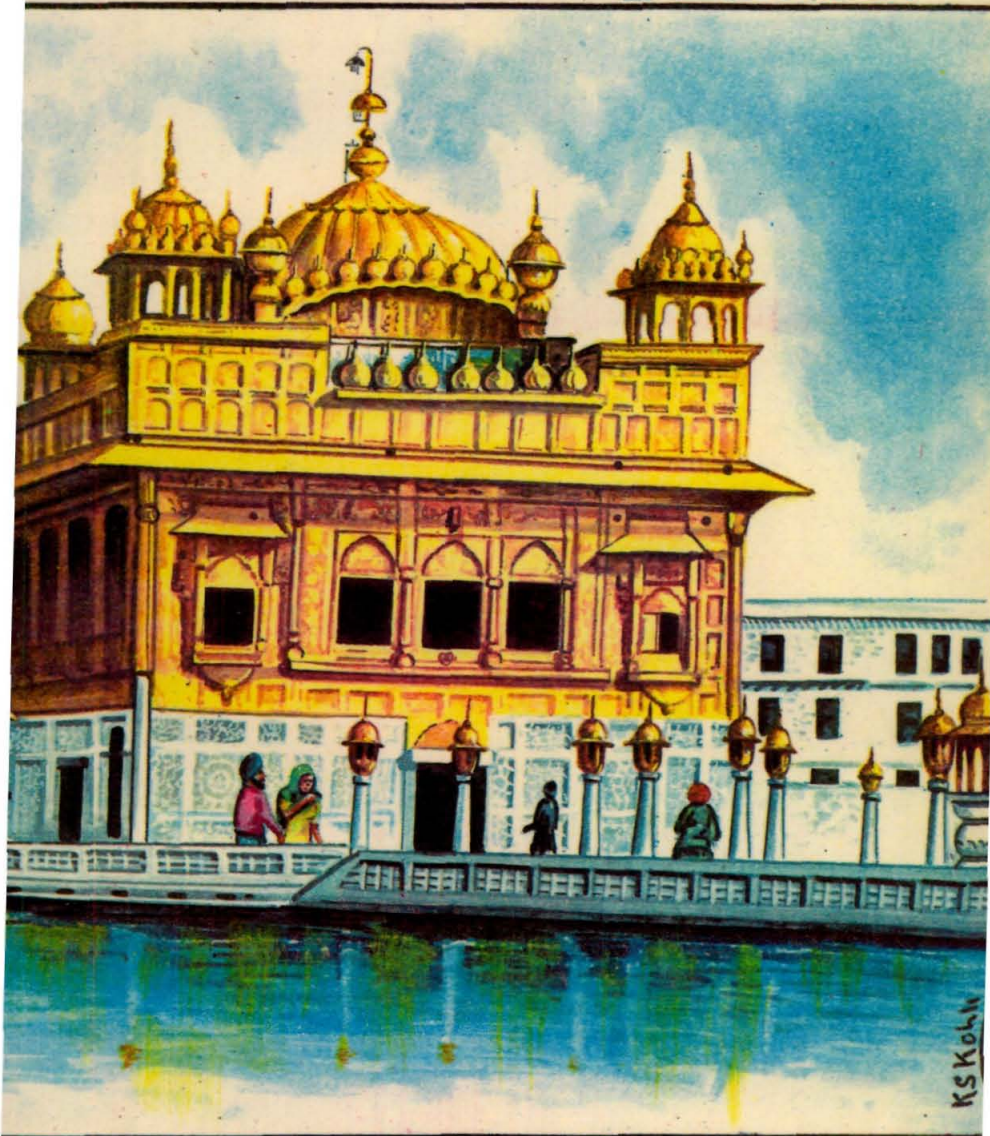
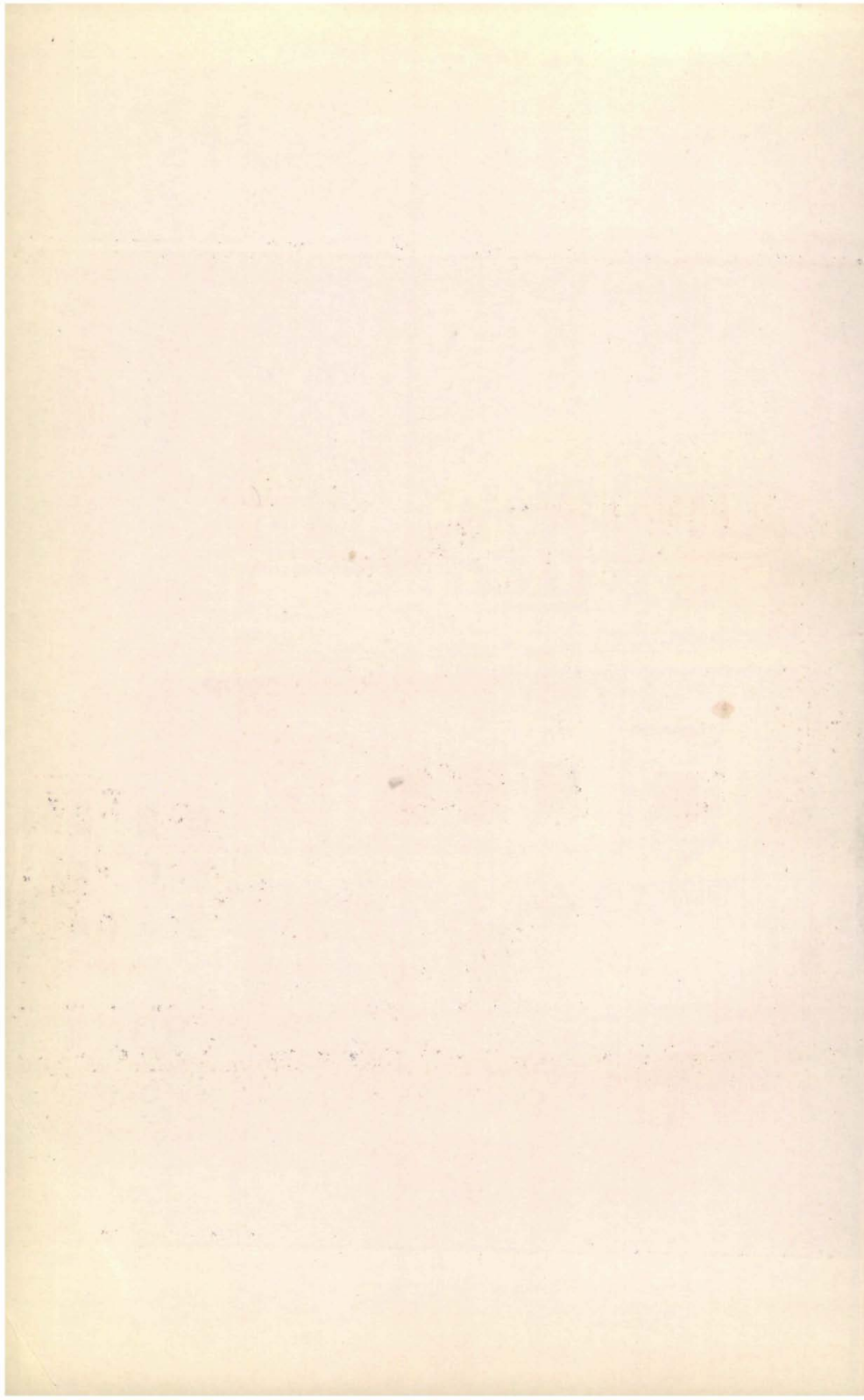


Stories from SIKH HISTORY

Book-IV



Hemkunt



Stories From
SIKH HISTORY

BOOK IV

(Guru Gobind Singh)

by
Kartar Singh
and
Gurdial Singh Dhillon
Edited by
Pamela McCormack



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Book I (Guru Nanak Dev)

Book II (Guru Angad to Guru Arjun Dev)

Book III (Guru Hargobind to Guru Teg Bahadur)

Book IV (Guru Gobind Singh)

Book V (Sikh Martyrs)

Book VI (Banda Singh Bahadur)

Book VII (Maharaja Ranjit Singh) and thereafter till 1989)

FOREWORD

Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find, is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular, it is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve. It is in this context that the Sri Prakasa Committee recommended moral instruction at the School level in order to develop the personality of students.

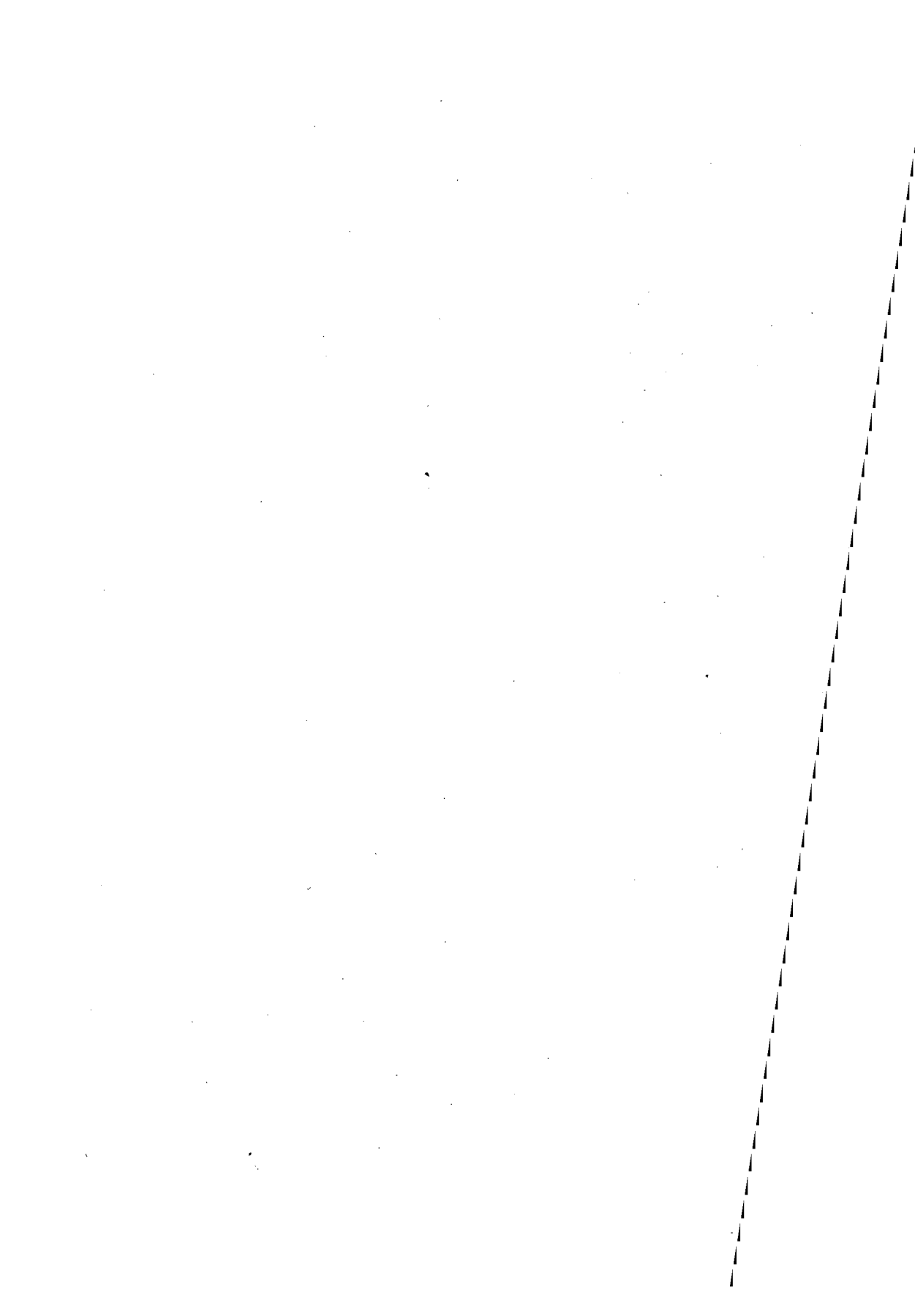
Modern psychology has emphasised that if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stage it will greatly help integrate his personality. The example of the teacher and his relations with students leave a deep impression on the minds of students. Moral instruction, I feel, is better given by example than by precept.

The Great figures of the past specially the heroes of history have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges from time to time. One of the great heroes of Indian history is Guru Gobind Singh. Through his example, he challenged superstition, inertia, tyranny and bigotry. His life is a beacon-light which gives inspiration to all who seek guidance in the path of truth and righteous action.

The youth of today, more than any other section of society, is at the cross-roads. School students are dazed by the march of exciting events and the great tensions of the modern world. Science may throw light on the physical world, but it is only the teachings of great saints and sages which offer a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any educational system which does not take into account the moral development of the students will remain inadequate and ineffective. I am glad to know that thoughtful educationists are devoting their attention to the moral education of the young. In this book for children, are presented a number of stories from the life of Guru Gobind Singh in a broad and vivid manner. The pictures and sketches given therein, I am sure, will create a lasting impression on their minds. I sincerely hope that the series of stories from Sikh History which they have planned will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

January 14, 1972

Ganda Singh
Ph.D., D. Litt.



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DETAILS ABOUT THE SIKH GURUS OR PROPHETS

S. No.	Name of the Guru	Name of father and mother	Birth Place	Birth—Death	Period of Guruship	Guruship assumed at the age of	Contemporary Muslim Emperor
1.	Guru Nanak	Mehta Kalu Mata Tripta	Telawandi or Nankana Sahib	1469—1539 (70 yrs.)	1469—1539 (70 yrs.)		Babar (1483—1530)
2.	Guru Angad	Pheru Mail Mata Daya Kaur	Matte'di Sarai Muktsar	1504—1552 (48 yrs.)	1539—1552 (13 yrs.)	35 years	Humayun (1530—1556)
3.	Guru Amar Das	Tej Bhan Mata Sulakhni	Besarka near Amritsar	1479—1574 (95 yrs.)	1552—1574 (22 yrs.)	73 years	Akbar (1556—1605)
4.	Guru Ram Das	Hari Das Mata Daya Kaur.	Lahore	1534—1581 (47 yrs.)	1574—1581 (7 yrs.)	40 years	—Do—
5.	Guru Arjan Dev	Guru Ram Das Mata Bhani	Goindwal	1563—1606 (43 yrs.)	1581—1606 (25 yrs.)	18 years	Jahangir (1606—1628)
6.	Guru Har Gobind	Guru Arjan Dev Mata Ganga	Wadali near Amritsar	1595—1664 (49 yrs.)	1606—1644 (38 yrs.)	11 years	—Do—
7.	Guru Har Rai	Baba Gur Ditta Mata Nihal Kaur	Kiratpur	1630—1661 (31 yrs.)	1644—1661 (17 years)	14 years	Shah Jahan (1628—1658)
8.	Guru Har Krishan	Guru Har Rai Mata Kishan Kaur	Kiratpur.	1656—1664 (8 yrs.)	1661—1664 (3 yrs.)	5 years	Aurangzeb (1658—1707)
9.	Guru Teg Bahadur	Guru Hargobind Mata Nanaki	Amritsar	1621—1675 (54 yrs.)	1664—1675 (11 years)	43 years	—Do—
10.	Guru Gobind Singh	Guru Teg Bahadur Mata Gujri	Patna	1666—1708 (42 yrs.)	1675—1708 (33 yrs.)	9 years	Bahadur Shah (1707)

Guru Gobind Singh

1

CHILDHOOD AT PATNA

Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth Guru of the Sikhs. He was born at Patna, now the capital of Bihar State, in December 1666 A.D. His father, Guru Teg Bahadur, had gone on a long tour. The object of this tour was to persuade the people to follow the path of Love, Service and Devotion, as preached by Guru Nanak. Guru Teg Bahadur had taken his family with him. He was accompanied by a large number of his followers, too. On reaching Patna, he made arrangements for his family to stay there. Leaving them at Patna, he went further east to visit Bengal and Assam. He was in Assam at the time of his only son's birth.

The tenth Guru's mother, Mata Gujri, named him Gobind Rai. Some people say that he was named Gobind Das. We shall see later how he came to be called Gobind Singh.

