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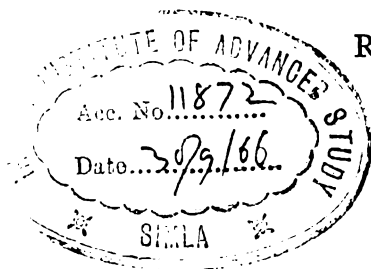


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*To My Mother,
NANAKI DEVI,
who lived and died in the Guru's Presence.*

FOREWORD

THIS COUNTRY has produced remarkable personalities in every walk of life since the earliest times. Our history is crowded with names of outstanding persons who have made notable contributions whether in art, literature, politics, science or other fields. Some are household words. There are many whose names are familiar but about whose life and work little is known to the public. There are others about whom people know little but who have made remarkable achievements.

The history of a country is, to a great extent, the history of its great men and women. They have moulded it and built it up. It is essential for the ordinary citizen to know something about these personalities in order to understand how our country has evolved.

In many countries, a dictionary of national biography has been published for such purpose. It is unfortunate that we have no such comprehensive work available. The intention of this Series is not to present such a scholarly and comprehensive book but rather to present to the ordinary reader in a simple narrative form, the life of eminent men and women of the country from the earliest days. It is intended to make it a popular encyclopaedia of national biography in separate volumes.

We are grateful to Prof. K. Swaminathan and Shri Mahendra V. Desai for accepting the Editorship of this Series.

It is a happy coincidence that the first book in the Series is going to be the Biography of Guru Govind Singh.

We are celebrating the 300th Birth Anniversary of the Tenth Guru of Sikhism and we hope that this Biography will help the ordinary reader in knowing something of the life of Guru Govind Singh. Dr. Gopal Singh, who is a well-known author and scholar of Sikh Scriptures and history, has written this book for us.

NEW DELHI,
July 28, 1966.

B. V. KESKAR

CHAPTER I

*“Lo, a man is born amongst men
—chivatrous, unfathomable, singular and unique.”*

—BHAI GURDAS SINGH

THIS IS THE STORY of a man who was born a mortal, but who, through sheer force of character and grace of God became immortal; who was born a prince, but chose to remain his whole life a mendicant; a saint, whom circumstances turned into a warrior, but who yet remained ever a saint at heart; who battled and won, but did not acquire an inch of territory. He gave to the Indian people the concept of nationhood—a concept which embodied dedication in every detail of life and purpose to the supreme ideal that is God, and yet did not require shirking earthly obligations. He became a Guru who was sought to be worshipped as God, but who denounced this cult of the personality in such severe terms as no one before or after him has done: “He who calleth me God, will forsure burn in the fires of hell. I’m but a slave of the Supreme Being come to witness His play.” Son of a martyr, great-grandson of a martyr, he laid at the altar of the Supreme not only himself, but all his sons, his mother, and whosoever called him his very own. He abolished succession by heredity, and restored to the people, for the first time in man’s history, till then, what he thought, belonged only to them: Sovereignty, both spiritual and temporal. And, he made wisdom of the spirit the guiding angel of everyman’s life. He spiritualised secular activity, and to earthly hope he gave religious sanctions. He gave a new meaning to life by popularising death for a cause. He abolished privilege by caste, birth, station,

creed, and raised the lowest equal in all ways to the highest. He restored to man his manhood, to woman her womanhood. He perfected a new religious discipline and was obliged to fight the others, yet he disparaged not differing creeds, nor divided man from man. "The temple and the mosque are the same," he said. After him, life was not the same again in our sub-continent. "Freedom, freedom, freedom" resounded from every heart—freedom from foreign tyranny as much as from what drags man down: superstition and cant and ego and self-pity and covetousness, and worst of all, the joyless round of a living death.

Yes, he did it in a single span of life, which was all-too-brief, a mere two score years and two. Not that he was not preceded by two centuries of training, the house of Nanak had given to millions of men and women, in utter dedication to God Who is one and the only one; in catholicity of outlook and discipline of the spirit; in inner cleanliness; in humility and service; in surrender and self-sacrifice; even in the use of arms in defending one's way of life. But, Guru Govind, the tenth in succession to Nanak, released such self-generating forces of history which could not but result in changing and transforming it in its totality. It has been said that all religious movements are indeed political. Yes, verily, they are so, for once you release the spirit of man, there's no freedom it will not claim, secular or otherwise. The soul had been set free by Nanak. But, it needed guidance still for two hundred years. Guru Govind stamped it with the seal of adulthood, and gave man his own charge.

Govind Rai (so he was known at birth), the only son of the ninth Sikh Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was born at Patna, in the year of grace 1666, where his father had stationed his family for a time, on his way to Assam on a

tour of "God's Mission." It is said, a pious Muslim faqir, Sayyad Bhikhan Shah, saw a strange light in the heavens on that day in far off Kohram¹, and bowed to it, saying, "God hath sent a new light on this earth." And, he followed the direction of that light to see the face of this holy one. After long and arduous travel, he came to Patna. And, in order to put the young prince to the test, he took with him two jars, one full of milk, the other full of water. Covering both, he placed them before the new-born, saying to himself: if he toucheth the milkpot, I would consider him a partisan of the Muslims; if the other one, of the Hindus. But, the babe laid his hands on both. "Blessed, blessed art thou, O Master of both," the Sayyad exclaimed, "this country needed thee now more than anyone else."

From his early childhood, Govind would sit in long and deep meditation like his father. He would also take full interest in learning Sanskrit, Hindi, Panjabi, Persian and Arabic. What interested him even more was archery and shooting. It is said he would aim his arrows at the earthen pots of young women who would come to fetch water from the well nearby. When he was reported to his mother, he asked why these women didn't bring vessels of copper. When they did so, he aimed his arrows at them with such deadly effect that soon the well was deserted. The mother was much distressed at this, and had to restrain her son after much effort.

Govind was fond of physical exercise and encouraged his companions to wrestle with him or with one another. Meantime, Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Panjab, leaving his family at Patna so that the education of his child was

¹ Macauliffe. Sikh historians, however, suggest the Sayyad having hailed from the village of Fasda Miran in the present district of Karnal in Panjab.

not interrupted. But, soon, the Guru had to call them to Anandpur (or the Abode of Bliss), a place which he had purchased and built on the site of the village Makhoval in the district of Hoshiarpur in Panjab. Surrounded by the Shivalik hills, it was considered a very calm and detached place for devotions, being far removed from the habitations of his close relations who had given him many anxious moments in life. But, now a far greater challenge had posed itself to him.

A deputation had come from Kashmir, representing the Brahmins of that enchanting valley, to complain to the Guru that its Moghal governor was tyrannising them very much and had posed before them two alternatives: Islam or death. They beseeched him: "Thou art our Lord and Master in this Kali age. We have no one else to go to for guidance and spiritual succour. It is now upto thee to save our race, else it would become impossible to live with honour and to preserve our age-old faith."

The Guru, after a great thought, said to them: "Go ye, and tell the Governor that if our Guru and guide, Tegh Bahadur, can be persuaded to take the lead, all others would follow him. If not, then we too will stick to our ancient faith." Encouraged greatly by this challenging reply, the Brahmins returned to the valley.

Govind was only nine years of age at this time. When the Guru broached the subject with his wife, Gujjri, she was much distressed as she felt such a challenge from the Guru to the Moghal authorities could not but mean his persecution or death. And so it came to pass. When the Guru's reply was reported to Aurangzeb,¹ through the

¹ By all accounts, Aurangzeb, a Sunni Muslim, though personally a pious and abstemious man, was fanatical, insensible and cruel in the

Governor of Kashmir, he was beside himself with rage and ordered that the Guru be put under arrest and brought to his presence. The Guru had to leave Anandpur soon thereafter. When his wife asked, "Whom are you going to leave us with?" the Guru replied, "With God and Govind." He appointed Govind Rai his successor and asked his followers to obey his injunctions.

Soon, Guru Tegh Bahadur was arrested and after being kept in prison under conditions of extreme hardship, he

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extreme. Music was banished from the realm by him and the allowances of poets discontinued. Many of the *firmans* of the emperor called upon his viceroys to demolish some of the Hindu temples of great eminence, including those at Somnath, Banaras and Mathura. According to Khafi Khan, Aurangzeb ordered the Sikh temples also to be destroyed and the Guru's agents (*masands*) for collecting the tithes and presents of the faithful to be expelled from the cities. He forbade Hindu fairs, as also the employment of Hindus as officers of the state. About 1690, the emperor issued an edict prohibiting the Hindus from being carried in palanquins or riding Arab horses. The Hindus were to pay double duty on goods (Mohd. Latif, *History of the Panjab*, Calcutta, 1890, p. 176). Perhaps to cover up his guilt against his father imprisoned for seven years till he breathed his last, and his brothers, he took on the pose of orthodox piety and reversing the liberal policies of his great-grandfather, Akbar, he not only imposed a sur-tax (*Jezia*) on all Hindus, but also persecuted severely the Shia Muslims and the Sufis. Due to his extreme ill-treatment of his father and putting to death his three brothers, he was much hated even by the sheriff of Mecca. The Shah of Iran (who was a Shia) was also greatly perturbed for his crowning himself as "the conqueror of the world," (Alamgir), and threatened even to march upon Delhi. He even ordered the beard of Aurangzeb's envoy at his court to be burnt by a page. Later, Aurangzeb bought over, with gold, all the custodians and holymen of the holy city of Mecca. Several Hindu princes, who were too small or too stubborn, however, he tolerated on payment of a tribute and some even served in his army, but the large masses hated him bitterly, while quite a sizable number became converts to Islam to escape persecution. (See *Aurangzeb* by Sir J. N. Sarkar.)

was executed in the Chandni Chowk of Delhi on his refusal to embrace Islam. He died with utter composure, singing the praises of God to his last moment. His saying was: "Why grieve for that which is inevitable? Everyone who's born must also pass from here."

When the Guru died, his son paid him a high tribute, saying, "He saved with his blood the frontal-mark and the sacred thread of the Hindus. O, what a wonderous act in this Kali age? Yea, he gave his life, but not his honour."

Guru Tegh Bahadur's body lay unclaimed for sometime in the overflowing city of Delhi for fear of reprisals by the emperor. But, two men of humbler castes took away, one the head and the other the trunk. One, a water carrier of Delhi, brought the sacred body of this illustrious martyr to his hamlet in the Raisina village, near Delhi, and cremated it with due honours, setting fire to his straw-hut to avoid discovery. The other, a Ranghretta (calico-printer), took away the head of his martyred Master to Guru Govind in Anandpur, where it was consigned to the flames with due ceremony.

It's said when a verse of his father saying, "My prowess is gone. I'm shackled by bonds. What hope is there for the Release of me?" was read to Guru Govind, he is said to have answered with another couplet which the Scriptures ascribe to his father but the tradition to him:

"My power hath come back to me; my bonds are loosed;

There's every hope for me.

Nanak sayeth: everything is in God's hands,

So help me Lord, my God."

This shift in emphasis was to be, as we shall see, the hall-mark of Guru Govind's life.¹

¹ In his autobiographical poem, "*Vichitra Natak*", Guru Govind Singh describes his clan of *Sodhis* to have descended from Lau, the son of Rama, one of whose descendants of peerless strength, *Kalket*, married the daughter of the king of Sanaudh. His son was known as Sodhi Rai from whom sprang the clan of Sodhis. As for the Bedis (Guru Nanak's clan), Guru Govind derives their lineage from another son of Rama, Kush, whose descendants were driven out of the Panjab by the Sodhis. Fleeing to Banaras, they became Veda-learned, and were hence called Vedis (Bedis). The Guru says that in his earlier birth, he was a great yogi, performing *tapas* in the Himalayas at a place called *Hem Kunda* "where one is face to face with the seven peaks." "I had no desire to come to the earth, being merged in God. But my Lord the God said, 'I've established thee as my son. Go, and make my Path (Panth) manifest to the world. Thou spread my religion here as well as there, and destroy whoever doeth evil.'"

Every description of Guru Govind Singh's person delineates him as a very handsome, sharp-featured, tall and wiry man, immaculately and richly dressed as a Prince. Decked with a crest upon his lofty, cone-shaped turban with a plume suspended behind from the top, he was ever armed with various weapons, including a bow and a quiver of arrows, a sword, a discus, a shield and a spear. His choice steed was of bluish-grey colour and on his left hand always perched a white hawk when he sat on the throne or went out hunting.

CHAPTER II

“For this purpose was I born :
To spread religion and to destroy
the evil-doers.”

—GURU GOVIND SINGH
in *Vichitra Natak*

AFTER THE MARTYRDOM OF HIS FATHER, Guru Govind resolved, finally, to revolutionise the Sikh faith. There was no choice but to resort to an armed struggle with Moghal imperialism. It had, in fact, been attempted already by his grandfather, Guru Hargovind, the sixth Guru, after the fifth Guru Arjun's martyrdom, but, then, Sikhism again relapsed into quietism. The intrigues for succession to the Throne of Nanak on the part of the Gurus' kith and kin who even attempted, sometimes successfully, to arraign the Delhi emperor on their side, left little time or opportunity for a determined stand against the foreign rule. The emperors also backed these relations of the Gurus and found this intervention in the Gurus' affairs through their own relations a more profitable and face-saving device in weakening their influence than provoking them to an open clash of arms. At the time of Guru Govind, the *masands*, or the Guru's deputies appointed to collect offerings from the devout on behalf of the Guru, became so powerful that they thought they could make and unmake the Gurus. They kept a large part of the offerings to themselves, extorted money from the devoted followers of the Guru's house through cruel means and even got themselves worshipped. It is said, Guru Ram Das decided to keep the succession confined to his own house, to repay a debt of gratitude to

his daughter for her selfless service to him. Ever since, the inheritors of the throne found little peace from their near relatives. Property and prestige, became overpowering temptations for contenders to the Throne, and not spiritual grandeur or the spirit of dedication, humility and sacrifice, which those who were chosen for the honour possessed in abundant measure.

That a fatherless child of nine, surrounded by the hostility of a powerful empire as much as the viciousness of relations and the covetousness and cruelty of the deputies who were expected to bring spiritual solace to the world and promote their secular welfare, should think of making a clean sweep of these formidable odds is a miracle of the human soul. And, what is more, the Guru realised in a single life-time, whose span was all-too-brief, what he had dreamed to do. The wish became the father of the thought and the thought was actualised into a living reality.

While the Guru had such a formidable array of hostile forces against him, he also had many positive assets. His followers spread far and wide throughout India, Ceylon, Afghanistan, Tibet, and Central Asia to wheresoever the holy name of Nanak had travelled. All his followers were extremely devoted to his house, made their offerings regularly, visited him atleast once every year, and no sacrifice was too great for them in the Guru's cause. Mostly small peasants, artisans and traders (though occasionally these also included sovereigns of states and rich merchants), their one aim in life was to attain salvation through the Guru's door by seeking his benediction. It is them that the Guru wanted to organise into a more cohesive, more determined, more self-sacrificing group, cutting across all intermediaries like the *masands*, and infusing in them the spirit of nationhood as much as spiritual hope.

He, therefore, sent word to all his followers to make offerings to the Guru's house direct, at the time of their visits to the Guru. They were asked also to offer, if they could, arms and horses instead of cash and grain. He accepted professionals also into his small army that he started to raise. He made it obligatory for those that lived with him to exercise their muscles along with their souls. He gave orders for the construction of a huge drum which was to be beat, morning and evening, as a symbol of royalty. Hunting expeditions became an everyday feature of the Guru's life who also got himself trained in all the weapons of war. But, as has been said earlier, he did not for one moment neglect either his followers' spiritual education and discipline or his own. Himself he got extremely well-versed in Sanskrit, Persian, Arabic and Panjabi, and read through all the ancient and current lore in these languages. He inspired his followers also to do likewise. Morning and evening, religious services would be held to keep the minds attuned to the Supreme Being so that whatever secular activity was undertaken must be yoked and dedicated to His purpose.

Some of the chiefs of the Shivalik hill states, particularly Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur (Bilaspur), got scared at the activities of Guru Govind. Sensing this, the *masands* approached the Guru's mother entreating her to ask the Guru to desist from his warlike activities, the beating of the drum, the recruitment of professionals in his army etc. and to devote his entire time to the spiritual education of his followers.¹ The *masands* were also apprehensive that

¹ Sikh historians refer in this connection to the visit to the Guru of a few *Sanyasis* (recluses) who made disparaging remarks about his claim to being a God's man and yet rolling in splendour. The Guru said, "My Sikhs shall not deny themselves the joys of the earth, though they will remain detached in their inner core."

these activities of the Guru would also one day be a menace to their own existence. Hence, their advice was not wholly selfless.

But, the Guru ignored the pleadings of his mother. Meantime, a Sikh from Assam, Ratan Rai, brought some very precious gifts for the Guru, including an elephant trained to do many kinds of tricks; a weapon which could serve the purpose of five kinds of different arms, five horses with golden trappings, a throne-shaped device from which puppets would emerge to play chess, and several costly jewels and dresses. The Sikh chroniclers record this Ratan Rai to have been born to the home of the raja of Assam, Raja Ram, who had become a great devotee of Guru Tegh Bahadur during his visit to Assam. It is said he had asked the Guru to bless him with the boon of a son which wish of his was granted. After the demise of his father, the young prince came to pay homage to the Guru and brought these valuable presents as a token of esteem in which his family held the Guru's house.

Although the growing influence and power of the Guru gave the Raja of Kahlur much cause for alarm, his courtiers advised him to be on good terms with him. The raja, therefore, went to call on the Guru. But when he saw the splendour of his court, the dedication of his large following and his increasing military strength, he was burnt with jealousy. Reaching home, he thought of a plan to trick the Guru into parting with some of his precious possessions or, failing this, to go to war with him to curb his rising influence. He, therefore, sent word to the Guru through an emissary to lend him the presents he had received from Assam as his son was being engaged to the daughter of Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar (in Garhwal), and he wanted to make a display of his possessions. The Guru, however, refused to oblige him, knowing the treacherous

state of his mind. The raja repeated the request through another state official who was also to threaten the Guru in case of refusal. But, the Guru dismissed him also with contempt. The *masands* tried to put fear of a war with the rajas in the mind of the Guru through his mother. But, they too failed in their attempt.

The other hill chiefs tried to accentuate these differences by pretending loyalty on either side and encouraging either party to settle with the other through a clash of arms. Inflamed, the raja made a final bid to hook the Guru's possessions and sent word through a brother prince that his refusal would mean a challenge to his sovereign authority with its attendant consequences. The Guru replied to him in the same tone, and started preparations for a showdown with him.

In these days, an invitation came to the Guru from the Raja of Nahan to pay him a visit and hunt game in the Doon valley. It is said, the raja invited the Guru as he was inimical to Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar and wanted the Guru's assistance should he be attacked. The Guru accepted the invitation and set out with his family and five hundred armed men, mostly *Udasis*. For the defence of Anandpur, he left a sizable garrison behind. The meeting was very fruitful. The Guru was very pleased with the natural scenery and set up his camp on the banks of the Yamuna, near Paonta. The raja was so much impressed by his bearing and valour, the discipline and dedication of his Sikhs, and their unswerving faith in God that he requested the Guru to stay there for a longer period. He promised to assist in the construction of a fort for housing the Guru and his men. The Guru was persuaded by his followers to agree to the proposal, their idea being to get rid of the hostile atmosphere around Anandpur.

