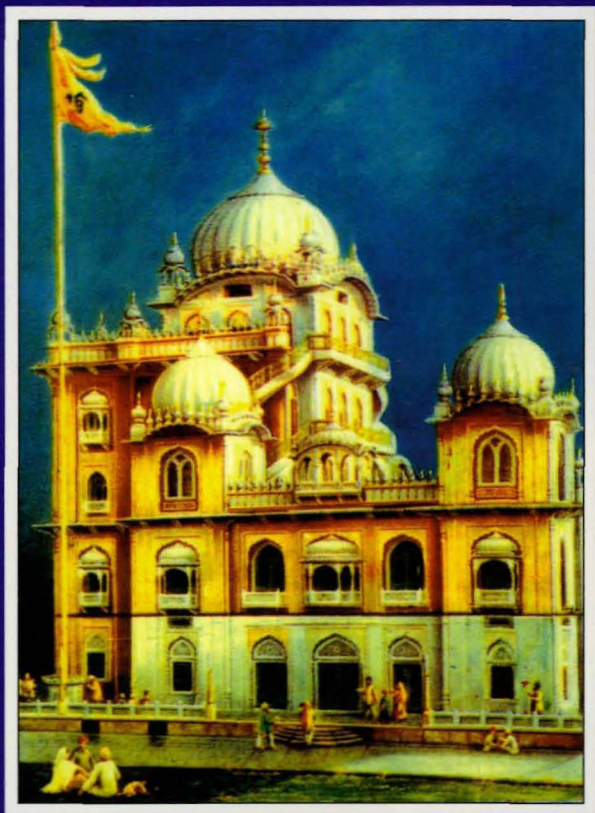


DAULAT RAI ON



SAHIBE KAMAL Guru Gobind Singh

DAULAT RAI
ON
SAHIBE KAMAL
GURU GOBIND SINGH

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*I have come into this world for this purpose,
The Supreme Lord has sent me for the
protection of Righteousness :
'You should propagate righteousness everywhere;
seize and destroy the sinful and the wicked'.*

*I have taken birth for this purpose,
Let the holy men understand this in their minds.
I have come for spreading Divine Religion
and for protection of saints,
And for annihilating all the tyrants. (42-43/6)
(Guru Gobind Singh in "Vachitar Natak")*

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FOREWORD

Guru Gobind Singh figures in world history as a great leader of men, a versatile genius of the highest order, a God-man and mystic par excellence, a redoubtable warrior and adept strategist, a fearless revolutionary, a classical Hero of Carlylian description, a powerful poet and patron of poets, a unique religious law giver and champion of the downtrodden, a relentless defender of faith and an all-sacrificing martyr for the cause of suffering and persecuted humanity. In fact, it is impossible to encompass and delineate in words all the facets of his highly charismatic and remarkable personality.

Contemporary and later historians, both foreign and Indian, have tried to assess and designate the tremendous scope and vast dimensions of his super-human character and his Herculean achievements. Just to cite an example, out of a whole lot, Macgregor in his famous *History of the Sikhs* (1846 p.101) says :

If we consider the work which Govind accomplished both in reforming his religion and instituting a new code of laws for his followers, his personal bravery under all circum-

stances, his persevering endurance amidst difficulties which would have disheartened others and overwhelmed them, in inextricable distress; and lastly his final victory over the powerful enemies by the very men who had previously forsaken him, we need not be surprised that the Sikhs venerate his memory. He was, undoubtedly, a great man.

Verily, a great man comes to surprise and baffle the whole world for all time to come. A man standing up against a vast scourge-like empiricial system bent upon destroying and demolishing an old and decadent indigenous religious community ! What an impossible situation ! What courage, what resource, what pluck ! A lad of nine called upon suddenly to lead a rising and developing nation, not only to save and preserve it from the clutches of a cruel and fanatic foreign ruler, but to reform, reshape and ensteel it into a strong fighting instrument of great potentiality. This is certainly a matter for constant rumination and discussion — a great historical fact to enthrall and electrify people around for centuries to come — a rare example for the comity of nations to emulate and furbish — a fertile subject for historians to cogitate and ponder !

Here in this important monograph based upon the well-known biographical writing in Urdu by Daulat Rai, we are concerned with an Indian Historian of note. He was a man of considerable insight and acumen, who rose much higher than the ordinary class

of historiographers and was thus able to grasp and understand the real historical situation obtaining in India before and during the turbulent times of Guru Gobind Singh.

Daulat Rai, now a very popular and famous name in Sikh circles, was a man of deep thinking and impartial religious conviction. Though an Arya Samajist himself, he was completely free from religious bias. Though he wrote in 1901 A.D. when the Punjab was seething with inter-religious wrangling and communal friction of an invidious nature, he was a rare person who evinced in his *Biography of Guru Gobind Singh* a highly patriotic and national feeling by transcending all parochial limitations.

Thus he was able to see Guru Gobind Singh in his true perspective. He saw the great Guru as a national hero and a national saviour. In fact, he found Guru Gobind Singh as a unique and peerless world figure, a prophet with a difference, before whose divine refulgence, other prophets appear dim and faded — a warrior and general whose dauntless spirit and unyielding courage has no match among the great warriors in history — a religious law-giver and social revolutionary whose like is rarely to be found among the galaxy of political reformers and law-givers of the world.

Daulat Rai was, of course, well-versed with the world history, so as to compare and contrast relevant situation while discussing the inimitable character of

Guru Gobind Singh. He says with a sense of pride in praising his matchless hero :

The Emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia despite having huge armies with them surrendered unabashed before Napoleon. And so did thousands of Muslims of Egypt. A brave general like Cronje despite having guns and four thousand Boer fighters with him, laid down arms before the British army. But look at the unparalleled courage displayed by Guru Gobind Singh. He had only forty Sikhs with him in a dilapidated adobe structure at Chamkaur surrounded by the Imperial hordes...Guru Gobind Singh refused to buckle under.....
(page 122)

This was the type of Hero who welded Sikhs into a powerful nation. This was the man who emancipated the long enslaved Hindu nation from the Muslim tyranny. This was the man who created a casteless, free society in India after centuries of internal friction and inequity.

We should be all-praise for Daulat Rai who gave us a re-thinking, a new line of thought, a new perspective. He has quoted Guru Gobind Singh's poetry at length to prove that the great Guru was a true worshipper of the One Formless God and had nothing to do with the gods and goddesses of the Hindu belief. He had certainly a new religious Order and Dispensation to offer to the strife-torn confused world. In the words of Daulat Rai :

Let me declare here unequivocally that the Guru worshipped the Formless Lord Akal only. He was dead set against the worship of gods and goddesses and always preached in no uncertain words against it. (page 81)

In the end we should feel beholden to the “Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust” of which M/s Singh Brothers, Amritsar are zealous protagonists for their onerous effort in printing Daulat Rai’s Biography in various languages, so that the great Guru’s message should reach the maximum number of readers.

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We are pleased to make this work of Daulat Rai available to the English-knowing world, which has already been well received by Urdu, Punjabi and Hindi readers. This book, originally written in Urdu, is the third in the series of our project of translating this work into other languages, which is being continued by getting it translated into Telugu and Gujarati.

This book could haven't been brought out without the continuing encouragement of our founder-trustee S. Pritam Singh Baura of Southall (U.K.). We express our gratitude to Prof. Surinderjit Singh, Ludhiana for translating this book in an idiomatic language. He, himself an inspired person, has accomplished this difficult task in reverence and has made this book a smooth-reading. We are beholden to Prof. Dewan Singh for his writing the Foreword of this book, to Prof. Prakash Singh for his going through the manuscript and making some good suggestions, to Sh. Hari Dev Bawa for his help in the proof-reading.

— Convener
Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust

PREFACE

Though I was conscious of my incompetence to deal effectively with the subject, two factors prompted me to write this book.

First of all, no such comprehensive book on Guru Gobind Singh had been written which dwelt at some length on the mission of this unique patriot and courageous fighter. Many Janam Sakhis, written earlier and now, by overzealous devotees are available. Carried away by their devotion and zeal these writers wrote such things as strain credence and the readers find it difficult to sift the factual from the fanciful. Such writings fail to depict a true picture of the persons under study and as such do them grave injustice.

Secondly, the majority of the people know so little about this great hero that many unscrupulous people have tried to gain their selfish ends by saying many wrong and undesirable things about the Guru, his life and teachings. I was taken aback by a book in which the writer out of sheer ignorance or coloured by his personal views and prejudices had tried to belittle and denigrate the mission of the Guru by misinterpret-

ing his words and sayings. Feeling the need of consulting some Khalsa Sikhs regarding these, I was all the more surprised to learn that most of them were poorly informed, nay quite ignorant about their Guru's real views. There were some whose thoughts were not only wrong but also divergent and contradictory.

So I tried to seek the Guru by delving deep into his own writings, and in the process my admiration, gratitude and reverence for the Guru was enhanced and I felt sorely grieved that most of his noble thoughts had not been touched upon and many others had been falsely spelt out. While discussing the Guru, his life and mission with many learned and literary persons, I could not escape the conclusion that they were either ill-informed or sadly misinformed. In certain circles such wrong impressions had taken root that had I not personally gone through Guru Gobind Singh's writings, I should not have considered him above an ordinary reformer. Impelled by the lamentable lack of information among the majority and equally saddening misinformation current in certain circles, I resolved to write about Guru Gobind Singh's life, his noble thought and his mission so that the populace at large could have a just view of the Guru's greatness.

I am deeply indebted to my friend Lala Jawala Dass, Master of High School, Dera Ghazi Khan for his ungrudging and valuable help. I am conscious of the fact that this book is neither perfect nor comprehensive. It is an humble endeavour to correct the prevail-

ing misconceptions about the life, works and mission of the versatile genius Guru Gobind Singh. May it inspire some day a better-equipped person to touch the theme with greater felicity.

23rd Jan., 1901

—Daulat Rai

INTRODUCTION

It is imperative to describe the plight of the Hindus and the origin of the Sikh religion before moving on to the life of Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Nanak founded Sikhism in Babar's time. Hindu India had then been under Muslim rule for 350 years.

Muslims were tempted to invade India because of disunity among Hindus caused by political, religious and social considerations. The concept of nationalism was missing. Hindus were divided in numerous religious sects following diverse and sometimes diametrically opposite rites, rituals and beliefs. Their modes of worship were different and often they were at war with one another. Starting with worship of gods and demigods, Hinduism had degenerated into animal worship. The social fabric was in shreds. The caste-system had become air tight. The Brahmins in their hey-day had introduced it to keep themselves in power and plenty. Shudras, the lowest caste, were condemned to eternal slavery and damnation. The old Vedic religion in the hands of the Brahmins, had become savage and cruel. Religion stands for peace (outward and inward), goodness and righteous living.

The Hindus then were bereft of the blessings of such a religion.

Before the onslaught of Islam, Buddhism had already made inroads in Hindu India. Buddhism, besides being simple, had rejected the caste system. The lower castes embraced it in great numbers and overnight gained equality with the high castes. Buddhism gained eminence over Brahminism till it was overthrown by the armed might of the Rajputs (of Agni Dynasty) adding fire power to the intellectual gun of Shankaracharya and his followers. These followers were mainly Brahmins and they exerted themselves extensively to restore the supremacy of the Brahmin, tighten the stranglehold of the invidious caste-system and keep the common man ignorant and illiterate. But idol-worship introduced by Buddhism had its roots grown too deep to be uprooted. The philosophy of Shankaracharya that 'all is God' (*Sabh Brahm he hai*) failed to cut any ice against the caste-system and thus bring Hindus into one fold.

Shankaracharya was a follower of Shiva. His main disciple Ramanuja was a votary of Vishnu, who preached the worship of his god. He was instrumental in creating more off-shoots of Hinduism like Madhavi, Vishnu Swami, Vallabhachari, etc. Thus instead of integration further ramifications took place to make things worse for Hinduism. People were attracted to these new fountains of clear reasoning but found the filth of many kinds in their depths. India was weak and

divided into inimical, political, social and religious camps. The Indians had become ease-loving pleasure-seekers. Their physical well-being and gratification of sense-pleasures became the main purpose of their life. The devotees of Krishna were largely responsible for this moral degeneration. The Brahmins reassumed the role of gurus who engrained in the psyche of the common man the indispensability of idol-worship and rites and rituals for spiritual uplift. His gurudom came to stay and cannot be shaken off even now.

Liberation is the destined end of human life. In order to cheat the common man of his worldly goods and money, the Brahmin advocated that this world of phenomena with its worldly goods, is untrue and the only true entity is Brahm. So the common man should offer his worldly possessions to him, considering them untrue and worthless. He would look after their spiritual welfare in return. The votaries of Shakti had become cruel and unchaste moral lepers. The Shaivites had taken to drugs, opium, charas, ganja and wine. Such was the sad plight of the Hindus. They were groping in the dark shrouded by superstition. They were no match for the one-God-loving (worshipping) fierce followers of Islam. The Hindus were stuck in the swamp of polytheism and manworship. They were at logger-heads with one another. The welfare of others was farthest from their minds. They were not united in anything.

The Hindu India looked an easy prey to the

Mohammedans who turned their face towards it and over-ran it at their will. They destroyed the last vestiges of Hindu power and completely enslaved the people. They tried their level best to belittle the Hindus, rob them of their wealth and women, reduce them to a servile and spineless people. In short they came to own Hindus as thoroughly as a man owns his cattle.

The Hindus could not withstand the relentless ramming of their citadel by the Mohammedans. Large number of the two lower castes of Hindus embraced Islam either under duress or willingly to escape the stigma of untouchability and slavery. The high caste Hindus were not greatly perturbed but rather felt relieved that the rotten limbs of the body of Hinduism had fallen off. "A good riddance," they mused. These high caste but purblind Hindus couldn't envisage that this limb was going to be rejuvenated and turn into their master. The neo-converts were more zealous than the invading Muslims and had no little hand in inflicting unspeakable horrors on their erstwhile masters and co-religionists. The idol-worship of Hindus invited the wrath of Muslims who considered it a holy duty to destroy the temples, along with the idols, of the infidels and bring them under the banner of Islam. Their proselytism assumed gigantic and horrendous proportions.

The idols were broken, the costly gems embedded therein taken away. The Hindu women in their thousands were not only molested and taken into

individual harems but were auctioned for the petty consideration of two dinars in the bazaars of Ghazni and other cities. Muslims and Hindus looked down upon each other, there was hardly any meeting ground between them. The tyranny of the victorious Muslims was boundless. In all walks of life the Hindus were treated like dirt. They were butchered in thousands, their idols broken and set in the door-steps of mosques where Muslims placed their shoes before entering. They were asked to keep food-stuff, clothes and bare necessities of life needed for a period of six months only and hand over the rest to Muslims. The chronicle of Muslim rule is full of death and decimation of Hindus, desecration and destruction of their temples, denigration of their gods, deflowering of their women and denial of all rights to them. A Hindu was forbidden to keep a fine horse, house, woman, children and things with him, to ride a horse and to wear a white turban. The Muslim rulers exerted themselves assiduously to obliterate the word victory, its concept, its very thought from the Hindu psyche. Whenever a Hindu chess-player emerged triumphant over his Muslim adversary, he was ordered to embrace Islam or be beheaded. If a Hindu wrestler worsted his Mohammedan opponent in the arena, he had to convert to Islam in order to save his skin. It was a devilish and sustained scheme to emasculate the Hindus. The good things of life were not for them. It was considered magnanimity on the part of their victorious rulers to let them breathe and lead a life at sub-human

level.

The Rajputs were once considered the finest flower of Hindu chivalry. Their pride, glory and manhood were ground to such fine dust that they vied with each other to offer their daughters in marriage to the Muslim princes and nobles. Thus the Hindu nation had touched the nadir. Any Hindu who looked askance at them was treated with scorn by the Rajputs. They had to pay *jazia* (tax) for remaining Hindus, and those who could not afford to pay, had to become Muslims. Hindus could not keep doors and lavatories towards west thus desecrating Kaaba.

Those Brahmins who embraced Islam were flatteringly called Sayyads. The raft of Hinduism was about to be sunk when it was steered clear of the dangerous shallows of sloth, superstition and ritualism and utter despondency by an able seaman no less than Guru Nanak Dev Ji. He preached the oneness of man and the oneness of God and denounced the caste-system and its off-shoots untouchability, idol worship and cankerous ritualism. He preached that *Akal* (God) is above birth and death. With disarming sweetness he used honeyed words which had the cutting edge of highly honed steel. The Brahmins felt the steel in his words but were powerless to fulminate against him. Guru Nanak assuaged to some extent the rancour between the Muslims and the Hindus.

The Hindus had lost their country and were on

the verge of losing their identity and faith. They had got some respite in the reign of Akbar but during Aurangzeb's regnancy, cruelty and tyranny, bigotry and intolerance, and proselytism reached its pinnacle. The earlier Muslim rulers were prompted by holy considerations in all their acts of cruelty and conversion. But Aurangzeb earnestly endeavoured to obliterate the last traces of Hinduism from the Indian soil. As he had dealt fiendishly with his own brothers on his way to the throne, his showing of extreme cruelty to Hindus, the infidels, is quite understandable. Thereby he wanted to absolve himself of the sin of fratricide and inhuman treatment of his father Shah Jahan. The time had come for the annihilation of the Hindus, Aurangzeb celebrated his victories by weighing heaps of the sacred threads of the Hindus, killed in the battle. The heavier the weight, the greater the victory. All great Hindu kingdoms had vanished from the Indian scene. The days of the Lunar Dynasty were over; the Yadav kings were a thing of the past. The scions of remnants of the Solar Dynasty like the King of Mewar were hiding in the fastnesses of jungles and hill nooks. The proud Rajputs of the Agni Dynasty were busy offering their winsome daughters to the Muslim rulers. The pride of the Hindus was trampled upon and they lay inert under the Muslim heel.

The raft of Hindu Dharma was about to founder. It was rudderless, without a helmsman, far away from the shores with no hope ever of making it.

In this predicament, piercing the mists of despondency there emerged a figure of hope. This personage took the boat out of the clutches of the ravaging tempest and steered it to the haven of the shore. He was like beneficial rain for the withered and drooping garden of the Hindu Dharma. Like a true friend he alleviated the sufferings of the Hindus. Who was he ? No other than Guru Gobind Singh, known the world over. The sapling which was planted by Guru Nanak was watered by the blood of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind and fertilized by their bones. Guru Teg Bahadur quickened its growth by injecting into its veins the vital fluid flowing out of his beheaded body. Guru Gobind Singh helped it mature into a full-fledged tree with the blood of his five beloved disciples, four sons and thousands of his followers. At last this tree bore fruit. Its fruit was nationalism, brotherhood, love and monotheism.

I am endeavouring to portray in the following pages the life of such a fine religious preceptor, great benefactor, peerless fighter, patriot and nation-builder for the perusal of the readers. If it finds favour I shall be immensely beholden to them.

25th January, 1901.

—Daulat Rai

GURU GOBIND SINGH

Birth and Early Life

Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Bengal along with the Raja of Jodhpur either on his own or at the behest of Aurangzeb. He left his mother Nanaki, his wife Mata Gujri who was in the family way and Kirpal Chand behind at Patna. Later on he moved towards Assam.

Mata Gujri gave birth to a son at Patna on Saturday night of 17-18 Poh of 1723 Bikarami corresponding to December, 1666. The day was still four and half hours away. He was called Gobind in deference to the wishes of his father. Many miracles are related regarding his birth, which I deliberately leave out, considering such stories to be not factual, being born out of the blind devotion of the followers.

When Gobind was old enough to play with other boys, his favourite pastime was to divide them into two groups pitting one against the other in mock battles. He himself was fond of wielding the sling and the bow and arrows.

As he was the son of a Guru, people respected him. The boys also showed him great deference and

he usually assumed the role of a king or a commander of the army. Sometimes, he would play the judge and dispense justice. He was skilled with the sling and made the boys familiar with its handling. When women of the neighbourhood carried pitchers for fetching water, he and his boys aimed at the pitchers and broke them. The women in exasperation complained to his grandma who often reprimanded him and threatened him with punishment.

The Guru was fearless from his very childhood. A famous anecdote runs like this. One day he was playing with his band of boys. The Nawab of Patna was passing by, in procession. The mace-bearer (of the Nawab) asked the boys to salaam (salute) the Nawab. But Gobind directed his companion-boys to make faces at him, instead. The boys did so and ran away.

When Guru Tegh Bahadur returned to Punjab, he left his family behind at Patna. He founded Anandpur Sahib and later sent for his people.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was aware of the temper of the times, Succession involved strife and jealousy. So he got his son trained in warfare and horse-riding alongwith religious instructions. He also made arrangements for his son to study Persian. Guru Tegh Bahadur's far-sighted introduction of his son to such fields of studies proved a great boon to Gobind Singh in his later life.

Unparalleled Sacrifice of His Father

Guru Gobind Singh devoted himself to his studies and spent his spare time in hunting or travelling about while his father was preparing for a glorious act of sacrifice, long-awaited by the people of his time. Aurangzeb was in power and was bent upon converting all Hindus to Islam in whatsoever way possible. Therefore he made free use of coercion, terror and violence. He had converted villages enmasse to Islam. The low caste and the middle class Hindus were fed up with the relentless and extreme cruelties perpetrated against them by the Muslim rulers. The Hindu religion had been made so impotent by endless divisions that it could not offer any mental peace or solace to these people. The high castes looked down upon the low, who themselves were not united, amiable or even forbearing enough to lead a life of peace. Juxtaposed against this background was the allure-ment that by going over to Islam, they would become members of the victorious and ruling nation and escape the ills heaped on them by the Hindu Dharma as well as the torture meted out by the Muslims. Hence the low-castes not only preferred Islam to the Brahmanic Hindu religion but found it a God-sent and joyously joined its fold. Therefore, Aurangzeb did not include them in his list of priorities. He was determined to convert the high castes—Brahmins and Khattris, to Islam by force. That is why he spent huge sums for the purpose of converting Brahmins and

Khattris of Kashmir. When the Brahmins in Kashmir refused to embrace Islam, he summoned them to his Delhi court.

At that time the Sikhs were gaining in strength and stature. Guru Hargobind had earlier measured swords with the Mughal forces of his time. Their religion was actively propagated and talked about. Therefore the Kashmiri Brahmins went to Guru Tegh Bahadur and related their tale of woe. The Guru became pensive on learning of their plight, his face expressing deep grief and concern. The sad plight of the Brahmins and the murderous might of Aurangzeb were thought-provoking facts. The plight of the former was pleading for succour to the oppressed as a moral duty and his blood rose to defend the freedom of worship for the Hindus. But the stupendous might of the Muslim ruler was a thing to reckon with. The Guru was pondering deeply over these aspects of the matter when Gobind Rai appeared. Finding his father pensive, he asked the reason. The Guru replied that the plight of Hindu Dharma in India called for the sacrifice of a pious soul. Gobind spontaneously quipped that there was none more pious than the Guru himself. The Guru replied, "If that is the Lord's Will, so be it".

The growing power of the Sikhs was rankling in Aurangzeb's eyes. On learning of the Guru's help for the Kashmiri Brahmins, he became incensed. He summoned the Guru to Delhi. The Guru installed

Gobind as his successor informing him that he was going to offer his head for the cause of Righteousness in obedience to the Akal Purakh's command. The Guru advised his son to save his dead body from indignity and perform the final rites after retrieving it. He further charged Gobind to shield the oppressed (Hindus) even at the cost of his life. It all transpired as the Guru had foretold. Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded at the behest of Aurangzeb and Jiwan, a Ranghar Sikh carried his Guru's head to Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur. On seeing his father's gory head, Guru Gobind Singh uttered these famous lines:

As an act of redressal, did he so,
Offered his head without a word of woe.
For Righteousness, performed this deed,
Gave he his head, but kept his creed.

The body of the Guru was taken away by a devoted Sikh to his own house. Fearing exposure he deliberately set fire to his house, while consecrating the body to the flames. It was impossible to cremate the body anywhere outside.

Difficulties Which the Guru Faced

Guru Gobind Singh was fired with zeal to endeavour for the fulfilment of his mission. But his path was beset with many impediments. When Guru Tegh Bahadur bequeathed to his son, the defence of Dharma (Righteousness), the extirpation of its enemies and the firing of hearts with patriotic fervour Guru Gobind

Singh was only nine. But he enshrined this legacy in his heart. He had no experience but of the inspiring self-sacrifice of his father made for Righteousness. The task before him was stupendous, he had no resources, no estate, no wealth, only a handful of Sikhs to give offerings, just enough for bare sustenance. Facing him was the formidable force of Islam whose sway stretched from the shores of the Indian Ocean to the peaks of Himalyas and touching the boundary of Burma on the east.