The first five or six years of his life were spent in the city of his birth. During these years he gave clear signs of the sort of life he was to lead later. He was active and full of mirth. He loved to play the soldier. He had an army of playmates at his heels. They all looked upon him as their leader. Usually, he would divide them into two groups. He placed himself at the head of one of the groups. The other group had a captain of its

choice. He made the two groups engage in games and matches requiring skill, courage, strength and patience.

He was fearless and brave. One day he was playing with his friends in a part of the city. The chief officer or Nawab of Patna came that way. The Nawab's servants called upon the boys to salute the Nawab. Hearing this, Sri Gobind Rai said to his comrades, 'No brothers, we are not going to salute or say *salam* to the Nawab. We shall all make faces at him. We shall jeer at him. Be ready.' As the Nawab approached, all the boys made faces at him. They clapped their hands in fun. The Nawab's servants tried to catch them. But they all ran away, shouting, clapping and laughing.

Sri Gobind Rai was a charming child. His conduct and manners won him a large number of admirers. He came to be loved by many—both young and old, rich and poor, learned and simple, Hindus and Muslims. Among his Hindu admirers was a learned Brahmin named Pandit Shiv Das. Raja Fateh Chand Maini and his wife also loved and admired him. Among his Muslim admirers of Patna were two brothers named Nawab Rahim Bakhsh and Nawab Karim Bakhsh. They made an offering of a village and two gardens to the charming child.

Another Muslim admirer of his was Pir Bhikhan Shah. He was a Sayyid. He lived at the village Thaska in the district of Karnal, now in Haryana. On the day when Guru Gobind Rai was born at Patna, the Pir did something unusual for a Muslim. He looked towards the east, in the direction of Patna. Then he made a deep and respectful bow. This act was strange for a Muslim. As we know, Muslims bow to the west, in the direction of Mecca. His disciples and servants felt surprised. They asked him why he had bowed to the east. The Pir replied, 'Far away in the east is a city named Patna. In that city a very special person has been born. He is

to perform wonders. He will destroy evil and wicked people. He will fight against sin, evil and false religion. He will champion the cause of virtue and true religion. I have bowed to that Savior who is Chosen of the God. I am going to that sacred city in order to see him. That will be a blessing for me.'

Pir Bhikhan Shah set out for Patna. He had some disciples and servants with him. In due course, he arrived at that city. He went to the house where Sri Gobind Rai then lived. He bowed and sat near the door of that house. He was asked what he wanted ; why he sat there in that way. He replied, 'I come from a far off place. I have come to have a look at the holy child born and living in this house.'

Mata Gujri was informed of the fakir at her door. She was told what he wanted. At first she hesitated a bit. She made some excuses to put him off. But the Pir said, 'I have travelled hundreds of miles to have a look at the holy child. I will not move from this place until my wish is granted. I will neither eat nor drink anything till then.'

His wish had to be granted at last. As soon as he saw the child, he made a deep, respectful bow. He had with him two earthen pots. They contained sweetmeat. One of them had been bought from the shop of a Hindu confectioner. The other had been bought from a Muslim confectioner's shop. The Pir placed the two pots before Sri Gobind Rai. Having done that, he sat with hands folded and eyes fixed on the holy child. Sri Gobind Rai covered one of the pots with his left hand. He covered the other pot with his right hand. Then he smiled and looked at the Pir. At this Pir Bhikhan Shah made a longer and deeper bow.

The Pir's disciples who had come with him said to him, 'O Pir, we are unable to understand what we have seen. Kindly explain it to us.' The Pir replied, 'I wanted to know



10 *The Pir placed the two pots before Sri Gobind Rai*

whether this man of God will favour the Hindus or the Musalmans. I had said to myself, "If he is to favour the Hindus, he will put his hand on the pot bought from the Hindu shop. If he is to favour the Muslims, he will put his hand on the pot from the Muslim shop." He has read my thoughts. He has covered both the pots. It means that both Hindus and Muslims will be equally dear to him. He will help the Hindus, if they need his help. He will help the Muslims if they are in need of his help. This has gladdened my heart immensely.

The Pir then returned to his home in the Panjab. He remained a loving admirer of Guru Gobind Singh all through his life.

RAJA RATAN RAI OF ASSAM

During his tour to the east Guru Teg Bahadur visited Assam. Raja Ram of Assam had no son. He and his queen were very sad on that account. They heard of the Guru's arrival. They heard his praises from all who had seen him. They decided to see the Guru. They felt sure that he could grant them the gift of a son. They came to Guru Teg Bahadur. They said to him, 'O true Guru, you grant the wishes of all your devotees. Be pleased to grant our wish, too. Please grant us the boon of a son.'

Guru Teg Bahadur blessed the couple. He prayed for them. He said to them, 'God will grant your wish. You will have a son. Pray to God every day, from the core of your hearts.'

God heard their prayers. He granted their wish. A son was born to them in due course. They called him Ratan Rai. Raja Ram died when the prince was only seven years old. When Ratan Rai became twelve years of age, he said one day to his mother, 'You have often told me that Guru Teg Bahadur got you the gift of a son. He blessed you. He prayed for you. Because of those blessings and prayers I was born to you. How good and gracious he was ! How lucky you were to meet him ! How lucky should I have been to see him ! But you tell me that he is no more in this world. You tell me that he laid down his life in order to save the Hindu religion. How great and noble he was ! His son, Guru Gobind Rai now occupies his seat. I would like very much to have a sight of him. Let us go to see him.'



The elephant wiped the Gúru's feet.

His mother agreed most readily and joyfully. Preparations were made for the long journey to Anandpur. The prince and his mother prepared a number of offerings to be made to the Guru. She said to him, 'Dear son, be careful. Don't let pride enter your heart. Don't begin to feel proud to think that you are making such good and costly presents. All that we have is God's gift. All of it belongs to the Guru and God. We are going to offer him some out of all that they have granted to us. The Guru is pleased with what is offered with humility and love. Even a small present so offered is dear to him. Costly presents made with pride and self-praise are not pleasing to him. Be humble, therefore. Pray that all these offerings be accepted by the Guru.'

Raja Ratan Rai set out for Anandpur. He was accompanied by his mother and several of his ministers and *darbaris*. In due course they reached the sacred city where they were given a hearty welcome. The Raja offered his presents to the Guru. They consisted of five strong, beautiful horses with golden trappings; a very small but very intelligent elephant; a weapon out of which five sorts of arms could be made—a pistol, a sword, a lance, a dagger and a club; a throne from which puppets could be made to come out and play *chaupar*; a drinking cup of great value; and several costly and beautiful jewels and dresses.

After presenting these offerings to the Guru, Raja Ratan Rai said, 'O true Guru, be pleased to accept these humble offerings. They are a very little part of what you and God have conferred on us. Be pleased further to grant me the gift of Sikh faith and sincerity. The Guru granted all his desires. The Raja felt immensely pleased.'

The Raja then proceeded to show the excellence and advantages of his presents. First of all, he showed how five

sorts of arms could be made from the weapon presented by him. It was a pistol to begin with. The Raja pressed a spring attached to the weapons. It took the form of a sword. He pressed the spring again. The weapon changed into a lance. He pressed the spring once more. The weapon became a dagger. He pressed the spring again. The weapon took the form of a club. When the spring was pressed once more, the weapon was again a pistol.

The Raja then placed the throne before the Guru. It was very beautiful. He pressed a spring attached to it. At once puppets came out of the throne. They began to play *chaupar*. The Raja then presented the elephant. He was small but very intelligent. He was black as coal. A white stripe stretched from the tip of his trunk, along the forehead and back, right to the end of his tail. The Raja caused the elephant to wipe the Guru's shoes and place them in order for him. The Raja then requested the Guru to discharge an arrow. As he did so, the elephant went running after it, and brought it back. The animal then held a jug of water with which the Guru's feet were washed. Then he wiped them with a towel. At the Raja's word of command, the elephant took a *chauri* and waved it over the Guru. At night, the elephant took two lighted torches in his trunk. In this way, he lit the path of the Guru and the Raja. The Raja prayed that the elephant should always remain in the service of the Guru alone.

The Raja stayed at Anandpur for about five months. He was of about the same age as the Guru, whose company charmed him. He accompanied the Guru on his hunting trips. He wished always to be in the Guru's presence. But he had his duties at home. He had to leave. When he was ready to depart, the Guru said to him, 'True worship consists in doing one's duty honestly and diligently. At the same time, the inmost thoughts should be firmly fixed on God. A ruler

should regard all his subjects as his own children. He should be just and kind to them all. He should do his utmost to make them happy. If you do all this, God will be pleased with you. 'He will confer on you peace, happiness and glory. I shall always be with you.'

The Guru gave the Raja suitable parting gifts. The Raja and his successors held the gifts in great respect.

SAYYID BUDHU SHAH

Nahan was a small hill State not very far from Anandpur. It is now a part of Himachal Pradesh. Its ruler at the time was Raja Medni Prakash. Once he invited Guru Gobind Singh to spend some time in his State. The Guru accepted the invitation. He went and put up his camp at the foot of the Nahan mountain. At the Raja's suggestion, the Guru constructed a fort in the Raja's country. He gave it the name of Paunta. He stayed there for quite a long time.

In Sadhaura, about twenty five kilometres from Paunta, there lived a Sayyid fakir named Pir Budhu Shah. He had heard much about Guru Gobind Singh. He longed to see him. Now he learnt that the Guru was staying quite near his place. He went to visit him. The Guru received him warmly and seated him by his own side. The Sayyid said, 'I am a sinner. I am terribly afraid of what may happen to me after death. Pray to God to pardon me for my sins. Save me from God's wrath.'

The Guru replied, 'God is all mercy and forgiveness. I shall tell you the way to find pardon for your sins. Repent of your sins from the bottom of your heart. Resolve never to do wrong again. Keep busy in doing good deeds. Help all who need your help. Be humble and truthful. Always feel God to be watching all your actions. Feel that He knows all your feelings, desires and thoughts. Think, feel and do nothing that may displease Him. Ever remember Him and pray to Him for mercy and grace. If you live such a life, you need have no

fears about your life after death.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah was delighted to hear these words. He bowed and promised to live and act as advised by the Guru. He stayed with the Guru for some time. During this time, the Guru gave him religious instruction suitable to his needs and circumstances. Sayyid Shah became a devotee of the Guru.

After a time, Sayyid Budhu Shah returned to his home in Sadhaura. A few days later, five hundred Pathans in military uniform came to him. They said to him, 'Our profession is military service. We were employed in the army of Emperor Aurangzeb. We have been dismissed for a minor fault. Now no one is prepared to employ us. All are afraid of the Emperor. We have come to you for help. Find us service somewhere. We shall be faithful in our service. We shall not bring a bad name to you in any way.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah decided to help them. He knew that Guru Gobind Singh had employed a large number of Muslims in his army. He decided to ask him to enlist the Pathans also. He took them to the Guru. He told the Guru their story. He recommended them for enlistment in the Guru's service. The Guru agreed. He took them into his service. He fixed a salary of five rupees a day for each officer and one rupee a day for each soldier. The five officers' names were : Haiyat Khan, Kale Khan, Nijabat Khan, Umre Khan and Bhikhan Khan.

While staying at Paunta the Guru spent much of his time in composing poetry. He also enjoyed the chase and the hunt every day. He extended and beautified Paunta with gardens and pleasure grounds.

This peaceful life was interrupted after some time. The hill chiefs came to fight against him. They were led by Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur.

The Guru's Pathan Soldiers had heard that the hill chiefs were about to attack the Guru. Four of the five Pathan officers, with the soldiers under them, decided to desert the Guru. They went over to the Guru's enemies. One Pathan officer, Kale Khan and the soldiers under him, however, remained faithful to the Guru.

The Guru lost no time in informing Sayyid Budhu Shah of the misconduct of the Pathan soldiers. The Sayyid felt their misbehaviour to be a personal disgrace to himself. He made up his mind to remove this disgrace. He decided to help and fight for the Guru. Accordingly, he joined the Guru along with his brother, his four sons, and seven hundred disciples.

A bloody battle was fought at Bhangani, near Paunta. Sayyid Budhu Shah, his brother, his sons, and his disciples all fought with great bravery and devotion. They killed a large number of the Guru's enemies. His men shouted like thunder. They drove the enemy before them as a hurricane drives dry leaves and straw. Two of his sons and several disciples fell fighting for the Guru. The Guru's enemies suffered heavy losses and a crushing defeat.

After the battle, Sayyid Budhu Shah went to the Guru to take leave of him. His surviving sons and disciples were with him. The Guru said to him, 'You have proved to be a true lover and worshipper of God. Do not consider your two sons to be dead. They shall live forever in God's blissful presence. Only those really die who care not for God and their duty, who turn cowards on the field of battle.'

Sayyid Budhu Shah replied, 'O true Guru, I do not, at all, mourn for my sons who have died fighting for you. They have laid down their lives in a good and noble cause. They have gone to enjoy seats in Paradise. They shall live there for ever.'



The Guru's gift to Pir Budhu Shah.

I am proud of them.'

The Guru considered how best to reward Sayyid Budhu Shah. He conferred on him the most precious gift of God's Name. He told him how to attain union with God. He made him other gifts also. The Guru was, at the time, combing his hair. A Sikh was standing near, holding his turban. The Sayyid requested the Guru to give him the comb with his loose hair in it. The Guru laid the comb with the loose hair in it upon his turban. He presented the turban and the comb to Sayyid Budhu Shah. He said, 'Keep these in memory of this day.' He also gave him a *kirpan* and a robe of honour. Finally, he gave him five thousand rupees for distribution among his disciples

Sayyid Budhu Shah returned home. His wife and other relatives began to mourn for his two sons who had fallen on the battle field. He told them not to mourn. His sons had not died. They had gone to Paradise to live there in joy and peace for ever. His wife dried her tears. She blessed her sons. She became a disciple of the Guru like her husband. Long afterwards, she and her husband were killed by agents of Emperor Aurangzeb. Their fault was that they had faith in Guru Gobind Singh, that they were his disciples. Both of them died fighting like soldier disciples.

MAHANT KIRPAL AND HAIYAT KHAN

Baba Sri Chand, Guru Nanak's elder son, remained an unmarried *sadhu* all his life. He started a branch of the Sikh faith. He called it the Udasi faith. His followers came to be called Udasi Sikhs or Udisis.

A large number of Udisis lived comfortably at Guru Gobind Singh's darbar. They took food from the Guru's free kitchen. Most of them were mere idlers. They lived in ease and comfort. They spent most of their time in idle discussions, gossip, rest and sleep. No wonder that they grew very fat and disinclined to do any work.

We have seen that Guru Gobind Singh had to engage in a bloody battle against the hill chiefs. The battle took place at Bhangani. We have seen what part was played in that battle by the Muslim fakir named Sayyid Budhu Shah. We shall now tell what part was played by Udasi *sadhus* in that battle.

The Guru had sent out men to watch the movements of the enemy. These scouts reported that the enemy forces were marching to attack. The Guru ordered all his men to get ready for the coming fight. He sent similar orders to his Udasi Sikhs also. He said to them, 'Put on your turbans. Take up your arms. Be ready for defence.'

The Udisis had no inclination to fight. They did not wish to lose their lives. They said to themselves, 'It is true that we have been taking food from the Guru's free kitchen. But we are not prepared to lose our lives on that account. Surely, the world is wide enough for us. There are other lands and places where we can beg for our living. The Guru's kitchen is not the

only one left for us in the world. It was not for fighting battles that we left our homes.'

Thinking thus, they decided to run away during the night. They did so one by one, so that their departure might remain unnoticed. All of them, about five hundred in number, went away. Their leader or mahant, named Kirpal, was the only Udasi who did not go.

Next morning the Guru was informed that the Udasis had run away during the night. Their leader, Mahant Kirpal, was the only one who had not fled. The Guru smiled and said, 'The root at any rate, is left. As the root still exists, the tree shall grow and bear flowers and fruit. If the mahant had also gone, the Udasis would have been all uprooted and finished. They would have been expelled from the fold of Sikhism.'

The Guru then sent for the mahant. When he appeared, the Guru said to him, 'O mahant, where have your Udasis gone? They feasted and fattened themselves on our sacred food. In the hour of our need they have all run away.'

The mahant calmly replied, 'O true Guru, they were all your disciples. All disciples are made by you. You possess the power to pardon those who have taken a wrong path. Do pardon those who have fled in fear. I am here to serve you with my whole self.'

