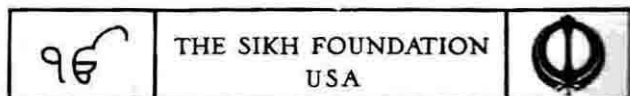


THE SIKHS  
AND  
THEIR  
RELIGION

PROF. GANDA SINGH



## GANDA SINGH

Born in 1900 at Hariana, an ancient town in Hoshiarpur district of the Panjab, Ganda Singh has had a most chequered and eventful career as an army official, journalist, lecturer, author and archivist. Soon after World War I he was in the Middle East, where he served for over ten years in Iraq and Iran.

Languages and history were his chief passions. As a boy, he had studied Arabic in a Moslem mosque of his native town. Urdu and Persian he learnt at the Vernacular school and Hindi and Sanskrit at the high school. He passed at Peshawar during the Third Afghan War the Army Certificate Examination in Pashto, polished his Persian in Iran and learnt Marathi with a view to studying the original documents of the eighteenth century.

On his return to India in December 1930, he joined as an editor the *Phulwari*, a Panjabi journal of Lahore, and later took up a teaching and research job at the Khalsa College at Amritsar, where he organized the Sikh History Research Department. His summer holidays he spent every year travelling in the country collecting for his college material and manuscripts bearing on the history of the Panjab.

He took his Master's degree in history from the Aligarh University and his Doctorate from the Panjab for his research in the eighteenth-century history of India and Afghanistan.

Retired as Director of Archives to the PEPSU Government, and of the Department of Panjabi Historical Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala, Professor Ganda Singh is a recognized authority on the history of the Panjab. He is a member of the Asiatic Society (formerly, the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal), Calcutta, the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, the Royal Central Asian Society, the British Museum Society, London, and the Indian History Congress. He has done for the Government of India a bibliography of the Panjabi literature and for the Panjabi University, Patiala, a bibliography of the Panjab. His published work includes 72 books and over 250 papers on historical subjects.

**SIKH FOUNDATION**

**THE SIKHS  
AND  
THEIR RELIGION**

**PROF. GANDA SINGH**



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## FOREWORD

The Western World has begun to become aware of the relevance of the Sikh philosophy and way of life to mankind at large. Having achieved the most spectacular growth and applications of technology and modern management, man finds himself gaping at a deep and dark tunnel from a spiritual and moral standpoint. The landing of a man on the moon, controlling and extending life through breakthroughs in medicine, harnessing nuclear and other forces for the ultimate weaponry and conquering time and space through modern technology have all been spectacles of great material and ego value. With the dazzlement of all these feats behind him, man still finds himself lost in his journey through life.

It is in this state of spiritual and philosophical bewilderment that the basic tenets of the Sikh way of life emerge as the beacon for the world of tomorrow. Man continues to worry about the state of the world, not realising that if we succeed in "putting the man together properly", the world will take care of itself. This is precisely what the life and teachings of the ten Sikh Gurus was dedicated to.

There has been a longstanding need for a concise treatise on the history and religion of the Sikhs for students of Sikhism in the Western hemisphere. We are fortunate to have this need filled through the decades of scholarship and research by Professor Ganda Singh. Through his pen flows the authenticity of historical facts, the thoroughness of literary research and candor of spiritual interpretation.

The trustees of the Sikh Foundation are particularly gratified at the opportunity to introduce this book by Professor Ganda Singh to the students of Sikhism in the U.S.A. and Canada.

Woodside  
30th November 1973

Narinder Singh Kapany  
President,  
The Sikh Foundation

## A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE SIKH PEOPLE

### GURU NANAK

The word *Sikh* is the Panjabi form of Sanskrit *Shishya*, which means a learner and a disciple. The Sikhs as a community are the disciples and followers of the *Gurus*, Nanak to Gobind Singh, who created, out of the disunited and shreaded fabric of society in northern India, a well-knit homogeneous body of people devoted in a bold and selfless spirit to the service of their countrymen. Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, was born at Talwandi Rai Bhoi (now called Nankana Sahib), to the southwest of Lahore (Pakistan) in April 1469. He was a revolutionary religious and social reformer according to whom the political and cultural domination of the people by the ruling and priestly classes was chiefly responsible for their degeneration. Their emancipation, he thought, could only be brought about by a new consciousness which should instill into them the unity and fatherhood of God and the equality and fraternity of man. He refused to recognize the distinction between man and man and between the sexes created by the old caste system and other orthodox social conventions and proclaimed that all women-born were equal in the eyes of God.

He felt that the real cause of the misery of the people was their disunity born of diversity of belief. He sought, therefore, to bring them together both in thought and deed. He inculcated a common mode of



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worship and a common social organization based on equality of man. He laid the foundation of *Sangat* or mixed congregations where his disciples met in the evenings as brothers-in-faith, sang the hymns of the Guru and derived inspiration for remoulding their lives. He also established a free community kitchen, *Guru ka Langar*, where all sat and ate together in the same row (*Pangat*), regardless of distinctions of caste, creed or status in life. The Hindus and the Muslims, the Brahmins and the Sudras were thus brought by Guru Nanak to a common social level.

Unlike many other saints and reformers of India, Guru Nanak did not confine himself exclusively to a life of prayer and devotion. He refused to sit idle in slumbering meditation while his people groaned under the heel of the oppressor. He awakened them to a new political consciousness and upbraided the rulers of his day, saying: 'kings are butchers, cruelty their knife, *Dharma*, or the sense of duty and responsibility, has taken wings and vanished'. According to him 'it was only fools and idiots who ruled' with little regard to the good of the people. 'The kings', according to Guru Nanak, 'should be dispensers of equity and justice'.

He felt outraged at the spectacle of Eminabad during the invasion of Babar in 1521 and protested with tears of blood at the helplessness of his countrymen reduced to abject slavery by the soldiers of the Mughal. His protest was simultaneously a demand for liberty and for freedom from foreign yoke. The same demand for freedom applied to his attacks on religious bondage and social slavery. Attack on any type of slavery is born of a yearning for liberty. The freedom of conscience is the first requisite for the uplift of a

down-trodden people and Guru Nanak laid the greatest stress on it.

This was a message of hope to the people to shake off their cowardice and dependence and to have faith in God 'who could, in an instant, demolish the old kingly edifices and raise the lowest of the lowly to the highest pedestal'. His institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* brought before the people the vision of a classless democratic society where all could claim equal status. This made Guru Nanak, a symbol of manly independence and self-reliance, which, as history shows, helped create a people whose like in indomitable courage and dogged tenacity in war and peace has yet to be seen.

Guru Nanak was a great traveller. He visited the centres of various religions and obtained first-hand knowledge of the lives and practices of their followers. At Hardwar, Kurukshetra and Banaras he saw Brahmanism in practice. In the Himalayas and in the northern parts of India, he discoursed with the Yogis, Sidhs and Naths. He met the Buddhists in Tibet, Burma and Ceylon. He went to Arabia and Iraq and met the Muslim Hajis and divines in Mecca and Baghdad. He is believed to have visited the land of the black Habash, Abyssinia, and some of the islands of the Indian Ocean. Thus for forty long years of his life, he travelled throughout the length and breadth of India and in the far-off foreign lands to study the various religions in practice and to preach his message of the brotherhood of mankind as sons of the same Divine Father, with diversity due only to geographical and historical causes. Wherever he went he proclaimed that there was but one God, not of the Hindus or of the Mussalmans but of all mankind. Under whatever name He is worshipped

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or remembered — Rama, Allah, etc., — He is *the One*, formless, invisible, uncreated creator, fearless and friendly, great and bountiful. The worship of God is not the exclusive privilege of a priestly class. He is best worshipped in selfless service of humanity wherein every man and woman should participate to deserve His blessings. Guru Nanak protested against idolatory, blind superstition and empty ritual which had sapped religious faith and morality and parted the hearts of men from their Creator.

‘In the doctrines of Nanak’, says C. H. Payne, ‘morality holds a higher place than in those of any other Hindu reformer. Few, even of the world’s greatest philosophers, have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of the *Granth Sahib* [the Sikh scripture]. Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour. . . . Loyalty, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid.’

Guru Nanak did not advocate renunciation or asceticism. Towards the end of his life he settled down with his family and sons at Kartarpur (now in Pakistan) opposite to Dera Baba Nanak in the Gurdaspur district. He was a prophet of the people. Their service was the greatest happiness of life. He lived amongst them, shared their sorrows and pleasures and taught them the way of honest and truthful living. ‘Truth is high, but higher still is truthful living,’ said he.

He wished his disciples to be servants of God and His people. ‘Having created the human body, God has installed His veryself therein,’ said he. And, ‘this world is the Chamber of God wherein the True One resides’—*Ih jagg sachche ki hai kothri, sachche ka vich*

vas. Therefore, with this human body, 'Let us be of service in this world so that we may find a seat in the court of the Lord' — *Vich duniya sev kamayie, tan dargeh baisan paiye.*

Guru Nanak was a great poet. The entire literary legacy bequeathed by him consists of poetry. He not only gave his people a living philosophy, a distinct outlook on life, but also a rich literary tradition, for which he has, ever since, served as a perennial fount of inspiration. He adopted as the medium of his expression his mother-tongue, Panjabi, the potentialities of which for high literary work had not yet been explored. He raised it to the status of a rich and elastic language which could adequately express the fine shades and moods of a powerful mind like his own.

He was held in affection not only by his Sikh disciples but also by his Hindu and Muhammadan countrymen who looked upon him as a national holy Saint and called him *Baba Nanak* or *Nanak Shah*. On his death in 1539 at Kartarpur he was claimed by both as their own, and they both in their own fashions raised mausoleums in his memory with a common wall between them—a thing unique in the history of religions.

#### GURUS ANGAD—RAMDAS

Guru Nanak's torch was taken up by his nine devoted successors, in the following order:

1. Guru Nanak	1469-1539
2. Guru Angad	1539-1552
3. Guru Amar Das	1552-1574
4. Guru Ramdas	1574-1581
5. Guru Arjun	1581-1606
6. Guru Hargobind	1606-1645

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7. Guru Har Rai	1645-1661
8. Guru Har Krishan	1661-1664
9. Guru Tegh Bahadur	1664-1675
10. Guru Gobind Singh	1675-1708

Guru Angad was a zealous preacher who strengthened the unifying institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat*, set up by the first Guru, and popularized the Panjabi script, the Gurmukhi, by recording therein the biography and hymns of the Master. Guru Amar Das was a great social reformer. He stood for the emancipation of women and opposed the practice of *pardah*, the veiling of women, and led a vigorous campaign against *Sati*, the burning alive of widows on the funeral pyres of their dead husbands. Guru Ramdas, the fourth Guru, gave to the Sikhs a rallying centre at Amritsar where, in 1574, he laid the foundation of the present city and excavated the famous tank three years later.

### GURU ARJUN

Guru Ramdas died in 1581 and his son and successor Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru, added to the fame and glory of the town. He had the tank built in lime masonry and constructed a temple in the centre of it. This temple, the *Darbar Sahib*, now known as the Golden Temple, is a symbol of the culture and conduct of the Sikh people. It enshrines a liberal religious tradition consecrated by noble deeds of piety, sacrifice and heroism. Unlike the old Indian temples with a single entrance, it has four doors opening out in four different directions offering welcome to all people without any discrimination of class or creed. Dedicated to no particular deity, with no idol or image installed in it, it has no sectarian bias.

On the banks of this sacred tank and in the precincts of the holy temple Guru Arjun composed and sang his hymns and preached his message. He was a saint and a scholar of rare piety and literary attainments. His compositions bespeak the great depth of his mind and the sublimity of his thoughts, full of divine love and human sympathy. It was reserved for him to compile and install in the Sikh sanctuary the holy book of the Sikhs which is the only object of religious reverence and worship for them. The *Guru Granth Sahib*, as this great book is called, which includes not only the hymns of the Sikh Gurus but also of a number of Hindu, Muslim and the so-called untouchable saints and sages of India, may rightly be called the Bible of the People. The most remarkable thing about it is that it is written in the spoken language of the people to whom the Masters delivered their message of devotion to God and service to humanity. In addition to its cosmopolitan character and outlook, it is the only scripture which has come down through the generations in its original form without the change of a single letter or a vowel sign. Its first manuscript is preserved in *Gurdwara Sheesh Mahal* at Kartarpur in the Jullundur district. The central temple at Amritsar and the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* gave to Sikhism the shape of a regular church.

Guru Arjun extended the *Manji* and *Peerha* system, established by his predecessors for the propagation of the faith, and deputed sincere and zealous Sikhs in all important towns and cities to collect and transmit to the headquarters the offerings of the faithful. These missionaries were known as *Masands*, and, through them, large numbers of people became Sikhs. Renunciation of the world was not part of the Sikh creed. There was no prejudice against any trade or profession.

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Worldly riches were no longer to be considered *Maya*. These could be helpful in the conduct of human affairs. 'For a religious man, it was not unholy to get wealth, provided he spent it in God's way, and gave, and lived in comfort'. The majority of Sikhs lived on agriculture and trade, and a number of them took up service. All contributed liberally to the common fund known as *Guru ki Godak*. Ten per cent (*Daswandh*) of the income was the minimum expected of a Sikh. The *masands* assembled at the headquarters of the Guru annually on the occasion of Baisakhi and presented to him the offerings collected by them. A senior *masand* (Persian *masnad*, meaning a cushioned seat) during his visits to Sikh congregations was offered a cot (*manji*) and a junior a stool (*peerha*) to sit on, while audiences squatted on mats or carpets. Thus these words came to be applied to the two classes of Sikh missionaries.

Another of Guru Arjun's contributions to the life of the Panjab was the founding of the towns of Tarn Taran and Kartarpur (in Jullundur), both of which are now sacred places of pilgrimage. He also had a number of tanks dug at Amritsar and other places.

The teachings of the Gurus, the abolition of the dividing distinctions of caste and creed and the establishment of Sikh bishoprics and parishes throughout the country, with Amritsar as their Mecca and the *Granth Sahib* as their holy book, made the Sikhs a living community devoted to the moral and social regeneration of the people. The spirit of service and self-sacrifice engendered by the teachings of the Gurus crystallized at the time of Guru Arjun into distinct national traits.

The increasing importance and popularity of Guru Arjun among Hindus and Muslims aroused suspicions in the mind of Emperor Jehangir, who wrote in his autobiography, the *Tuzuk-i-Jehangiri*, that 'a Hindu, Arjun by name, lived . . . in the garb of a *pir* and *shaikh* and had captivated the hearts of many simpleminded Hindus, and foolish and stupid Muslims, by his ways and manners. . . . They called him *Guru*, and from all directions fools and fool-worshippers were attracted towards him and expressed full faith in him. From three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For years the thought had been presenting itself to me that I should either put an end to this false traffic or that he [Guru Arjun] should be brought into the fold of Islam'. Then referring to the allegation against the Guru having blessed his rebellious son Khusrau, he said: '*I fully knew his heresies*. I ordered that he should be brought into my presence, and having handed over his houses, mansions and children to Murtaza Khan and having confiscated his property, I ordered that he should be put to death with tortures.' The orders were carried out and the Guru was tortured to death in 1606 A.D.

He was seated in a cauldron of boiling water and burning sand was poured on his naked body. To add to the pain, his blistered body was dipped in the cold water of the river Ravi. Completely resigned to the Will of God, Guru Arjun cheerfully endured these most agonising and dreadful tortures and surrendered his soul to be one with Him, saying:

Sweet is Thy Will, My Lord,  
Thy Grace alone I beseech.

*Tera bhana mitha lage,  
Nam padarath Nanak mange.*



## GURU HARGOBIND

Guru Arjun thus suffered martyrdom at the altar of his faith. His successor, Guru Hargobind, seeing that the tyranny of the Mughal authority in India had become unbearable, relegated the rosary to the treasury and accorded sanction to the use of steel in the defense of *Dharma* and for the protection of the oppressed. He himself wore two swords on the occasion of his succession at *Akal Takht* at Amritsar as emblems of spiritual and temporal authority – *Piri* and *Miri* – the combination of the *Deg* and *Tepi* – the kettle to supply food to the needy and the sword to smite the oppressor. This was the first step towards the transformation of Sikhism into a militant church.

*Masbid Zulfikar Ardistani*, also known as Azur Sasani, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind, tells us in his *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* that 'the Guru had seven hundred horses in his stables; three hundred cavaliers and sixty artillerymen were always in his service.' This was the first corps of Sikh volunteers raised by the Guru at Amritsar. It was near the site of the Khalsa College, Amritsar, that the Sikhs fought in 1628, their first battle against the Mughal forces of Emperor Shahjahan.

But Guru Hargobind was not a mere soldier. He was primarily a saint, a *Guru*, the sixth in direct spiritual inheritance from Guru Nanak. He had taken to martial ways with a view to creating among his people a will to resistance and preparing them to stand up to the tyranny and oppression of the ruling race. Guru Hargobind's reply to a question by the Maratha saint *Shri Samarth Ramdas* met Guru Hargobind at Srinagar in about 1634. Fully armed and riding a horse, the

Guru had just returned from a hunting excursion. "I had heard that you occupied the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak", said Ramdas. "Nanak was a *tyagi sadhu* — a saint who had renounced the world. You are wearing arms and keeping an army and horses. You allow yourself to be addressed as *Sacha Padshah*, the True King. What sort of a *Sadhu* are you?" asked the Maratha saint. Guru Hargobind replied: "Internally a hermit and externally a prince. Arms mean protection to the poor and destruction to the tyrant. Baba Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced *maya*, i.e., self and *ego*" —

गुरु हरगोबिन्द कहिआ बातन  
फकीरी, जाहर अमीरी । शस्त्र ग्रीब की रक्खिआ जरवाणे की भक्खिआ ।  
बाबा नानक संसार नहीं त्यागिआ था । माया त्यागी थी ।

These words of Guru Hargobind found a ready response in the heart of Ramdas, who, as quoted in *Pothi Panjah Sakhian*, spontaneously said, "this appealeth to my mind— *Yeh hamare man bhavti hai.*" He found in the words of the Guru an expression of his own inner spirit and latent ideas. He seems to have realized that the Marathas, who had much in common with the people of the Panjab in their physical and spiritual make-up, could well imbibe the spirit of the Guru and collaborate with the Sikhs in resisting and vanquishing the intolerant Mughals.

The vision of Guru Hargobind and *Samarth Ramdas* was fulfilled in the eighteenth century, when the disciples of these great teachers, the Sikhs in the north and the Marathas in the south, smashed to pieces the tyrannous empire of the Great Mughals.

Guru Hargobind was a great missionary as well, and it was as a result of his own work and that of the orders of Udasis and Masands and other organizations,

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encouraged and strengthened by him, that the faith of Sikhism spread beyond the boundaries of India. To this Zulfiqar Ardistani bears witness saying that 'there were not many cities in the inhabited countries where some Sikhs were not to be found.'

### *GURUS HAR RAI – TEGH BAHADUR*

Guru Hargobind was succeeded by Dara Ekikoh, son of Guru Har Rai whose assistance to the fugitive philosopher-prince Dara Shikoh excited the royal wrath. Guru Har Krishan, the eighth Guru, was followed by Guru Tegh Bahadur on whom Aurangzeb wreaked his vengeance for his having espoused the cause of the Kashmiri Hindus. Accusing him of proselytizing activities and of association with Sufi saints, such as Hafiz Adam and others, for whom he harboured in his mind the deepest hatred, the Emperor ordered the Guru to be put to death and his body to be cut in four pieces and hung at the four gates of the fort of Delhi.

