

I/2011

# NISHAAN

NAGAARA

## Zafarnama

The Epistle of Victory

Some Wars are Just  
'Raj Karega Khalsa'  
Looking to the Future



# Contents

Issue 1/2011

**2 Editorial:**  
**Telling Truth to Power**  
Dr. I.J. Singh



**4 Guru Gobind Singh : Spiritual leader, poet and warrior**  
Khushwant Singh

**8 Creation of The Khalsa**  
Pritam Singh



**14 Epistle of Victory**  
Dr Trilochan Singh



**15 ZAFARNAMA**  
**The Epistle of Victory**  
Navtej Singh Sarna



**26 ZAFARNAMA**  
Photo story by Malkiat Singh



**44 Some Wars Are Just**  
Dr. I.J. Singh  
Drawings by Gagandeep



**52 The Last Letters of Emperor Aurangzeb**  
Captain Bhag Singh



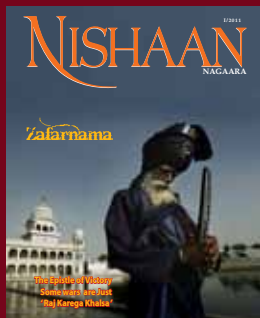
**53 'Raj Karega Khalsa'**  
Dr Kharak Singh and Prof G.S. Dhillon



**61 Looking to The Future**  
Gurminder Deol



**62 Baramaha :**  
**Paintings of Sidharth**



Cover : Gurdwara Lohgarh Sahib in Dina  
(Photograph by Malkiat Singh)

**Editorial Director**  
Dr Jaswant Singh Neki

**Executive Editor**  
Pushpinder Singh

**Joint Editor**  
Bhayee Sikander Singh

**Editorial Board**  
Inni Kaur  
Dr I.J. Singh  
Dr Gurpreet Maini  
Malkiat Singh  
Monica Arora

**Distributors**  
Himalayan Books, New Delhi

#### Editorial Office

D-43, Sujjan Singh Park  
New Delhi 110 003, India  
Tel: (91-11) 24617234  
Fax: (91-11) 24628615

e-mail : nishaan@lycos.com  
: nishaan.nagaara@gmail.com  
website : www.nishaan.in

#### Published by

**The Nagaara Trust**  
16-A Palam Marg  
Vasant Vihar  
New Delhi 110 057, India

#### Printed by

Aegean Offset  
B-220, ECOTECH-III  
Udyog Kendra-I  
Greater Noida Ind. Area

**Please visit us at:**  
[www.nishaan.in](http://www.nishaan.in)

The opinions expressed in the articles published in the Nishaan Nagaara do not necessarily reflect the views or policy of The Nagaara Trust.

## Telling Truth to Power

Hardly is there a Sikh who has not known of the *Zafarnamah*, written in 1706 by Guru Gobind Singh to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Two of the first five Sikhs who became amritdhari, and are remembered as *Panj Piyaaray*, Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh personally carried the missive to the Emperor. Even though it is in *Farsi*, parts of it are integrated into the collective consciousness of Sikh psyche, most of whom are only marginally conversant with that language.

The compound word *Zafarnamah* comes from the Arabic *Zafar*, meaning victory and *Farsi Namah*, meaning letter, epistle or diary. *The Encyclopaedia of Sikhism* (Punjabi University, 1998) tells us that besides this pivotal document three other writings bearing that title exist in Sikh history; two pertain to the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and one relates to Ahmed Shah Durrani's first two invasions of India.

My larger purpose in writing today is to connect the *Zafarnamah* of Guru Gobind Singh to modern notions of war and peace. Here, we bring you the Guru's historical document and matters related to it. This *Zafarnamah* is the one that Sikhs and non-Sikhs – even those that know little about Sikhi - have known about. In many ways it is one of the defining documents of the Sikhs' tryst with destiny.

When *Nishaan* dedicated this special issue on the *Zafarnamah* – the Epistle of Victory that Guru Gobind Singh wrote to the Emperor Aurangzeb, after the Guru evacuated the fort at Anandpur in December 1705 - it also lined up many outstanding scholars to explore and pay tribute to this unique document of Sikh history.