Meanwhile, Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar heard of the Guru's repute and paid him a visit. As has been said earlier, he and the raja of Nahan were not on good terms. The Guru mediated between the two and brought them close to each other. The Guru hunted big game in the surrounding forest, and once killed a tiger with a sword and shield. This greatly impressed both the rajas. It was here that Sayyad Budhu Shah of nearby Sadhaura, a man reputed for his saintly disposition and of whom we shall hear more later on, came to call on the Guru and also sent five hundred Pathans who had been discharged from the Moghal army to serve under Guru Govind Singh.

It was here, at Paonta, that the Guru wrote much of his chivalrous and devotional verse, which was later collected in a single volume called *Dasam Granth* (the Book of the Tenth King) or whatever of it was available after his death.¹ He employed 52 poets also to render

¹ The *Dasam Granth*, like the *Adi Granth*, also consists of 1430 pages. According to all available evidence, it was compiled by Bhai Mani Singh, the devout and learned Sikh custodian of the Golden Temple (who later became a martyr) 26 years after the death of Guru Govind Singh, at Damdama. But, some historians assert that it was not the *Adi Granth*, but his own Book that the Guru dictated to Bhai Mani Singh. However, much of its secular portions are subjects of great controversy even amongst the Sikhs who ascribe their authorship not to the Guru, but to some of his 52 poets who lived at his court.

The contents of this Granth, which is mostly in Braj Bhasha, are: (1) *Jap*, or the meditations (2) *Akal Ustati*, or the praises of God and the denunciation of ritual, superstition and cant (3) *Chandi Charitra* I and II, or the life of Chandi, the goddess of war (4) *Var* or ballad of Durga, the exploits of the goddess of war, (in Panjabi) (5) *Gyan Prabodh*, or the sayings of Wisdom (6) *Chaubis Avtar*, or the life-stories of the incarnations of God, according to the Hindus, and *Brahmavatar* and *Rudravtar* (7) *Shabd Hazare* or devotional hymns (8) Thirty-three *swayyas*, or the praises of the one immortal, unknowable God of wonder and grace (9) *Khalsa Mahima*, or words in praise of the Khalsa
(Contd.)

into Hindi the classical pauranic tales of chivalry, notably of Chandi, the goddess of war who destroyed the demons. His *Vichitra Natak*, sort of autobiography, gives many interesting and inspiring details of his life here, and a little later at Anandpur. In *Riti Kavya*, or traditional poetry, the Guru's poetry is unexcelled in sweep of imagination, choice of word and phrase, and mastery over metre. There is no metre known to Indian prosody that has not been employed by this great Master, nor a mood that he has not captured. Such is the power he communicates that it is sheer excitement even to utter or listen to it. His war-poetry especially occupies a unique place in Indian letters.

One of these days he heard that Ram Rai, son of Guru Hari Rai, and a cousin of Guru Govind (who had fallen out with his father on misinterpreting a verse of Guru Nanak to the emperor Aurangzeb in order to seek his favour and had set up a *gaddi* of his own at Dehra Doon) had been cremated by his deputies, the *masands*, while he was in a trance, and not yet dead. The *masands* wanted to usurp his huge property themselves and claim succession to him. This tragedy was reported to the Guru at Paonta and his assistance was sought by Panjab Kaur, the widow of Ram Rai, to curb the *masands*. The Guru immediately set out for Dehra Doon. When he heard of the lascivious life of the *masands*, and their other crimes, he gave them extreme punishment. Some he is said to have consigned to the flames alive; some escaped; those that had stood loyal to Panjab Kaur he rewarded.

(Contd.)

(10) *Shashtra Nam-Mala*, verses in praise of many arms (11) *Charitro-pakhyan* or 404 tales of wiles of women (12) *Zafar nama* (in Persian), or the letter of victory, addressed to Aurangzeb (13) *Hikayats* or legends and tales.

Now, approached the marriage of Bhim Chand's son with the daughter of Raja Fatch Shah. The latter invited the Guru also to his house to participate in the celebrations. But the Guru sent his emissary, with precious presents, accompanied by five hundred horse. He was received with utmost consideration at Srinagar. When the groom's party arrived near Paonta, they found the Guru's camp right in their way. Raja Bhim Chand sensed danger, and so he sent an envoy to the Guru to allow him safe passage. The Guru said he had no grudge against the bridegroom who could pass safely through, along with some attendants, but the rest of the party, including Raja Bhim Chand, should take another available route, so that men were not provoked on either side. The raja acquiesced in this arrangement, but was greatly stung and pledged to take revenge once the marriage was over. When the groom's party reached Srinagar, they objected strongly to any presents of Guru Govind being accepted by the bride's house. Fatch Shah was also told that unless he joined hands with his brother princes to fight the Guru, the marriage of Bhim Chand's son to his daughter would be cancelled. The Guru's party had, therefore, to leave in disgust. On way, Bhim Chand's forces tried to intercept and dispossess them. But, the Guru's troops soon put the enemy to rout with their accurate and devastating gunfire. They reached Paonta safe, but soon received news that the hill chiefs were preparing for a major attack on the Guru on way back home. When the Guru heard of this, he marched his troops six miles ahead, towards a place called Bhangani, to wait for the combination of the hill chiefs come to battle with him. When the Sikh troops got orders for the march, they were exceedingly excited over the news. But the Pathans thinking that the Guru's main dependence at this time

was upon them, decided to desert to the enemy who would reward them with much cash at this critical moment. The Guru tried to dissuade them against this treachery, but they were adamant. The Guru sent word to Budhu Shah also to tell him how his men had misbehaved. The Muslim divine was so shocked that he presented himself for service along with his four sons and a brother and seven hundred followers.

The Guru also gave command to the Udasis, five hundred of whom were accompanying him, to prepare for the battle. But, except for their leader, Kirpal, everyone fled to safety. The battle which was soon upon the Guru raged with utter fury. Budhu Shah's men and relations fought with as much valour as the Sikhs. Mahant Kirpal, the Udasi, fought with his club and made mincemeat of the enemy, including a deserter Pathan general, Hayat Khan. The Guru even employed a cannon built by one of his Sikhs from Banaras, Ram Singh by name. A confectioner, named Lal Chand, who had never learnt how to handle arms, fought with such bravery that even the trained Pathans were taken by surprise. He killed several of them. One of the bravest of rajas, Hari Chand, fell in the battlefield. The Guru lost his cousin, Sango Shah. Pir Budhu Shah lost two of his sons. But the losses of the enemy were so colossal that they fled in disarray. The Guru blessed Pir Budhu Shah with a *Kirpan* (small, Sikh dagger), and a comb, with some broken hair of his, and a turban in remembrance of his services to the Guru's cause. These are still preserved as sacred relics in the erstwhile princely state of Nabha.¹

¹In *Vichitra Natak*, the Guru gives a very animated description, in verse, of the battles of Bhangani, and the one that followed at Nadaun, and the expeditions against him of Dilawar Khan, Hussain Khan, and the emperor's son (later Bahadur Shah), who later sent Mirza Beg on his behalf.

"I am exalted, because yeo people have exalted me."

—GURU GOVIND SINGH

AFTER A STAY probably of three years at Paonta (1684-87 A.D.), the Guru now returned to Anandpur. On way, even the Raja of Nahan did not come out to greet him, as he was expected to, fearing the wrath of his brother princes who had been trounced and mauled badly by the Guru's forces. But, he was very warmly received by the inhabitants of Anandpur. The Guru built a fort here, with strong and lofty battlements around it.

The Sikhs came to visit the Guru from far and near. His fame as a warrior-saint attracted to him many a chivalrous youth, besides poets, musicians and men of religious disposition. The hunting expeditions were resumed as usual, and occasionally the Sikhs who strayed from his train would also exhibit some more exuberance than was expected of them. They were flushed with recent victory and howsoever the Guru might instruct to restrain them, they did, on occasions, it seems, transgress limits of worthy behaviour, especially when they could not get fodder for their horses even on payment, nor goats for meat. This would distress the Guru greatly.

Raja Bhim Chand was not only provoked by his defeat and jealousy over the Guru's growing power, but he was not unnaturally apprehensive of maintaining his own position as ruler amongst his subjects. He, thereupon, took counsel with his advisers as to the best course he might adopt to curb the influence of the Guru's house. He was, however, advised to seek a rapprochement with the Guru,

both in the interest of peace and to put up a joint front against the Moghals if need arose.

An envoy was sent accordingly to sound the Guru, who responded generously, as was expected from his station and spiritual temper. He said, "I have no quarrel with anyone. I want only to be left in peace to propagate the cause of *Dharma*. My father gave his head to protect the religion of the Hindus. But here am I, trying to infuse a new spirit in this dying race, being refused co-operation by the Hindu chiefs, and even resisted and attacked without cause. My followers cannot even buy for cash what they need from the surrounding villages. Such is the hostility generated by the raja against us. We have not aggressed against him even once. But, certainly, we mean now to defend our honour."

The envoy however beseeched the Guru to forget the past, and to consider the raja's territories as his own. The Guru replied, "In my house whosoever comes with friendly intent and in humility is received with open arms. We do not harbour grudge against those who seek to be forgiven." Raja Bhim Chand was much pleased on hearing this report and prepared himself to call on the Guru with large presents. The Guru also bestowed upon him a robe of honour. It appeared there was now complete understanding between the two.

In these days, emperor Aurangzeb ordered the governor of Jammu, Mian Khan, to advance upon the hill chiefs to gather tribute. Accordingly, the Governor sent his Commander-in-Chief, Alif Khan, to do the job. Everyone of the hill chiefs said to Alif Khan that as Raja Bhim Chand was the greatest of them all, he should be asked first to pay. If he did so, everyone else would follow suit. An envoy was sent by the Moghal warrior to the raja, demanding tribute under threat of war. Raja Bhim Chand told the

envoy that he would much rather fight than pay tribute. He was advised by his counsellors to seek the assistance of the Guru at this critical moment. For, once the Moghals were given a fitting reply in war, they would leave them in peace for long. Otherwise, their demands would know no end. This would also cement the relations between the house of the Guru and their own, thus making Bilaspur the unchallenged leader of all the hill chiefs.

When the Prime Minister of the raja appeared in the presence of the Guru with a request for assistance, he made such courtesies that the Guru could not refuse him. "We are under the protection of the house of Nanak. So there's nothing that the Moghals can do to us if only you were to be our guide and light." The Guru granted his prayer and alerted his troops. Meanwhile, Alif Khan had gathered tribute from some of the hill chiefs who became his allies, against the combined forces of the Guru, Raja Bhim Chand and others. By common consent, the Guru was given the command of the Allied forces. The enemy was obliged to come out of their fortresses and challenge them on open ground. They showed exemplary valour so that Raja Bhim Chand wanted to beat a retreat. At this, the Guru personally took the field and challenged one of the rajas, Dayal, chief of Bijharwal, and pierced his heart with his bullet. His arrows created such havoc amongst the enemy forces and the Sikhs fought with such reckless courage that the enemy fled the field, under cover of darkness.

The Guru then returned to Anandpur. On the way, he again encountered hostility of the villagers who refused to sell fodder and grain to his troops. Thereupon, the troops took what they needed by force, but not without making due payment. This, once again, put fear in the minds of the hill chiefs. When the Guru reached

Anandpur and saw a brief period of peace, his forces grew in strength so much that the Governor of Panjab, Dilawar Khan, was also scared. So, he sent an expedition, 11,000 strong, under his son, to force the Guru to pay tribute, else to sack the city of Anandpur. After him, every other hill chief was also to be served a similar notice, or humbled through war. Sensing the approaching storm, however, many people left Anandpur. But, the Guru's forces met the advancing Moghal troops on the banks of the Satluj, and inflicted a crushing defeat on them. Thereupon, Dilawar Khan sent another expedition, this time under a slave-general of his, Hussain by name. He marched on Anandpur with two thousand troops. Hussain plundered village after village with great rapacity and alarmed Raja Bhim Chand so much that he thought it would be better to become an ally of his than the Guru's. He, therefore, paid whatever tribute he was asked to, and so did the other princes. Not only this: they made common cause with him and advanced with their troops along with the Moghals on Anandpur.

On way to Anandpur, the Moghal general wanted to settle accounts with Raja Gopal, chief of Guler, who had refused to fall in line with his brother princes, as the sums of tribute demanded from him were not within his means. He sent his envoy to the Guru for assistance. The Guru at first tried to bring about a conciliation between him and the other chiefs, so that they could together face the Moghal onslaught. But, this did not work, and no choice was left to Gopal but to give battle to the combined forces of the Moghals and the rajas of Kangra and Bilaspur. The Guru sent some troops for his help, seven of whom were slain on the battlefield. But, in the battle also fell the Moghal general and the raja of Kangra. Bhim Chand fled with his army, and Gopal

was victorious. He came to pay tribute to the Guru with large offerings.

It may be stated here that in the meantime the Guru had married twice, while still young, two brides whom their parents claimed they had nurtured for the Guru's house. The one, Sundari, gave birth to one son, Ajit Singh, and the other, Jitoji, brought forth three sons, Jujhar Singh, Fateh Singh and Zorawar Singh. Later, a Sikh made representation to the Guru that he too had pledged that his daughter, Sahib Kaur, would wed no one but the Guru. The Guru, after much hesitation, accepted his entreaties. She, however, agreed to remain issueless, being blest, as we shall learn later, as the Mother of the Khalsa.

One day, a Brahmin of great repute, Kesho Das by name, came from Banaras to visit the Guru. He claimed that if he were helped with the wherewithals for a *homa* (sacrificial fire), he could make visible the goddess of power, Chandi or Durga, also known as Kali. He said it was through extreme austerities and *tapas* that the goddess would appear, and that only if a man like him were to be the master of ceremonies. He harangued the following of the Guru also on the great blessings that the goddess would bestow on whosoever could invoke her grace. Such a one could never be defeated in war. He attributed the successes of the ancient Hindu heroes like Bhima and Arjuna to their being the votaries of Durga.

The Sikhs were much impressed with his talk and supported his request to the Guru. The Guru replied: "Even gods and goddesses are subject to the Will and authority of the one God who is supreme over all creation. He it is from whom we should seek all boons and benedictions. He gives man the power to make and unmake

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his destiny if man surrenders himself to Him and fights only for His causes.”¹

The Guru, then, unsheathed his sword and said, “This is the true manifestation of the goddess of Power, the shining steel with which evil is punished and virtue protected and rewarded. He who is willing to taste its baptism for a righteous cause invokes indeed the blessings of God.”

The Guru, thereafter recited a few couplets to show that the power resided in the people. Pointing to his followers, he said :

“It is through ye that I have won battles; through your favour that I have distributed bounties to the poor. Through ye it is that all my woes are past, through your favour that my house is overflowing with material possessions. Through your kindness have I smothered my

¹ Writes Dr. Gokal Chand Narang: “The Guru did not believe in any deity except the True and Deathless one, but whether to show his followers that there was no such power, or to win over the popular sympathy and confidence of the populace as the chosen favourite of their favourite deity, it seems to be beyond doubt (as all historians agree on the point) that the Guru ordered a great sacrifice to be performed with the ostensible object of making the goddess appear. The ceremony is said to have lasted for a year. At the end of that time when Durgashtami came round again, the Guru asked the presiding priest when the goddess would make her appearance. The Pandit said that the goddess would reveal herself only if a pure and holy man of noble lineage sacrificed himself at the altar, and had his head flung into the fire. The Guru was apparently pleased, and said to the Pandit with a smile of sarcasm on his lips, “Where shall we find, revered sir, a holier man than yourself whose head could form a fitting offering to the goddess.” The Pandit was struck dumb and decamped on a false pretext. The Guru flung all the remaining material into the fire and came out from behind the screens with a drawn sword flashing in his hand. The large quantity of the homa material thrown in a lump into the fire blazed forth in a large flame which being on a lofty hill was seen for miles around, and was taken as a sign of the propitiation and appearance of the goddess.” (*Transformation of Sikhism*, pp. 85-86)

enemies; through your favour am I instructed in wisdom. O, I'm exalted because ye have exalted me, else there were many poor ones like me wandering luckless and friendless."

He continued: "One who serveth the people, pleaseth me. Nothing else is pleasing to my mind. Offer gifts to them if thou may, for no one else is worthy to receive them. To show favour to them bears fruit both here and hereafter, and all other service is of no avail. O, my possessions, my body, my soul are at the disposal of my people. For, nothing else avails, nay, nothing."

The Guru writes that hearing these words the pandit was much grieved and wept.

CHAPTER IV

"Great is Govind Singh who's the Guru and the disciple rolled into one."

—BHAJI GURDAS SINGH

1699. It was on the first day of Baisakh, mid-spring, and the beginning of the Hindu new year, that Guru Govind Singh, after a great thought, decided finally to evolve a new order. Upto now, everyone, Hindu or Muslim, was welcome to the portals of the new faith, if he pledged to forego his caste exclusiveness, interdicine, serve man irrespective of his creed or position, to be pure in word, thought and deed and to believe only in one God, and discard all cant, superstition and ritual. It was a society of the peaceful and the holy. The fifth Guru, Arjun, had even given up his life without demur, in a most non-violent way, at the behest of the emperor Jehangir. His son, Hari Govind, the sixth Guru, wore arms, however, and kept a small force with which he fought the forces of Shah Jahan in self-defence at times, and always won. Guru Hari Rai, who succeeded him, also maintained a cavalry of 2200, though he never used it. The eighth Guru, Hari Kishen, died very young, at the age of 8, and the ninth Guru, father of Govind, was beheaded in Delhi under orders from Aurangzeb, but no fight followed, no rebellion raised its head. Guru Govind Singh had seen how he himself was being pursued by the surrounding hill-chiefs, even though they claimed to be Hindus, in collusion with the Moghal emperor, Aurangzeb, for the mere fact that he wanted the people of all religions to co-exist and not to be coerced to accept a way of life which they did not voluntarily choose. He had no territorial ambi-

tions, and meant harm to no one. Yet, he hardly found peace for himself or those who belonged to him.

The Guru, therefore, decided to evolve an order which would keep as its ideal of life nothing but sacrifice for the cause of *Dharma*, and would not accept slavery, either political, or social or economic. And, if for this they had to fight their way through, they wouldn't shirk the use of arms; in fact, arms would be an instrument for the achievement of their ideal society in which no one sat upon another's rights or ideas and each individual was free to pursue any path of life so long as he did not come in the way of another.

"The Hindus," at this time, as Dr. Gokal Chand Narang has aptly remarked, "were too mild by nature, too contented in their desires, too modest in their aspirations, too averse to physical exertion and terror-stricken and demoralised, even though strongly attached to their religion. They had religion, but no national feeling. (So) Guru Govind Singh sought to make nationalism their religion."

Several events that stood out in the Guru's mind had perhaps influenced this decision. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, had been beheaded in a public square of Delhi, but no one had come forward, except two low-caste Sikhs in disguise and under cover of darkness, to claim his body. One Hindu chief was fighting with another, and even asking for assistance against his co-religionists from the emperor Aurangzeb. Caste had so much divided our race that when Guru Govind sent some Sikhs to learn Sanskrit, the Pandits refused to teach them as they belonged to the lower castes. Daughters were murdered at birth and woman was so much downgraded and secluded as to deny her all the rights and obligations of a living, human being. Even though a large number of Sikhs followed

the teachings of the Guru and accepted him in every way as their spiritual guide, they were far too involved with *their household* and environments to be ever prepared to answer the call of supreme sacrifice for the sake of Dharma. They were a spiritual and a social entity but not a politically dynamic or decisive force. And, into this the Guru wanted to convert them, now, if there was to be a future for them also as a people, each one of whom was not merely free but equal in all ways.