### *GURU GOBIND SINGH*

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last of the Gurus, has been rightly called the soldier-saint of India. In his youth he applied himself closely to self-education and was deeply impressed by the idea that God had been sending saviours from time to time to uphold righteousness and to destroy evil. He felt that he himself had this mission to perform in his own country which suffered under the yoke of religious and political tyranny. The teachings of his predecessors and the unique examples of martyrdom had elevated the spirits of the Sikhs. But the old social shackles of the Hindu community, such as caste system, had not yet been com-

pletely broken. This hindered the growth of a homogeneous well-knit class of people inspired by a common national ideal. In fact, the idea of nationalism had not yet been born in this country. The ancient idea of the division of labour had created among the people well marked groups and classes which, with the passage of time, had developed into rigid castes with deep-rooted prejudices. The Sikh institutions of *Sangat* and *Pangat* had gone a long way towards demolishing caste. But the difference in the social level of the low-caste Sudras and the highborn Brahmins and Kshatriyas was so great that they could not join in any common cause. These differences and prejudices could only be abolished by a bold reformer, ready to fight at once the obstructionist religious fraternities and the political rulers of the land.

The first thing to do was to change the psychology of the people. This the Guru achieved by introducing a new form of baptism, *Khande da Amrit*, and enjoining upon the baptized Sikhs to be called the *Khalsa* of *Wahiguru*, the Lord's Own, with the common surname of *Singh* or lion. They were to wear, in future, the same five signs, all beginning with the letter *K*: *Kesh* (uncut hair), *Kangha* (a comb), *Kachha* (a pair of shorts), *Kara* (an iron bracelet) and *Kirpan* (a sword). As soon as the first ceremony was over the Guru himself, to the surprise of all present, knelt down as a candidate before the Initiated Five, begging them that he might as well be baptized in the same form and manner. The initiation of a *Guru* by his disciples was a thing unknown in the history of religions. Guru Gobind Singh was the head of the religion. He had always been regarded as the *Guru* of the Sikhs and would as well be regarded as such in future. Yet he wished

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to be baptized as one of them, adopting the same form and wearing the same symbols as had been prescribed for the new dispensation. And he voluntarily offered to submit himself to the same discipline as had been laid down for the *Khalsa*. He was of the *Khalsa*, he said, and the *Khalsa* was the very breath of his life, nay, his very self.

The *Panj Piare*, as the first five baptized ones were called, complied with the wishes of this strange suppliant. They assumed the role of the *Guru* and baptized the Master into the fold of the *Khalsa*, the *Singhs*. From Gobind Das, as he was up to this time called, he became Gobind Singh. Well has this strange phenomenon been acclaimed by a contemporary poet Bhai Gurdas II saying:

*Wah purgato mund unumna waryam ikela*  
*Wah, wah Gobind Singh, ape Gur chela.*

And lo! there appeared an unsurpassable man, a unique hero. Wonderful, wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh, a venerable preceptor as well as a humble disciple.

And yet another example of the sublimity of Guru Gobind Singh's mind. Some people called him an *avtar*, an incarnation of God, nay, God Himself. This was against the spirit and teachings of Sikhism which inculcated the oneness of the self-existent, unborn and formless creator. Therefore, with all the emphasis at his command, the *Guru* protested against this heretic innovation and declared in unmistakable terms:

*Je hamko pamesar uchar hai,*  
*Te sabh nark kand meh par hai.*

*Mo ko das tawan ka jano,  
Ya mai bhed na ranch pachhano.  
Main hon paran purkh ko dasa,  
Dekhan ayo jagat tamasha.*

*(Bachitar Natak, Vz, 32-33)*

Those who call me God, shall all fall into the pit of hell.  
Consider me as a slave of His, and have no doubt about it.  
I am but a slave of the Lord, come to see the spectacle of the  
world.

Bravery, as much as truth and purity, was to be the Sikhs' religion. The Khalsa were inspired by a sense of divine mission, and no fear of any earthly power was to deflect them from their duty. A tremendous change was thus brought about in the character of the people. The lowest of the low in society, the sweepers, the barbers and the confectioners, were transformed, as if by miracle, into doughty warriors who, along with the baptized Jats and Khattris, fought under the Guru's command as many as fourteen battles, in twelve of which they were distinctly successful against the imperial and other enemy forces.

In addition to being a great soldier, Guru Gobind Singh was a versatile scholar, possessing an eloquent and forceful style of writing. With a sword dangling by his side and bows and arrows ready at hand, he would write his verses in the field of battle while directing the movements of his men in action against the enemy. There is hardly any literary subject that he has not treated with grace and facility. He was equally well versed in all three languages then current in northern India—Braja, Persian and Panjabi. He has written in praise of God, enunciating his own beliefs and doctrines as a monotheist. He has extensively translated and summarized the ancient religious literature of India and has given us an autobi-

ography. His writings cover about 1300 large-size pages and are available under the title of *Sri Dasam Granth* or the Book of the Tenth Guru.

The aim of Guru Gobind Singh in founding the Khalsa was to build up a nation of the Purified Ones who would be free from fear and selfishness. But the rulers of the time, the Hindu rajahs of the Shivaliks and the Great Mughal of Delhi, saw in the activities of the Guru a threat to their own power. Of their own initiative and also under orders from the Emperor Aurangzeb, the Hill rajahs and the Governor of Sirhind launched a regular war against him. In spite of the heavy odds, the Guru continued the struggle. After the twelfth battle he had to leave his ancestral home at Anandpur for the Malwa territory, south of the Sutlej. Two of his sons were killed fighting in the battle of Chamkaur while the younger two, eight and six years old, betrayed by a servant, were butchered to death under the orders of the Governor of Sirhind in the Christmas week of 1705. But they have left a permanent imprint on the pages of history. True to the spirit of their grandfather and great-great-grandfather and the teachings of their faith, they stood unshaken against the tyranny of the ruling fanatics. No threats of torture and no fear of death could frighten them, nor could the promises of a comfortable future allure them to abjure their faith. Bricked up alive and suffocated to unconsciousness, they resolutely refused to embrace Islam and accepted the butcher's knife with which they were slowly done to death.

But how great and unrevengeful was Guru Gobind Singh! He had taken to the sword only as a last resort. He readily accepted the invitation of the dying Aurangzeb and set out for the Deccan to see him for peaceful

negotiations to solve the problem of the struggling Panjab. And after the death of the Emperor, he would not seek to destroy his enemy's sons in distress, but, like a true saint-soldier, he stood for justice and lent a helping hand to the rightful heir Prince Muazzam Bahadur Shah against his usurping brother. The new emperor Bahadur Shah gratefully acknowledged the assistance of the Guru in the battle of Jajav and presented to him on July 23, 1707, at Agra, a rich dress of honour. The negotiations could not, however, be resumed as Bahadur Shah was not yet free from his difficulties and had to march to the south to suppress the rebellion of his younger brother Kam Bakhsh. The Guru, therefore, accompanied him to the Deccan, and, before the negotiations could come to a successful conclusion, he was fatally stabbed at Nander by an agent of the Nawab of Sirhind. He died on October 7, 1708.

The religious creed of Guru Gobind Singh was the same as that of the earlier Gurus: the conception of God, and of the Guru and the holy Book remained unchanged. Guru Gobind Singh, in addition, infused in the Sikhs greater political consciousness. He knit them together into a compact national brotherhood and demanded brave deeds and zealous devotion to its cause. The greatest feat of his life was the creation out of the humblest of peasants and artisans a body of brave patriots and martyrs ever ready to sacrifice their all at the altar of their faith and country.

The line of religious succession ended with the tenth Guru Gobind Singh. The Masters' Word in the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* was henceforth to be the spiritual guide of the Sikh people who were to recognize in the joint personality of an assembly of five true baptized Sikhs,



the spirit of the Guru. The community at large or through their elected representatives assembled in a congregation, deliberating in the mystic presence of the Guru, represented by the Holy Book, was to be considered the *Guru-Panth*, the supreme religious and secular authority of the Sikhs in all matters and at all times. This democratic liberalization of religion greatly influenced the life and conduct of the Sikh people who, like their spiritual Masters, became the pioneers of freedom movements in northern India, establishing in the eighteenth century socialistic republics in the form of Sikh *misals* and *panchayats* in the Panjab.

#### BANDA SINGH

Guru Gobind Singh had, before his death, reclaimed at Nander an ascetic *Bairagi*, Madho Das, converting him to his faith with the name of Banda Singh and reluming him with Promethean fire to continue his struggle for freedom of the Panjab from under the oppressing yoke of the Mughals.

The Sikhs under his command soon embarked on a career of conquest and within a few months of his arrival in the Panjab dislodged the Mughal power from the cis-Sutlej territories. Samana, Shahabad and Sadhaura were among the first important places to fall to Banda Singh who occupied the fort of Mukhlis-garh to the north-east of Sadhaura to make it his capital. He next moved in the direction of Sirhind whose governor, Wazir Khan, came out to meet him with a large force and an innumerable host of Muslim crusaders. The battle was fought on the plain of Chappar Chiri on May 12, 1710. The cold-blooded murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh associated with the town and its governor was still fresh

in the memory of the Sikhs. They made so strong and sweeping an attack that the enemy could not stand against them. Wazir Khan was killed in the battle and the capital of Sirhind was occupied on the third day.

The victory of Sirhind placed at the disposal of the Sikhs the entire province from Karnal to Ludhiana and broke the first sod in their ultimate conquest of the Panjab in the days to come. Sardar Baj Singh, a companion and counsellor of Banda Singh, was appointed the governor of the conquered territory with Ali Singh of Salaudi as his deputy. Fateh Singh of the Bhai-ke family was given the charge of Samana, and Ram Singh, brother of Baj Singh, that of Thanesar, jointly with Baba Binod Singh.

Banda Singh fixed upon Mukhlis-garh as his headquarters, repaired its old fort and renamed it Lohgarh, or the Iron Castle. He assumed royal authority, not in his own name but in the name of the Guru, whose *Khalsa* and *Banda*, or chosen slave, he proclaimed himself to be. He struck coins in the name of Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh with the following inscription in Persian on the obverse:

سکه زد پر بهر دو عالم تیغ نانک و اہمب است  
فتح گو بند سنگھ شاہ شاہان فضل سچا صاحب است

By the grace of the True Lord is struck the coin in the two worlds:  
the sword of Nanak is the granter of all boons, and  
Victory is of [Guru] Gobind Singh, the King of kings.

The reverse had the following words in praise of his newly founded capital:

ضرب بہ امان الدہر مصورت شہر زینت التخت مبارک بخت

Struck in the City of Peace, illustrating the beauty of civic life, and the ornament of the blessed throne.

He also introduced an official seal for State documents and letters patent. It contained the following inscription expressive of his deep sense of devotion and loyalty to the Gurus:

عظمتِ نانک گورو دینم ظاہر و دینم باطن است  
پادشاہِ دین و دنیا آپ سچا صاحب است

The greatness of Guru Nanak is visible, as well as invisible. The king of the spiritual as well as temporal world is the True Lord himself.

This was later on changed to

دیگ و تیغ و فتح و نصرت بید رنگ  
یافت از نانک گورو گوبند سنگھ

The Kettle and the Sword—the symbols of Service and Power, Victory and ready Patronage have been obtained from Gurus Nanak-Gobind Singh.

He started his own regnal year from the date of his conquest of Sirhind.

He had no time to organize any regular administration. But he knew the woes of the peasantry, groaning under the oppression of the landlords, and took immediate steps to abolish the Zamindari system. This was a revolutionary measure which exercised a great influence on the future fiscal history of the Panjab. A socialist in his thinking and a communist in the methods he employed, Banda Singh was over two centuries ahead of his times.

As a result of the application of his methods, the tillers of the soil soon became masters of their holdings and, in the course of time, the curse of the Zamindari system, which till very recently afflicted many parts of India, was lifted from the Panjab.

Banda Singh was a great political leveller and a thorough social uplifter. Wherever he went, he raised the down-trodden to positions of authority and social prestige. 'In all the parganas occupied by the Sikhs,' says William Irvine on the authority of contemporary writers, 'the reversal of the previous customs was striking and complete. A low scavenger or leather-dresser, the lowest of the low in Indian estimation, had only to leave home and join the Guru [meaning Banda Singh], when in a short space of time he would return to his birth-place as its ruler, with his order of appointment in his hand. As soon as he set foot within the boundaries, the well-born and wealthy went out to greet him and escort him home. Arrived there, they stood before him with joined palms, awaiting his orders . . . . Not a soul dared to disobey an order, and men who had often risked themselves in battle-fields, became so cowed that they were afraid even to remonstrate.' The Sikhs were fired with a strong zeal to root out the Mughal tyranny from the land of Ind, and such was the confidence inspired by them in the minds of the non-Muslim population that they came to be looked upon as defenders of their faith and their country. Every complaint from the oppressed people excited the Sikhs against the Mughal officials and aristocrats. Receiving complaints from across the Jamuna, Banda Singh led an expeditionary force to the east of that river and occupied Saharanpur. He was still busy in the Gangetic plain when the Sikhs of the Jullundur Doab rose as one

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man to throw off the yoke of the Mughals. Being on the border of the province of Sirhind, they were the first to be electrified with the spirit of revolt and independence. They were successful in their enterprise. Sayyad Aslam Khan, the governor of Lahore, was now seized with terror. He appealed to the religious sentiments of the Muslim population and raised the *Haidri* flag for a *jehad* against the Sikhs. But so heavy was the defeat inflicted by the Sikhs upon the crusaders at Bheelowal that with the exception of the city of Lahore, practically the whole of Majha and Riarki fell into their hands. The Sikhs were now masters of the Panjab east of Lahore. According to Iradat Khan, 'there was no noble man daring enough to march against them from Delhi.' 'If Bahadur Shah had not quitted the Deccan which he did in 1710, there is every reason to think,' says Malcolm, 'that the whole of Hindustan would have been subdued by these. . . invaders'.

But the Mughal empire, with its inexhaustible resources in men and munitions of war, was too strong for the infant community of the Sikhs. Emperor Bahadur Shah moved with a mammoth army against them. They had to retire from Sirhind and Thanesar to the fort of Lohgarh. This hilly retreat of Banda Singh's forces was closely invested by over sixty thousand imperial horse and foot, including troops of the Rajput princes. The Sikhs soon ran short of provisions, and, by a determined sally on the night of November 30, 1710, they disappeared into the hills of Nahan. The Emperor had to move in dismay to Lahore to make it the base of his future operations against them. Frustrated in his efforts to get at the Sikh leader, Bahadur Shah issued edicts to his *faujdars*

on December 10 to kill the disciples of Nanak [the Sikhs] wherever they were found—*Nanak-prastan ra har ja kih bayaband ba-qatl rasanand.*

Within a fortnight of his escape, Banda Singh and his comrades were again active. In response to a *hukam-nama* issued by him on December 12, the Sikhs from all directions flocked to him at Kiratpur and he was able to lead an expedition against some of the Hill rajas who had been troubling the last Guru. They were reduced to submission without much opposition. The Governor of Jammu was defeated on May 25, 1711. Kalanaur and Batala also fell to the Sikhs. But the occupation of these places was only temporary. Banda Singh was constantly pursued by imperial generals and he had again to retire to the hills.

The death of Bahadur Shah at Lahore on February 18, 1712, and the period of internecine struggle between his successors offered a favourable opportunity to the Sikhs to re-establish their power. Lohgarh once again became the capital of the Sikh kingdom. The armies of Emperor Farrukh Siyar again drove away Banda Singh to the hills from where he reappeared in the plains in the beginning of 1715. But he was not destined to be free for long. In the absence of a strong position for defence, he was brought to bay at the village of Gurdas-nangal. Here he was closely besieged in an enclosure. 'But such was the terror of the Sikhs and their chief', says Muhammad Qasim in his *Ibrat Nama*, 'that the commanders of the imperial army prayed that God might so ordain things that Banda Singh should seek his safety in flight from the fortalice!'

With food and supplies run short the situation soon became desperate. The besieged Sikhs had to slaughter

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oxen and other animals and eat the flesh raw. When all grass was gone, they gathered leaves from trees. 'When these were consumed,' says Irvine, 'they stripped the bark, and broke off the small shoots, dried them, ground them down and used them instead of flour, thus keeping body and soul together. They also collected the bones of animals and used them in the same way. Some assert that they saw a few of the Sikhs cut flesh from their own thighs, roast it and eat it.' 'In spite of all this,' says Kamwar Khan in the *Tazkirat-us-Salatin*, 'the infernal Sikh chief and his men withstood all the military force that the Great Mughal Empire could muster against them for eight long months'. But how long could this last? The Sikhs were reduced to mere skeletons, and when no physical resistance was possible, they were made prisoners and taken to Delhi. Emperor Farrukh Siyar ordered them all, 794 in number, to be put to the sword at the rate of one hundred a day.

The carnage began on March 5, 1716, and 'it is not a little remarkable', write John Surman, Khoja Serhau and Edward Stephenson, the ambassadors of the East India Company to the Mughal Court at Delhi, in their letter of March 10, 'with what patience they undergo their fate, and to the last it has not been found that one has apostatised from this new formed religion.'

The details of Banda Singh's execution are too horrible to relate. The executioners hacked his son Ajai Singh to pieces in front of him, and, dragging out his quivering heart, thrust it into the mouth of the father, who stood unmoved completely resigned to the Will of God. Then came his own turn. First of all, he

was deprived of his right eye and then of his left. Then his hands and feet were cut off, his flesh was torn with red-hot pincers and finally his head was chopped off. Banda Singh remained calm and serene up to the last, 'glorying', says Elphinstone in his *History of India*, 'in having been raised up by God to be the scourge to the inequities and oppressions of the age.' This took place on June 9, 1716.

The fearless composure of mind, the peaceable calmness and the stoic self-control exhibited by Banda Singh during his last moments is one of the wonders of the Gurus' impact on the lives of their followers. When the flesh of his body was being torn with red-hot pincers, the Mughal Prime Minister Muhammad Amin Khan questioned him on the fierceness of his struggle against the Mughal empire. "I will tell you," replied Banda Singh, " whenever men become so corrupt and wicked as to relinquish the path of equity and abandon themselves to all kinds of excesses, Providence never fails to raise a scourge like me to chastise a race so depraved, but when the measure of punishment is full, then He raises men like you to bring him to punishment." [*Siyar-ul-Mutakherin*, 404; Raymond, i.90; Briggs, 79-80].

Banda Singh has been accused by some ill-informed writers of anti-Muslim bias. Five weeks after his historic victory at Sirhind we find him telling Jan Muhammad of Buriya (Gulab Nagar) on June 23, 1710: 'I have forgiven your crime and appointed you *Zamindar* of the whole pargana. You should proceed with your men and bring in Sardar Khan of Chundla. Then you will accompany me for the chastisement of Jalal Khan.' There was no change in his policy even after the royal edict of December 10, ordering an indiscriminate massacre



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of the Sikhs wherever found. Although he was then himself pursued from place to place, he would not let his struggle assume the shape of a communal strife. His was a political struggle for the emancipation of his country from the tyranny of the Mughals, who happened to be Muslim by faith. He would not therefore impose any religious restrictions upon the Muslims as such. They, in fact, flocked to him in large numbers for protection and service. The news-sheet presented to His Majesty Emperor Bahadur Shah through Hidayatullah Khan on April 28, 1711, tell us:

The wretched disciple of Nanak (Banda Singh) has his camp in the town of Kalanaur up to the 19th Rabi-ul-awwal, 1123 (April 26, 1711). During this period he has promised and proclaimed: 'I do not oppose the Muslims.' Accordingly, for any Muslim who approaches him, he fixes a daily allowance and wages, and looks after him. He has permitted them to read *khutba* and *namaz*, with the result that five thousand Muslims have gathered round him. Having entered into his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say their prayers in the army of the wretched (Sikhs).—*Akhbar-i-Darbar-i Mu'alla* (Jaipur Records).