Of course, an additional but special occasion is that now we have a brand new and very attractive rendering of the *Zafarnamah* in English by that distinguished Sikh Indian diplomat, Navtej Singh Sarna. His translation comes across as the labour of love that it is. It brings out the commanding scholarship of *Farsi* by the Guru,

but it also highlights the Guru's uncommon, nay, unique philosophic depth and his extraordinary, indeed superhuman, ability to transcend extreme human suffering.

I need not dwell on the difficulties of translating documents from one language to another, and particularly when the original was drafted over three centuries ago in a very different cultural context; times have changed and the language has evolved in many ways; a living tradition regards the document as its sacred heritage. It is not easy for a translator move seamlessly across such barriers where even a minor slip can doom both the translator and the project.

*Zafarnamah* was penned by Guru Gobind Singh in wartime and its unique and uncertain circumstances; these were the most trying days for him. He had abandoned Anandpur and in the process got separated from his family. His two older sons had embraced martyrdom in battle; the two younger sons aged 6 and 7, had been walled up alive during that period.

When I got the call to write this editorial I wondered how to capture the mood and spirit of the Guru when he titled his letter to the emperor "an epistle of victory." If this is victory what then is defeat? What was he thinking?

And then in a moment of epiphany I saw how I could in one sentence convey in a nutshell what it means to me. I would summarise it as "telling truth to power" that can only be done when in cheerful and an upbeat frame of mind. His state of mind comes out most clearly when he reminds the emperor "so what if I have lost four sons when I have thousands more" He was then referring to his Sikhs that were willing to fearlessly walk to the end with him.

"Telling truth to power" is a heady and intoxicating formula. Many speak of it but in the world of practical political reality – pragmatism, it is rarely seen. In life it is not so easy to practice. Even the best and bravest often flinch and fail.

For Sikhi, speaking truth to power started with Guru Nanak when he addressed the invading conqueror, Emperor Babar, founder of the Mughal dynasty, or other powerful satraps and minor rulers of the day in the early 16th century. His writings in Guru Granth bear forthright and ample testimony.

And telling truth to power became a permanent feature with Sikhs – as if coded in their DNA – as seen in the character of every Guru that followed, most notably Guru Arjan, Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh, as also his four sons; it is equally demonstrated by hundreds of thousands throughout Sikh history and even those in the 20th century and our times today who imbibed the message of Sikhi. Even the events of 1984 saw many who did not shy or slink away from telling truth to power even when their lives were stake.

*Zafarnamah* is forthright and honest. But it is more than that. A community must develop a comprehensive and clear policy of how to deal with the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune that visit upon it periodically. The necessary code of conduct in such challenging circumstances must come to us from the lives of our Guru-Founders, what documentary material they have left us as their legacy, and from our continuous tradition that has translated those habits of the heart, teachings and guidelines into defining our Sikh lifestyle.

This is how we evolve and lay out a comprehensive philosophy of war – when it is just and when it is not. For Sikhs, the rules of warfare emerge clearly and unmistakably from *Zafarnamah*, when laid in juxtaposition with the conduct of the Gurus in war and peace. The *Zafarnamah* of Guru Gobind Singh, though a dramatic document is, to my mind, a lineal descendent of the world view and polity expounded, laid out, and lived by the earlier Gurus, beginning with Guru Nanak.

What expectations and behavior are appropriate in war? How is war justified? Is preemptive war alright? How and when should one pursue peace? What goals justify war – conquest of a people or their properties? How to negotiate a peace while in the midst of war? How, in the interest of peace, to rise above the grave injustice done by the enemy? Both Gurus Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh demonstrated that. How to treat prisoners or those who have surrendered? How best to treat a fallen enemy? As Bhai Ghanayya did with kindness and aid, which Guru Gobind Singh approved, or quickly dispatched to the nether world?

*Revenge* and *Avenge* are two words that sound so similar but in meaning have a world of difference. How do we look at the crucial meaning of each? One has to do with justice, the other does not. How do we think of them in life?

An enemy's dignity must be acknowledged. History tells us that when Alexander the Great won his battle for control of the Punjab, he asked his vanquished enemy as how he should be treated. At his dignified response, Alexander appointed him to manage the conquered territories.