The battle was in full swing. Mahant Kirpal was also there in the field. He was on horseback. He was watching the brave deeds being done by the Guru's warriors. He felt an urge within himself to take part in the battle. He saw Haiyat Khan advancing. This Haiyat Khan was, as you know, one of the four Pathan officers who had deserted the Guru. Mahant Kirpal went up to the Guru. He said, 'O true Guru, permit me to fight against that faithless Pathan.'



24 *The Mahant challenged Haiyat Khan.*

The Guru replied, 'O holy saint, you can kill with your words. You need not fight. Pray that I may be victorious. Your prayer will surely be answered. My enemies shall be killed or made to run for their lives.'

But the mahant was eager to engage Haiyat Khan. He again prayed the Guru to let him fight. The Guru asked, 'With what weapon are you going to fight ? Mahant Kirpal lifted his club and said, 'With this weapon of war'. The Guru smiled and said, 'All right, go and engage your enemy.'

The mahant was on horseback. He had his matted hair twisted round his head. His body was clothed with a thin plaster of ashes. His big belly projected far in front of his saddle. On his shoulder he held his 'weapon of war', his wooden club. In this form he was going to engage a mighty and practised warrior armed with the latest weapons of destruction.

The mahant advanced and challenged Haiyat Khan. The Pathan saw that the mahant had no war-like weapon. Haiyat Khan did not like to attack such an unarmed, defenceless man. All who saw the mahant said, 'How can that fat fakir fight against a mighty Pathan warrior ? How can a sparrow stand against an almighty hawk ?'

The mahant continued to challenge Haiyat Khan. 'Come on, O faithless jackal,' he said, 'come on and taste my club, my weapon of war.' At last, Haiyat Khan advanced against the mahant. He lifted his sword and aimed a powerful blow at Mahant Kirpal. The latter received the blow on his club. And lo ! Haiyat Khan's sword fell to pieces. That was a miracle indeed. The mahant then said, 'Now it is my turn to strike. Be careful. Defend yourself.' So saying, the mahant rose on his stirrups. Wielding his club with both hands, he struck Haiyat Khan on the head. The blow was so forceful that Haiyat

Khan's skull broke. His brains issued forth from his broken skull and stained the battlefield.

The mahant continued to display his skill and bravery. At last the Pathans retreated. Mahant Kirpal then made his way to the Guru. The Guru said, 'Well done, my sadhu-warrior, well done!'

A CONFECTIONER TURNS A WARRIOR

The wonderful feat performed by Mahant Kirpal at Bhangani became the talk of the day. The news of his daring, wonderful soldierly deed reached Paunta in no time. People said to each other, 'How wonderful! Did you ever hear of such a feat before? Our Guru can work wonders. Here was a fat, big-bellied *sadhu*, untrained in the use of war-like weapons. He had never handled a sword or a spear. See, how our Guru brings about a wonderful change in him. He pats the unarmed *sadhu*. He sends him to face a strong and well-armed Pathan soldier. People laugh as the *sadhu*, with a club on his shoulder, advances against the Pathan. The Pathan aims a blow at him. He breaks the Pathan's sword into pieces. Then, with his wooden club he breaks the Pathan's skull. This he does as easily as Sri Krishna used to break the earthen pots carried by the *gopis*. The Pathan's brains issued forth as did butter from the *gopis'* earthen pots broken by Sri Krishna. Did you ever before hear of such a miracle? Our Guru can, indeed, turn sparrows into hawks. Nay, he makes tiny sparrows pluck and kill mighty hawks. How wonderful! How wonderful!'

Such talk reached the ears of a confectioner. His name was Lal Chand. The news and the talk had a strange effect on him. They aroused in him the martial spirit and zeal of a warrior. He felt in him a strong urge to go and fight the Guru's enemies. He made up his mind to go to Bhangani. He closed his shop at once. He went to Bhangani as fast as his legs could carry him.

Arriving there, he hurried to the spot where the Guru stood directing the battle. He said, 'O true Guru, I feel within me a strong urge to join the fight. Bless me and send me into the battle. I will not prove a coward. But you will have to do something more, too. I have never learnt to handle any war-like weapon. I have never **handled** a sword or a spear. You will have to give me some suitable weapon. You will also have to tell me how to handle and use that weapon. If you put your hand on me and bless me, I can use every weapon most effectively. With your blessings, I can face, fight, and fell even the strongest Pathan.'

The Guru replied, 'All right, you may do as your heart urges you to do. If you want to fight, take and mount a horse.' A horse was given to him. He had never before mounted a horse. But he managed to reach and sit on the back of the horse given to him by the Guru. The Guru then gave him a sword and a shield. The confectioner said, 'How are these to be used? In which hand should I hold the sword? In which hand should I hold the shield? And in which hand should I hold the horse's reins?' The Guru smiled and said, 'Take the sword in your right hand. Take the shield in your left hand. Leave the reins alone. When anyone tries to hit you with a sword, put forward the shield. Receive the blow on the shield. Then use the sword with the right hand.'

The confectioner held the sword and the shield as directed. He let go the horse's reins. The soldiers standing near laughed aloud at the confectioner's ignorance. They said, 'Here is a warrior, indeed! And a rider, too! But our Guru has the power to work wonders. He can make tiny sparrows pluck and kill powerful hawks. The confectioner will surely overcome strong, practised warriors. Let us watch him. Let us cheer him.'



29 A confectioner turns a warrior

The confectioner ran his horse into the Pathan army. The Guru's soldiers cheered him and shouted, '*Sat Sri Akal*'. Bhikhan Khan saw the confectioner advancing towards him. As you know, Bhikhan Khan was one of the four faithless Pathan officers who had deserted the Guru. A friend of his, named Mir Khan, was standing near him. He, too, was strong, well-practised warrior. Bhikhan Khan said to him, 'See, here comes a *Bania* to fight against us Pathans. He has been all day weighing and selling flour, pulses and salt. Now the Guru has given him a sword and a shield. He cannot sit firmly on horseback. But this horseman comes to fight against us who are strong and skilful soldiers. Meet him. Take his arms and his horse. Then cut him into pieces. Make him lick the dust.'

Mir Khan went forward to meet the confectioner. He fell upon him as a hawk falls upon a sparrow. He drew his sword and aimed a blow at the confectioner. The latter received the blow on his shield. Then, with his mind fixed on the Guru and saying, '*Akal*' he struck a blow at Mir Khan. The blow proved effective and fatal. Mir Khan's head was separated from his body. Shouts of '*Sat Sri Akal*' rose from the Guru's soldiers.

Mir Khan had come to make the confectioner lick the dust. But he himself had to fall and lick the dust. Seeing him killed by a confectioner, the Pathans and the hillmen were filled with fear and wonder. They said, 'How can we defeat the Guru? He can make fat, unarmed *sadhus* and simple shopkeepers face and kill strong and well-trained warriors. How wonderful!'

Soon, thereafter, the Guru's enemies took to their heels. He let them run away. He did not let them be chased and killed. He did not want to shed blood unnecessarily.

THE GURU'S AMAZING CALL

Guru Nanak as well as his successor Gurus used to let their hair and beards grow their natural length. On their heads they wore turbans and not caps. Most Sikhs followed their Guru's example. They had long hair and flowing beards. They wore turbans on their heads. But, quite a considerable minority continued to shave even after embracing Sikhism.

Guru Gobind Singh decided that all Sikhs should wear long hair and beards like their Gurus. He said to himself, 'Sikhism is distinct and different from Islam and Hinduism. In their character, outlook, customs and daily conduct, the Sikhs are distinct and different from their neighbours—Hindus and Muslims. I want the Sikhs to be in form and appearance, also, they should be distinct and different from all others. They should have a form and appearance of their own. They should have a uniform of their own. A Sikh among even a thousand non-Sikhs should be immediately and easily recognizable.'

Thinking thus, the Guru sent out orders that all Sikhs should let their hair and beards grow their natural length. They should wear turbans and not caps. On one occasion some Sikhs said to the Guru, 'If we wear long hair, both Hindus and Muslims will laugh at us and tease us.' The Guru said, 'I will tell you how to stop them from teasing and laughing at you. You should all wear arms. You should, at all times, be ready to defend yourselves. No one will dare to insult you.'

In the beginning of the year 1699 A.D. the Guru sent out special invitations to all Sikhs. They were desired to attend a special gathering. The gathering was to be held on the occasion of that year's Baisakhi. There was a good response to the invitations. As the Baisakhi day approached, companies of Sikhs began to arrive at Anandpur. They came from all parts of India.

The Guru ordered carpets to be spread on a raised piece of open space. A beautiful tent was also set up nearby. At that place now stands the Gurdwara named Sri Kesgarh.

On the day just before Baisakhi day, a large open-air gathering was held at place. As soon as the morning prayers were over, the Guru went into the tent. He remained there for some time. The assembled Sikhs wondered what the Guru was doing inside the tent. He came out at last. His appearance was altogether different from usual. His eyes shone like fire. His face was hard-set and red. His naked sword shone and shook in his uplifted hand. He looked like a warrior about to enter a battlefield. In a voice as of thunder he said, 'My dear Sikhs, this sword of mine wants to taste the blood of a Sikh. Is there any one among you ready to lay down his life at a call from me ?'

All grew pale on hearing such a strange demand. There was no response to this amazing call. The Guru repeated the question. Still there was no reply. A third time he spoke in a louder voice, 'Is there any true Sikh of mine among you ? If so, let him give me his head as an offering, as a proof of his faith in me.' At last Bhai Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore, rose and said, 'O true king, my head is at your service. Cut it off from my body and make it lie at your sacred feet.'

The Guru took him by the arm. He dragged him into the tent. The Sikhs gathered outside the tent heard from inside the sound of a blow of a sword. They heard the sound of a

body falling on the ground. They saw a stream of blood coming from the tent. It appeared that the Guru had beheaded Bhai Daya Ram.

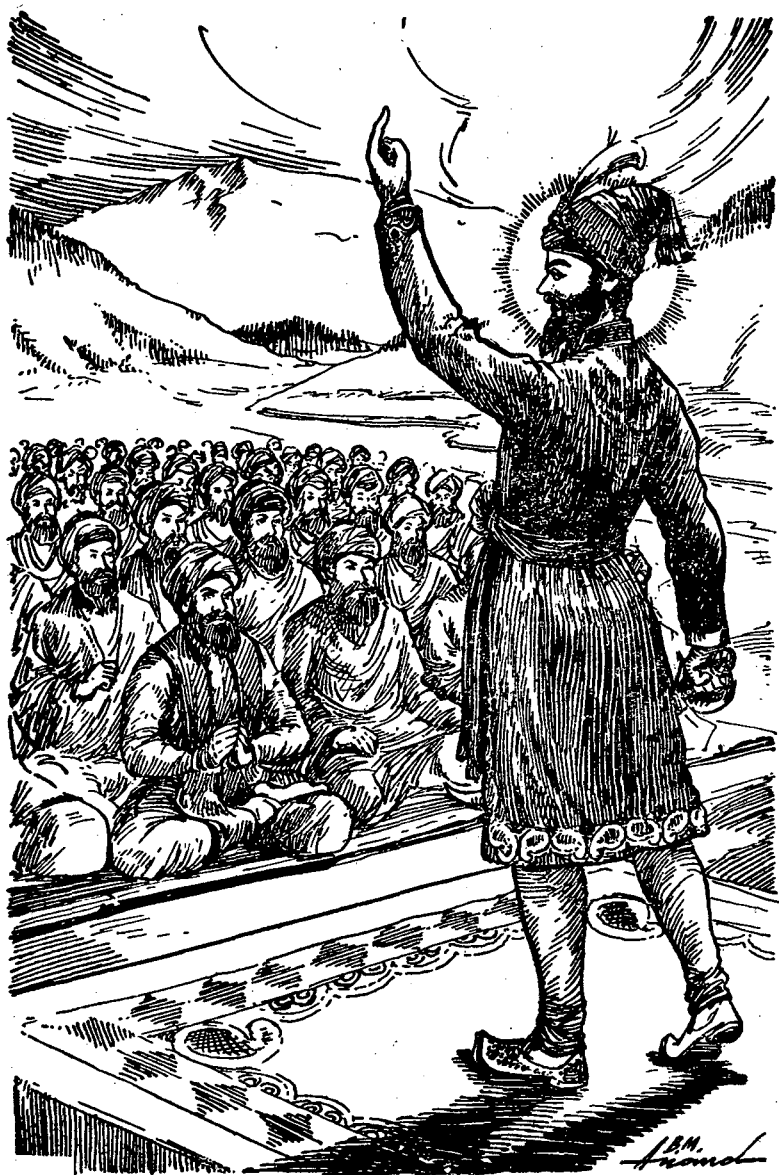
After a while, the Guru came out of the tent. His face was redder than before. His eyes were red as blood. The sword in his uplifted hand was dripping with fresh blood. In a loud thundering voice he called out, 'Is there another true Sikh ready to give me his head?' The Sikhs gathered there felt convinced that Guru really meant what he said. They were convinced that Bhai Daya Ram had been killed. There was dead silence again. The Guru called once more. There was no response. He called for the third time.

On the third call, Bhai Dharm Das, a Jat Sikh of Delhi, stood up and said, 'O true king, take my head. Death with your sword will give me life everlasting.'

The Guru caught him by the arm. He dragged him forcibly into the tent. The same two sounds were heard. The first was that of a blow with a sword. The second was that of a body falling to the ground. As before, a stream of fresh-spilled blood issued from the tent. The Sikhs assembled outside were convinced that Bhai Dharm Das, too, had been killed. They were all filled with terror. Many of them fled for their lives.

A short time after, the Guru came out again. He looked fiercer than before. His face and eyes were redder. Waving his sword above his head, he called out, 'Is there any other Sikh ready to offer me his head? I am in very great need of the heads of my Sikhs. Be quick.'

More and more Sikhs slipped away. The gathering became thinner and thinner. Every face was pale. All lips were dry. All heads were lowered. All eyes were downcast. Some went to the Guru's mother, Mata Gujri. They



34 *My sword wants to taste the blood of a Sikh.*

complained to her against the Guru. 'He has gone mad,' said they. 'He is killing his Sikhs. Remove him from guruship. Make a grandson of yours the guru in his place.' She sent a messenger to him. But he was in no mood to receive or listen to any messenger. He repeated the call for another head. On the third call Bhai Mohkam Chand, a washerman of Dwarka, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same manner as he had treated the other two. The same two sounds were heard. A stream of blood was seen coming from the tent. 'So another Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside.

After a short time, the Guru came out of the tent. In the same manner as before, he called out for another head. Again there was no response. Some more Sikhs ran away. Others lowered their heads. The Guru called again. Still there was no response. On the third call, Bhai Sahib Chand, a barber of Bidar, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same manner as he had treated the other three. The same two sounds were heard from inside the tent. A fresh stream of blood was seen to flow out. 'So the fourth Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside the tent.

After a while the Guru again came out of the tent. He was waving his sword covered with fresh blood. He again called out for another head. At this, most of the remaining Sikhs ran away from the gathering. Only a few had the courage to stay. At first there was no response. The call was repeated. At last Bhai Himmat Rai, a water-carrier of Jagannath, stood up and offered his head. The Guru treated him in the same way in which he had treated the other four. The same two sounds were heard from inside the tent. A stream of blood was seen to flow out. 'So the fifth Sikh has been killed,' thought the Sikhs gathered outside the tent. 'How many more will go the

same way ?'

This time the Guru stayed longer in the tent. At last he came out. He was dressed in bright saffron coloured garments. His sword was sheathed. His face was beaming with joy and satisfaction. He was followed by five Sikhs dressed exactly like him. Who were they ? Oh wonder ! They were the same who had given their heads to the Guru ! They had been killed ! Had they been brought back to life ? Their faces, their dress, and their whole appearance were all like the Guru's.

The Guru seated them near himself. Then he said aloud, 'When Guru Nanak tested his Sikhs, only one Sikh, namely Guru Angad, stood the test successfully. Now I have found five Sikhs totally devoted to the Guru. I am immensely pleased. It is a matter of joy for all of us. The Sikh faith will grow and flourish for ever. These five are my *Panj Piare*, my Beloved Five. They are in my form, I am in theirs. They are one with me. I am in them. They are in me.'