Destiny had pitted a penniless recluse (fakir) lodged in a corner of the vast country against this redoubtable Islamic empire, finding him most suitable for this task. It was imperative for a fighter of Guru Gobind Singh's calibre to carry out the loving command of his father. What could he do in the face of the armed might of a pitiless and savage tyrant like Aurangzeb. An unfledged novice of nine pitted against a crafty and powerful potentate. Even then he decided to free Hindus from the Muslim yoke and rid India of this oppressive Muslim rule. He was not an enemy of Islam nor had he anything to gain by such animosity. He was against such Muslims who, under the garb of Islam, were perpetrating ungodly acts of cruelty and were Muslims in name only. He was the enemy of these savage and cruel butchers who regarded the shedding of blood of non-Muslims and denigration of their religions as holy acts.

Guru Gobind Singh resolved to oust such

people. But the fulfilment of his mission seemed well nigh impossible. The ill was diagnosed and the medicine prescribed, but it was very difficult to obtain. He however, procured it at last. But how this *Vaid Gobinda* went about administering this medicine, with what wisdom and what success, needs a detailed analysis to be fully understood.

The very exercise undertaking this task was beset with innumerable impediments and problems. He was a youngman just past childhood. His kith and kin were hostile to him owing to his succession to Guruship. The Sikhs were suspect in the eyes of the Government of the times. But he was endowed with a heart which scoffed at all troubles, was undaunted by impediments and hardships, unperturbed by problems and uncowed by any grief. A man blessed with such a heart had not taken birth in India (among Hindus) for thousands of years. This peerless heart was inspiring him. But there was no material to work upon.

He wanted to shield his people from the insolent and tyrannical hand of Aurangzeb. He wanted to free his country and Hindu Dharma from the clutches of the corrupt and cruel administration. But he found his countrymen lacking in everything. They were spineless, cowardly, hypocritical, busy in harming and accusing one another, sans unity, determination and sense of honour. There was nothing to bring them together and nothing in them to bind them to a common cause. Disgrace and decline was in evidence

everywhere. The Hindus were beset with extreme selfishness. There was no one to lend an ear to their complaints and to succour them. The Kashatris had lost their valour, the Brahmins their all after effacing others. The Hindu had lost his self-respect, honour and possessions. There was no sense of security. They faced perpetual danger.

Such was the general state of affairs, when Guru Gobind Singh was brimming over with zeal for nationalism and defence of Dharma. He was determined to restore the honour of the people, allay their sufferings and free them from tyranny. He was also conscious of his inexperience, destitution and utter lack of help of any kind from any quarter. We can well imagine his predicament. His patriotic fervour boiling over contrasted with the chilling cowardice and utter despondency of the people. But he was endowed with a heart, undaunted by obstacles, undeterred by hardships, uncowed by the hopelessness of the situation, unawed by the stupendous might of the Mughals. He viewed the situation in depth from all sides. He found the Hindus deflated in everything, fallen in all aspects. He found certain questions nagging his mind and demanding attention and solution. Only after resolving them could the Hindus be saved.

Problems concerned with Hindus

1. The Hindus had discarded the Worship of one God and had supplanted Him by numerous gods,

avtaras, animals, vegetation and metals. The obvious result with the disintegration of their nation. Beset with physical and spiritual slavery they were out to obliterate their very existence. How to wean them from the worship of His creatures and the pull of the Vedas and restore the worship of one God, was the first problem.

2. How to check the downward slide of the Hindus in physical, mental, spiritual, moral and educational sphere and give it an ascending direction?
3. What were the causes of disunion, animosity, bickering and weakness among the Hindus, which should be removed to bring them on a common platform of brotherhood and nationalism ?
4. How to weaken the dominance of Islam and free Hindus from bondage ?

In short, how to bring about the worship of one God, brotherhood and nationalism among the Hindus and how to deliver them from the clutches of degrading slavery.

It goes without saying that others before Guru Gobind Singh had deliberated upon this theme but without any tangible results. All such efforts at reformation had resulted in the widening of the gulf of differences. All reformers had pointed in newer directions, thus leading to further separations and ramifications. A veritable jungle of pathways was created

making more and more new sects who took pleasure in the discomfiture of others. They never thought of working unitedly despite religious and political differences, against the common bloodthirsty enemy. Owing to mental slavery they had strayed far from the Vedic religion. The Muslims trampled upon them one by one (in turn). The only difference being that those who enjoyed the discomfiture of others had their moment of humiliation slightly later.

They were united in not a single thing about religion. All of them boasted of deriving their own brand directly from the Vedas and looked askance at others. They were responsible for the slide downward from mental slavery to political enslavement. And political bondage had brought them to the brink of annihilation. Their religion and nationality was about to lose their identity. Their religion had no strength to bind the numerous sects together. They had no power, wealth and manhood left to fight back. Wide-ranging reforms were needed in moral, religious and social fields. The last question perplexing Guru Gobind Singh was that the material at his disposal was nil. He was hard put to find a solution to the complicated problem.

He surveyed the field before him. There were impediments in the way of religious and social reforms. The political reality was fraught with dangers and pitfalls. Despite all this he steeled himself for this Herculean task. He decided to inject new vigour into

the frigid Hindu blood which had lost all sense of honour, shame, brotherhood and valour. He took the field all alone like a true warrior.

To put things in their true perspective, it is proper to view the scene. Guru Gobind Singh was a recluse sans wealth, power and possessions but possessed of one thing which despite everything added to his courage and impelled him towards success. It was the spark of nationalism and the fighting instinct of a Kashatri. The exploits of Ramachandra are remembered with reverence and pride. But in Ramachandra's time the whole of India was under the Hindu Kings. Neither the country nor the Dharma was threatened. He himself was a king, enjoying great wealth and power. The neighbouring kings sided with him. No one can aver that patriotism or nationalism of any kind was involved in his war against Lanka. Undoubtedly he proved a true Kashatri warrior and killed Ravana who had forcibly taken away his wife. A great deed of personal revenge.

On the other hand Guru Gobind Singh took up the cudgels for the betterment of others, grieved at the forcible abduction of lakhs of wives of his countrymen. He undertook this tough task under extremely difficult conditions. All exploits of Krishna were motivated by personal revenge. He killed Kansa because the latter wanted to obliterate his dynasty alongwith Krishna. He took to the sword in self-defence and wielded it well. Conspiring with the Pandavas and with their

active support he defeated king Jarasindh, who had attacked him fifteen times to avenge the killing of Kansa. Jarasindh had forced Krishna to leave his Kingdom and found a new Kingdom in Gujrat with Dwarka as its capital.

It was pure and simple revenge that prompted these exploits. No patriotism of any kind was involved. There is no doubt that Jarasindh and Kansa were both cruel despots. And it was the duty of a Kashatri to take up the sword for the extermination of such persons. Even if we admit that some patriotic feelings were lying at the back of all this, contrary to the facts, his exploits should be assessed in the light of his being a king with great resources at his command, with many kings at his side and the great Pandavas backing him up. His actions appear not beyond any ordinary king of his time. No foreign power was ruling the country, which was under Kashatris and the people were prosperous.

But the task before Guru Gobind Singh was comparatively far more stupendous, important and critical. In patriotic fervour he leaves Krishna far behind. Similarly his deeds far excel those of Shankaracharya. The latter was helped by Kashatri kings in his bid to browbeat the Buddhist Scholars with his intellect and scholasticism. Had he not been backed by the Kashatri might he would have failed in his mission. Guru Gobind Singh stood all alone without friends and helpers. The emperor of his time was dead

set against him.

Prophet Mohammad had to contend with a small tribe of Quareshi sect. Guru Gobind Singh was faced with a situation far more difficult and critical than any of these great persons had met. It required greater courage and determination. His (own) Hindu brethren were against him, he himself was a penniless recluse. True his father had been martyred. But millions before him had been butchered by the Muslim emperors. Why so far no one had ever thought of taking revenge during all these centuries ? Why it occurred only to Guru Gobind Singh that the Muslim power should be weakened ? Why no one had stood up against the tyranny of the Muslim rule ?

The most surprising thing is that the very Hindus for whose welfare Guru Gobind Singh was bearing all kinds of hardships were not only fighting shy of helping him, but were adding to his cup of miseries by fighting against him. The Hindus were so much consumed by selfishness that there was no hope of their ever rallying under the banner of nationalism. In the heart of Guru Gobind Singh was lit the spark of nationalism which all earlier Hindu reformers including Krishna, Ramachandra, Shankaracharya and Ramanuja had lacked.

The spark was there but material needed for stoking it was lacking. The Guru was only fifteen and had this Herculean task before him. No fierce wind of

fear and danger, no cyclone of cowardice, no hurricane of hurry and selfishness, no currents of carelessness could extinguish this spark. Great wisdom, patient awaiting of opportune time and the knack of feeling the pulse of the time were needed for such a task. So Guru Gobind Singh retired to the hills in order to nurse the spark of nationalism into a blaze and devise means to utilise it to good effect. Another reason of his seclusion could be his desire thereby to cool the opposition of Ram Rai, a strong contender for Guruship. It is said that the Guru stayed in the hills for many years and the hill chieftans did all they could to harass him.

During this sojourn, he added a lot to his knowledge. He learnt Persian thoroughly, acquired some understanding of Arabic and attained proficiency in Sanskrit. He heard and went through the chronicles of great kings and warriors of India and studied the lives and philosophies of great reformers and leaders of other religions. He ruminated over the ups and downs of his country and listened raptly to the ballads on the bold exploits of the doughty warriors of India, sung by the bards. When his Sikhs gathered around him, such recitals were a regular feature. The idea was to infuse valour into them. He spent some of his time in hunting tigers and other wild animals. All along, his mind dwelt on the task before him, devising ways and means to be put into practice in the times to come. During this period the claim of Ram Rai to the Guruship proved hollow and lost bite. In

due course the Sikhs started rallying round Guru Gobind Singh. He would daily listen to the tales of woe inflicted by Aurangzeb which steeled him further in his resolve and kept the spark burning in his heart.

The might of the Mughals was evident as also the helplessness, sad plight and inherent weakness of the Hindus. He fixed his priorities and decided first of all to remove the causes responsible for disunity, despondency and debility among Hindus. This required sweeping reforms in the religious field, alongwith social reforms like eradication of caste - system and untouchability. Needed also was the inculcation of upward looking among the Shudras. And last of all he was to turn to political reform. All these involved considerable difficulties.

Religious Reform

From the very beginning the Hindus have held the Dharma as supreme, a pious binding duty nearer to the heart than everything else. At no time in their history had they turned their back on it or esteemed it less. They were able to keep it alive during Buddhist onslaught and even after seven hundred years of Muslim atrocities. Their country, property, wealth, lands and families were seized, their libraries and books burnt and their lives taken. In short they saw everything perishing before their very eyes, but they kept their Dharma alive. They enshrined it in the deepest recesses of their hearts where not even the most tyran-

nical hand could reach it. They bore torture, endured hardships and sorrows but somehow kept their Dharma alive, because it was most dear to them. They defended it with streams of their blood and millions of their lives. They proved equal to the occasion, though they were a divided lot, various sects warring with one another. Due to sectarian differences they came to be sub-divided into groups and sub-groups.

Their existence was like the flickering light of a dying lamp. This flickering light was about to be extinguished by the storm of intolerant fanaticism let loose by Aurangzeb when Guru Gobind Singh shielded it with his hands and saved it from extinction. The sad plight of the Hindus was evident from the fact that even in one family various ways of diverse religious practices were followed. While one worshipped Ganesh, the second prayed to the Sun, the third was a devotee of Shivji, the fourth — a votary of Vishnu, the fifth, the follower of Ram, the sixth devoted to Bhairav, the seventh worshipped Hanuman, the eighth admired Krishan Leela (Amours), the next was a Vedanti and so on. And added to this emaciating division was mutual animosity and hatred. Thanks to these fissiparous tendencies, the Hindus had no common language. Their religious books were different. There was no unanimity on any religious issue. They were not united in any one thing. How could there be any feeling of oneness, mutual sympathy and patriotic feeling among them ? There was no social intercourse

and fellow-feeling among the Hindus.

Disunity, friction and animosity were rife. The religious structure was in disarray and loose. The South had no love for the North. The Hindus of the North had no truck with the denizens of the South. Both of them were unconcerned about the eastern people. And none of them had even a single practice in common with the West. No one trusted the others. The country was full of corrupt and deceitful people. Their religion was not the same, their morality different, their aims different, their hopes different, their living different, their habits different, their habiliments different, their prayers different, their gods different, their temples different, their rites and rituals different, their desires different, their food different, their ways different, their tempers different, their hells different, their heavens different. There was no oneness in their thoughts, in their actions. They followed ways not only different but often sharply conflicting with one another. They had neither love for one another nor shared the grief of others. They never felt inclined to succour one another.

The Hindu kings were hostile to one another. The subjects were out to harm one another. The religious sects were thirsty for the blood of one another. How could then the Hindus survive or prosper ? Why should not they have decline and downfall ? Why should not they suffer and be despondent ? Why should not their humiliation and disgrace

be apparent ? Why should not their honour and self-respect be well nigh extinct ? Why should not their nations' dignity and destiny be different? Why should not they be termed cowardly and docile, semi-civilized or savage rabblement ?

The position of religious sects and sub-sects had become worse. Their number could be counted in thousands. Normally the Brahmins were the founders of these sects and groups. In addition to them were different sects following diverse saints and fakirs. Things had come to such a pass that every village had its own rites and rituals, gods and sects quite different from all others. Some Hindus had slid still lower by following certain Islamic sects and Muslim *Pirs* (holymen) who considered them heathens, fit only to be bled. Some of the founders of the sects deified themselves as the supreme Lord, while some others claimed direct descent from him.

If the play of Maya was eulogized at one place, the world and its goods were described as ephemeral and transitory at another and people advised renunciation. All of the founders and leaders of sects had opened shops, were extolling their own religious wares and were worried about selling them. Liberation was going cheap and selling for a song. The fasting of a day, just one bathing at a *Tirath*, the recitations of a couple of words and incantation of some names were claimed to wash away the sins not only of this life but also of the sum total of thousands previous births, as well as

those of one's forefathers and relatives. Over and above all this they entitled one to emancipation and transported him to heaven (*Swarga*). The variance in religious affairs applied even to *tilaks* (marks on foreheads). The *tilaks* were different, their contours different, their positions different. All this was done to enable the agencies of the gods to recognize their respective devotees, after their demise. The rosary and its beads were different. The materials used and their colours were diverse. It is not possible to tabulate all the ramifications of their diverse creeds.

Differences and contrasts were the order of the day. Rites, rituals and religious acts differed from man to man. In the religious field transactions were aglore. The rules for returns of religious dealings were defined, rules for sale, purchase and mortgage were laid down and enforced. One person would worship god, do penance and give in charity and another could reap the rewards. Give a man some pice and take away the gain entailed by his prayers, recitations and incantations. Sin and commit crimes of all kinds. Then give a professional in the religious field some money, get a religious book read, get a couple of mantras recited by a rosary a number of times and have your sins washed away. Appease your particular god by offering him some flowers, Coconut, *patashas* (sugar-candies) etc. When absolution was so cheap and readily available, why should a man bother about morality, engage in the hard task of worship and prayers and study of the

scriptures ? Why cleanse the inner self with the rigours of austerities and abstinences ? Why should one think of social welfare or unity or turn towards one God ?

When the rewards of here and hereafter could be obtained with a handful of coins, where was any place for virtuous acts of this and earlier lives ? Not only were one's rites, rituals, customs different in this world but in the next also. Every god had his own special heaven and hell. When the gods were at variance with one another, how could there be peace among their followers ? The Hindus even denigrated the Almighty Lord Himself. First of all they parcelled Him into gods like Brahma, Vishnu etc. Later on He was made to manifest Himself not only in the form of human beings but also of animals like the Crocodile, the Tortoise, the Boar and what is even worse of a man-animal Narsingh (Half lion, half man). They started idol-worship and carved idols of the gods. But their idols too, were different.

One idol was headless, another without feet. While some idols were made of stone, others were hewed out of logs of wood. Even the stones were of diverse shapes and kinds, round, chiselled etc. Mostly the idols of *Kaam* (Eros) and of Krishna were worshipped. It is most surprising that the idols of the Tortoise, the Boar and the Crocodile were not made and worshipped.

Many tortuous austerities and different physical tortures were undergone in the name of religion.

Some considered it a pious act to die while being sawn apart in a well at Kashi, while some desired being trampled to death under the Chariot of Jagan Nath. But it is surprising that the cutting off of one's nose or ears had not come into vogue then, though piercing them was considered propitious. Most bizarre things were done. While one tried to blight his arm the other kept standing on one leg to proclaim his religious fervour yet another hung downward and still another tried to ape the animals in his stance. The religious garbs were of diverse colours, of different shapes. The hair style and modes of keeping hair of the head, the beard and the moustache were different.

This immoral and irreligious tide was responsible for the birth of Buddhism. The power of the sword had led to the spread of Budh Dharma and also to its downfall. Its good points became extinct in India with its ouster but its evil practices were retained as a legacy by Hindus. Animal sacrifice was considered a fit offering to the gods and goddesses, and human sacrifice was deemed still more virtuous. The priests of the temple of Bandar Bashi proudly claimed that animal sacrifice was offered in such an abundance that blood never dried on the sacrificial altar. Eating of filth was the special trait of one religious sect. The followers of Bhairo indulged in drinking to please their god. The votaries of Shivji took to opium, charas and hemp as an act of devotion. The followers of Shakti or Devi ate meat and drank liquor as a religious duty towards their deity. Certain sects revelled in eating

with dogs. Salvation could be had by merely serving the saints and sadhus and at the soulful glance of a guru.

The Brahmins were the originators of all religious ills. They had forbidden the non-Brahmins from studying Vedas and Shastras. In due course of time the field of education became their preserve and they refused to teach others. They opined that Sanskrit was the language of the gods and of all the people of the world only Brahmins were privileged to study it. They were the editors and rehashers of Shastras and the makers (writers) of Puranas, as well as the creators of all religious sects. Despite being worsted, humbled and humiliated, they were loth to forego their acquired position of authority. They were never willing to let go off a thing over which they claimed their birth right and divine right. Therefore, it was well nigh impossible to interfere in any one of their affairs. They were incensed by such interference and considered it more hurtful than the Muslim atrocities. You can fully apprehend the state of affairs if you go through the various injunctions they had incorporated in the religious books (Shastras) to perpetuate their pre-eminence, dominance and self-acquired authority over others. Their number is great, but just a few are given below :

1. All the world and all that it contains is the property of the Brahmin. All things have been made for him. Manu I Chapt/96,100,101.

2. The Brahmin can annihilate a king with his army, horses and elephants, with the power of his mantras. Manu 9/213.
3. The Brahmin can create many worlds like our own, rulers of kingdoms, new gods, new human beings and many other perishable things. Manu 9/315. (This can be true as he had created many new kings and kingdoms with small capitals of their own by setting the Rajputs against one another. He had created countless new gods, and was busy creating more every day).
4. The Brahmin deserves greater respect and reverence than a king. Manu 2/139.
5. Very serious crimes committed in order to save his body and soul, are not punishable in the case of a Brahmin. Manu 9/205, 208, 232; 4/69, 165; 8/281, 283.
6. Any crime against the person of a Brahmin or against his property deserves ten times the ordinary punishment in such cases. Manu 7/367; 8/378, 379.
7. It is the imperative duty of a king to appoint a Brahmin as his trusted minister and advisor. Manu 7/58.
8. The working of courts should be entirely entrusted to the Brahmin. Manu 8/1, 9, 10, 11.

9. In a Yajna the Brahmins should be fed and given plenty of gifts and fees for spiritual services rendered. In case these are insufficient all lives, progeny, animals, good name and blessings (joys) of now and hereafter of the person performing Yajna are destroyed. Manu 3/133 to 146; 11/39,40.
10. Atonement for not doing worship, pilgrimage and Tirath- bathing can only be obtained by liberal cash donations to a Brahmin. Manu 11/117, 139.
11. No tax of any kind can be charged from a Brahmin. Manu 7/(132), 133.
12. If someone steals an animal belonging to a Brahmin, his feet should be cut off from the ankles. Manu 8/325.
13. A shudra should preferably serve a Brahmin and in case of non-availability of a Brahmin master, he should serve a Kashatri. Manu 8/334.

It is not necessary here to dwell at greater length on such references; these few are enough to establish the pre-eminence of the Brahmins in all aspects of life. Everything was under their control. Their right even to create new gods had been accepted. They interpreted the Shastras to suit their selfish ends of the moment and established such rites, rituals and traditions as were consonant with their own material

welfare. They had already debarred the common mass of non-Brahmins from the study of Sanskrit. Now they forbade them to learn Arabic and Persian, on the plea, that the study of the language of the *Malechhas* (a term of contempt for the Muslim invaders) was against the injunctions of the Shastras. Whosoever, commenced the study of Persian was declared a Shudra and ostracised. That is why the Kaisths who were the first to study Persian are even to-day considered Shudras in India. The Brahmins completely enmeshed the Hindus in mental slavery which is even worse and more damaging than physical slavery.

The Hindus were enslaved mentally by the Brahmins on the one hand and physically by the Muslims on the other. Guru Gobind Singh decided to free them from both these kinds of slavery. Opposition to the freeing of the Hindus from mental slavery was expected from the Brahmins, but the Hindus themselves were ready to oppose him and they did so. But Guru Gobind Singh gave a clarion call for the freedom of the Hindus despite opposition from these ungrateful people. And he forcefully exhorted the people for the worship of the Akal.

First of all he turned to reform in the religious sphere. Being a spiritual leader he preached the gospel of Lord-devotion and taught the people to spurn polytheism and to shun the following of man-made religious sects. He forcefully rebutted the plurality of god. Following the precepts of Guru

Nanak Dev Ji, he forcefully denounced and forbade the worship of idols. He censured the custom of observance of obsequies and described the worship of gods as a fraud, termed the concept of Avtars as anti-nature, condemned Tirath-bathing as a hoax, criticised the religious garbs as dresses of deceit, delivered people from the worship of men, animals, vegetations and minerals. He pulled people out of the bog of superstition, and decried the symbols of religious distinctions. He drew the attention of the people to the One Creator, who is Formless and Eternal. He eulogized supreme glory of Truth.

In short he took people away from small, slimy, stagnant and filthy fountains to the shores of the infinite Ocean of Lord-devotion. Given below are some Kabits of Guru Gobind Singh culled out of his numerous verses epitomising the beauty of his gospel, the depth of his Lord-devotion and the extent of richness of his thought. It is hoped that the readers will relish them:

Tav-Prasad(i) Kabit

*Khūk malhārī gaj gad-hā bibhūtdhārī,
Gidūā masān bās kario ī karat haiñ.
Ghughū mat bāsī lage dolat udāsī mrig,
Tarvar sadiv mon sādhe ī marat haiñ.
Biñd ke sadhayā tāhe hīj kī baḍayā det,
Bañdrā sadiv pāe nāge ī phirat haiñ.
Añgnā adhīn kām krodh mai prabīn.*

Ek giān ke bihīn chhīn kaise kai tarat haiñ. (1/71)

Could the Lord be realized :

- (a) by eating filth then the swine would,
- (b) by smearing the body with dust then the ass and the elephant would,
- (c) by haunting the cremation grounds then the jackal would,
- (d) by living in a domed monastery then the owl would,
- (e) by wandering listlessly then the deer would,
- (f) by standing still and silently then the tree would,
- (g) by abstinence from sex then the eunuch would,
- (h) by walking barefoot then the monkey would.

How can a frail being, who is swayed by comely women, is preyed upon by wrath and lust and is bereft of perception of the True One, cross beyond ? (71)

*Bhūt banchārī chhit chhaunā sabhai dūdhādhārī,
Paun ke ahārī su bhujaṅg jāniat haiṅ.
Triṅ ke bhachhayā dhan lobh ke tajayā teto,
Gaūan ke jayā brikh-bhayā māniat haiṅ.
Nabh ke uḍayā tahe pañchhi ke baḍayā det,
Bagulā birāl brik dhiānī thāniat haiṅ.
Jete baḍe giānī tino jānī pai bakhānī nāhe,
Aise na prapañch man bhūl āniat haiṅ. (2/72)*

The Lord cannot be realized by roaming like ghosts, by subsisting on milk alone like kids and the young ones of animals, by living on air like serpents. Those who feed on vegetation and have discarded all attachment can be likened to the oxen. Those who fly in the air (with the help of yogic power) emulate the birds. Those who meditate can be compared to cranes, wolves and jungle cats. But they who have attained enlightenment, keep mum and do not even dream of enacting shows of deceit. (72)

*Bhūm ke basayā tāhe bhūchri ke jayā kahaiṅ,
Nabh ke uḍayā so charayā kai bakhāniāi.
Phal ke bhachhayā tāhe bāndrī ke jayā kahaiṅ,
Ādis phirayā tete bhūt kai pachhāniāi.
Jal ke tarayā ko gaṅgairī sī kahat jag,
Āg ke bhachhayā su chakor sam māniāi.
Sūraj sivayā tāhe kaul kī baḍāi det,
Chaṇḍramā sivayā ko kavī kai pahchāniāi. (3/73)*

Those who live under earth can be called the issue of termites. Those who soar in the sky can be called the small birds. Those who eat fruit can be called the breed of monkeys. Those who move in isolated areas can be recognised as ghosts. Those who walk on water are called water spiders by the people. Those who swallow flames can be likened to the *Chakor*. Those who worship the sun earn the trait of a lotus. Those who worship the moon can be compared to a blue lotus.