These are age-old questions and have been around as long as war has, and that is as long as humans have been around - and even longer. The post 9/11 world today has encountered these questions anew and finds no easy answers. It is quite clear that even though we might someday be able to ban nuclear weapons, it would only change the nature of our weaponry of war; it will not banish war from our hearts or from our lives. For that we need a different arsenal and different habits of the mind. These matters deserve careful scrutiny.

Western philosophic perspectives on the theories of war and peace usually start and end with Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. The questions that engaged them are the same questions that Guru Gobind explored and laid to rest by his conduct and in *Zafarnamah*. These matters of justice and injustice, war and peace continue to vex mankind even today. At this time in our world, *Zafarnamah* holds a particular relevance; it informs Sikh reasoning about such matters.

Sikh history speaks of very limited periods of respite from war and Sikhs have rightly earned universal respect for their determination, skill, discipline and courage. At the same time Guru Granth, the repository of Sikh spiritual heritage, remains both a testament to the longings for peace that stir in the human heart as well the Sikh determination to speak truth to power and defend the universal human right to do so, even in the face of brutality, war and martyrdom.

Yet, no one is more repelled by war than the old soldier who has lived its brutality and depravity, indeed its ever-present evil. *Zafarnamah* is the most potent reminder of that spirit and of the fact that Sikhs in their centuries' old history have seen only brief periods of peace.

# Guru Gobind Singh

Spiritual leader, poet and warrior



Guru Gobind Singh on Horseback with his Attendants. c.1830 (Kapany Collection, Asian Art Museum of San Francisco).  
(Sikh tenets prohibit worshipping images of the Gurus.)

In the summer of 1921 a strange phenomenon was witnessed in the Punjab. That year the Sikhs launched a passive resistance movement to take possession of one of their historic shrines called Guru Ka Bagh, a few miles from Amritsar. Batches of passive resisters went to this shrine. They were mercilessly beaten by the police. Their arms and legs were smashed; they were dragged by their long hair; many were hung upside down from branches of trees till they became senseless. Instead of being cowed down by these brutalities, the number of passive resisters increased steadily till 500 began to arrive every day at Guru-Ka-Bagh, amongst them many who had suffered beatings earlier and had been discharged from the hospital. This “rare species of courage” as Gandhiji and Rev. C. F. Andrews described “was born of religious fervour”, in its turn born of a legend widely accepted by the Sikhs. It was said that wherever five passive resisters assembled to say their prayers, Guru Gobind Singh appeared before them. He led them to Guru Ka Bagh. And he, not the passive resister, received the blows showered by the police. When these *satyagrahis* were produced in court and asked their names and addresses, they gave their names correctly. But of their parentage and address, the answer invariably was: “My father’s name is Guru Gobind Singh my mother, Mata Sahib Devan. My home is the Guru’s town Anandpur.” The Guru Ka Bagh satyagrah went on for some months till the Punjab’s jails were crammed. Ultimately it was the police and the Government which gave in and agreed to Guru Ka Bagh being handed over to the Sikhs. I have met many of these passive resisters and with my own ears heard them tell of the *darshan* of the Guru and his ethereal form lead them to face the police. They swear that they lost all fear, and when they were tortured they knew no pain.

Soon after Guru-ka-Bagh yet another phenomenon was witnessed in the Punjab. The sacred pool surrounding the Hari Mandir in Amritsar was drained and cleansed. In this *Kar Seva* as it was known, millions of people took part.

You can today meet hundreds of men and women who will swear that many a time while they were engaged in this *Kar Seva* the Guru’s white hawk swooped down from the skies and settled on the gold pinnacle of the Hari Mandir – and then as dramatically vanished into the blue heaven.

Sceptics will undoubtedly have explanations for these phenomena. Let us concede that in an atmosphere of religious fervour, such experiences are possible. However, the point to bear in mind is that for the Sikhs these phenomena have been usually connected with Guru Gobind Singh, because he has been to them their father-figure, their supreme hero, the sustainer of faith, hope and courage, and their beau-ideal—all in one.

