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HIS
OUTSTANDING
ACHIEVEMENTS

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GURU GOBIND SINGH HIS OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENTS

Sri Guru Gobind Singh was the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs. He had not completed even ten years of his age when his father, Sri Guru Teg Bahadur, laid down his life for the cause of justice and Dharma, and particularly for the protection of the Kashmiri Pandits, and he was called upon to assume the leadership of the Gurus' followers. With the exception of his revered mother, Mata Gujri, there was no relation of his who could help or guide him in the discharge of his onerous duties. On the other hand, if we take into consideration the opposition that his father had met at the hands of most of the descendants of Guru Hargobind who were all claimants to the Guruship, on the 8th Guru, Guru Harikishen's demise, we can even assume that if they, I mean his paternal relations, were not actually hostile to him, they could not have been very friendly to him either. So, young Gobind Singh was left almost entirely to depend upon his own qualities and traits of character with which God had endowed him, and subsequent events are ample proof of the fact that they were really of high order, in fact exceptional. It, however, appears that he did not merely rely upon the gifts which the Providence had bestowed upon him. On the other hand, he spent his time, on one hand, in delving deep into religious and spiritual problems, and on the other, he

started learning Braj Bhasha, Sanskrit and Persian languages, in following literary pursuits and in acquiring skill in swordsmanship and other soldierly sports.

A large number of eminent poets and writers were attracted to his Darbar (Court) from all parts of the country and the Guru worked hard in producing and getting produced superb religious and devotional *banis* (compositions) as also non-religious literature covering various subjects. Unfortunately, good part of that treasure got lost when Guru Ji was forced to leave Anandpur during the war with the Mughals. but what could be salvaged was after his death collected and compiled by Bhai Mani Singh in the shape of a *Granth* which was named *Dasam Granth*. Some of the devotional *banis* contained in the *Dasam Granth* came to be read and recited by the Sikhs like the prominent *banis* of Shri Adi Granth, but most of the *Dasam Granth* remained more or less a sealed book to the average Sikh. In spite of the fact that the major portion of the *Dasam Granth* was in high-flown and rich Braj Bhasha, even the lovers of that language and popular Hindi did not care to study it; the reason probably was that the script in which the *Dasam Granth* was written, was Gurmukhi which they neither knew, nor cared to learn. A few years ago, a teacher of one of the Delhi colleges, made a critical study and research into the *Dasam Granth* and wrote a thesis on the basis of which the Panjab University conferred upon him the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy. This thesis has now been published in the form of a book—*The poetry of the Dasam Granth*—in which the learned author has revealed

the exquisite beauties of poetry, rhyme, rhythm, imagery, the richness of vocabulary, depth of thought, flight of imagination high philosophic principles and trends, etc. of the Granth.

There is one important matter relating to the *Dasam Granth* of which mention need be made here. When Bhai Mani Singh compiled it, he had hardly any time to screen the *banis* which came into his hands and he put them all in the volume without definitely stating which of them were those of Guruji himself. A controversy has now arisen as to which of the *banis* were written or composed by Guru Gobind Singh and which by others who worked in his Darbar. The mere fact that various writers continued preparing and translating books of all kinds for several years should make one think that some of the works included in the *Dasam Granth* must have been from their pens. In addition, there is a strong opinion among the Sikhs that the "persual of the *banis* contained in the Granth indicates that all of them could not have been written or composed by Guruji. But the learned author of the *Poetry of the Dasam Granth* holds a different opinion and maintains that the entire collection of which the *Dasam Granth* is composed is, without doubt, the genuine work of Guruji. I have carefully gone through that part of the book and in spite of the arguments advanced and the authorities quoted in support of the conclusion arrived at by the learned author, I find it impossible to agree with him and so do a large number of Sikhs who have given any attention to the matter. In one of the letters addressed by me to

the Secretary of the Central Committee, which has been formed for the celebration of Guruji's 300th Birth Anniversary, I made a number of suggestions for the consideration of the Committee; one of them was that steps should be taken to have the above-mentioned question examined by a small sub-committee of learned persons, well-versed in the Gurbani. I take the liberty of repeating this suggestion once more because I regard the question very vital and capable of far-reaching repercussions, if not properly handled.