This is also mentioned in a later news-sheet and is confirmed by one received by the Emperor on May 20, saying: 'whoever from amongst the Hindus and Muslims comes to him for service is looked after and fed.'

Although the successes of Banda Singh were but temporary, there was a revolution effected in the minds of people of which history often fails to take notice. A will was created in the ordinary masses to resist tyranny and to live and die for the national cause. The example set by Banda Singh and his companions in this respect was to serve as a beacon-light in the darker days to come. The idea of a national State, long dead, once again became a living aspiration, and, although suppressed for the time being by relentless persecution, it went on working

underground like a smouldering fire, and came out forty years later with a fuller effulgence, never to be suppressed again.

The history of the Sikhs from the fall of Banda Singh to the establishment of the Sikh power in the Panjab in 1764-65 is a record of the titanic struggle of the Khalsa against the Mughals and the Durranis. In it the sons of the soil not only fought for their very existence, but were also able, after long and determined suffering, to assert their superior right to rule over their own land.

### *PERSECUTION BEGINS*

After the defeat and death of Banda Singh every measure was taken not only to destroy the power of the Sikhs but also to extirpate the community as a whole. The edict of Emperor Bahadur Shah ordering a general massacre of the Sikhs—men, women and children—was repeated by Farrukh Siyar, and a money reward was offered for the head of every Sikh brought to Lahore, dead or alive. This continued for three years. Such were the results of the exertions of Abdus-Samad Khan, the governor of Lahore, that for a time it appeared as if the boast of the imperialists to wipe out the name of the Sikhs from the land was going to be fulfilled. The death of Emperor Farrukh Siyar in September 1719 gave them some respite. But on the transfer of Abdus-Samad Khan to Multan in 1726, during the reign of Muhammad Shah, his youthful son and successor Zakariya Khan became the governor of Lahore, determined 'to exterminate the whole nation of the Sikhs'. He sent out moving columns in all directions to hunt them out and to bring them to book. In hundreds 'they were daily brought in chains and executed in the

streets of Lahore'. They were tortured in different ways – broken on the wheel, flayed alive or cut up limb by limb.

What provoked the Sikhs to a relentless retaliation against the officials of Lahore was their attack on Tara Singh of Van who was killed fighting in self-defence. He was very popular among the Sikhs on account of his religious character and helpfulness in times of distress. The Sikhs rushed out of their hiding places and fell on government treasures and caravans. They made it impossible for revenue from villages to reach the government treasury and still more impossible for the forces of the Government to catch the outlaws as they ran away to their rendezvous in forests or other places difficult of access.

On the representation of Zakariya Khan in 1733, the Delhi Government approved of the grant of a *jagir* to the leader of the Sikhs with the title of *Nawab*. The offer was made through one Sabeg Singh of Jambar who appeared before the Khalsa at Akal Takht, Amritsar. But no leader would accept it. The Khalsa was destined to rule free, they said, and could not occupy a subordinate position. The Guru had promised them *Raj*, and his word must be fulfilled. The *jagir* was, therefore, tossed from man to man, without being accepted. At last, at the pressing entreaties of Sabeg Singh, it was suggested that it might be given to someone noted for service. Kapur Singh of Faizullapur was then waving a big fan over the assembly. He was selected for the honour. But he would not have it before it had been sanctified by the touch of five Khalsas' feet.

*THE TWO DALS*

In giving them a *jagir* the Government had expected that the Sikhs would beat their swords into ploughshares and turn into peaceful peasants. But they were not made of such pliable stuff. They had had the taste of political liberty and nothing short of it could satisfy them. They were pledged to free their land from foreign domination and they could not be side-tracked from their ultimate object. They availed themselves of this breathing time to organize the scattered Khalsa into strong and well-knit divisions, easy to maintain in days of scarcity and readily available in times of emergency. To begin with, two main divisions were recognized—the *Buddha Dal*, the Army of the Elders, and the *Taruna Dal*, the Army of the Young. The *Buddha Dal* consisted of veterans, many of whom had seen the days of Guru Gobind Singh and had fought under the command of Banda Singh. They were led by Nawab Kapur Singh, with Sham Singh of Naroke, Gurbakhsh Singh Roranwala, Bagh Singh Hallowalia and Bhamma Singh as prominent members. The *Taruna Dal* was led by Dip Singh and others. It was however discovered, especially after the death of Diwan Darbara Singh in July 1734, that the Army of the Young needed further sub-division to provide for its leaders greater opportunities of service and fewer of friction. This was, therefore, split up into five *jathas* under the leadership respectively of (i) Dip Singh, (ii) Karam Singh and Dharm Singh of Amritsar, (iii) Kahan Singh and Binod Singh of Goindwal, (iv) Dasoundha Singh of Kot Buddha and (v) Biru Singh and Jiwan Singh *Ranghretas*.

While the Buddha Dal was comparatively more stationary, the Taruna Dal was always on the move, spreading into the Bari Doab and going further up to Hansi and Hissar. This renewed energy of the *Dal* alarmed the government and led to the confiscation of the *jagir* in 1735. Persecution of the Sikhs began again and thousands of them must have fallen under the executioner's sword. Among them was Bhai Mani Singh, a revered Sikh saint and scholar of the time, who had to pay with his life for his efforts to bring the Sikhs together at Amritsar. He was hacked to pieces joint by joint at Lahore on June 24, 1734.

The Sikhs' entry into the temple and tank of Amritsar was banned and sentries were posted all round the city to watch out for them. But these oppressions failed to subdue the Sikhs. Every individual Sikh, wherever he was, considered himself to be a standard-bearer of the Khalsa and a proclamation of the existence of his people. Singly or in groups they shot out with vengeance whenever they found a chance. Some performed their pilgrimage in secret and in disguise; 'but in general, according to a contemporary Muhammedan author,' says John Malcolm, 'the Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full gallop towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt, and sometimes taken prisoners, but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom, and the same authority states that an instance was never known of a Sikh, taken in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith.' [*Sketch of the Sikhs*, 88.]

*NADIR SHAH'S PROPHECY*

The homeward return of Nadir Shah from Delhi through the Shivalak hills in May 1739, laden with the riches of the Mughal Empire, offered a favourable chance to the Sikhs to replenish their resources. Driven away by Zakariya Khan from their homes and hearths in the plains, they had taken shelter in these hills. The Sikhs fell upon Nadir's rear and relieved him of much of his booty. Astonished at this, Nadir Shah called a halt at Lahore and enquired about the whereabouts of the people who had dared to rob the conqueror of Delhi. 'Who are these mischief-makers?' asked he. 'They are a group of fakirs who visit their Guru's tank [at Amritsar] twice a year, and bathing in it disappear,' replied Zakariya. 'But where do they live?' was the next question of Nadir Shah. 'Their homes are their saddles,' was the reply. 'Take care, then,' Nadir warned him, 'the day is not distant when these rebels will take possession of thy country'. This remark cut Zakariya Khan to the quick and he resolved to launch an all-out campaign against the Sikhs. The previous orders were now repeated with greater emphasis and rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of Sikhs.

*BOTA SINGH AND GARJA SINGH*

The story of Bota Singh's self-sought martyrdom is a typical illustration of how the Sikhs of those days made light of danger and sacrificed themselves to maintain the prestige of the Khalsa. It was towards the end of 1739 when one Bota Singh of Padhana (now in Pakistan) was seen by some villagers near Serai Noordin, three miles to the north-west of Tarn Taran. He was

returning from a secret pilgrimage to the Darbar Sahib at Amritsar and was, perhaps, going to his village by a circuitous route. "There goes a Sikh," shouted one of the villagers. "Oh no, he couldn't be a Sikh," said another. "There is no Sikh left anywhere in the neighbourhood. They have all been killed or driven away. The Lahore Government of Zakariya Khan has proclaimed that no Sikh now exists in the land." "Sikh he is, I am sure," said the first man. "Then he must be some coward, a jackal, hiding about to save his life," was the reply. These insulting remarks stung Bota Singh to the quick. A *Singh* of the Guru, to him, was as brave as a lion. To hear him being called a coward, a jackal, he could not stand. The Guru's *Khalsa* could not be exterminated, he felt, and he decided to proclaim its existence at the peril of his own life. He would not now go into the hiding. He took up a position in the open on the highway leading to Lahore, not far away from where he stood, and with the help of another Sikh, named Garja Singh, levied a tax of one anna on every bullock-cart and of one pice on every donkey-load. Their object was to attract the attention of the Government at Lahore. But as everyone quietly paid the toll and no complaint was carried to the provincial headquarters, no notice was taken by the Government.

Bota Singh felt restless. He had not taken up this position for collecting toll. He only wished to prove to the fanatical rulers that in spite of their all-out efforts to exterminate the Sikhs, they very much existed. He, therefore, wrote direct to the governor, Nawab Zakariya Khan, at Lahore announcing himself and the tax he was levying on travellers. The words

of the letter as preserved by Ratan Singh Bhangu in his *Prachin Panth Prakash* are:

*Chitthi likhai yaun Singh Bota.*

*Hath hai sota, vich rah kharota.*

*Ana laya gadde nu, paisa laya khota.*

*Akho bhabi Khano nu, yaun akhai Singh Bota.*

In English they would read as:

Thus writes Bota Singh this letter.

“With a big stick in hand, on the  
road I stand,

Levying an anna for a cart, and a  
pice for a donkey-load.

Tell sister-in-law Khano that this  
is a message from Bota Singh.”

Zakariya was all fury on receiving this message. Immediately he ordered a detachment of one hundred horse to arrest Bota Singh and his companion. The troop commander, Jalal Din, offered to intercede with the Governor for their lives if they surrendered themselves and agreed to accompany him to Lahore. But the Singhs had been anxiously looking forward to winning the crown of martyrdom. The day of glory had at last come. They could not miss it. They spurned the offer of Jalal Din. They knew the combat was hopelessly unequal with the enemy fifty times their number. But those who fight for a cause do not enter into calculations. With smiles on their faces and the resounding cries of *Sat Sri Akal* on their lips, Bota Singh and Garja Singh grappled with their assailants and died fighting, glorying in the undying greatness of the Khalsa.



*BHAI TARU SINGH—THE FIRST GHALUGHARA*

The more daring and desperate people being out of the reach of the Government, the wrath fell on peaceful, innocent Sikhs living in towns and villages. They were brought to Lahore in hundreds and were offered the choice of Islam or the sword. There were no exceptions made. Saints and scholars, peasants and tradesmen, women and children, all who wore long hair and followed the path of Sikhism, were condemned to the same fate. On refusing to give up his faith, the hair of Bhai Taru Singh, a pious and devoted Sikh, were scraped off his head with a cobbler's scraper. Sabeg Singh of Jambar, who had persuaded the Khalsa to accept a *jagir*, was also caught and broken on the wheel along with his young son, Shahbaz Singh. The situation for the Sikhs became worse during the governorship of Yahiya Khan, the son and successor of Zakariya Khan, who had died on July 1, 1745. 'The Governor, Yahiya Khan', says Syed Muhammad Latif in his *History of the Panjab*, 'now issued a proclamation for a general massacre of all Sikhs, wherever they could be found. Death was to be the punishment of all persons who invoked the name of Guru Gobind, and a reward was offered for the heads of Sikhs. Thousands were put to death daily and their heads brought before the Subadar of Lahore for reward.' It was during this time that all Sikhs living in Lahore were arrested and made over to sweepers for execution on March 10, 1746. A huge army under the personal command of Yahiya Khan and his *Diwan* Lakhpat Rai marched against the Sikhs in May, and some ten thousand of them were estimated to have been killed in a few days. This holo-

caust is known in Sikh history as the first *Ghalughara*.

### RAM RAONI

The internecine quarrels between Yahiya and his brother Shah Nawaz, followed by the invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani of Afghanistan, gave the Sikhs a chance to emerge from their hide-outs. Their leader Jassa Singh Ahluwalia brushed aside the opposition of Adina Beg Khan, faujdar of Jullundur, and took possession of Amritsar from Salabat Khan. Arrived in their holy city, they celebrated the *Baisakhi* festival on March 29, 1748, and chose, at the suggestion of Nawab Kapur Singh, Sardar Jassa Singh leader of the Dal Khalsa which was organized and declared to be a State. The feeling of the new leader was that they could no longer trust their safety to bushes and caves and that they must provide themselves with a regular fort. They selected a piece of land in the neighbourhood of their sacred temple and threw up a small enclosure of mud walls and called it Ram Raoni, which was later known as Ramgarh.

### MIR MANNU'S RULE

Sikhs now began to assert their rule in different parts of the central Panjab. They established themselves in the rural parts of the Rachna, Bari and Jullundur *doabs*. The new governor, Muin-ul-Mulk, popularly known as Mir Mannu (appointed on April 11, 1748), tried to placate them and secured, through *Diwan* Kaura Mall, their assistance against the Afghan governor of Multan, Zahid Khan, whom the Durrani had left there after his first invasion of India. But when he was fully settled in his seat as governor,

both of Lahore and Multan, after his submission to Ahmad Shah Durrani in March 1752, he changed his attitude towards the Sikhs. He ordered Adina Beg Khan to round them up in the Jullundur and Bari *doabs* and destroy them root and branch. At times Mir Mannu himself rode out for the hunt and brought in a large bag of Sikhs. 'Hundreds of Sikhs,' says Syed Muhammad Latif, 'were brought daily to Lahore and butchered at the *Nakhas*, or *Shahidganj*, outside the Delhi Gate, in sight of multitude of spectators'. Finding the homes of the Sikhs depleted of men, their women and children were seized and brought to Lahore. The dark and narrow dungeons where they were imprisoned, starved and tortured, and where little babes were cut to pieces and placed in the laps of their mothers, can still be seen in the Gurdwara Shahidganj in the Landa Bazaar, Lahore. But all this persecution does not seem to have produced any effect upon the Sikhs, as is apparent from the following song of Sikh bravado coming down from those days:

*Mannu asadi datri, asin Mannu de soe,  
Jion jion Mannu wadh-da,  
Asin dun sawae hoe.*

Mannu is our sickle,

And we are a crop for him to mow;

The more he cuts us the more we grow.

It was in the midst of one of his *shikars* of Sikhs, that the hunter, Mir Mannu, was brought down by the mightier hunter, Death. On November 2, 1753, his horse shied at the sound of a return volley of the Sikhs and threw him off his seat. Before he fell to the ground, his foot got entangled in the stirrup and he was dragged along the earth to fatal unconsciousness. He died on November 4.

*STRUGGLE AGAINST THE AFGHANS*

The renewal of persecution by Mir Mannu had once again driven the Sikhs to their old ways and they had begun their bid for independence. The submission of Mannu to Ahmad Shah had converted Lahore and Multan into provinces of Afghanistan. The Sikhs had now to fight against two great powers, the Mughals to the south of the Sutlej and the Afghans to the north of it. The death of Mir Mannu and the period of chaos and confusion that followed came to the Sikhs as godsend. And they fully availed themselves of this situation not only to establish themselves in various parts of the country and expand and strengthen their power, but also to resist the re-establishment of Mughal authority or the strengthening of the Afghan rule in the Panjab. They foiled the attempts of Mughlani Begam, the widow of Mir Mannu, and of Khwaja Ubaidullah and Adina Beg Khan to maintain themselves at Lahore, and drove away the Afghans from the Land of Five Rivers.

Ahmad Shah Durrani came to India for the fourth time in November-December 1756 and brought the great Mughal empire to its knees. On his way back he sacked the Sikh towns and temples of Kartarpur and Amritsar and left his son Prince Taimur as his Viceroy at Lahore, evidently to re-establish the Afghan rule in the Panjab. But the Sikhs had by this time become virtual masters of the central rural Panjab. Only Lahore and a few principalities in the neighbourhood of the towns were held by Muslims. Sardar Charhat Singh Sukkar-chakkia (grandfather of Maharaja Ranjit Singh),

who had established himself at Gujranwala, was very active in harassing Ahmad Shah on his homeward journey right up to the Indus.

Prince Taimur could not for long stay in the country. The combined forces of the Sikhs and Marathas (invited by Adina Beg) drove the Afghans away both from Sirhind and Lahore in March–April 1758. Adina Beg held Lahore for about four months, while the Maratha contingents continued to stay there up to November 1759, when they fled away before the advancing Afghans during the fifth invasion of Ahmad Shah. The Sikhs, however, gave a better account of themselves, and, in a battle fought in the neighbourhood of Lahore, they inflicted a heavy loss on the Shah.

On his return to Afghanistan, after the battle of Panipat, Ahmad Shah Durrani appointed Zain Khan as governor of Sirhind and recognized Sardar Ala Singh of Patiala (March 29, 1761) as the ruler of the territories held by him.

The years 1757 to 1761 were very favourable to the Sikhs. While the Bhangi, the Sukkarchakkia and the Ahluwalia Sardars were able to expand and strengthen their power to the north of the Sutlej, Sardar Ala Singh of the Phulkian family carved out a principality for himself in the south. The arrangements made by Ahmad Shah for the administration of the Panjab on his return to Afghanistan in May 1761 were all upset by the Sikhs as soon as he left Lahore. Khwaja Mirza Jan of the Chahar Mahal was defeated and killed, and Nur-ud-Din Bamezai, an Afghan general, was worsted at Sialkot. In his attempt to reduce Gujranwala, Khwaja Ubaid

Khan was routed and shut up in Lahore. The Sikh Sardars followed up this victory and triumphantly entered the city and, without yet completely establishing themselves in the capital, proclaimed Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia the king of Lahore, with the title of *Sultan-ul-Qaum*. This fulfilled the wishes of their saintly leader, the late Nawab Kapur Singh, the organizer and the first leader of the joint *Dal Khalsa*.

### THE GREAT HOLOCAUST

The Sikhs now decided by a national resolution, known as *Gurmata*, passed in a general assembly of the Khalsa at Amritsar on the occasion of Diwali on October 27, 1761, to liquidate the Indian allies and supporters of Ahmad Shah in the Panjab since they were a hindrance to the release of the country from the yoke of the Afghan invader. The nearest at hand was Aqil Das of Jandiala, twelve miles to the east of Amritsar. But they had to raise the siege (January 1762) on hearing that Ahmad Shah was rushing against them with a huge army. They crossed the rivers Beas and Sutlej to arrange for the safety of their families in the hills of Anandpur and then return unencumbered to meet the Shah. This was a fatal mistake. As soon as the Shah heard from Bhi-khan Khan of Malerkotla of the presence of the Sikhs in that area, he rushed down from Lahore and flung a surprise on them on the morning of February 5, 1762. Taken unawares and attacked on all sides by the Afghans and the forces of Sirhind and Malerkotla, the Sikh line of defence was broken and over ten thousand lives, mostly women, children and old men, were lost in the struggle. This fearful carnage is called the *Dursa Wadda Ghalughara*, the

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Second Great Holocaust, to distinguish it from the first *Ghalughara* of 1746.