A REVOLUTIONARY ACT

On the Baisakhi day of 1699 A.D., Guru Gobind Singh held a large gathering of his Sikhs. It was held at the place where now stands the gurdwara called Sri Kesgarh. Sikhs from all parts of India attended the gathering.

The Guru was dressed all in white. He was in high spirits. His face was bright and cheerful. He sat on his throne. The Beloved Five sat before him in the first row. When all had assembled, he addressed the gathering saying : 'I have called you here today for a special purpose. I am going to do something which will make this day most memorable in Sikh history, something which will mark a turning point in the history of my people and country.

'So far, as of course you all know, the custom of *charnpahul* has been in vogue for admitting persons to the Sikh faith. A vessel of water was placed before the Guru. He touched the water with his toe. The person who wanted to become a Sikh drank a little of that water. Such has been the practice so far. It developed humility. That virtue is very precious and essential. As Baba Nanak has said, "Sweetness and humility are the essence of all good qualities." But times have changed. Sweetness and humility alone cannot successfully meet the challenge of the rapidly changing times. Now we need fearless bravery, dauntless courage, and skill in the use of arms. We need them for the defence of the faith. We need them for maintaining the Sikh nation. We need them to free our country from the rule of cruel

foreigners. We need them to bring to the common man, the blessings of justice, love, equality and brotherliness.

‘From today the Sikh nation will be called the *Khalsa*. *Charnpahul* will be replaced by *Khande da Amrit*. The person desiring to become a Sikh will drink water that has been stirred with a *khanda* or two-edged sword. This water will be called *amrit* or nectar.

‘They who partake of this *amrit* will be changed from jackals to lions, from sparrows to hawks. They will be called Singhs or lions. All castes, all people, are equally welcome to take *amrit*. I mean to make all Sikhs give up and forget their previous castes. I want to combine them all into one Brotherhood, the *Khalsa*. In that Brotherhood all will be equal in all respects—the lowest with the highest.’

The Guru then took some pure water in a vessel of steel. He knelt beside that steel vessel. He told the Five Dear Ones to stand around him. They were asked to fix their eyes on the Guru. They were to fix their thoughts on God. Kneeling beside the vessel of steel, he began to stir the water with a *khanda* or two-edged sword. At the same time, he went on repeating some sacred verses. In this way he repeated, one after the other, the sacred verses which he had chosen for the ceremony. Then he said, ‘In this vessel of steel I have prepared the *amrit* or the baptismal nectar. With it I shall baptize the Beloved Five. Then I shall baptize others. But before proceeding further, I shall show you what wonderful powers the *amrit* possesses.’

Saying this, he put some of it aside for birds to drink. Upon this, two sparrows came. They filled their beaks with the nectar. Immediately, they flew away to a little distance. They began to fight fiercely. They fought like two rajas fighting for a kingdom.

Thereupon the Guru said to his Sikhs, 'You have seen what wonderful power the *amrit* possesses. All who take it will acquire the same spirit as did the sparrows here. They will become fearless, powerful, brave and warlike.'

A Sikh went to the Guru's wife, Mata Jitoji. He informed her of the *amrit* which the Guru had prepared. He gave her an account of the incident of the two sparrows. Hearing this, she said to herself, 'Let me go and sweeten the *amrit*. It will have sweetening effect on those who take it.' She took some Indian sweetmeat called *patashas*. She took the sweets to Guru. When she reached there, she stood waiting before him. Soon he raised his eyes. He saw her with the sweets in her hands. He said to her, 'You have come at a very appropriate time. You have brought something which will prove very useful. I am going to change my Sikhs into Singhs or lions. The *amrit* prepared by me will produce fearless courage, strength and bravery. These qualities are very useful. They are very much needed these days. They are needed very urgently now. They will be needed still more urgently in times to come. But alone they can prove to be dangerous possessions. They must be accompanied by a sweetness of temper and a peace-loving nature. The sweets brought by you will have that effect. Pour the sweets into the nectar. Those who drink it will be brave, strong and fearless like lions. At the same time, they will possess the grace of womanly sweetness.'

Mata Jitoji poured the *patashas* into the *amrit* which the Guru had prepared. He dissolved them in it by stirring it with the two-edged sword. Then he stood up, holding the vessel of *amrit* in his hands. He made the Beloved Five kneel on their left knees in the soldierly fashion. He told them to look into his eyes. He gazed into the eyes of each of them,



40 *Mata Jito ji poured the sweet into the amrit.*

turn by turn. At the same time he threw showers of the baptismal nectar five times into the Dear One's face. At each shower, he called upon the Dear One to say aloud, *Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh*'. Then the Guru sprinkled the nectar five times on the Dear One's hair and eyes. Then he said to one of them, 'Hold the steel vessel in both hands. Drink some of the nectar. Then pass the vessel on to the next Dear One. Let the vessel go round, forward and backward, in this way, till the whole of the nectar has been drunk.'

As we have seen the Beloved Five belonged to different castes. One of them belonged to a so-called high caste. He was a Khatri. The other four were all from the so-called low castes—a jat, a washerman or calico-printer, a water-carrier and a barber. For such five persons to drink from the same vessel was an unheard of act anywhere before in India. It was a revolutionary act. It shocked all who were proud of their castes.

Then the Guru said, 'Those who take *amrit* become my lions. I name them Singhs. Therefore, the names of my Beloved Five will no longer be Daya Ram, Dharm Das, Mohkam Chand, Sahib Chand and Himmat Rai. Their names will be Daya Singh, Dharm Singh, Mohkam Singh, Sahib Singh and Himmat Singh. From now on, the names of my Sikhs will not end in "Das, Rai, Ram, Mal or Chand". They will all end in "Singh". My Sikhs must always wear the following five articles whose Panjabi names begin with 'K', namely *Kes* (uncut hair), *Kangha* (a comb), *Kirpan* (a sword), *Kachh* (a short drawers) and *Kara* (a steel bracelet). My Sikhs should practise arms. They should always be ever ready to use them for the defence of their principles, their faith and their country. They should not show their backs to the foe in battle. They should always live and act according

to the three golden rules laid down by Baba Nanak. They should always help the poor. They should always protect those who seek their protection and help. They should give up and forget their previous castes. They now all belong to one caste, namely the *Khalsa*. They must not drink or smoke. They must not eat *halal* meat, that is, the meat of animals killed in the Muslim fashion.

They must not worship idols, cemeteries or cremation grounds. They must not worship gods and goddesses. They should worship and believe in only one God. They must rise early, three hours before dawn, bathe, read or recite the prescribed hymns of the Gurus, and meditate on God. They should be honest and truthful. They should set apart a tenth of their income for the Guru's cause.'

After that the Guru asked his Beloved Five to prepare the *amrit* as he had done. When it was ready, he stood up before them with clasped hands. He begged them to baptize him, to give him the *amrit* in exactly the same way as he had baptized them. They were astonished at the Guru's proposal. They hesitated. But the Guru said, "Why do you hesitate? I have given you my form, my glory and my appearance. I name you the Khalsa. The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me. I am now your *chela* or disciple. Baptize me as I have baptized you. Make me a Singh as I have made you Singhs.'

The Beloved Five obeyed. They baptized the Guru in just the same way as he had baptized them. His name was made to end in 'Singh'. It was changed from Guru Gobind Das or Gobind Rai to Guru Gobind Singh.

The Guru then invited others to take *amrit*. Thousands of them were baptized that day. They all became Singhs or the

Guru's lions. The baptismal ceremony was carried on daily for several days.

Thus was born the Khalsa—a nation of saint-soldiers, worshippers of one God, friends and servants of man, and sworn foes of all tyrants ; a Brotherhood in which all were to be equal in all respects and in which all castes were united to form one caste.

A DONKEY IN A TIGER'S GARB

One day, a Sikh appeared before Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. He did not bring any offering for the Guru. This was something unusual for a Sikh. He said to the Guru, "O true king, pardon me for coming empty-handed. All the same, I want to make an offering to you. I am sure you will like it. But it is too heavy. I have not been able to lift it and bring it to this place." The Guru enquired, "What is it? Where is it?" The Sikh replied, "Away in the forest, I came across a big tiger. I killed it. I should have brought its body to you as an offering. But, as I have said, it is too heavy. I am not strong enough to lift it and bring it to you. Be pleased to lend me suitable assistance."

The Guru sent some strong men with the Sikh. They brought the tiger's body and placed it before the Guru. He was pleased to see it. He praised the Sikh for his bravery. He then had the tiger's body skinned. Then he sent for a potter's donkey. He had the donkey clothed in the tiger's skin. The donkey, thus dressed as a tiger, was let loose. All animals ran away from it out of fear. Even men, women and children fled on seeing it approach. Soon there was panic among the people. The donkey in the tiger's garb enjoyed the new experience. It no longer had to carry any loads. It no longer had to obey any master. It was free to run about and feed at pleasure

This went on for some time. In the meantime, several complaints were made to the Guru. Several people requested

him to have the dreadful beast killed. In response to these complaints and requests, the Guru went out to shoot that 'dreadful beast'. He took a party of Sikhs with him. The hunting party approached the donkey in the tiger's garb, raising the usual shouts and cries. On hearing the noise made by the Guru's party, the supposed tiger began to bray in terror. It ran away at top speed. The hunting party allowed it to go away unchecked and unpursued. It fled for protection to its old master. It was trembling with fear. Its behaviour and movements were not at all like those of a tiger. They were those of a donkey. The potter was puzzled to see a tiger behave and move like a donkey. 'What is the matter with this tiger ?' he said to himself. He approached it cautiously. As he did so, the supposed tiger began to bray and move its tail.

The potter realized that the animal before him was not a tiger. It was only a donkey in a tiger's garb. He was greatly amused at this discovery. He had a hearty laugh. Then he said, 'So, my lost donkey has come back in a tiger's suit. But it is a donkey all the same. Come on, my dear. I shall make you appear in your true garb. You have enjoyed quite a long holiday. I have missed you very much all these days. Now you will have to carry loads as before. But you have become stronger. So, the loads will be heavier than before.'

Saying this, the potter took the tiger's skin off the donkey's body. Then he gave it a sound beating for having run away. He then employed it in carrying loads. The loads were much heavier now.

All who heard the story were greatly amused. They said to each other, 'So we were all deceived. It was only a donkey dressed as a tiger. Yet how dreadful it looked ! If it had continued to wear the tiger's skin, it would have continued to terrify us all.'

Some Sikhs asked the Guru what he meant by what he



46. *A donkey in tiger's garb.*

had done. The Guru replied, 'I want you to learn a lasting lesson from this. As long as you were bound by castes and other Hindu beliefs and customs, you were like donkeys. You were driven about by persons of no position or power. I have freed you from all those chains. I have conferred on you worldly powers and blessings. I have clothed you in the garb of tigers. I have given you the courage and bravery of lions. I have made you superior to your neighbours. I have given you the Khalsa uniform. I have made you my Singhs or lions. Cling to that uniform of five 'Ks' (*Kakars*). Don't ever discard it. Remember what happened to the potter's donkey When it wore the tiger's garb, it looked like a tiger. It was in fact, taken to be a tiger by all who saw it. Nobody could go near it or think of using it as a beast of burden. But when the tiger's skin was taken off, it was caught and beaten by the potter. It was once again made to carry loads. If it had not behaved and brayed like a donkey, if it had preserved the tiger's garb and conduct, it would still have been regarded and treated as a tiger.

'You should learn a lesson from this. You must not only have the appearance of tigers, or lions. You should also possess the qualities befitting your appearance. This you can do by taking the *amrit*. I have introduced and by following the Rules of Conduct (*Rahat*) which I prescribed for the Khalsa. An *Amritdhari* Sikh or a Singh of mine will have the exterior as well as the interior of the king of the animal world. As long as you, my dear Sikhs, preserve that exterior, your enemies will fear you. You will always be victorious. But if you part with this exterior, if you discard the Khalsa uniform, you will again revert to your original condition. You will fall from the lofty position to which I am lifting you.

'Yes, Guru Nanak's Sikhs should, henceforth, take the baptismal nectar—*amrit*—such as I have prescribed. They

should ever keep distinct from others in character and conduct, as well as in appearance. So long as the Sikhs preserve the form and appearance that I have given them, so long will they enjoy my blessings. They will have in them my spirit and my light. I shall be with them at all times and in all places. *Wahiguru ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji Ki fateh.* God's is the Khalsa, and God's shall the victory be.'

It is really a great misfortune that a large number of the present-day Sikhs are not baptized as desired and enjoined upon them by Guru Gobind Singh. Too many of them are seen going about without the Khalsa uniform, of which the most essential item is *Kes* or uncut hair and beard. They are no longer distinct in appearance from others. They are thus disobeying Guru Gobind Singh's order. They are sure, also, to lose the distinctive Sikh character and qualities. This baneful practice must be checked and ended ; otherwise, the Sikh community will suffer a terrible setback and loss. It will no longer remain a community of Sardars, a brotherhood of Saint Soldiers. Let us act in time. Let every Sikh child and youth, and everyone who calls himself or herself a Sikh, take a vow to take *amrit*, wear the Khalsa uniform and observe the Khalsa *rahat* or the code of conduct prescribed by Guru Gobind Singh. Let everyone of them strive to reclaim all who have gone astray and discarded the Khalsa uniform and way of life.

“HINDU RELIGION IN DANGER !”

The news of Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act and his creation of the Khalsa soon spread far and wide. It did not have the same effect on all people. Naturally enough, it was hailed joyously by a vast majority of the people. That majority consisted mostly of the so-called low-castes and out-castes. They rejoiced that the Guru was going to liberate them from the chains of the caste system.

Do you know the chief features of the Hindu caste system ? We shall state them here in brief. That will help you to appreciate the full significance of the Guru's revolutionary act. Under that system Hindu society was divided into four main classes or castes, namely, Brahmans, Khattris, Vaishyas and Shudras.

The Brahmans belonged to the highest caste. They alone had the right to read and study the religious books. They alone had the right to worship and offer prayers to gods and goddesses. They alone had the right to perform religious rites and ceremonies. For all this the low-caste people had to supply all their needs and requirements.

The Khattris formed the second highest caste. They were inferior to the Brahmans and superior to the other two castes. They were the warrior class. They alone could bear arms. They alone could become soldiers, rulers, and kings. The low-caste people had to obey them and supply all their needs and requirements.

Traders and shopkeepers formed the Vaishya class. All workers and labourers, such as carpenters, shoemakers, barbers, water-carriers and farmworkers were classed as Shudras. They were forbidden to hear, read, or possess the Vedas.

Besides the four castes, there were people who were regarded as out-castes, as having no caste. They were treated as untouchables.

The low-castes and the out-castes had to toil for the high-castes, as well as for themselves. They could not study religious books. They could not perform or take part in religious rites. They could not bear arms even for self-defence. They had no voice in the management of public affairs.

Women, even those of the high castes, were not permitted to perform or take part in Vedic rites. They could not study religious books or the Vedas. Women were, therefore, regarded as Shudras and beyond the pale of religion.

But Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act was going to change all this completely. It is true that the previous Gurus had preached equality of all human beings. They had worked to end the prejudices and evils of the caste system. Men and women of all castes and classes, could sit together and dine together in the Guru's kitchens and in Sikh homes and gatherings. They could all read religious books and take part in religious rites. It is true that the high-caste people had learnt to mingle with persons of low-castes in *langars* and *diwans*. But they had not been called upon to eat or drink from the same vessel as the low-castes. But Guru Gobind Singh was requiring all persons, men and women of all castes to eat and drink from the same vessel. He was ending all inequalities based on the caste system. He was going to make all people—the high-castes, the low-castes, and the out-castes—equal in all respects. He was elevating the lowest to

a position of equality with the highest, in all respects.

We have seen that the four Dear Ones included Sikhs from the so-called low-castes. Yet they were given the right to prepare *amrit* and baptize others. What is even more significant, the Guru begged them to baptize him to begin with. He called them his *guru*. He called himself their *chela* or disciple. Members of all castes and classes could bear arms and become leaders, soldiers, kings and rulers. All could become warriors to defend themselves, their community and their country. All had to work for their living. Even the Brahmans and the Khattris had to do the same. They could no longer live on the earnings of others.

Naturally, the 'high-caste' people did not like all this. The Brahmans were upset most of all. They had enjoyed the special rights and benefits of their special position for centuries. They felt that all these rights of theirs were being taken away. They felt that they were being thrown down from their high positions. They felt that the low-castes and the out-castes were being elevated to a position of equality with them. They did not, at all, like this levelling up and levelling down of the various castes and classes.