As is well known, the foundation of Sikh religion was laid by Sri Guru Nanak Dev, the First Guru. After him the small band of seekers-after-truth that he had brought into existence grew under the patronal guidance of his eight successors, into a well-knit community. They were not very large in number but they had come to possess considerable influence among the religious-minded sections of the Hindus and even among the pious Muslims. A study of Guru Gobind Singh's life history indicates that the main idea working in his mind when he was old enough to start active work, was that time had arrived when the followers of the new faith should be organised and given their own literature and, since the government of the day was not kindly disposed towards them but was definitely hostile they should be militarily so equipped and trained that they would be able to protect themselves and their institutions in case of danger. With the later object in view, he established the order of the Khalsa, the first five pioneers of which, known among the Sikhs as *Panj Pyaras*, he

regularly baptised by a ceremony called *Pahul* and made it incumbent upon all who took the *Pahul* to observe the five symbols called Ks because their names began with the letter K, such as Kesh (hair), Kirpan, etc.

In order to see that these injunctions of his were rigidly followed, Guruji also laid down the four *Kurahaits* (major lapses) on committing any one of which a Sikh who has taken the *Pahul* becomes a *Pattit* (an apostate). I do not want to go here into the philosophy and merits of the five Ks and to discuss in detail the reasons which made Guruji treat the above-mentioned lapses as the most serious ones. I wish, however, to say a word regarding one particular lapse, namely, carnal connection by a Sikh with a Muslim woman. The injunction is that the Sikh who has such a connection ceases to be a Sikh, i. e. he should be regarded an an apostate. Guru Ji attached greatest importance to general chastity and emphasised it in very strong terms. This is what he said in his own words :

“Since I attained the age of understanding, the command of my father and Guru has been :

‘Ever inculcate and develop love for your own spouse;
but

“Never err to seek the bed of another’s wife even in a dream”.

Despite this emphatic declaration of the above rule, so far as sexual morality is concerned, the Guru considered that something more was required to impress upon his followers

the imperative necessity of respecting and protecting the honour of Muslim women, and there was a reason for this. During the war with the Mughals the Sikh armies had seen that on many occasions the enemy soldiery indulged in wanton and savage attacks upon defenceless Hindu and Sikh women and took pleasure in ravishing them. Guruji apprehended that if occasions arose and Muslim women fell into the hands of the Sikh soldiery, there would be great temptation for the later to maltreat and dishonour them, just in a spirit of retaliation. So, in order to deter them from doing this, he decreed that such an act should be regarded, as if it were, a capital offence from the religious point of view.

That Guru Gobind Singh did not believe in *Ahimsa*, cannot be denied. His life history amply proves that he did not indulge in the fight with the Mughals either for the fun of it or with a view to avenging the tyranny that they had been perpetrating upon Hindus and Sikhs. The fact that he spent years and years of his youthful days in the advancement of cultural activities and in the production of high class works of poetry and literature, is a proof positive of his desire and objective to live in peace and to spread harmony and concord in the world. History does not record a single instance of his taking initiative for a battle with the enemy. Previous to him, two of his illustrious predecessors namely, Guru Arjan, his great grandfather, and Guru Tegh Bahadur his own father, had offered their lives as acts of passive resistance with the hope that their sacrifices would open the

eyes of the tyrants and make them change the enormity of their policy. Unfortunately, their hopes were not realised and Guru Gobind Singh decided that there was every justification for him to fight. His words in the *Zafarnama*, letter in Persian addressed to Emperor Aurangzab, are :

**“Chun kar azkumah heelte dar guzzasht,
Halal ast burdan beh shamshir dast.”**

(When things go beyond all remedy, it is permissible to draw the sword). It must, however, be remembered that his war was not against the Muslim nation; it was only against the foreign tyrant and the tyrant in person and not against his relatives or descendants. Even when he was engaged in deadly battles and the exigencies of the moment necessitated the sacrifice of all that was near to him and he held dear, including his revered mother, four sons and faithful disciples, he enjoyed the affection and respect of devout Muslims and gave them respect in return.