On the 10th of April, a day before the Baisakhi festival, the Shah appeared at Amritsar and ordered the Sikh temple to be blown up with gun-powder and the sacred tank to be desecrated with the blood and bones of men and cows and filled up with the debris of the demolished edifices.

All this, however, failed to depress the Sikhs. It only added to their determination and fury. Within three months, while the Shah was still at Lahore, they were once again up in arms against Zain Khan of Sirhind and inflicted a defeat upon him (April-May, 1762).

On October 16, 1762, a day before Diwali, the Shah himself suffered a defeat at their hands in a pitched battle at Amritsar. At this time arrived news of disturbances in Afghanistan and he had to return home (December 12, 1762).

No sooner did the Durrani leave the Panjab than the Sikhs rushed out of the Lakhi Jungle and other places and resumed their struggle against the government. The Buddha Dal led by Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia went about the country establishing Sikh *thanas*, while the Taruna Dal under younger leaders such as Sardar Charhat Singh Sukkarchakkia established itself at Amritsar and undertook to cleanse the holy tank and restore the ruined temple.

*SIKHS CONQUER SIRHIND*

Having defeated and killed Bhikhan Khan of Malerkotla in an action in December 1763, the Sikhs turned to Sirhind to square up their account with Zain Khan. They were now at their fullest strength, the two Dals having come together. United under the flag of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, they made a determined attack on Sirhind on January 14, 1764, the third anniversary of the third battle of Panipat, and inflicted a crushing defeat on the Afghans. Zain Khan was killed and his troops fled in all directions. With this victory, the entire province of Sirhind from the Sutlej in the north to the districts of Karnal and Rohtak in the south, and from the boundary of Bahawalpur State in the west to the Jamuna in the east, came into the possession of the Sikhs.

*SIKHS EXPAND*

In February, the Afghan governor of Lahore, Kabuli Mall, yielded to the pressure of the Sikhs and agreed to keep with him an agent of theirs, one Tek Chand by name, to advise him in the conduct of affairs with ten rupees a day as his allowance. While Sardar Charhat Singh pushed on to the north-west beyond the Jhelum, Sardar Hari Singh Bhangi went up to Multan, crossed the Indus and overran the Deras.

Hearing of the Sikh eruptions in the Panjab and the failure of his generals and governors to resist them, Ahmad Shah Durrani rushed down upon them in the winter of 1764-65 with a combined army of over thirty thousand Afghans and Baluchis. But he could not get at them. Successfully dodged and vexingly



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harassed by the Sikhs, he had to return home disappointed at the end of March 1765, leaving the Panjab to be parcelled out among the various Sikh confederacies.

### *SIKHS CONQUER LAHORE*

On the Baisakhi day of Samvat 1822 Bk., April 10, 1765, the Sikhs decided by a *gurmata* at Amritsar to take possession of Lahore. All opposition was brushed aside in a week and they were the masters of Lahore on the morning of April 17. The Khalsa now stood supreme in the Panjab. They looked upon this achievement as a mark of the Guru's special favour and proclaimed it as such in all humility in the inscription on their coin, saying:

دیگ و تیغ و فتح و نصرت بیدرنگ  
یافت از نانک گوردگوبند سنگھ

*Deg O Togh O Fateh O Nusrat be-dirang  
Yaft az Nanak Guru Gobind Singh*

The couplet was borrowed from the seal of Banda Singh and the coin of Jassa Singh.

### *QAZI NUR MUHAMMAD'S OBSERVATIONS*

It will not be out of place to give here an estimate of the character of the Sikhs of the mid-eighteenth century from the pen of a contemporary Baluch writer. Qazi Nur Muhammad of Gunjaba had accompanied Mir Naseer Khan of Baluchistan during the seventh Indian invasion of Ahmad Shah Durrani

expecting to be appointed a judge at Lahore after the conquest and annexation of the Panjab by His Afghan Majesty. He spent the winter of 1764-65 in the train of the Shah and was present in all his incursions against the Sikhs 'with pen in hand and sword hanging by his side.' In his *Jang Namah* he has written an account of Ahmad Shah's invasion of 1764-65 and has recorded therein his own first-hand impressions of the character and fighting qualities of the Sikhs. In his intense hatred for them as the opponents of the Afghan power in the Panjab, he uses all sorts of abusive language and calls them 'accursed infidels', 'dogs of hell', etc., etc. But he was so deeply impressed by the lofty character and bravery of the Sikhs in their struggle for freedom, that he devoted a section of his book (No. XLI, pp. 156-59) to *the Bravery of the Dogs in a Religious War and in General*. Here for once he checks himself from calling them opprobrious names and praises them unhesitatingly. He says:

Do not call the dogs (the Sikhs) *dogs* because they are lions, and are courageous like lions in the field of battle.

How can a hero who roars like a lion in the field of battle be called a dog?

If you wish to learn the art of war come face to face with them in the field.

They will demonstrate it to you in such a way that one and all will praise them for it.

If you wish to learn the science of war, O swordsman, learn from them how to face an enemy like a hero and to get safely out of an action. It is unjust to call them dogs.

Truly they are like lions in battle, and they surpass Hatim [in generosity] in time

of peace.

When they take the Indian sword in their hands, they overrun the country from Hind to Sind. . . .

The body of everyone of them is like the piece of a rock, and, in grandeur, every one of them is more than fifty persons. . . .

During a battle, with guns in their hands they come jumping into the field of action, roaring like lions. . . .

Although there are so many musketeers, no one can excel them in the use of musket. If their armies take flight, do not take it as an actual flight. It is a war tactics of theirs. . . .

Beware, beware of the, for a second time.

Leaving aside their mode of fighting, hear you another point in which they excel all other fighting people.

In no case would they slay a coward, nor would they put an obstacle in the way of a fugitive. They do not plunder the wealth or ornaments of a woman, be she a well-to-do lady or an humble servant.

There is no adultery among these 'dogs', nor are these mischievous people given to thieving. . . .

There is no thief at all amongst these 'dogs', nor is there any house-breaker born amongst these miscreants.

They do not make friends with adulterers and housebreakers. . . .

They are not from amongst the Hindus.

They have a separate religion of their own.

Qazi Nur Muhammad also pays a glowing tribute to the Sikh spirit of self-sacrifice in the cause of their religion and religious places. As an eye-witness he tells us, "When the Shah arrived at the Chakk [Amritsar and entered the Darbar Sahib on December 1, 1764], there was not a single *kafir* [Sikh] to be seen there. But a few of them had remained in an enclosure [the *Bunga* of the *Akal Takht*] so that they might spill their own blood. And they sacrificed their lives for the Guru. When they saw the renowned king [Ahmad Shah Durrani] and the army of Islam [numbering about thirty-six thousand], they all came out of the enclosure. They were only thirty in number. They had not a grain of fear in them. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death.

*Na kardand yak zarrah i tars bak*

*Na khaufe zi qatl o na beem az halak*

"Thus [unmindful of the overwhelming strength of the Shah's army] they grappled with the *Ghazis* and in the grappling they spilt their own blood. All of them were killed." [*Jang Namah*, XXV, 48-55.]

These compliments paid to the Sikhs by one of their worst enemies are invaluable to the students of history and the Sikhs may well feel proud of them.

### THE SIKH MISALS

The two *Dals* had by this time, 1765 A.D., been divided into twelve important commands, popularly known as *Misals* or confederacies. They were:

*To the north of the Sutlej*

- |                    |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| (i) Ahluwalia      | (v) Kanhaiya         |
| (ii) Bhangi        | (vi) Nakei           |
| (iii) Dallewalia   | (vii) Ramgarhia      |
| (iv) Faizullapuria | (viii) Sukkarchakkia |

*To the south of the Sutlej*

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| (ix) Karorsinghia | (xi) Phul-kian |
| (x) Nishananwalia | (xii) Shahid   |

The Sikh Misals were republican in character. In the words of Sir George Campbell, who had seen this in actual practice in the *cis-Sutlej* areas in the eighteen forties, 'Each Misal elected its own supreme chief and sub-chief, and every horseman had his rights and his share in the common conquests. The combined Misals formed the *Khalsa* or Sikh commonwealth. Just as in Germany the tendency was to an elective supreme chief who had very little power, and whose place was not hereditary. But the chiefs of Misals, and minor chiefs, gradually acquired a hereditary footing like the dukes and barons of Europe.'

Speaking of the republic of Mehraj, of which he had intimate knowledge, Sir George says:

"Mehraj remained an independent republic till with the rest of the country, it came under British protection. . . It was really a very complete, fully equipped republic. . . It was diplomatically recognised as a state. . . There were no chiefs or hereditary rulers; the state was governed by its punches or representative elders. There was nothing of any feudal system or any division into conquerors and conquered. . . Unhappily, as I think, this interesting republic was soon after wiped out, when all the smaller Sikh states were mediatised and reduced to the position of British subjects"

(*Memoirs of an Indian Career*, i. 42-3, 46-47).

### MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH

The trans-Sutlej *Misals* were integrated into the sovereign state of the Panjab by Ranjit Singh. Born heir to one of these confederacies, he had the foresight to visualize a united Sikh kingdom. By his superior political understanding and military genius he succeeded in reducing the existing states to subjection and joining the people of the Panjab into a strong nation.

Ranjit Singh, the only son of Sardar Maha Singh Sukkarchakkia, was born of Bibi Raj Kaur, also known as Mai Malwain, on November 13, 1780. He was in his tenth year when his father died. Ranjit Singh showed uncommon ability and tact in administering the affairs of his small principality and won the confidence of his followers by his wise and courageous manner. He took part in the campaigns against Shah Zaman, the king of Kabul and a grandson of Ahmad Shah Durrani, who invaded India with a view to re-establishing the Durrani power. Once as the Shah was in occupation of the Lahore fort, Ranjit Singh, according to two contemporary historians, Sohan Lal and Bute Shah, thrice rushed upon the Samman Burj of the fort with a handful of Sardars, challenging him to an open combat. "Come on, O grandson of Ahmad Shah," shouted he, "and meet the grandson of the Great Sardar Charhat Singh." But there was no response from the other side and Ranjit Singh had to retire without a trial of strength with the Durrani.

A real opportunity came Ranjit Singh's way when leading citizens of Lahore, Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs, tired of the Bhangi Sardars and dreading an attack from their neighbour Nizam-ud-Din of Kasur, sent him a petition to come and occupy the city. He marched with his army and took Lahore (July 7, 1799) without much resistance from its masters, the three Bhangi Sardars, who were treated with consideration and given *jagirs*. The occupation of Lahore by Ranjit Singh marked the beginning of a just and peaceful government after decades of unrest and chaos. Once in possession of the capital, he started enlarging the limits of his dominions. He conquered the powerful provinces of Multan, Kashmir and Peshawar, eventually carrying battle to the home of the invaders who had incessantly come down upon India with the object of plunder and conquest. Ranjit Singh's name thus occupies a most honoured place in the national history of the country, for he stemmed for ever the tide of invasions from the north-west and taught his countrymen how to fight for a patriotic cause.

Ranjit Singh not only founded a vast kingdom, but also established a sound and enlightened system of administration. His government was completely secular in character and he recognized no distinctions of religion or creed when making appointments to offices of State. This is most remarkable considering that the Sikhs had just passed through a period of ruthless religious persecution. Ranjit Singh's chief minister was a Muslim, Faqir Aziz-ud-Din by name. So was his personal physician Fazir Nur-ud-Din. Dina Nath, a Hindu, was another minister to the Sikh court. The Sikh sovereign's most trusted officer in the palace was a Hindu, Jamadar Khushhal Singh, who

held the office of *Deorhiwala*, or chamberlain. The police administration of the capital was in the hands of a Muslim. A Muslim officer, General Ilahi Bakhsh, was in charge of the Artillery. Another, Imam-ud-Din, looked after the fort of Gobindgarh at Amritsar, where Ranjit Singh kept most of the munitions of war. There were Dogras, Gurkhas and Muslims in his armies besides foreigners, including French, Italians, Americans and Russians. Throughout his career of war and conquest, Ranjit Singh was never known to have ravaged a city, desecrated a place of religious worship or shown harshness to vanquished enemy.

So strong was the impact of Sikh spirit of democracy on Maharaja Ranjit Singh that he never claimed any superiority for himself and used to say that the kingdom in reality belonged to the Guru and that he was only its watchman. He always remembered the words of the Guru Nanak—*bhullan andar sabh ko, abhull Guru Kartar*—Every one is liable to err, the Supreme Creator alone is infallible. The *Real Ranjit Singh* by Fakeer Syed Waheed-ud-Din has reproduced in facsimile two of the Maharaja's *farmans* wherein he had authorised Fakeer Syed Noor-ud-Din and Sardar Amir Singh of Lahore to withhold, and to bring to his notice for amendment, any order of the Maharaja himself, of the princes royal, the Prime Minister or of the chief Sardars, if in the opinion of the Syed or the Sardar, it was inappropriate. This was, perhaps, the only order of its kind in the history of the world issued by a king authorising a subordinate officer of the state to withhold any order issued by the king himself if, in the opinion of that officer, it appeared to him to be inappropriate and oppressive. This speaks volumes



for itself.

Ranjit Singh was a very shrewd ruler and perhaps no one in India then understood the designs and diplomacy of the British better than he. His dealings with Charles Metcalfe, who kept following him for months with the draft of a treaty without being able to secure an interview, show to what advantage Ranjit Singh could have used his diplomatic skill and astuteness if his situation and circumstances had been favourable.

### *CONSPIRACIES AND MURDERS*

But the British had distinct advantages over him. They were an older power, much more firmly established. They had practically the whole of India under their rule and were gradually closing in on the Panjab. The cis-Sutlej Sikh chiefs had accepted their suzerainty and allowed them to extend their boundaries right up to Ranjit Singh's dominions and establish a cantonment at Ludhiana. The British were also cleverly laying their net in the Sikh State and, when the mighty Ranjit Singh was gone (June 27, 1839), their machinations began to unfold themselves in a more sinister manner. Their friends, the Dogra brothers and the Sandhawalia Sardars, set in motion a series of courtly conspiracies which resulted in the destruction of the Sikh dynasty. Ranjit Singh's successors, one after the other, fell victims to foul intrigue. His son, Kharak Singh was poisoned to death by Dhian Singh. His grandson, Prince Nau-Nihal Singh, became the target of a fatal plot as he was returning after his father's cremation. Maharaja Kharak Singh's widow, Maharani Chand Kaur, had her

head beaten to pulp by her maid-servants who were secretly in the pay of the Dogras. Ranjit Singh's second son Maharaja Sher Singh was assassinated by Ajit Singh Sandhawalia, who, pretending to show to his sovereign the carbine he had got from an Englishman while on a visit to Calcutta, emptied the barrel into the Maharaja's chest, killing him on the spot. A little distance away, Sher Singh's young son, Prince Pratap Singh, barely 13 years old, was simultaneously put to the sword by Attar Singh Sandhawalia. Many more princes, ministers and Sardars were engulfed in this bloody carnage. Ranjit Singh's kingdom lay in ruin and chaos when the British launched their first war upon it.

### *PROVOCATIONS BY BRITISH*

The British had made sure of victory before they fired their first shot. After the death of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, their dream of conquering the Panjab had acquired clearer and more definite lineaments and they had set in train an elaborate political and diplomatic conspiracy for its realization. \*Memoranda and plans were drawn up; armies were assembled on the Sikh frontier; guns, stores and other munitions were collected; officers of the Lahore Darbar were seduced and won over and spies and traitors were set to work to create conditions favourable for a successful occupation of the country. And all this when they were committed by treaties and agreements to be friendly towards the Lahore government. The Sikhs, on the other hand, remained true to their plighted word and scrupulously observed to the last the terms of the alliances made with the British. They were openly provoked by the British Frontier officers such as

Major George Broadfoot. The latter behaved as if the Lahore territories to the south of the Sutlej belonged to the British and attacked a party of Sikh Sardars visiting their dominions on official duty.

### *FIRST ANGLO-SIKH WAR*

The climax came when the Governor-General Sir Henry Hardinge ordered the troops from Ambala, Meerut and some other stations in the rear to move up to the frontier. The Sikhs decided to move their troops only when they learned that the Governor-General and the Commander-in-Chief were marching up to their border. They crossed the Sutlej (December 12, 1845) a whole week after the actual movement of British troops had started. Even this involved no violation of the British frontier, since the Sikhs had landed in their own territories. But the Governor-General proclaimed war on the Sikhs (December 13) and confiscated Maharaja Duleep Singh's possessions on the left bank of the Sutlej.

Five battles took place — Mudki (December 18), Ferozshahr (December 21), Baddowal (January 21, 1846), Aliwal (January 28) and Sobraon (February 10). The Sikhs fought with their usual spirit of courage, chivalry and patriotism and came very close to victory at some decisive moments. But the last-minute desertions and treacheries of the Poorbias and Dogras saved the British many a desperate situation and eventually enabled them to claim success after the battle of Sobraon. The British troops marched upon the Sikh capital, arriving there on February 20. Two days later a portion of the royal citadel was garrisoned by English regiments. A treaty was signed at Lahore

on March 9, followed by another on March 11 which secured the British a few more territorial concessions. The British troops were to remain in Lahore till the close of the year. But a fresh treaty (Bharowal, December 16, 1846) was foisted on the Darbar extending the British lease up to September 4, 1854—the day Maharaja Duleep Singh was to attain the age of 16. The resident at Lahore now ruled on behalf of the minor king with “full authority to direct and control all matters in every Department of the State”

#### *THE PANJAB ANNEXED BY BRITISH*

The Panjab, of course, was never intended to be an independent country again, and, although according to treaties the British were to stay in Lahore only during the minority, they were gradually strengthening their control and spreading their net with a view to completely subjugating the country. A rising in Multan was at last made the excuse for usurpation. As regents of the young Sikh ruler, it was the duty of the British to quell any disorder. But they let the Multan disturbances grow, deliberately postponing action. The act of restoring order in a few districts of the state was given the name of war. In the two battles (Chelianwala, January 13, 1849, and Gujrat, February 21, 1849), the Lahore troops and members of the Sikh Council of Regency, with the solitary exception of Sardar Sher Singh, co-operated with the British, who fought as guardians of the Sikh Maharaja. But when they were victorious, they deposed and repudiated their ward and annexed his kingdom. A British writer's comments on this transaction are significant:

“This is perhaps the first instance on record in which a guardian has visited his own misdeeds upon his ward. The British Government was the self-constituted guardian of the Rajah, and the regent of his kingdom; a rebellion was provoked by the agents of the guardian, it was acknowledged by the guardian to be a rebellion against the government of his ward, and the guardian punished that ward by confiscating his dominions and his diamonds to his own use.” — John Sullivan in *Are We Bound By Our Treaties?*

#### MAHARAJA DULEEP SINGH

Soon after the annexation of the Panjab, the young Maharaja Duleep Singh was placed under the guardianship of Dr. John Login and removed to Fatehgarh in the U.P. Here, under Christian influences, he was converted to Christianity and presented by Lord Dalhousie with the ‘divine book of the Lord’ in place of the temporal kingdom of the Panjab of which he had been deprived. In 1854 he sailed for England, never to see the land of his birth again. He came to India twice for short periods. In January 1861 he came to Calcutta to see his ailing mother and, as she refused to be parted from him, he took her along to England. For the second time he came in 1864 to return her ashes to the soil of India in compliance with her last wish that her bones should not be allowed to rot in the heartless land of the English — ‘*Merian haddian is nirdei dharti vich na rul jan*’.