*Nārāin kachh machh tiñdūā kahit sabh,
Kaul nābh kaul jih tāl main rahat haiñ.
Gopī Nāth gūjar gupāl sabhai dhenchārī,
Rikhī-kes nām kaiñ mahañt lahiat haiñ.
Mādhav bhavar au aṭerū ko kanahyā nām,
Kañs ke badhayā jamdūt kahiat haiñ.
Mūrñ rūñ pīṭat na gūrhta ke bhed pāvai,
Pūjat na tāhe jā ke rākhe rahiat haiñ.* (4/74)

The octopus, the tortoise, the fish can be called “*Narain*”, which means “water-living”.

If the Lord is called Narain (living in water) then He is the octopus, the tortoise, the fish.

If the Lord sports a lotus in His navel, then all ponds sport lotuses.

If He is called Gopal, Gopinath (shepherd of cows) then He is *Gujjar* by caste and profession.

If He is called Rikhikesh, then many saints were called by this name.

If He is called Madhav, then He is a black bee.

If He is called Kanahya, it is the name of the spider as well.

If He is called the slayer of Kansa then He is a Yamdoot.

The fools chant empty words and do not realize His mystery and they do not worship the True one, who sustains all. (74)

*Bisv-pāl jagat-kāl dīn dae-āl bairī-sāl,
Sadā prītpāl jam jāl te rahat haiñ.
Jogī jāṭādhārī satī sāche baḍe brahmchārī,
Dhīān kāj bhūkh piās deh pai sahat haiñ.
Nioli karam jal hom pāvak pavan hom,
Adho mukh ek pāe thāḍhe na bahat haiñ,
Mānav phaniñd dev dānav na pāveh bhed,
Bed au kateb net net kai kahat haiñ.* (5/75)

The Lord who is the Creator of the Cosmos, as well as its Destroyer, the Preserver of the poor, the slayer of the vile, is ever the True Sustainer, is Eternal. The Yogis, the Celibate, those with matted hair, the Virtuous, contemplate Him and endure thirst and hunger, perform numerous Yogic feats, light sacrificial fires to air, fire and water, hang upside down, stand on one foot, go without sitting, but can't realise His essence. Men, gods, demons, godlings cannot unfathom His ways, and Scriptures declare Him ineffable. (75)

*Nāchat phīrat mor bādar karat ghor,
Dāmanī anek bhāu kario ī karat hai.*

*Chāṇḍramā te sītal na sūraj te tapat tej,
 Iṇdra sauṇ na rājā bhav bhūm ke bharat hai.
 Siv se tapasī ād(i) brahmā se na bed-chārī,
 Sanat Kumar sī tapasayā na anat hai.
 Giān ke bihīn kāl-phās ke adhin sadā,
 Jugan kī chaukri phirāe ī phirat hai. (6/76)*

The peacock is a peerless dancer, the cloud a unique drummer and the lightning an enchanting danseuse. The moon is unrivalled in coolness, the sun in scorching heat and Indra in kingly grandeur. There is no ascetic like Shiva, no knower of the Vedas like Brahma and nobody equals Sanat Kumar in leading a life of austerities. And yet bereft of True realisation they are all subject to Death and gyrate in the Cycle of Yugas. (76)

*Ek siv bhae ek gae ek pher bhae,
 Rām Chandra Krisan ke avtār bhī anek haiṇ.
 Brahmā ar bisan kete bed au purān kete,
 Siṁmrīt(i) samūhan kai hui hui bitae haiṇ.
 Mondī madār kete Ashunī Kumār kete,
 Ānsā avtār kete kāl bas bhae haiṇ.
 Pīr au pikāñbar kete gane na parat ete,
 Bhūm hī te hui kai phir bhūm hī milae haiṇ. (7/77)*

One Shiva was born, another died still another was reborn. There have been countless avtaras of Krishna and Ramchandra and countless have been vishnus and Brahmas and countless kinds of countless scriptures like Vedas and Puranas. There have been countless Mondis and Madars and countless Aswin Kumars (the twin sons of the Sun) and countless Hansa Avtara. All

of them were subject to death. Countless have been the Prophets and the Pirs who returned to dust from where they had sprung. (77)

*Jogī jatī brahm-chārī baḍe baḍe chhatra-dhārī,
Chhatra hī kī chhāiā kāī kos lau chalat haiñ.
Baḍe baḍe rājan ke dābit phirat(i) des,
Baḍe baḍe bhūpan ke drap ko dalat haiñ.
Mān se mahīp au Dilīp jaise chhatra-dhārī,
Baḍo abhimān bhuḡ dañd ko karat haiñ.
Dārā se Dilīsar Durjodhan se māndhārī,
Bhog bhog bhūm añt bhūm mai milat haiñ. (8/78)*

There have been great Yogis, Brahmcharis, Celibates and great kings whose canopies spread over miles, who crushed the pride of other kings and annexed their kingdoms. And great emperors like the famed Man Singh and Dalip who were proud of their prowess. Great emperors like Dara and vainglorious kings like Daryudhan enjoyed all earthly pleasures. All of them in the end turned to dust. (78)

*Sijde kare anek topachī kapaḡ bhes,
Postī anekda nivāvat haiñ sīs kau.
Kahā bhaeo mall jau pai kāḍhat anek dañd,
So to na ḍaṇḍaut astāṅg athtīs kau.
Kahā bhaeo rogī jo pai ḍārio rahio urdh mukh,
Man te na mūñḍ nihurāeo āḍ(i) is kau.
Kāmnā adhīn sadā dāmanā prabīn ek,
Bhāvnā bihīn kaise pāvai jagḍīs kau. (9/79)*

The gunner, the disguised hunter bow down countless times. The opium-eaters nod their heads countless times. The wrestler while performing his

exercises lies on the ground and stands up countless times. But all these cannot be termed prostration before Him. A sick person lies with his face downward many times on the bed. But it is not obeisance to the Lord as no devotion is involved in it. Caught in the web of desires, skilled in the deceptive ways and without realizing Truth, one can't attain Him. (79)

*Sis paṭkat jā ke kām mai khajūrā dhasai,
Mūṇḍ chhaṭkat mitra putra hūn ke sok soṇ.
Āk ko charrayā phal phūl ko bhachhayā sadā,
Ban ko bhramayā aur dūsro na bok soṇ.
Kahā bhayō bheḍ jo ghasat sīs brichhan soṇ,
Māṭī ke bhachhayā bol pūchh lijai jok soṇ.
Kāmnā adhīn kām krodh mainṇ prabīn,
Ek bhāvnā bihīn kaise bhetai parlok soṇ.* (10/80)

A person shakes his head vehemently when an ear-wig enters his ear or when some dear one dies he beats his head. One who grazes on celandine flower and fruit and roams in the jungle can be none other than the billy-goat. What does it avail if a person rubs his head like a sheep rubbing against trees or eats dust like a leech. Beset by desires, swayed by lust and anger, how can one go to heaven without True realization ? (80)

*Nācheo ī karat mor dādar karat sor,
Sadā ghanghor ghan kario ī karat haiṇ.
Ek pāe ṭhāḍhe sadā ban mainṇ rahat brichh,
Phūk phūk pāv bhūm(i) srāvag dharat haiṇ.
Pāhan anek jug ek ṭhaur bās karai,
Kāg aur chil des des bicharat haiṇ.*

*Giān kai bihīn mahān dān mai na hūjai lin,
 Bhāvnā bihīn dīn kaise kai tarat haiṇ.* (11/81)

Peacocks dance, frogs croak and the clouds ever chant their roaring. The trees ever on one foot stand. The *Sarvagi* clears the passage in front before stepping, the stones ever squat in the same place. The crow and the kite fly through many lands. One without true knowldge, loving devotion, and faith in the Bounteous Lord cannot cross Beyond. (81)

*Jaise ek svaṅgi kahūn jogiā bairāgi banai,
 Kab-hūn saṇniās bhes ban kai dikhāvai.
 Kahūn paunhārī kahūā baiṭhe lāe tārī,
 Kahūn lobh kī khumārī soṅ anek gun gāvai.
 Kahūn brahmchārī kahūn hāth pai lagāvai bārī,
 Kahūn ḍaṇḍ-dhārī hue kai logan bhramāvai.
 Kamnā adhīn pario nāchat hai nāchan soṅ,
 Giān ke bihīn kaise brahm lok pāvai.* (12/82)

Like an impersonator, a man enacts many roles in his quest for the Lord. Somewhere he is a Yogi or a Bairagi, somewhere he shows up in the guise of a sanyasi. Somewhere he subsists on air alone, somewhere he sits in a trance. Somewhere impelled by the love of wealth he sings the praises of others. Somewhere he is a Brahmchari, somewhere he displays marvellous yogic feats. Somewhere he moves with a staff in his hand (as a follower of a certain religious sect). In all his roles he is trying to attract and impress the people. Thus swayed by desires, he prances like a puppet but bereft of True Knowledge he cannot attain salvation. (82)

*Pañch bār gīdar pukāre pare sit kāl,
 Kuñchar au gad-hā anekdā pukār hīñ.
 Kahā bhayo jo pai kalvatra līo kāsī bīch,
 Chīr chīr chorṭā kuṭhāran so mār hīñ.
 Kahā bhayo phāñsi dār(i) būḍio jar gaṅgdhār,
 Dār(i) dār(i) phāñs ṭhag mār(i) mār(i) dār hīñ.
 Dūbe narak dhār mūrḥ giān ke binā bīchār,
 Bhāvnā bihin kaise giān ko bīchār hīñ. (13/83)*

The jackal howls five times in winter, the elephant trumpets and the donkey brays many times. It avails a man nothing to be sawn in two by a saw at Kashi, thieves and robbers are sometimes axed. What if the fool does choke himself to death in the Ganges by putting a noose around his neck ? Many robbers have been hanged to death. The nescient fools are drowned in the currents of Hell because sans loving devotion one can't dwell on Him. (83)

*Tāp ke sahai te jo pai pāiai atāp nāth,
 Tāpnā anek tan ghāel sahat haiñ.
 Jāp ke kie te jo pai pāyat ajāp dev,
 Pūdnā sadiv tuhiñ tuhiñ ucharat haiñ.
 Nabh ke uḍe te jo pai nārāiñ pāyat,
 Anal ākās pañchhī ḍolbo karat haiñ.
 Āg mai jare te gat(i) rāñd kī parat kar,
 Patāl ke bāsī kion bhujañg na tarat haiñ. (14/84)*

By torturing one's body, one can't find the Lord of Bliss, for the wounded undergoes great physical torture without finding Him. By mere chanting of some names one can't find Him, otherwise the *Poodna* bird who ever chants *Tu-hi* (thou) would have found

Him. One can't find the Lord by soaring in the sky, otherwise the "Anil" who ever soars in the sky would have found Him. If by self-immolation, one could find salvation, then the women who commit *Sati*, would have been emancipated as also the snakes, who dwell inside the hot earth. (84)

*Koū bhaeo muṇḍiā saṇniāsi koū jogi bhaeo,
 Koū brahmchārī koū jati anumānbo.
 Hindū Turk koū Rāfzi Imām Sāfi,
 Mānas kī jāt sabai ekai pāihchānbo.
 Kartā karīm soī rāzak rahīm oī,
 Dūsro na bhed koī bhūl bhram mānbo.
 Ek hī kī sev sabh hī ko gurdev ek,
 Ek hī sarūp sabai ekai jot jānbo.* (15/85)

Though someone has shaved his head, someone has become a sanyasi, someone has become a yogi, someone a Brahmchari, someone is a Turk, someone called Rafzi, someone is Imam Shaffi. But regard all human beings of different castes, creeds, clans, countries and continents as one and the same. The Lord is One and the same, though we call Him by different names like Karta (Creator), Karim (Gracious), Razik (the Sustainer), Rahim (the Merciful). One should not be deluded into believing them to be separate entities. We are the devotees of One God and He is the Enlightener of all. All human beings have the same physical appearance and the same soul animates their bodies. We should recognise them as one. (85)

Dehrā masīt soī pūjā au nivāj oī,

*Mānas sabai ek pai anek ko bhramāo hai.
 Devtā adev jachh gaṇḍharb Turk Hīndū,
 Niāre niāre desan ke bhes ko prabhāo hai.
 Ekai nain ekai kām ekai deh ekai bān,
 Khāk bād ātash au āb ko rālāo hai.
 Alah abhekh soī Purān au Kurān oī,
 Ek hī sarūp sabai ek hī banāo hai. (16/86)*

The temple and the mosque are the same. The Hindu way of worship and the Muslim prayer, Nimaz are the same. The worshippers are the same, though we may get the deluded impression that they are different. Under the influence of different countries, the gods, demons, the angels, the celestial singers appear in different guises. But the human beings have the same eyes, the same ears, the same limbs, the same body and the same elements mixed in them. The Allah of Muslims, Abhekh of Hindus is the same. Their scriptures, Quran and Puran are the same. All human beings are the same and have been fashioned in the same mould by the same Creator. (86)

*Jaise ek āg te kanūkā koṭ āg uṭhe,
 Niāre niāre hui kai pher(i) āg mai milāheṅge.
 Jaise ek dhūr te anek dhūr pūrat hai,
 Dhūr ke kanūkā pher dhūr hī samāheṅge.
 Jaise ek nad te taraṅ koṭ upjat haiṅ,
 Pān ke taraṅ sabai pān hī kahāheṅge.
 Taise bisv rūp te abhūt bhūt pragaṭ hui,
 Tāhīn te upaj sabai tāhīn mai samāheṅge. (17/87)*

By giving a few graphic examples, the Guru

brings home the sameness that pervades all.

1. Countless sparks fly off from a big fire, for a time being they appear different having an ephemeral identity of their own, but in the end they fall back into and merge with the parent fire.
2. Millions of microns of dust rise out of a dust heap and are pulled back by it and merge into it.
3. Countless sprays of water that shoot out of and fall back into the ocean are nothing but water.
4. Likewise all corporeal and incorporeal beings spring from Him and in the end merge into Him. (87)

Kete Kachh Machh kete un kau karat bhachh,

Kete achh vachh hui sapachh uḍ jāheṅge.

Kete nabh bīch achh pachh kau karaīṅge bhachh,

Ketak pratachh hue pachāe khāe jāheṅge.

Jal kahā thal kahā gagan ke gaun kahā,

Kāl ke banāe sabai kāl hī chabāheṅge.

Tej jio atej mai atej jaise tej lin,

Tāhīn te upaj sabai tāhīn main samāheṅge. (18/88)

There are countless fish and tortoises and countless are those who eat them. Countless fledglings growing strong shall fly off and countless are the birds of prey who shall devour them. And countless after taking birth shall be finished off. All denizens of earth, all beings living in water, and all winged ones that fly in the sky, are the creatures of the Akal and all of them shall be mowed down by Death. As light

merges into darkness and as darkness mingles with light, all creatures spring from Him and shall be resorbed by Him. (88)

*Kūkat phirat kete rovat marat kete,
Jal mai dūbat kete āg mai jarā. ॥
Kete Gaṅg-bāsī kete Madinā Makā nivāsī,
Ketak udāsī ke bhramāe ī phirat haiṇ.
Karvat sahat kete bhūm(i) mai gaḍat kete,
Sūā pai chaṛhat kete dūkh kau bharat haiṇ.
Gain mai uḍat kete jal mai rahat kete,
Gayān ke bihīn jak jāre ī marat haiṇ.* (19/89)

Many howling roam about, many wailing die, many drown themselves in holy waters, many burn themselves alive in fire, many live on the banks of Ganges, many live in Mecca and Medina, many deluded by a life of detachment forsake their homes and wander about. Many bear being sawn alive, many get themselves buried alive, many lie on planks studded with nails and bear torture. Many fly in the air with yogic powers, many live in water. Steeped in nescience they all burn in Hell-fires. (89)

*Sodh hāre devtā birodh hāre dāno baḍe,
Bodh hāre bodhak prabodh hāre jāpsī.
Ghas hāre chāndan lagāe hāre choā-chār,
Pūj hāre pāhan chaṛhāe hāre lāpsī.
Gāhe hāre goran manāe hāre maṛhī matt,
Līp hāre bhītan lagāe hāre chhāpsī.
Gāe hāre gaṇḍhrab bajāe hāre kiṇnar sabh,
Pach hāre paṇḍat tapaṇt hāre tāpsī.* (20/90)

All the gods and godlings wearied searching for liberation and Him. All the demons wearied defying Him. All the wise ones failed to find Him through their reasoning. The reciters failed to find any knowledge of Him. Many cried off after rubbing their foreheads with chandan, many got tired of sprinkling fine scents and aromas. Many wearied of worshipping the stones, many got tired of offering prasad to their gods. Many tired of worshipping the tombs and haunting the graveyards. Many got tired of branding themselves with the various symbols of the different gods. The singers and musicians failed to find Him through their efforts. The pundits failed in their mentations and the ascetics failed to find Him through penance.

(90)

The Guru did not mince his words. His crystal clear message needs no clarification. He gave a much-needed and timely turn to the religious affairs of the Hindus. As for religious instruction, it was well nigh impossible for the concept of Nationalism to take birth and strike roots among the Hindus.

Guru Gobind Singh writes in his autobiography — All gods, prophets, pirs were sent to the earth to reprove the people for their sinful ways. But they instituted their own worship quite forgetting their Lord. The Brahmins had assumed the ways of the Shudras and the kashatris had said good-bye to their duties. Hundreds of religious leaders, preceptors, pirs

had sprung up to create countless sects. Gorakhnath, Ramanuj, Ramanand, Shankaracharya, etc. had set up their own religions. Mohammed had enjoined upon his followers to repeat his name along with Allah's. Thus every guru, pir or prophet misled the people by instituting their separate religions with diverse ways of worship and rituals. Consequently the sins of selfishness, bigotry, cruelty, jealousy, hatred, wrong doing were rife among the people. The prophets had weaned the people away from Truth and filled them with hatred and haughtiness.

Those who were sent for showing the Highway, misled the people by making their own bye-ways. So, thou O Gobind, have been sent by Lord Akal to bring people onto the True Path of Loving Devotion to Him who is Truth, Consciousness and Bliss. Guru Gobind Singh while declaring himself a humble servant of the Almighty Lord declared: "He, who considers me as a god or avtar shall burn in hell. I am a human being like all others and have come to witness the world-drama. The Hindu and Muslim religions have degenerated. The Yogis and the followers of the Quran and Puranas are all deceitful. All the religions have gathered dust. The Bairagis and the Sanyasis have led the people astray. Their ways of worship are misleading. The Lord is not in the pages of certain books. He embodies Humility and Truth. I see His glorious splendour on all sides. I shall reveal His immanence, His Grace directs all my actions. He is my True Friend The Lord-

All Steel is my Anchor and provides all power to me.”

It is evident that the Guru was sent to preach Truth, Piety, Love and Justice. He had come to relume and propagate the True Religion of Akal. He proclaimed that both the Hindus and the Muslims had strayed from the True Path. The Hindus having forsaken the Formless One were destitute. He declared that the Quran and the Puranas do not reveal the Lord. The worship of idols and tombs can never give peace. The greatest asset of the Guru was that he never claimed to be the avtar or prophet or descendent of Akal. But in all humility and earnestness he declared that he was a lowly servant of the Lord, not above ordinary human beings, sent to multiply goodness and dwell on the glorious Truth and point to the True Way leading to the Peerless One. Whosoever worships him as a god shall forever burn in Hell-fires. Were one to view impartially, rising above narrow sectarian considerations, the Guru is head and shoulders above all other religious preceptors and founders of religions. They all incorporated their ego in their religious systems and provided amply for their self-reverence and self-glory, declared themselves God's beloveds, His sons or his prophets or regents and considered themselves a cut above the common man. But the Guru, disregarding his personal pre-eminence proclaimed himself an ordinary servitor of the Lord commissioned to preach Love and Truth. This is the finest example of humility and selfless service set by any religious

preceptor.

His status is the highest among religious preceptors of all times. If humility par excellence was in evidence anywhere it was in Guru Gobind Singh. It is not my intention to denigrate the founders of religious sects of any country or time. We in India venerate all such persons, because in their own way they all exerted to induce people to goodness. But I assert unhesitatingly that all other teachers of True Way were impelled by the desire of self-edification and gave themselves a status higher than a mere man's—that of a near one or dear one or the beloved or an adviser or a co-equal or the son or the Lord Himself. They all reduced Him to dependence on others. They never preached Oneness and omnipotence of Akal. Guru Gobind Singh never claimed any kinship with Him or a special status for himself. He never incorporated himself in his actions which he proclaimed as directed by Akal. He described himself as a mere man though he did what no other religious great had done before. Hence I have reasons to consider him more worthy of respect and reverence than all others.

Guru Gobind Singh taught truth and piety to his Sikhs, stressed why Akal who is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss should be worshipped through Truth and Devotion and impressed upon them not to insult the Creator by worshipping His creatures. Thus he gave the people in general and the Hindus in particular the lesson of unity and nationalism. He pulled the Hindus

out of the mire of superstition, turned them from the worship of His creatures to the contemplation of One Akal, sowed in their minds the thought of a common cause. He weaned the minds of the Hindus from the enervating thought of renouncing the world as unreal and inspired them to a life of action. He taught the people who had hitherto considered the killing of a cat as a sin, that shedding of blood for the defence of one's Dharma and country was not sinful. He stemmed the downward slide of Hindu Dharma towards cowardice, helplessness and finally extinction. The Hindu Dharma had almost reached the final stage of a baneful close. He infused a new spirit, vital and virile, in the Hindus. Those who were seeking reasons to change their religion, were so inspired by him as to lay down their lives for it. He filled the people with the thoughts of selfless service and self-sacrifice for others, their country and Dharma, to such an extent that these actions seemed a common occurrence. He turned the common men of clay into doers of dazzling deeds of daring. Their feats of valour astounded the world and are still remembered.

A nation cannot progress as long as its people do not love one another and unite for a common cause. The Hindus had become helpless owing to not supplicating an All-powerful providence. The Guru knit the people together in a bond of brotherhood. His message went home because he taught the people in the language of the common man. He deemed it im-

proper rather deadly to preach his gospel and deliver his instruction in a language other than that of the land. He had seen the evil effects of education being denied to the Hindus by the Brahmins. The common people could not have access to it since it was imparted in Sanskrit which was a preserve of the Brahmins. Had the Guru retained Sanskrit as the medium of his message he would have veritably failed, for the common man would have failed to grasp it. He felt that pulse of the people and like the first Guru, Guru Nanak expressed his thoughts in the lingua of the people. Consequently he was able to effect sweeping changes in the religious sphere.

Social Reform

He took in hand reforms in the social structure with a similar single mindedness and devotion. This task was very difficult, beset as it was with insurmountable impediments. Here too his achievements are outstanding and unequalled by any other social reformer. At that time the Hindus were miserably caught in the web of social divisions based on the invidious caste system. The social conditions of a people are strongly affected by their religious environs. The Hindus were no exception. Changes in the religious sphere cause attendant changes in the social structure. Divisions and sub-divisions in the religious sphere were on the increase owing to Brahminism. New gods and avatars were invented and introduced, foundations were laid of numerous man-made sects which further affected

traditions, rites and rituals. The well-being of those who lived on others, lay in the proliferations of sub-castes. Their ever-increasing wants and luxuries could be supplied only through the multiplication of sub-castes. The Brahmins divided and sub-divided people on the basis of religious differences. This process continued for a very long period with the result that by the times of Guru Gobind Singh the number of such sects had swelled to thousands.

One caste had no dealings or fellow feeling with another. The Shudras had nothing in common with Kashatris, the Brahmins had nothing to do with other castes. The Brahmins and Kashatris among themselves were further sub-divided innumerable. These sects and sub-sects could not inter-marry or dine with one another. They were poles apart. The members of one caste or section could not eat the food cooked by others. And these social bindings were so very iron-cast that merely by eating food prepared by others would make a man an outcaste and deprive him of his religious standing. Religion had been reduced to a narrow code of eating and drinking taboos. Differences were apparent even in the kinds of foods and eatables. Such fine distinctions led to mutual hatred and much bickerings and strife everyday. How could love for one another survive in such a suffocating atmosphere ? How could unity take place under differences and distinctions so varied and sharp ? Eating and drinking with one another was a taboo, the infr-

ingement whereof resulted in the loss of one's caste and religion. Such was the sorry state of affairs that people of different castes could not eat together while sitting at the same floor. This fell traditions of untouchability had touched the level of ridiculous superstition. It played havoc with the sense of brotherhood and nationalism among the Hindus.