Were the people willing to go through fire? This the Guru wanted to put to a test. So, on the first day of Baisakh, when men and women had gathered as usual, from far and near, at Anandpur, to pay homage to the Guru, he stood up in the assembly, of a sudden, naked sword in hand, and thundered, "I want a Sikh who can offer his head to me, here and now. My sword is thirsting for the head of one who has learnt the lesson of surrender to me."

There was a hush in the whole congregation. What did the Guru mean? No one before him had asked any follower of his to offer this supreme sacrifice? And, for what reason? No one could divine what was behind this play of the Master, who had ever bestowed supreme affection and care on them. The Guru, his eyes flashing like lightning, roared again, "Is there no one in this whole assembly who could stand up and say, 'Here I give myself up to thee, ye who've always chimed: He who loveth the God's Way offereth his head to Him on the palm of his hand'?" There was utter silence even now. When, for the third time, the Guru asked, "Is there not one who can prove his faith in me?" a Sikh from Lahore, Daya Ram, a Khatri, came forward, slowly, his head bowed and his palms joined in prayer: "O King of kings, here I offer my head to thee. It was always thine. If it can

be of any use to thee, I would deem it the greatest privilege, and feel redeemed.”

The Guru, says the tradition, took him into an enclosure, and slaughtering a goat there, came back, his sword dripping with blood, his eyes redder and fiercer than before. Many in the congregation fled in terror. Others bemoaned in their thoughts that the Guru had perhaps lost reason. But, when the Guru asked, “I want another head. *Dharma* cannot be protected now except by those who are prepared to make the supreme sacrifice of their lives,” another person, Dharam Das of Delhi, answered to his call the same way. He was also taken to the enclosure, another goat slaughtered and the Guru came out before a fear-stricken audience, his sword drenched in blood. At this point, many Sikhs rushed to the Guru’s mother, asking her to intervene, or to depose him from the spiritual Throne of Nanak. For, wasn’t he shedding the blood of innocent followers of his merely to satisfy his whim? The mother sent word to the Guru, but he was adamant in carrying out his will.

This time, and another two times, came forward three more persons, Mohkam Chand of Dwarka, Sahib Chand from Bidar, and Himmat of Jagannath Puri to offer their heads, one by one. After the five had thus surrendered themselves to the Guru, the Guru put a stop to further demands. Meantime, he brought out the five Sikhs he had taken into the tent, dressed in fresh garbs, blue turbaned, with loose, long yellow shirts, a waist-band round their waists, with sorts of nicker-bockers worn as under-wears, and with swords dangling by their sides, they looked not only smart, but soldier-like, inspiring and dedicated. These the Guru called his Beloved ones. The whole assembly thereupon resounded with the shouts of “Sat Sri Akal” (Immortal is God), and entreated the

Guru to bless them likewise. It would be of interest to note that out of the five, three belonged to the untouchable classes.

The Guru now asked for a steel bowl filled with water. He instructed the five Beloved ones to sit around it along with himself and to stir the water by turns with a double-edged dagger, reciting five compositions, one by one, composed by himself or the earlier Gurus.¹ As this was being done, his wife, Jito, came with some sugarcakes (Patasas). The Guru asked her to sweeten the water in the bowl with these. "It's a very happy coincidence", he said, "The Khalsa shall not only be warlike, but also sweeten the life of those whom he's chosen to serve." When the readings were finished, the Guru administered what he called "Amrit" (or nectar) to his Beloved five, one by one, sprinkling it in their eyes, their hair, over their bodies, and then asking them to partake of it from the same bowl by turns. This done, he now stood before them with folded hands, entreating them to administer the "Amrit" to him likewise.

This almost stunned them, as also the rest of the assembly. "You are the Guru, our spiritual guide, for both here and the hereafter, our redeemer and our saviour, unto whom we have delivered up also our lives. How can we administer "Amrit" to you, O King of kings?" The Guru said: "It's a new order I have evolved from this day, where there'll be no high and no low. I want to establish this fraternity on the basis of utter equality by asking to become your disciple now." On his refusal to take back his words, the Guru was administered "Amrit" the same way, much to the wonder of his devout followers. It electrified the atmosphere as nothing else

¹ These are: the *Jap* of Guru Nanak, *Jap*, *Benati Chaupai* and ten *swayyas* of Guru Govind; and *Anand* of Guru Amar Das.

could. It is said many thousand persons were baptised thus on that day at their request, their number rising to eighty thousand in two weeks' time.¹ The Guru called them the Khalsa, the pure and his very own.

The Guru then addressed them thus: "From now on, you have become casteless. No ritual, either Hindu or Muslim, will you perform, and believe in superstition of no kind, but only in one God who's the Master and the protector of all, the only creator and destroyer. In your new order, the lowest will rank equal with the highest and each will be to the other a *Bhai* (Brother). No pilgrimages for you any more, nor austerities but the pure life of the household, yet ready to sacrifice it at the call of *Dharma*. Women shall be the equal of men in every way. He who killeth his daughter, the Khalsa will not deal with him. You will wear your hair unshorn, like the ancient sages as a pledge of dedication to the Guru, a comb to keep it clean, a steel bracelet to denote the universality of God, an underwear to denote chastity and a steel-dagger for your defence. Smoking being an unclean habit and injurious to health you will forswear. You'll love the weapons of war, be excellent horsemen, marksmen, and wielders of the sword, the discus, and the spear. Physical prowess will be as sacred to you as spiritual sensitiveness. And between the Hindus and the Muslims, you'll act as a bridge², and serve the poor without distinction of caste, colour, country or

¹ Comments Bhagat Lakshman Singh in his *Life and Work of Guru Govind Singh* (Lahore, 1909):

"Baptism was at first wholly voluntary and never meant for all Sikhs, but now it is imposed on all converts and real belief in Sikh ideals is not asked for—so false conversions are common."

² *Rahit-Nama* (Code of Sikh Conduct) by Bhai Daya Singh, one of the five beloveds.

creed¹. My Khalsa shall always defend the poor and *Deg* (the community kitchen) will be as much an essential part of your order as *Teg* (the sword). And from now on, you will all call yourselves Singhs (lions) and greet each other with *Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji Ke Fateh* (The Khalsa belongs to God. O, Victory be to God) !”

As the word went round the countryside that the Guru had created a new order with the mission of “do or die”, it infused a new spirit in the Hindu citizenry as it struck terror in the hearts of his adversaries.

¹ The exact words given in Bhai Chaupa Singh's *Rahitnama* are:

“The Guru's Sikh should consider the mouth of the poor to be the treasury of the Guru.”

Chaupa Singh, it may be mentioned, was the male nurse of the Guru in his childhood.

CHAPTER V

*"He alone is wise, O Nanak, who feareth not another,
nor maketh others afraid."*

—GURU TEGH BAHADUR

ACCORDING TO A MUSLIM HISTORIAN, Ghulam Mohyuddin, the emperor was duly informed by the news-writer of the address given by Guru Govind Singh to his followers on the birth of the Khalsa. "He has abolished caste and custom, old rituals, beliefs and superstitions of the Hindus and banded them in one single brotherhood. No one will be superior, or inferior, to another. Men of all castes have been made to eat out of the same bowl. Though orthodox men have opposed him, about twenty thousand men and women have taken baptism of steel at his hands on the first day. The Guru has also told the gathering: 'I'll call myself Govind Singh only if I can make the meek sparrows pounce upon the hawks and tear them; only if one combatant of my force equals a lakh and a quarter of the enemy.'"

The hill chiefs were also greatly scared. While the Guru one day went out hunting in the Doon Valley, two of them, Balia Chand and Alim Chand, challenged him with a large detachment. Though the Sikhs were few in number, they gave an excellent account of themselves. The Guru's arrows brought havoc in the enemy's camp. Balia Chand was shot dead; Alim Chand lost one of his arms and fled. With many dead left on the battlefield, the hill armies beat a retreat, humbled and in disarray.

When the other Rajput hill chiefs heard of this encounter, they were gravely alarmed. Finding themselves weak, if not helpless against the Guru, they decided to approach

the emperor at Delhi through a petition. The emperor was in the Deccan, engaged in grim battles. So, in his absence, the Subedar of Sirhind heard their representatives. The memorandum said, "The present Guru is tenth in succession to Nanak, the Guru who preached the gospel of peace and human brotherhood. That's how we raised no objection to his finding residence in our midst. But, his ideas and intentions are different from Nanak's. When we tried to curb his rising power with which he aims to challenge even the emperor himself, he repaired to the Nahan state, made friends with the raja there, and then came into conflict with him and Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar. A battle was fought between us and him at Bhangani where human blood flowed in abundance. Then, he returned to Anandpur, and established a new order, called the Khalsa, which is contrary to all our cherished beliefs and customs. He says his religion is distinct as much from the Muslim, as from the Hindu faith. And, yet, he wanted us to join hands with him to fight our emperor against whom he harbours profound grudge. This we have refused to do, much to his annoyance and discomfiture. He is now gathering men and arms from all over the country to challenge the Moghal empire. We cannot restrain him, but as loyal subjects of your Majesty, we crave your assistance to drive him out of Anandpur and not to allow grass to grow under your feet. Otherwise, he would become a formidable challenge to the whole empire, as his intentions are to march soon on Delhi itself." This representation was duly forwarded by the Viceroy of Sirhind to the emperor.

After some time, the imperial Government replied to this representation saying that the hill chiefs could be assisted by imperial troops if their expenses were paid for.

To this the hill rajas readily agreed. Accordingly, two Moghal generals, Painde Khan and Din Beg, were despatched to help the Rajput princes with a force of ten thousand troops under both. At Rupar, they were joined by the hill forces under the direct commands of their rulers. The purpose of this assault, as advertised, was to drive the Guru out of Anandpur, but if he promised to live as a loyal subject, then, he would be allowed to abide there on payment of a tribute.

When information reached the Guru that a strong force was advancing against him, he organised his men also in battle array. He appointed the five Beloved ones as five generals of his army, and himself also decided to fight along with his troops. The fire-power of the Sikhs inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. Though the Moghal forces on the one hand and the Rajputs on the other were haranguing their troops separately that it was a religious war, nothing availed them. At last General Painde Khan decided to engage the Guru in a single combat and thus determine the result of the battle. He challenged the Guru to come out and face him personally. Hearing this, the Guru galloped his steed towards him and roared, "I'm Govind Singh come to settle accounts with thee." Painde Khan taunted the Guru, "Why don't you settle with me then ? Strike first so that you have no regrets." The Guru smiled and said, "It's not the custom of my house to fire the first shot. You have aggressed against me. So, I give you the privilege !"

Painde Khan moved his horse around the Guru in many positions to strike him with the sword, but the Guru was so swift with the movements of his horse that the Pathan general felt helpless. He, then, discharged an arrow which whizzed past the ear of the Guru. The Guru taunted him, "Thy archery is perfect !" Painde Khan discharged

another arrow which also missed its mark. Upon this, he hastened to retreat, but was challenged by the Guru: "You dirty coward, why don't you let me have my chance also?" Saying this, the Guru aimed an arrow at the ear of Painde Khan which was the only part uncovered by armour. The aim was so sure that Painde Khan fell off the horse-back and died. The other general, Din Beg, now took the command. The Moghal troops fought desperately, while the hill troops fled in disarray, seeing the battle going in favour of the Sikhs. Din Beg was himself badly wounded and seeing no chance of victory beat a retreat. He was pursued by the Sikh forces upto Rupar, but the Guru advised them not to harass them any further. The Sikhs captured a large booty from the battle-field and having wrought much destruction to the enemy troops, were greatly enthused over this decisive victory.

The Guru now sent instructions to his Sikhs that whosoever came to see him must bring either an arm or a horse. When the news of the Guru's victory reached far and near, many people came to join the ranks of the Khalsa. The Guru employed armourers to make muskets, swords and arrows and collected a large quantity of gunpowder and lead.

Some of the hill chiefs felt panicky and decided once again to approach the emperor for assistance, and make valuable presents to him. One of their number advised them not to do so, and to muster their own forces, surround Anandpur from all sides and starve its occupants to death or submission. This advice was later accepted. Each hill chief, among them, the rajas of Jammu, Nurpur, Mandi, Bhutan, Kulu, Kainthal, Guler, Chamba and Srinagar, contributed his contingent. Raja Ajmer Chand, son of Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, was to be in overall

charge of the invading force and everyone agreed to submit to his decisions. Ajmer Chand first sent an emissary to the Guru asking him either to abandon Anandpur or pay them the arrears of yearly rent on the land on which the city stood. Failing this, the town was to be blockaded from all sides.

The Guru spurned this demand with the contempt it deserved adding, that as the site of the Anandpur town was bought by his father for cash, no one could claim from him a rent on it. And if it was the desire of the hill chiefs to deprive him and his followers of their lawful habitation, through force, then the Guru had no choice but to fight back in self-defence. The Guru said he meant no harm to them whatever, if only they would let him in peace and not join forces with the Moghals against whose tyranny he was preparing to fight. Indeed, he sought their help and assistance in this holy war.

The rajas were furious at this reply. They were convinced that the Guru would not buy peace at the cost of honour, and would much rather fight than surrender or sue for peace. Thereupon, they collected a large army contributed by every chief of the hill states. There were not many Sikhs residing in Anandpur at this time. But, they were joined soon by the devout from many corners of the Panjab. The Guru's eldest son, Ajit Singh, in his teens, also was permitted to command a company of one hundred. The two forts at Anandpur, Lohgarh and Fatehgarh, were put incharge of two separate commanders with a force of one thousand to guard each fort. The Guru advised his forces not to move beyond the town, but to remain on the defensive.

The Sikh chroniclers say the hill forces swarmed in like the locusts. But, though outnumbered and outweaponed, the Sikhs fought with such bravery and self-assuredness

that the enemy was thrown in confusion and the Ranghars and Gujars sought to flee. These two castes were known for their fighting qualities, and bearing a grudge against the Guru over an earlier fight in which they had lost and their towns of Nuh and Bajpur had been sacked, had mustered a strong force under their leader, Jagatullah. But nothing availed them against the accurate marksmanship and death-daring chivalry of the Sikhs. Jagatullah was shot dead and the Sikhs would not even allow the enemy to remove his dead body. The Guru himself, seated on a mound, aimed his deadly arrows at the enemy accounting for innumerable heads.

At this, the rajas decided to make one final assault from three directions. But, even this did not yield any result. Jagatullah's body lay on the cold dust, but inspite of determined attacks of the enemy, the Sikhs made it a point of prestige not to let it fall into his hands. After bloody skirmishes, the enemy retired to his camp. Here, they were counselled by some, like the Raja of Mandi, to sue for peace with the house of Nanak, there being no dishonour involved in approaching a high spiritual personage with a petition for peace. But some of the rajas thought this would further embolden the Guru, that he was not as strong as he was feared and that if they did not lose heart, they would soon gain an upper hand. So, they made a desparate try again. This time they concentrated all their forces on a single point. The Guru's son, Ajit, showed exemplary courage. His horse was wounded, so he fought on foot. This electrified the atmosphere. The Sikhs fought with their backs to the wall and wrought havoc in the enemy's forces. In the end, the hill chiefs thought it was useless to continue the fight any longer and after a siege of two months, they withdrew. But, before they did so, they tried another method of

breaking through the defences of the fort. They sent an intoxicated elephant to make a breach in the walled defences. Seeing this, a Sikh, Duni Chand, who had brought a detachment of five hundred from the Central Panjab to aid the Guru, fled in terror, secretly. The Guru on hearing of this remarked, "He who flies from death in the face of danger to his nation finds death awaiting him in another garb." It is said when Duni Chand reached Amritsar and his foul deed was known to the community, he was ostracised from society and died a lonely man soon thereafter, stung by a cobra.

The elephant, except for his trunk, was covered with a steel coat-of-mail. He had to make an assault to the front door of the Lohgarh fort with a spear stuck in his forehead. The hill forces were to march in his rear so that when the front gate was breached, they would storm the troops within and a great massacre would follow. The fort would thus fall into their hands. The Guru appointed one of his valiant soldiers, Vachitter Singh, to pierce the elephant's trunk with a lance. Another Sikh, Ude Singh, was appointed to chop the head of Raja Kesri Chand who was leading this assault.

Vachitter Singh was successful at the very first go, in driving his lance into the mad head of the elephant advancing menacingly towards the fort. The animal got furious in his rage, turned back and trampled many of his own troops to death. Ude Singh challenged Kesri Chand in a single combat and cut off his head. After much massacre of their men, and abandoning much war-booty, the hill chiefs took to their heels in the dead of night losing the most prominent of their ranks, Raja Ghummand Chand, also on the battle-field.

However, they decided to give no peace to the Guru and made frantic appeals to the emperor to assist them

in their designs. On hearing of it, the Guru this time decided to meet the enemy on open ground, some distance ahead of Anandpur. Seeing the Guru thus exposing himself to attack, the hill chiefs advanced upon him. The Guru's forces took positions on an elevated ground, and soon beat them back. Then, a Muslim gunner was employed for high reward to get the Guru. But in this also they failed. With one shot, the gunner killed a servant of the Guru, but the Guru employed his skill in archery to devastating effect and killed both the gunner and, also, his brother who had the same mission on hand.

Meantime, the imperial army under the Subedar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan, reached the spot. Though the Guru was advised to hasten back into the fort of Anandpur, he refused to budge from his ground and advanced with about five thousand men, in three detachments, the Guru commanding the rear and his son, Ajit, with another four, the vanguard. There was desperate fighting right upto the bank of the Satluj which the Guru crossed along with his troops to take positions on the other side. But, the losses of the imperial and the hill armies were so colossal that they decided to retreat, and, offering presents to the Moghal viceroys, entreated him to go back and not to pursue the battle anymore. The hill chiefs were happy that the Guru had left Anandpur, but their satisfaction was short-lived as after a brief while the Guru returned with the beat of drum. Now Raja Ajmer Chand who was his prime enemy, sued the Guru for peace and sent him costly presents and a very conciliatory communication. The Guru replied in the same friendly tone. The other hill chiefs also followed suit, and peace reigned for some-time in this battle-scarred region.

CHAPTER VI

*"Blessed is he who even when he wars
keeps God in his heart."*

—GURU GOVIND SINGH

DURING THE BRIEF PERIOD of peace that followed, the Guru instructed his following in the finer, spiritual or social aspects of Sikh life. Men and women trekked long weary distances to have his sight, and, as was the Guru's behest, made offerings of arms or horses to him. Congregations would assemble, morning and evening, in which besides the chanting of the Guru's Word by the musicians, the Guru would minister instructions on dedicating one's life and all one had to the Supreme Being, to keep Him ever in one's remembrance and to do everything in His name and for His pleasure. The Guru also enjoined upon his followers to serve each other, irrespective of any distinctions, and to look upon the whole humanity as one.

One day, the Guru feeling thirsty asked some water to be brought to him. A young boy obeyed the command, but when the Guru looked at his soft, feminine hands, he said to him: "Your hands are so tender that I wonder if you have ever used them!" The boy said this was true. He was born to rich parents who wouldn't permit him any manual work. The Guru threw away the water he had brought, saying, "I wouldn't accept any offering from a hand that has not served another."

Every Sikh was expected to make an offering of the tithe, each year, to the Guru. This the Sikhs did with utmost devotion, taking this to be a favour of the Guru. They came from all over the country, not only from the Panjab, but from as far away as Kabul and Kandhar.