Now, Anandpur was situated in the territory of the hill chief of Bilaspur Hill State. Guru Teg Bahadur had built it on the land purchased from the Raja. There were over twenty small States in these hills. The chiefs or Rajas of these hill States were Hindu Rajputs. They were Khattris by caste.

A party of Brahmans went to the hills' chiefs. They poured out their hearts to them. They aroused in them anger and fear against Guru Gobind Singh. They told them of his revolutionary act. They told them of the harm which that act was sure to cause to the Hindu religion and the high-castes. They said, 'He is out to wipe out the Hindu religion. He is breaking

up the caste system. He has declared a war on the caste rules. He is mixing up the four castes along with the out-castes and uniting them all into one caste or class. In that way he is creating a new caste which he calls the Khalsa. On becoming members of the Khalsa, all—high-castes, low-castes and out-castes—become equal in all respects. His movement is becoming dangerously popular. If he is allowed to go unchecked, the Hindu religion and Hindu culture will disappear altogether. It is your duty as Khatrias to serve and save your religion. Moreover, even your own interests and safety demand speedy action against him. He is raising an army. If you do not check him in time, he will become too powerful for you. He will drive you all out of your kingdoms and establish his own rule. Rajas, not only your religion but also your kingdoms are in deadly danger. Save them if you can.'

The hill chiefs were already jealous and afraid of the Guru. They had tasted his steel at Bhangani. The Brahmans' words, therefore, filled them with alarm and anger. They assured the Brahmans that they would soon take suitable action against the Guru. The Brahmans went away highly pleased and satisfied.

THE HILL CHIEFS AT ANANDPUR

Guru Gobind Singh's Khalsa was increasing in number and strength, day by day. Reports of what was happening at Anandpur reached the hill chiefs quite regularly. Such reports made them feel restless and worried. Everyone of them began to look upon the Guru as his mortal foe. A number of them met together at Bilaspur. They reviewed the situation created by Guru Gobind Singh's revolutionary act. They discussed what steps should be taken against him. They decided to see the Guru before doing anything else. They said, 'Let us appeal to him to desist from the path which he has chosen. If he refuses to pay heed to our appeal, we shall meet again and plan further effective action against him.'

Accordingly, a deputation of the hill chiefs went to Anandpur to see the Guru. Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur was their leader. The Guru received them with due regard. He gave them seats of honour in his *darbar*. A look at their faces revealed to him what was passing in their minds. He said to them, 'Rajas, your fears are baseless. Your objections against my creation of the Khalsa are ill-founded. They are based on a misunderstanding of the whole matter. They indicate that you have not fully understood the needs and the spirit of the times. I am not destroying your religion. Your religion is not in danger. Your rule and kingdoms are not in danger, either. I do not want to found a kingdom. I do not want to deprive you of your kingdoms and thrones. On the contrary, I want to

make you stronger and safer. My aim is to end the rule of the cruel tyrants who treat you as their slaves. Need I remind you of what you and your people have to bear under their rule? They force Hindus to become Muslims. They mercilessly butcher those who refuse to give up their religion. They dishonour and break the idols of your gods and goddesses. They pull down your temples and build mosques on their sites. Hence, it is they that are destroying your religion. They, not I, pose a danger to your religion. What is far worse, they seize your wives, sisters and daughters before your very eyes. You lack the courage to resist them, the courage even to resent their action. You bear it all with meekness. Nay, you have fallen so low that you meekly give your daughters to your muslim rulers. You do this because you are afraid of them and want to please them. I am deeply concerned about your fallen state. Are you not ashamed to call yourselves Rajputs? Think of your ancestors. Think of their fearless bravery and self-respect. If you still possess a trace of that bravery and self-respect, if you still have a trace of the ancient spirit of your race, then listen to my advice. Take the *amrit*. Embrace the Sikh religion. Become members of the Khalsa panth, become Khalsa. Then gird up your loins to free your country and elevate it from its fallen condition.'

The hill chiefs heard all this with lowered heads. Then their leader, Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur said, 'O true king, what you say is correct. It is true that we have fallen, and fallen very low. But we are helpless. There is no way out of our present fallen state. The Turks are too powerful for us. Who can withstand the Pathans and the Mughals? Everyone of them can eat a whole goat. We are nothing before them. Even if we take your *amrit* and embrace the Khalsa religion, we can fare no better. We shall still be no match for them. Even you will fail against them. Your low-caste and out-

caste soldiers are, at best, as cats fighting against tigers, or as tiny sparrows fighting against mighty hawks. Hence, it is best to make a virtue of necessity. We must endure what we cannot cure. We would humbly advise you to give up your plans. You cannot succeed.'

On hearing this, the Guru said, 'O Rajas, you have lost the spirit of your mighty ancestors. You have become cowards. It is cowardice that makes you think and behave in this ignoble way. Why shame your ancient name and fame? Come, shake off this weakness of heart. Take the *amrit*, join the Khalsa. Be leaders in the nation of Saint warriors founded by me. Cast off all fear. The *amrit* will infuse new life in you, as it has done in my Sikhs. They are now Singhs or lions. The *amrit* will change you from jackals to tigers. You will become Singhs (lions). These 'sparrows' of mine, as you call them, shall tear the imperial hawk to pieces. I shall make cats fight and defeat tigers. My Singhs will destroy the cruel Pathans and Mughals. They will liberate the country from the curse of the cruel foreigners' rule. Come, join them in this holy campaign to gain freedom and establish friendship and equality among all people. Come, champion the cause of human equality and freedom of worship. Safeguard the honour of your women. Liberate your unhappy, down-trodden countrymen. Come, God will be your helper and guide.'

But the Guru's words fell on deaf ears, and on dull and dead hearts. The Rajas shook their heads and went away. In their hearts they were determined to work against the Guru. They said, 'We will make him leave the hill region and go back to the place whence his father came to settle here. If need be, we shall call in the aid of the Emperor of Delhi.'

A SURPRISE ATTACK

The hill chiefs had chosen to become sworn enemies of Guru Gobind Singh. They considered him to be a constantly growing danger. They wished to get rid of him ; the sooner, the better. But how to do that was the perplexing question. The memory of Bhangani was yet alive in their minds. They hesitated to attack him ; for they feared another and more bitter defeat. All the same, they were always making plans to achieve their evil objective. They decided that every one of them should always be on the look-out for a chance to harm the Guru. Then something occurred which, they thought, was a *godsend* for them.

One day Guru Gobind Singh went out on a hunting excursion in the hills. He had only a small party of Sikhs with him. But they were all strong, selfless, and brave warriors. They had vowed never to show their backs to the enemy. They were ready to lay down their lives for the Guru's sake or at his command. To die fighting for the Guru and his cause was regarded by them as a piece of good luck. The bravest and strongest among them were Udhe Singh and Alim Singh.

Two hill chiefs, Balia Chand and Alim Chand, learnt of the Guru's presence in the hills. They learnt that he was accompanied by only a small party of Sikh soldiers. These Sikh soldiers, they understood, were scattered about in pursuit of game. The news made them glad. It filled their evil minds and hearts with evil thoughts and designs. They thought, 'Here is a godsend for us. Here is a very good



57. *A surprise attack.*

opportunity for us to get rid of this grave and ever-growing danger to our race and religion. The Guru has only a small number of Sikhs with him. They are not in battle-form. They are unprepared for a fight. They are scattered here and there in search of game. We can easily overcome and finish them, and then catch or kill the Guru. What good luck ! It will be a most valuable service to our race and religion. We shall win name, fame and honour. Let us fall upon him suddenly. He and his Sikhs will be caught unawares. It will be easy for us to finish them.'

So thinking, the two hill chiefs hastily called out their armies. They marched cautiously and noiselessly, but as quickly as possible. They made a sudden attack on a group of the Guru's companions. The latter were taken by surprise. They had not expected such an attack. But they did not feel unnerved or shaken. They stood their ground well. Each of them cut down a number of the hillmen. But it was a very unequal fight. They were too few in number to cope with the attackers. They were forced to retreat. But they did so without any panic.

At the time of the attack Guru Gobind Singh was at some distance from the scene of the battle. Because of the intervening hills and bushes, he could not see what was happening. A Sikh went running to him and informed him of what had happened. He rushed to the place of the encounter, raising his war-cry of '*Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !*'

His war-cry was heard by the retreating Sikhs. It inspired them with fresh courage and resolve. They rallied around their Guru, raising the Khalsa war-cry of '*Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !*' Hearing this war-cry, other members of the hunting party rushed to the place from all sides. They all fell upon the hillmen. They began to cut down their enemies as a woodcutter chops off twigs from a felled tree. The Guru

discharged his arrows at the enemy. The arrows took fatal effect. The Sikhs fought with zeal, courage and skill. Both sides fought most desperately.

Balia Chand saw his men being destroyed by the Sikhs. He rushed forward to their aid. Udhe Singh, one of the bravest soldiers of the Guru's army, rushed forward to oppose Balia Chand. The other hill chief Alim Chand, also advanced to support the hill army. Alim Singh, another of the bravest soldiers in the Guru's army, hastened to meet Alim Chand. The fight became fiercer still.

Alim Chand aimed a blow of his sword at Alim Singh, who received it on his shield. Then with his return blow, he cut off the hill chief's right arm. At this, Alim Chand ran away. Balia Chand was thus left in sole command of the hill army. But he did not long enjoy that honour. He was soon shot dead by Udhe Singh.

The hill troops saw that one of their chiefs had fled from the field and the other was dead. At once they took flight. Thus the honour of victory was left to the Guru and his brave, devoted Sikhs. After the battle the Guru continued his hunting excursion.

The news of this battle and its results added to the hill chiefs' fears. They thought it highly dangerous to allow the Sikhs to increase in power and number. But they felt that the Guru was too powerful for them. So they decided to complain to the Delhi government against him and his Sikhs.

In their representation to the Delhi government they said, Guru Gobind Singh has established a new religion distinct from the Hindus and the Muslims. He has given it the name of Khalsa. He has united the four castes into one. He welcomes even the outcastes and Muslims to join his Khalsa. He invited us to join him. He said to us, "If you consent you will

get empire in this world and salvation in the next. You should rise in rebellion against the Emperor. I shall help you with all my forces. As you know, the Emperor killed my father. I desire to avenge his death.”

‘We did not think it proper to oppose our kind and just Emperor. We refused to accept his advice and suggestion. Consequently, he is displeased with us. He has become our sworn enemy. By ourselves we cannot restrain him. He is too powerful for us. We therefore, beg for the protection of the Emperor against him. As loyal subjects of the kind Emperor, pray for assistance to expel the Guru from Anandpur. We beg to submit that if he is not checked in time, he will become a danger to the Emperor’s government.’

Emperor Aurangzeb was at that time engaged in warfare in the Deccan. The hill chiefs’ representation was heard by the subedar or viceroy of Delhi. It was then forwarded by him to the Emperor to await his orders.

A FEW ANECDOTES

(1) Bibi Deep Kaur

With his *amrit* or baptismal nectar Guru Gobind Singh had infused fearless valour in all hearts. He was verily changing jackals into lions. He was preparing tiny sparrows to fight and pluck mighty hawks. The process was not confined to men-folk alone. The Guru had raised women to a position of equality with men. He had baptized them in the same manner as men and along with men. Men and women of all castes and classes partook of the *amrit* together, from the same vessel. A spirit of fearless heroism filled them, through and through.

There are numerous examples of Sikh women displaying what is commonly called the manly spirit of courage. One of them is given below :

Once a number of Majha Sikhs, men and women, were on their way to Anandpur. On arriving close to a certain village, they halted by the side of a well in order to refresh themselves. A young woman, named Deep Kaur, continued to march on. She proceeded until she reached a grove of trees and thick bushes. By then, her companions were out of sight and out of earshot.

But she was not afraid. Suddenly, four armed Muslims closed around her. They had been lying hidden among the bushes. Their evil designs could be read in their eyes and gestures. They stood blocking her way and threatening her.

She displayed the true Sikh spirit. She did not lose her presence of mind. She was not afraid in the least. She showed no trace of panic. Her alert mind worked quickly. She threw one of her gold bangles on the ground before them and said, 'Take that and go away.'

One of the ruffians bent down to pick up the bangle. Deep Kaur quickly drew her sword. In the twinkling of an eye, she cut off his head from his shoulders. His companions were not prepared for such an adventure. They were taken aback and stunned. Before they could recover from the shock and draw their swords, two of them were despatched by that brave daughter of Guru Gobind Singh. Then she fell upon the remaining one. With a quick stroke of her sword she wounded him. He fell on his back. Instantly she was on his chest. Sitting on his chest, she pierced him through the heart. In this way she finished off all of her four assailants.

Just at that time the rest of the party arrived on the spot. They saw Deep Kaur just stepping aside after having killed the last of the ruffians. They saw the four corpses lying on the ground. They were all filled with wonder. They marvelled at the courage and presence of mind displayed by Deep Kaur. They were full of praises for the feat of swordsmanship performed by her. The corpses were thrown into a well. The party proceeded on their way to Anandpur.

The incident was narrated to the Guru. He was highly pleased at the brave and manly performance of Deep Kaur. He said, 'She has proved herself to be a true Sikh. She saved her honour and life. Let all follow her example.'

(2) A Sikh Lady's Prayer

One day, an old Sikh lady came to the Guru's darbar, weeping and bewailing bitterly. The Guru beckoned her to

come near him. Then he asked her why she was weeping and bewailing in that manner. She replied, 'O true king, unbearable is the woe which has befallen me. My husband joined the Khalsa army. He fell fighting bravely for the sacred cause. I was glad to learn that he had served you with his life and earned your blessings. My two elder sons followed their father's example. They also joined the army of your Saint-soldiers. They also fell fighting for the sacred cause. When I heard of their martyrdom, I thanked you and the Lord above. They had made an excellent use of their lives. They had joined their father at the Lord's court.

'But my third son seems to be unlucky. He aspired to follow the examples set by his father and elder brothers. But he has fallen dangerously ill. His illness seems to be incurable. It is likely that he will fall prey to this disease. My grief is unbounded. What grieves me is not that he is about to die so young. My woe is that he will not be able to make good use of his valour and soldierly attainments. Cure him, O true king, make him a soldier of yours. Let him die a Saint-warrior's death, with God and the Guru in his heart, with the Khalsa war-cry on his lips, and a sword and a shield in his hands.

'Such is my woe and such is my prayer. Grant my prayer and end my woe, O true king.'

The Guru was highly pleased to hear her. He said, 'Go, brave lady, to your son's bedside. Then pray to God. I shall also pray for you. I am sure He will grant our prayers and your son will get well. He will be a hero in the Khalsa army. He will follow in the footsteps of his father and brothers.'

She went away, rejoicing that her sons' life would not be wasted.

(3) A Khatri Youth

One day, Guru Gobind Singh was sitting in his darbar, discoursing among his Sikhs. He felt thirsty. He asked a Sikh to fetch him water. Before that Sikh had time to do so, a Khatri youth, who was sitting close by, stood up and volunteered to perform the service. The Guru noticed that the young boy's hands were very soft and clean. He said to the youth, 'Your hands are soft and tender. Have you ever used them in doing any work? Do you have any occupation?'

No, true king,' replied the youth. 'My parents are rich. We have many servants to serve and work for us. I have never to do any work. In truth, this is the first time that I have offered to use them in doing even such work as fetching water for another.'

Saying this, the youth went, brought a cup of water and offered it to the Guru. The Guru refused to take it. He said, 'This water is impure. I cannot take it.'

'No, true king,' said the youth 'the water is as pure as water can be. I carefully washed my hands and the cup before filling it with fresh water drawn from the well. It is pure, O true king.'

'But,' said the Guru, 'your hands are not pure. They are polluted. By their touch the cup and the water have become polluted.'

Then the Guru raised his voice and said, 'O Sikhs, it is an important article of the Guru's faith that the body must be used in useful work and service. The body is purified by serving others. Dead and untouchable is the body which is not used in serving God's people. In doing some honest, useful work. Service and merit, not birth or caste, determine a Sikh's position in the Guru's darbar. There is no place for

idlers here. Always make the best use of your bodies. Do not shirk work. Work does not lower but dignifies man. Worship without work is no good.'