Guru Gobind Singh wanted to efface these distinctions and bring Shudras at par with the high castes. He wanted to inculcate in all a sense of equality in consonance with the natural law of the Lord Akal. He exerted to widen the narrow confines and bounds prevalent at the time so as to include the Shudras in the religious and social fold. He desired to make religion allembracing so that it facilitated the entry of people of other sects and religions. Without removing these crippling and deadening restrictions Shudras could not be brought in. The divisions ushered in by these restrictions had weakened the social structure and sapped the strength of the country and the nation. The numerous castes, sub-castes, sects and sub-sects had no love and sympathy for one another. This emboldened the Muslim invaders to vanquish them one by one. Instead of coming to the succour of their neighbours, they watched their downfall with undisguised glee. Now they had reached a state just short of their obliteration and of their Dharma.

Since the low castes could not be admitted to the high ones, it was not possible to get the work of

high castes done through the low castes. This was one of the greatest disadvantages of the caste system which was creating innumerable hurdles in the path of progress and national integration. The farsighted and sagacious Guru held it imperative to lift the low castes to the level of the high ones, so that the former could regain their sense of dignity and manhood and work for national reconstruction instead of just doing menial chores for the high castes. During the days of Brahmanic ascendancy and the Kashatri reign the plight of the Shudras was very miserable. They were treated at par with cattle and beasts of burden, though they were the original inhabitants of the country. There is no doubt that they were worse off than the ancient slaves that were bought and sold like animals and than even under Muslim oppression.

Manu, the ancient law-giver of the Hindus, had ordained that the Shudras were born to serve others. The Manu-code had made it a legal binding so that the high castes could press them into menial service but the food cooked by them was not to be touched. All such injunctions of Manu were not followed very strictly. But under the Brahmins' their observance and hold was tightened to an inhuman degree. When persons of the same caste were not allowed to eat with one another, it was impossible to imagine that any person of a high caste could be allowed to eat the food of the Shudras. Even a Brahmin could not eat of another Brahmin and the same rule

applied to the other high castes. Some of the black injunctions of Manu are given here :

During the days of distress and destitution, the members of a caste can engage in the work of lower caste, but under no circumstances is he to undertake the work of the higher caste. (Chapter X/99-100)

The Shudras is forbidden to study, the Vedas, the Shastras and the scriptures. (ChapterX/127-128)

It is reprehensible for a Brahmin to study the Vedas before a Shudra. (Chapter IV/99)

The Shudra should be fed the left overs of his master's food and clothed with his tattered and discarded dress. (ChapterX/25)

The Shudra is not allowed to amass wealth. (ChapterX/129)

If a Shudra abuses a man of higher caste, his tongue should be cut off. (ChapterVIII/270)

If a Shudra sits near a Brahmin on the same floor, the flesh of his bottoms should be sheared off. (ChapterVIII/281)

If a Shudra talks of religious matters to a Brahmin, molten lead or boiling oil should be poured in his mouth and ears. (Chapter VIII/272)

The atonement for the killing of a Shudra is the same as that for killing of a cat or a dog or a frog or a lizard or other animals.

It is not necessary to dwell on such ordinances. These few highlight succinctly the sad plight of the Shudras under the Brahmans and Hindu rule. They were severely forbidden to rebel against such unjust and inhuman injunctions. Such was the fate and status of the Shudras when Guru Gobind Singh embarked on his mission. They were treated like dogs and cattle. They could not rise higher up in the scale and do the work of Kashatris. If per chance a Shudra attained some worthwhile stature in the political arena, he could under no circumstances be admitted to a higher caste. No amount of wealth or personal status of political nature or courage or scholasticism could raise a Shudra to a higher caste. What is shocking and highly damnable is that all this was done in the name of religion and God, supported by the so-called gospels of God. It was necessary to cut asunder the shackles binding the hapless Hindus in the dark dungeons of superstition and to bring them out in the open, to exalt them to the dignified stature of human equality.

No nation can progress, for that matter no religion can prosper, if it is bound down by many restrictions. Naturalness is a must for independence and is an assest, without which no man, no people, no country can forge ahead. The Vedic Dharma had bestowed natural freedom to man. But its explanations, annotations, exegesis and instructions and laws as given in later scriptures had curtailed and extremely limited this freedom. The Hindu, to all outward ap-

pearances a free man, was hedged and hemmed in on all sides, hardly able to breathe freely. The result was that he was left with no national character, if ever he ever enjoyed the possession of any such thing, it was a matter of the hoary past. Now he was a prisoner of mental slavery which further enslaved his heart and soul. Despite all this the Hindu was highly averse to any change in his food, eating habits, dress habits, ways of worship, etc. Any change in any of the above ways of living was attended with the danger of losing his caste and being ostracised. It was necessary that the Hindus who had become slaves mentally and physically, should be jolted out of their miserable stupor. The sad plight of the Hindus in the political field was largely responsible for this predicament.

Political Condition of the Hindus

Hinduism is said to have been a great political force not only within India but its effect was felt beyond its confines. The Hindu conquests extended far and wide. But after the war of Mahabharata their political power suffered a gradual decline. In due course of time the country was parcelled up in small principalities. Numerous Rajas no higher than fief-holders came to rule over the length and breadth of India. They were always at logger-heads with one another, ready to destroy one another and highly gratified at the downfall of others. Only the descendants of Kaurvas and Pandavas were ruling over bigger chunks of land. After this great war which can justly be

called the war of annihilation of the Hindus, the solar and lunar dynasties ruled over their respective areas for a very long period.

The Buddhist kings wiped off the remnants of these great dynasties. They came to be remembered only in name. The kings of the *Agni* (Fire) Dynasty crushed the might of Buddhist kings and threw them out of India. The descendants of the Agni Dynasty who came to be called Rajputs were ruling over small kingdoms and were hostile to one another. None of them could ever acquire a great kingdom. Mutual animosity was at the back of all their actions and they could never conceive the grand idea of a nation and nationalism. If we peruse the pages of history we shall find that not a month passed, without there being a battle on the soil of India. The Rajput kings were always fighting with one another on one pretext or another. Though there had been great kings like Raja Bikramajit and Raja Bhoj, now it was a different story of mutual bickerings and strife. The Rajputs had displayed great feats of personal valour sung by the bards all over India. Such heroic actions were in great numbers and were spread over large areas and great periods of time.

The Hindus had failed to forge a common bond of national brotherhood. Not to speak of nationalism, they could not think of any common national interest. According to European historians the break-up of the Hindu political power in small principalities was a

great boon to the Hindus and saved them from immediate and total capitulation before the Muslims onslaught. The Muslims could not conquer the whole of India in one or two battles. At every step they had to face hostile and determined forces of the Rajput kings and other Hindu kings, who fought pitched battles for every inch of their country and capitulated only when they had no strength left. Were that these kings had united and fought together against the common enemy ! In my opinion which is at variance with the considered view of the European Historians, the Muslim invaders were tempted and eventually triumphed because they faced no united opposition. Had there been a strong central power of the Hindus, the Muslim invaders in all probability would have made a hasty and inglorious retreat. The predicament in which the Hindus found themselves now would never have come about. There was no dearth among the Rajputs and the Kashatris of fighting spirit of which they gave ample proof in individual and unorganised acts of resistance, still fondly remembered and sung. The sad story of Prithvi Raj and his cousin Jai Chand vividly proclaims how the mutual bickerings and internecine wars were responsible for the downfall of India and the Hindus and the establishment of Muslim rule lasting over hundreds of years. They were also responsible for the induction of Rajputs in the employment of the Muslim kings and of their women into the Harems of the Muslim kings and princes. They were also responsible for the slavery of Hindu India.

It is very difficult to assess the extent and enormity of Muslim atrocities and insufferable indignities inflicted on the Hindus during this long period. The Hindus had never the inclination and genius to write their history and the relentless spate of death and devastation, torture and tyranny never allowed them to gather their wits around them and to pen such things. They were too stunned to keep note of these unending tales of woe and misery of their people. It was left to Muslim historians to keep a track of such acts and record them. Most probably they were prompted in this by a desire to record the glorious times of the Muslim rule, to record the grand deeds of death and devastation of Kafirs as convincing proof of the stupendous Muslim might. Had they not taken pride in penning these gory details with unabashed glee, such records would have been lost for ever.

The writing on the wall was there for all Hindus spelled very clearly. They were in a state of utter destitution and despondency, of abject humiliation and helplessness. They bore untold sufferings and hardships without a murmur, without raising a voice of revolt, without coming to the aid of one another, without ever dreaming of standing unitedly or at least thinking of a common cause in the vaguest of terms. Those communities well versed in the wielding of swords and the art of warfare had long since left the sinking boat of Hindu Dharma and gone over to the Muslim fold. They were lost for ever to the Hindu

world. The Rajputs and the Kashatris had lost their valour which was confined to old stories alone.

The Muslims had been ruling over the length and breadth of India for many centuries. The foundations of their dominance had struck deep roots. Guru Gobind Singh with his sagacity and farsightedness thought of loosening the stranglehold of Muslim power by first weakening it. During this long period of slavery under the Muslims no Hindu had ever thought on these lines. It was left to Guru Gobind Singh to transform an enfeebled, humiliated, disunited and downtrodden people like the Hindus of his day, into a living nation fired with the ideals of nationalism and brotherhood. It has been said earlier that no person had ever thought of doing so in the last four thousand years of Hindu history. The Guru wanted to build such a nation over which the Brahmins could make no dent with all their machinations. For the completion of his mission, changes of two kinds were needed, one in the religious and the other in the social sphere.

The material at his disposal was disheartening and well-nigh spent up. The Hindu power was in tatters, the Hindu Dharma on the way out and the people lying supine under the Muslim heel. The Hindus were sitting frightened in their homes like mice in their holes. Their faces were downcast, their hearts despondent, their shoulders beaten, their minds bedeviled, their limbs enfeebled, their bodies emaciated. The Hindus could suffer their daughters and their women-

folk being taken away before their very eyes and sold as slaves in the foreign markets for a petty consideration of two dinars. A lesser man, almost any man, would have given up before embarking on such a mission as that of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh took up the challenge and created such a virile, upright and one-God-loving people like the Sikhs who struck terror in the hearts of their enemies, who were ever ready to lay down their lives for their country, people and Dharma, who always came to the succour of the needy, the tyrannised and the down-trodden. He changed cowards into men of great courage, uncowed by the Muslim might. He surveyed the country and selected the people and the area where he was to put into practice his grandiose schemes. The selection of the area was determined by the kind of men inhabiting therein.

From Where and for Whom the Guru Started His Mission

He found the foot-hills of Northern Himalayas most suitable for his purpose. It was unimaginable that the caste-proud Rajputs even in their distressed condition would follow him. The Hindus of Western Punjab had lost their valour. The Kashatris of Central Punjab were physically and spiritually debilitated, and were not suitable for the task the Guru had in his mind. The people of Bengal, Madras and Maharashtra had tired of fighting the Muslims and the difference in their languages was too great to be surmounted. The youth

of these provinces had not been prepared for such a task. There was very little chance of success through their efforts. The North-Eastern belt of Punjab had to some extent been influenced by the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Some Hindus of this area had rendered deeds of self-sacrifice, which had deeply impressed the people of the surrounding areas.

Guru Gobind Singh was looking for such people who were healthy, brave and amenable to religious instruction. The foot-hills of Northern Himalayas provided such men. The people of their area were familiar with the teachings of Guru Nanak, were healthy and stout and were able to bear hardships. They were always ready to fly off at the slightest provocation without ifs and buts. Guru Gobind Singh knew that an unkindled lamp when lighted can very easily light other lamps of whatsoever kind. The problem lay in lighting the first lamp. The Hindus were like a lamp without oil. The Guru wanted to furbish this oil-less lamp lying in this area in order to enlighten the entire world. Special oil and equipment were needed for this. The Guru poured the warm blood of his dear ones as oil and placed the wick of nationalism in the lamp. He lighted it with the fire of the fighting spirit in such a way that the dead nation came alive. The Great Guru never attributed this grand act to his personal efforts. He always gave the credit to Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

Having selected the area Guru Gobind Singh

set to work. First of all he attained proficiency in many fields. He passed his time in studying History, listening to recitations of heroic poems, learnt the art of hunting and the use of weapons. His youthful demeanour acquired the temper of steel. The Sikhs who came for seeing their Guru, started imbibing thoughts of virility and action. The Guru while hunting took with him Sikhs who were living by. This made them hardy and hard-working, discarding their ease-loving ways. They started taking interest in the execution of difficult tasks and learning the lesson of brotherhood and nationalism. From mere theorising on religion they turned to its practice. Gradually the Sikhs became aware of the martial nature of their Guru. Instead of giving the usual offerings of clothes, ornaments, vessels, carpets and other necessities of life, the Sikhs had switched over to weapons and horses. The Guru used to express his pleasure over such offerings which encouraged his Sikhs. The result was two-fold, the acquisition of weapons by the Guru and martial spirit by his Sikhs.

In keeping with the change, the Guru assumed a lordly demeanour laying aside his ascetical robe. He now always kept a sword at his waist whether sitting on his cushioned seat or outside and held court every morn and evening and often organised contests of skill in martial arts and handling of weapons. Stirring poems, full of patriotic fervour and heroism were sung and recited, alongwith devotional hymns. Guru

Gobind Singh himself penned *Kavits* and other poems in different metres that aroused courage and quickened the blood of the listeners. He had detailed fifty-two poets that adorned his court, for writing stirring verses on the exploits of daring in the face of heavy odds, accomplished by Indian heroes and warriors of yore. He kept bards at his court who always sung songs, full of heroic lore and national grandeur. In his anthology called the 'Granth of the Tenth Guru' some portion is devoted to the wars of goddess Durga against the demonic hordes. It is penned in such metres, couched in such virile words and forceful metaphors, and is full of such heroic overtones as vibrate and delivered in such a style that the listeners are overcome with the warmth of martial emotions even in winter. Since this portion on the exploits of the goddess is included in the granth, some people have erroneously concluded that the Guru was a devotee of the goddess.

Let me declare here unequivocally that the Guru worshipped the Formless Lord Akal only. He was dead set against the worship of gods, and goddesses and always preached in no uncertain words against it. His only purpose was to arouse the dormant fighting spirit of the people, the selection of the protagonists was a secondary matter. As it was, the people of the area were conversant with the mythical exploits of the goddess. Instead of inventing a new hero and inventing his exploits, it was better and more expedient, to

make use of the available material. The Guru had divined correctly, his writings were highly successful in arousing the spirit of the people, filling them with martial thoughts. All this prepared his followers for the coming battles.

Basic Tenets of the Guru

The Guru wanted to establish two basic principles that of universal brotherhood and the spirit of sacrificing oneself for others without demur. The feeling of brotherhood can only dawn after the annihilation of all (man-made) artificial barriers between man and man. The baneful caste-system introduced by Manu and followed with a vengeance by the Brahmins had to be nullified. During thousands of years, the differences, divisions and distinctions created by this system had entered into the Hindu psyche. The living apart of thousands of years without any social intercourse with one another had congealed into infrangible moulds. The cancerous poison of the caste system had entered into vitals of the human system. How was the Guru to smash all these barriers, instil a feeling of equality in the down-trodden of centuries, bring to the level of common clay those who claimed divine origin and had claimed and enjoyed divine rights for thousands of years. He achieved with a single master stroke what seemed impossible. He established the new institution of the Khalsa. A man's caste and distinctions of high and low were cast off on joining its membership. Here all were equal, knit in

the bond of universal brotherhood.

The different gods, gurus, sects, traditions, rites and rituals were responsible for the creations of all kinds of differences and differentiations among the people. The worship of the Formless One created conditions that were favourable for the erasing of these distinctions from the minds of the people. Now they started thinking in terms of unity and nationalism to the extent of putting the country and the nation above the self.

Before the Creation of the Khalsa

Some incidents that took place before the institution of the Khalsa deserve to be dwelt upon. During the early days of the Guru's seclusion, Raja Rattan Rai of Assam, a devotee of Sikh Gurus, came to visit him. Among other presents offered to the Guru, there was an elephant called Prasadi. In these days the Guru was engrossed in hunting, which attracted a good number of brave Sikhs around him. Guru Gobind Singh used to go hunting in great style, riding his elephant accompanied by his warrior Sikhs. In those days it was customary for high officials of noble birth to keep their kettle-drums in their homes. They used to carry these along on hunting. The Guru on seeing the ever increasing gathering around him decided to keep such a drum at his court. Some worldly-wise persons advised the Guru against it without success. Then they prevailed upon his mother to restrain

him from doing so, by reminding him of the tribulations his grandfather had to suffer. She advised him that the Guru should work for peace and engage in worship of Akal – the true duties of a Guru; he should not take to soldierly ways and assume a regal bearing.

The Guru replied that he was the grandson of the illustrious Guru Hargobind Sahib, unawed by anybody, that she wanted him to remain in obscurity while his Lord Akal commanded his coming out in the open and that if any king looked askance at him, that king would have to measure swords with him. A heart, determined and dauntless, full of national fervour couldn't be expected to give a different reply – expedient and opportune. The kettle-drum was duly installed and taken out on hunting excursions. The Guru's hunting excursions, his martial bent of mind and his accumulation of weapons were causing concern to the local hill chieftains. The Guru often used to enter their territories in the course of his hunting trips, which was not to their liking. The beating of the drum added further to their unease. They started looking for pretences to pick up a quarrel with him.

Raja Bhim Chand of Kehloor was the first to provide such an occasion. He asked Guru Gobind Singh to give him Prasadi, the elephant. The Guru refused, against the advice of his mother and other well-meaning people, who wanted him to make peace with this offering. The Raja took umbrage and prodded by Kirpal, another hill chieftain, sent a mes-

sage to the Guru to move out of his principality. The Guru wanted to measure swords with Bhim Chand. But with the timely intervention of the Raja of Nahan, hostilities were averted. Some historians have penned that a battle ensued between Bhim Chand and the Guru, with victory to the latter. Guru Gobind Singh founded a village called Paonta in the territory of Nahan in the Kartik month of the Samat Era 1741 (1684 A.D.) and built a fort there. Some Afghan Sardars, namely Kaley Khan, Hayat Khan, Bhikhen Khan, under the ire of Aurangzeb, were seeking the shelter of a Raja or Nawab. But no Raja or Nawab was bold enough to provide it. The Guru took them under his wing on the recommendation of Sayyad Buddhu Shah. A bold step, not unexpected of a man like the Guru, but inexpedient as later events proved.

During this period Raja Bhim Chand took a marriage party to Sri Nagar to marry his son to the daughter of Raja Fateh Shah. The Guru sent his Dewan Nand Chand with presents for the occasion. In order to please Bhim Chand, Fateh Shah refused to accept them. Dewan Nand Chand came back feeling small and insulted. This further strained relations between the Guru and the two Rajas. Raja Bhim Chand won over Raja Kirpal Chand Katochia, Raja Kesri Chand Jassowalia, Raja Sukhdial Jasrotia, Raja Hari Chand Hindooria, Raja Pirthi Chand Dudwalia and Raja Fateh Shah of Sri Nagar to his side against the Guru. Emboldened by this alliance they started

causing petty annoyances to the Guru.

Then they joined their forces together and attacked the Guru in the Baisakh of Samat 1742 (1685 A.D.). Guru Gobind Singh, who was nineteen then, led his small and inexperienced force against the invaders. Five hundred Udasi Sadhus who had fattened themselves at the Guru's *Langar*, decamped at the very outset. The Afghan Sardars, whom the Guru had provided shelter, left the Guru in the midst of the engagement and crossed over to the enemy, in pursuance of a conspiracy already hatched with the Rajas. Sayyed Buddhu Shah feeling hurt by this treacherous act came to the succour of the Guru. A pitched battle was fought for three days between the banks of Yamuna and Giri stream. The Guru was himself leading his army of irregulars who were far from well equipped. His force consisted of fakirs and mendicants unfamiliar with warfare, of ordinary men, tillers of land, petty traders and shopkeepers who had never even seen a skirmish from a distance.

The list of famous fighters on the Guru's side mentioned in the *Janam Sakhis* contains the name of Lal Chand, a sweet-meat seller. This gives some idea of the composition of the Sikh army. Dewan Nand Chand and Kirpal Chand, the maternal uncle of the Guru, figure in the list. The Udassis, the eaters of dainties prepared by the Halwai Lal Chand, decamped from the field leaving their cook to fend for himself and face the heavy odds. What a fight it was !

The down-trodden and the dregs of society gave such a dressing to the enemy that it slunk from the field, convincingly defeated, in disarray and disheartened. Raja Hari Chand was killed at the hands of the Guru, Raja Kesari Chand and Sukhdev were wounded. The Guru dazzled the enemy with the daring display of his swordwielding and marshalling of his men in a masterly manner. The Guru and his men emerged victorious.

The Guru learnt a lesson from the defection of the Afghans and the decamping of the Udassi Sadhus. This made him ponder deeply over the whole matter. He needed his own men, virile and dedicated fighters, united in a holy bond of brotherhood cutting across all barriers of caste and creed. The Guru was well aware of the timidity and disunity of the Hindus, lack of a common cause, of nationalism and of fellow-feeling among them. He felt the need of giving back to them their lost courage and restoring the human dignity of man. He wanted to instil in them strong feelings of brotherhood and nationalism.

Sounding their war-drum, the victorious army of the Guru entered Paonta. One son of Buddha Shah had died fighting valiantly in the battle-field. The Guru honoured Buddha Shah by bestowing a head-dress on him by way of a robe of honour. He also gave Buddha Shah half of his personal turban, as a token of brotherly love, and a credential in appreciation of his help. The descendants of Buddha Shah are respected by the Sikhs, in consequence. A month after this

victory the Guru marched to Anandpur, his previous abode. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur had bought this piece of land. Guru Gobind constructed here some small forts such as Kesgarh, Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Holgarh and Fatehgarh designed to afford protection against future attacks.

Guru's Support to the Hill-Rajas

Soon afterwards, these hill Rajas were attacked by a force of the Subedar of Sirhind, under Alif Khan, for not paying tribute to the Emperor of Delhi. The Rajas decided to fight instead of paying up. In dire straits, Raja Bhim Chand supplicated the Guru for help. The Guru forgave the Rajas their previous misdeeds and decided to help them, keeping in view the thought of national unity, and utterly disregarding his personal grievances against them. He did not want to crush the Hindus by siding with the Muslim rulers, nor to remain aloof and be a silent spectator to their humiliating rout. He made peace with them and sent a force of five hundred foot-soldiers and horsemen under Dewan Mohri Chand and Daya Ram. The Imperial Army was defeated and thereafter peace prevailed for three years when Guru Gobind Singh had no occasion to draw his sword against any one. He devoted this time to the crystallisation of his thoughts and schemes and giving them a practical shape. He also kept on providing spiritual food to his Sikhs by his sermons and by engaging them in devotion of Akal. He did not, however, ignore to keep their martial

spirits alive.

In the Bhadon of Samat 1745 (1688 A.D.), the Satrap of Lahore, sent a force under Rustam Khan. The hilly streams were in spate owing to the rainy season. The area was lashed by tempests and heavy rains. This forced the army to turn back without engaging in a single skirmish. The stream that had compelled the army to turn back was named the 'Helper Brook' by the Sikhs. After some time, Rustam Khan reinforced by some more men and weapons attacked the Rajas again but was defeated. It is said that the Guru had sent three hundred men under Bhai Nagina Singh to help the Rajas. At last Aurangzeb had to send his son Muazzam Khan to bring the Rajas under heel. Muazzam personally went to Lahore and despatched a big army under Mirza Beg, a nobleman. Mirza Beg defeated the Rajas, devastated their territory, depopulated their habitations and humiliated their subjects in many ways. The Guru had remained at his hilly retreat, but the Muslims plundered the village of Anandpur also, as described by him in his biographical piece *Vachitar Natak*.

The 'Story' of Naina Devi

During his hilly sojourn Guru Gobind Singh was busy planning for the future and gathering the necessary wherewithal for the execution of his plans. Either under the influence of Pandits or of his own, the Guru decided to hold a Yajna and light the sacrificial

fire at a special place. He prevailed upon the Pandits to perform the Yajna to call up the Devi to give her blessings for the destruction of the enemies. All things needed for the Yajna were stored at Malkar (Naina Devi) Hill. Some well-known Pandits of Benaras were sent for. Kalidas and Keshodas were two of the famous Pandits often mentioned in the chronicles. Pandit Bishambar Dass was also deputed for the Yajna. The sacrificial fire was lit for many days but no Devi appeared. Their earlier claims belied, the Brahmins now claimed that unless some holy man (*Mahatama*) was sacrificed in offering to the Devi, she would not make an appearance.