One day, a Sikh came to him in quest of peace. "I've earned enough", he said, "now I want to be at your feet to listen to your instructions and redeem myself." The Guru put him under a tutor and asked the tutor teach him reading and writing so that he could read the Guru's Word himself and write it for others. But, when the tutor uttered to him the first stanza of Guru Amar Das's *Anand*, beginning, "Wonder, O wonder, my mother, I've attained unto the Guru", he refused to learn any more! The tutor complained to the Guru of the apathy of the learner. On being questioned by the Guru, the Sikh replied, "What more is there for him to teach and me to learn when I've found the Guru and feel blessed. This is what I came here for!" The Guru embraced him saying, "Blessed art thou who hast found the Guru that soon, and so well."

A Sikh, Kahan Singh by name, was greatly devoted to the Guru. He was once plastering a wall when a drop of mud fell on the Guru's dress as he was passing by. The Guru humorously remarked: "Such a one should get a slap in the face." Many Sikhs rushed forward and gave the poor man a hearty drubbing. The Guru who was witnessing the scene felt distressed and asked, "You have carried out my instruction very thoroughly indeed! Now I ask, is there one who would marry his daughter to him? He is so devoted to my work and ought to be rewarded with a suitable match". Most Sikhs became utterly mute, but a man from Kandhar immediately offered his daughter to the poor man whom the Guru blest with the boon of five powerful sons.

Hearing that his kitchen was not well served, the Guru one day visited it in disguise, and asked for food. Those incharge made refusals on various grounds, some that the food was not yet ready, others that the Guru must

eat first. He then went to the house of Nandlal, the poet, and asked for something to eat. The poet immediately brought some uncooked eatables and offered them to the needy. The Guru recounted this episode in one of his gatherings, saying, "When a hungry man asks you for food, do not make excuses. Give away what you have, and you will be blessed. A poor man's mouth is indeed the Guru's treasury."

One day, finding the rations in the Guru's kitchen dwindling, his mother stopped the Sikhs from serving food to others. The Guru was greatly distressed on hearing this and pronounced a curse: "Those who have given this evil advice to my mother, may the Turks destroy them!" The mother tearfully begged of her son to pardon her and those that had given her false reports of the dwindling rations.

The Guru said, "O mother, the Guru's kitchen will never be empty, nor my Khalsa's, so long as it is meant to serve others." And, he forgave those who were responsible for this misdemeanour.

In the meantime, Raja Amjer Chand sent a Brahmin to the court of the Guru in the garb of a devotee but indeed to keep a watch over his activities, and the size of his treasury. By giving secret information, he was responsible for two of the finest horses being stolen from the Guru's stable. One day, he suggested to the Guru to grace the fair at Rawalsar, near Mandi, where the hill chiefs also gathered each year. He said this would be an ideal opportunity for a rapprochement between the two sides.

The Guru agreed on the entreaties of his mother and a large number of the devout. The Guru received the rajas in his camp with great warmth and they and their queens were literally charmed by his manners and sweet

speech. They implored the past to be forgiven to which the Guru said: "In my house, we do not store the past, only the present and the future." The Guru arranged a big feast in honour of his visit and invited high and low to partake of it. But the high-caste Brahmins refused the invitation, saying, "He has corrupted the religion of our forefathers. How can we interdine with men of low castes or give up our age-old beliefs in our gods and rituals by following his way of life."

Knowing that the hill folk were very superstitious and believed in astrology, the Guru said, "My Sikhs will never be a prey to superstitions. For them, one moment is as good as another. He who has faith in God will not like to divine His secrets through astrology or such like superstitions."

It is said a Vaishnava, Har Gopal by name, being influenced by his father's newly-awakened faith in the Guru, came to visit him with a handsome offering, but he felt disgust in his mind on seeing the Guru taking a meat diet. Though he pretended to the Guru that he had utter faith in him, and was blest by the Guru who also offered him a steel bracelet, on way back home he confided to a Sikh that he had wasted his money on the Guru who was a meat-eater. The Sikh asked him to transfer to him the Guru's blessings and the steel bracelet in return for the money he had offered to his Saviour. The Vaishnava was much pleased with the deal and received his money back from the Guru's devotee with great joy. But after sometime, he incurred such heavy losses in his trade that he had neither the money, nor the peace of mind. So, he went back to the Guru to ask forgiveness. The Guru pardoned him and said, "The Guru eateth whatever cometh to him from God. He eateth not for the taste of the palate, but to keep him a fit and a worthy

instrument of God's mission. Men quarrel over diet, dress and ritual and over caste, community and creed, and have thus torn man from man. My mission is to restore mankind to a single brotherhood. So, how can I love one kind of man and hate another? They whose lives and deeds are dedicated to God find everything that cometh from Him sacred and good. My Sikhs shall never live on charity or religious offerings, but through honest means earn to live and live to share, and will ever keep God in their hearts in whatever they do. All else is secondary and of little consequence."

A Brahmin complained to the Guru that some Pathans had abducted his bride. The Guru sent an expeditionary force of one hundred cavalry under his young son, Ajit Singh, to restore the Brahmin's bride. Ajit Singh fell on the Pathans in the night like lightning and produced the culprits along with their booty before the Guru. The woman was restored to her husband and the Pathans punished for their misdeed.

The Guru's fame was spreading far and wide, thus giving alarm to the hill chiefs. In these days, two Muslim generals, Sayyad Beg and Alif Khan, were marching from Delhi to Lahore. Raja Ajmer Chand thought this an excellent opportunity to ask for their assistance which was agreed to on payment of one thousand rupees a day. Sayyad Beg, on hearing of the Guru's holy character, refused to fight and indeed joined the Sikh ranks. Together, they gave a hot chase to Alif Khan and his forces and made them retreat with heavy losses. Sayyad Beg transferred all his wealth to the Guru and decided to cast his lot with him in future.

After a brief period of peace, the hill chiefs with a force of ten thousand attacked Anandpur again. The Guru had only eight hundred men with him, but he asked

them to meet the enemy in the open this time, and not from behind the battlements. A great carnage followed. The Guru instructed the Khalsa army to aim their arrows and guns from positions of vantage and not to pursue the enemy nor charge him with swords hand to hand. But when the Sikh troops saw the enemy retreating, they pursued him. The Guru was much displeased at this for, as he had visualised, the enemy finding them hopelessly outnumbered fell upon them and inflicted heavy losses. The Guru now himself took the field and this enthused the Khalsa so much that they routed the enemy.

However, the respite after this victory also turned out to be all-too-brief. For, on insistent entreaties from the hill chiefs, the imperial troops soon advanced against the Guru's house under a Moghal general, Sayyad Khan. The Guru had only five hundred men at his disposal at this time. He put them in battle array under General Sayyad Beg and Maimun Khan, another devotee of his. At first they were disheartened to hear of a large army advancing towards Anandpur, but the Guru gave them heart and said, "In the final analysis it is man's heart that leads one to victory, not numbers or arms. And he who has a moral cause to fight for always has God on his side." Sayyad Beg engaged himself thereupon in a single combat with a hill chief and killed him. Seeing this, a Moghal general, Din Beg, filled with hatred against Sayyad Beg for having deserted the Moghal army, struck him from behind and killed him. Maimun Khan fought with great bravery, as did other Sikhs and took a huge toll of life of the enemy's hosts.

Seeing such fantastic deeds of valour, General Sayyad Khan himself advanced towards the Guru on horseback. But, on beholding his serene and holy face said to him, "You strike first. I do not have the heart to take the

initiative." The Guru replied, "In my house, we never fire the first shot. If you wouldn't strike me, I wouldn't strike you either." The General was so much overcome by emotion on hearing these words that he dismounted and fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru blessed him with the Name of God and said, "Thou art saved in both the worlds." Sayyad Khan, however, could not restrain his troops who continued to war with the Sikhs. But, he retired to a distance, when another commander, Ramzan Khan, took the field against the Guru. The Guru aimed his arrow and killed his horse. But his forces were far too few to be able to romp victory home this time. The Guru, therefore, decided to leave Anandpur which was captured and looted by the Moghal army. The Sikhs were so much exercised over this defeat that they wanted the Guru to permit them to pursue the enemy and to die fighting rather than suffer the humiliation of a defeat. The Guru permitted them to do so. They gave a hot chase to the enemy and not only killed a large number of them but also relieved them of much of their booty. Many lost their lives but those that remained brought the Guru great joy and he came back to Anandpur with them much relieved.

The emperor was greatly exercised over this debacle of his huge army. The Qazi advised that the Guru be brought to the presence of the emperor. Aurangzeb agreed with this and sent a message to the Guru saying, "Your religion and mine believe in the unity of God. Why should there be any misunderstanding between us? There is no choice for you nor for any one else but to acknowledge my sovereignty which I have obtained from Allah, the Almighty. If you have any grievance, come and see me and I shall treat you as a holy man, but do not challenge my authority, else I shall have to march personally against you."

To this the Guru replied, "There's only one Sovereign, God the All-powerful to whose Will both your Majesty and I are subject. But you recognise this not and discriminate and pursue the Hindus, and instead of doing justice practise discrimination and bring harm to their person and religion. God has sent me with a mission—to restore righteousness on the earth. How can I be at peace with you so long as our ways are different ? " The Guru however treated the emperor's envoy with great courtesy, and bestowed a robe of honour on him.

CHAPTER VII

*"He who chooseth the lover's role must a'iso
choose to walk through death."*

—GURU ARJUN

THE SIKHS from various parts of the country, notably the central Panjab, came to visit the Guru in large number. They brought offerings of horses or arms as was the Guru's bidding. They learnt the lessons of warfare at Anandpur. The Guru, however, felt that even though calm prevailed around him, it was a lull before the storm. So, he must not be caught unprepared if the challenge came from any source, at any time.

The hill chiefs were also secretly planning to have a show-down with the Sikhs in one final, decisive bid in collaboration with the imperial forces. They, therefore, sent another emissary, this time in the person of Raja Ajmer Chand to the Deccan where the emperor was waging war against the Deccan sultanates. The raja met the emperor, personally, and presented a petition on behalf of his fraternity detailing the anti-state activities of the Guru's house for the last over one century which resulted in the martyrdom of his father and great grandfather. The emperor was told that the Guru who had founded a new religion wanted all Hindus to embrace it and to wage war on the Moghal empire. The emperor, alarmed at these reports, ordered the dispatch of all available troops at Delhi, Sirhind and Lahore to march on Anandpur, under the supreme command of Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind. These were joined by the hill troops. The Guru got information from his devout

followers from Delhi and elsewhere of the approaching storm. Though troops from the imperial capital could not be spared, those from Sirhind and Lahore made a formidable combination for the far fewer men the Guru had under arms with him.

When the enemy's hosts reached the outskirts of Anandpur, the Sikhs discharged their artillery fire with such venom and accuracy that it took a great toll of the enemy's life and horse. The Guru's army was shelling from within the forts, while the enemy was without any such cover and was on a lower ground. Two of the Guru's generals, Ude Singh and Daya Singh, were ordered at the close of the day's battle to charge the enemy in single combat. They with their storm troopers rushed into the enemy's ranks and inflicted heavy losses on the enemy. After a reorganisation of forces, the enemy was compelled, as we shall see, to pursue a different strategem. The fear lurking in everybody's mind that the Guru was a performer of miracles was coming true. Macauliffe records nine hundred dead on the enemy's side on the first day of the battle.

Next day, the Guru himself took the field on a charger. He showed magnificent skill in archery and his men fired with deadly precision. All attempts to capture the Guru alive or to kill him failed. So, it was decided to change the tactics and to cut off outside supplies from the fort so that the Guru and his men be starved into submission. The Guru asked his followers not to venture forth, but to hold the forts put under the charge of different commanders, including his son, Ajit Singh. The enemy cut off all supplies. The Sikhs in the dark of night pounced upon the enemy and created much havoc and looted much booty. On the day-break, another assault from the enemy followed, but to no avail against the Sikh guns.

These days, a Sikh, called Bhai Kanihya, was reported to the Guru as administering water to the fallen in battle, irrespective of friend or foe. The Guru called him to his presence and asked him why he was offering water to the enemy's wounded. Kanihya replied: "Since you've taught me to make no distinction between man and man, I do not see amongst the wounded any but *you*." The Guru was so much pleased with this reply that he blessed him with salvation. His followers, the *Sewapanthis*, whose one aim in life is SERVICE (*Sewa*), are an honoured part of the community to this day.

The hardships of the beleaguered troops increased with each day. In spite of the night sorties of the Sikhs, it was becoming near impossible to subsist on the meagre rations left within the fort. Even water supplies were running out. Starvation stared everyone in the face. Some of them complained to the Guru's mother that their hardships were being unnecessarily prolonged, for the Guru would not let them venture out, except occasionally and at night, but the booty they got was not enough to sustain them for long and their losses in such assaults were also heavy. For sometime, they lived on the leaves of trees and bark ground into flour. Hundreds of Sikhs sought the permission of the Guru to leave him. The Guru was much distressed, but said he would permit them to do so only if they denied him, in writing. Even this some of them did, saying, "Neither Thou art our Guru, nor we Thy Sikhs." But, as we shall see later, when they returned home, they were so shamed by their womenfolk that they returned to battle at Mukatsar and each one of them died fighting for the Guru.

Seeing the Sikhs not surrendering even though by all estimates their resources were totally exhausted, the hill chiefs hit upon another plan. They sent an emissary, a

Brahmin, who said both the Hindus and the Muslims promised on oath that if the Guru would only leave the fort of Anandpur, the enemy's forces would retire and the Guru might return to his fort, later, at his pleasure. The Sikhs could even take all their moveables with them. The Guru saw in this proposal a trick to drive him out of his entrenchments, and so did not agree. But the entreaties of his mother and devout followers left no choice for him. However, to put the bonafides of the enemy to the test, he asked for pack bullocks to convey his property first. This was immediately complied with. The Guru, however, sent out only the useless and waste material, covering it with brocade. This caravan was to move out at the dead of night with the help of torch lights. When this procession reached the enemy's camp, they pounced upon it with great ferocity, throwing all their oaths and solemn commitments to the winds. But, when, on daybreak, they found to their shame the contents of their booty, they knew that they could not trick the Guru into being caught in their trap.

The Guru now reminded his followers of what he had told them beforehand. But, meantime, the Moghals sensing the Guru's reaction at their foul deed, sent in another emissary, this time with a message, suggested to be in the emperor's own hands, expressing regret at the misbehaviour of the imperial troops and promising safe conduct, should the Guru condescend to quit Anandpur. The Sikhs were in dire straits. The Guru's mother also joined hands with them in making entreaties to accept the emperor's offer and not to let his innocent followers die of starvation. Even if the imperial troops were to betray their trust, it would be better, it was argued, to die fighting than through hunger. The Guru accepted the latter alternative, and so set fire to his possessions: those that

could not be disposed of thus, were buried in the ground. The Guru's mother, with the two youngest sons of the Guru, aged 5 and 7, and his wives, were to go first, while the Guru with five hundred of his following was to move out along with his two elder sons, at the dead of night. It was the biting cold month of December of the year 1704 A.D.

On reaching Sirsa, the Guru met his mother and his two younger sons and entrusted a devout Sikh to take them to Delhi, to where his wives had already left. But, he took them instead to Rupar to a relation of his. Here, the Guru's mother met a Brahmin, Gangu, who was once their cook, who later took them to his village, Kheri, near Sirhind, and betrayed them to the Nawab of Sirhind. The Nawab offered them the choice between Islam and death. "We are the sons of Govind Singh who knoweth not defeat, nor surrender," the older one is reported to have said, "our grandfather laid down his life, but gave up not his faith. So shall we." When asked to bow before the Nawab, the little heroes kept their backs straight, and refused to pay obeisance to the Vicar of tyranny who was after the blood of their father and his peace-loving followers. When told that their father was dead and so there was no more any earthly hope for them, they are said to have replied: "Our father is deathless. He can never die." Realising that even though tender of age, they were resolute of will and firm in faith, they were ordered to be bricked up alive.¹

Historians have gone lyrical over the manly and fearless ways of the innocent ones, but what else could one expect from the offspring of Guru Govind? However, for the aged mother of the Guru, the shock was too overwhelming and, on hearing of the heart-rending news, she collapsed.

¹ Some historians say they were executed.

The Mughal authorities conducted a search in the Brahmin's house, suspecting that he had kept to himself the jewellery and other valuables of the Guru's mother. On his refusal to divulge where he had buried the treasure, they tortured him to death. The only one to protest against this heinous crime against the Guru's sons was the Nawab of Malerkotla who said, "The sins of the father should not be visited upon the tender sons. If we could not defeat the Guru, why wreak vengeance on these poor little things!" But, his pleas went unheard. The Sikhs under Banda Singh Bahadur kept this act of grace on the part of Malerkotla's house so much in their memory that whereas they destroyed Sirhind utterly, and butchered Wazir Khan and his entire family, they spared the state of Malerkotla altogether.¹

The Guru was in the meantime being pursued by the Mughal army. He took shelter in an improvised mud fortress at Chamkaur, where a bloody battle ensued, resulting in the loss of all but five of the forty Sikhs² who were now with the Guru, the rest having been left at Sirsa to withstand the Mughal assault, till the Guru had crossed to safety. The Guru's two elder sons, Ajit and Jujhar, also died fighting valiantly at Chamkaur in single combats. The Guru had insisted, much to the anguish of his followers, that if not the first, they must not be the last to die. Seeing them fall before his very eyes, he

¹ Even during the worst communal holocaust of many centuries that occurred in 1947, when Hindu, Sikh and Muslim populations of the divided Panjab migrated *en masse* to their respective homelands amidst much carnage, no Muslim of Malerkotla was touched, and they were pathetically persuaded to stay along with the Nawab in India, which they did.

² Possibly, it is these forty martyrs that the Guru blessed as the *Muktas* (or, the Saved ones), mention of whom is made in the Sikh prayer.

offered prayers of thanks giving to God: "*O God, I've surrendered to Thee what belonged to Thee.*"

Now, the Guru's own life was also in danger. But, he refused to leave the five who were still with him. They did their best to prevail upon him saying if he were to keep alive, the faith would grow once again into a formidable force. But, the Guru said, "My life is not more sacred than a devoted follower's. I'm going to die in battle along with you, if there's no other choice." On this, the Sikhs were much distressed. So, they hit upon a plan. The five gathered together and passed a *Gurmatta* (resolution) and presented it to the Guru thus: "Thou hast always said wherever there are five of you, dedicated to me, there I shall also be, and whatever ye ask, that shall be granted unto ye. Now, we command thee, as thy Guru, to leave the fort post-haste, and let's deal with the enemy later as best as we can." The Guru felt so helpless. His own injunctions were being quoted against him! He decided to obey, and after hugging each one of them to his bosom and saying, "God be with you, ye are redeemed both in this world and the next," he left. Two of them remained behind to lay down their lives next day, one of them being Sant Singh who wore the Guru's crest to masquerade for him. The Moghals were greatly disappointed to find, on inquiry, that the man of mistaken identity was not Guru Govind, but one of his followers. But before the Guru left, he discharged two arrows which struck the torches in the hands of the Moghal bodyguards, and then pierced through their bodies. Under cover of darkness he walked, barefooted, through the forest and lay down tired at Machhiwara, between Rupar and Ludhiana, where the other three Sikhs also joined him as directed.

On being informed that a detachment of Moghal

army was still pursuing him, it became incumbent on him to escape to safety soon. But his feet were blistered, and he could hardly walk. At a Sikh's house where he was putting up now for a day, he met two Pathans, Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, who had visited his court earlier also, and who now offered their services to the Guru. It was decided that the Guru would be carried on a cot by the two Pathans and two Sikhs while the fifth one would serve as an attendant. The Guru was to disguise as a Muslim *Pir*, recently returned from *hajj*, and fasting. This scheme saw them safely through the Moghal troops who were camping on the way.