The youth's pride of birth and wealth were thoroughly shaken. He took a vow to lead his life in accordance with the Guru's teachings. To the end of his days he diligently served in the Guru's *langar*. He used to cook and distribute food, carry water, wash utensils and sweep the floor. Needless to say that the Guru was highly pleased with him. Almost every day he asked him to fetch water for him. He took it joyfully, saying, 'How sweet it is !'

AT RAWALSAR

Guru Gobind Singh was most eager to carry on his mission in peace. His aim was to prepare his people for winning freedom and equality in all spheres of life—religious, social, economic and political. The hill chiefs did not like the Guru's plans and campaigns. They thought, 'He is sure to make us his first target. If he succeeds, we shall lose our kingdoms, and our religion will be destroyed.' They decided, therefore, to oppose the Guru. They attacked him unprovoked a number of times. They were defeated every time.

After a number of such defeats, the hill chiefs considered it prudent to make peace with the Guru. But their intentions did not undergo any change for the better. In their hearts, they were still his bitter, sworn enemies. The peace which they made was only a temporary affair, a mere deception. It was a cover under which they could plot, prepare and work against him. It was, in other words, a mere camouflage.

Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur was the most prominent among the hill chiefs. Anandpur was in his territory. Naturally, therefore, he was more concerned and worried about the Guru's activities than his brother chiefs. Hence, though outwardly professing to be at peace with the Guru, he was determined to expel him from Anandpur.

He made a plan to find out the Guru's secrets. That was his first step towards preparing for war against him. He thought that such knowledge would help him in defeating the Guru. Accordingly, he suggested to the Guru to let an

ambassador of his be posted at his court. The Guru readily agreed; for he wanted to live at peace with all. Raja Ajmer Chand, thereupon, sent a clever Brahman named Pamma to the Guru's darbar. In name Pamma was an ambassador, but in reality he was a spy. He duly set himself to the task of finding out the Guru's secrets.

One day, at the instance of his master, Pamma suggested to the Guru to go to Rawalsar near Mandi. He added, 'On the occasion of the approaching Baisakhi festival, all hill chiefs will gather there. It will be an excellent opportunity for having heart-to-heart talks and cementing friendly relations with them.

The Guru was ever anxious for peace. So he readily accepted Pamma's suggestion. In due course, he went there along with his family and a company of his Sikhs. All hill chiefs also gathered there. The Guru arranged a magnificent reception for them. They were charmed with his engaging manners. They begged him to forget and forgive their past offences. They promised to be ever on good terms with him. The Guru assured them that he would treat them as they deserved.

The Guru explained to them the main principles of the Sikh religion. He exhorted them to join forces with the Khalsa. 'Let us all,' said he, 'make a united effort to free our country from the foreigners' cruel rule.' But they declined to run any such risks. 'The Turks,' said they, 'are too powerful for us. Your dreams can never be fulfilled. We are content with what we have. We feel resigned to our lot as it is. We must endure what we cannot cure.'

The Guru tried to awaken their spirits, to put a new life in their dead hearts. But they refused to accept his advice.

The Guru stayed at Rawalsar for a number of days. His

morning and evening religious gatherings attracted large crowds. Hundreds were fed in his free community kitchen. A large number of them were baptized and admitted to the Khalsa faith.

The wives of the rajas expressed a desire to see and hear the Guru. He received them in a separate tent. He gave them instruction suitable to their status and position. They were charmed to see him. The Guru noticed that they were looking at him with deep admiration. Their eyes never left his face. He told the eldest among them that it was time for their departure. The *ranis* did not wish to go away. But the eldest lady prevailed upon them to terminate their visit.

One of the *ranis* Padmani, daughter of the Raja of Chamba, later sent a letter to the Guru. She took her father's permission before doing so. In the letter she asked some questions on spiritual matters. The Guru sent her suitable replies. The princess was much pleased on receiving the Guru's answer. With her father's permission she went again to visit the Guru. When she bowed before him, he patted her on the shoulder with his bow. She said, 'I am your worshipper. Why have you not patted me with your hand?' The Guru replied that he never touched any woman, except his wife, with his hand. The princess bowed and went away.

One day a Sikh offered to the Guru a number of weapons of his own make. Among them was a two-barrelled gun. The rajas admired the weapons and the skill of their maker. The Guru loaded the gun and said, 'Let a Sikh stand at a distance of a hundred yards. I want to see whether the gun can shoot a man at that distance.'

Several Sikhs rushed to serve as targets for the gun. Everyone of them tried to be in front of the rest. On seeing the

struggle. the Guru said. 'Well, let all of you stand in a line where you are. Let us see through how many of you the bullet will pass.' Several Sikhs stood quietly in line. The Guru levelled the gun, took aim, slowly and carefully, and pressed the trigger. The Sikhs stood firm as a rock. The bullet, passed over their heads. The Guru had meant to test their faith. He wanted the hill chiefs to see what faith his Sikhs had in him. He wanted to show them how his Sikhs were ready to lay down their lives at a word from him.

The hill chiefs were amazed to watch this scene. They said, 'How can we defeat one whose soldiers serve him with such wonderful zeal and such unquestioning obedience ?'

SAIYAD BEG

Once Guru Gobind Singh went to Kurukshetra on the occasion of a solar eclipse. He knew that a big religious fair was held there on that occasion. Horses and other animals were also taken there for sale. One of his objects in going there was to carry the message of Guru Nanak to the people assembled there. His second object was to purchase horses for his army.

His discourses attracted large numbers. Many of the listeners embraced his religion and became members of the Khalsa. Several scholars and *yogis* also came to him to hear his discourses. A leading *yogi* named Madan Nath, was one of those who waited on the Guru. On seeing the Guru's glorious face, the *yogi* said, 'You have the external appearance of a lion, but inwardly you are a perfect saint.' The Guru replied, 'I have assumed this external appearance in order to strike terror in the hearts of the Turks. They have enslaved our country. Their misrule is inflicting misery and hardship on the people. I aim at ending their oppression and tyranny. I want to liberate my country and countrymen by infusing a new life in them.'

Most of the hill chiefs also attended the fair at Kurukshetra. They, too, came to see and hear the Guru. They renewed their promises of peace and friendship with him. But, as ever before, their promises were false. Their hearts were still full of malice and evil. They saw that the Guru had, at the most, a hundred soldiers with him. So they said, 'Here is a good



Saiyad Beg

chance for us to capture or kill the Guru. He will be returning to Anandpur. Let us get ready our forces. We shall waylay him and fall upon him unawares. We are sure to capture or kill him.'

The decision was easy to make. But its execution was quite a difficult matter. The hill chiefs hesitated. They were afraid of the Guru. They were still debating when they heard the news that two Muslim generals were near at hand. Their names were Saiyad Beg and Alif Khan. They were each in command of five thousand soldiers. They were on their way from Lahore to Delhi. The hill chiefs decided to hire the two generals and send them against the Guru.

Raja Ajmer Chand met them for the purpose. They were each promised one thousand rupees a day. They agreed to help the hill chiefs in the manner desired by them.

No, Saiyad Beg was a thoughtful man. He had a religious bent of mind. He became curious about the person against whom he had been hired to fight. He made enquiries about the Guru. What he learnt filled him with admiration and respect. He decided not to fight against him. So he withdrew from the Muslim army.

The Guru was near Chamkaur when the Muslim hirelings fell upon him. The odds were extremely heavy against him. But he was not the man to lose heart even in face of the heaviest odds. His faith in God and his self-confidence were unshakable. His Sikhs had unbounded faith and confidence in him. They were always joyfully ready to die fighting for him. They fought for their faith and principles, for their Guru and God. How could mere hirelings stand against such soldiers of God!

The battle raged with fury. The news of the hill chiefs' wicked plans had reached Anandpur. Consequently, four

hundred Sikh soldiers hurried from there to join the Guru. They arrived when the battle was still raging. They came raising the Khalsa war-cry of '*Akal! Akal! Sat Sri Akal!*'

The Guru's fast pouring and unerring arrows had rained death and destruction on the Muslim army. The dauntless fighting put in by the Sikhs had made the hirelings waver in their hearts. At that time they heard the Khalsa war-cry raised by the Sikh soldiers coming from Anandpur. This made their hearts sink still further. But the odds were overwhelmingly in their favour. So they fought on with desperate fury.

Saiyad Beg watched the fight for some time. He was filled with admiration for the Guru and his Sikhs. He felt that it was not enough that he should abstain from fighting against that Fakir-soldier of Allah. He should go over to him, kneel before him, become his follower, and actively help him in the unequal fight.

The battle was raging with great fury. It had come to a critical point. At that critical moment Saiyad Beg approached the Sikhs and said, 'Brothers mine, you believe in the Guru so do I believe in him. I shall, therefore, fight on your side.' He joined the Sikhs. Some of his followers, who held the same views, accompanied him. Soon thereafter he and his men were seen fighting against Alif Khan and his army.

Alif Khan had been wounded. His confidence had been shaken. Saiyad Beg's going over to the Guru took away what little courage he still had. So he ordered a retreat. He was hotly pursued by the Sikhs and Saiyad Beg. On his return from the pursuit, Saiyad Beg alighted from his horse and went to pay his respects to the Guru. He became a devout follower of the Guru. He had been a servant of the Emperor. Now he had given up that service. He threw in his

lot with the Guru and his Khalsa. He gave to the Guru all his wealth to assist him in his struggle against his enemies. He remained with the Guru as a trusted and powerful ally.

Some time after this incident, Emperor Aurangzeb sent a large army against the Guru. The brave and faithful Saiyad Beg led the Khalsa army. He fought very bravely. After a time he was mortally wounded. He died praising the Guru and thanking God that he had given him a chance to make a good use of his life. The Guru came to the place where Saiyad Beg's body lay. He blessed the martyred hero and said, 'He has become immortal. He has gone to live forever with the Father above. Those who lay down their lives in a good cause never die.'

SAIYAD KHAN

The hill chiefs had become mortal enemies of Guru Gobind Singh. They had determined to kill him, or, at least, to expel him from Anandpur. But all their attempts had proved ineffective. So, once again, they sent a representation to Emperor Aurangzeb. In it they represented the Guru as an enemy of both Islam and Hinduism. They represented him as a sworn enemy of the Emperor and his loyal subjects like the hill chiefs. They added that he wanted to convert all Muslims and Hindus to his faith and establish his own rule in the country.

Emperor Aurangzeb had his own suspicions against the Guru. The hill chiefs' representation confirmed those suspicions. It aroused his fears. He decided to send a large army under Saiyad Khan to conquer and capture the Guru. The imperial army was soon on the march.

In due course the Guru received intelligence that the imperial army had arrived near Thanesar. It would reach Anandpur soon. On hearing this, he mustered his troops. He found that they were only five hundred strong. The rest of his army had dispersed to their homes. The Guru knew that he was going to face heavy odds. The imperial army was far too strong and numerous for his small force. But he did not feel afraid or dejected. He decided to make the best defence with his present force. He felt sure that God was on his side. He decided to do his best, heart within and God overhead.

Saiyad Khan's troops appeared in sight in a few days.

They lost no time in falling upon the Guru's army. The Sikhs fought most valiantly. They held their ground wonderfully well against the overwhelming enemy. A number of Muslims were also fighting for the Guru. In fact, they were in the foremost rank of his army. One of them was Maimun Khan. Another was Saiyad Beg. They believed that the Guru was a true saint, a prophet of love and peace. They felt that he was being causelessly and unjustly attacked. They said, 'It is not a war of Muslims against non-Muslims, of believers against unbelievers. It is a war of evil against good, of might against right. Our duty is clear. We must oppose evil and might. We must support good and right. It is no sin to fight against these Muslim invaders.' So both fell upon the imperial army like tigers on a herd of cattle. They were followed by Sikh warriors.

Maimun Khan discharged arrow after arrow with mortal effect. Saiyad Beg cut down everyone who came to oppose him. After a time there occurred a severe single-handed combat between Saiyad Beg and a hill chief. They attacked but repeatedly missed each other. At last Saiyad Beg struck off the hill chief's head. Seeing this, Din Beg, a general in the imperial army, rushed at Saiyad Beg. A fierce hand-to-hand fight ensued. At last Saiyad Beg was mortally wounded. He died repeating the Guru's and God's praises. The battle raged on in great fury. Though greatly outnumbered, the Sikhs held their ground admirably.

Now, Saiyad Khan general of the imperial army, was the brother of Sayyid Budhu Shah's wife. The couple were faithful followers of Guru Gobind Singh. We have already read about them and the part they played in the battle of Bhangani. From them Saiyad Khan had heard much of the Guru's great spiritual powers and lofty principles. He had been, therefore, a secret admirer of the Guru. On the battle-

field he saw Musalmans, like Maimun Khan and Saiyad Beg, fighting in the foremost ranks of the Guru's army. This made a strong impression on him. He felt a desire to meet and submit to the Guru. But his pride as a general of the imperial army stood in his way. He had come to conquer the Guru. What would the world say if he submitted to one whom he had come to conquer and capture ?

The Guru knew what was passing in Saiyad Khan's mind. He decided to end his mental struggle. He smiled and advanced towards him. Saiyad Khan saw him. He decided to do his duty as the general of the imperial army. He aimed a shot against the Guru but missed. He had never missed before. He advanced to be nearer the Guru. The Guru smiled once more and said, 'Try again, Saiyad Khan. I am so near you. I hear that you are a good shot.' Saiyad Khan fired another shot, but missed again. The Guru advanced still nearer, and said, 'Try once again, Saiyad Khan.' Saiyad Khan levelled his gun and took aim. But he could not pull the trigger. Saiyad Khan was perplexed. A shiver ran through his body. The Guru smilingly said again, 'Try once more. I am so near you now.'

He who had come to conquer was himself conquered. He got down from his horse. He went up to the Guru with folded hands. He knelt beside the Guru's horse and touched the Guru's stirrup with his forehead. He grasped the Guru's foot and said, 'I am your servant and slave. Accept me as such. I shall never fight against you.'

The Guru bade him rise. He rose with light in his eyes and joy and love in his heart. The Guru conferred on him the gift of true Name and the supreme reward of salvation. But unlike Saiyad Beg, Saiyad Khan did not actively assist the Sikhs. He fought no more against anyone. At the Guru's bidding, he retired to a lonely cave near Kangra. He passed

his days there in thinking of God and the Guru. Later, when the Guru went to the Deccan, Saiyad Khan followed him and remained with him to the last.

After Saiyad Khan's having become the Guru's disciple, Ramzan Khan took command of the imperial army. He fought with great bravery against the Sikhs. Seeing this, the Guru let fly an arrow at him. It killed his horse. The Guru, on closely observing the combat saw that the odds were too heavy against him. Hence he decided to evacuate the city of Anandpur. He retired to the fort. The Muslims plundered the city and the Guru's property. After that they proceeded in the direction of Sarhind. They encamped for the night a few kilometers away from Anandpur. They were in high spirits. A good half of the night they spent in feasting and merry-making. Then they lay down to sleep.

The Sikhs felt their defeat very keenly. They obtained the Guru's permission to fall upon the imperial army at night. The Guru's eldest son, Prince Ajit Singh was at their head. The Turks were taken unawares. A scene of wild confusion followed. Hundreds were killed by the Sikhs. Others fled in hot haste for their lives. All the booty which they had brought from Anandpur, as well as their own camp, fell into the hands of the Sikhs.

The Emperor called upon his fugitive troops to account for their cowardice and defeat. They pleaded that the Sikhs had waylaid and attacked them unawares. The Emperor then asked what sort of person the Guru was? A soldier said, 'He is a young handsome man, a living saint, the father of his people, and in war equal to one lakh men.' The Emperor was much displeased on hearing this praise of the Guru. He ordered the soldier to be dismissed from service at once.

But he could not dismiss the soldier's words from his

mind. They sank deep in his heart. They came to him again and again. In his heart of hearts he began to admit the Guru's great powers of body, mind and spirit. 'How good it would be!' thought he, 'if such a holy, strong man could be won over and made a follower of the Prophet. Otherwise, he would have to be done away with.'

AURANGZEB'S INVITATION

When Emperor learnt how his army sent under Saiyad Khan and Ramzan Khan had fared, he was enraged. He declared that he would put an end to the Guru's life and activities. But the court Qazi advised him that the Guru should somehow be prevailed upon to come to the Emperor's court. 'If he can be won over,' added the Qazi, 'he will be an excellent and trustworthy ally.'