With a smile Guru Gobind Singh informed the Pandits that there couldn't be a holier man than they; so one of them should be offered to the Devi. It is said that all the Pandits either on the pretext of urination or bathing, disappeared from the scene, leaving the Yajna incomplete. When none of them turned up, the Guru caused the remaining stuff of the Yajna to be thrown into the sacrificial fire. A giant flame rose up on the hill that could be easily seen for miles around, which made the people believe that the Devi had made an appearance.

The authenticity of this episode is questionable. It appears that some overzealous followers of the Guru, banking upon the credulity of the ignorant, had concocted such an improbable story. They were misled by the prominence their Guru had given

to the Devi in his writings. She was the heroine of two epic poems, where her exploits had been graphically eulogised. It seems farfetched that the Guru should resort to such a drama to impress upon the people that he had the Devi to help him in his battles.

Guru Gobind Singh has said in unequivocal terms that he never believed that such beings had any godly powers. How could he then make offerings to them ? He had condemned in the strongest possible terms the worship of these creations of Akal.

Foundation of the Khalsa

The ensuing events show that the Guru wanted to create a new breed of men, steeped in nationalism and brotherly love, with a penchant for fighting, imbued with devotion to Akal, and ready to sacrifice their lives for their ideals. The Gurus were peace-loving preachers of love and devotion to the Formless One, often keeping aloof. The cruelty, plunder and heartlessness of the Muslims and the piteous plight of the Hindus, the denigration of their women and their Dharma prompted the Tenth Guru to come out of his seclusion and feel the pulse of the people. The antagonism of the Hill Rajas and the wars forced on him by them made him assume the mantle of a kingly saviour as well. He needed a band of devoted Sikhs, courageous, well versed in warfare, and eager to succour the oppressed as a religious duty. Such people were difficult to find in the Hindu society of his time.

He decided to institute a new order of universal brotherhood, imbued with devotion to Akal, filled with the ideal of self-sacrifice for the welfare of others. Such an order would demolish the existing barriers of caste and creed, high and low, man and woman, and pave the way for the advent of nationalism and bring unity. It would also help in bringing about the downfall of the tyrannical foreign rule. It was not the intention of the Guru to launch a crusade against the Muslims.

Accordingly, on the Baisakhi of Samat 1756 (1699 A.D.) the Guru gathered his Sikhs in great numbers at an open place at Anandpur. The Sikhs had come from far and wide at the invitation of the Guru. A huge tent and an enclosure had been set up in the field. When all the Sikhs had assembled, the Guru appeared with a naked sword in his hand and declared that as willed by Akal Purkh he was going to offer the head of a Sikh as the first sacrifice for the defence of Dharma. The blood of this Sikh shall serve as a living symbol of the defence of the country and Dharma, for the coming generations of Sikhs and inspire them to shed their blood for these ideals. The Guru called for a Sikh willing to offer his head to his Guru, to be sacrificed for the defence of Dharma and the country, to step forth and appear before his Guru. The blood of this Sikh shall revive the dead nation. On hearing the words of his Guru, Daya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore came before his Guru with folded hands and sedate dignity and offered his head to be cut off at once for

this noble cause.

The Guru took him inside the tent holding him by the hand. The sound of a powerful stroke of the sword was heard from within and blood started flowing out of the tent. The people outside felt sure that the head of Daya Ram had been severed from his body. Guru Gobind came out brandishing a blood-stained sword and demanded the offering of another head. Dharam Chand, a Jat of Hastinapur offered himself. The Guru took him within and the above act was repeated. Guru Gobind Singh emerged with his blood-stained sword. He asked for a head three times more and Himmat Rai, a Potter, Mohkam Chand, a Tailor and Sahib Chand, a Barber, offered their heads. They were taken in one by one by the Guru who each time acted in the manner mentioned above. It is difficult to find their peers in the annals of history. At the mere bidding of their Guru they offered their life and body to him. Such an event had never taken place in any country of the world at any time before.

It was with a two-fold purpose that the Guru acted in the strange manner depicted above. Firstly he wanted to find out whether the Sikhs had in them the stuff to sacrifice their all for the love of their Dharma and land, how far his efforts and exhortations over a long period had succeeded in producing the desired effect and whether the Sikhs had reached such a state that they could gaily sacrifice their lives for others. His Sikhs had risen to the occasion and creditably passed

the severe test. He had asked for the heads of five Sikhs and five Sikhs, lovingly called the Five beloveds, had unflinchingly placed their necks under the sword of their Guru. This assured him that all Sikhs would willingly obey him through thick and thin and that his preparatory work had not gone waste. Guru Gobind Singh must have been immensely pleased with the result of his test.

Secondly, he wanted to bring it home to his Sikhs that only people like the Five Beloveds could successfully undertake difficult tasks for their Dharma and country, and that they all should be ready to make such sacrifices. What Five Beloveds had done, they all could. He had sown the thought of self-sacrifice in the minds of his Sikhs. Now he turned to its germination and blossoming into action. He took the 'Five Beloveds' out of the tent and held his court in the fort of Kesgarh. He armed the five and dressed them in a special uniform. He armed and dressed himself likewise and asked for water from the river flowing below. This water was poured in a receptacle of steel, some sweets (*patashas*) were added to it. Guru Gobind Singh himself recited the Five Banis and stirred the contents all the while with his *Khanda*. He called the preparation, Amrit (The Eternal-life-giving Nectar). And this was administered to the Five in the following manner. Five times he took out five handfuls of Amrit and made the five partake of them, while the six of them (including the Guru) shouted "Wahe-Guru Ji Ka

Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh". This ceremony was termed 'Pahul' and the brotherhood was called the Khalsa and their Dharma called the Khalsa Dharma. All members of the Khalsa were instructed to add 'Singh' after their names.

Basic Tenets of the Khalsa

The following basic tenets of the Khalsa were set up :

- (1) Whosoever adopts the Khalsa Dharma shall partake of Amrit in the same manner as administered by the Guru.
- (2) Whosoever takes 'Pahul' shall be bound to add 'Singh' to his name.
- (3) Wheresoever five Sikhs assemble, Khalsa Dharma shall perfectly exist there and for the purpose of the 'Pahul' these five shall act as the Guru. They can be any five Sikhs without any distinctions. Accordingly, the Guru himself was administered 'Pahul' by the 'Five Beloveds' and his name changed to Gobind Singh from Gobind Rai.
- (4) Whosoever joins the Khalsa Dharma, shall be called a 'Singh'. He shall keep hair on his head, keep a weapon of steel like Kirpan on his person, wear a short (Kachha) and an iron Bangle (Kara) and keep a comb (Kangha) in his hair. From the very time of the establish-

ment of the Khalsa, the keeping of these five essentials called the Five *Kakkas*, became a must for every Singh.

- (5) All Sikhs shall be equal brethern in the Khalsa without any distinction of high or low. Their previous castes and creeds and surnames stand nullified. All the Sikhs shall eat together from the same vessel.
- (6) All Sikhs shall stand freed of all previous distinctions of birth, caste, creed and doings. They shall start life anew in the Khalsa Dharma.
- (7) It is imperative for all Singhs to attribute all spiritual and temporal powers to steel. It shall be their bounden duty to keep weapons of steel, and gain proficiency in their use in a battle.
- (8) The Singh who dies in battle or takes part in a crusade (*Dharam Yudh*) and destroys his enemy, who is never disheartened though vanquished shall attain a high stature.
- (9) The Singh shall not wear a Janju.
- (10) Liberation can be attained only through Khalsa Dharma.
- (11) The Singhs should discard all rites and rituals of the Hindus, but should respect the latter's Temples and religious feelings and defend

their Dharma and country when endangered.

- (12) It is the duty of the Singhs to destroy the enemies of the people.
- (13) The Singhs shall worship the Lord through truthful actions and pray to the One Formless Akal only and not to any of his creations.
- (14) They shall bow before the Guru Granth Sahib only and not before any man, tomb or grave.
- (15) The Singhs shall hold Guru Nanak Dev as their spiritual guide and Supreme Lord, venerate all his successors and obey their injunctions.
- (16) They shall occasionally take a bath in the holy *Sarovar* at Amritsar, the main *Tiratha* of Sikhs.
- (17) They shall accost each other with “Wahe-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh” and discard all other forms of greetings.
- (18) They shall not use tobacco.
- (19) They should hold Khalsa as the repository of His Divine Power.

Guru Gobind Singh forbade the entry of the following kinds of people into the Khalsa Brotherhood:

- (1) *The Massands*, who managed the affairs of the Gurdwaras in those days. They had degenerated into a class of timid, worthless and indolent Pujaris.

- (2) The followers and devotees of Dhir Mal called 'Dhir Malleeay', who contented with Guru Tegh Bahadur for Guruship and violently opposed him and went to the extent of firing at him.
- (3) 'Ram Raeeay', the followers of Ram Rai, a collateral of Guru Gobind Singh who contested the Guruship and created all kinds of trouble for the Guru.
- (4) The killers of new-born daughters. Since such people as had become habitual killers of their daughters were likely to continue the evil practice even after joining the Khalsa, they were excluded from the ranks of the Khalsa. The Sikhs were asked not to deal and intermarry with such people.

By laying the foundation of the Khalsa, Guru Gobind Singh delivered his message of love and initiated the completion of his mission. He inscribed in glowing letters the story of the Khalsa and its rules on the pages of Time. Only his signature remained to be appended to it. In due course he signed with his love and this Document of Universal Love and Brotherhood was attested and witnessed by the sacrifice of his four sons. Now the document was completed in all aspects for the coming generations of the world to peruse and cherish.

The ceremony of initiation into the Khalsa

Dharma was completed. As a protest of disapproval, many high castes, Kashatris and Brahmins, who were present in the gathering, walked out. And upholding the customary ways of the high castes, they created a furore, taking the event as an unwarranted interference in their Dharma, based mainly on caste system and hollow rites and rituals. The Guru addressing his Sikhs declared that he had obeyed the mandate of Lord Akal, which enshrines the uplifting of the lowly and the down-trodden. Disregarding the out-bursts of the high castes he prophesied "Those whom the high castes spurn now shall be my heirs after my death and become the equals of the highest".

The Guru's Way of Life

I pen here whatever I have gleaned about the Guru's personality and life history. He was sturdy and of a somewhat hefty build. He was tall and looked powerful by appearance and body-structure, he interested himself in tasks involving effort and hard labour. He loved the hunting field more than the sermonising seat of Guruship and spent a greater part of his time in hunting. He always endeavoured to interest and involve his Sikhs in hunting. He hunted the wild boar, the lion and other wild beasts.

He always practised the wielding of weapons, in which he was highly skilled, and encouraged his Sikhs to take to arms. He made his Sikhs practise their use under his personal supervision. The acquisition of skill in the use of weapons formed an essential part of

the education of his sons. He used to feel great pleasure in receiving the gifts of weapons and horses from his Sikhs and such offerings endeared the Sikhs to him. He was fond of keeping good horses and his stable contained some thorough-breds. He was a skilled rider par excellence. After much practice he had gained mastery in the use of the bow and the sword. While hunting, he used the scimitar, the small dagger, the two-edged sword and the spear with great dexterity.

He used to hold court like nobles and dressed himself in very fine apparel like a king. He had a regal bearing and carried a sword at his waist. He was an excellent poet and composed verses in almost all the metres that were prevalent at that time. His verses were a very forceful medium to inspire and enthuse his listeners. His epics on the wars between Durga and the demons were very stimulating and filled the listeners with courage and martial fervour. He had gathered around him a group of fifty two eminent poets of his time, who wrote and recited their verses and received due appreciation both in words and in terms of money.

In addition to his penchant for penning and perusing poetry, he was fond of hearing the old classics. He was very well acquainted with Persian and Arabic and had attained a high degree of proficiency in Sanskrit. He loved to hear readings from books on history, especially the chapters dealing with wars, and he spent a lot of time in this pursuit. Recitals from

Vedas, Up-Vadas, Upnishidas, Puranas and Simritis interested him and he listened to them with loving attention. He kept poets and pundits (learned scholars) around him. He sent many of his Sikhs to Kashi to get education.

He was not such a great lover of classical music as Guru Nanak Dev Ji, but he daily listened to the singing of *Shabads*. He was very fond of Martial music and listened with rapt attention to the musical renditions of war epics by the bards at his court. He was very steadfast in the performance of his daily duties. He used to rise early in the morning and recite Japuji, Jaap Sahib and Sawayye. In the evening he dutifully recited Rehrass and Kirtan Sohila. He used to spend some time daily in the praise of Akal. The Guru was never to be seen taking part in dancing and other festivities during Holi. He had no inclination towards frivolous modes of merry-making and luxurious living. Self control and simplicity were the key notes of his character.

Those Who Embraced the Khalsa

The directions of Guru Gobind Singh and the system of the Khalsa Dharma had become very popular among Jats and other Hindu communities. Its simple and clear rules and advocacy of an open and free way of living was so effective that thousands of people joined its fold. The Jats who were considered no higher than the Shudras by the high-caste Hindus rushed towards this fount of brotherhood like a thirsty man dashing towards a fountain of water. The Guru

had earnestly embarked on this mission impelled by Truth and strong feelings of love for the oppressed Hindus. The people at large appreciated his mission and devoted efforts, and they responded enthusiastically to his call. The number of his Sikhs grew daily. There is no doubt that the Khalsa Dharma had a strong appeal for those low-caste people who were considered worthless, low beings, no better than chattels meant for menial chores and who were never assigned any worthwhile job.

The Khalsa of Guru Gobind Singh was a group of people who were determined and daring, truthful and trustworthy, and dedicated and devoted to their Guru and Dharma. They proved their mettle and credentials time and again. The high castes had kept themselves aloof and hence the qualities mentioned above could not be attributed to their inclusion. In fact, these people had over a long period of bondage and subjection to persistent tyranny lost whatever good qualities they ever had. The Kashatris, once known for their fighting prowess, valour and self-respect, were offering their daughters, willingly and with some sort of pride, to the Muslims. The Brahmins were ready to sacrifice their country in order to save their dhoti from disrespect and were not perturbed over the sale of their women in the bazars of Ghazni for petty sums of two dinars. These communities could not be said to contribute to the wonderful qualities of Khalsa.

The Khalsa were a people ready to sacrifice

their all for the welfare of others and for their country and Dharma. They held life cheap before the ideals of love and universal brotherhood. They would not hesitate to raise a big pile of their bones and flesh to serve as a high pedestal for their nation and country. They wanted to cleanse with their blood the indignities of the last seven hundred years, animate the corpse of nationalism with the warmth of their spouting gore. Since the Khalsa comprised mainly of people drawn from the low castes and Shudras, the Hill Rajas, proud of their prowess and position, jeered at the Guru. Scornfully they asked him if he proposed to defend the country with the help of these sparrows and pit his jackals against the formidable tigers. The Guru replied, "Unless I raise one to stand against many, cause sparrow spurn the hawk and inspire jackals to kill lions, I shall not deserve to be called Guru Gobind Singh."

There is difference of opinion about the occasion when the Guru uttered these words. But there is no doubt that he did utter them and proved them true by time and again making his handful of Sikhs fight against vast multitudes of adversaries on the battle-field. His followers were made of sterner stuff, forged in a steely mould of courage. We have already seen an example of their mettle provided by the 'Five Beloveds' at the time of the formation of the Khalsa. Later events gave ample proof of the fearlessness, the courage and the martial qualities of the Khalsa. Two incidents taken at random will suffice. They occurred

in the presence of the Guru.

Once Guru Gobind Singh was sitting in his court. One of his Sikhs presented a gun to him. The Guru declared all of a sudden that he wanted to test his aim and desired some Sikh to offer himself as a target. Many Sikhs got up and pleaded forcefully for the acceptance of their respective offers.

Directing his glance and pointing to a Sikh, the Guru smilingly ordered him to be taken away and hanged immediately. Neither did he give any reason for this strange decision nor did he hint at offence committed by the Sikh, but only vouchsafed that his Guru needed his head. Without any hesitation that Sikh offered his head. The Guru was highly pleased and declared that only such obedient, true and steadfast Sikhs can save the Hindu nation.

Opposition of the Guru by the High-Caste Hindus

The Kashatri Kings and the Brahmins reacted to the Guru and the Khalsa Dharma in their typical manner. They came out openly against Guru Gobind Singh and his noble mission. The Brahmins could not tolerate the breaking up of the caste system and the discarding of the tradition of Janju-wearing. They created a furore over this. The Rajas of the surrounding hill tracts were set against the Guru by the Brahmins who declared that the Guru had denigrated Hindu Dharma. These Rajas were already jealous of his growing power and saw a challenge to their own

supremacy in his crusade against caste distinctions. The Brahmins incited them to hound the Guru persistently without giving him a breather so as to break his spirit and disperse his bedraggled crowd of an army. Guru Gobind Singh invited the Hill Rajas to join the Khalsa Dharma. The Rajas belonging to the high caste could hardly be expected to respond favourably. They rejected the offer disdainfully and reacted despicably and deceitfully at later times.

O, Hindus ! there can be no more ungrateful people than you. No other nation can boast of ingratitude of a deeper hue than you. No other nation has in her the fell spirit of disregarding her patriots. Who can be more savage and hell-bent on torturing the true lovers of her land ?

The Guru — The great Gobind Singh — was preparing to sacrifice his all for thee, was busy wholeheartedly to lift thee out of thy degraded state to a higher level of self-respect and decency and yet thy people stand against him out of jealousy and selfishness ! This is all due to the ungratefulness, hatred and jealousy that is suffused in thy veins. It is because of this perverse stuff in you that you have been condemned to slavery.

In short, the Rajputs who claimed to be great fighters and stupid Hill Rajas turned against the Guru. The latter, commenced making preparations against him with a view to harassing him. But the heart of

Guru Gobind Singh was dauntless and nothing could trouble him. The Hill Rajas fired the first shot against him in a cowardly and unsoldierly way. They asked him to leave their territory, get out of Anandpur and pay for the damage and destruction caused by his people. This compensation should be made in hard cash. In the case of non-compliance with these conditions, the combined army of the Hill Rajas will march against him. The Guru's father Guru Tegh Bahadur had bought the land and had set up a village there. The Guru, a fighter by instinct and a crusader for freeing the country from foreign dominance, could not be expected to submit to such terms. He sent back the reply that he would pay the claimed damages with his sword and re-purchase his stay at Anandpur with bullets. The Rajput Kings did not like the tone and tenor of this reply. Their blood rose in vengeance and they drew their swords. They attacked Anandpur a number of times. I give below a brief account of these attacks :

The Guru had delivered a telling blow to the false faith and useless religious wrangles of the Brahmins and the Mullahs by establishing Khalsa Dharma in the teeth of the silly and indiscreet storm of Hinduism and the fanatical flood of the Muslims. He was yet to defeat the Imperial forces of the Muslim Emperor of Delhi, for which he was making plans. Some have opined that these plans of the Guru bordered on madness and were impracticable. It was

rashness verging nothing short of madness for a destitute person to aspire to clash with a mighty power. This opinion itself sounds meaningless when we consider how single individuals like Nadir Shah, Babur had carved vast empires in Asia. They gathered men around them and then some more men and thus gathering power they marched to their destiny. What is needed is courage, an indomitable heart and the help of self-sacrificing, devoted followers. The Guru would have succeeded in his mission but for three factors. He could not in his time destroy the Muslim Empire. But he left it tottering and had created a virile people and a strong wave of nationalism to complete the task still left undone.

The greatest factor that could not let him succeed was that he was not a deceitful person like Shivaji. He considered it below his dignity as a preceptor to resort to ruse and duplicity and wanted to succeed through physical skill and prowess only. Diplomacy and deceit are the heart and soul of warfare, but the Guru abhorred them.

Secondly, the Guru did not create openings for getting close to the Hill Rajas. On the other hand, the two parties drifted apart to the extent of open hostility for one another. The very house was divided against itself. Instead of putting up united resistance against the common enemy, they fought against one another. This war was forced on the Guru ere he had gained sufficient strength for the trial of arms with Delhi.

Since the Hill Rajas had used the pretext of defending their religious traditions to justify their unwarranted attacks on him, he as a Guru and dauntless person had to take up the gauntlet. Thus the two parties were engaged in a mutually destructive conflict.

The third and the last factor was the lack of proper training of his men in the art of war. They were all men of indomitable courage and had the capacity and the will to fight till the last. But the lack of proper training and weapons was a very big handicap for them while facing numerically far superior and better equipped armies. If only they had more time for practising warfare !

The First Attack : Guru Gobind Singh was hunting in the foothills with his followers. The first attack on him was launched by Raja Alam Chand and Raja Ballia. The Guru and his men were poorly equipped, and the two Rajas wanted to exploit his this disadvantage. The Guru with his small band of men faced them boldly and engaged them in a fierce battle. A pitched skirmish took place, for a short time. Raja Ballia was killed in the encounter and the Guru and his men won the day in the first battle.

The Second Attack : Angered at their ignominious defeat, the Hill Rajas sought the help of the Subedar of Sirhind, who despatched a force. Thus reinforced the Rajas again attacked Anandpur. The battle raged for thirty days. Pierced by an arrow in the ear Paindey Khan fell dead. Dina Beg ran away from

the field. The victorious Sikhs pursued the retreating enemy up to Rohtak. Ajit Singh, the eldest son of the Guru Gobind Singh displayed great valour in the field.

Kesri Chand was also killed in the battle. It is said that the enemy brought an elephant to break open the portal of the Anandpur fort. Duni Chand, a Kashatri Sikh was ordered by the Guru to intercept the elephant, but he ran away. The Guru then asked Bachittar Singh to confront the animal. Before becoming a member of the Khalsa, he was a Lubana (a low caste) by caste. He faced the elephant manfully and gave its trunk such a deep gash with his sword that the brute ran away in panic. This incident highlighted the difference between the Sikhs of the Guru and the Brahmins and the Kashatris of the time. How low the Kashatris had fallen, how brave had become the Sikhs, whatever their erstwhile caste was ! After this victory, the Guru marched to Kiratpur from Anandpur.

The Third Attack : The second defeat was rankling in the minds of the Rajas. They tried to involve the Subedar of Sirhind fully now. It is said that rupees twenty thousand were given to the Subedar in cash and Raja Bhim Chand offered him the hand of a female from his family. The Subedar was won over to their side. The Guru had rallied some more men around him and had built four more forts for emergency use. The Guru well knew the result of opposing the Emperor of India. He had not been able to consolidate his position fully. The continuous warfare

with the Rajas had not allowed him to finalise his schemes. He had only a small number of Sikhs with him and no source of income except what his poor, half-famished Sikhs offered in cash or kind. The Guru had some Pathans with him, but their number was so small as to be insignificant in a major engagement. With the help of the forces of Sirhind, the Raja attacked the Guru at Kiratpur on 17 Maghar of Samat 1755 (1699 A.D.).

The Guru and his Sikhs fought bravely, but it was difficult to hold such large hordes there. So the Guru returned to the Anandpur Fort. His Sikhs displayed signal acts of bravery. Among such fighters was one Joga Singh who is mentioned in *Janam Sakhis*. In the days when preparation of this engagement were afoot, he was called to Peshawar for his marriage. His Guru had asked him to return forthwith after the ceremony. Joga Singh left after the completion of the circumambulations in connection with his marriage, though his father forbade him. The Sikhs were made of such stuff. The siege of Anandpur lasted some days, the Sikhs fought valiantly. Guru Gobind Singh went over to the Raja of Sohli, who had invited him. This battle has been less mentioned by the English historians, but all *Janam Sakhis* have given accounts of it.

The Attack of Aurangzeb's Army

For two years after this, the Guru moved about in different directions. It will be wrong to imagine that the courage and determination of the Guru suffered a

fall because of this defeat. On the contrary, he was steeled by adversity. During this period he remained busy in rallying his Sikhs for the coming battles. He busied himself in hunting during his stay with Sohli. From there he moved into the domain of the Raja of Bhanbour. After a brief stay there he went to Rawalsar and celebrated Baisakhi there. Then he crossed into the principality of the Raja of Mandi and built a fort there. Some Sikhs came to meet him with some presents. The Raja Kalmotia looted them on the way. On learning of this, the Guru sent his son Ajit Singh for redressal. Mahant Jwalamukhi came with five hundred men to help Raja Kalmotia. The Mahant incited many Rajas against the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh came at last to help his son. The Raja Kalmotia was defeated and the Guru chastised the Mahant. The Sikhs looted Jwalamukhi. The offerings of his Sikhs were the only income the Guru had. If these were to be looted enroute by Rajas the Guru was within his right to attack these people.

