludicrous and shows what little care he took to ascertain true facts. The 'proselyte' is conducted into the presence of five or more Sikhs, when one of them pours into the hollow of his hand a little water being touched by the toe of each of the Sicques, the proselyte swallows....After the performance of this ceremony a cup filled with *sharbet* is introduced, out of which he drinks five times.'

'The Sicques', writes Forster, 'after the manner of the Hindus, bury their dead; and they oblige the Mahometan converts to adopt the same usage.'

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(a) 'The very existence' of the four 'immediate successors of Guru Nanak was disregarded by the government.' Evidently, he is ignorant of the execution of Guru Arjan by the orders of Jahangir.

(b) Guru Tegh Bahadur 'was put to death in Patna' by Aurangzeb's commands;

(c) 'The Sikhs never received any certain information about the death of Guru Gobind Singh.' The *Gur Sobha* of Saina Pati stands as the most effective refutation of this statement.

(d) Banda was 'openly put to death by the command of Shah Alam.' But Shah Alam or Bahadur Shah died in 1712 and Banda was executed in 1716 by Furrukhsiyar.

(e) His description of *Amrit* ceremony shows that he never took the trouble to ascertain from his hosts the details of a ceremony which must have performed quite often by them.

(f) 'The Granth or sacred book of the religious laws of the Sikhs is a compound of mystical absurdities.'

(g) Sikh Priests, whether he met them at Baramula, Hassanabdal, Narangabad, or Amritsar, are called by him Sikh Gurus, though in another place he writes that there were only ten Gurus, Guru Gobind Singh being the last.

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### LIFE OF GURU NANAK DEV

I congratulate you heartily on producing a book on the life of "Guru Nank" which is as valuable as your previous one on "Guru Gobind Singh". The combined appeal to intellect and sentiment which is a feature of your work and method of presentation is something uncommon among writers on the lives of our Gurus.

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An interesting and valuable addition to books on Sikh Religion and History. The learned author gives a fascinating account of Guru Nanak's life, his missionary tours, and traces the development of his all-inclusive dynamic creed...

The book is written with sincerity and conviction and profusely illustrated with quotations from the hymns of Guru Nanak. It can be placed with confidence in the hands of all enquirers—young and old.

It is a fine companion to the author's scholarly 'Life of Guru Gobind Singh'...

*Principal Kashmiri Singh.*

The descriptive power, simplicity and lucidity of language give the work additional interest and charm. The writer has rendered a very great service by the exposition in a foreign language the life and teachings of the Sikh Prophet. His special subjects of 'Miracles' and 'Science and God' greatly impressed me and gave me much pleasure. I think he is completely successful in his task. I recommend this book to the foreigner who wishes to know the mission of 'Guru Nanak Dev.

*Capatain E.J. Bradbury, O.C. Special Holding Co. Jalans, wrote  
on 20.2.47 :*

It intelligently analyses the cause of irreligion, and suggests effective remedies which, if acted upon, will remove the complaint. The author seems to have laboured hard on it and has produced a book which will prove very useful to the general reader as well as to those entrusted with the work of preaching and carrying on the mission of the Gurus. Even non-Sikhs will find much useful material for their benefit....

The book is really a very good addition to Sikh literature and I congratulate the author on writing it.

*Principal Teja Singh.*



## LIFE OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

.....a complete but concise life-sketch of this prophet of freedom to whose hallowed memory the Sikhs, nay, all Indians, are so devoutly attached...will be found a great help and source of perennial inspiration to all those desirous of obtaining a clear insight into the real spirit of Sikhism, exemplified, in the life of this prophet of freedom and humanity; a life which should be studied by every Indian....the author has disentangled a lot of confused and conflicting accounts about the Guru's life and teachings, and successfully cleared the current misunderstandings and erroneous beliefs, about them... he has consulted all the authentic and original sources.... and had thus given an amount of information....which is thoroughly accurate and reliable.

His style is simple and catchy and makes a ready appeal.

*The Amrit Bazar Patrika, Calcutta.*

...The first serious attempt in English at a clear, comprehensive, intelligent, and intelligible exposition of the Guru's life. ...The author has taken special pains to sift the seed from the tare.

In clearing vital issues, exploding accepted myths, and throwing additional light on certain highly controversial points in the Guru's life, S. Kartar Singh's book has rendered a signal service to impartial students of history.

*The Tribune, Lahore.*

....In his biography of this great Sikh Guru, Prof. Kartar Singh has sought to dispel certain erroneous ideas about Guru Gobind Singh's career which have been given currency to by some English and Indian historians ....Prof. Kartar Singh has convincingly shown the baselessness of such suggestions.

With the help of materials which were not hitherto available to most of the biographers of the Guru, Prof. Kartar Singh has told the stirring story of Guru Gobind Singh's career in a manner as arresting as it is impartial.

*The Bombay Chronicle, Bombay.*

....clearly the best book in English written so far about the great Guru Gobind Singh. The author has worked hard to put the historical truth faithfully.....He has successfully tackled all misrepresentations and prejudices that have....accumulated round the personality of the Guru. The style is impassioned but restrained, the choice of words is happy, and the arrangement of topics, appropriate....

*Principal Bawa Harkishan Singh.*

It is an authentic account of Guru Gobind Singh's life, being the result of the author's long and close study of the original material, some of which was inaccessible to previous writers on the subject.

The book is a monument to the author's industry and research, and deserves to be read by all impartial students of history.

*Principal Teja Singh.*

....I heartily congratulate you on the production of a short life of Guru Gobind Singh which is not only brimfull of interest, but, as far as I can judge, also historically correct.

*Prof. Ruchi Ram Sahni, Lahore.*

I must say that Sardar Kartar Singh has taken great pains in collecting his material from various sources, both original and secondary, and put together that material in an excellent form. Besides its great value as a detailed biography of Guru Gobind Singh, I regard this work as contributing a very important chapter in the history of the Sikhs.

*Prof. Sita Ram Kohli.*