The Emperor accepted the Qazi's advice. It accorded well with his own secret, innermost feelings. He deputed the Qazi to convey the following message to the Guru, 'There is only one Emperor. You believe in one God, so do I. So your religion and mine are the same. I wish to meet and talk with you. Come to me without any hesitation. Otherwise, I shall be angry and come to you. If you come, you will be treated as holy men are treated by kings. I have obtained this sovereignty from God. You should not oppose my wishes.'

Guru Gobind Singh knew how Emperor Aurangzeb had treated his own father, brothers and their families. He also knew how he had treated holy men like Guru Teg Bahadur. Hence, it was not wise to trust him. He thought, 'I can well imagine what sort of treatment the cruel, crafty king will give to me. It will be suicidal to fall into his hands.' Hence, he declined the invitation. He sent the following reply :

'My brother, the Sovereign who has made you Emperor has sent me into the world to do justice. He commissioned you also to do justice. But you have forgotten His orders.'

You practise hypocrisy. In persecuting non-Muslims you are acting unjustly. You are violating God's orders. What you are doing does not become a true believer in God. Hence, I would say that you do not believe in God. Until you desist from ill-treating God's children, I cannot meet or see you, I cannot seek friendly ties with you.'

When despatching this reply to the Emperor, the Guru conferred a robe of honour on the Emperor's messenger.

Raja Ajmer Chand and the other hill chiefs were deeply distressed to see that the glory and power of the Guru and his Sikhs were increasing, day by day. Then they heard how the imperial army under Saiyad Khan and Ramzan Khan had fared. This news made them still more nervous and restless. They began to fear that the Guru would soon deprive them of their kingdoms. They met together and decided to send another petition to the Emperor. In this petition they implored the Emperor to send a strong army under trustworthy generals to crush the Guru. They said that the Guru was his foe as well as theirs. They assured him that they would join the imperial army with all their troops.

Raja Ajmer Chand undertook to go and present the petition to the Emperor. The latter was at that time in Deccan. Ajmer Chand proceeded thither to present the petition to him. By then the Emperor had received Guru Gobind Singh's reply to his invitation. That reply and the hill chiefs' petition made him feel that the Guru was becoming a real and powerful danger to the Mughal rule. So he ordered that all available troops under the nawabs or viceroys of Delhi, Sarhind and Lahore be despatched against Guru Gobind Singh. He also directed the hill chiefs to help the imperial army in every way.

The viceroy of Delhi said that he could spare no

troops for the campaign against the Guru. The troops which he had were required for the defence and safety of the imperial capital. However, the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore speedily marched towards Anandpur at the head of all their available troops. The two armies met at Ropar. The armies of the twenty-two hill chiefs also joined them at that place. The Ranghars and Gujjars of the locality also joined the invaders there.

The Guru was thus being faced with overwhelming odds. But he did not feel the least perturbed. He had unshakable faith in God, whose soldier he was. His Sikhs had full confidence in their Guru. They were prepared to die fighting for him. So they boldly waited for the combined armies.

The invaders appeared in due course. The battle raged with great fury. The two viceroys were astonished to behold the slaughter of their soldiers at the hands of the Sikhs. They had counted on an easy victory. Nine hundred Muslims and about an equal number of hillmen were killed on the first day. The battle went on raging for several days.

BHAI GHANAEEYA

Among the Sikhs at Guru Gobind Singh's darbar there was one named Bhai Ghanaeeya. He was a resident of Sodra in the district of Gujranwala, now in Pakistan. He was a devout and peaceloving Sikh. He had a tender and compassionate heart. He was ever busy in doing whatever service he found a chance to do. Because of his love of peace and service, and his tender-heartedness, he was averse to becoming a soldier. Therefore, he had not joined the Guru's army of saint-soldiers by taking *amrit*. But he was not an idler or a coward. Whenever fighting took place, he would invariably go into the battlefield along with his co-workers. There he went about serving water and giving other help to the wounded.

At the conclusion of one day's fighting, some Sikhs appeared before the Guru and said, 'O true king, a Sikh named Ghanaeeya is helping the Turks, our enemies. We wound and fell them. He goes and gives them water and other help. He makes them well and fresh again. They are soon ready to fight against us again. He is thus undoing our work. He is helping the enemy. He should be bidden to desist from doing this.'

On hearing this, the Guru sent for Bhai Ghanaeeya. He appeared before the Guru in no time. The Guru said to him, 'Ghanaeeya, what have you been doing? I am told that you go about helping and serving the enemy. Is it true?'

'No, true king,' said Bhai Ghanaeeya. 'I have never given



any help or service to an enemy. My brothers here are mistaken.'

'O true king,' said the complaining Sikhs, 'we are not mistaken. He is telling a lie. With our own eyes we saw him giving water and help to our enemies.'

'Well, Ghanaeeya,' said the Guru with a smile, 'I know you very well. I do not believe you to be capable of telling a lie. But these my Sikhs here are also incapable of making false statements. Come, tell the truth.'

Bhai Ghanaeeya, replied, 'From their point of view, what my brothers here say is true. Yes, it is true that I have been giving water and help to those who are called Turks as freely as to those called Sikhs. But, in reality, I served no Turk or Sikh. I was serving you alone. O true king.'

'Me?' said Guru Gobind Singh. 'How?'

'Thus O true king,' replied Bhai Ghanaeeya, 'you have told us, 'if you clothe a naked person you clothe me. If you feed a hungry person, you feed me. If you give water to a thirsty man, you give water to me.'" These words of yours have been engraved on my heart. When I saw wounded soldiers, Sikhs and Muslims, lying on the ground, panting for water, I saw not them but you, O true king. I saw you in everyone of them. Hence, I gave water and help to none but you, my Lord.'

'Well done, Ghanaeeya,' said the Guru. 'You have been acting in the true Sikh spirit. As long as a Truk bears arms and fights against us, he is our enemy. But as soon as he falls wounded on the ground, he ceases to be our enemy. He is then only a man, a brother in need of help and care. Similarly, when he throws down his arms and runs away, he ceases to be our enemy. He becomes simply a man, a son of the Father above. He deserves help and sympathy. My Sikhs

should help and serve the wounded. Be they Sikhs or Turks. My Sikhs should not chase and harm those who surrender their arms or fly from the field of battle.'

The Guru then gave a pot of ointment to Bhai Ghanaeeya and said, 'Carry on the good work. In addition to giving water to the wounded, dress their wounds. Then take them to a safe place for further treatment. Do this and your name will live in the world. God will be highly pleased with you.'

It is said that the founder of the world-wide Red Cross Organisation took his inspiration from Bhai Ghanaeeya's story told here.

FAREWELL TO ANANDPUR

Aurangzeb had decided to put an end to Guru Gobind Singh's life and activities. Under his orders the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore had attacked the Guru. All the hill chiefs had joined them with their armies. The Ranghars and Gujjars of the locality had also joined the attacking forces. The Sikhs had to face overwhelming odds. But they fought with wonderful firmness, bravery and skill.

The viceroys found their soldiers being killed in large numbers. After a time they lost all hope of ever being able to defeat the Sikhs in open battles. They decided to besiege the city, cut off all supplies, and thus force the Sikhs to surrender. They acted accordingly.

After a time the effects of the siege began to be felt in the fort. Those inside the fort began to starve. Elephants and horses died lingering deaths for want of food. Now and then, the Sikhs fell upon the enemy's camp at night, and took away some supplies from there. But such supplies could not last long.

The Sikhs bore the hardships of the siege with patience and fortitude. But after a time they began to lose heart. They begged the Guru to evacuate the fort. But the Guru would not listen to any such proposal. Overcome by fatigue and hunger, some of the Sikhs threatened to desert the Guru.

The besiegers heard of the discontent in the Guru's ranks. They decided to take timely advantage of it, and thus end the war. Two messengers—a Brahman and a Sayyid—

were sent to the Guru. They were to say to him, 'The hill chiefs and the Mughal viceroys swear by the cow and on the Quran, respectively, and give you the following promise : "If you evacuate the fort and go away, you will not be harmed in any way. You may even come back after a time." We assure you that their oaths will be sincerely and fully kept.'

The messengers went to the Guru. They delivered the besiegers' message to him. They, too swore on the cow and the Quran that the besiegers were sincere in their offer.

But the Guru refused to put faith in these oaths. He said, 'The hillmen have broken their oaths many a time in the past. As for the Mughal viceroys, they can be no better than their Emperor. Everyone knows, how he treated his father and brothers. I can trust neither the hill chiefs nor the Turks.'

A number of Sikhs were in favour of accepting the besiegers' offer. They went to the Guru's mother. They urged her to persuade him to accept the offer. She advised him accordingly. He tried to convince her that no reliance could be and should be placed on the besiegers' oaths. But she was not convinced. At last, he agreed to demonstrate the correctness of his opinion.

He said to the messengers, 'I shall evacuate the fort on one condition. The besiegers should first allow me to remove my movable property. Go back and get their consent.'

They went away and soon returned to inform the Guru of the besiegers' consent. The Guru said that he would send away his property during that night.

The messengers went away. Under the Guru's orders such things as old shoes, torn clothes, horsedung, sweeping and rubbish of all sorts, were collected and packed in sacks. These sacks were to be the Guru's property intended to be removed. The sacks were covered with bright coloured cloth

and loaded on the backs of bullocks. Thus loaded, the bullocks were led out of the fort at the dead of night. Burning torches were tied to their horns, so that their departure might be easily observed. As the bullocks approached the besiegers, they at once fell upon them to plunder the Guru's 'property'. When they found what the sacks contained, they were filled with sadness and shame. They had broken their most solemn oaths and what had they got ?

The siege was continued. The condition of the besieged grew worse and worse every day. But they bore everything with fortitude and patience. Then came a letter in Aurangzeb's own handwriting. It said, 'I have sworn on the Quran not to harm you. If I do, I may not find a place in God's court hereafter ! Cease warfare and come to me. If you desire not to come hither, then go withersoever you please. No harm shall be done to you.'

The letter was delivered to the Guru by a Qazi. The latter added that the hill-chiefs had also sworn by the cow that they would not harm the Guru in any way. The Guru told the Qazi that he had no faith in the oaths and pledges of the hillmen and the Turks. They were sure to be broken.

The siege continued. The hardships of the besieged went on increasing. At last a group of Sikhs decided to go away against the Guru's wishes and advice. He said to them, 'All who want to leave should give in writing that I am not their Guru and they are not my Sikhs.' A large number wrote the disclaimer and went away.

After a time, the Guru's mother became in favour of going away with her daughter-in-law and grandsons. At last the Guru yielded to his mother's wishes. He agreed to evacuate the fort. He, his family, and his remaining Sikhs left the fort at the dead of night. The December night was pitch dark and

bitterly cold. A piercing cold wind began to blow and soon it began to rain.

The besiegers learnt that the Guru and his Sikhs had evacuated the fort. They at once started after them, forgetting all their oaths and pledges. They overtook the Guru and his party near the bank of the Sarsa stream. The night was dark. A cold wind was blowing. The Sarsa was in flood. To cross it was very difficult.

The Turks fell upon the Sikhs. Severe fighting took place in the darkness and rain. Many Sikhs were killed. The rest succeeded in crossing the flooded stream. Much of the Guru's property, including many precious manuscripts, was washed away. In the confusion that ensued the Guru's mother and his two younger sons became separated from the main party. The Guru, along with some of his Sikhs, proceeded towards Ropar. His wives, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, stayed in the house of a trusted Sikh at Ropar. They proceeded towards Delhi on the following day in the company of that Sikh. The Guru started towards Chamkaur. At that time he had with him forty Sikhs besides his two elder sons—Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh. His five Dear Ones were among the forty Sikhs.

AT CHAMKAUR SAHIB

After evacuating Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded towards Ropar. As he was moving on, he learnt that a large Mughal army lay a few miles off in front. He knew that the armies of the two viceroys were pursuing him. He was thus between two formidable armies. He had only forty Sikhs and his two elder sons with him. He decided to change his course and go to Chamkaur. On reaching there, he occupied a mud-built house or *haveli*. It was located on a high spot and was in the shape of a fortress. He posted soldiers to guard the four walls and the gate. With two Sikhs and his two sons the Guru held the top storey.

The Mughal armies arrived at nightfall. They surrounded the village. Early next day they began their attacks on the *haveli*. They were greeted, each time, with a volley of bullets and arrows. Each time they fell back after losing many of their soldiers. Two army officers, Nahar Khan and Gairat Khan, tried, in turn, to scale the wall. They were shot down by the Guru. Another officer, Mahmud Khan, saved himself from the Guru's arrows by hiding behind a wall.

The imperial army then directed all their efforts towards forcing open the gate. As they moved in that direction, a number of Sikhs went out to oppose them and defend the gate. They fought valiantly and killed many of the attackers. At last, they were overpowered and slain. Then another batch of Sikhs came out and engaged the attackers as long as they could.

This went on for a good part of the day. Then there was a

slight pause. The Sikhs took counsel and decided to request the Guru to make good his escape. 'If he goes,' said they, 'he can raise thousands to carry on the fight for the sacred cause.' So they went to him to make the appeal. They found that the Guru's eldest son, Baba Ajit Singh, was standing with folded hands before the Guru. He was beseeching the Guru for permission to go out and check the enemy's advance in the next attack. 'Dear father,' they heard him saying, 'you have named me Ajit or Unconquerable. I shall not be conquered. If overpowered, I shall die fighting like my brother Sikhs'.

The Guru embraced and kissed his eldest son for the last time. He then bade him go unto certain death. The Sikhs fell on their knees before the Guru and begged him to save himself and his two sons. But the Guru would not agree to do so.

Baba Ajit Singh, who was hardly eighteen, bade farewell to his father, younger brother and his brother Sikhs. Five Sikhs accompanied him. The attackers came on. They were engaged by Baba Ajit Singh and his five companions. Many of the attackers were killed in hand-to-hand fights. At last the six brave warriors were overcome and killed.

The Guru had been watching his son from the top storey, admiring and rejoicing at his daring, bravery and skill. When he saw him fall, he thanked God that his son had proved worthy of His cause.

The Guru's second son, Baba Jujhar Singh, now made the same request as his elder brother had made. The Guru took him in his lap. He kissed and patted him. Then he gave him a sword and a shield. 'Go, my son,' said the Guru, 'and join your grandfather and elder brother. Go and wait for me there.'

Thus armed, this lad of fourteen years went out to face thousands of hardy, well-trained, and far better armed Mughal soldiers. Five Sikhs accompanied him. Baba Jujhar Singh

fought as valiantly as his elder brother had done. Many stalwarts fell before the sword of that child-warrior. Then he was overpowered. He died fighting to the last.

The Guru had been watching and admiring Baba Jujhar Singh's wonderful performance. When he fell, the Guru thanked God that his second son had proved worthy of His cause.

The gate was attacked and defended in this way throughout the day. At night the Mughal army lay down to take rest. By then, besides the Guru's two sons, three of his five Dear Ones (*Piaras*) had been killed. Their names were Bhai Mukham Singh, Bhai Sahib Singh and Bhai Himmat Singh. Thirty-two other Sikhs had also fallen. He was left with only five Sikhs.

The five remaining Sikhs took counsel and said to the Guru, 'We beg you to make good you escape. You will create thousands of Khalsa warriors. The Khalsa will destroy the cruel, Godless tyrants.' The Guru shook his head. The Sikhs then said, 'O true king, at the time of creating your Khalsa, you declared, "The Guru is the Khalsa, the Khalsa is the Guru." We, as the Guru Khalsa, order you to go. We hope you will excuse our assuming this role.'

The Guru was left with no alternative. He had to obey the Guru Khalsa. He seated his five Sikhs near him and proceeded to entrust the Guruship to them. Then he said, 'After me the Khalsa Panth shall be the Guru under the guidance of Guru Granth Sahib. Wherever five Sikhs assemble and remember me, I shall be with them. They shall be the priests of priests. Whenever a Sikh breaks any rule of the Khalsa conduct, five Sikhs can give him baptism and grant him pardon.'

Saying this, the Guru went round them thrice. Then he laid his plume and crest in front of them, offered them his arms,

bowed before them, and cried out, 'Sri Wahiguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahiguru ji ki Fateh.'