In the Baisakh of Samat 1758 (1701 A.D.), the Guru returned to Anandpur, which had been looted and destroyed by both the Muslims and the Rajas. He built the place a new, repaired the fort and administering Pahul to his four sons made them Singhs. After visiting many places, the Guru witnessed the Kurukshetra Fair in Asarh of 1759 (1702 A.D.) and returned to Anandpur. He busied himself in military preparations. The Sikhs started calling him the *Sacha Patshah* (The True Emperor) and he became known far and

wide by this name. It was not a new term, some of the earlier Gurus had also been so called. But now it was used extensively with redoubled zeal and devotion. The Hill Rajas who were already jealous of his growing power and popularity, became alarmed now. They felt their existence in danger and determined to finish him. After great deliberations, they decided to inflame the Emperor against him and then attack him with the help of the Imperial force.

A messenger was sent to implead the Emperor for help after poisoning his ears against the Guru. He informed the Emperor that the Guru called himself the True Emperor, dressed and conducted himself like one, had collected a large army of Sikhs, had invented a new religion and was ready to conflict with the Muslims. All robbers and dacoits had joined his group and his power was growing daily. He pleaded that if this newly gushing spring was not plugged at once, it would be impossible to stem the roaring torrent that it shall grow into. The Emperor was enraged and his tyrannical and fanatical blood started boiling. He deemed it a god-send that all the Hill Rajas were against the Guru and resolved to finish him.

The Fourth Attack : Aurangzeb ordered Bazid Khan, the Subedar of Sirhind to capture the Guru and produce him in the Imperial Court at Delhi. He sent three of his generals, Amir Khan Das-Hazari, Nijabat Khan and Wahid Khan to help the Subedar. Raja Ajmer Chand was sent with this force, which was rein-

forced by the forces of the Hill Rajas. This combined army besieged Anandpur on Phalgun 17 of Samat 1759 (1703 A.D.). The Guru having a much smaller army did not come out of the Fort and fought from within. A bloody battle raged for five days. Many Singhs were killed, but they had accounted for a greater number of the enemy. The Guru coming out on the sixth day, waged a vigorous attack. He killed Sardar Azeem Khan, a noted general and Paindey Khan. Raja Hari Chand Jassowalia was killed by Mamon Khan, a servant of the Guru.

The Fifth Attack : Feeling humiliated over this defeat, Aurangzeb decided to despatch a very large army against the Guru. He ordered the Subedar of Lahore, and it is said also the subedar of Kashmir to join forces with the Subedar of Sirhind, to defeat the Guru, capture him alive and produce him at his Imperial Court in Delhi. It speaks volumes for the courage and capability of the Guru that the forces of the entire Northern region were deployed against a mere recluse. This formidable force consisting of the armies of the Subedars of Delhi, Sirhind, Lahore and Kashmir went into action against the Guru and his men. It is said that the Guru had been able to muster only ten thousand men. He deputed his eldest son Ajit Singh to man the Kesgarh Fort with two thousand soldiers. Man Singh and Sher Singh with one thousand men were despatched to the Lohgarh Fort. Alam Singh and Suket Singh with three thousand soldiers were sent to Damdama Fort. Ude Singh was detailed

to Agampur Fort. But it appears that either these details are incorrect or all these people came to the open field at Anandpur where the great battle took place.

Guru Gobind Singh himself was at Anandpur. The Imperial army surrounded Anandpur and a terrible battle ensued. The Sikhs fought very bravely and beat back the Muslims many times. The Muslims with fresh reinforcement attacked fiercely. The Sikhs faced their charge with exemplary courage. The Muslims were about to enter Anandpur when Ajit Singh jumped into the fray with a batch of dedicated Sikhs, but the advancing wave of the Muslims appeared to be irresistible. Seeing the predicament of his forces, Guru Gobind Singh personally led a counter-attack. A very bloody engagement took place. The Sikhs fought with gusto. Azeem Khan and Dilawar Khan, two high officers of the Imperial army were killed. Towards the close of the evening the Muslim army wilted under this fierce onslaught and decamped. The Sikhs had won the day.

The battle was resumed on the second day. The Guru was at Damdama now. Zabardast Khan threw a cannonball in his direction. The Guru had a miraculous escape but some nearby Sikhs were killed. For some days the Sikhs fought back against fierce attacks by the multitudinous Muslim hordes. How long could a handful of men stand against such vast numbers? When the number of the Sikhs was consid-

erably reduced they went back into the Fort of Anandpur and closed its portals. The Imperial forces cut off their supplies of food and other necessities. During one night of the siege, the Sikhs finding an opportune time waged a surprise attack and in utter confusions the Muslim forces moved back and lifted the siege. Raja Dadwal and Raja Jassowal were killed. The Sikhs captured some booty. The Imperial forces hung back in the neighbourhood waiting for further reinforcement.

The Sixth Attack : Aurangzeb gathered another big force from all over the Empire, supplemented it with Rajput troops and despatched the combined army to help the forces of Subedars of Sirhind, Lahore, Delhi and Kashmir. This redoubled Imperial army attacked and besieged Anandpur in Chet of Samat 1761 (1704 A.D.). The Sikhs bore the hardships of the siege with great fortitude. When there was no food left, the Sikhs preferred death in the battlefield to dying of starvation. But the Guru wanted the Sikhs to face the siege for some days more. There were some Sikhs who were fed up with the privations they faced and desired to leave Anandpur. Guru Gobind Singh told them that they could leave Anandpur only after disowning him and declaring that they were not Sikhs. Some disavowed their Guru and faith, while others remained faithful.

The Hill Rajas sent a Brahmin who on oath of the sacred cow, brought word to the Guru that the

army would not follow and molest the Sikhs if the Guru abandoned the Anandpur Fort with his men. The Guru like a truthful man believed the word and taking his men, their families and his own left the Fort for Kiratpur. The Imperial forces after looting the Fort, went back on their solemn pledge and pursued the Sikhs. Next day, the Guru and his people reached Kanwalsar on the banks of Sirsa stream, which was in flood. They were between the devil and the deep sea. The Imperial army was hot on their heels and in front was the raging torrent. He was in the position of General Cronje who in the war of Transval with his four thousand Boers was trapped by a large British force. There was a stream on one side and the hills on the other. Cronje capitulated. Guru Gobind Singh faced even a more unenviable predicament. He had women, children and the aged to protect and he was harassed and pressed upon by the Muslim hordes. At last some Sikhs braved the raging river and took the families across. Just then the Muslim army launched a severe attack. The Guru, with the remnants of his small band, faced them. But his men faltered in the face of such heavy odds and they were routed.

Guru Gobind Singh with his two sons and forty Sikhs entered Chamkaur and took shelter in an enclosure. In this flight, the Sikhs took two wives of the Guru to Delhi. The aged mother of the Guru, with her two grandsons, took shelter with Ganga Ram, an old Brahmin cook of the Guru's household (her tale of woe shall be related later on). Let us turn to the

field of Chamkaur where the Guru performed miraculous feats of daring not equalled in the entire history of the world. The Imperial army and the Hindu hordes who were pursuing the Guru well knew that the Guru had entered Chamkaur with only forty men. He did not have any forces left and like a lion was shut up in a cage. The enemy could not hope for a better situation than this and decided to capture him alive. So this adobe structure, this shelter-house was surrounded on all sides.

The reader may well visualize the set up, the critical situation for the Guru. A whole army of an Empire supported by the Rajputs and the forces of Hill Rajas poised against a handful of Sikhs, destitute and in dire straits, sheltered in an adobe building and surrounded on all sides. The entire history of the world can scarcely produce another example of a handful of men facing such vast multitudes. No king, no general had ever stood up or even thought of making a fight against myriads of Imperial forces. The Guru not only faced these overwhelming odds but also slipped through them.

He was unperturbed and undaunted. He effected his escape not for fear of losing his life. He was not a coward, he saved himself for the fulfilment of his holy mission. He wanted to have a breathing space so as to regroup and revitalise his people. Were he a coward, he would have taken his sons alive with him. He would not have sent his sons out to make heroic

sacrifices right before his eyes. He left after signing with the blood of his sons, the Divine Document enshrining his message of Universal Love and Brotherhood. The heroic sacrifices of his sons were the testimonies affirming this Glorious Deed. He did all this for the shameless, spineless, dastardly and ungrateful Hindu nation. Who is there among the Hindus so pur-blind, so base, so rash, so mean, so cynical, as to accuse the Guru of cowardliness.

The Emperors of Germany, Austria and Russia despite having huge armies with them surrendered unabashed before Napoleon. And so did thousands of Muslims soldiers of Egypt. A brave General like Cronje despite having guns and four thousand Boer fighters with him laid down arms before the British Army. But look at the unparalleled courage displayed by Guru Gobind Singh ! He had only forty Sikhs with him in a dilapidated adobe structure at Chamkaur surrounded by the Imperial hordes. The enemy General sent a message demanding the Guru to surrender and bid good-bye to his Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh refused to buckle under and his son despatched the insolent soldier on the spot. He sent his reply through a Sikh saying that Lord Akal commands him to die fighting rather than giving himself up, to spread the Khalsa Dharma rather than forsaking it.

He had only forty Sikhs with him in a poor adobe structure besieged by countless foes. Judge his reply considering his highly vulnerable position. Can

any man accuse him of cowardice ? Here he proved the truth of his saying that he would cause the sparrows to spurn the hawks and then alone be worthy of being called Gobind Singh. He and his men kept the Imperial army at bay throughout the day. An exceptional exploit, a daring display of dauntless courage, a victory of the spirit over mere physical force. The Guru missed no opportunity to jump into the fray with a sword in his hand to help and bolster his valiant Sikhs—the Famous Forty. He sends his sons out, one by one, to fight unflinchingly and die fighting before his very eyes. He utters no words of anguish, feels no lashings of regret, does not abjure his faith or give up his mission.

We all know the story of Rustam who mistakenly kills his son in a bout. Who lashed by regret slithers to the ground in a swoon and on gaining consciousness is determined to kill himself. A brave man like Napoleon had tears in his eyes at the death of his general. Ram Chander wept piteously at the swooning of his brother Lakshman and ordered Hanuman to bring the reviving herb. Guru Gobind Singh was not disheartened by the death of his eldest son Ajit Singh but continued the fight. His second son Jujhar Singh who was barely fourteen or fifteen comes before his father. He seeks permission from his father, the Guru, to measure swords with the enemy and avenge his brother's death. The Guru is not swayed by fatherly love or considerations of his son's tender age. He allows his son to fight and meet certain death. Did any

other father face such a situation and behave to non-chalantly ? It seems he willed his son to dare the enemy and die and thus seal with the last attestation through self- sacrifice, his father's Immortal Document of Love and Brotherhood of man.

Jujhar Singh wants to drink water before going out to fight. His father, the Guru, tells him to go ahead and quench his thirst with the enemy's blood and not with water. He further tells Jujhar Singh to drink from the cup of martyrdom in the battlefield and that his thirst is symbolic of the thirst of the Khalsa for their enemy's blood. He blesses his son to march to Heaven on the path of the Martyrs already taken by his brother, Ajit Singh. Despite his tender years, Jujhar Singh jumps into the battle like a redoubtable warrior and sheds his blood for the defence of Hindu Dharma.

Fie on him who denigrates the Guru by accusing him of cowardliness ! May his mouth fill with filth and dirt who utters such accusals. The Guru left the field to fight another day for his country and Dharma at a more opportune time. He could have very easily saved his sons and taken them with him out of Chamkaur.

The Sikhs fought fiercely till dusk. By then only three Sikhs were left alive, namely Dharam Singh, Man Singh and Daya Singh, along with their Guru. Just imagine ! The whole Imperial army cannot dare to capture these four Sikhs. The door of the adobe building is closed. Visualize the awe which the Guru

inspires in the enemy. Not a single soul among them dares to approach the door and break it open, though it is kept under constant watch. The Guru kisses the faces of his sons and the hands of the Five Beloveds, leaves their bodies behind and surveying the field scornfully moves out of Chamkaur. What was dearer to him than his sons, than his Five Beloveds, than his Sikhs, for which he was saving himself ? It was for his faith, his mission of universal brotherhood and his duty to defend the country and the downtrodden though ungrateful Hindus that he after sacrificing his worldly all was keeping himself alive.

After the Battle of Chamkaur

How did the Guru escape from there ? It is said that the remaining three Sikhs started shouting at night that the Pir of the Hindus, meaning the Guru was slipping out. The shouting created consternation and an uproar in the Imperial army. Utter confusion reigned amongst them and making use of this diversion the Guru slipped out in the darkness of the night, bare-footed and with a blistering heart. He moved towards the jungle.

Leaving the Guru at this stage, let us turn to the sad and heart-rending story of his two small sons. After the exodus from Anandpur and the crossing of the turbulent Sirsa stream, the mother of the Guru with her two younger grandsons took shelter with an old servitor of the family, Ganga Ram, a Brahmin, of village Kheri that falls in Ropar district. The Guru's

mother had taken with her some gems and hard cash. The old Brahmin servitor was filled with greed. He thought of usurping this wealth and informing the Subedar of Sirhind about the presence of the Guru's mother and his sons. His wife remonstrated with him saying that he had eaten the salt of the Guru and should not betray him.

The glitter of the gold and the gems blinded him, blotted all sense of shame and gratitude from his mind. He stole these from the old lady and informed Nawab Jani Khan, about her and her grandsons. Jani Khan passed on the news to his superior, the Subedar of Sirhind. The old servitor committed a despicable crime. But for a Brahmin it was nothing extraordinary. He had been sucking like a leech the life-blood of others for thousands of years without compunction or mercy. For his wants and livelihood, he had never been averse to deceiving his master, his king, his people, and his country. He had deceived all of them, too readily without a twinge of his conscience. The entire history of India is full of instances of such treachery. They are shameless and ungrateful deceivers for the sake of their pleasures and selfish ends. They feel no shame in begging either in private or openly like the mendicants.

Informed by the treacherous Brahmin, the Nawab got the lady and her grandsons arrested and sent them to Sirhind as ordered by the Subedar. The Nawab also came to know about the gems and gold

which the ungrateful Brahmin servant had stolen. So he took the Brahmin along with the booty and produced him before the Subedar. This Brahmin god (the epithet “god” is applied to the Brahmin all over India) got nothing for his treachery and ungratefulness other than the saving of his dirty skin. The two sons of the Guru, Zorawar Singh aged nine and Fateh Singh aged seven, were produced before the Subedar, who in the first instance sentenced them to one year’s imprisonment in a Tower, known as the Chandal Burj till today.

Later on he summoned them to appear before him and urged them to embrace Islam and then lead a life of luxury like royal princes. He warned them that if they failed to heed his advice, they would be put to the sword. Do you know what these two tender and innocent kids said in reply ? They declared that they were the sons of Guru Gobind Singh and the grandsons of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the king among martyrs of the nation and the country. In their veins ran the blood of their redoubtable father and their noble grandfather. Islam did not appeal to them and no temptation or hope of any reward could make them embrace it. They did not want to buy their lives at the cost of the Khalsa Dharma. They held their lives very cheaply and cared not two hoots if it flew out of their limbs; Death held no terror for them. They would not go against the mandate of Akal and embrace the faith of the enemies of their country and Dharma. Their answer was worthy of their noble descent. It was the

elder of the two sons who made this bold reply. He asked if conversion to Islam could save them from Death. If die they must, why not die nobly for their country and the Khalsa Dharma ?

This bold reply stunned the Subedar of Sirhind. Then seething with wrath he ordered them to be beheaded. The world is not entirely full of heartless and devilish people only. Here and there are to be seen good and noble souls. Even in this gathering of blood-thirsty men was one such noble soul-Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan of Kotla. Addressing the Subedar, the Nawab questioned the justice of punishing innocent children for the fault of their father. He wanted to know what injunction of the Holy Quran permitted the slaughter of the innocent. This gory act of great injustice could perhaps have been averted. But there was in that assemblage a Kashatri Dewan Sucha (Truthful) Nand, inimical to the Guru, who counselled their killing, holding it unwise and impolitic to save them arguing that it is not wise to bring up the young ones of an asp after killing it because the wolf's whelp has the making of a future wolf.

O, Mother India, these are your offspring. Your most favourite, the eldest Brahmin son (Ganga Ram) had already shown his true colours of deceit, ungratefulness, shamelessness, indecency and inhumanity. Now be proud of your second worthy son, the Kashatri, Dewan Sucha Nand who felt no hesitation in wreaking his vengeance on the Guru, by sending his tender sons

(of the ages of 7 and 9), to certain death. He was not to be outdone by his elder Brahmin brother, in meanness, jealousy, cold-blooded inhumanity and devilishness. These are your true begotten sons. These mean and selfish sons cause you endless pain and greatly torture your mind. These sons of yours are consumed by jealousy and hatred for your other children. They are thirsty for the blood of thier own brethren and like leeches, they are even engaged in sucking it. O weebegone Mother , whom can you accuse and complain against when your own children are eager to kill one another ? O, who can defend you then ?

O, Mother, you have been seen the work of your Brahmin and Kashatri sons, who claim pre-eminence over your other sons. Now Guru Gobind Singh has taken with him your lowly son, the Shudra, to defend you. But the jealous, mean and haughty elder brothers won't let them gain enough strength to achieve their goal. In their wickedness the wretches — the ignoble elder brothers — work against you and their own good. Their wisdom has been consumed by their wickedness. O, Mother India , pray to the Almighty for your sons. Supplicate the Lord to teach them to love one another and foster firm bonds of brotherhood.

After a day or two the children of the Guru were again invited to embrace Islam. Glowing pictures of luxurious living, big Jagirs and great riches as rewards and dignities were drawn before them. But

Zorawar Singh was unmoved and reiterated the reply given earlier that they were not tempted by the short and inglorious life of pleasure. They would rather die than give up the Khalsa Dharma. They were the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, undaunted by death. They would court death smilingly. They challenged him to do his worst. These words cut the Subedar to the quick and he ordered that they should be bricked alive. The erection of a wall was started around them. They stood unperturbed. There were no tears in their eyes, no tremor on their lips, no trembling in their limbs, no beads of perspiration on their foreheads, no paleness on their faces. What stead-fastness, what courage, what fortitude, what super-human capacity for making sacrifices !

Just imagine, dear reader, what kept them calm, unconcerned and unmoved under such trying circumstances ? This courage, this fearlessness, this spirit was instilled in them by their father, Guru Gobind Singh. When the wall rises higher, the younger brother aged seven shows some signs of uneasiness. Zorawar Singh addresses his brother saying, "O, Fateh Singh, shout Wahe-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh (The Khalsa belongs to God and victory is in His hands), I hold you answerable to your vows to your father and your mother's milk ! Do not lose heart in the face of tribulation." Fateh Singh steadies himself. What a glorious show of manliness for a child of seven !

The wall reaches the level of their chests and inches higher. Their breathing is obstructed and they feel suffocated. At this critical juncture, they are urged again to choose between Islam promising life and refusal meaning death. Their answer is the same but they add that they see heaven across the wall, on the other side in front of them, they feel no pain. They cherish their Khalsa Dharma and are not prepared to bargain for miserable life. They feel blessed as they carry out the command of the Lord Akal. The wall reaches the level of their heads, then covers them. The two tender hearts are stilled for ever. They died for their Dharma and their Motherland. They died to live for ever in the hearts of men. They died to revive Hindu Dharma. They died to give eternal life to their Khalsa Dharma. They showed the world that a nation that bears brave children like them never dies. Hallowed is the land which gives birth to such valiant progeny.

Compare them with fully grown men who bid good-bye to their religion for a handful of coins. Compare them with long-beards who for the sake of a woman forsake their faith. Some of them join the fold of Mohammed. Some others of them swell the ranks of the followers of Christ. My country-men, these were the children who signed with their blood, the Immortal Document of the Love of their father. Krishan avenged himself on the enemies of his father, only after growing to full manhood. We cannot compare this feat of his maturer years with the exemplary

courage shown by these kids of seven and nine. Their father was not there to guide or order them and yet they braved death for his faith and principles. They were not grown up and sturdy like Krishan but they out-did him in courage and steadfastness.

The Muslims dealt with these tender boys with the same cruelty which was in evidence in their heartless treatment of the innocent grandnephews of their Prophet in the battlefield of Karbla. To this day the Shias and other Muslims remember the occasion with lamentations and heavy hearts. But the brave Sikhs have taken this inhuman treatment of their Guru's children in their stride.

When the old mother of the Guru came to know about the heart-rending tale of her grandson's deaths, she was overwhelmed by the heartlessness and the cruelty of the perpetrators of this dastardly act and died. Let us turn from this horrendous tale of human ungratefulness, of mean, unmanly revenge, of inhuman treatment of young children at the hands of grown-up men holding high positions, and turn to the exploits of the Guru.

The Guru started walking bare-footed in the dark night when thorny bushes and way-side thorns could not be made out. How could he escape unscathed. His feet became blistered and were bleeding still he walked till day-break. The Imperial army tried to track him at night and also during the day, the heaps of the dead-bodies were sorted out to find his body but

without success. Not knowing where to look for him, the authorities sent search-parties in all directions.

Since the Sun had risen, the Guru , certain of being pursued, went to sleep in a thicket, with a couple of clods under his head for a pillow. He was dead tired and had not slept for many nights with the result that he slept very soundly during the day. He passed the night at the same spot without eating anything. There is a Gurdwara now at this place. In the small hours of the night, he marched to the east of Machhiwara town and passed the day in a garden. An edifice known as Charan Kanwal (Lotus Feet) stands in his memory. Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, two Pathan brothers came to their garden for a walk and recognised Guru Gobind Singh because they used to bring horses to him for sale. They judged from his tattered clothes and his physical condition that he had come from a battlefield. They were under debt of the Guru for his past favours and had earned handsomely through dealings with him. They were Muslims but were men enough not to act in an ungrateful manner.

Instead of harming the Guru or informing the Imperial forces about him, they escorted him safely to Behlolpur. The three Sikhs of the Guru who had escaped from Chamkaur in the ensuing confusion after their announcement regarding their Guru's exit also reached there. They had dressed themselves like Muslims and were looking for their Guru. A column of the Imperial army, looking for the Guru, arrived in neigh-

bourhood. The Guru and his comrades took shelter with one Gulaba Singh there, who personally took them to the house of Qazi Pir (or Mir) Mohammad. The Qazi and the Guru were old friends. The Qazi proved his true humanism and friendship. After deliberations, it was decided that the Guru should be declared a Muslim Pir and dressed like one be taken to Mālwa region. Accordingly, the Guru was declared *Uch Da Pir* (The Pir of Eminence), seated on a cot raised high as per the custom prevalent then and accompanied by the Qazi, Ghani Khan and the three Sikhs in Muslim garbs, was taken out of Behlolpur . The Guru, attired in blue robes, was taken from one village to another in the direction of Malwa.

What a company it was, strange and holy. How courageous and bold on the part of the Guru to put himself at the mercy of Muslims, when his own people, the Hindus, for whose defence and welfare he was struggling, had betrayed him, when the entire resources of the Muslim Empire of the time were ranged against him, and when every Muslim hand was raised against him. Human mind staggers to take in the situation, what a man the Guru was ! His shrewd judgement of men was proved true. He saw no Hindu worth the name, to afford him shelter and also he had no faith in their word of honour or their honour itself. Had he trusted his life in the hands of any Brahmin or Kashatri, it would not have been worth a dime. The two Muslims justified the trust reposed in them and at least they escorted him safely to Malwa. The Guru in

the guise of a Muslim Pir was taken to village Ghungrali and after buying weapons from Jhanda Mistri, the group arrived at the Dera of Mahant Kirpal Dass, in village Haer, who refused to give shelter to a rebel against the Emperor. See, how a Hindu had behaved !

From there, the group moved farther and at last arrived at the house of Rai Kalha, the Rais (dignitary) of Raikot, in village Jatpura. Though a Muslim, he entertained them well. The Sikhs presented horses and weapons to the Guru at that place. The Guru also learnt there what had befallen his aged mother and his two younger sons. The Guru heard it all with equanimity and thanked Akal Purkh for the consummation of His Will. The Guru declared there that a day would come when the Khalsa would raze Sirhind to the ground to avenge their innocent brothers. These words were a sort of legacy for the Sikhs who proved them true.

The Epistle of Victory

After passing through some villages like Sheik-hupura, Dhanoula, Namgarh, the Guru in the month of Maghar of Samat 1761 (1705 A.D.) reached Dina. He rested there for some time and improved his condition a little. He collected some weapons from the region, initiated some Singhs and armed them. He received offerings from his Sikhs. He penned his famous missive "Zafar Nama" in Persian, meant for Aurangzeb, who, it is said, sent for the Guru, assuring

him of safe conduct, and proper respect. The Guru refused to believe in Aurangzeb's word of honour and wrote to him forcefully that he should refrain from cruelty and tyranny; otherwise he would face the wrath of the Lord for his evil conduct. The Guru added that he personally had neither any domain nor desire of seizing any territory but he and his Sikhs would ever be ready to move against him and work for his downfall. The Sikhs would pay him back in his own coin. This letter proves Guru Gobind Singh's fearlessness and his dedication to his mission.