It is said the Moghals would offer them safe conduct only if the "pir" would eat with them along with his followers. The Guru, however, excused himself saying he was on fast, and would touch nothing but raw barley. His three Sikhs were, however, advised to eat whatever was served with God's name uttered over it.

On the way, he met Mahant Kirpal who had fought on his side so valiantly in the battle of Bhangani, but Kirpal would not keep him for fear of the Moghals. The Guru went thence to Jagraon and Raikot and met the chowdhry of these towns, Rai Kalha by name, who offered him great courtesies at his village, called Jatpura. From here, he proceeded to the lakhi forest where he encamped for sometime in the midst of great natural scenery. Whoever heard of the Guru's coming, came to him overcome with emotion. The Guru himself writes: "When they heard of their Shepherd, they were full of gratitude to God. The flocks would touch not grass nor water, and no one waiting for the other ran to have a sight of the Master and be blest by him." It is here that the Guru received the heart-rending message from Sirhind about the martyrdom of his two young sons and mother. The

Guru, composed as ever, bent upon his knees and lifting his hands to God in prayer uttered: "These two, Thy trust, I have also rendered unto Thee," and digging up a shrub with this knife he made this prophecy: "Just as I've torn this shrub from its roots, so shall this tyrannous empire be destroyed, root and branch, and much too soon."

CHAPTER VIII

“When there’s no other course open to man,
it is but righteous to unsheathe the sword.”

—ZAFARNAMA

FROM JATPURA, the Guru proceeded to Dina. A Sikh had presented his horse to him on the way and this facilitated his march away from the Moghal forces sooner than was possible otherwise. The Guru halted at Dina for some time. It is here that he wrote his Persian composition, *Zafarnama* (or, the Letter of Victory) in the name of Aurangzeb. This letter breathes defiance and contempt for earthly power which is yoked to tyranny and sin, and lays down the eternal rule that he alone wins in the end whose cause is just. That he alone doeth good who’s right.

The Guru says in this epistle, *inter alia*: “O king, I have no faith in thy oaths. Thou vowest to go one way and followest another. I would not have withdrawn my forces from Anandpur if I hadn’t put my faith in what thou pledged to me. And what could my forty men at Chamkaur do, when a hundred thousand men of thine fell upon them ?

“When there’s no other course open to man, it is but righteous to unsheathe the sword. When thy forces advanced against me, I gave them a taste of my arrows. Some of thy men fled, others were sent to the other world. And, I escaped, unhurt, by God’s Grace. Not a hair of my head could all thy forces touch.

“I protest thou believest neither in God, nor thy prophet. Thou keepst not thy word, and liest, putting

faith in worldly weal and power, and not thy God. Thou knowest not the value of an oath on the *Quran*. If the prophet Mohammad were here, I would present to him this foul deed of thy treachery. Thy envoy and thy Qazi vowed before me on thy behalf, and thou betrayed my trust! If even now thou repentest and comest to see me here in this territory of *Bairars*, who are all my followers, they shall give thee safe conduct and thou shalt not be harmed. I wish I could speak to thee face to face.

“I owe allegiance to only one God, my King. If He so desires, I might come to thee. Did thy God ask thee to tyrannise over others? Fie on thy sovereignty and on thy regard for God and religion! But, hear me: do not employ thy sword to murder the innocent, for the God on high would for sure punish thee. Fear God, therefore, who’s the Master of the earth and the heaven, and whose vengeance is terrible, who fears no one and is the protector forever of the poor.

“What if thou hast killed my four sons? Remember, the coiled snake is still alive. By putting out a few sparks thou quenchest not the fire thereby. Thy troops plundered the goods I had sent out (of the Anandpur fort) believing their oath to be true. But just as thou hast forgotten God, God will now forget thee and thou wilt be punished for thy evil deeds. But I wonder if thou knowest God. Thou hast an empire, wealth and pomp, a generous disposition, warlike qualities, but far from thee is religion.

“My protection is God than whom there’s no one better, nor higher. He who acteth honestly, him the God saveth to perform His service. How can an enemy touch his person of whom God on high is the friend and refuge? Life is but for a brief few moments. Change is the law of life. Whoever cometh here, also quitteth the scene. So,

whatever one's strength, one must annoy not the weak and thus destroy one's roots."

This unusual letter the Guru sent to the emperor through two of his trusted Sikhs, Daya Singh and Dharam Singh. The letter was duly delivered to the emperor, personally, in the south at Ahmadnagar and the emperor expressed a wish that the Guru might come and see him, but before the two could meet, news was received that the emperor was dead.¹

In the period that intervened, the Guru travelled through the Malva country. Some easy-going Sikhs of the central Panjab (Majha) hearing of the Guru's nearness waited upon him and implored him to return to the peaceful path of Nanak.

They promised to intercede on his behalf with the emperor so that further animosities between the two houses might cease. But, the Guru refused to listen to them saying, "I'm fighting for a cause, not for myself. I have sacrificed my sons, my father and my mother for this cause. And, now you come to ask me to withdraw from the fight to save my person? This will never be.

¹ That Aurangzeb, in his last days, had become so much conscious of his barbarous and bigoted ways is borne out by the letters he addressed to his sons from his death-bed, which said, *inter alia*: "I know not who I am, where I shall go and what will happen to this sinner full of sins. My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart but my darkened eyes have recognised not His light. There is no hope for me in the future. When I have lost hope in myself, how can I hope in others? I have greatly sinned and know not what torment awaits me (in the Hereafter)."

(*History of India*, Vincent Smith, Oxford, 1920, p. 448)

The Sikh historians aver that this change was wrought after Aurangzeb had received the letter of Guru Govind Singh which detailed his excesses and those of his viceroys in a language which he understood and coming from a holy man affected much his mind and heart.

Whosoever wants to live in ignoble peace, may compromise with tyranny. I wouldn't till I have breath in me, nor will those who will choose to follow me." These men then left for their homes, disappointed, but when they reached their destinations and told the people of the Guru's determination to continue the fight, hundreds of them resolved to fight on the Guru's side, led by a woman, Mai Bhago, who, donning a man's dress shamed and censured them back to the path of suffering and sacrifice. Some of them were those who had earlier denied the Guru at Anandpur and escaped from the battle.

The Guru now got news that he was being pursued by the imperial troops, at least ten thousand strong, under Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind. He, therefore, proceeded towards *Khidrana*, in the district of Ferozepur. In the meantime, the large contingent of Sikhs from Majha (whose strength some historians like Latif have put at 12,000, though the Sikh Chroniclers say they were far fewer, some say as few as forty) saw a huge force advancing towards the Guru who was only a short distance away. They engaged the Moghal hosts so recklessly that everyone of them including the brave heroine, Mai Bhago, fell on the battlefield. It is said they attracted the Moghal forces towards themselves by spreading their white cotton sheets on the trees and shrubs all around. The Moghals seeing a huge Sikh camp pounced upon it and after a fierce battle, killed everyone of their number. The Moghal forces thinking that the Guru also must be one of the slain, retired from the field quite some distance behind, as they could not find water for their troops. When the Guru went to the scene of the battle to find out wherefrom had that timely contingent arrived to assist him, he found one of the Sikhs, Mahan Singh by name, still a little conscious. The Guru took him in his lap, wiped his face,

and with tears of joy in his eyes, said: "Ask whatever thou may and I grant thee that. Thou hast redeemed thyself both here and in the hereafter." The devotee, his breath choked with emotion, sobbed: "If thou art in mercy, forgive me and my companions our earlier betrayal of thee at Anandpur. Pray tear up the piece of paper on which, to our shame, we wrote: we acknowledge thee not as our Guru. We have tried to wipe our treachery to thee with our blood. Now own us if thou may in thy Mercy and bless us that we die in peace." The Guru blessed him profusely, tore up their collective letter of apostacy and said, "Ye are all saved by God in whose cause ye have laid down your lives. God's Mercy shall be upon ye and upon those who'll choose to follow ye." Mai Bhago who showed signs of life was picked up by the Guru from the battlefield and taken with him for treatment. He got all the dead bodies collected and cremated with due honours.

The Guru now proceeded to Talwandi Sabo (in the erstwhile Patiala state) and now called Damdama Sahib (or the place of the Guru's rest). Here, he stayed for quite sometime¹ dictating the *Adi Granth* to a devout Sikh of his, Bhai Mani Singh, and adding to it his father's hymns and, according to tradition, one verse of his own. He did so because, it is said, the original copy was with his uncle, Dhirmal, who refused to part with it. And, the Sikhs wanted an edition certified by the Guru. He also made additions to his own compositions. Here, he was also joined by his wives, Sundri and Sahib Kaur. When they asked the Guru where the young sons were, the Guru replied, pointing to his followers: "For these thousands, I sacrificed the other four. So long as these

¹ Some historians like I. Bannerjee in his *Evolution of the Khalsa* (Part II) think the Guru stayed here for three years.

sons of mine are alive, I will not consider the death of my other sons in vain! ”

The Guru blessed this part of the land saying instead of coarse grain and shrubbery, it will yield wheat and fruit, which it does now, and scattering his reed-pens in all directions he said, “This will one day be a place of great learning.” It is now known as the Guru’s Kashi. The Guru, according to Trumpp, made 1,20,000 converts during his stay at Damdama. The old glory of Anandpur, it appears, had returned and Sikhs thronged here from far and near. Now, the Guru decided to depart along with five others towards the Deccan via Rajputana, inspite of the besecchings of his devotees. “My message of hope must spread from one corner of this land to the other,” he said, “I cannot sit back and relax, when my nation is on fire.” It appears, it was now the Guru’s wish to integrate his forces with those of the Rajputs and the Marathas to give a decisive battle to the Moghals.

CHAPTER IX

*“O death thou terrifiest everyone, not me,
who’s filled with utter joy at thy sight”*

—KABIR

WHILE THE GURU was yet on his way, he heard of the death of Aurangzeb. His eldest son, Bahadur Shah, was engaged in a military expedition in Afghanistan at that time. Taking advantage of his absence, his younger brother, Mohammad Azam, usurped the throne. Bahadur Shah hastened back home to fight his way to his legal heritage. He had often heard of the heroic exploits of Guru Govind Singh, and, also, that being a man of spiritual disposition, he harboured grudge against systems, not men. He, therefore, took a chance and appealed to Guru Govind Singh, through one of his devout Sikhs from Ghazni, Bhai Nand Lal, whom he knew personally, to forget the past and help him gain possession of the imperial throne. He promised to look into, and redress, any grievances the Guru might have against his house.¹

¹ Why Bahadur Shah made, and the Guru accepted, the request for assistance is amply justified by the character of the former as evidenced by historians of the time. Contrary to his father’s Sunni creed, Bahadur Shah was a Shia, and a liberal Sufi like his uncle, Dara Shikoh, who too was on the best of terms with the Guru’s house and was offered material help and a robe of honour by the seventh Guru, Hari Rai, when Dara was a fugitive after the battle of Samugarh, and which so much annoyed Aurangzeb that he called the Guru to his presence to answer for it. Dara, it may be recalled, was a great votary of Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore, a renowned Sufi, who had been called upon by the fifth Guru, Arjun, to lay the foundation stone of the now famous

(Contd.)

Though the Guru wasn't sure of Bahadur Shah keeping his word once victory was his, he had heard of his catholicity of outlook as against the bigotry and one-track mind of his father. So, he decided to give his offer a trial and sent a detachment under one of his trusted disciples, Dharam Singh, to render whatever assistance they could to Bahadur Shah in his hour of crisis. A bloody battle was fought near Dhaulpur for three days in which Mohammad Azam, along with several of his principal officers, was killed, his army scattered and Bahadur Shah proclaimed himself the emperor of India. He was extremely grateful for the assistance that the Sikh detachment had rendered him and sent Dharam Singh, their leader, to express his heartfelt gratitude to the Guru. He also made a request to the Guru to see him, saying he himself would have paid a visit to the Guru, but this

Golden Temple at Amritsar. Thus the relations of Sikhism with the Sufi and Shias, both persecuted by Aurangzeb, were of the most cordial.

According to Mohd. Latif (*A History of the Panjab*, Calcutta, 1890, pp. 181-82), "Bahadur Shah was a generous, munificent and excessively good natured prince. His tolerance and amiability were in great contrast to the bigotry and hypocrisy of his predecessor, Aurangzeb. Brought up in the school of adversity (he was kept in confinement for seven years by his father charging him with softness to, and even hobnobbing with, the Sultans of Bijapur and Golkanda whom he was asked to subdue but with whom he wanted to make a rapprochement of the king-emperor) he had grown up mild and affable to such a degree that the people called him the saint king.

Latif continues: "According to his historian, his gifts in jewels and rich dresses were truly royal. In his dress he was plain like a devotee. He tried at Lahore to introduce the *Khutba*, according to the Shia creed, but on being opposed by the Sunnis abandoned the idea, a singular sign of his liberal outlook. Fond of the society of learned men, he took great delight in discourses on topics of law and divinity. He was most popular in Panjab and one of the gateways of Lahore (Shah-Almi) was named after him..."

gesture might be misconstrued by some of his bigoted followers.

When this invitation was received in the Guru's camp, the Sikhs would not advise the Guru to accept it. They feared there might be some catch in it. The Guru's wives also entreated him likewise. But the Guru said, "Life and death are in the hands of God at all times. Hence, one cannot be too careful in avoiding danger." He accepted the invitation and accompanied by one of his wives, Sahib Kaur, and leaving the other one, Sundri, in Delhi, (the third one had died early), he marched towards Agra where the emperor had encamped himself. On way, he halted at Mathura and Vrindavana and held discourses to the people.

When he reached Agra, the emperor received him with great courtesies, made him costly presents and thanking him profusely for the timely assistance he had rendered him requested him to spend some time with him. The Guru gladly accepted this invitation¹. He thought it would be a good opportunity to bring to the emperor's notice the tyrannies heaped upon his followers by the proteges of the imperial rule, notably the Nawab of Sirhind, who had ordered his two young sons to be bricked up alive.

¹ Thus says *Tarikh-i-Bahadurshahi*, a source book, of this incident: "At the time the (emperor's) army was marching towards Burhanpur, Guru Govind, one of the descendants of Nanak, had come into these districts to travel, and accompanied the royal camp. He was in the habit of constantly addressing assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics and all sorts of people." (As quoted in *History of India as told by its own historians*, Vol. 7, page 566). Khafi Khan, a contemporary of Aurangzeb, and no friend of the Guru's house, in his "*Muntakhabul-Lubab*" corroborates this view that the Guru accompanied by some 200 *sowars* became a "companion" of the emperor for some-time, on his march to the Deccan.

This nearness of the emperor to the Guru became an eyesore to many of his courtiers, and some of them decided to embarrass the Guru. One day, as he was conversing with the king in the presence of some courtiers, one of them, said to be a learned Sayyad from Sirhind, made a request thus: "O Guru, we have heard of the great house of Nanak. You are the tenth in succession to the founder of your religion. We consider only him to be a divine man who can perform miracles. It would give us great satisfaction if you too could allay our doubts in this behalf." The Guru sensed clearly what lay behind this seemingly innocent request. But in order to put his questioner in the wrong, he answered: "Why, the emperor himself is the miracle-maker. He can raise high who's humble, and demolish those that are high and mighty." The questioner was, however, persistent: "Sir, what you speak is truth, but I want to know if there's a miracle Your Holiness can perform." The Guru thereupon took out a gold coin and said, "Look, what a miracle is this? It can buy anything in the world, any person, any value. Isn't it?" "Yes, yes, your Honour, but we would be pleased to know what miracles can *you* perform. That is what will allay our doubts." The Guru, thereupon, drew his sword and thundered: "*This* is the miracle I can perform. I can chop off the head of anyone who dares challenge me. Here is the final arbiter for the destinies of men and nations."

The questioner became speechless. The emperor, who was listening to the questions and answers with great interest before, reprimanded the questioner for his impudence. "No, no, Excellency," he said, "You shouldn't mind this impertinence on the part of my courtier." As this news travelled, everyone was amazed at the fearlessness of the Guru even in the presence of the

emperor of the land in whose presence it was just not possible for anyone to appear armed, much less to draw the sword.¹

One day the emperor said to the Guru, "There's no faith better than ours. Why shouldn't those who want to escape hell embrace it." The Guru replied, "O king, it is not the stamp but what is inside it that makes a coin worthwhile. Even when a counterfeit coin has Your Majesty's creed imprinted upon it, no one will exchange it with goods in the market-place. So also in the case of faith. It's not the label, but the content that's pleasing to God, and which determines who's to be consigned to hell, who to heaven. I believe in one God, not two or three, and for me no one is an infidel save one who denies His Presence."

One day, the Guru made known to the emperor the desire he had harboured for some time. This was to deliver up to him the body of Wazir Khan, Subedar of Sirhind, so that he could deal with him as he chose. The emperor was taken aback at this demand, but did not refuse it at the moment. He said, he would consult with his ministers and would tender a reply later, though he expressed his grave doubts if it would not lead to a mutiny in his army if he surrendered a Viceroy's body to the Guru for reprisals. He, therefore, requested the Guru to wait for a year till his rule was firmly established and invited him to accompany him on his march towards Jaipur and other places. The Guru, though annoyed at the emperor's hesitancy, still did not want to break off his relations suddenly and agreed to accompany the emperor on his march, to see if given a further chance, he would meet

¹ That the Guru was permitted to go, armed, and escorted by five Sikhs, also armed, into the presence of the emperor is supported by Mohd. Latif in his *History of the Panjab* (Calcutta, 1891, p. 273).

with his demand which was legitimate and in accordance with the Quranic injunction: life for life.

The Guru, however, waited for some time more at Agra, addressing the holy congregations every morning and evening. Meantime, the emperor marched towards Jaipur. Later, the Guru's camp followed his, and soon overtook the emperor and visited Jodhpur and Chitaur along with him. The Rajput princes of these places paid homage to the Guru, who continued his march southwards along with the emperor till he reached Burhanpur where a devout Sikh had prepared a house for the Guru. The Guru honoured him with his visit and stayed in the house for some time. The emperor in the meantime had left and later wrote to the Guru to join him. The Guru accepted his request and both proceeded to Nanded in the Deccan, on the bank of the river Godavari. This was in the later part of the year 1707 A.D. The Guru had with him some infantry and two to three hundred cavalry equipped with lances.¹

At Nanded, he visited the house of a Bairagi, Madho Das by name. The Guru had heard that the Bairagi could perform miracles and had such skill in magic that he could overthrow anyone who sat on his couch. The Guru thereupon went into his hut, and lay on his couch in his absence. When Madho Das came and saw a stranger occupying his couch, unharmed, he couldn't believe his eyes. The Guru, he was told in advance by one of his followers, had also slain one of his goats and cooked and eaten its meat. This sacrilege and affront the Bairagi could not bear, and demanded an explanation

¹ Here the Guru seems to have parted company with the emperor who, according to Daulat Ram's *Life of Guru Govind Singh*, wanted the Guru, now, to help him against the Marathas which the Guru refused to do and finally broke off from him.

from the intruder. The Guru replied that he was too fatigued and having come upon the hut of one who was known for his hospitality, he could not but recline on the couch and eat whatever was available. The Guru also told him that he had come to reclaim him from the life of a recluse. When Madho Das looked into his eyes and at his figure and saw something unusual in his charming, fearless manners, he asked who he was. When told that he was Guru Govind Singh in person, he fell at his feet, and said, "O Master, I'm Thy slave (Banda). You have honoured me by your visit and emancipated me. Pray tell me if there's any command of yours I can carry out. You are the saviour of our race."