What kind of man was this Guru Gobind Singh? By now you must be familiar with the main events of his life. I will not repeat them. I will only draw your attention to five points to help you judge the Guru’s place in history. The choice of the number ‘five’ is deliberate. Five has some kind of mystic significance in the Punjab – the land of the five rivers. The Guru himself subscribed to sanctity of the five:

*pañcoñ meñ nit bartat maiñ hpñ  
pañc milan to pīran pīr.*

“Wherever there are five there am I. Where five meet, they are the holiest of the holy.”

First, it should be borne in mind that he was only a child of nine when his father, the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur was executed by the order of Emperor Aurangzeb. In any mortal such an experience would result in a traumatic shock followed first by fear and then by hate and desire for revenge against the people who had perpetrated the crime. I have little doubt that many persons must have tried to fill young Gobind’s mind with feelings of hatred and revenge against the Mughals. The Guru remained impervious to these influences. When he grew into manhood he announced his mission in life in the following words: “I came into the world charged with the

duty to uphold the right in every place, to destroy sin and evil.. the only reason I took birth was to see that righteousness may flourish, that good may live and tyrants be torn out by their roots.”

Secondly, it should be constantly before our minds, that the Guru never subscribed to the theory “might is right”. Although he introduced the worship of arms in Sikh religious ritual and even described the sword, the spear and the musket as ‘*the Pirs*’ – religious mentors of the Sikhs, –this was entirely in the context of force as the righter of wrongs. He was fully aware of the fact that the teachings of the first five Gurus and the Granth Sahib were pacified in content. But should truth and goodness be allowed to suffer annihilation at the hands of falsehood and evil? The Guru’s answer was a categorical “No”. In a Persian composition entitled the *Zafarnama*, The Epistle of Victory said to have been sent to Emperor Aurangzeb, he wrote:

*cū kār a hamā, hīlate dar guzasht  
halāl ast burdan ba shamshīr dast*

“When all other means have failed, it is righteous to draw the sword.”

In this very context it is significant that although Guru Gobind Singh dictated the final version of the Granth Sahib, he did not include any of his own compositions exhorting people to rise in arms in the sacred text.

Thirdly, the Guru took penal care that anti-Muslim sentiment should not stain the crusade he was about to launch against the Mughals. “My sword strikes tyrants not men”, he said. Amongst the earliest recruits in his army were Muslims. Although he fought the Mughals all his life – as indeed he did the Hindu Rajputs of the hills – he had both Muslims and Hindus fighting on his side shoulder to shoulder with his Sikhs. This followed naturally from his conviction that all men were of one caste – *manas ki jat sab ek pacanbo* – he exhorted. And that the mosque and the temple to be the

same; the call of the *muezzin* and the chanting of the *pandit* were the same.

The non-communal tradition started by Guru Gobind Singh was continued into the time of Maharajah Ranjit Singh who was, as pointed out by Pandit Nehru in his “Discovery of India”, one of the few genuinely secular rulers of our country. It was, therefore, in the fitness of things that in the crowning success of Sikh arms, the flag that the Muslim General, Colonel Basswan, carried through the streets of Kabul bore the emblem of Guru Gobind Singh; likewise the Dogra Hindu, General Zorawar Singh, planted this saffron banner bearing Guru Gobind Singh’s *Chakra* with *Kirpans* crossed beneath in the very heart of Tibet.

Guru Gobind Singh was able to raise his fight against Mughals into a struggle of the down-trodden against oppression of the right, into a demand for justice against tyranny of wrong-doers, in short, into a crusade, a veritable *dharma yudha* against the powers of evil. He forbade his soldiers from looting. He made them take solemn vows that they would never molest women of the enemy. He emulated the example of our ancient *rishis* and *yogis* and insisted that all Sikhs should wear their hair and beards unshorn – for they were not common soldiers but *Sant Sipahis*, Soldier-Saints.

Thirdly, what deserves absolute attention is the incredible sense of loyalty and sacrifice that the Guru was able to arouse amongst his followers. Let me give you a few examples. You may have heard of the famous baptismal ceremony when five men willingly agreed to have their heads cut off. There are innumerable examples of similar sacrifice. As well known as these first five Sikhs known as *Panj Piyaras* were another group of forty known as *Chali Mukte*. Under great stress during the prolonged siege of Anandpur these forty men asked the Guru to let them go. After getting deed of renunciation the Guru released them from their obligation. When these men returned to their homes their women folk taunted them for disloyalty to the Master. The men (including

amongst them a woman, Mai Bhago) rejoined the Guru at Muktsar and fell fighting. The last request their leader, Mahan Singh, made to the Guru, was to have the deed of renunciation torn up before he closed his eyes for ever. Yet another example was of an old woman who came to the Guru for help. She told him that her husband and two sons had been killed fighting. All that remained of her family was her youngest son who was dangerously ill. She begged the Guru's blessings to restore him to health – not to have some one to look after her in old age, but in order that this son too could attain martyrdom in the battle field.