A careful study of original documents and relevant literature during his stay in England had convinced the Maharaja that he had been cheated out of his kingdom and defrauded of his property by the

British administrators of India. He began to agitate for the restoration of his sovereign rights over the Panjab and for the return of the diamond *Koh-i-Noor*. He appealed to Her Majesty Queen Victoria and England's Prime Minister, the Marquis of Salisbury, for justice and requested for the appointment of a competent Court of Law Lords of the House of Peers to pronounce a judgment upon the conduct of the East India Company's administration towards him. This was refused. Frustrated and disgusted, he decided to return to India to live and die in the land of his ancestors. But he was not allowed to touch the shores of his motherland. He was disembarked at Aden and ordered back to Europe. During his short stay at Aden he renounced Christianity and rejoined the faith of his forefathers, receiving the Sikh baptism at the regimental Gurdwara there. On his return to Europe, he made frantic efforts to seek the assistance of the Russians, but he was not successful. He died of a broken heart at Paris on October 22, 1893. He had a large family of ten of whom his last and eldest surviving daughter Princess Bamba Sutherland died at Lahore on March 10, 1957.

### *SIKHS SUPPRESSED BY BRITISH*

Having deprived the Sikhs of political power in 1849, the British tried to break their morale. The leading Sardars were either exiled or imprisoned. Their lands and properties were confiscated and their forts and mansions were razed to the ground. The Sikh leaders were reduced to nonentities to be humiliated and ridiculed by those who, while in their service, had betrayed the cause of the Panjab and had now been raised to positions of authority by the new

rulers of the land.

### *MUTINY OF 1857 AND SIKHS*

Then came the mutiny of 1857. The Sikhs had not been taken into confidence. They had neither been consulted nor invited. The Poorbias had not the moral courage to approach them for assistance since they had themselves helped the British destroy the independent kingdom of the Panjab in 1845-46 and reduce it to British subjection in 1848-49. Moreover, the offensive airs of the Poorbia garrison in the Panjab were particularly galling to the martial Sikhs. The behaviour of the Poorbia soldiers during their first march from the theatre of war to the capital of Lahore and during the British occupation of the country before and after the annexation had caused such deep wounds in the hearts of the people as could not be healed in so short a period. The Sikhs could not volunteer to help these erstwhile enemies of their country, nor could they, for evident reasons, espouse the cause of the Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah (1837-1862), whom the mutineers had raised to the throne. For over two centuries they had fought against the Mughal tyranny and they could not now be persuaded to support an alliance which might have resulted in its re-establishment.

### *THE KOOKAS*

The Sikhs, however, were not considered to be above suspicion by the British even after the suppression of the mutiny. The activities of the Sikh reformist movements of the Nirankaris and the Namdharis were closely watched. They had both

taken birth in the north-west—the Nirankaris at Rawalpindi and the Namdharis at Hazro (Attock)—and they both aimed at maintaining the purity and glory of Sikhism. After the death of their first leader, Bhai Balak Singh of Hazro, the Namdharis, originally known as *Jagiasis* and *Abhiasis* (seekers and meditators) and later called the *Kookas*, assumed greater importance under *Baba* Ram Singh of Bhaini and spread in the central and cis-Sutlej districts and states. In the eighteen-sixties they attracted the attention of the British authorities and were suspected of disloyal activities aiming at the re-establishment of the Sikh rule. Ram Singh was a peace-loving saint. Much against his wishes, some of his overzealous followers committed murders of cow-killing butchers, and, in January 1872, a batch of them marched upon Malaud and Malerkotla for arms. Their attempts failed and the whole batch of them was arrested. Mr. L. Cowan, the Deputy Commissioner of Ludhiana, who, perhaps, wished to be known as defender of the British empire in India, interpreted this venture as the beginning of another rebellion in India and, without any trial, ordered forty-nine of the Kookas to be blown away from the guns on January 17, 1872. Similarly the Commissioner of Ambala, Mr. Douglas Forsyth, blew away the remaining sixteen of them the next day. This calculated cold-blooded murder sent a thrill of horror through the country and both officials were removed from service by the Government of India. *Baba* Ram Singh with twelve of his lieutenants was exiled from the Panjab and he died at Rangoon on November 29, 1884. The headquarters of the Namdharis at Bhaini were placed under police surveillance which lasted until December 10, 1920, when the Government, finding them opposed to the Akali agitation against the Panjab



authorities, withdrew the restrictions.

### *SIKH RENAISSANCE*

The awakening created by the Nirankaris and Namdharis gave birth to the Singh Sabha movement which, under the guidance of the Khalsa Diwan, Lahore, and the Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar, has to its credit the spread of education among the Sikhs including the establishment of the Khalsa College at Amritsar. The efforts of these institutions, supported by the writings of Giani Gian Singh, Bhai Dit Singh, Bhagat Lakshman Singh and Bhai Vir Singh, brought about a renaissance in the community and introduced a number of religious and social reforms.

### *ATTACK FROM ARYA SAMAJISTS*

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century and the first two of the twentieth the Sikhs and Sikhism had to face the most fanatical attacks of the Arya Samajists who not only abused and insulted their Gurus but also ridiculed the community by publicly shaving a number of Sikhs at Lahore and other places. It was all the more painful to the Sikhs as it was they who had first invited the founder of the Arya Samaj, Swami Dayananda, to the Panjab, had arranged for his lectures at Jullundur, Amritsar, etc., and had protected him against the Sanatan Dharmi Hindus on whom he poured abuse in his writings and speeches. The present-day opposition of the Panjab Arya Samajists to the language and culture of the Panjab is only a projection of their old inimical fanaticism against the Sikhs.

### *AGITATION OVER COLONY BILL*

The spring and summer of 1907 saw the begin-

nings of a new political awakening and agitation among the Sikhs. It was in connection with the Colony Bill of 1907 which had been passed in the Panjab Legislature against the advice of most of the Indian members. Some of its provisions were unduly oppressive to the agriculturist colonists of the Lyallpur district who were mainly Sikhs. The stirring poems of Banke Dayal (like the *Pagri Sambhal O Jatta*, *Pagri Sambhal O*) and the fire-breathing speeches of Sardar Ajit Singh and Lala Lajpat Rai, who took up the cause of the Colonists, worked up the Sikh agriculturists against the Government. Ajit Singh and Lajpat Rai were deported. The agitation was, however, successful in persuading the Viceroy, Lord Minto, to withhold sanction to the Bill.

### GHADAR PARTY

Ajit Singh disappeared to Persia, and then to the United States of America. There he got in touch with the Hindustan Ghadar Party of San Francisco. This party had been organized on June 2, 1913, under the presidentship of Baba Sohan Singh of Bhakna (Amritsar) with the object of freeing India from under the British yoke and establishing a *Panchayat raj* (Republican state). Its official organ, the *Ghadar*, began publication as a weekly on November 1, 1913.

### THE KOMA GATA MARU

Indian emigrants to Canada were in those days subjected to many humiliating restrictions. To comply with the requirements of the Canadian government Baba Gurdit Singh chartered a Japanese ship, *Koma-gata-Maru* (renamed as *Guru Nanak Jahaz*), and set

sail with three hundred and seventy-six passengers. But they were not allowed to land at Vancouver. On their return to India they were received at Baj-Baj on September 26, 1914, by the police who would not allow them to go to Calcutta and insisted on their leaving for the Panjab by a special train kept ready for them. In the tumult a shot was fired. In the firing that followed, twenty Sikhs were killed. Baba Gurdit Singh escaped with some of his companions. The others were rounded up, brought to the Panjab and lodged in different jails. Similarly, 173 passengers, mostly Sikhs from America, Japan, Manila and Shanghai, arriving at Calcutta by *Tasu Maru* on October 28, 1914, were interned in the Central jails of Montgomery and Multan. This gave a powerful stimulus to the Ghadar propaganda in the country.

#### THE GHADAR FAILED

At this time a large number of Ghadarites slipped in through the ports unobserved and poured into the Panjab. Bhai Kartar Singh Sarabha was a prominent figure among the revolutionaries who were to lead an armed rebellion with the help of sympathetic army units stationed in different cantonments. Rash Bihari Bose was to direct the operations. 21st of February, 1915, was the date fixed for the rising. It was changed to February 19. But the secret leaked out and the timely precautions taken by the Government proved an effective check. The leaders and active workers were all arrested and tried under three different cases in 1915-16. Seventeen of them were hanged and a large number of them were sent to jail for life. In addition to these some two dozen other Sikhs were sentenced to death for offences connected

with the Ghadar movement by civil and military courts.

### *RIKAB GANJ AGITATION*

The year 1914 also saw the beginning of the Rikab Ganj Gurdwara agitation which further widened the gulf between the Sikhs and the Government. This Gurdwara is sacred to the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur and stands on the site where his headless body was cremated after his execution in 1675. Early in 1914 the Government of India pulled down a part of its enclosing wall to suit the plan of the new Viceregal Lodge for which they had acquired from the Mahant the whole land lying between the Gurdwara and the outer wall. There was a great agitation among the Sikhs, but it was suspended during the war of 1914-18. It was, however, again taken up after the war by Sardar Harchand Singh and Master Sundar Singh of Lyallpur and Sardar Sardul Singh Caveeshar of Lahore. As the Government refused to respect the sentiments of the Sikhs, it was decided to send a *Shahidi jatha* (a batch of martyrs) to rebuild the demolished wall and face the consequences of official wrath. The Government then realized the seriousness of the situation. Before the *jatha* arrived at Delhi, Maharaja Ripudaman Singh of Nabha arranged for the reconstruction of the wall on behalf of the Government of India.

### *GURDWARA REFORM MOVEMENT*

The indiscriminate massacre by General Dyer in the Jallianwala Bagh at Amritsar on April 13, 1919, set ablaze the smouldering fire of political discontent against the British Government in India. It hardened the people of the Panjab—and particularly the Sikhs—to open

defiance of law for the restoration of peoples' rights, to begin with, in the management of their religious institutions. The custodians of Sikh temples had fallen into evil ways and the Government invariably stood for the maintenance of vested interests. The process of law was dilatory and expenses prohibitive. The Sikhs had tried the experiment of litigation and had begun to despair. They had failed to release their temple at Sialkot from the clutches of an apostate who openly flouted Sikh religion. They found themselves helpless against the Mahant of Nankana Sahib. The Government would not withdraw its own control from the temples of Amritsar and Tarn Taran. The Government of the Panjab opposed in 1920 the introduction of a bill in the Imperial Legislature to secure to the people a little more effective control of religious and charitable endowments.

#### *TARN TARAN AND NANKANA SAHIB*

Finding the existing law of no avail and the Government indifferent, the Sikhs adopted the new technique of sending *jathas* of peaceful Akali volunteers to assert their inherent right of managing their temples or Gurdwaras. The success gained at Rikab Ganj, Delhi, and at Sialkot on October 5, 1920, encouraged the Sikhs to apply this technique to the Gurdwaras at Amritsar, Panja Sahib (Hasan Abdal) and many other places. Alarmed at the successes of the Sikh reformists, some of the officials began to connect their movement with the political agitation in the country. Mr. King, the Commissioner of Lahore Division, in an official letter encouraged the priests to put up resistance against the reformists, with the result that clashes began to occur between them. At Tarn Taran Akali volunteers were attacked and two of them were

killed. The bloodiest event occurred on February 20, 1921, at Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak, where Mahant Narain Das had butchered in cold blood with axes and guns about 300 unarmed and non-violent volunteers. The dead and dying were gathered up into piles and were burnt with kerosene oil. The whole world was shocked to hear the news. The Government were now left with the only alternative of handing over the control of the Gurdwara to an elected representative committee of the Sikhs, known as the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee.

#### *AMRITSAR*

But the attitude of the Government became hostile and they adopted coercive measures to suppress the movement. Instructions were issued to District Magistrates to attack a Gurdwara whenever there appeared an apprehension of interference on the part of the Akalis. In November 1921 the keys of the Golden Temple, Amritsar, were taken away from its manager and all those who protested were arrested. Hundreds went to jail at the bidding of the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee and remained perfectly non-violent. Failing to find anyone to become a manager on behalf of the Government or to set up a rival committee the Government was obliged to return the keys to the Committee and release the prisoners unconditionally on January 17, 1922. Thus triumphed non-violence and self-sacrifice over bureaucratic high-handedness and Mahatma Gandhi congratulated the Sikhs in a telegram to Baba Kharak Singh, then President of the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, saying: 'First Decisive Battle of India's Freedom won. Congratulations.'

*GURU KA BAGH*

There was yet another trial of strength to come at Guru ka Bagh, about twelve miles from Amritsar. The Mahant having gone back upon his pledges, the Shromani Committee took charge of the institution in its own hands. The Government stepped in on behalf of the Mahant and arrested and convicted on August 8, 1922, the Akali volunteers for cutting firewood from a grove of trees for the free kitchen run by the temple for pilgrims and other wayfarers. The Sikhs took this as a challenge and began to volunteer themselves for arrest. The Government arrested the leaders of the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, closed all approaches to the Guru ka Bagh and belaboured with *lathis* all those who proceeded to the place, leaving them unconscious on the ground. A party of 100 Sikhs daily took a solemn vow on the holy Akal Takht of Amritsar to offer *Satyagraha* and under all circumstances to remain non-violent in word and deed. On their refusal to disperse at Guru ka Bagh, they were mercilessly beaten by the police and thrown in muddy ditches, to be picked by medical relief parties. The reports of eye-witnesses and the letters of the Rev. C. F. Andrews sent to the press from the place of occurrence stirred the conscience of the world and convinced the people that there was something far greater involved in the struggle than a mere dispute about land and property. In the words of the Rev. C.F. Andrews, 'A new heroism, learnt through suffering, has arisen in the land. A new lesson in moral warfare has been taught to the world.' According to John S. Hoyland in his *The Cross Moves East*, 'An English spectator of...[this] movement of *Satyagraha*, when hundreds of ex-soldiers, belonging to

proudest and most martial [Sikh] race in India, marched in rank after rank up to a cordon of police, there to be clubbed down unresistingly, has said to the present writer that never in his life did he see anything so dreadful and at the same time so impressive.'

With some two thousand Sikhs beaten to unconsciousness and 5,605 arrested up to November 16, 1922, the Government failed to overawe them. It was in a fix and was in search for a way out. At this stage Sir Ganga Ram, a retired engineer, came to the rescue of the Government. He took the land in dispute on lease from the Mahant and wrote to the Government that he did not require the protection of the police. Thus did the Government wriggle out of an untenable position.

### JAITO MORCHA

The next struggle was only partially religious. It began on September 14, 1923, when the continuous reading (*Akhand Panth*) of Guru Granth Sahib going on at Jaito in Nabha State, for the benefit of the deposed Maharaja Ripudaman Singh, was interrupted by the State authorities. The State was then ruled by a British administrator, Mr. J. Wilson Johnston. The *jathas* sent by the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee for restarting the interrupted reading were arrested by the State police and left in far-flung and out-of-the-way places. After some 500 men had been treated in this way, a big *Shahidi jatha* of 500 was sent. On its arrival at Jaito on February 21, 1924, it was mercilessly fired upon by the State forces, causing some 300 casualties including about 100 killed. The members of the *jatha*, seeing their comrades fall dead or wounded,



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rushed forward to seek martyrdom and, in the words of an eye-witness, they literally ran into the jaws of death. Many more *jathas* followed. They were all arrested and not fired upon. The struggle dragged on up to July 21, 1925, when the restrictions on the *Akhand Path* were removed and the Sikhs were allowed to perform the ceremony uninterrupted.

### *GURDWARA ACT 1925*

Negotiations had in the meantime been going on with the Government of the Panjab for a permanent solution of the Gurdwara problem. With the strenuous efforts of Bhai Jodh Singh and his colleagues in the Panjab Legislative Council, the Gurdwara Act 1925 was passed on July 7, and it came into operation on November 1, 1925. It placed the control of all historical Gurdwaras in the hands of an elected Board which was named the Shromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee. This brought to an end the long drawn struggle between the Sikhs and the Government on this issue.

Thirty thousand Sikhs are estimated to have gone to jail during the Gurdwara movement, paying some fifteen lakhs of rupees as fines, with the loss of about five hundred lives.

### *NON-VIOLENT NON-CO-OPERATION*

In the field of politics, the Sikhs have always been in the van of patriots. The activities of Bhai Maharaj Singh after the annexation of the Panjab, of Maharani Jind Kaur during her exile, of Baba Ram Singh Kooka and of Sardar Thakur Singh Sandhawalía, as well as

those of Maharaja Duleep Singh in Europe, are all links in the chain of Sikh struggle for freedom from British domination. The unrest created in the Panjab colony areas by Sikh agriculturists and the attempt of the Ghadar Party to raise an armed rebellion in the country point to the same direction. The Jallianwala Bagh massacre of 1919 added fresh fuel to the smouldering fire of political agitation against the British domination, and the Sikhs jumped into the arena with the first session of the Central Sikh League, held at Amritsar in 1919 along with the session of Indian National Congress. In the special session of the Congress held at Calcutta in September 1920 was passed Mahatma Gandhi's resolution of non-violent non-co-operation with the British. The sponsors of the Central Sikh League were greatly impressed by Gandhiji's move and they invited him to their second session held at Lahore on October 20, 1920, under the presidentship of Sardar Kharak Singh. The sincere and enthusiastic appeal of the venerable Sardar carried the day and the non-violent non-co-operation resolution was adopted with the traditional vigour of the Khalsa. In the words of Lala Lajpat Rai, "as regards non-violence, with its attendant conception of self-sacrifice, they [Sikhs] have given the most amazing proofs at Nankana Sahib . . . and later at Ajnala and Amritsar. They have proved themselves worthy descendants of their Gurus, and the examples they have set of self-sacrifice, calm courage, devoid of swagger, in the face of provocation, will be hard to beat."

When Lala Lajpat Rai, the then President of the Panjab Provincial Congress, was imprisoned in February 1922, Baba Kharak Singh became its President. As a result of the Government policy of repression against the

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Congress, Mahatma Gandhi was sent to jail for six years and Baba Kharak Singh was sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment for delivering seditious speeches. In December 1922 he discarded his clothes as a protest against the orders of the Government not to allow the prisoners in jail to wear black turbans or Gandhi caps. The Government tried to divide the Hindus and Sikhs and withdrew the ban on the black turban. But Baba Kharak Singh remained unshaken and wore clothes only in June 1927, after four and a half years, when he was released from the jail. He was one of the topmost leaders in the Panjab who led demonstrations against the Simon Commission in 1928 and who refused to agree to accept Dominion Status for India. He stood for complete independence, for which a resolution was passed in the 45th session of the Indian National Congress at Lahore on December 31, 1929, under the presidency of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru.

### *CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE*

In February 1930 Mahatma Gandhi decided to launch the Civil Disobedience campaign for which the Shromani Akali Dal offered, on March 5, five thousand Akali volunteers. The campaign could not, however, be pushed forward on account of Hindu-Muslim riots at Calcutta and Poona.

### *COMMUNAL AWARD*

In 1932 the Sikhs under the leadership of Master Tara Singh refused to accept the Communal Award of the British Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald. But as they were in a negligible minority in the country, their protest remained unheeded like a cry in the wilderness.

*CO-OPERATION AND 'QUIT-INDIA'*

During this period Sir Sundar Singh Majithia tried to solve the political problems of the Sikhs in co-operation with the Government. A section of the Sikhs, like that of the Congress, was persuaded, for political reasons, to help the British government during the Second World War while a considerable number of them led by Giani Gurmukh Singh *Musafir* and Sardar Ishar Singh Majhail, joined the 'Quit-India' campaign of 1942 and went to jail.