The Guru Khalsa further decided that three Sikhs—Bhai Daya Singh, Bhai Dharam Singh and Bhai Man Singh—should accompany the Guru. Two Sikhs—Bhai Sant Singh and Bhai Sangat Singh were to remain in the *haveli*. They were to hold it as long as there was life in their bodies.

The Guru and his three companions left the *haveli* at the dead of night. It was pitch dark. Thick clouds covered the sky, here and there. There were occasional flashes of lightning. As they proceeded, Bhai Daya Singh said, 'O true king, here lies the body of Baba Ajit Singh.' The Guru looked at the body, blessed his martyred son, and proceeded on. A moment later, Bhai Daya Singh said, 'Here lies the body of Baba Jujhar Singh.' The Guru looked in that direction, blessed his martyred son, and walked on. Bhai Daya Singh then said, 'O true king, I have a sheet over me. I wish to tear it into two pieces to cover the bodies of the two young martyrs.'

The Guru said, 'The idea is good and noble. You have my permission, but on one condition. You should first cover the bodies of my thirty five martyred Sikhs. They are my sons in spirit, and equally dear to me. Then you may cover the bodies of these two martyrs who are my sons in flesh.'

Bhai Daya Singh could make no reply. He bowed and held his tongue. They proceeded on their dangerous course.

UCHCH KA PIR

Guru Gobind Singh and his three companions left Chamkaur Sahib at the dead of a December night. The Guru pointed to a star and said to his companions, 'We shall proceed in the direction of that star.' Because it was pitch dark, the Guru got separated from his three companions. He travelled barefoot. His path lay through wild land covered with thick thorny bushes. His feet were pierced with thorns. Blisters also appeared on them. His clothes were torn on the thorny bushes. The night was pitch dark. A bitter cold wind was blowing. Under those circumstances he could not make much progress.

A short time before dawn he reached a village named Kheri. There he was recognized by two *Gujars*. They raised an alarm. He was forced to kill them. As the imperial army was after him, he could travel only by night. During the day he rested among clusters of thorny bushes. He had nothing to eat but the tender leaves of the *akk* plant. He had nothing but a clod of earth to rest his head on. But amid all these hardships the Guru's heart and mind were as firm and strong as ever. When he lay down to sleep, his hands always grasped his drawn sword.

The Guru was travelling through the Machhiwara forest. Feeling exhausted, he lay down to rest. His three companions had travelled in the direction of the star pointed out to them by the Guru. They reached the same spot. They found him sleeping with an earthen waterpot for his pillow. They awakened him. They told him that the imperial army was in

hot pursuit. It might be on them at any time. But he could not walk as his feet were blistered and painful. He told his Sikhs to go and take shelter in a neighbouring garden. But how could they go leaving him there ? Bhai Man Singh took him on his back and carried him to a well in that garden. There he drank water and bathed for the first time in many days. He felt much refreshed.

The garden belonged to Gulaba Masand, a resident of Machhiwara. He heard of the Guru's presence in his garden. He hurried to meet the Guru and offer him his services. He took the Guru and his companions to his house. He lodged them in the upper storey. But as the imperial army was after him, it was not safe for the Guru stay there for long. He had to move on somehow.

In that village there lived two Pathan brothers named Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan. They had been in the Guru's service for some time. They heard of his being in their village. They also heard of the risky situation in which he then was. They decided to help him. They went to him and offered their services. They said, 'O ture king, permit us to carry you to a safe place.'

While the Guru was in Gulaba's house an old Sikh lady, named Gurdevi, came to see him. She had been spinning and weaving cloth for him. She had been at the same time, praying that he might be pleased to visit her village to accept it. On hearing of the Guru's presence in her village, she brought and offered that cloth to him. He had it dyed blue. He had it made into a robe and a sheet. He thus prepared a dress like the one worn by a sect of Muslim fakirs.

The Guru put on that robe and sheet. Thus disguised, he was borne in a litter. It was lifted in front by Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan and by Man Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh in rear. Bhai Daya Singh waved a *chauri*. Whoever questioned



97 *He is a high saint in union with Allah.*

them was informed that they were escorting the *Uchch ka pir*. The expression *Uchch ka pir* meant either a high saint or the Holy Saint of Uchch, a well-known Muslim sacred place near Multan.

They travelled on in this way without any mishap. One day, however, they were overtaken by a detachment of the imperial army which had been searching for the Guru. Its commander suspected that the *Uchch ka pir* was no other than Guru Gobind Singh. He questioned the bearers of the litter closely and long. He was not satisfied with their answers. He sent for Qazi Pir Muhammad, who had once been the Guru's Persian tutor. He asked the Qazi to identify the occupant of the litter. The Qazi said, "Don't stop this great and holy personage. Don't put him to any inconvenience. He is a high saint in union with Allah. Let him proceed unmolested." The commander was satisfied. He made apologies to the *Uchch ka pir* for having suspected and inconvenienced him. He begged him to go whither he pleased. For this timely service the Qazi was given a *hukmnama* or letter of recommendation addressed to Sikhs in general. It was highly prized by the Qazi and his descendants.

Thus escorted, the Guru proceeded towards Hehar in the Ludhiana district. In that village lived Mahant Kirpal Das. He was the same Udasi Mahant who had distinguished himself in the battle of Bhangani. He welcomed the Guru most devoutly and cordially. Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were permitted to go back home. They were given a pair of gold bracelets and a *hukmnama*. In that *hukmnama* it was written that Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan were dearer to the Guru than his own sons.

Mahant Kirpal Das was eager to serve the Guru. But he had heard the imperial orders against helping or sheltering the Guru. He feared lest some local official should come to

know of the Guru's stay at his house. The Guru read his mind He decided to move on. Mahant Kirpal Das acted as one of the bearers of Guru's litter for some miles. Then he was allowed to go back.

From Hehar the Guru moved on to Jatpura. There he was met by a Muslim named Rai Kalha. He was a rich and important person and the Chaudhri of Jagraon and Rai Kot. He was a devout admirer of the Guru. He knew of the imperial orders against helping or sheltering the Guru. But that knowledge did not deter him from serving the Guru. He took him to his house and treated him with most loving hospitality. The Guru stayed with Rai Kalha for many days.

DINA AND MUKTSAR

The Mughal armies were marching about in search of Guru Gobind Singh. The Emperor had issued an order that none should help or shelter the Guru. All the same, daring devotees of the Guru received, entertained and helped him. Such devotees were not only Sikhs, but also Muslims.

After leaving Machhiwara, the Guru visited Hehar. From there he moved on to Jatpura. There he was lovingly served by a Muslim chauthri named Rai Kalha. After a short stay at Jatpura, the Guru moved on to Dina. At that place he was lovingly served by three brothers named Shamira, Lakhmira and Takht Mal. The Nawab of Sarhind learnt about this. He sent strict orders to Shamira, telling him to arrest and surrender the Guru. Shamira ignored the orders.

Thereupon Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sarhind, decided to march in pursuit of the Guru. Rumours of the Nawab's decision reached Dina. The Guru was prepared to face and fight the Nawab. But he thought, 'If the fighting takes place near this or any other village, the inhabitants will be put to much unnecessary trouble.' Hence, he decided to move into the fastness of the jungle.

After passing through a number of villages, he reached Jaito. There he learnt that Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind was coming thither with a force of five thousand. He was expected to reach there in four or five days. The Guru decided to move on to near Khidrana. His plan was to face the Mughal army near the lake.

It has been told already that a few hundred Sikhs deserted the Guru during the siege of Anandpur. Before leaving, they wrote the disclaimer, putting down on paper that he was not their Guru and they were not his Sikhs. These deserters belonged to all parts of the country. Some of them were killed on the way, while others were able to reach their homes.

Forty of the deserters who could reach their homes belonged to the Majha tract of the Panjab. When they reached their homes, they were shamed by their own women. The latter did not let them enter their homes. They said, 'Go back to the Guru and make amends for your cowardly conduct. Otherwise exchange your dress with ours, stay at home, and act as housewives, in our place. Dressed in your clothes we will go and fight and die for the Guru. In that way, we shall wash away with our blood the shame which your conduct has brought on the Sikhs of the Majha.'

The deserters from the Majha decided to go back. This band of forty fully armed Saint-Soldiers started towards the Guru. Mai Bhago of Jhabal also joined them. She and Bhai Mahan Singh of Sursingh were the leaders of this band. They had to move cautiously. If they had marched together as a *jatha*, they might have been captured. So they travelled in small groups, mostly by night, and by unfrequented routes. Along the way, quite a large number of Sikhs joined them.

The party reached near Khidrana. They learnt that shortly before the Guru had gone over to the other side of the lake. They also learnt that Wazir Khan's army was approaching. It was expected there soon. On reaching Khidrana, they found it almost dry. Bhai Mahan Singh proposed to engage the enemy there. The Guru would, thereby, have time to reach some safe place.

His proposal was accepted. Wide white sheets of

khaddar were spread on shrubs. They looked like so many tents. The sight of them was sure to make the enemy believe that the Sikhs were encamping there in large numbers.

The Muslim army arrived soon. Long and bloody was the battle which ensued. The Sikhs fought with their usual courage and power. Mai Bhago was fighting in the foremost rank. The Guru had reached a sand-hill on the other side of Khidrana. From there he directed a constant rain of arrows at the most prominent officers and soldiers of the Muslim army. A large number fell, pierced by the arrows. The army made repeated attacks on the Sikhs. Each time it had to go back after suffering heavy losses.

At last the Sikh's stock of ammunition and arrows was exhausted. They were obliged to have recourse to their spears and swords. They advanced in small groups. They engaged the enemy and killed several times their own number. They went on wielding their weapons most effectively until they were overpowered and cut down. They were not fighting for victory. They had no thought of saving their lives. Their only wish was to win the Guru's pardon and pleasure. Their only aim at that time was to check as long as possible, the enemy's advance against the Guru. In time, all of them lay on the ground. About three thousand Turks lay with them on the same bloody field. The Mughal army then decided to go back.

After the Muslim army had gone, the Guru visited the scene of the battle. With fatherly affection he lifted the heads of the martyrs into his lap, one by one, he wiped their faces, and blessed them. In due time it was Bhai Mahan Singh's turn to be thus caressed and blessed. The Guru found that there was still some life in him. After a time he opened his eyes. He found himself in the Guru's lap and arms. He was filled with immense joy. The Guru asked him if he had any

wish to be fulfilled. 'No, father,' replied Bhai Mahan Singh. 'I have seen you. I die for your cause, in your lap and with your blessings. What else or more could I desire? But father, if you have taken compassion on us here, tear up our disclaimer, the paper on which we and others wrote, "You are not our Guru, we are not your Sikhs." Tear it up and let broken ties be reunited.

The Guru was highly pleased to hear Bhai Mahan Singh's last wish. He blessed him and said, 'You have done a great deed. You have saved the root of Sikhism in the Majha. You and your companions, all forty of you, are *Muktas*—the Saved Ones. You are delivered from the chain of births and deaths forever.' Saying this, he took out the disclaimer from under his belt, tore it into tiny pieces, and threw them all away. Bhai Mahan Singh saw this. He felt immensely relieved. He smiled, took a long, deep breath, and closed his eyes forever.

Then the Guru went on to the place where Mai Bhago was lying senseless. She had not been severely wounded. She had fallen down out of utter exhaustion. A little aid revived her. The Guru was greatly pleased with what she had done. He had her removed from the battlefield. Her wounds were treated and healed. When she was all right, she was baptized. She became Mai Bhag Kaur.

Mai Bhag Kaur, dressed in male dress, remained in the Guru's service to the end. Along with ten Sikhs, she used to guard the Guru's bed during his sleep. When the Guru died, she went to Bidar. She lived there till the end of her earthly life.

RETURN TO THE ETERNAL HOME

After the battle of Muktsar the Guru continued his onward journey. After passing through many villages, he made quite a long halt in the Lakhi jungle. Religious gatherings were held there every day, morning and evening. Sikhs from far and near came in their hundreds and thousands. Hundreds were baptized and made members of the Khalsa. Among those baptized at that place was a Muslim fakir named Ibrahim. After baptism, he became Ajmer Singh. He was the first Muslim to be baptized. He accompanied the Guru in his continued journey.

Leaving the Lakhi jungle, and passing through many villages, the Guru reached Talwandi Sabo, now called Damdama Sahib or the Sacred Resting Place. He stayed there for over nine months with an influential Sikh named Dalla. He made it a great seat of learning. It is often called the Guru's Kashi. While at Damdama Sahib, the Guru gave the final form to the Holy Granth.

Leaving Damdama Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh continued his journey to the Deccan. Some time after Emperor Aurangzeb died at his camp in Ahmadnagar. His sons began to fight for the throne. Bahadur Shah, who was the eldest, requested the Guru for help in the war of succession. The Guru helped him with a detachment of his selected soldiers under the command of Bhai Dharam Singh. He also sent an order to the Khalsa to render all help to Bahadur Shah, who was a good man.

Bahadur Shah won the war of succession. He became the

Guru Gobind Singh : Yes.

Madho Das : What have you come here for ?

Guru Gobind Singh : I have come to make you my disciple.

Madho Das : I submit. I am your Banda (slave).

Saying this, he fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru instructed Banda in the tenets of Sikhism. In due course he baptized him. On taking the *amrit*, Madho Das became Banda Singh. In Sikh history he is popularly known as Banda Bahadur. After a time the Guru sent him to the Panjab as the leader of the Khalsa.

Now, Wazir Khan Nawab of Sarhind, was still an enemy of the Guru. He had been responsible for most of the Guru's sufferings. He became alarmed to learn that Guru Gobind Singh's relations with Bahadur Shah were growing closer, day by day. He knew what would happen to him if peace were made between the Emperor and the Sikhs. It was believed that the Guru had a special object in accompanying the Emperor. That object was to punish Wazir Khan, murderer of his sons. Already the Emperor had shown an inclination to help the Guru at the expense of Wazir Khan. He had granted a *firman* in favour of the Guru upon Wazir Khan for payment of three hundred rupees a day. Wazir Khan was therefore, in fear of his life. He feared that the Guru might succeed in prevailing upon the Emperor to punish him for his cruel, murderous acts. He could not feel secure until he had killed the Guru. He therefore, planned to have the Guru murdered.

He hired two young Pathans and deputed them to murder

the Guru. They pursued him secretly on his journey to the Deccan. They came to Nander. They paid occasional visits to the Guru. Thus they became acquainted with the Guru and his attendant Sikhs. One day, after the evening service, one of the Pathans went near the bed on which the Guru was taking rest. The Guru gave him *Parsad* (some sweets), which he devoured at once. Then he took his seat near the bed. After a time the Guru had a nap. His sole attendant also happened to be sleepy. The Pathan saw his chance. He sprang to his feet, drew his sword, and stabbed the Guru in the left side. Before he could deal another blow, he was cut down by the Guru with his sword. Then the Guru called out to his Sikhs. Many Sikhs came running. The Pathan's companion tried to escape, but he fell under the sword of the Sikhs who had come upon hearing the noise.

The Guru's wound was immediately sewn up. In a few days it appeared to have healed up. But one day he tried to bend a stiff bow which a Sikh had brought for him. His imperfectly healed wound burst open. It began to bleed profusely. The Guru felt that the end of his earthly life was near. He had already conferred the Guruship on the Khalsa at Chamkaur Sahib. That took care of his secular affairs. He had then said there was to be no personal Guru after him. Regarding matters religious and spiritual, he now formally conferred the Guruship on the Holy Granth. Having placed five pice and a coconut before the Sacred Granth, he went round it thrice and then bowed before it.

Then he addressed his parting message to his Sikhs. He said, 'The system of personal Gurus ends with me. There will be no eleventh or twelfth Guru of the Sikhs. Such are the orders of the Father. The Panth will guide itself by the teachings of the Gurus as incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib. Whenever you need my advice or guidance, gather in

the presence of Granth Sahib, and discuss and decide things in the light of the Guru's teachings embodied therein. Whenever a group of my Sikhs remembers me with true hearts and pure minds, I shall ever be in their midst. Love the Word. Love and serve the Panth. Preserve the Khalsa uniform, the Khalsa identity, and the Khalsa principles.

Then he lay down and returned to the Eternal Home from whence he had come. This happened on October 7, 1708 A.D. He was then less than forty two years of age.