The Guru was deeply touched at this homage. When asked, Madho Das narrated his whole story to the Guru. Born in Poonch, near Rajauri (Kashmir), he farmed for sometime, practised firearms and went on hunting expeditions. One day, he had killed a she-deer and found, to his utter distress, two young ones in her womb. This shocked him so much that he renounced the world and became a recluse, settling later at Nander and practising austerities. Here he had also learnt the practice of Yoga, and some magic. The Guru liked his sensitive nature, but reminded him that when tyranny had overtaken men, it was the duty of the more sensitive to fight against it and even to lay down their life in the struggle. Madho Das, who now called himself the Master's slave, Banda, offered to do as he was bidden. The Guru thereupon baptised him and named him Gurbakhash Singh (though he continued to be known popularly as Banda Singh Bahadur). The Guru also presented him with a sword and five arrows from his quiver and instructed him to remain chaste, not to turn away from battle, to remain humble in victory, not to found a sect of his own, to look

upon his associates in this mission as comrades and equals, as the principles of the Khalsa brotherhood enjoined, and never their superior, and to take counsel with them at all times.

The Guru blest him that so long as he carried out the Guru's mission in the spirit in which it was intended—punishing the evil-doers and raising the poor and the down-trodden—in a spirit of dedication and detachment, with God in the heart, ever and at all times, the Guru's hand will always be at his back. Banda bowed at the Guru's feet and promised to do as he was instructed and never to depart from the path set out for him by the Master.

Thereupon, the Guru gave him detailed instructions to proceed to the Panjab along with three other Sikhs¹, Binod Singh, Kahan Singh and Baz Singh, and to wait at a point near Buria (in Ambala) for reinforcements which the Guru would get him sent. Thereafter, he was to attack a place nearby, called Sadhaura, where his devout Muslim follower, Budhu Shah, had been executed along with his disciples by his co-religionists for helping the Guru in the battle of Bhangani. Later, he was to march on Sirhind, lay siege to the city and seize and personally execute Wazir Khan, the Subedar, whose head the Guru had demanded earlier from the emperor but was disappointed by the latter's evasive replies. Later, he was to settle accounts with the chiefs of the hill states adjoining Panjab some of whom had been inimical, without cause, to the Guru's house and had even joined hands with the Moghal emperor to attack and harass him at a time when he needed and had asked for their help to defeat the common enemy.

Banda left Nander soon after, with a letter from the Guru in the name of the Sikhs to rally to his banner. The

¹ Dr. G. C. Narang puts this figure at 25.

Guru stayed here for sometime more. He would meditate on the bank of the river Godavari at a secluded spot. While here, many Sikhs came from far and near to visit him and make him presents. A Sikh once presented to him a valuable diamond ring. The Guru was sitting by the river-side, absorbed in the thought of the Divine, and threw the ring into the river. The Sikh was greatly disappointed. He entreated the Guru to tell him about where he had thrown the ring so that he could dive into the river and search for it, for it was such a precious thing. The Guru smiled and throwing another precious ring (which, it is said, the emperor had gifted him at Nander) into the river, he exclaimed, "There, I threw it there!" The whole congregation was amazed at the detachedness of the Guru from the possessions of the world.

The Guru after sometime seems to have sent away his wife, Sahib Kaur, who had accompanied him to the Deccan, to Delhi, where his other wife, Sundri, was. She was not willing to part, as she had taken a vow that without seeing the Guru, each day, she would not partake of food. But the Guru prevailed upon her and blessing her with six different weapons told her to look at them whenever she desired to behold him. Bhai Mani Singh, a great divine and learned follower of the Guru, was also made to accompany her.

Soon after, one night, as the Guru was retiring to his bed in his camp a Pathan, Gul Khan by name, entered into his presence. The man had visited the Guru earlier also during the last few days, claiming to be his devotee. As this visit was not considered unusual, no one stopped him. The Guru offered him *prasad* (sanctified food) which the rascal devoured at once. Then, as the Guru was bidding him good-bye and in the process of reclining on his bed, he plunged a dagger into the Guru's illu-

trious body twice. The Guru jumped from his bed with the speed of an angry lion, drew his sword and chopped off the head of the fleeing assassin.

All evidence now goes to prove that the murderer was a hireling of the Subedar of Sirhind, who, fearing reprisals from the Guru for his dastardly deeds dispatched this hired assassin to put an end to the Guru's life at the first opportunity.

The wound was treated immediately and stitched up. On the fourth day, the Guru appeared in his *Darbar* and it was considered he was well on the way to recovery. But, the same night when he stretched a little, the wound again gaped open. The Guru sat up, in pain, and thinking his journey's end to be near, he called aloud some of his immediate followers. By the time they arrived, the Guru was absorbed in meditation, but the Sikhs were at once apprehensive that something dreadful was in the offing. His face was serene and calm, as usual, and he betrayed no signs of a sinking man, but of one utterly composed and withdrawn in his own inner being, his eyes quietly closed, like petals of lotus at sundown. As soon as the prayer was over, some of them choked with emotion could not resist expressing their deep anxiety at what they feared was in the womb of the future. But, the Guru, collected as ever, replied in subdued tones: "The one thing men dread most is death. I have always lived in its nearness and looked it in the face. So should every one of you who claims to follow me. I'll ride to my death as a bridegroom does to the house of his bride. So, do not grieve for me. For, wheresoever are the five pure ones of you dedicated to God, there my presence shall also be." Asked who was to succeed him to the spiritual throne of Nanak, he replied, "The Word as enshrined in the Granth Sahib. Whoever searcheth me here, findeth me. You

shall hereafter look upon it as the visible embodiment of the Gurus. I had come to establish God on earth, and so I entrust you to Him. He will ever be your Guide, Protector and Refuge, so long as you keep to His Path.”

The Guru, with quiet, graceful movements, put on a clean and pleasing dress. He, then, stood to perform the *Ardasa* (closing prayer). Then, he circumambulated four times round the Holy Book, and making an offering of five *paisas* and a cocoanut, as was customary at the time of the succession of the new Guru, bowed before it, thus formally declaring the Holy Book to succeed him as the Guru. He then put on a waistband, as was usual with him while going on a battle, slung a bow on his shoulder, and taking his musket in his right hand, uttered to those around him in final salutation: “*Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Waheguru ji ki Fateh!*” (The Khalsa belongs to God; O, Victory be to God).

The Guru, now, asked his steed to be brought to him which he caressed, tenderly, and mounting it on his last journey together, proceeded towards a walled tent where he had ordered his bier to be prepared. He asked his Sikhs not to follow or accompany him to the bier. Except one, Bhai Santokh Singh, everyone was bidden to go back home. Here, he dismounted his horse which stood, tearful and mute, outside the tent, its reins held in the hands of a grief-stricken follower. Other Sikhs sat for a while, outside the enclosure, reciting the Word of the Guru, and praying. It was only one quarter before the end of the night when the Guru went into *samadhi*, and laid himself with a quiet grace on the bier.¹ Before he did so

¹ According to the latest researches, the Guru breathed his last, in the early hours of October 7, 1708 and was cremated by his followers with due honours in the morning. (See *Gur Sobha* by Senapati, a Court Poet of Guru Govind Singh and *Last Days of Guru Govind Singh*

he asked his only attendant to convey this last wish of his to his followers that he did not want anyone to erect a shrine commemorating his death. "He who does so, shall perish." The Guru in his humility wanted his own name to be effaced utterly and sought merely to be followed as life, not worshipped as a tomb. But, the Sikhs later gathered his sacred ashes and built a platform on it. The Khalsa whom the Guru had declared as his successor in secular matters resolved that the memory of such a great one as Guru Govind could not but be commemorated. Here was then democracy in action!

Thus ended, at the young age of 42, an amazing character in the history of the human race. Assuming secular and spiritual responsibilities for not only his immediate followers, but for human freedom in this subcontinent, for man's dignity and his right to his personal beliefs and ways of life, at the tender age of 9, fatherless, surrounded by jealous and intriguing members of his ancestral family, by the hill chiefs around, and above all the Moghal emperor and his viceroys, he gave new secular hope and spiritual dynamism to a whole people. He moulded out of sheer clay men and women of steel, sparrows who could pounce upon the hawks and tear them open. Only three years after his death, the Sikhs under Banda were the masters of a large portion of territory in central and south-east Panjab and were threatening Delhi. Thirty years after, they were the masters of the Cis-Satluj states, after a life-and-death struggle which, in its heroism and sacrifice, has few parallels in the history of mankind. The Guru had made death for a cause so popular that even when price was put on the head of every Sikh, and the whole community

by Dr. Ganda Singh). Orthodox Sikhs, however, believe, that the Guru winged his way to the heaven on horseback.

was hounded out of their habitations and lived for years in the woods and hide-outs, not one surrendered or accepted defeat. By the end of the Guru's century, they had established their rule over the entire Panjab, and later also in Kashmir, Ladakh and the Pathanland right upto the Khyber pass. For the first time in a thousand years of India's history, the tide of invasions had turned west-wards. This was nothing short of a miracle.

But, this was not all. He composed poetry that has few peers in the annals of literature: so vast is its canvas and imaginative sweep. The Guru created not merely a community of warriors, but men who would, even during war-time, never forsake God, and whose victories would be for the sake of *Dharma*, not for self-glory or greed. In other words, according to Guru Govind Singh, it was not power, but ethics that must determine the polity of a nation. And a nation must consist of a whole people, not a society broken up by caste, colour, creed or a superior race. This democratic spirit which the Guru infused in the Khalsa brotherhood, in which the highest was equal to the lowest, and where a small, well-knit idea-inspired band of men and women fought and acted in the name, and for the sake, of a whole people has made Arnold Toynbee remark that he had anticipated Lenin by two centuries.¹ He abolished succession knowing what abuses an office by heredity can lead to. He even proclaimed, as has been pointed out that "whosoever would call me God would be consigned to hell." The Sikhs had to turn in secular matters to the whole Khalsa for a unanimous resolution, or the consensus (the *Gurmatta*), which was obligatory for everyone to follow. And, though he fought both with the Moghals and their vassals, the Hindu hill chiefs, he inculcated nothing but

¹ *A Study of History* (Oxford, Abridgement, 1960 p. 745.)

respect for the other man's faith. "Men are the same all over, though each hath a different appearance," he preached.

For the first time our race was given the message of the whole man. The same person was to be the devotee of God, as much as a warrior, a tiller of the soil as well as the performer of menial duties. *Seva* (Community service), and *Langar* (Community kitchen) have since been the *sine-qua-non* of the Sikh fraternity. The taboos of dress and diet no longer were important for a spiritual life. Nor any profession was forbidden to a Sikh. But, all that he did was to be in the name of God. For, the Guru said, "The Khalsa belongs to God, and so victory also, in every field, is God's." He who only earns but does not share, he who only gathers joys but does not sacrifice, he who runs after the transitory allurements of life but is not dedicated to God forever and at all times, could not claim the Guru as his own. His last prayer was, as it would also be of those who seek to follow him:

"O God, there's nothing that's mine in me: all that's me belongs to Thee. When I surrender to Thee what's Thine, O what is it, then, that belongs to me?"

EPILOGUE

NOW THAT we have come to a close of this story, it would be fitting to assess so far as is possible from the available material on his life and letters, the place of Guru Govind Singh in the annals of man. He has been criticised as having deviated from the path of peaceful pursuits of the spirit enunciated by Guru Nanak, the founder of his house. On the other hand, it has been suggested that he was not much of a success in uprooting the tyrannous regime against which he had raised the standard of revolt. His founding of the Khalsa, a distinct socio-political entity, as the spearhead of the movement of liberation of the Indian people, has also been misconstrued as an attempt to divide his creed from that of the Muslims as much as from the Hindus, though, initially, it is argued, Nanak's endeavour was to reconcile both to an inner life rather than to bring into vogue another exclusive Path. His exploits against the Moghals have been represented as born out of his hatred of the "alien faith" of the Musalmans; his departure from the ancient customs and beliefs of the Hindus has been characterised as his total and utter rebellion against the faith of his forefathers much more severely and uncompromisingly than Nanak had ever intended!

But these, and similar other arguments are the exercises of puny, or perverse, minds in judging a figure as elemental and as profound as that of Guru Govind Singh. As Cunningham has rightly remarked, "if it be thought by any that his obscure end belied the promise

of his whole life, it should be remembered that when Mohammad was a fugitive from Mecca, "the lance of an Arab might have changed the history of the world" and that the Achilles of poetry, the reflexion of truth, left Troy untaken. The lord of the Myrmidons destined to a short life and immortal glory, met an end almost as base as that which he dreaded when struggling with Simois and Scamander; and the heroic Richard, of eastern and western fame, whose whole soul was bent upon the deliverance of Jerusalem, veiled his face in shame and sorrow that God's holy city should be left in the possession of infidels. Success is thus not always the measure of greatness. The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the true adjuncts of that purity of worship which had been preached by Nanak. Govind saw what was yet vital and relumed it with promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people, and the impress of Govind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free and manly bearing than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look which marks the fervour of his soul and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity."

He concludes: "The learned of Greece and Rome misunderstood the spirit of those humble men who obtained a new life by baptism. Tacitus and Suetonius regarded the early Christians as a mere Jewish sect... and failed to perceive the fundamental difference, and to

appreciate the latent energy and real excellence of that doctrine which has added dignity and purity to modern civilization.”¹

A more recent comparison would be that of Karl Marx, author of “the Capital,” who was taken to be a frustrated idealist who wanted merely to avenge his own fate from society. But, now, no one in his senses would try to belittle the profound and fundamental changes his doctrine has brought about in the whole human civilization. The world, after Marx, was never the same again, and it is immaterial if one stood against him or for. But, everyone in his adult years was required during the last one whole century to take up a position in sympathy with or in opposition to him.

Again, was it merely an unclaimed son of a carpenter dying young on the Cross possessed by a vision of the Kingdom of God which no one amongst his persecutors had seen or visualised? It was, in truth, a whole new civilization being born which was to turn the course of world history for ages to come.

Only its birth-pangs were mistaken for the pitiful cries of a persecuted individual! And when during the twenties of this century, Mahatma Gandhi of hallowed memory launched his non-violent movement of non-co-operation against an imperialist nation armed to the teeth, with his unusual weapons of the spinning wheel and Satyagraha, and broke only the salt and such other sundry laws which touched apparently not even the fringes of the people’s needs and demands, no one knew, least of all his detractors, that this meek man of unimpressive physique but resolute will attuned to God, was indeed, transforming the soul of a slave nation! Such was also the cataclysmic nature of the doctrine of Guru Govind Singh.

¹ *A History of the Sikhs* by J. Cunningham, 1955 Ed., pages 74-76.

Guru Govind, it must be emphasised, did not depart even an iota from the teachings of Nanak. If he had any such intention, he would not have installed the *Adi Granth* of his predecessors as the visible image of the Gurus after him. His own compositions are a dedication to no other ideal but the Supreme Unknown. He fought not as if he was fighting men of differing creeds, but only when there arose a question of a people's honour against their oppressors, irrespective of their denomination or outer coat. And, it is a fact of history that both Hindus and Muslims fought equally on his side. The man who uttered: "The temple and the mosque are the same: the Hindu and the Muslim ways of worship lead to the same end," could not justifiably be accused of an anti-Hindu, or anti-Muslim bias. And wasn't it Guru Nanak, again, who had protested in some of his most patriotic hymns against the tyrannies of Babur, and was incarcerated for voicing that protest? Wasn't it Nanak, too, who had warned: "He who trieth to rule over another is a fool, an indiscriminate wretch." The bearing of arms and even regular conflicts with the Moghals had started at the time of Guru Govind's grandfather, Guru Hari Govind. Every Guru, from Nanak onwards, had been termed *Sacha Padshah* (the true king), and all the symbols of royalty like the throne, the waving of the fly-brush over their heads, their words being treated as *Hukum* (order) which, indeed, was identified with God's Will, had been current for at least two centuries before Guru Govind. Caste-exclusiveness had already been abolished in Sikh society by Guru Nanak, and a community kitchen of which everyone had to partake irrespective of caste, birth, creed or station, had been a usual feature of the Guru's house long before him. That ethics should be the guiding principles of secular activity and human

polity also was an accepted basis of social organism and individual behaviour since the days of Guru Nanak. Nanak's injunction that every activity must be God-grounded and God-dedicated was also never departed from by Guru Govind.

Where, then, lay the distinct contribution of Guru Govind Singh? In organising a socio-political body of spiritually-awakened, but earth-aware people who were to spearhead the movement for the liberation of a whole society, and not merely remain content with the self-sufficient peace of the spirit, or the material well-being of an individual. In the transformation of a whole corporate society through a well-knit, dynamic, conscious, and frontal organisation deriving its authority from, and working solely in the interest of, the whole people, in every detail of their life. In making the baptism of steel and fire a necessary adjunct of a dedicated life. In making democratic temper permeate every layer of a man's being as much as of a society of which man is but a portion and limb. And, yet in making a universal God both the inspiration and the ideal of social and individual activity. In short, it may be said, that whereas Guru Nanak gave meaning to life, Guru Govind invested death with a new purpose.

Writes Sayyad Mohd. Latif, eulogising the merits of Guru Govind's contribution: "He was a lawgiver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his *masnad* and a faqir in the society of the Khalsa."¹ Thus, Guru Govind Singh gave man the message of the whole man.

Dr. Sir Gokal Chand Narang is in our view quite justified in saying that "though he did not actually break the shackles that bound his nation, he had set their souls free, and filled their hearts with a lofty longing for

¹ *A History of the Panjab*, Calcutta, 1890.

freedom and ascendancy. He had broken the charm of sanctity attached to the lord of Delhi and destroyed the awe and terror inspired by Moghal tyranny.”¹

In the words of Prof. Bannerjee: “It is undeniable that Guru Govind Singh must be counted among the greatest of Indians of all ages. The object he attempted was great and laudable, and the means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind could alone have suggested. (And) it will not do us to forget that whatever else he might have been, Guru Govind Singh was first and foremost a religious leader. None but a person of a saintly disposition, highly spiritual and a complete resignation to the Will of God could have behaved as he did during the acute crisis of his life. Leaving his home and everything in the hands of the enemy, he bids farewell to Anandpur, and with his ranks depleted and his family dispersed, his wives going in one direction and his mother with his two younger sons he knew not where, he arrives at Chamkaur and is at once surrounded by the Moghals and the hill chiefs. After a superhuman fight against the heaviest of odds, in which he sees his two dearest sons and his chosen companions fall one after another before his very eyes, he stealthily leaves the place and for some time is hunted like a wild animal, now escaping in one disguise, now in another, when news arrives of the barbarous and brutal murder of his two younger sons and the no less tragic death of his mother. He faces all this with the most supreme composure, and serenely goes on with his work as if nothing has happened. He compiles a new recension of the Granth Sahib, adds to his own compositions and busies himself in laying strong the foundations of Sikhism in the Malva tract. Certainly, no mere politician or soldier could have done it. It is

¹ *Transformation of Sikhism*, (Delhi, 1960), p. 98

significant that after a very close contact with the Guru for more than a year, Bahadur Shah treated him as a *dervesh* and ordered the considerable moveable property left by him to be relinquished to the heirs, though according to rule it ought to have been confiscated. A man who preached that "the temple and the mosque are the same", could not have been the enemy of a community or a class. There's nothing in the Guru's life and writings to support any such conclusion. He had left the leadership to the collective wisdom of the community knowing fully well that it would throw up its own leaders as need arose, and that the Guru's hopes were not belied is shown by the part that even such obscure men as (Nawab) Kapur Singh and Jassa Singh Kalal played in the Sikh war of independence. (They) blunted the edge of Abdali's aggressive power which even the Marathas failed to resist, and turned his great triumph at Panipat into a barren victory."¹

A fuller and more comprehensive estimate of the achievements, both subtle and apparent, of this great prophet of hope must, however, await a more appropriate forum. Suffice it to conclude here in the words of a Sikh chronicler, Bhangu Rattan Singh, whose family had seen or participated in the Sikh struggle for freedom in the eighteenth century: "The Guru created the Khalsa, for he wanted to transfer sovereignty to the poor of our land, so that they might remember in the days to come that there was also in history a Guru by the name of Govind Singh!"²

¹ *Evolution of the Khalsa* (Part II) by Prof. I. Bannerjee, Calcutta, 1962, pages 156—160.