*THE I. N. A.*

The part played by the Sikhs in the organization and maintenance of the Indian National Army (the *Azad Hind Fauj*), at first under the command of General Mohan Singh and then of *Netaji* Subash Chandra Bose, in 1942-45, deserves a special mention. Thousands of them in the Far East sacrificed their all in its cause and thousands laid down their lives at its call. (And all honour to the I. N. A. for its contribution to the achievement of Indian independence.)

*THE EAST PANJAB SAVED*

The Sikhs were the staunchest advocates of *Akhand Hindustan*, the undivided India. In the course of negotiations for the division of India in 1946-47, the Sikh leader Master Tara Singh refused the offer of Mr. Muhammad Ali Jinnah for a separate Sikh State in Pakistan, and decided to sink or swim with India. If Master Tara Singh had not protested against the inclusion of the Panjab in Pakistan and had not raised his sword-arm in its

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defence, the Land of the Five Rivers would, perhaps, have been completely lost to India.

### *SIKH LOSSES AND SUFFERINGS*

With the partition of India agreed to by the leaders of the country, the Sikhs were the worst sufferers. Unsupported by friends and harassed by the enemies, they became the special targets of Muslim fanatics who singled them out for fire and sword. Beginning with the north-western districts where the Sikhs were in a helpless minority, the Muslims began in the winter of 1946-47 a regular crusade to drive or wipe them out. Their houses and property were looted and burnt and their men, women and children were indiscriminately put to the sword or burnt alive. In March 1947, planned murders and arson were begun in the eastern districts as well, and Hindus and Sikhs were killed in cold blood. Large parts of the cities of Amritsar and Lahore were set on fire and reduced to heaps of ruins. By summer, the whole Muslim population was up against the Sikhs in the trans-Ravi districts, and immediately before and after the creation of Pakistan on August 15, 1947, the Sikhs were killed at sight wherever found. Trainfuls of refugees on their way to India were mercilessly massacred. Women were forcibly abducted. Rape and torture became the order of the day. The Government was completely paralysed and failed to protect the Sikhs. It was thus a state of an all-out war of extermination against the Sikhs who had been taken unawares and unprepared. The appeals of Indian leaders failed to appeal to the minds of Muslim Leaguers. It appeared as if they would understand no language other than that of cold steel. At long last and as a last resort, therefore, the Sikhs were driven to the necessity of

retaliation in the east Panjab. This proved efficacious. Mr. Jinnah was also now persuaded to cry a halt to the forces of violence and disorder that his Muslim League had let loose against the non-Muslims.

The loss of non-Muslim life in this great holocaust of 1946-47 is estimated at a figure between 200,000 and 250,000 and of non-Muslim property at about twenty thousand million rupees.

### *'RAJASTHAN' OPPOSED*

In May-June 1947 India was faced with the danger of a further vivisection by a proposal for the creation of another separate and independent federation of Rajasthan comprising the Indian States. A number of ruling princes were easily taken in and they looked up to the youthful Maharaja of Patiala, Shri Yadavindra Singh, for lead. A word from him in their support could then have created a situation which even the Iron Man of India, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, would have found difficult to control. But like a true Sikh and a staunch patriot, Maharaja Yadavindra Singh not only refused to associate himself with this balkanization of India but, on the other hand, stood up like a Himalayan rock against it. He gathered round him the patriotic princes and so moulded the opinions of their Highnesses as to bring them in line with his own progressive views and successfully persuaded them to give up the idea of the proposed federation of Rajasthan. This saved India for all time to come from a permanent source of weakness and danger from within and without the country. The Maharaja was hailed by Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel as a champion of Indian unity and a saviour of the oneness of Hindustan.

*REFUGEES REHABILITATED*

True to the spirit of his great ancestors of the eighteenth century, Maharaja Yadavindra Singh offered his entire resources for the service of those who had suffered in the cause of Indian Independence. This offer came as a Godsend to the bewildered refugees. The timely organization set up by the Maharaja for the relief and rehabilitation of the uprooted Panjabis was a great source of hope and encouragement to them and gave time and inspiration to the Government of the Panjab and the Government of India to set up machinery for their settlement in India.

*PATIALA TROOPS IN KASHMIR*

The service rendered to India by the Patiala troops in Kashmir in October-November 1947 shall remain writ large on the pages of history. The tribal Pathans from the north-west aided by regular Pakistan troops had attacked the valley. The procrastination of the Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, 'had laid his subjects open to arson, bloodshed, loot and rape' by the Pakistanis. Soon after he had signed on October 26, 1947, the Instrument of Accession to India, the 1st Sikh Regiment was flown to defend the State. These brave sons of the Panjab were able to check the advance of the Pakistanis. Then more Indian troops arrived, and in due course of time the valley of Kashmir was saved for India.

Maharaja Yadavindra Singh was the right-hand man of Sardar Patel in the integration of Indian States into Unions, and in the words of the Sardar (July 15, 1948), 'he took up the cause of the country at a time when

there were few friends amongst the Princely Order,' and he made a 'notable contribution to the unity and integrity of India.'

### *UNIFICATION*

The Sikhs had made great sacrifices and suffered heavy losses in life and property during partition. Their homes and hearths in the West Panjab were gone. They had been robbed of all they possessed. They stood bleeding and stranded. Their future was uncertain. They had no place of shelter and no means of rehabilitation. At this stage the enemies of the Sikhs found an opportunity to attack them. They were afraid lest, in some scheme of rehabilitation prepared by the Government of India, the Sikhs should be so settled on their new allotments as to form a consolidated population in a contiguous region, gaining thereby political advantage and strength. Once settled, the Sikhs would soon re-establish themselves and it would then be difficult to attack and weaken them. These people, therefore, directed their Press guns against them to give them a bad name. At times they ascribed to Sikhs things which they had never subscribed to and, perhaps, never thought of. In their sectarian fanaticism they went to the extent of disowning and decrying their mother tongue, Panjabi, in spite of its being their common medium of expression in their every-day lives— a thing which no other people on the surface of the earth had ever done in the entire history of mankind. The only reason for their antipathy towards Panjabi was that the Sikh scriptures happened to have been written in it. They succeeded to a certain extent in poisoning the mind of the great Hindu community in whose name they posed to parade and whose cause they



pretended to uphold. This gave rise, not without reason, to distrust in the minds of the Sikhs who came to feel that their language and culture were not safe under the political and cultural domination of such people. Hence the demand for a Panjabi Suba, which, in the first quarter of 1956, was the subject of very anxious negotiations between the Sikh leaders and the Government of India. There were occasions when the disruptive opposition of interested parties threatened to bring about a breakdown. But both sides, the Government of India and the Sikhs, were anxious for a peaceful settlement. And thanks to the far-sighted and sympathetic approach of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, Shri Govind Ballabh Pant and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and to the reciprocal goodwill and helpful attitude of Master Tara Singh and his colleagues, Sardar Hukam Singh, Giani Kartar Singh, Bhai Jodh Singh and Sardar Gian Singh Rarewala, an amicable solution of the problem was found in the merger of the Panjab and the Patiala and the East Panjab States Union into a united State of the Panjab, with the demarcation of Panjabi-speaking and Hindi-speaking linguistic zones. Thus for the first time in recent history the Panjab became a single unit, administratively.

But the administrative unity thus achieved did not bring about political unity. The continued hostility of the Arya Samaj towards Panjabi created new tensions and pressures. The demand for the creation of a Panjabi-speaking state where the language and culture of the region could have scope for uninhibited progress gained further strength. The Sikh movement for the realization of this demand was dramatized in mass campaigns and prolonged fasts by Akali leaders, Master

Tara Singh and Sant Fateh Singh. In the *morcha* launched by the Shromani Akali Dal in May 1960 nearly 50,000 Sikhs courted arrest. On December 18, 1960, Sant Fateh Singh, who was directing the campaign from inside the premises of the Golden Temple, in the absence of Master Tara Singh in jail, went on a fast unto death which on certain assurances received from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was ended on the 23rd day on January 9, 1961. Master Tara Singh committed himself to a similar fast in August and September, 1961.

Sant Fateh Singh went on fast again in December, 1964. The Sikhs' persistence and their handsome and heroic part in the Indo-Pakistan conflict led the Government of India to finally concede to their demand. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri announced the formation of a Parliamentary Committee, headed by Sardar Hukam Singh, the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, to make recommendations on this subject. The Hukam Singh Committee gave on March 18, 1966, a unanimous verdict in favour of the creation of a Panjabi-speaking state. For the demarcation of boundaries the Government of India appointed in April 1966 a commission whose decisions based on the impugned and tainted 1961 census further exacerbated Sikh sentiment. The Sikhs felt that some of the Panjabi-speaking areas had been left out of the Panjab state and given over to Haryana created out of the residuary areas. The Commission by a majority had even allocated Chandigarh and portions of the Kharar Tehsil to Haryana—a palpable wrong to the Panjabi-speaking state. The Government of India itself could not enforce these recommendations and, in its decision of June 9, 1968, overruled the majority verdict of the Commission to the extent of placing Chandigarh neither in the Panjab state nor in Haryana, but under its own control.

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The problem of getting Panjabi-speaking areas restored to the Panjab became a major issue. The Shromani Akali Dal as a party and Sikh leaders individually pledged themselves to get the wrong rectified. Sardar Darshan Singh of Pheruman courted martyrdom by fasting unto death. On October 27, 1969, which was the 74th day of his fast, he died renewing the Sikh tradition of sacrifice and martyrdom. On January 26, 1970, Sant Fateh Singh, President of the Shromani Akali Dal, went on a fast declaring that if his demand for the restoration of Chandigarh to the Panjab was not complied with, he would burn himself alive. On February 1, the Government announced its decision to make over Chandigarh to the Panjab, with certain areas of the Fazilka and Abohar tehsils of the Panjab to Haryana in lieu thereof.

After the 1967 general elections, the Akali Dal with the support of the Jan Sangh and the Communist parties, and with Sardar Gurnam Singh as Chief Minister, formed the first non-Congress government in the Panjab. In the mid-term election held in the beginning of 1969 the Akali Party emerged with even greater strength. Sardar Gurnam Singh was again elected the Chief Minister of the state. On account of internal differences, however, Sardar Gurnam Singh was replaced by a young leader Sardar Parkash Singh of Badal on March 27, 1970. The Sikhs are now in a distinctly dominant position in the Panjab. But inner faction, which has been the bane of the Sikh affairs, especially after the passing of the Gurdwara Act of 1925, continues to sap their creative energy. Yet the Sikh commitment to their faith and history remains unimpaired and of this the community gave ample evidence in observance in 1966-67 of the tercentenary of the birth of Guru Gobind Singh and in 1969-70 of Guru Nanak's quinquecentennial.

## SIKHISM

Sikhism, as a religion, is one of the most modern, both in its age and in its teachings. It does not boast of any very elaborate and complicated philosophy couched in a not easily intelligible language. Guru Nanak and his successors spoke to the people in the language of the people and explained their ideas to them with examples from the everyday life of the common people. Religion, according to them, was not the monopoly of a few thinkers and philosophers but was the common property of the people at large; nor was it a matter of mere academic interest but was a constant source of solace and inspiration in day-to-day life. It must, therefore, be brought home to the people in their own simple and easily understood language. This is what the Sikh Gurus tried, and their efforts proved eminently successful. The teachings of the Sikh Gurus are fortunately preserved in their original form in the *Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of the Sikhs. Ever since its compilation by Guru Arjun in 1604, there has been no change in it whatever. Even the spelling of the original Gurmukhi text is not permitted to be changed. There is, therefore, no difficulty in understanding the creed of Sikhism in its true perspective.

## CONCEPTION OF GOD

The Sikh conception of God, as given in the opening lines of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, is that:

There is but One God, who is All-Truth, the Creator,  
devoid of fear and enmity, Immortal, Unborn,  
Self-existent, Great and Bountiful.

The True One was in the beginning, the True One was in the primal age; the True One is now also; the True One, says Nanak, also shall be.

*(Japji)*

Again:

The Unseen, Infinite, Inaccessible, Incomprehensible God is not subject to death or destiny.  
 He is of no caste, Unborn, Self-Existent, without fear or doubt.  
 He hath no form or colour or outline; He becometh manifest by the True Word.  
 He hath no mother, father or kinsman; He feeleth no lust and hath no wife or family.  
 He is pure, endless and infinite; He is All-light.  
 God is in every heart; His light is in every heart.

*(Rag Sorath)*

He is neither set up or installed, nor is made by anyone. The Pure One is Self-existent.

*(Japji, v. 1,2)*

The God of Sikh conception is an existing reality and not merely an abstract idea existing nowhere but in our brains. 'Our gross senses cannot perceive Him, our mind cannot know Him, our thoughts cannot fathom Him,' it is true, but 'our spirit can commune with Him'.

Sikhism does not wrangle about the theories of creation. It is enough that we are here. The *how* of it is not our concern. "By His order all form appeared and by His order all life came into existence."

Guru rejected the theory of incarnation which had resulted in the worship of images. God, according to him, is Supreme and Sublime, Eternal and Formless, and cannot be confined to, or found in, images. He is All-pervading, though separate and distinct from His Creation. He is in everything that exists, but everything that exists is not God. He is beyond the intervention of intercession of any person and needs no idols or images, or priests or temples, for His worship, nor is the mere performance of any rituals and ceremonies enough to win His grace.

#### ETERNAL PEACE

Sikhism holds out no alluring promises of eternal bliss or happiness on the mere adoption of certain rites or belief in any particular person or dogma, but enjoins upon its followers to live a life of purity, not as ascetics living upon public charity but as wordly men living upon the fruit of their honest labour. According to the Guru,

The hungry man makes a home of his mosque; he spends all his time in his mosque so as to receive alms ever the more.

One man (*a Jogi*) who earneth nothing slitteth his ears; another becometh a beggar and loseth his caste.

Touch not at all the feet of those who call themselves *gurus* and *pirs* and go about begging.

They alone who eat the fruit of their own labour and share it with others, says Nanak, recognize the right path. (*Sarang ki Var, I.22*)

The salvation of the Sikh is not obtained by renouncing the world, residing in forests and there torturing and annihilating the body by austerities and penances. 'The body is the palace, the temple and the house of God.'

says Nanak; 'Into it He putteth His eternal light.' (*Rag Malhar*) 'So nourish the body that you may serve the Lord.' (*Rag Suhi*)

According to the Sikh Gurus, the Lord can be served best in the service of humanity, and humanity can be served best by the cultivation of virtue and renunciation of evil.

In the world we should live to serve: then do we  
find a seat in His court. (*Sri Rag*, I. p. 26)

The heart is the paper, conduct the ink, good and  
bad are both recorded therewith.

Man's life is as his acts constrain him.

As a man soweth, so shall he reap; as he earneth,  
so shall he eat. (*Rag Suhi*)

Forsake vice and pursue virtue.

Abandon covetousness, slander, forswear falsehood,  
and thou shalt obtain the true fruit through  
the Guru's instruction. (*Rag Sorath*)

Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is  
truthful living. (*Sri Rag*)

Make thy mind the farmer, this body the earth,  
good deeds the seed, and irrigate it with the  
rain of God's Name.

Love of God will germinate in thy heart, and thus  
shalt thou gain imperishable merit. (*Sorath*,  
I. p. 595)

#### CASTE REJECTED

Guru Nanak saw the inequity of the caste and class system which had created divisions between man and man and set one against the other. He declared that the caste was an incorrigible evil and must be abolished. He would recognize no special privileges for the high caste, nor would he hold the low ones in compulsory subjection. To him all were equal. There could be no distinction of high and low amongst the

children of One Father God. Nanak declared the fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man and proclaimed absolute justice in the divine realm in the light of merit based on individual action. *Sa zat sa pat hai jehe karm kamae*, that is, the caste and status are determined by one's actions, and not by the accident of birth.

*Wahiguru*, the wonderful Lord, the Creator, is the judge of the actions of His creation, and those who act according to His wishes shall be saved. This is the spirit of the Guru's teachings. In denouncing caste exclusiveness, the Guru said:

Recognize divine light in everyone. Do not  
enquire about caste.

There is no caste in the world beyond.

(*Rag Asa, I*)

Caste and birth are not asked; enquire at the  
house of the True. According to one's  
actions are caste and birth. (*Rag Prabhati, I*)

Nonsense are castes, nonsense are names. All  
creatures are under the shelter of the same  
One God. (*Sri Rag, I*)

The man who performeth good actions,

He is called a *deva* (saint);

He who does evil deeds in this world,

Men call him an *asura* (demon). (*Bach. Natak, X*)

#### UNTOUCHABILITY DENOUNCED

Untouchability or contemptuous treatment of the backward or suppressed people is as bad, according to the Guru, as distinction based on caste or class. It is rather worse. And he attacked it with all the force at his command. He condemned the haughty and scornful attitude of the privileged classes and identified himself with the lowest of the low.

There are lowest men among the low classes;



Nanak, I am with them; what have I got to do  
with the great?

God's eye of mercy falls on those who take  
care of the lowly. (*Sri Rag, I, 4-3*)

Guru Nanak denounced the very idea of impurity attached to God's creation and refused to admit of any distinction between the so-called high and low.

Call them not pure who wash their bodies and  
sit, says Nanak; those alone are pure in  
whose heart He dwells. (*Asa di Var, I*)

To him a low-born but God-fearing and truthful Chandala, living upon his honest earnings, was a thousand times better than a high-born Brahman 'who feeds on carrion and drinks of human blood.'

The result of these teachings was that the lowest classes, in particular, rallied round the standard of the Gurus and were at once raised to the highest ranks and positions in life. A low class Muslim rebeck-player, *Mardana*, was a constant respected companion of Guru Nanak who addressed him as *Bhai*, or brother. The *Ranghretas* or sweepers were affectionately welcomed by Guru Gobind Singh and called *Guru ka betas* (the sons of the Guru). And it is nothing short of a miracle of Sikhism that the poor ploughmen, the Jats, the despised wine-distillers, the Kalals, and the depressed peg-menders, the carpenters, nay even those whose touch or sight was not tolerated and whose brethren are still rotting as dregs in some places in the twentieth century, on entering the fold of the Khalsa became commanders of armies, chiefs of confederacies, rulers of states and high priests and preachers in Sikh temples.

#### HUMILITY

Service and humility are the essence of Sikh religion which inculcates fraternity and equality in the Fatherhood

of God and brotherhood of man. *Ek pita ekas ke ham barak*—there is One father and we are all His children—says the Guru. (*Sorath*, V. p. 611) Thus, all men and women being equal members of one common fraternity of mankind, the distinctions of white or coloured races, of advanced or backward nations or of high and low classes are a negation of the universal teachings of prophets and religions. The difference in colour or prosperity is due to geographical and economic conditions of different parts of the world where different people happen to live. If a few people have come to be rulers, it is because of their misuse of power and economic exploitation. Instead of using the gifts of God for the welfare of their less fortunate fellow beings, they have used them for self-aggrandizement and self-glory. This is against the spirit of human brotherliness, and Guru Nanak condemns it saying, *hukam karhe murakh gawar*—‘It is fools and idiots who govern’ regardless of the welfare and interests of the governed. And tyranny and arrogance ultimately recoil upon the tyrants themselves.