How was Guru Gobind Singh able to fire his followers with this kind of reckless valour? Primarily by setting an example himself. This is the fourth point for your consideration. He fought alongside his men. He never put his family before his followers. On the contrary at one of the engagements he allowed two of his sons to go to a certain death before he allowed any of his *Panj Piyaras* to do so. Within a few months he lost all his four sons: two were killed fighting, the other two, aged nine and seven, were executed by the Government of Sirhind. His own mother died of grief. When his wife asked him in tears for her four sons, the Guru answered, "What if four be dead; thousands live to continue the battle." It was by this kind of personal example that the Guru was able to train poor rustics who had handled nothing more lethal than a *lathi* and flabby, potbellied, timid shopkeepers to become some of the greatest fighters India has ever known. He redeemed his pledge that he would train the sparrow to fight the hawk and teach one man to fight a legion. Pathans, Persians, Afghans and Baluchis of the North West Frontier region who had for centuries invaded India, terrified, massacred and looted our people, were beaten back into their home-lands by these new soldiers of Guru Gobind Singh.

It has never been fully appreciated by our historians that these Punjabis set up a human barricade against the invaders and so made possible the rise of Maratha power in the Deccan.

Fifthly, and this is my final point, is the genuinely democratic spirit of this great leader of men. Guru Gobind Singh never claimed divinity for himself. He denounced those who tried to make him an incarnation of God. "I was ordained to establish a society and lay down its rules", he wrote. "But whosoever regards me as Lord shall be demned and destroyed. I am – and this let there be no doubt, I am but a slave of God, as other men are: a beholder of the wonders of creation." He took no credit for what he did; he attributed all achievements to the Khalsa – all his victories, his power, his prestige, he said, was due to the efforts of his followers. Although he was their Guru, he made himself their disciple *ape gur-cela*. Whenever the congregation passed a resolution it acquired the sanctity of a *gurumata* – an ordinance of the Guru binding even on the Guru himself.

Guru Gobind Singh was thus a rare combination of many qualities – a sophisticated aesthete composing poetry in many languages – Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian and Punjabi; a handsome cavalier fond of chase and danger; a soldier who dedicated his life to fight tyranny; a leader who looked upon his followers as comrades and equals, a Guru who exhorted people to worship the God they love best but insisted that they look upon their fellow beings as equals; a man who sacrificed all he had, his family and his worldly possessions and ultimately himself for his ideals. This idea he stated in lines which have become the most quoted of his compositions:

O Lord of Thee these boons I ask  
 Let me never shun a righteous task.  
 Let me be fearless when I go to battle,  
 Give me faith that factory will be mine.  
 Give me power to sing Thy praise,  
 And when comes the time to end my life,  
 Let me fall in mighty strife.

Has the world produced any man as near great as Guru Gobind Singh?

**Khushwant Singh**



# Creation of The Khalsa



Map by Gagandeep Singh.

Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru in succession to the Pontificate founded by Guru Nanak Dev, was born at Patna on 26 December 1666 and ascended the Sikh Pontificate in 1675 to the martyrdom of his father Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, at the tyrannical hands of bigoted and fanatic Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb. In his autobiographical verses known as *Bachitar Natak* (the Wonder Drama), Guru Gobind Singh records the Divine Mission that characterised his descent on the earth in the following words:

*For this purpose have I come into this world;  
For the sake of dharma, has the Almighty  
Lord sent me;  
For the propagation of righteousness in every place,  
for the uplift of the good and the saint; And for the destruction  
of the wicked and the villainous tyrants, root and branch.*