² *Prachin Panth Parkash*, by B. Rattan Singh.

**Extracts from the Works of
Guru Govind Singh**

(Translations by the author)

J Á P

The Sacred Word as uttered by the Tenth Master.

Chhape Chhand

By Thy Grace

He who hath neither distinguishing signs, nor marks,
nor caste, nor lineage.

He whose form and colour and distinctive marks, no
one can discern.

He who is the Moveless Being, and beyond limitations
and is manifested as Light of the Spirit.

He whom myriads of Indras look upon as the King of
kings.

He who's the Master of the three Worlds, of the angels
and the demons, and of whom every blade of grass and
vegetation proclaimeth: "not this, not this".

O, all His names one cannot tell: so everyone

Knoweth Him from whatever He Doeth.

Bhuyang Paryat Chhand

- Greetings to Thee, O Being beyond Time.
 Greetings to Thee, O Beneficent One.
 Greetings to Thee, O Master without form.
 Greetings to Thee, O One of incomparable Beauty.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's contained not in form.
 Greetings to Thee, Who is accountable to no one.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's without body.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's born not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's destroyed not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's divided not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who hath no names.
 Greetings to Thee, Who hath no place.
 Greetings to Thee, Whom deeds do not bind.
 Greetings to Thee, Whom no religious system can contain.
 Greetings to Thee, O Nameless Being.
 Greetings to Thee, O Placeless Being.
 Greetings to Thee, O Unconquerable One.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou who art unafraid.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou without shores.
 Greetings to Thee, Who can be corroded not.
 Greetings to Thee, O Infinite One.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou, without beginning.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou without blemish.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou that art limitless.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's cleaved not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's broken not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's of charitable disposition.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's infinite and beyond count.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's One and the only One.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's One and yet Many.
 Greetings to Thee, Whom elements bind not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's constant and moveless.

Greetings to Thee, Whom deeds bind not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who wanders not in doubt.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's without a homeland.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's without a garb.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's without a name.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's without desire.
 Greetings to Thee, Who outgoeth not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who dieth not.
 Greetings to Thee, Who moveth not.
 Greetings to Thee, Whom elements give not a form.
 Greetings to Thee, Who belongeth to none of (the three)
 Worlds.
 Greetings to Thee, Who grieveth never.
 Greetings to Thee, Who hath no woes.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's established not (by another).
 Greetings to Thee, Who's honoured by the three Worlds.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's the Treasure (of Good).
 Greetings to Thee, Who's deepest of the deep.
 Greetings to Thee, Who hath no arms.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's the Master of the three Attri-
 butes, and yet is not born.
 Greetings to Thee, O Reveller, the great Enjoyer !
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou well-yoked (to life) !
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou without colour.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou that goest never.
 Greetings to Thee, O Unfathomable Thou.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou that Pervadest all.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou Sustenance of the waters.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou who leanest on no one.
 Greetings to Thee, O Casteless one.
 Greetings to Thee, O One without lineage.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou without (an exclusive) religion.
 Greetings to Thee, O Wonder of wonders.

Hail, all Hail to Thee.

Hail, O One without a garb.

Hail, O One without a place.

Hail, O One without a roof.

Greetings to Thee, O Death of all beings.

Greetings to Thee, the Beneficent Lord of all.

Greetings to Thee, Who's in all forms.

Greetings to Thee, O King of all.

Greetings to Thee, O Destroyer of all.

Greetings to Thee, O Establisher of all.

Greetings to Thee, O Annihilator of all.

Greetings to Thee, O Sustenance of all.

Greetings to Thee, O Angelic Being.

Greetings to Thee, O Mysterious One.

Greetings to Thee, O One not born, and yet
of matchless Beauty.

Greetings to Thee, Who's all-pervading.

Greetings to Thee, Who permeates all.

Greetings to Thee, Who loveth all.

Greetings to Thee, Who destroyeth all.

Greetings to Thee, O Death of death.

Greetings to Thee, O Beneficent One.

Greetings to Thee, O Thou without colour.

Greetings to Thee, O Deathless One.

Greetings to Thee, O Mightiest of the mighty.

Greetings to Thee, O Doer of all doings.

Greetings to Thee, O Attached Being.

Greetings to Thee, O Detached One.

Greetings to Thee, O Thou without kindreds.

Greetings to Thee, O Fearless One.

Greetings to Thee, O Beneficent One.

Greetings to Thee, O Master of Mercy.

Greetings to Thee, O Infinite One.

Greetings to Thee, O Greatest of the great.
 Greetings to Thee, O Great Lover.
 Greetings to Thee, O the Groom of all.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou the Sucker of all life.
 Greetings to Thee, O Thou the Sustenance of all.
 Greetings to Thee, The Creator of all.
 Greetings to Thee, The Destroyer of all.
 Greetings to Thee, O Detached One.
 Greetings to Thee, O Great Indulger.
 Greetings to Thee, Who's Merciful to all.
 Greetings to Thee, Who sustaineth all.

Chachri Chhand

By Thy Grace

O Thou, without form,
 Of incomparable Beauty.
 O One without birth,
 Whom elements can contain not.
 Unaccountable,
 Without a garb.
 Without a name,
 And Detached.

Supportless.
 Mysterious,
 Unconquerable,
 And Unafraid.

Honoured in the three Worlds.
 The Treasure of treasures,
 Master of the three Attributes,
 and, yet, not born !

Without end.
Without beginning.
Unborn—and Self-dependent.
Unborn. Without caste.
Not contained by the elements,
And complete in Himself.
Undestroyable.
Unbreakable.
Unconquerable
And Unmoved.

O Deepest of the deep,
The Friend of all,
Without strife,
Without bonds.

Unthinkable. Unknowable.
Immortal. Unbound.

O Creator,
Unborn,
Infinite, the Great Being.

Without a blemish.
Without an equal.
Uninvolved.
Uncreated.

Unfathomable. Unborn.
Beyond elements.
Uncontaminated.

Beyond all regions.
 Without woes.
 Not Bound by deeds.
 Without superstition.

Unconquerable. Unafraid.
 Without arms. Unfathomable.
 Unweighable. The Treasure of Good.

Many, and yet One.

Bhuyang Prayat Chhand

Hail, the Most Venerable One.
 Hail, O Treasure of all-Good.
 Hail, O Angel of angels.
 Hail, O Garbless, Unfathomable One.
 Hail, O Death of death.
 Hail, O Sustenance of all.
 Hail, O All-pervading One.
 Hail, Whose Presence is everywhere.
 Hail, O One without limbs, without master.
 Hail, O One without an equal, O the Destroyer of all.
 Hail, O Sun of suns, the Most Venerable One.
 Hail, O Moon of moons, O Light of the suns.
 Hail, O Melody of music, Voice of the tune.
 Hail, O Rhythm of the dance,
 Hail, O Harmony of the melody.
 Hail, O Liquidity of the waters; O Movement of the
 winds.

- Hail, O One without limbs, O One without a name.
 Hail, O One of whole form.
 Hail, O Destroyer of destroyers.
 Hail, in whom all elements are contained.
 Hail, O One without blemish; the Embodiment of stain-
 lessness.
 Hail, O King of kings,
 Hail, O Super-form.
 Hail, O Yogi of yogis, the Supreme *Siddha*.
 Hail, O King of kings, O Splendour of splendours.
 Hail, O One decked with arms,
 Hail, O Warrior who enjoyeth a battle.
 Hail, O Inner-knower.
 Hail, O Mother of the Universe.
 Hail, O One without garbs, without superstition,
 Hail, O Detached One, whom no one can ravish.
 Hail, O Yogi of yogis, the Supreme Attached One.
 Hail, O Ever-present God, the Doer of fearsome deeds.
 Hail, O One who Blesseth angel and demon with Religion.
 Hail, O Destroyer of maladies, Embodiment of Compassion.
 Hail, O King of kings, O Master of masters;
 Hail, O greatest Giver, who Blesseth with Honour.
 Hail, O Malady of maladies, O Pure One.
 Hail, O Mantra of mantras; O Charm of charms;
 Hail, O Deity of deities; O *Tantra of tantras*.
 Hail, O Truth-Bliss-Consciousness, O Destroyer of enemies.
 Hail, O Formless One, of exquisite Beauty.
 Hail, O One who is everywhere, alike.
 Hail, O One who increaseth our wisdom, our occult
 powers.
 Hail, O Destroyer of sins, above, beneath and in the
 middle.
 Hail, O Sublime, Supreme God of gods, Giver and
 Sustainer,

Hail, O Thou who art Compassionate and givest to all.
 Hail, O Mysterious One, Unpierced, Nameless and
 Desireless.
 Hail, who liveth at all places, and defeateth the mightiest.

By Thy Power

Chachri Chhand

(Thou art) on the waters and on the earth.
 Fear-free, and Unconquerable.
 The Master of all, not-born,
 Without a country, without a garb.

Bhuyang Prayat Chhand

Hail to Thee, O Unfathomable, Unbound, Embodiment
 of Bliss,
 Whom everyone honoureth,
 And who is the Treasure of all.

Hail to Thee, who hath no overlord.
 Hail to Thee, who's the Destroyer of all.
 Hail to the Indestructible One.
 Hail to the Undestroyable One.
 Hail to the Immortal One.
 Hail to the Self-dependent One.

Hail to the All-pervading One.
 Hail to the One who's in all garbs.
 Hail to the King of kings.
 Hail to the One who decketh all.
 Hail to the Overlord of all.
 Hail to the Light of moons.
 Hail to the Melody in all music.
 Hail to the Lover of lovers.
 Hail to the Wrathful One, the Destroyer, the Sucker.
 Hail to the Creator of maladies.
 Hail to the One who Enjoyeth all.
 Hail to the Conqueror of all.
 Hail to the One who striketh fear.
 Hail to the Supreme Teacher of all **Sublime Wisdom**.
 Hail to the Melody of melodies.
 Hail the *Mantra of Mantras*—
 Hail, O Charm of charms.
 Hail to the One who is in all directions.
 Hail to the One who attracteth all.
 Hail, Who manifesteth in all forms.
 The Destroyer of the three Worlds and, yet,
 without form.

Hail, O Life of all life.
 Hail, O Seed of all seeds,
 Who's ever Profound and Calm.
 Never contaminated, Unattached,
 and drawn towards all,
 O Thou.

O Embodiment of Compassion,
 O Destroyer of sin :
 O ever, all over, of all,
 Hail, O Repository of all miracles, all intuitions !

Charpat Chhand

By Thy Grace

O Thou of immaculate Deeds !
 O Thou of unbreakable Law !
 O Thou of the 'whole' Yoga !
 O Thou, the Moveless Reveller !
 Of Eternal Rule,
 Of Establishment ever-the-same,
 The Master of the Higher Law,
 Of Deeds unknowable
 O Thou.

Thou art the Giver of all,
 The All-knower,
 The Destroyer of all,
 The Decorator of all,
 O Thou.

Thou art the Life of all life.
 The Power of all power.
 The Reveller in all,
 The Yogi of yogis—
 O Thou.

O Angel of angels,
 Our inmost Secret,
 The death-dealing God,
 And the Sustenance of all,
 O Thou.

Rual Chhand

By Thy Grace

O Thou the First Person, the Being beyond time, not cast into the womb, the Limitless One.

Who decketh all, and blesseth with graces the three Worlds, the Mysterious and Compassionate One since beginning.

Who sustaineth all, and maketh all to effort, and then destroyeth all.

Who's here and also there, the Detached One, whose Beauty has all the graces.

Who hath no name, no place, nor form, nor colour, nor sign.

Yea, the First Person, the Embodiment of Compassion, not born from the womb, Infinite, the Beginning of all.

Who hath no nationality, no dress, no form, no distinctive marks, no attachment,

And who, here as well as there, and in all directions, hath spread out as Love.

Without a name, without desire, who seemeth without a fixed abode,

And who's the Pride, the Decorator of all and whom everyone acknowledgeth as his own.

One and yet who seemeth many and entereth into a myriad forms,

And Playeth His Play, and then windeth it up and becometh the One again.

His Mystery is known to no one : neither to the Veda, nor to the semitic texts.

O, how is one to identify Him when He hath neither form, nor colour, nor caste, nor clan.

Who hath neither father nor mother and is neither born nor dies, (but) the disc of whose Power circles fast round the four directions and is acknowledged by the three Worlds.

On whom dwell the fourteen *lokas*,
Yea, Who's the First God, the beginningless Being, who establisheth all.

The Supreme Being, Immaculate, the whole Man and Infinite.

Who, the Self-born, hath Created the entire Universe and is also the Destroyer of all.

Deathless, yoked to His Law, the Immortal One, my greetings to Him.

Who's without doubt, the Repository of Religion, whom elements can contain not, Unknowable, without a garb.

Who hath neither limbs, nor attachment, nor a distinctive colour, nor caste, nor clan nor a name.

And who destroyeth the tyrant and his pride, and whose function is to emancipate all.

He's only but Himself, the Profound One, beyond praise, the Only One, Detached,

The Destroyer of ego, the Death of all, the First Person, Unattached.

Without limbs, Undestroyable, body-less,
the Only One, Infinite.

Who Sustaineth all, and Destroyeth all, is everywhere,
and yet is Detached from all.

Yea, His form, or colour, or sign, no *Sastra*
can delineate.

Of Him, all the high *Vedas* and the *Puranas* utter:

“Not this, not this”.

And the *Smirtis* too. O, no one
can visualise Him through the mind !

Madhubhar Chhand

By Thy Grace

O Thou of infinite Praise,
 of indescribable Virtues :
 Whose Seat is unbreakable, and Who's praised as Formless.
 Who's born of Himself and Who'll be destroyed never.
 Who's the King of kings and Powerful and of long arms.
 Yea, the Angel of angels, the Sun of suns, the King of
 kings, infinite is whose Glory.
 Who's the Indra of Indras, most innocent of children,
 Yea, Poorest of the poor and Death of death.
 Whose Glory is indestructible, whose Limbs defy the
 elements,
 Whose Extent and Condition can only be termed,
 'infinite', Yea, He of limitless Praise.
 The men of silence Praise Thee, O Fearless One, without
 desire, whose Light dazzles, and whose Expanse and
 Condition are indivisible.
 Whose function is to make the whole Universe dance,
 ideal is whose Law, who filleth all, and whose Majesty
 no one can challenge.

Chachri Chhand

By Thy Grace

The Master of the earth. Emancipator. Compassionate.
 Infinite.
 The Destroyer. The Doer. Without name. Without
 desire.

Bhuyang Prayat Chhand

The Creator of four directions and also their Destroyer,
Who's Compassionate to all directions and Whom every
side acknowledgeth.

Who Directeth and Filleth all directions, and Projecteth
and Sustaineth all, and then Levelleth all.

Who's on all sides, Who Liveth in every corner, to Whom
everyone pays obeisance and Who Blesseth all.

Chachri Chhand

Neither hath He an enemy, nor a friend.
Neither is He afflicted by doubt, nor by fear.
He's without form, without the effect of deeds,
Unborn, and not cast into the womb.

Unvisualised, Unsupported by another.
Farthest of far, Immaculate and Pure.
The Master of the earth,
Unseen, Invisible, Undrawable.

Bhagvati Chhand

By Thy Grace

Thy Country is broken up never, nor Thy dress ever
contaminated.

Thy Deeds are indestructible, Thy "illusion" unbreakable.
 O One Detached from all the three Worlds,
 Who may even withdraw the splendour of the sun.
 Who's described as Ever-detached
 and Creator of all elements.
 The Glory of the kings, O Thou.
 The Flag of every religion, O Thou.
 Who's never in pain
 and Filleth all.

O Creator of the Universe.
 O Warrior of warriors.
 Self-existent, of incomparable Beauty,
 Who's the One and our only God.
 The First God, without a peer,
 Mysterious, beyond form,
 and dependent upon Thyself alone.

Thou givest sustenance to all,
 O Compassionate One, the Emancipator,
 Immaculate and sinless:
 The Mystery within a mystery.

Destroyer of all sins,
 and King of kings.
 The Cause of all causes,
 And the Provider of all.
 All-Mercy, the Giver of sustenance.
 The Fountain of Grace.
 The All-powerful,
 And, also, the Destroyer of all.

Everyone acknowledgeth Thee, O God,
 And Thou Knowest and Givest to all.

Permeating everything,
and Ever-present all over.

In every country and continent,
And in every garb, O King of all, O Establisher of all,
O Giver of all,
Who absorbeth all in Himself.
O Glory of all, O Splendour, O Grace.

Is there a place without Thee ?
Or a garb, O Sustainer of all,
O All-death ?

Thou Levellest all, Destroyest all,
Thou Enterest all forms
and Seeest everyone in every direction.

Thy Domain is over all.
All deeds are done though Thee.
Thou driest up all,
and then bringest back the spring.

O the Vital-breath of all.
O the Power of all.
O Thou who art in all, all-over.

Thou art acknowledged all over.
Thou art eternally the Supreme Master of all.
Thou Establishest all,
And art felt all over.

O Sun, whose Light illumines all,
Who's accepted all over, as the Supreme God,
and, also, as the cooling Moon.

○ Great Utterer,

○ All-wise One :

The Fount of Wisdom and of Knowledge,
and the Master of the Muse.

○ Embodiment of Beauty,

Who attracts and is attracted by all.

I greet Thee ever,

Whose progeny dieth never.

Thou layest low Thy enemies,

And Savest the poor :

○ of High Station,

The Ruler of earth and the skies.

○ Master of culture,

Whose Treasure is open to all,

Who's the all-Powerful Enemy,

And the sure Sustenance of the Universe !

○ Master of many moods,

Mysterious, Indivisible,

○ Blesser of the lovers,

And the Destruction of the enemies.

Whose Form is indescribable.

Whose Elements aren't subject to the three attributes.

Whose Glory is magnificent.

And who's our Nectar, well-yoked (to life).

Eternal is whose Form,

Of incomparable Beauty. Unpierceable.

The Defeat of all and also their Glory.

Every greetings to Thee, O God.
 Who's ever without desire,
 Unshackled is whose Form (by Time or Space).
 Profound and Deep, and of indescribable Praise.

Aum. O beginningless Beginning,
 O the First of Beings,
 Without limbs, without a name,
 The Destroyer of the three Worlds,
 And also their Fulfiller.

Destroyer of the three Maladies,¹
 Blessor of the three boons².
 Undestroyable. Most Profound.
 The Creator of good circumstance,
 and the great Lover of all.

Of Form that Enjoyeth the three Worlds.
 Unbroken. Uncontaminated.
 The Destroyer of hell.
 And the Inheritor of the earth.

Unutterable is Thy Glory.
 Ever, and for ever.
 of Detached form, and yet well-yoked,
 and of incomparable Charm.

Whoever can utter Thy praise,
 O Detached Glory?
 Indescribable is Thy Form,
 And yet Thou art yoked to us,
 O Magnificent Splendour !