Humility, not servility, raises a man to higher planes and service wins him a place of honour. The Guru tells us in the *Sukhmani*: ‘He who recognizes himself lowly shall be exalted. He whose mind is humble is saturated with the Lord’s Name. Having subdued the self, the humble live in all-happiness; the self-conceited are consumed by the fire of egoism.’ (*Gauri*, V. 3-6, 12-1)

A unique example of humility and self-discipline may be seen in the life of Guru Gobind Singh, the soldier-saint of India. As soon as the ceremony of initiating the first five Sikhs into the Order of the Khalsa by the Guru was over, he himself, to the surprise of all present, knelt down as a candidate before the Initiated Five begging

them that he might be baptized in the same form and manner. Guru Gobind Singh was the head of the religion. He had always been regarded as the *Guru* of the Sikhs, and would as well be regarded as such in the future. Yet he wished to be baptized as one of them, adopting the same form and wearing the same symbols as had been prescribed for the new dispensation. And he voluntarily offered to submit himself to the same discipline as had been laid down for the Khalsa. The *Panj Piare*, as the first Five baptized ones were called, complied with the wishes of this strange suppliant. The disciples assumed the role of the *Guru* and baptized the Master into the fold of the Khalsa, the *Singhs*. Well has this strange phenomenon been acclaimed by the poet Bhai Gurdas II, a contemporary of the Guru, saying:

*Waih pargateo mard agammra waryam ikela,  
Wah, wah Gobind Singh, ape Gur chela. (xvii)*

And lo! there appeared an unsurpassable man,  
a unique hero.

Wonderful, wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh, a  
venerable preceptor as well as a humble  
disciple.

Yet another example of the sublimity of Guru Gobind Singh's mind. Some people called him an *avtar*, an incarnation of God, nay, God himself. This was against the spirit and the teachings of Sikhism which inculcated the Oneness of the Self-existent, Unborn and Formless Creator. Therefore, the Guru protested against this heretic innovation and declared in unmistakable terms:

*Jo mo ko pamesar uchar hai  
Te sabh nark kund meh par hai  
Mo ko das tawan ka jano  
Ya mai bhed na ranch pachhano  
Main hon param purkh ko dasa  
Dekhan ayo jagat tamasha. (Bachittar Natak, vi. 32-33)*

Those who call me God shall all fall into the pit  
of hell.

Consider me as a slave of His, and have no doubt of it.  
I am but a slave of the Lord, come to see the spectacle  
of the world.

#### UNIVERSAL BROTHERHOOD

Guru Gobind Singh looks upon the entire world as one family and all religions and worship as fundamentally one, aiming at the realization of the same One God whose children they all are. He says:

Some one has become a shaven *Sannyasi*;  
Another is considered a Yogi, a *Brahmachari* or a  
*Yati*;

One is a Hindu, a Turk (Muhammadan), a Rafzi or  
an Imam-Shafi;

But understand thou that mankind is all one.

*Karta*, the Creator, *Karim*, the Compassionate,  
*Razak*, the Nourisher, or *Rahim*, the Mer-  
ciful (whether addressed by any Hindu or  
Muslim name), is the same.

There is no difference whatever; fall not into  
any error or delusion.

The One alone is to be served; the teacher of all  
teachers (the *Gurudeva*) is one.

One is the nature and know thou that the Light  
in them all is one. (*Akal Ustat*, 85)

The (Hindu) temple and the (Muslim) mosque  
are the same;

The (Hindu) *Puja* and the (Muslim) *Nimaz* are the  
same.

All men are one, but many only in manifestation;  
So gods and demons are one, *Yakshas* and  
*Gandharvas*.

(The differences between) the Muslims and Hindus  
are due to the different nature of the garbs  
of various lands.

The eyes, the ears, the body, the make is one—a  
combination of earth, air, fire, water.

Allah or *Abhekh* (formless God) is the same.

The Puranas and the Quran (the Hindu or Muslim sacred books) are the same. (*Akal Ustat*, 86)

To him, the delusion of whose heart is gone, the Hindus and Musalmans are alike . . .

The eastern dwellers of the Himalayas, the Chinese and Tibetans, the Bengalis and Gurkhas, the *Sidhs* and *Yogis*, the Baghelas and Marathas, the Dravidians and Tilangas, the Mughals and Ruhilas, and from among the westerners, the Ghauris and Gardezis, the Qandaharis and Qureishis, and the Arabs and *Farangis* (the Europeans), all sing thy praises and move under thy orders. (*Akal Ustat*, 254-55)

Therefore,

Pause for one moment on the thought that if there is but one Self in all, where is the room for hatred?

If there be but one God in all, where is room for contempt?

If there were more than One, if there was not One without a second, then might man be different from man and might quarrel with his brother;

But if the same God abides in every heart, if the same Self animates every vehicle, where is the room for hatred or contempt?

There is but One God in all. (*Rag Maru*, I)

#### KNOWLEDGE, DEVOTION AND ACTION

For the successful conduct of life, Sikhism is a combination of the three paths of knowledge (*jnan*), devotion (*bhakti*) and action (*karma*). The Guru intended the Sikh to be a saintly man and a manly saint. In his wisdom he is to be guided by the experience of those who have gone before him. He should have the *jnan*, knowledge, of the existence of God and should be able to distinguish between the real

and unreal, true and false and good and bad. Without the light of knowledge, he shall only be groping in the dark, not unlikely to go astray from the right path. But the acquisition of knowledge is not the be-all and end-all of life. It has to be applied. The Sikh should feel the presence of God here, there and everywhere, watching and guiding him on the path of action. Enlightened, he must range himself on the side of God and, with full faith and devotion (*bhakti*), he must surrender himself completely to His Will. Everything that come from him is for the best and is, therefore, the best. It must be accepted cheerfully. Accepted, it has to be in all cases. There is no alternative. Then why brood over and bemoan for things not to our liking. The time and energy thus wasted can be better utilized for constructive and happier purposes. Surrender to God has one very great practical advantage. While the faithful devotee enjoys the divine gifts and blessings as his right as one of His children, the responsibility for his ills and misfortunes, as also coming from Him, is shifted to God's plan for men and mankind.

This does not, however, mean that a Sikh has to sit idle and wait for everything to be done for him from above. No. God has given him life, light and hands and feet. He has, therefore, to be always up and doing, pushing on and striving towards his goal. But in his actions he has to so conduct himself as to be always feeling the presence of God about him. The scripture tells him '*hath paon kar kam sabh, chit Niranjan nal*—while your hands and feet are engaged in worldly pursuits, let your mind be with God.'

Knowledge and devotion are aids to right action.

## SERVICE ABOVE SELF

The Gurus had seen that emphasis on the negative side of virtue had led to the adoption in the east of asceticism as the highest ideal of life which ultimately meant the negation of all manly duty. The Sikh Gurus taught a more positive truth, and, above all, truthful living. Truth is higher than everything, but higher still is truthful living—*sach-hu orai sabh ko upar sach achar*—said the Guru (*Sri Rag*, I. Asht. xiv-5). According to Sikhism, love of humanity manifested in service above self is the *summum bonum* of a Sikh's life. 'He who remains selfless in service, attains God' (*Gauri*, V. *Sukhmani*, xvii-2).

Only service done in this world shall win us a place in heaven—*Vich duniya sev kamaiye tan dargeh baisan paiye*—said Guru Nanak. (*Sri Rag*, I. p. 26) Sikhism does not prescribe different duties (*dharma*) for different classes. It recognizes no privileged class. The Guru or the disciple, the king or the servant, the priest or the layman, are all equal in *sangat* and must serve one another. No one is exempted from service. The more one serves, the better Sikh he is. The Sikh must always be alert, up and doing, seeking opportunities for service. This brought about a change in the outlook of the Sikhs who in the eighteenth century became selfless knights of the Order of the Khalsa. They had no personal motives, no passions of worldly love, to inspire them in the performance of their duty. The sight of wronged innocence or oppressed weakness was itself sufficient to move them to action. Unmindful of the overwhelming number of the enemy, Hari Singh Bhangi prepared to leave for the rescue of a Brahman girl snatched away by the Nawab of Kasur.

Thirty Sikhs, according to the *Jang Namah* of Qazi Nur Muhammad, came out to meet as many thousands of Durrani and Baluchis of Ahmad Shah Durrani in defence of the Sikh temple at Amritsar and died fighting on December 1, 1764. "When they saw the renowned king and the army of Islam," says the Qazi, "they came out of the enclosure. They were only thirty in number. But they had not a grain of fear about them. They had neither the fear of slaughter nor the dread of death. Thus they grappled with the *Ghazis* and spilt their blood." Similarly, thirty five years later, Ranjit Singh with only forty Sikhs challenged the might of the Afghan army of Shah Zaman in Lahore in 1799.

And these knights of the Khalsa rescued the land of the Panjab from the iron clutches of the Mughals and the Afghans in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and restored it to the rightful sons of the land after the lapse of some seven hundred years.

The example of Bhai Kanhaiya illustrates to what heights a man can rise when he practises service above self in the light of the Guru's teachings. In one of the battles of Anandpur, when the Sikhs were engaged in a life-and-death struggle with the Mughal forces who had come to destroy and devastate the Guru's headquarters, *Bhai Kanhaiya*, a devoted Sikh, was seen serving water with absolute impartiality both to the Sikhs and the enemy. A complaint was carried to the Guru. And when questioned by him, *Bhai Kanhaiya* replied that he was following the Guru's instruction that one should look upon all, friend and foe, with an equal eye. His duty, he said, was to serve water to the thirsty and he saw no distinction between a Sikh and a Mughal in their thirstiness. Here was an



ideal Sikh. The Guru was highly pleased with him.

He who sees God in all His creation serves and worships Him best. God manifests Himself in all His creatures. They are all He. The man himself is an image of God. The soul in man, the *atma*, the real man, is a part, a ray, of the Great Soul, the *Param-Atma*. Without it a man is but a corpse. The service of man is, therefore, the real service and worship of God.

Bhai Kanhaiya may rightly be said to have been the Indian precursor of the inspirer and founder of the Red Cross Society, anticipating it by over a century and sixty years. (Henri Dunant and his friends founded the RCS in 1864.) The service-minded admirers and followers of Bhai Kanhaiya soon came to be known as Sewa-panthis (*Seva*—service, *panth*—path, *panthis*—followers of a particular path), the followers of the Path of Service. And history knows them for an enviable record of unassuming selfless service of the people in the far-flung arid parts of the western Panjab through a network of *Deras* and *Dharmshalas* maintained by these saintly persons, also called the Addan-shahis.

#### THE 'GURU' IN SIKHISM

As a path of discipleship, Sikhism has the teachings of the Guru as a guide for its followers. The necessity of a *Guru*, a spiritual teacher, has been recognized by all religions. The Hindus call him an *avtar* (an incarnation of God), the Christians, the son of God, and the Mussulmans, the prophet. In Sikhism he is called *Guru*, the teacher. The successors of the first Guru Nanak are believed to have been one with him, having the same light and the same spirit. They

all called themselves Nanak and subscribed their names as such to their writings. According to the Sikhs, the spirit of the master blended with that of his successor. With the death of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, ended the line of personal succession. And the spiritual Guruship was vested in the *Granth* (thenceforth called the *Guru Granth Sahib*), the incorporated Word, the repository of the Gurus' teachings. "The Word is the *Guru*: the *Guru* is the Word. All nectars are in the Word." This had been said by Guru Ram Das. The Word is in reality the permanent guide, an ever-living teacher. The master is ever present in his Word. He can be best seen and followed in the Word. It is in this spirit that the Sikhs look upon their Holy Book and pay to it the highest reverence. It is a source of hope and inspiration. They read or hear it read on all occasions for guidance and find in it peace and blissfulness.

### THE SIKH PRAYER

Sikhism is the religion of prayer and of prayer-minded people. Prayer is the very breath of a Sikh's life. The Sikhs believe in its efficacy. They pray to God on all occasions, of happiness and sorrow, of births and deaths, of marriages or of proceeding on journeys. In fact, they do nothing important without invoking the Lord for His protection and guidance. 'Ask the Lord when there is something to be done. He shall (help you) accomplish it, says the Guru (*Var Sri Rag*, IV). 'Pray to Him who is bestower of peace and happiness. To Whomsoever the Merciful Lord is kind has his wishes fulfilled.' (*Sri Rag*, V). 'He knoweth, He doeth and He

accomplisheth. Standing in His presence, O Nanak, do ye offer thy prayer.' (*Var Maru*, II.1)

A prayer is a devout supplication or an humble entreaty made to God, or to some other object of worship, by a person on his own behalf, or on behalf of some other person or persons, individually or collectively, earnestly beseeching favour. It is the expression of our faith, devotion and humility and of our acknowledgment of His omniscience, omnipotence and all-mercifulness. It has a purifying effect on human mind. It purges it of self and egotism and uplifts the human soul to the nearness of God. Constant prayer strengthens our faith and ennobles our life which is quickened into action by the light and heat we receive from those who have left their traces on the pages of history and whose glories we sing in our prayer. It helps us renew our resolve to persevere in the path of God—the service of humanity. It is a refuge from all storms and stresses of life and a source of strength and happiness. It is, therefore, an important factor in the moulding and building of our character and deserves our serious and sincere attention.

#### A REGULAR HABIT AND ROUTINE OF LIFE

Concentration of mind is the first prerequisite of prayer. It is true that human mind is fickle and restless. It is really a problem to concentrate it on anything for some length of time. It has been a problem for all philosophers and *yogis*, and it was solved by them by constant practice and persevering meditation. And they were able to be in tune with the Infinite and rise to unimaginable heights in the realm

of soul. Rich philosophies of life and religion, preserved for us in their Word, were the result. Practice, persevering practice, in saying prayers is, therefore, absolutely necessary for successful results. Theory is helpful for mental preparation only. Prayer must be a regular habit, a routine of life. Then alone, slowly but surely, shall we in due course of time be able to get at the real meaning and import of prayer. Effort, sincere and persistent effort, has to be made. The mind is likely to wander about during prayer. Nobody knows when through God's grace a moment may arrive for our mind to be in a receptive state to react favourably to a particular idea. If we do not make prayer a regular routine of our life and afford occasional opportunities to our mind to be in a prayerful and receptive mood, how can it receive and react to flashes that may come to it? There must be a clean receptacle ready to receive a thing when it comes, if we have to retain it in its purity.

#### A SET FORM OF PRAYER

It is true that prayer is a thing more of the heart than of the tongue, and its effect does not exclusively lie in the beauty of its words or in the style of its expression, but in the humility and earnestness of the heart. It is equally true that one pours oneself forth more naturally and freely in self-chosen thoughts, and, perhaps, no words are used or needed at all beyond small spontaneous ejaculations at moments of overflowing praise and wonder. But that is true only in the case of individual prayer. A congregational prayer covering an extensive range of past glories and present and future aspirations of a community, to be said in large assemblies of people in different states of mind,

and on different occasions and in different places, has necessarily to be formulated in a phraseology appealing to the heart. Such a prayer formula set in all-embracing words, as the Sikh prayer is, gives to the individual a sense of unity with the community, and to the congregation that of oneness among themselves in their approach to God. It gives a ready-made language to speak to Him, supplemented, of course, by such additions as the person praying may be moved to make or as the occasion of prayer may demand. A gapless flow of words and ideas helps concentration of mind and keeping to the point and avoids wandering of thoughts which are otherwise bound to go astray. It is only a few saints and seers who will pray to God in the absence of a set form of prayer. The blessed saints who have attained to the nearness of God, who have become one with Him, are, perhaps, above prayer, though it is through prayer that they have risen to that blissful stage. They have completely surrendered and resigned themselves to the will of God. They are all 'prayer-full.' They are far, by far, above the ordinary run of mankind. The ordinary man, through sloth or for want of persuasive words, will not pray, thus remaining deprived of the means of self-improvement provided by prayer. The set form of prayer is, therefore, for the common man. There is no denying the fact that without concentration of mind, a thing quite difficult in itself, the oft repeated words of prayer are liable to become formal, an absent-minded repetition. But then the fault lies with our mind. The experience of trained and disciplined minds tells us that as they pray and find themselves in the presence of the Lord, 'the most familiar forms of prayer become transmuted from a mechanical act of memory to living words spoken to God from the heart and quick with

meaning.' Illustrations of this may be found in their thousands in the history of the Sikhs and of other people in the world.

#### ARDAS

The Sikh word for prayer is *Ardas*. It is the contracted Panjabi form of the Persian *arzasht*, a petition, a memorial or an address from an inferior to a superior. There is nothing peculiar in this contraction. Brevity is a well-known characteristic of the Panjabi language. In borrowing words from other languages, it only retains their essential parts, as represented by their sounds, and drops off the non-essential embellishments. For example, the English word 'attention' is reduced to *tichan* and French 'l'arme' to *lam*. Even in its own construction, more than two or three words are at times put together and contracted into one word. *Makhe*, *kitthon* and *othe* are abbreviated forms of *main akhia e*, *kis thaon ton* and *os thaon te*, respectively.

Unlike some of the saints of old, or of the present day, the Sikh Gurus inculcated a life of useful service to their fellow-beings with a prayerful mind looking for guidance towards the Common Father. This is reflected in their history and recounted in their prayer which has set up new traditions in common congregational prayer.

The Sikh prayer consists of two parts, the invocation and the prayer proper. The invocation is further subdivided into two sections: the invocation to God and the Gurus, and the recounting of the glorious deeds of their martyrs and heroes.

## PERSONAL AS WELL AS CONGREGATIONAL

The Sikh prayer is not individualistic, nor is it isolationistic. It is both personal and congregational. In India of old, ancient and mediaeval, religion was individualistic in its outlook and attitude. The old Indian custom of silence and meditation at dawn and sunset aimed only at individual advancement. But the religion of the Sikhs has a different outlook. It aims at the advancement and welfare of the individual as well as the community. As is their religion, so is their prayer. In it the Sikhs, individually or in groups, big or small, are one with the community throughout the world. An individual Sikh wherever he is, or a congregation of them wherever it is, prays for the entire Khalsa—*jahan jahan Khalsa sahib, tahan tahan rachhia riayit* (May His protection be extended to the Khalsa wherever they are)! This must not, however, convey the impression that the Sikh prayer is, perhaps, exclusively communal in the narrow sense of the word. It is not. As individuals, to begin with, form themselves into groups and communities which ultimately are a part of the world at large, the prayer of the Sikhs also concludes with a universal prayer for peace and prosperity for all in the world—*tere bhane sarbat da bhala*. (In Thy Will, may peace and prosperity come to one and all)!

## INVOCATION

The first part of the invocation to God and the Gurus, up to Guru Tegh Bahadur, was composed by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, and it forms the opening introduction to *Var Sri Bhagauti ji ki* in the *Dasam Granth*. The next two sentences refer to Guru Gobind Singh and to *Guru Granth Sahib*, the spirit of

the Gurus embodied in their Word. This is indicative of the faith of the Sikhs. And faith, as everyone knows, is a wonderful unifying factor in the life of a people. Once one in faith, they become one in things spiritual and mundane. One in worship, individual or congregational, they become one in other interests of life. They become closer in fellowship and their circle of sympathy, goodwill and understanding widens to embrace their brothers-in-faith wherever they are on the globe. Faith in God keeps one's mind at rest and saves it from wandering. He whose mind stays on Him keeps in perfect faith and it helps him maintain equanimity against all odds in life. Rightly understood and rightly used, faith is a force which nothing can resist. This has been abundantly demonstrated in the lives of the Sikh Gurus, martyrs and heroes who, in perfect calmness and with smiling faces, laid down their lives at the altar of their faith. The dread of tortures and the fear of death could not deflect them from the path they had set before them. To maintain his faith Guru Arjun agreed to sit on a hot iron plate, with burning sand pouring over his naked body, and in a cauldron of boiling water. Ultimately his blistered body was dipped in the cold water of the river Ravi. Guru Arjun cheerfully endured these tortures and surrendered his soul to be one with God saying:

Sweet is Thy will, my Lord,  
Thy grace alone do I beseech.

Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, was decapitated in the main public street in Delhi and the two young sons of Guru Gobind Singh were bricked up alive and then mercilessly butchered to death in an open court at Sirhind. Thousands of Sikhs were captured under the orders of the Mughal emperors,



carried to Lahore or Delhi and there broken on the wheel, flayed alive, cut up joint by joint or otherwise done to death. But to the great surprise of the world, "not one abjured his faith or perjured his soul to preserve 'his muddy vesture of decay'." This was all a miracle of faith which to the Sikh was a source of rare inspiration and immeasurable strength to face the worst of circumstances and to make supreme sacrifices in their cause.

#### HEROES AND MARTYRS

The glorious deeds of these heroes and martyrs of faith are referred to in the second part of the prayer in small pithy phrases which remind the Sikhs of their unity with the past and unfold to them chapters of their eventful history in the first half of the eighteenth century when, under the edicts of the emperors of Delhi, their forefathers were hunted down like wild beasts and killed at sight wherever found. The very existence of the Sikh people was then in danger and more than once was it reported by the rulers of the Panjab to their Imperial masters at Delhi that the whole nation of the Sikhs had been extirpated. Then time and again sprang out of their retreats heroes like Bota Singh of Padhana, Mehtab Singh of Mirankot and others to proclaim with their blood the existence of the Khalsa. They made light of all dangers and tortures that awaited them and welcomed death cheerfully singing the words of Guru Nanak: *Marn munsan surian haq hai jo hoe marn parwano*—it is the right and privilege of the brave to die, if they die in an approved cause. (*Wadhans I, Alahnian*) Fear of death or thoughts of failure of their ventures, however dreadful and arduous, never suggested themselves to these warriors, and, if ever they did

to anyone in moments of great physical pain, they were immediately driven out of their minds by the inspiring deeds of those who had gone before them.

Such heroes and martyrs are a rich heritage of which any people may feel rightly proud. They had dedicated their lives to a cause and they lived and died for it. To them the cause, the glory and greatness of the Khalsa, was dearer than their own lives which, they knew, had to go the way of millions and millions of people. These millions of people had died and had been forgotten. But heroes and martyrs have become immortal in their deaths and are very much alive in our prayer, and their memory is ever fresh and green in our hearts. We feel enthralled to recite or hear references to the heroes and martyrs who sacrificed their all and laid down their lives so that others might live in peace. Their mention in the prayer stirs the imagination of reciters and hearers, men and women, young and old, and inspires them with unflinching devotion to and faith in God and the Gurus.

The thoughts thus radiated by the Khalsa in their congregations in the mornings and evenings travelled far and wide, carrying the message of hope and strength to the Khalsa wherever they were, whether in the jungles of Kahnawan and the Shivaliks or in the waterless sandy regions of Bhatinda and Bikaner. At times, for days and weeks, they had no cooked food and had to live on parched gram pushed down their throats with handfuls of muddy water. Yet they lived in peace and happiness resigned to the will of the Lord. They had no physical comforts, it is true, but they had mental satisfaction and peace. They were suffering for a cause with smiling faces. This was, therefore, no suffering

for them. Thanks to the teachings of the great Gurus, the Sikh heroes could take a detached view of life. Though persecuted to the bitterest extreme, they hated not the tyrants but only the tyranny. They never waged war against Islam but only against the perpetrators of tyranny who then happened to be Muslims. And in this they received the active co-operation of the people (including thousands of Muslims) whose cause they had taken upon themselves to defend and support.

Inspired and encouraged by the sacrifices of the Sikhs of old in the cause of the Panth and people, thousands and thousands of Sikhs jumped into the field of action in the twenties of the present century for the defence of their holy places and religious and civic rights. And in the previous decade, the largest number of those who kissed the gallows in the early stages of India's struggle for freedom came from amongst those similarly inspired.

In the light of those who walked on the Guru's path for the welfare of their fellow-beings, we see light for our own guidance, if ever we are called upon to face the same circumstances as our forbears had to. And as long as we keep our gaze fixed on the lives and experiences and sufferings and successes of the great Gurus and martyrs, our fears and weaknesses disappear and our difficulties are removed and we keep to the right path, saved from stumbles and strayings. The secret of their success lay in the righteousness of their cause, their faith in God and their devotion to the Gurus.

#### DEVOUTNESS AND SERVICE

Now to come to the prayer proper. In it the Sikh

prays for and on behalf of the community and begs for God's grace and protection to be able to serve his fellow-beings. The gift of Sikhism, the life of discipline and discipleship, is in particular asked for. A Sikh is a disciple, a man disciplined and in discipline, and Sikhism is nothing if not a life of active discipline. A disciplined person alone obeys and follows the orders and instructions of the master. He alone has the strength and courage to stand undisturbed against all odds in life and make supreme sacrifice in a noble cause. The *Deg* (cooking pot) and the *Tegh* (the sword) are the special symbols of service, and *Kesh* (unshorn hair) are the visible symbols of the fraternity of the Khalsa. And the Sikh prays to the Lord for strength to maintain them.

#### A DIP IN THE TANK OF *Amritsar*

Prayer for an unhampered dip in the holy tank of Amritsar and for the preservation of their choirs, banners and mansions (*Jhande Bunge jugo jug atall*) has again an historical background.

The Sikhs' entry into the temple and tank of Amritsar was banned by the Mughals in the fourth and fifth decades of the eighteenth century and sentries were posted all round the city to watch for them. Rewards were offered for the heads of Sikhs, dead or alive. But these oppressions failed to demoralize them. Every individual Sikh, wherever he was, considered himself to be a standard-bearer of the Khalsa and a proclamation of the existence of his people. Singly or in groups, they shot out with vengeance whenever they found a chance. Some performed their pilgrimage in secret and disguise 'but in general, according to a contemporary Muslim author,' says John Malcolm in his *Sketch of the Sikhs* (London, 1812), 'Sikh horsemen were seen riding at full

gallop towards their favourite shrine of devotion. They were often slain in making this attempt, and sometimes taken prisoners, but they used, on such occasions, to seek, instead of avoiding, the crown of martyrdom, and the same authority states that an instance was never known of a Sikh taken, in his way to Amritsar, consenting to abjure his faith' (p. 88).

#### BANNERS AND MANSIONS

It was during the time of Ahmad Shah Durrani that banners (*jhande*) of the Khalsa were pulled down and the temple and its *bungas* (residential mansions) were blown up with gun-powder, and the sacred tank was desecrated with the blood and bones of men and cows and filled up with the debris of the demolished edifices. This happened twice, in 1757 and 1762, and was done to destroy their rallying centre at Amritsar and to crush their opposition to the establishment of the Afghan dominion in the Panjab.

But nothing would crush the spirit of independence of the Sikhs who, whenever they found a chance, rose and struck and ultimately succeeded in freeing their motherland from the galling yoke of the Mughal tyrants and the Afghan invaders. The Sikhs had stood out to help those whom the rulers had used and treated most harshly. In their early efforts, to begin with, they drew upon themselves the wrath of the ruling tyrants and afforded relief to their suffering countrymen. Relieved, they picked up courage, joined the ranks of the Khalsa and added to their strength for ultimate success.

#### 'UTTER *Wahiguru*'

In the course of the prayer, the participants are occasionally called upon to utter the name of God,

*Wahiguru* (the Wonderful Lord). This has both physical and psychological effect. While physically it helps recall us from our sloth, which at times spoils our prayer, and prevents us from drifting into neglect and inattention with the wandering of our thoughts, psychologically it helps and adds to our prayerfulness by lifting us to higher plane of praise and wonder (*vismad*) at the Lord's miracle in transforming weak sparrows into strong hawks and cowardly jackals into the bravest of lions in the person of the Khalsa. And the Khalsa, in their new life, exhibited indomitable courage to stand against the then greatest empire of the world and to rescue the Panjab from the clutches of the ferocious Afghans of the eighteenth century. By the occasional utterances of the name of God, the soul is moved to express its gratitude and devotion to Him and the mind is uplifted from things mundane to things spiritual.

This is in brief the explanation of some of the references in the Sikh prayer which sets before us the very heart of the Sikh character, the love of God, the love of their fellow-beings and the love of the entire world, as given in the last lines of the prayer—*Nanak Nam charhdi kala, Tere bhane sarbat da bhala*.

#### 'RECOGNIZE THE *Granth* AS GURU'

The Sikh prayer is usually followed by the *Agia bhayi Akal ki* and *Raj karega Khalsa* couplets, the last one of which is not unoften misunderstood and misconstrued. An explanation about them also will not, therefore, be out of place here.

The first couplet refers to the establishment of the Khalsa and to recognition by the Sikhs of the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the *Guru*. Great emphasis is rightly

laid on the second part of the couplet saying: "All Sikhs are commanded to recognize the *Granth* as the *Guru*. Recognize the *Granth* as the *Guru*; it is the visible body of the Masters." According to the Sikh belief, all the ten Gurus were one in spirit. The light of one blended with that of his successor till the lines of personal succession ended with Guru Gobind Singh who declared that after him the Masters' Word in the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* would be the spiritual guide of the Sikh people. This has given a continuity and permanency to the Sikh Guru for ever and ever. It is through word, spoken or written, that the teacher instructs or imparts knowledge to the disciple. In the words of Guru Ram Das, "The Word is the Master, the Master is the Word; all immortalizing nectars are in the Word." (*Nat*, IV. *Ashtpadi*, iv-5) The physical body of the Master is not permanent. It is mortal. It perishes with time. His word alone is permanent and everlasting, Guru Gobind Singh, therefore, vested all spiritual authority in the holy Book, the repository of the collected wisdom and philosophy of the Gurus embodied in their Word. 'Those who wish to meet the Lord, may see Him therein (in the *Granth*)', says the couplet.

Now about the *Raj karega Khalsa* couplet. It says:

*Raj karega Khalsa, yaqi rahe na koe,  
Khwar hoe sabh milenge, bache sarn jo hoe,*

which means:

The Khalsa shall rule, no hostile refractory shall exist.  
Frustrated, they shall all submit, and those who come  
in for shelter shall be saved.

The words of the couplet are clear. There is no ambiguity about what they mean. Just as all other historical allusions in the prayer refer to past history, so

does this couplet refer to the days of the later Mughals, Bahadur Shah to Shah Alam II. It was evidently composed and first sung by the Khalsa during the days of Banda Singh Bahadur (1710-16) who was the first Sikh political leader to declare the independence of his people in the Panjab. Bahadur Shah, the son and successor of Aurangzeb, not only declared the Sikhs to be rebels, but also issued edicts to all his *faujdars* on December 10, 1710, 'to kill the disciples of Nanak (the Sikhs) wherever they were found—*Nanak-prastan ra har ja kih ba-yaband ba-qatl rasanand*. According to this order, they were to be wiped out of existence wholesale. No trace of them was to be left in their own land, their birth-place, the land of their ancestors. This was a tyranny of the worst type. And no self-respecting son of the land, much less the Sikhs, could stand it, however great and numerous were the odds pitched against him. The *Singhs* of Guru Gobind Singh were not frightened by these edicts. They had been cast in a different mould and had received the baptism of the double-edged sword (*Khande di Pahul*). They knew the land was theirs and it was their right to live there. They had only to assert this right. Tyranny has no long life, and tyrants perish under the weight of their own sins. It was only the question of time and the Sikhs would come to their own. And they proved to be right. The *raj* of the Khalsa was established and they successfully broke the first sod in the ultimate conquest and independence of the Panjab. It was then when they were persecuted and done to death for aspiring to *raj karo* in their homeland that, to keep up their spirits, with their minds strengthened by faith and emboldened by constant prayer, the Sikhs sang this couplet: *Raj karega Khalsa, yaqi rahe na koe*. It is true that they had to suffer very heavily and had to make innumerable sacrifices for over half a



century. But they knew their cause was right and success would ultimately be theirs. Throughout this period of waiting they sang this couplet praying for the fulfillment of their aspirations. And when they had become independent, they sang it in commemoration of their successes and as a reminder of their promise of protection to those who sought it.

With the coming in of the British to the Panjab, the Sikh aspirations for *Swaraj* were once again revived, and with it the justification of the recitation of this couplet. The dread of the Feringees suggested to some of the loyalists, afraid of being listed as rebels, a compromise in giving to the word *Khalsa* an alternate meaning as 'pure'. They wished to convey to the new rulers that the Khalsa had then no political ambitions or aspirations to rule in the country and that the couplet appended to their prayer only meant that the 'pure' shall rule.

It is not always correct, particularly in the context of this couplet, to translate the word *Khalsa* as 'pure'. The word for pure is *khalis*. Derived, of course, from *khalis*, *Khalsa* is, in fact, a technical term which in the days of Muhammadan administration meant inalienable lands or revenues directly looked after or administered by the government or the king. Guru Gobind Singh applied this word specifically to those of the Sikhs whom he had baptized as *Singhs*, the lions. To them he gave the name of *Khalsa*, 'his own'. "The term," wrote H. H. Wilson in 1855 in his *Glossary of Judicial and Revenue Terms*, "has been of late familiar as the collective denomination of the Sikh government and people." The recitation of the *Raj karega Khalsa* has provided to the Sikh people a source of inspiration and strength in their social and political undertakings in the past and shall

always act as an incentive for them in the service of the country. With the blessings of God, India is now a free country. The old aspirations of the Sikhs have come to be fulfilled in the establishment of the People's *Raj*, the sovereign democratic Republic of India, with equality of status and of opportunity to all sections of the people of the country.

In the present democratic set-up in India, the people of the country have to be educated in democratic principles of government to be able to organize themselves in groups and parties to take upon their shoulders, or to share with others, the burden of the governance of the country as and when they are called upon to do so. Like the majority group of the Hindus and the largest minority group of the Muslims, the Sikhs are as well a group of people in the country and have a right to aspire to political power as a group by itself or in collaboration with others. They have for this purpose to educate the constituents of their group. The Sikh group can best be educated for the service of the country on the lines laid down and the traditions set up by the great Gurus and heroes and martyrs whose glories are recounted in their prayer. The *Raj karega Khalsa* is a part of their past aspirations and traditions to serve their countrymen, and its recitation reminds them of their duties and responsibilities not only towards their own people but also towards the entire family of Mother India whose own flesh and blood they are.

### ARDAS

#### The Prayer

Victory to the One Wonderful God.  
May the Almighty Lord protect us.

*Ode to the Lord by the Tenth Guru Gobind Singh*

Having first of all invoked the Almighty God, think of  
Guru Nanak;

Then think of Guru Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das; may  
they help us!

Remember Guru Arjun, Hargobind and the great Hari  
Rai;

Think of the great Har Krishan whose sight dispels all  
pains and sorrows;

Remember Tegh Bahadur, and the nine treasures shall  
come hastening to our homes.

May they help us in all places!

May the great Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master,  
protect us everywhere

(Then) concentrate on the sight and study of the holy *Guru Granth Sahib*, the spirit (embodied in the visible Word) of the Ten Masters and utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful, is the Lord)!

Think of the glorious deeds of the Five Beloved Ones, the four sons of the Master, the forty Saved Ones and of other steadfast, meditating and devout souls who worshipped the Name, shared their food in companionship with others, ran a free kitchen (for the needy) and plied the sword (in defence of the helpless) and overlooked the faults of others – think of those dear and true ones, O Khalsa, and utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

Think of those Singhs, men and women, who sacrificed their lives at the altar of *dharma* (duty enjoined by Sikhism), who were cut up joint by joint, suffered their scalps to be scraped off, were broken on the wheel, were sawn or flayed alive, and who abjured not their faith and perjured not their soul, but lived their devotion to Sikhism with their hair intact to the last breath of their lives – think of those great martyrs, O Khalsa, and utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

Think of those who underwent innumerable sufferings to maintain and preserve the sanctity of their holy places, and, with smiling faces, suffered themselves to be ruthlessly beaten or imprisoned or to be shot, cut up or burnt alive and, without a sigh of complaint, resigned themselves to the Will of God — think of those noble souls, O Khalsa, and utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

Think of the four *Takhts* — the seats of holy authority — and of the various *gurdwaras* and utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

We pray, in the first instance, for and on behalf of the *Sarbat Khalsa*, the entire community. May they bring to their mind the holy Name of the Wonderful Lord! And through His grace, may they be blessed with peace and happiness! May His protection be extended to the Khalsa wherever they are! May success attend their cooking-pots (for the service of the needy) and victory come to their swords (in the defence of righteousness)! May God look to and preserve His form and image in the Khalsa! May the *Panth* be ever victorious! May the great Sword be ever helpful, and may the Khalsa always triumph and prosper! Utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

Grant to the Sikhs, O Lord, the gift of a life of discipline and discipleship — Sikhism — the gift of unshorn hair, the gift of good conduct, the gift of discrimination, faith and confidence and, above all, the gift of Thy Name and of unhampered dip in the holy tank of Amritsar.

May the choirs, banners and mansions of the Sikhs abide for ever and ever! And may righteousness triumph! Utter *Wahiguru, Wahiguru, Wahiguru* (Wonderful, wonderful, wonderful is the Lord)!

May the Khalsa be humble in mind and exalted in understanding! May the Timeless Lord Himself guide their intellect and protect their honour!

O True King, this forgetful creature, neglectful of Thy Name, is so engrossed in things mundane that he has forgotten Thee.

Save us, O Father, from lust, wrath, greed, worldly attachments and arrogance and grant to us the love of Thy feet. May we be devoted to the service of humanity!

O True Father, through Thy merciful Will, we have spent the night in peace and happiness. May Thy grace extend to our activities during the day! Bring us in the company of only those who may help us remember Thy Name.

[Here the leader of the prayer mentions in suitable terms the specific occasion on which the prayer is offered or the purpose for which the blessings of God are sought.]

O Merciful Almighty Lord, the Honour of the unhonoured, the Strength of the weak and the Shelter of the shelterless, standing in Thy presence we offer our prayer. Forgive our sins and errors and fulfil the wishes of all.

Through Nanak, may Thy Name, Thy Glory, be for ever on the increase!

And, in Thy Will, may peace and prosperity come to one and all in the world.

*Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa*

*Wahiguru ji ki fateh*

The Khalsa belongs to God,

To God belongs the victory.

[Here ends the prayer proper. It is generally followed by two couplets which, rendered into English, read as under.]

Command came from the Timeless God,

And then was established the (Khalsa)

*Panth.*

All Sikhs are commanded to recognize the

*Granth* as the *Guru.*

Recognize the *Granth* as the *Guru*;

it is the visible body of the Masters.  
Those who wish to meet the Lord,  
may seek Him therein (in the *Granth*).

[The prayer concludes with the following historical couplet of the early eighteenth century which had then become the determined political creed of the Khalsa. It is the symbol of the past triumphs of the Khalsa.]

The Khalsa shall rule, no hostile refractories  
shall exist.  
Frustrated, they shall all submit, and those who  
come in for shelter shall be saved.

*Sat Sri Akal*

True is the Eternal Lord



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