After leaving Dina and passing through many villages, the Guru reached Kot Kapura. Rai Kapura looked after the Guru well and offered him money and many horses but refused to do anything else. Guru Gobind Singh had desired Rai Kapura to keep him at Kot Kapura, allow him to train his men in warfare and also to lend him his personal support. Thus disappointed in the fulfilment of his desire, the Guru moved out and reached village Dhilwan. There lived Sodhi Koul Sahib, a descendant of Pirthi Chand. He received the Guru warmly and requested him to take off his blue robes. Guru Gobind Singh consigned his robes to the fire in his farsightedness so that his Sikhs may not take to worshipping them. But his Sikhs beholden to their Guru at every step could not be kept from keeping safe the sacred relics of their Guru like Nishan Sahib, Chola Sahib which adorn Gurdwaras now. It is a sad story that these relics are worshipped in a way and used as a means of earning money. It is

proper that these should be reserved and held very dear by every Sikh.

The Regrouping of the Sikhs

Here the Guru was joined by those Sikhs who had disowned him at Anandpur Sahib during the siege. They came to ask forgiveness for their grievous sin. When these Sikhs had reached their homes after deserting their Guru, they were taken to task by their brethern and put to great shame. They had fallen so low in the estimation of the people that it had become very difficult for them to pass their days in that region. Now they were forced to turn to their Guru for pardon. This is an indication of the love and reverence which the people had for their Guru and of the public support which his mission was gaining. The Subedar of Sirhind got wind of the Guru's sojourn in the area and the rallying of Sikhs around him. So partly in compliance with Aurangzeb's order and partly fearing chastisement for his own crimes, he decided to finish the Guru and he set out to achieve this end. Guru Gobind Singh was again forced into an unequal engagement. He was able to muster only a handful of Sikhs.

Taking positions in the sandy plain of Khidrana, Guru Gobind Singh with his band of sturdy Sikhs waited for the forces of Sirhind. Wazir Khan, the Subedar reached there and the battlefield came to life. The Sikhs fought tenaciously to the last ounce of courage and energy in their bodies. The field was

littered with heaps of corpses. The Sikhs captured the only source of fresh water in the area. The Muslim army was much troubled by the lack of water and waged many attacks to regain the spring. Repulsed time and again and tormented by thirst, the Muslim army was disheartened and decamped. The Sikhs pursued them relentlessly for four to five miles and inflicted heavy casualties. Utterly vanquished, the Muslim army went back to the safety of Sirhind and abandoned any future campaigns against the Guru, in the dangerous wilds and jungle areas. Thus, the Guru and his Sikhs captured the battlefield, having decidedly defeated the Imperial army.

The Guru, thus, proved the wisdom of leaving the field at Chamkaur and silenced his detractors. It was his farsightedness and will to fight another day in pursuance of his mission for the defence and welfare of the Hindus and the Hindu Dharma that caused him to move out of a hopeless situation. It is well to remember here that Rai Kapura of Kot Kapura who had refused to help the Guru against the Muslims, fought on the side of Muslims against the Guru and was killed in this battle. Proving once again that the degenerate Hindus instead of helping the Guru for their own welfare had opposed him at every step. They never hesitated to lift their swords against him. They had been reduced to abject slavery, both mental and physical and to moral decrepitude.

When the Muslim army had fled from the bat-

tlefield, Guru Gobind Singh approached the bodies of his Sikhs who had fallen in the battle. With his handkerchief, he wiped the blood from their faces, extolling their bravery and exclaiming that they had attained heaven by virtue of their sword-arm. There was still some life in Mahan Singh of Majha. The Guru poured some water in his mouth and he opened his eyes to find his Guru before him. He recovered to some extent and in reply to his Guru's offer of a reward for his heroic services, he very feebly requested his Guru to tear the Deed, disowning their Guru, signed by him and his comrades. Guru Gobind Singh took out the document from his cummerbund, where he had been keeping it all along and tore it before the eyes of Mahan Singh. Thus, the Forty Sikhs were taken back into the Khalsa fold.

This act of Mahan Singh is highly praiseworthy and is remembered and recounted with great love and esteem. In the dying moments of his martyred life, he had thoughts only for the welfare of his brethren and countrymen. Selfless sacrifice for his country and Khalsa Dharma and selfless service of his comrades were uppermost in his mind till his last breath. Blessed are such people indeed who die desiring the welfare of their comrades and countrymen, who shed their blood for upholding the honour of their homeland, who consecrate their lives to the good of their country and countrymen. Only those countries, that had such men in their folds, touched great heights in their his-

tory. Only such countries attained great splendour and achieved great degrees of perfection in any field. Sacrifice spells success for nations. In all times and all climes, its great need had been felt, is still felt and will continue to be felt. No people, no country can attain anything worthwhile without offering sacrifices. The lamp of national honour is lit by mending the wick of selfless service and by pouring the oil of self-sacrifice. The edifice of a nation's greatness is raised on the firm foundation of self- sacrifice. Guru Gobind Singh personally performed the last rites of his brave Sikhs.

He founded a town in commemoration of this battle and gave it the name of Muktsar, meaning thereby, the Tank of Liberation. He called all those Sikhs who had died there as the Muktas (The Liberated Ones). Then passing through many villages the Guru went to Wazidpur, where the people did not allow him to stay. In this jungle tract, some soldiers of the Brar clan insisted on receiving their pay, but the Guru had nothing to offer them except hunger. During this period, the Sikhs had often to go without food for a day or two. The Guru managed to pay his men after receiving some monetary help from a Sikh devotee. One of the Sikh soldiers, Dewan Singh by name refused to receive his pay. The Guru administered Amrit to one Brahmin Faqir, who had become a Muslim at his birth, and called him Ajmer Singh.

The Guru at Damdama

Guru Gobind Singh reached Talwandi and his wife arrived there from Delhi. After staying there for some days, he went to Bathinda and then to Damdama. It is commonly held that since the Guru had some respite (meaning 'Dam' in the vernacular) here, the place was called Damdama Sahib.

Another tradition goes that the Guru sent his letter to Aurangzeb from here through Daya Singh and Dharam Singh, who brought the Emperor's reply as well. The Emperor had invited the Guru to Delhi in flattering terms. Having no faith in the Emperor's word and his assurances, the Guru did not visit him. He busied himself in more important work and sent a strongly-worded reply wherein he openly reproached Aurangzeb for his cruel and evil deeds. The Guru reminded him of the wrath of God about to fall on him. The Guru also declared that the Dharma of Guru Nanak is the finest of all, that Delhi holds no terror for him since he is unawed by any earthly power, that he has no attachment for the world and its goods, that he is patiently awaiting his end. The Guru warned Aurangzeb about the evil consequences of his evil acts when he shall be hauled up on the Judgement Day and found wanting in the face of the piteous cries of accusation raised against him by thousands of innocent beings tortured to death by him on this earth. How should it fare with him at that time, the Guru asked him to

visualize. Moved by this letter, Aurangzeb sent for Guru Gobind Singh once again, but the Guru did not respond.

Damdama Sahib is held sacred for yet another reason. The whole of Guru Granth Sahib (Adi Granth) was rewritten here and the Guru added the Bani of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. This volume of Guru Granth Sahib is called the Bir of Damdama. Some people hold that the Guru effected some changes in some verses of the Granth, but there is nothing much to substantiate this claim. The Guru, per force, had to get the Granth rewritten, as the followers of Dhir Mal who had the original Granth with them had refused to hand it over. He also wanted to incorporate the Bani of the Ninth Guru, in this Granth. He had respite from continuous warfare now and could attend to these things. It is firmly held that Guru Gobind Singh composed some portions of his famous *Vachittar Natak* in which he deals with the lives and doings of the first nine Gurus, writes about his personal life and eulogized the Glory of Akal Purkh as the Fountain-Head for all his actions.

Guru's March Towards Deccan

From Damdama, the Guru moved towards Deccan to carry his mission to regions other than the Punjab. He passed through Rajputana. The Rajputs and their Rajas had so far been untouched by his mission. Probably this was what had prompted him to

approach them in their own region. The people welcomed him in a befitting manner, gave him due respect, entertained him. They were impressed by his sermons and benefitted from them. At one place, Mahant Chet Ram, a follower of Dadu Saint received him very warmly. A mention of this meeting is made in many traditional accounts.

While passing through this territory, the Guru witnessed the Mela of Puranmashi (Full Moon) in Kartik month of Samat 1763 (1706 A.D.) at Pushkar Raj. When the Guru visited Ajmer, a faithful devotee of his constructed a ghat there in commemoration of his visit. It is known as Gobind Ghat (wharf). Guru Gobind Singh learnt of the death of Aurangzeb while he was camping at Baghaur town. Aurangzeb died in Samat 1764 (1707 A.D.). The Guru showed no sign of elation of any kind and kept his usual composure on hearing this news.

The Guru and Bahadur Shah

After the demise of Aurangzeb, a tug of war ensued among his sons for the Imperial throne. At the time of his father's death, Bahadur Shah, the eldest son was at Kabul. Azeem Shah, another son of Aurangzeb drew his sword in defiance and sending for his younger brother Kam Bakhsh, got him murdered, thus following in the foot steps of his father who had despatched his brother Murad likewise. Bahadur had to face a cruel and strong enemy. Fearing that he might face the

same fate as did Dara Shikoh, he made great preparations for the war. He also wanted to benefit by the help of Guru Gobind Singh at this critical juncture.

By that time the Sikhs had established themselves as a strong force to reckon with and had formed a sizeable number. Bahadur Shah saw in the person of the Guru the means of enlisting the support of Sikhs for his own good. In his farsightedness he might have imagined that in the case of his proving victorious, he would not have to face the opposition of the Sikhs and their Guru, who had made his opposition to the tyrannical Muslim rule very clear. Therefore, Bahadur Shah sent two Hindu Dewans to the Guru soliciting his help. After pondering over all aspects of the matter, the Guru resolved to help him. The Guru did not have to oppose any Hindu power and as a friend he could bide his time, stay near the Emperor and also near his Sikhs whom he would be able to train and equip. The above factors must have weighed heavily with him while making this decision.

When the Guru approached Bahadur Shah, the latter received him courteously and with proper respect. At last the Guru helped him by bringing a large force of his Khalsa on Bahadur Shah's side against Azeem Shah at the battlefield of Agra. Tradition goes that the Guru pierced Azeem Shah with an arrow while he was sitting atop his elephant. It may be imagined that the Guru tried to do so. Azeem Shah was killed whether at the hands of the Guru or of

somebody else. But there is no doubt that the Guru was greatly responsible for Bahadur Shah's victory. In gratitude for the Guru's help, the new Emperor, Bahadur Shah, took him to Delhi and he stayed there for some time. When Bahadur Shah started on his Deccan campaign, the Guru accompanied him. Before leaving, the Guru allowed his wife Sundri Ji to adopt a son, who was called Ajit Singh. The Guru in the company of the Emperor passed through Mathura, Bharatpur, Jaipur etc. and reached Ujjain. Bahadur Shah wanted to send the Guru with a big force under him against the Marathas. The Guru saw through the political gambit of the Emperor and refused to oblige him.

Meeting Banda Bahadur

Parting company with the Emperor, and passing through many places, he reached Nanded. Madho Dass alias Narain Dass Bairagi, a Hindu Faqir, lived there. The Guru met him and found in him a great potential for fighting and the requisite guts and fervour for sacrificing himself for the defence of the down-trodden Hindus and their Dharma. The Guru made Madho Dass his Shishya (a Sikh) but did not administer Pahul (Amrit) to him perhaps with a view to closing the chapter of Guruship and forestalling any claim to Gurudom by him, later on. The fact of Madho's not having been given Pahul would deter the Khalsa from upholding such a claim if ever made by

him in time to come.* The Guru gave him the name of Banda and sent him to Sirhind. The Guru wrote to many Sikhs urging them to give active support to Banda in his mission. He detailed a large group of Sikhs to accompany Banda Singh to the Punjab.

At the time of sending off Banda, Guru Gobind Singh made him to take five vows (1) of remaining a celibate, (2) of never telling a lie, (3) of not starting a new sect or instituting guruship, (4) of not sitting on the seat of guruship, and (5) of treating Sikhs as his brethren and equals. He wrote to Sikhs in general to join him. Guru Gobind Singh bestowed his sword on him.

Guru Gobind Singh, who was still alive when Banda Bahadur embarked upon his mission, learnt of the plunder and the devastation of Sirhind at the hands of Banda. The Guru evinced neither elation nor satis-

* This view is refuted by a host of historians, old and modern, Punjabi, Indian and Europeans, Muslims and Hindus, who wrote in English, Persian and vernacular, e.g. Forester, James Brown, Mc'Gregor, Mohammad Latif, Gulam Hussain Khan, Iradat Khan, Kanhya Lal, Sharda Ram Phillauri, Ahmed Shah Batalvi, Zaka-Ullah, Ganesh Dass Wadehra, Ali-u-Din Mufti. All these references have been quoted by Dr. Ganda Singh in his book *Banda Singh Bahadur* (Punjabi) where he writes that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the boon of Amrit on Madho Dass and called him Banda Singh and honoured him with the title of 'Bahadur'. Giani Sohan Singh in his book *Banda Singh Shahid* (Punjabi) quotes many more Indian and foreign writers in support of the administering of Pahul to Banda.

faction over it. To him, this act was unworthy of his noble mission. Secondly, a man who had been sent to bear hardships for the good and betterment of others and to be indifferent to his own worldly happiness, could not feel joy and satisfaction over such poor, negative achievement.

In reality, Guru Gobind Singh had come to show people that the heaven of sacrifice and suffering produces calmness and content. He did not live long enough to witness the successful achievements of Banda Bahadur. He received that summons from his Akal for which all of us should ever be ready.

Attracted by the natural beauty of the area around the banks of Godavari, Guru Gobind Singh set up his camp there. Later on, he bought a piece of land there and built a house on it. He called this place Afzal Nagar also known as Abchal Nagar. A Mandir in that area too is known by this name till today. The Guru stayed there for quite some time and his Sikh disciples started trickling in from the surrounding areas. The Guru spent his mornings in Kirtan (singing of Shabads). At noon after taking his meals, he daily distributed food among the needy. On occasions he would go out hunting because he wanted his Sikhs to be alive to the need of fostering fighting capabilities in them and keeping themselves in good shape. By his daily routine, he set before his Khalsa an example of good conduct – of how one should spend one's life in Lordworship, in helping the needy and indigent and in

doing courageous and bold deeds.

The Guru received here the news of the killing of the Subedar of Sirhind at the hands of Banda Bahadur in the battle on the 13th Jeth of Samat 1764 (1707 A.D.). The Sikhs were overjoyed to hear this news which according to them was an act of vengeance. But the Guru heard the news with serenity and opined that the command of Lord Akal has been carried out. His face bore no expression of jubilation. A heart which is indifferent to sorrow, which is unperturbed by hardships, grief and toil, cannot be carried away by any feelings of joy over trivial successes. The Guru was basically a kind-hearted man who could not be pleased by the shedding of anyone's blood. But a sharp distinction must be made between being trigger- happy and shedding blood in the performance of one's duty. The appreciation of this distinction had often forced him to take to difficult and dangerous paths for the success of his mission.

Brutal Attack on the Guru

Bahadur Shah passed through Nanded after the annexation of Ahmed Nagar and the completion of the Deccan campaign. He met Guru Gobind Singh and tried to take him along, but the Guru declined to accompany him. The power and existence of Guru Gobind Singh was rankling in the mind of the Emperor, who well knew what the mission of the Guru was and earnestly wanted to exterminate him. The Emperor was awaiting an opportune time. The ex-

plots of Banda Bahadur made the Emperor feel further threatened by the existence of the Guru, so he planned for the physical liquidation of the Guru. After setting the wheel of conspiracy in motion, the Emperor removed himself from the scene. He had incited one Turkish youth to despatch the Guru who had killed his father and grandfather and it was the primal duty of a Muslim to avenge the murder of his ancestors. The Emperor had further reproached the youth for his shamelessness in serving the killer of his forebears. To accentuate the effect of his goadings, the Emperor added the tempting offer of honours and regards for the successful completion of the conspiracy.*

This Turkish Muslim was called Gull Khan and he along with his brother Atta-Allah-Khan, was in the service of the Guru. They were the descendants of one Paindey Khan, who had been killed by the Guru in one of his many battles. This conspiracy had taken a strong hold on the minds of these two Turks and worked successfully because the Guru trusted them. On the fourth of Bhadon of Samat 1765 (1708 A.D.), finding the Guru asleep and unattended by anyone else, Gull Khan thrust his dagger deep into the Guru's stomach. The Guru stood up wounded, and pressing his wound with one hand and taking hold of his sword with the other struck a telling blow on his assailant, killing him on the spot.

* Historians have averred that this conspiracy was hatched by the Subedar of Sirhind.

The wound was not very dangerous but had been inflicted in a very sensitive part of the body. The Sikhs gathered around their Guru in no time.

A surgeon was sent for who stitched the wound and dressed it. The wound started healing and there were distinct signs of recovery after some days. But the Guru tried his hand at archery one day, with the result that the wound was reopened and inflammation set in. Despite all curative measures, the wound started deteriorating with the result that the Guru's health steadily declined.

Thus, the Guru, stabbed by his enemies, sealed his Document of Love, with his own gory signature. He had started writing this Legacy to his Nation with the ink formed out of the sacrifice of all his ease and happiness mixed with his heart's blood, on the paper of devotion to the nation, with the pen of patriotic fervour. This Document had been witnessed and signed by his two elder sons and the Five Beloveds with their blood. His remaining two innocent and tender sons had testified it with their blood. The whole process of writing had commenced with the blood of Guru Teg Bahadur, the father of the Guru. The contents were written with the blood of the two elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh, while his two tender sons of ages seven and nine testified it with their blood. The Guru with his own gore wrote finis on it.

This elegy of the Emperor of the Khalsa had its Title written in blood. Its every dot, every word and

every line was written with the blood that shall not dry till eternity.

All efforts to heal the Guru's wound proved unavailing. When the Guru felt that his hour was approaching, he asked for a coco-nut and five paise as per stipulations which he placed before the Holy Granth and enjoined the Khalsa that from then onwards, the Holy Granth shall be their only one Guru, their Eternal Guru who shall ever protect them and guide them in all matters, that they should never accept any other guru, should never bow before anyone or any granth other than the Guru Granth Sahib. His injunction was that they should ever remain steadfast and true to their faith, that he would be there in spirit where his five Sikhs gather and that these five shall be vested with the authority to administer Amrit (Pahul) to the seekers and make them members of the Khalsa Fraternity.

Ending of the Guruship in Person

In this manner the sagacious and farsighted Guru ended the cycle of succession to Guruship. He could feel the pulse of the people and the temper of the times. By putting this bar, he saved the Sikhs from future degeneration, dissensions and divisions. That is why the Khalsa Dharma has kept its purity during these three hundred years. The devolution of the power of bestowing of Pahul on five Sikhs was a great democratic step which saved the Sikhs from the ills of gurudom which had eaten into the vitals of the Hindu

Dharma invested with multitudes of gurus in the form of Brahmins. The Guru was well aware of this fact and could never allow this evil to afflict the Khalsa. So, he decided to abolish gurudom for ever and did it in a very effective manner.

Last days of the Guru

On the next day, the 15th of Kartik of Samat 1765, Guru Gobind Singh bathed himself, dressed and armed himself, said his prayers and heard kirtan. Then he stretched himself on his bed and listening to the recital of Bani from Guru Granth Sahib, breathed his last uttering the last words, "Wahe-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh". Thus, he poured the final *Ahuti* of his body in the Sacrificial Fire which he had lit for the betterment of the Hindus. On that day was set the special sun of the Hindus which had enabled them to see clearly with their own eyes, whose warmth had brought spring into their withered garden with its wilted plants supporting drooping twigs and leaves, and engendered fresh sprouts.

This Sun had set in the darkness of death. That lightning singing patriotic songs in the storm clouds of hope disappeared, the down pour of the soothing rain of nationalism that was helping to cool the burning hearts of the Hindus and to extinguish the fire of acrimonious dissensions sweeping across the country, was driven away by the tempest of Death. The river whose overflowing currents were promising plenty and prosperity in the drought-despoiled fields of India, was

submerged in a devastating flood. The great soul which had come to revive India, was whisked away; the heart full of love for the Hindus, ever zealous and ready to spill its blood for their welfare, was stilled. Alas! the True Lover, the True Well-Wisher, the True Friend of the Hindus, the True Consoler, the Loving Helper, the Real Benefactor of the Indians closed his eyes for ever. But he had planted the sapling of Nationalism, had watered it with his blood and had manured it with his bones. The sapling took roots, grew fast into a robust tree and eventually bore a plenteous crop of rich fruit.

The deep love, determination and faith with which he had embarked upon his mission and which had sustained his assiduous efforts, bore fruit at last. The string of sacrifice that took toll of the members of his family — his father, his mother, his four sons and of his own life, was crowned at last with success. The Guru died in the flush of real achievement. He had gained the goal he had set before him and exerted himself to achieve. The creation, growth and steady rise to glory of his Khalsa testifies to the successful culmination of his efforts. He died fully conscious that he had set wheels in motion as he had wanted to, that he had carried out the mandate of his Lord Akal. He had done his duty, to the people and to the Country as ordained by his Akal.

Shivaji Maratha was his contemporary. Their aims and objective are often compared and it is erroneously concluded that the Guru was comparatively

unsuccessful in his mission. All facets and aspects of their efforts, the situations involved, the angles involved in their mission whether personal or national or a clever combination of both, their principles and scruples should be taken into account while comparing them with each other. Shivaji undoubtedly was impelled by the motive of national good but underneath lay very selfish undercurrents of gaining power. While Guru Gobind Singh had no such ulterior motives intermixed with his mission. He did not want to carve a kingdom to perpetuate a dynasty like Shivaji. He, on the other hand, sacrificed whatever he had, sacrificed his sons, thus ending his dynasty for the sake of his country and the welfare of his countrymen. Shivaji worked for gaining political power, though in some degree nationalism was involved in it. Guru Gobind Singh fought on all the four fronts, remaining in the fore-fronts in each, the social, political, religious and military. He never resorted to any subterfuge in any of his actions in these fields.

The main aim of the Guru was to uplift the down-trodden low castes and make them atleast the equals if not the betters of the high castes by making them the devotees of one Formless Lord, united in the brotherhood of man. Shivaji was not inspired by any such lofty ideals of Brotherhood of man and worship of the Formless One. He worked purely in the political field unhampered by religious, social or humane consideration. He was free to adopt any or all methods, of deceipts, duplicity and diplomacy. The Guru

primarily a religious preceptor and ~~reformer~~, had closed all these avenues of help and relied entirely on his physical prowess, determination and devotion to his cause, to achieve his ends. The conquests of Shivaji attracted men to him with the lure of pelf and power. On the other hand the Guru gathered ordinary people, the so-called dregs of the Hindu society around him, filled them with love, courage, patriotism and brotherhood, in order to gain conquests for the cause of the people. Shivaji attracted fighters to him, the Guru transformed ordinary people into selfless, redoubtable fighters for Hindu Dharma, the equal of the highest in the world. He transformed the ruined field into a verdant green blossoming and promising a rich crop of its fruit. The Hindus are forever beholden to Guru Gobind Singh and bow before him in grateful esteem.

Outstanding Qualities of the Guru

It shall be amiss on my part, if I fail to write about the qualities of the Guru that emerge from the happenings penned on the foregoing pages. I shall write only about these. Every Punjabi is conversant with these traits of the Guru, though no one so far has tried to capture them in writing. Mine is going to be the first exercise in this direction, if I falter here and there, I crave the reader's indulgence to bear with me. If I repeat myself or seem to be contradicting myself, it is entirely my fault, the fault of a novice in this field.

Guru Gobind Singh was a true anchorite and a

true patriot. Krishna and Bhishma had sermonised in the *Mahabhart*a that a man who gives up his life for the good of others is the greatest of all anchorites. The Guru not only gave up his life for the welfare of others but also gave up everything he had for the love of his country. He sacrificed his ease and comfort, his blood and body for his nation. He did not hesitate to sacrifice his all for his country and people. He may easily be called the greatest among those who gave up everything for their country. Giving up entails first possessing a thing and then giving it up for a noble cause for the general good. Buddha detached himself from the world out of fear of pain and suffering. The detachment of Bhishma was inspired by the selfish motive of gaining the favour of his father. The Guru gave up everything he had for his people, for his country. He sacrificed everything for the Hindus, for their welfare and for their Dharma, without any selfish motive or thought of return. Had he so desired he could have rolled snugly in the lap of luxury, could have demanded and enjoyed enormous esteem and respect, could have received paeans of praise as a revered Guru. He never hankered after such petty things.