¹ Passion, darkness, inertia.

² *Dharma* (righteousness), *Artha* (worldly weal), *Kama* (desire).

Chachri Chhand

Unbreakable. Without limbs.
 Without a garb. Beyond count.
 Without doubt. Beyond (the fruits of) deeds.
 Without beginning. The Beginning of the beginnings.

Unconquerable. Ever-the-same.
 Not formed by the elements,
 And unafraid.

Undestroyable and Detached.
 Without involvement, and without bonds.

Who's Ever-perfect. Whose devotion
 is only to His own Presence.
 The Detached One,
 Who goeth never,
 and is the Embodiment of Light.

Without care. Ever-the-same.
 Indescribable.
 And Unseen.

Unaccountable,
 Without a garb.
 Not corroded by Time,
 And the Most Deep.

Unborn.
 Unknowable.
 Immaculate,
 Without beginning.

Unestablished,
 Who's also forever.
 Without caste,
 Emancipated and free.

Charpat Chhand

By Thy Grace

- Destroyer of all,
- One who's all over,
- Leveller of all.
- Knower of all.

- Creator of all.
- , the Death of all.
- , the Vital-breath of all.
- , the Power of all.

- , Thou art in all deeds,
 All religious orders.
 Attached to all,
 And the Emancipator of all.

Rasaval Chhand

By Thy Grace

Greetings, O Destroyer of hell.
 Greetings, O Eternal Light.
 O Form, O Formlessness,
 Whose Elements are indivisible.

The Destroyer of destroyers,
 Who's ever with everyone,
 Whose Form is most subtle.
 And, Who's not bound by the elements.

Without limbs, without a name.
 Destroyer of the three Worlds, and, also, their
 Fulfiller.

Whose Presence cannot be broken.
 The All-Powerful, All-beauty.

Without sons, and grandsons.
 Without an enemy, or a friend.
 Without father, without mother.
 Without caste, without creed.

Related and yet Unrelated.
 Most Profound and Infinite.
 Whose Glory is eternal
 And Who's Self-existent,
 And never humbled.

Bhagvati Chhand

By Thy Grace

Thou art the Presence.
 Thou art here and now.

Hail, hail to Thee, all hail,
 Whose Utterance is the same for everyone.
 Thou hast a Master-mind.
 Thy Light informs all beauty.
 O Perfect, Compassionate one,
 Who Provideth all in His Mercy.

Thou art the Giver of our daily bread.
Yea, the Sustainer for ever :
How All-pervasive is Thy Grace !
O One of dazzling Splendour.
O Thou Destroyer of Thy enemies,
And Decorator of the poor.
The breaker of Thy Opposites,
And the Wiper of fear.

Thou Forgivest our blemishes,
And art Present at all places.
Thou art defeated by no enemy,
O Compassionate Provider of the poor !

Thy Tongue uttereth the same for all,
Our Most Blessed Master,
Whose function is to destroy Hell,
And who liveth ever in His own Paradise.

Thou goest in all directions,
And Thou goest ever and forever more.
How exquisitely Cultured art Thou,
(That) everyone is equally dear to Thee.

O God of gods, Transcendent,
Ever-the-same for everyone, Unseen,
Without a nation art Thou, and beyond words.
And, Yea, ever without a garb.

Thou art the Master of the earth, the sky,
And of the most Profound Religion,
Of utter Compassion,
And of beauteous Courage.

Thy Light is constant :
 Thy Fragrace is limitless,
 O Thou, the Embodiment of Wonder,
 Wondrous are the Elements that make Thee.

How utterly vast is Thy Expanse,
 O Glory of our soul,
 O Moveless, Limbless One,
 Infinite and Undivided.

Madhubhar Chhand

By Thy Grace

Greet Thee ever the men of silence :
 Yea, Thy Merits are constantly praised.
 No enemy's power can destroy Thee :
 For Thou, O Powerful God, are indestructible.

I greet Thee endlessly.
 Yea, greet Thee all the Pure ones,
 O Indivisible God of Power,
 Whose Strength no one can challenge.

O Immortal God, of Himself born,
 Who's the Light of the detached ones,
 Greetings to Thy endless Merits,
 Who's Ever-present on the earth as in waters.

Thy Parts no one can destroy.
 Thy Seat is moveless,

And Thy Praises limitless,
 And Thy State and Extent beyond comprehension.
 Indestructible art Thou over the land and sea.
 Yea, denied not in any direction of the Universe.
 And, the Overlord of all that is.
 And considered Infinite all over.

Self-existent, Undying,
 Ever the Support of the earth,
 The Inspiration of the angels,
 Ever-the-same at all times.

The One and the only God since the beginning,
 Whose Praises are countless.
 Whose Thought drives out all thoughtlessness.
 O All-powerful Guru, O Immortal One.

Is there a home that greets Thee not ?
 Who keeps not Thy Name, Thy Feet, in his mind ?
 Yea, Thy Condition is ever the same.
 O there's nothing that's unworthy about Thee.

And Uninvolved without affliction is Thy Condition.
 And Thy Treasure is exhausted never,
 O Un-established, Limitless One !

Invisible and subtle is Thy Law,
 But confirmed are Thy Deeds !
 Yea, Thou art Endless, and Unharmful and Whole,
 O Ever-giver, my Over-lord !

Harbolmana Chhand

By Thy Grace

O Compassionate One,
The Destroyer of Thy enemies,
And the Instructor of the unwise :
And the Leveller of the earth.

O God of the Universe,
O our Transcendent Lord,
The Creator of strife,
and yet the Emancipator of all.

Thou art the Support of the earth,
And the Creator of the Universe.
Thou art pleasing to the mind,
And ever-known all over.
Thou art the Filler of all,
And the Creator,
And the Support of all,
and also the Destroyer of all.

O Master of Compassion,
The Filler of the Universe,
The God of everyone,
And the Lord of the earth.

Thou Pervadest the egg-shaped universe,
And Destroyest all un wisdom.
Yea, Thou, the Compassionate One
Art farthest of far.

No one can establish Thee, O God,
 Nor utter Thee, O Unutterable One.
 Thou art the Doer of the impossible,
 And the Nectar of nectars.

Yea, Thou art the Essence of the nectars.
 The Doer and the Cause,
 The Support of the earth,
 And the Accomplisher of the unattemptable.

O Thou Blessor of the nectars,
 O Thou God of gods,
 O Thou Doer of the 'not-done'¹,
 O Thou Quintessence of the Waters of Immortality.
 O Thou Creator of wonders,
 O Thou Sweetest of sweet,
 O Thou Master of man,
 O Thou Destroyer of the unwise !

O Thou Filler of the Universe,
 O Compassionate One,
 O King of kings,
 O Provider of all.

O Thou Destroyer of fear,
 And of the enemies of man,
 Who giveth pain even to the kings,
 And art the only One worthy of praise.

O Thou Giver of wisdom,
 O Thou Creator of all creation,
 O Thou Builder of all,
 O Thou Destroyer of all !

¹ *i.e.*, impossible.

Thou art our Oversoul,
 Yea, the Soul of all,
 Who art chained to our souls,
 And who givest meaning to praise.

Bhuyang Prayat Chhand

Greetings, O Sun of suns,
 Greetings, O Moon of moons,
 Greetings, O King of kings,
 Greetings, O Angel of angels.
 Greetings, O Abysmal Darkness,
 Greetings, O Light of all light.
 Greetings, O Totality of the whole.
 Greetings, O Seed of seeds.
 Greetings, O Death of death.

Greetings, O Master of passion, inertia, peace.
 Greetings, O Quintessence of the elements, and yet not of
 them.

Greetings, O Yogi of yogis, O Wisdom of the wise.
 Greetings, O Mantra of *mantras*, O Concentration of the
 concentrated.

Greetings, O Warrior of warriors, Wisdom of wisdoms,
 Greetings, O Sustenance of foods, O Wetness of waters,
 Greetings, O Creator of strife, O Embodiment of peace,
 Greetings, O God of gods, without beginning,
 O Treasure of treasures !

Thou art the Creator, the Embodiment of power,
 The Praise of praises,

Greetings, O Hope of hopes,
 O Beauty of beauties,
 Whose Form is indestructible, without limbs, without
 name, without desire.
 Destroyer and Fulfiller of the three Worlds, through past,
 present and the future
 Art thou.

Ek Achhri Chhand

Unconquerable. Undying.
 Of fear free. Ever-the-same.
 O Thou !

Not cast into the womb, Unborn,
 Nor destroyed ever,
 Who Vaults, all over, like the sky.

Unbreakable. Unpierceable.
 Unknowable. Undissolved.

Beyond Time. Compassionate.
 Unaccountable. Without a garb.

Without a name. Without desire.
 Profound and Uncorroded.

Not-dependent; the Destroyer of all,
 Subject not to transmigration, Who's silenced never,
 Without enmity and Uninvolved,
 Without form, without sign.

Subject not (to the effect of) deeds. Without doubt,
 Unaccountable. And Indestructible.
 O Thou !

Bhuyang Prayat Chhand

Hail, O hail, all-hail to Thee,
O Destroyer of all.

Yea, Indestructible and Nameless,
Who Abideth ever the same all over.
Whose Substance is informed not by desire.
And, whose Form is ever the same for all.
Who's the Destroyer of misdeeds,
and Who's the Treasure of the good and the eternal Law.

Eternal, True and the Embodiment of Bliss,
Thou art the Destroyer of Thy opposites.

Compassionate and Blesser :
Who livest in all, alike, all over.
Whose Substance is Wonder,
And who's terrible to the tyrant.
Yea, the Destroyer and the Creator,
and the Master of Mercy.

In all the four directions art Thou, enjoying everywhere,
Self-existent, Holy, Ever-yoked to all.
Above birth, above death,
The Embodiment of Compassion.
Who art ever with us, and whose Substance is never
destroyed,
O Thou !

Akal Ustati

(Praises of God, the immortal)

Extend to us Thy Protection,
 O God immortal,
 O All-Steel,
 O All-death,
 O All-Power.

Sawayyas

By Thy Grace

(On Ritual etc.)

1

Of no account is this to thy God if thou closest
 thine eyes, and, like a crane, sittest in meditation,
 And goest about bathing at the seven seas, (thus) losing
 the merit of life both here and Hereafter.
 Thou dwellest in the midst of sin and (hence) passest
 thus thy life in vain.
 Hear Ye all, I utter nothing but Truth that he alone
 attaineth God who loveth.

2

Some worship but stocks and stones, while others suspend
 the *lingam* from their necks.
 Some look out for God in the east, others in the west.

Some worship but idols, some are unwise enough even to
worship the dead.

All these are involved in a false show, and they find not
the Mystery that is God.

3

God Protecteth the poor, Saveth the holy and
Destroyeth His enemies.

All life, all animal kingdom He Provideth at all times.

Yea, He Sustaineth all in the waters and upon
the earth, and mindeth not our temporary
misdemeanours.

Compassionate to the meek, the Treasure of Mercy,
He see-eth our weaknesses, but defeateth us not !

4

The Veda, the Puranas, the Quran and other semitic
texts, all proclaim: "The Kings of kings, our God,
is a Mystery:

His secrets no one can fathom."

5

They who eat filth are no better than swines; they who
roll in dust no better than elephants or donkeys !

They who live in crematoriums no better than jackals :
they who abide in tombs, no better than owls !

Thou wanderest in the woods? So do the deer!

Thou livest in silence? So do the trees !

Thou art a celibate ? So are the eunichs !

Thou wanderest barefooted? So do the monkeys !

And, how wilt thou, O slave of the woman, lust
and wrath, attain God without Love ?

6

Thou bidest in a forest? So do the demons!
 Thou livest on milk? So doth a child !
 Thou livest on air ? So doth a serpent !
 Thou livest on grass, vegetables, and desirest not wealth?
 So do the cow, the ox !
 Thou fliest in the heavens? So do the birds.
 Thou sittest long in meditation? So do the cranes, the
 cats, the wolves !

Yea, they who Knew, let not such deceit enter their
 hearts even unconsciously.

7

If thou wanderest unseen, thou art no better than a ghost !
 If thou eatest only fruit, no better than a monkey !
 If thou worshippes the sun, no better than the lotus !
 If thou dwellest on the moon, no better than a water-lily !

8

Mere bowing down of the head availeth not : for do not
 the gunners do the same? And, the hunters and the
 opium-eaters?
 The slave of desire, clever in amassing riches, can attain
 not God, without a living faith in Him.

9

Thou criest out to God five times : so doth the jackal in
 winter.
 If by merely uttering 'Thou, Thou', one were to attain
 Him, doesn't the warbler ever utter the same cry ?

10

The same are the temple and the mosque : 'Tis the same
if one worshippeth Him the Hindu way or the
Muslim.

For, men are the same all over : the difference is only
of the appearance, the seen.

The same eyes, the same ears, the same body, the same
build, a get-together of earth, air, fire and water.

Allah is the same as *Abhekha* : the Puranas the same as the
Quran. All men are made alike. They appear no
different to me.

11

From the one fire arise myriads of sparks and then merge
in the same fire again.

From the dust arise myriads of particles, and then blend
with the dust again.

From the sea arise myriads of waves and then fall and
merge in water again.

So also arise all forms, sentient and non-sentient, and
springing from Him are United in Him again.

12

O mind, Practise renunciation thus :

Consider thy homestead to be a forest,
and keep detached in thy mind.

Let continence be thy matted hair, and the joining-with
(God) thy ablution, and the disciplined conduct thy
long nails.

Let Wisdom be thy guide, so instruct thy mind, and, yea,
besmear thy body with the 'ashes' of God's Name.

Eat sparingly and sleep sparingly, and have forgiveness
and compassion and love within thee.

And live with good conduct and contentment, and rise
above the three Modes.

Harbour neither lust in the mind, nor wrath,
nor greed, nor obstinacy, nor undue attachment.

And thou see-est the Quintessence of thy Soul,
and attainest unto the Supreme Being.

13

Destroyer of misery and sin, He crusheth the hosts of evil
instantaneously.

He, the Unbreakable, smiteth the powerful but loveth
those who are in love with Him.

The Lord of Lakshmi can find not His limits: the Veda
and the semitic texts both proclaim Him to be an
impregnable Mystery.

The Benevolent King, the Giver, ever beholdeth our
secret thoughts, yet, getting angry, He denieth not our
daily bread.

14

He giveth to those who know and proclaim Him, also
to those who don't.

Yea, He Giveth to the earth and also to the heavens.

O man, why waver in faith,
when the Beauteous Lord, Thy God, ever taketh
care of thee!

15

There's no sin worse than the one
one commiteth in the name of religion !

16

I bow to the double-edged Sword, the Scimitar, the
Falchion, the Dagger,

I bow to the Holder of the Mace,
 whose light permeates the fourteen spheres.
 I bow to the Arrow, the Musket,
 Yea, the Sword, spotless, fearless, unbreakable and free.

The Powerful Mace and the Lance,
 The Wielder of the Discus,
 Whom elements can hold not and who's Terrible and
 Brave.

I bow to Him with strong Teeth,
 Whose Power is Supreme over all.
 Yea, the Arrow and the Gun,
 The Destroyer of His enemies.
 To the Rapier and the Sword.
 Who Destroyeth the evil-doers,
 I bow !

17

O God, grant me this boon,
 That I swerve not ever from Thy righteous Path,
 That fear overtakes me not
 When I fight my enemies,
 and, yea, when I fight, I fight to win !
 That I'm instructed by no one but my higher Mind,
 that I crave ever to sing Thy Praise.
 And when cometh the evening of my life,
 I die fighting in the thick of a holy war !

18

“Food for the poor and Sword for the tyrant :”
 O God, let both go hand-in-hand.

The Poet's Prayer

(Extracts)

O God, give me Thy hand and Protect me.

Let my mind's desires be fulfilled.

And, may I be attached ever to Thy Feet.

O God, be my Refuge, for I belong ever to Thee.

May all my enemies be smitten by Thee.

May Thy Beneficent Hand be ever at my back.

O God, Bless my family, and those that are mine,
my servants, followers and all.

O God, be Thou my sanctuary.

And may all my enemies be destroyed here and now.

And, God, fulfil also this my desire,

That I crave ever to dwell upon Thy Feet.

That I forsake Thee never in favour of another,

And whatever I seek, I attain from Thee.

O God, Bless me that I fear not death,

That Thou art ever at my back.

O God, whose Banner hath the insignia of the sword,

Who was in the beginning and will also be at the end,

The only One alone,

And who alone is my Guru and Guide,

O Thou, the Embellisher of the whole creation,

The Inner-knower of all hearts, the Discriminator
between good and evil,

And who's Merciful to the ant as much as to the elephant:

Who's pained when the innocent and the saints are pained,

And happy when the saints are happy:

O God, whoever seeketh Thy refuge,

All his enemies are destroyed in sorrow.

O God, I surrender before Thee:

O Lord, Give me Thy beneficent Hand, and Protect me.

The Sikh Prayer

(This Prayer is recited after every service, morning and evening, at home as well as in congregations at the temples. Its first six lines were composed by Guru Govind Singh.)

Having first remembered Lord the God, call on Guru Nanak.

And then on Guru Angad, Amar Das and Ram Das :
may they ever protect us.

Then call on Arjun and Harigovind and the holy Hari Rai.

And then on Hari Krishan, seeing whom all one's sorrows are dispelled.

And then remember Tegh Bahadur, the Guru, that the nine Treasures come hastening to thy home.

O our Masters, be Ye ever with us.

May the tenth King, Guru Govind Singh, be ever on our side.

And now turn your thoughts to the teachings of the Guru Granth Sahib, the Visible Embodiment of the Gurus and utter :

“Glory be to God.”

(All congregation answers :) “Wonderful Lord.”

The four sons,¹ the five beloved ones,² the forty saved ones,³

¹ The martyred sons of Guru Govind Singh.

² Whom Guru Govind first baptised.

³ Those who fell in the battle of Chamkaur. Some say it refers to those fallen near Khidrana (later known as Mukatsar). They had first deserted the Guru and later returned to do battle and die. But, their number could on no account be forty.

the martyrs, the true disciples, the contemplators of God, and those who remained steadfast on the Path: remember their glorious deeds and utter:

“Glory be to God”.

(All:) “Wonderful Lord”.

They who dwelt on God’s Name, shared their earnings with others, wielded the sword on the battlefield, and distributed food in companionship, offered their heads at the altar of *Dharma*, were cut up limb by limb, were skinned or boiled or sawn alive, but uttered not a sigh nor faltered in their faith, remember their glorious deeds and utter:

“Glory be to God.”

(All:) “Wonderful Lord.”

O great King, save us from the five sins—lust, wrath, greed, undue attachment and ego. O God, let us call on Thee alone, Yea, Thee alone, and let the merit of this remembrance be happiness of all kinds. O God, wherever are the members of the holy Khalsa, extend Thy Protection and Mercy to them: let the Panth be ever victorious: let the sword be ever our Protector: let the war-cry of the Khalsa resound through the world:

“Glory be to God”

(All:) “Wonderful Lord”.

O God, may Thy Sikhs be blest with the boon of faith, of discipline, of trust, of an awakened mind, and, above all, the contemplation of Thy Name.

May the banners, the staying-places, the choirs of the Khalsa stay whole through the ages, and may Religion be ever victorious.

O God, let our minds be ever humble, our intellects exalted and be Thou ever the Protector of our minds.

Utter, O Khalsa, "Glory be to God",

(All:) "Wonderful Lord."

Blest by Nanak, the Guru, may our spirits be ever in the ascendency. O God, May the whole world be blest in Thy Will and Mercy.

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