Guruji's physical life on this earth terminated when he was hardly 42 years old. He had gone to the South and there he was stabbed by an assassin, who, it is believed, was sent for this purpose by a Mughal satrap. The mission that he had come to accomplish apparently was still where he had taken it up. He had tried hard and sacrificed everything and every person that a man of the world can regard dear. Of his four sons, two had been martyred by the Mughal armies in an unequal encounter at Chamkaur and other two had been captured and bricked up alive at Sirhind by the orders of the Mughal Governor because they refused to embrace his way of life. The

number of persons who were prepared to lay down their lives in order to vindicate Guruji's mission was very large even then, but there being no one to lead them they did not know what to do. This condition lasted for about 5 years when Banda Bahadur appeared on the scene. He had a meteoric rise but his career was very short, after which he and his band which consisted of about 700 faithful followers were overpowered and brought to Delhi in fetters and butchered there in cold blood. Banda himself was subjected to all sorts of inhuman tortures and his body was pincered with red-hot iron rods until death came to the rescue of his soul. This added to further frustration of the Sikh community. Thousands renounced their faith or bought their freedom with wealth and riches that they could lay their hands upon. The rest ran to jungles and spent their days subsisting on fruits and wild vegetation. Virtually a reign of terror was let loose in the plains of Panjab. Prize was set upon Sikhs' heads. If one produced a Sikh alive in the Mughal Court he was paid Rs. 80/- per head; and if one was found in possession of a dead Sikh's head with long hair he earned the reward of thirty silver coins. At times some intrepid Sikhs in the form of guerilla bands sallied out and gave a fight to the mighty Mughal armies but being very few in numbers and meagrely armed, they were generally routed and had to rush back to their hilly lairs. Two most notable incidents are described by the Sikh historians as *Ghalugharas*, the battles of blood, the major one and smaller one, and so heavy were the casualties and losses suffered by the Sikhs that

the local Mughal satraps reported to the Centre that the community had been completely wiped off from the face of the earth. These conditions went on till 1739, when at last the few Sikh bands who were still alive decided to come out into the open, fight for their existence or die in the struggle. Without any organisation or leader, practically unarmed, except with crude swords and spears, they devised novel tactics of warfare. The details of their exploits are still shrouded in mystery. Dr. Hari Ram Gupta and a few other research scholars and historians have recently discovered and brought to light the story of their soul-stirring deeds but more and extensive research work is yet to be done. Moreover, it is not necessary to dilate upon all that in this small article. All that may be mentioned is that as a result of incessant war which the bands waged and the wonderful struggle that they carried on against heavy odds, by 1769, i. e. in a short period of 30 years or so, the Sikhs became the masters of Panjab, from the Jamuna right up to the Indus, and for the first time after the reign of Ashoka drove away the foreign hordes across the frontier hills.

The study of history will tell you what a great and stupendous task the Sikhs accomplished and what were the sacrifices that they had to make for the final victory, The Mughal Empire had, no doubt, started tottering after the death of Aurangzeb, but it was still quite strong, well-organised and very rich. The Governors of Panjab, who had been entrusted with the task of exterminating the Sikhs were given free hand and were furnished with immense wealth to accomplish this object.

The Hindu community sympathised with, and even secretly helped the Sikhs, as they well knew that the salvation of the country lay in their hands, but they had their own problems and because of the dreadful sufferings of which they also were the victims, they were disorganised and even demoralised. How in the face of all this, the handful of Sikhs succeeded in putting an end to the Mughal rule in the greater part of the Panjab and in establishing small kingdoms, which they called *Missals*, will always baffle human understanding. My own opinion is that the secret of this was not temporal power or material resources, because these the Sikhs had none, but the indomitable spirit infused into them by the deeds and teachings of the great Guru Gobind Singh. No doubt, Guru Gobind Singh was not present in body amongst his followers, his soul and spirit was all the time with them; and all that he had taught them by precept as well as practice continued to guide and inspire them.

This is how Guruji's mission to root out tyranny was ultimately fulfilled; and it was a great achievement indeed.

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