It is extremely rare if not altogether impossible to find all the good qualities in one man. But the Guru was an embodiment of all round perfection. He was a poet, a religious leader, a religious and social reformer, an excellent planner and counsellor and a superb general. He was a poet whose verse was forceful and vibrant with emotions of every kind, and highly

eloquent. As a reformer in the social and religious spheres he had no peer. In the battle-field he was a dauntless general unperturbed by the turn of events. He was a sagacious and farsighted counsellor, a true lover of his country, an unflagging champion of his people, an unrivalled martyr of his country.

Krishna, Ram Chandra and Shankara were great men and in their time they performed great deeds. Guru Gobind Singh surpassed them all in working wonders for the nation and the country. In the battlefield, Krishna exhorted martial princes to drive away any thoughts of cowardice out of their minds and prepare for the battle, while the Guru uplifted and filled with fervour and fighting spirit such people who had been turned into mere clods of clay during many centuries of oppression, and who had never dreamed of holding weapons. Inspired by the Guru they performed such deeds of exceptional valour as put into shade the exploits of Arjuna in the battlefield. And with a tiny band of these men the Guru having no worldly possessions, confronted the innumerable Imperial hordes with vast resources at their disposal.

He was very steadfast. He stuck to the last to the mission of his life, which he had conceived during the life time of his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Every moment of his life, he kept his mission before him. He continuously worked for its success. No grief, no hardship, no adversity in short nothing could or did take his mind away from his mission. He did not waver

in his resolve at the death of his sons and his near and dear ones.

Nothing could lower his courage. No defeat could dishearten, no distress could depress him, no predicament could make him despondent. A little respite after a rout, made him gather his men and prepare for another showdown in the battlefield with a redoubtable enemy with the vast resources of an equally vast empire at his back. He fought successfully against armies made up of professional soldiers. With bands of ill-equipped men from the lower rungs of society — essentially non combatants — having little or no training in war-fare, he fought successfully against armies made up of professional soldiers. No situation was hopeless for him. Visualize the valiant stand taken by the Guru and his forty Sikhs against the Imperial hordes at Chamkaur. The entire History of the world cannot offer its peer.

He was an excellent fighter himself, equally skilled in the handling of the sword, the bow, the spear and other weapons. He always fought in the forefront to inspire his Sikhs with feats of personal valour, and to bolster their courage. His sword used to spread consternation in the ranks of Imperial army and his arrows always dented the enemy attack. He was not only an excellent fighter, but was also a superb general. He knew how to marshall his men and get the best out of them. Many a time he defeated the combined armies of the Subedars and the Hill Rajas with a small

force. His presence was electrifying for his men. He always went where his presence was needed most. He inspired his men to perform deeds of unique valour, to die fighting against impossible odds, to beat back numerically superior forces. Excellent generals had not been great fighters. But the Guru possessed both these qualities in the highest degree.

He was very hardy and industrious. Whenever he found leisure, he used to train his men. He bore all kinds of hardships, braving the thorny paths barefooted in the dark night, sleeping on clods of earth, breasting the raging torrents, going without food and rest, with perfect equanimity. He would often thank his Lord Akal for such harsh blessings. He never felt dismayed by any adversity. He could send his sons to fight and see them die fighting before his very eyes without wincing. He could hear calmly the news of the horrible deaths of his remaining two children of the tender ages of seven and nine years. No word or action of his ever displayed despondency.

The Guru was never in a haste to do anything. He would always ponder over all aspects of an issue before going in for any action. The laying of the firm foundation of the Khalsa is a wonderful example of his superb circumspection. So firm was the foundation of the edifice of the Khalsa, that the Imperial swords and guns, the Imperial power and glory could not check its growth. Every man who became a Sikh of the Guru, was infused with such mettle that he thought nothing

of battling with death, of sacrificing his life for his faith and the good of others; Guru Gobind Singh turned cowards into courageous men, traders into tough fighters and the down-trodden into doughty warriors. His men were not only great warriors in the battle-field, but were also men of integrity, humane, gentle, full of love for all, God-loving, open and truthful. He inculcated the noble qualities of selfless service and self-sacrifice in his people. He was the first man to think of nationalism and to foster feeling of nationalism among the Indian people.

He was not only highly circumspect but was far-sighted as well. He planned not only for the present but also for the time to come. With his far-sight he knit the Khalsa into such a strong union, gave it such principles as would forestall any degeneration or decline. His abolition of the Gurudom was a very sagacious, timely and far-sighted step. It has verily saved the Khalsa from losing its purity and character. He was a good administrator and personally looked after everything. He managed his resources skillfully and kept a small army at no great expense. He looked after the well-being of everyone of his men.

There was a magic in his words that carried away his Sikhs. They would gladly do anything for him so much that they would not hesitate to sacrifice their lives at his behest. Guru Gobind Singh loved his Sikhs equally well without any distinction of high or low and they were aware of this. The Guru endeared himself

to all with his sweet manners, soft words and warm heart. He was a great lover of mankind and a firm believer in the brotherhood of man. That is why despite being a relentless enemy of the cruel and despotic Muslim rulers he was loved and honoured by the ordinary Muslims. The carrying of the Guru on a cot raised high by two Muslims, to a place of safety when the Imperial army was looking for him, bears this out amply. He was very courteous and generous. His *Langar* (kitchen) was always open to any hungry person. His house was always open to the needy. He and his services were always there for the taking by any oppressed person. Though the Hill Rajas were dead set against him and left no occasion to fight against him, but the Guru readily responded to their supplication and helped them when they were in sore distress.

He had a jovial nature and loved to play practical jokes on others. We all know how he alongwith his fellows broke the pitchers of ladies, in his childhood at Patna. He had a fine sense of humour, subtle as well as robust. Once one of his devotee Sikhs killed a tiger, brought its whole skin alongwith its head face, ears etc. intact and presented it to him. The Guru asked his Sikh to put the skin along with the head etc. onto a donkey. They did a nice job of it and the donkey came to resemble a tiger. The Guru asked the Sikhs to set the donkey loose, out on the streets. The people taking it for a real tiger were seized with panic and ran for their lives. Some hid themselves while some others climbed trees and house-tops. People locked their

doors. At last the donkey brayed and the people heaved a sigh of relief.

He was not only a patron of arts but also a man of letters himself. He was fond of reading and especially loved to go through historical books especially those dealing with the exploits of the Indian heroes. He liked such books to be read to him. He was quite proficient in Arabic and Persian and also knew Sanskrit well. He used to hear with great interest readings from the old Scriptures, The Shastras, Upanishdas and Puranas, etc. He was a great poet and kept a coterie of 52 poets at his court. He had a great love for war epics, encouraged his poets to compose verses on martial themes and himself composed epics celebrating the exploits of the goddess Durga of Hindu Mythology in stirring verse that arouses martial feelings in the readers.

He devoted some time daily, both in the morning and the evening, to the worship of Akal the Formless One, and to the singing of *Shabads* (hymns) from Gurbani. Recitations from the Holy Granth, the Guru Granth Sahib, were made every-day and the Guru always attended these recitations in the holy congregation. He personally recited Japji Sahib, Jaap Sahib, Swayyas, Chaupai and Rehras everyday. He was very regular and devout in saying his prayers and performing his religious duties. He thoroughly despised idol-worship and the observance of *Sharadhs* (obsequies for the well-being of the dead ancestors).

Guru Gobind Singh was a votary of Truth. He never lost sight of Truth in any of his teachings and actions. He did nothing untruthful either in the battlefield or in his daily works. He was often requested by people to perform miraculous deeds. His reply ever was that man is a powerless being, all miracle-making lies with the Lord. Once at Agra he was asked about the existence of miracles. He answered that man cannot perform miracles but three things in the world are miracles in themselves; steel, strength and wealth. Steel (the Guru meant weapons) can grant crowns, fulfil a man's desires, help him gain honour and liberation through a heroic death in the battle-field. Power (physical and intellectual) helps one gain dominance in any sphere. The powerless are pushed to the wall, humbled and humiliated. They are the slaves of the powerful people. Wealth wins over everybody. A poor man has no friends, no relatives. Wealth enables a man to attain honour and respect and fulfil his desires.

The Guru was very simple in manners and dealings. He loved everyone irrespective of caste, creed, social status or any other man-made distinction. His concept of love was all-embracing, the concept of Universal Brotherhood which cut-across all barriers of caste, colour, creed, clan and country. He received everyone, including those who considered themselves his enemies openly, with a smiling face. He was a man without any shortcoming, above praise and averse to

denigration of others. Generous to a fault, he helped even the Hill Rajas who were ever eager and did their level best to trouble him. Bahadur Shah, the Emperor of India wanted to grant him a *Jagir*, but the Guru declined the offer. He was never swayed by desire in his chequered career. He was a true champion of the downtrodden and oppressed Hindus.

Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh

The Guru did not believe in the existence of the so called Avtaras or Incarnations. Nor did he hold it possible that there could ever be an Incarnation of the Formless One. Some people have put forth that the Guru believed in Avtaras. They are misled by his verse on Ram Chandra, Krishna, Vishnu, Brahma etc., the 24 Avtaras included in the anthology of his works, the Dasam Granth. They adduce plausibly that since he praised them in his verses, he must have believed in their existence. But these gentlemen fail to take cognizance of the fact that nowhere in his writings had the Guru accepted them as Avtaras or Incarnations of the Formless Akal.

In reality he wrote about them in the language of the people, drawing from the mythological lore current at that time. He wrote about their exploits in glowing terms, using forceful words with telling effect, mainly to arouse the martial spirit of the people lying dormant then. It is too farfetched to assume that a writer's having written about something is a conclusive proof of his belief in its existence.

It is meaningless to make one's own unwarranted deductions ignoring the words of the Guru which are very clear. His words can be classified in two categories : firstly (a) those in which the refutation of Avtaras is implied or merely hinted at and secondly (b) those in which it is clear and pointed.

The First Kind

He writes in the *Akal Ustat* (the Praise of the Lord)

1. *Namastavaṅ Akāle.*

My salutations to the Lord who is above Death.

2. *Namastaṅ Ajaname.*

My salutations to Him, who does not take birth.

3. *Ajanam Hai, Awaran Hai.*

He has no body and no birth, He has no caste.

The Second Kind

1. *Kete Krishan se kīṭ koṭai upāe.*

Usāre garhe pher meṭe banāe. (96)

The Lord Akal creates millions of worms like Krishna, annihilates them and recreates and so on.

The Guru writes in 33 Swayyas :

- a. *Kāhūn lai thok badhe ur Thākur,*
Kāhūn Mahesh kau ish bakhānyo. (12)

Some hang stones as gods, around their necks, while some others erroneously call Mahesh 'God'.

- b. *Kāhūn kahyo Hari māṇdar main̄ Hari,
Kāhūn masīt ke bīch pramānyo.* (12)

Some people say that the Lord lives in the Mandir alone, while some others believe that He is in the Mosque only.

- c. *Kāhūn ne Rām kahyo Krishnā kāhūn,
Kāhūn manai avtār nā mānyo.* (12)

Some people say that Krishna is God, while some others believe in the Avtaras of God.

- d. *Phokaṭ dharam bisār sabai,
Kartār hī kau kartā jī jānyo.* (12)

I have discarded all these false religions and am of the firm view that He who is the creator of the Universe, is the only Lord.

2. *Jau kahuṇ Rām ajon(i) ajai at(i),
Kahe kau Koshil kukh jayo jū.
Kāl hūn Kāhn kahai jih kau,
Kih kārāṇ kāl ke dīn bhayo jū.* (13)

You declare that the Lord does not take birth and is formless; then how could he be born of Kaushalya's womb, why was Krishna whom you describe as deathless humbled by death ?

(13th Swayya)

3. *Kayo kaho Krishan kripā-nidh hai,
Kih kāj te badhak bāṇ lagāyo,
Aur kulīn udhārat jo,
Kih te apno kul nās karāyo.*

*Ād(i) ajūn (i) kahāe kaho,
 Kim Devak (i) ke jāthrañtar āyo.
 Tāt na māt kahai jih ko,
 Tih kiyo Basudeveh bāp kahāyo.* (14)

How come that Krishna, whom you people call the gracious, was killed by the arrow of a hunter ? You call Krishna the saviour of your race. Why did he let his progeny, the Yadavs come to an end ? Why was he whom you call as the One without a beginning and Unborn, conceived in the womb of Devaki and born ? You call Krishna the One, unborn and without any father or mother. Then why was Vasudeva called his father ?

(14th Swayya)

*4. Jāl badhe sab hī mrit ke,
 Koū Rām Rasūl na bāchan pāe.
 Añt mare pachhtāe prithī par,
 Je jag main avtār kahāe.
 Re man lail ikel hī kāl ke,
 Lāgat kāhe na pāen pāe.* (15)

Everybody is caught in the noose of Death, no Rama or prophet can escape from it. All of them who made grand claims of being the Avtaras of God, died repentant. Why dost not thou, O, hapless being seek the shelter of the One Lord ?

(15th Swayya)

*5. Main na Ganeseh pritham manāūñ,
 Kishan Bishan Kabhūñ na dhiāūñ.*

Kān sune pāihchān nā tin soñ.

Liv lāgī mohī pag in soñ,

Mahā kāl rakhvār hamāro.

Mahā loh mai kiñkar thāro.

(Krishna Avtar, 434-35)

I do not seek the blessings of Ganesh first, I don't worship Krishna or Vishnu, etc. I do not recognize them. I am engrossed in the loving-devotion of my Lord alone. The Lord of Death, Akal, is my refuge and He saves me in all tribulations.

6. Krishna killed some demons and performed some other marvellous deeds. He declared himself as the God. He was consumed by Death, so he could not be the Lord. How can he save those who have faith in him, since he himself was subject to Death. Only the Lord is All-Powerful and only He creates and destroys.

(Shabad Hazare)

7. The Lord has no friend, no foe. He does not desire His praise, neither is He angered by dispraise. He has no parents, neither has He any progeny. So He cannot be Krishna, who was born of Devaki's womb.

(Shabad Hazare)

On gods and goddesses : He was as opposed to gods and goddesses as to the concept of Avtaras. He did not believe in them or in their worship.

1. One cannot obtain Liberation by chanting the names of Ram or Rahim, Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, the

Sun, the Moon etc., they are all the thralls of death.

2. *Krishan au Bishan japo tohe koṭik,*

Rām Rahīm bhali bidh(i) dhiāyo.

Brahm japio ar(u) saṁbh(u) thapio,

Tih te tuhe ko kinhūn na bachāyo.

Koī kari tapsā dīn koṭik,

Kahūn na kauḍī ko kām kaḍhāyo.

Kāmak(u) maṅtra kasire ko kām na,

Kāl ko ghāo kinhūn na bachāyo.

(97/1)

You prayed to Krishna and Bishna and millions of others, millions of times, you worshipped Ram and Rahim also, supplicated Shiva and Brahma, but none of them could save you from death. You prayed to all of them millions of times for millions of days, but all these countless supplications were not worth a dime. Impelled by the greed of worldly things, you indulged in incessant incantations of Mantra and Tantric practices, but none of these could save you from mauling by death. (Vachitar Natak)

The Guru considered himself no better than an ordinary person. He was well aware of the tendencies of the devotees and the temper of the times towards his deification and elevation to the status of an Av-tara. In order to forestall any such endeavours on the part of his followers, he unlike Christ, Moses, Mohammed, Krishna, Buddha, etc., who called themselves the dear and near ones, the prophet of God or God himself, called himself a lowly servitor of God.

The Guru declares in his *Vachitar Natak* :

Jo ham ko Parmesar uchar(i) haiñ.

Te sabh narak kuñd maiñ par(i) haiñ.

Mo ko dās tavan kā jāno.

Yā mai bhed na rañch pachhāno. (32)

Main hau param Purakh ko dāsā.

Dekhan āyo jagat tamāsā. (33/6)

All those who call me God, shall fall in the pits of Hell. Take me for a servitor of His, there is not the slightest doubt in this. I am a lowly servant of the Supreme Being and I have been sent to witness the world drama. This humility raises the Guru far above the other saints of the world.

The verses above give a clear reflection of his views on gods and goddesses and their worship. He does not subscribe to the Vedantic view that the Creator and His creatures are one and equal. He holds that the creature cannot be equal to his Creator.

Idol Worship : When the Guru did not believe in the entity of gods, goddesses and Avtaras, how could he support their worship by men. He was undoubtedly opposed to idol-worship and so was he to the worshipping of the dead and their tombs. He has written many verses on this theme; a few specimens are reproduced below :

1. *Phokaṭ dharam bhayo phal hīn,*

Ju pūj silā jug(i) koṭ(i) gavāi.

Sidh kahāñ sil ke Parse bal,

Bridh ghaṭī nav nidh na pāī.
Āj hī āj samo jū bitiyō,
Naih kāj saryo kachh(u) lāj na āī.
Srī Bhagwaṇt bhajyo na are jaṛh,
Aise hī ais su bais gavāī. (21)

The following of false religious way is a fruitless endeavour. If you worship a stone for millions of Yugas, it will not yield any good, you have simply wasted your time. You do not gain any success, you destroy your energy and do not obtain the worldly riches. O, ignoramus you have wasted your life in idol-worship. Don't you feel ashamed of yourself for not worshipping your True Lord ? . (21st Swayya)

2. *Kāhe ko pūjat pāhan kau.*
Kachhū pāhan mai Parmesar nāhī. (20)

Why do you worship stones ? The supreme Lord is not in them and cannot be attained by stone-worship. Pray to the True Lord, whose worship removes all your grief and sorrow. Only utter His True Naam, which is a panacea for all ills. Keep away from the futile ways of false worship. (20th Swayya)

3. *Jau jug tai kar hai tapsā,*
Kachh tohe prasaṇn na pāhan kai hai.
Hāth uṭhāe bhalī bidh so,
Jaṛ tohe kachhū bar dān na dai hai.

If you worship a stone till the close of Yūgic Cycles, it cannot express its gratification, it cannot raise its hand and bless you with anything, O, fool !

How have you come to believe foolishly that it can save you from any distress ? You are simply degrading yourself by this kind of worship. (22nd Swayya)

The Guru declares in *Vachitar Natak* :

*Pakhāñ pūj hoñ nahīñ,
Na bhekh bhīj hoñ kahīñ.
Anant nām gāe hoñ.*

Param Purakh pāe hoñ. (35/6)

I am not a worshipper of stones, I do not follow the false sects. I sing the glories of the Infinite and savour His Bliss.

In his famous supplication the *Chaupai*, he says :

*Tā kau kar(i) pāhan anumānat.
Mahā mūrkh kachh bhed na jānat.
Mahādev ko kahat sadā Siv.
Nirañkār kā chinat naih bhiv.*

(16)

The fools, without realizing the mystery of His Infinite Glory, take Him for a stone. They call the god of gods as the True One without understanding the concept of the Formless Lord.

Wahe-Guru : According to the Sikh Gurus, the word 'Wahe-Guru' is symbolic of the Formless Eternal Lord, who is the True Guru (Enlightener) of a man (in his life) and the Creator of the Universe. Guru Gobind Singh used this word in the same way as the earlier Gurus. He says in the *Chaupai* :

Ād(i) ant(i) ekai avtārā.

Soi Gurū samjhayhu hamārā.

(9)

He who is the same one throughout, the only Incarnation of Himself is my Guru.

Tiratha: The Guru attached no great importance to the practice of bathing at Tirathas. He says :

Jal kai majan(i) je gat(i) hovai,

Nit nit meṇduk nāveh.

Jaise meṇduk taise oe nar,

Phir(i) phir(i) jonī āveh.

If washing one's body with water helped one attain Liberation, then all the frogs should have been emancipated. Like the frogs, the pilgrims, who pin their hopes in Tirathas, gyrate in the cycle of births and deaths.

He held the rites and rituals-ridden, old religion as false and warned the Khalsa, time and again to keep away from them. He forbade the Khalsa to use intoxicants and smoke tobacco.

God (Ishwar) : The Guru believed in the God who is Truth-Consciousness-Bliss, Eternal, Unborn, Unbegotten, All-pervading, Fearless, Infinite, Peerless, Formless, Immaculate, Just, Sustainer Universal. All his writing in his Granth amply bear this out.

Ilham (Revelation) : The Guru always stressed that all his actions were done in obedience to the Will of his Lord. Unlike the old prophet he never claimed any revelations for his *Bani* (writings) or that the Word of God was revealed unto him. He did not believe in

miracles nor did he claim to perform supernatural deeds. But he performed one of the greatest miracles of all times—The turning of cowards into heroes, the uplifting of the downtrodden of centuries to glorious heights of manhood.

His Writings

Dasam Granth is the famous anthology of the writings of the 10th Guru, Guru Gobind Singh. Some portions out of it were composed by him, while the other portions belong to the poets that he kept around him in his court. His writings bear the words *Sri Mukh-Wak Patshahi dasween* (from the lips of the 10th Guru). It is a voluminous book having 1066 pages. A detailed review of this Granth is beyond the scope of this book. But I will briefly dwell on the writings contained in this Granth.

Some portions of this Granth have been written in very forceful words in an equally forceful style. To the portions of the book written by his court poets belong compositions on Avtaras and the goddess Durga, poems concerning battles and the composition *Istri Charitar*. The verses written by the Guru are interspersed throughout the Granth. It had been written in Gurmukhi script and Punjabi language and rightly so. The *Zafarnama* and the last portion of the Granth is in Persian, though written in Gurmukhi script which creates some difficulties for the reader.

This Granth is a vast storehouse of Lord devotion, of the Eulogy of His Traits and His Naam. Its

main portions are :

- 1) **Jaap Sahib** : It is his composition and can be considered as an exposition of Japji of Guru Nanak.
- 2) **Akal Ustat** : The Guru's composition, contains the Eulogy of the Akal in glorious terms.
- 3) **Vachitar Natak** : The wonderful drama in his own forceful words, of the Guru's life and that of his predecessors, an account of his taking birth.
- 4) **Chandi Charitar I** } A glowing account of the
- 5) **Chandi Charitar II** } mythological fierce battles between Chandi goddess and the demons and her victories over them, in very stirring words.
- 6) **Chandi Ki Var** : It appears to have been written especially for arousing the martial spirit of the Sikhs.
- 7) **Gian Parboddh** : It is full of spiritual Lore concerning God and His praise.
- 8) **Chaubis Avtara** : It is a forceful recounting of the exploits of 24 Avtaras of Vishnu from Hindu Mythology, in the manner of *Chandi Charitars*.
- 9) **Mehdi Mir** : It is written about the future Imam Mehdi yet to come with what purpose or view in mind is unclear.
- 10) **Brahma Avtara** : An account of the mythical

Avtaras of Brahma.

11. **Ruder Avtara** : An account of the mythical avtara of Ruder or Shivji.
- 12) **Shastar Nam Mala** : It is uncertain whether it is the Guru's composition or not. It is an account of the descriptions of various weapons and their praise.
- 13) **Sri Mukhwak 33 Swayyas** : In these verses, the teachings of the Quran and the Puranas have been shown at variance with his own teachings and that of his predecessors. To some extent the teachings of the Vedas have also been criticised.
- 14) **Shabad Hazare** : The Guru's own composition extolling the Glory of the Lord Akal and Devotion to Him.
- 15) **Istri Charitar** (The Wiles of Women) : Not his own compositions, forms a big chunk of the Granth. It is an unnecessary appendage not worthy of inclusion in the Granth. It is an account of the female guiles and the sorrows of the other wife and the step-mother.
- 16) **Hakayat** : Written in Gurmukhi script but composed in Persian. In this Aurangzeb had been confronted with sample accounts of the cruelties he had perpetrated on the people and forcefully warned of the evil consequences.

It is quite probable that this Granth was put together after the death of the Guru. The Sikhs hold it in great reverence but it is not read, and recited as much and as often as Guru Granth Sahib. The Guru himself never gave any directions that only his Granth should be given the place of pride or that his Bani should be preferred to the Bani of the other Gurus.

The Guru got the Bani of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur included in the Adi-Granth but never made any effort for the inclusion of his own writings. He could have easily done so, if he wanted.

His poetic faculty, with its felicity of phrase and fecundity of imagination, is one of the special traits of the Guru. His writings have the universality of appeal as they touch the tender strings of the human heart with the lyrical strains of the Cosmic Brotherhood of Man, as they fill one with martial feelings, arouse the martial spirit and prepare for a life of purposeful action. His graphic descriptions of the gory battle scenes, bring out alive the battlefield itself before one's eyes, with the neighing of horses, the groaning of the wounded dying, the shrieking of violent death, the clashing of weapons, and the clamour of war.

The Guru was able to infuse new blood and vigour in the dying Hindu nation. From amongst the cowardly and supine Hindus, he created a new breed of virile and valiant people, the Khalsa, filled with the spirit of selfless service and self-sacrifice for the good of humanity and the Glory of Akal. This Khalsa, is a Living Testimony to the Guru's mirific qualities.