Whatever, therefore, Guru Gobind Singh did, was done to fulfil the above divine mission. It was in furtherance of this noble cause that he created on the 30 March, 1699 (Baisakhi Day), in his own image, the Khalsa of *Waheguru* the Lord's Own, knighting them as 'Singh' or lion and

making men and women conquer death here and now by eradicating from their minds the fear of death. "As Guru Nanak seated Guru Angad on the throne, so have I made the Khalsa Guru" said Guru Gobind Singh. By the alchemy of *amrit*, the baptismal nectar (Elixir of Immortality) and the meta-physics which culminated in this regenerative principle, Guru Gobind Singh touched the people with faith and courage, welding the diverse elements of a society split into myriad groups by difference of religion, caste and social status into a united and powerful people assuming the role of "Lover of Peace", "Defender of the Right" and "Destroyer of the Evil"; converted the sparrows into imperial falcons; turned sheep into lions and the weak and the down-trodden people into heroes and warrior-saints; raised low-born men of the level of lords and grandees (called "*Sardars*"); changed the destiny of millions and millions of men from serfdom and slavery to freedom and honour and created an everlasting and perpetual urge in the people to lead a life of respect, dignity and equality, socially free and politically independent.

The new measures raised the strength of the Sikhs several fold ushering in a new era of emancipation. They caught the imagination of the people and on the very first day the “*Panj Pyaras*” – Five Beloved Ones – and as many as 20,000 men and women took baptism of steel (*amrit* or *Khande-di-Pahul*) at Guru Gobind Singh’s gracious hands, initiated to love of God and His humanity and fight for the victory of the righteous cause. He brought home to the people that the value of life lay in its intensity and activity and the fundamental human rights would not come to them as a gift from other; rather they had to win them through their own steel-like strength. With his charismatic personality, he struck a devastating blow at the roots of all inequality, (social, political and economic or based on caste, creed or sex) and infused a new life, the Spartan discipline and a powerful spirit of resistance at the common level of the people, to the forces of evil and oppression of all kinds. Those who lacked purpose were given one, those who had no voice were given the same and those who had no self-respect had it injected into their bones. Through the administration of *amrit*. Guru Gobind Singh injected indomitable spirit, unconquerable will and matchless bravery into the hearts of those who had remained the very ‘dregs of society’ with centuries of social, political and cultural bondage raising the plane of their thinking and action tremendously, turning them from quietest. Acolyte to the Fighting Hawks; all becoming equal in spirit, mind and body with a supreme combination of spirit and energy – spiritual sublimity and physical prowess, bestowing power and sovereignty on them with Name on the lips, love in their hearts and the mighty sword in their hands for the protection of the poor, innocent and the oppressed and destroying the wicked and the tyrants, leading to the establishment of a noble, spiritual, disciplined and permanent order of the patriot saints, the Brotherhood of the Khalsa – the Pure, the Elect.

Indeed, Guru Gobind Singh’s *amrit* made cowards shun their cowardice, the impotent and sheepish masses came to acquire the habits and manners of heroes. The wolfish tyrants were completely subdued by the valiant knights of the Gurus creation:

*tere paimana-i-dil main who bhara amrit  
zale-i-duniya use pi le to jawan ho jae  
munjmid quam ko tu ne woh rawani bakshi  
jis ke mazkur se har nazm rawan ho jaye.*

*us amrit se murdo main jan a gayi  
har ik shai nayi zindgi pa easyi*

To quote from S. Ranbir Singh’s book entitled “Glimpses of the Divine Masters”:

“The *amrit* of the Tenth Master, completely transmuted and transformed the man irrespective of caste, creed or religion. After taking *amrit*, the Khalsa resembles no parent type of his own. Just as lime, betel-nut, catechu and betel-leaf, they turn into one and same red-blood colour when well chewed, similarly in Khalsa there is the blending of the whole spiritual character of man of the past, present and future, as it was a new creation, a universal man of God, belonging to one class, caste, colour or creed. Khalsa is the super-man saturated with the glories and powers of the infinite, yet exuberating sweetness, innocence, and brotherliness. He strikes no fear in others, nor does he fear any.”

The Khalsa Sikh – the crowning glory of the Tenth Lord, a marvelous amalgam of the strength and courage of a warrior and the peaceful attributes of a devotee – is to worship one God and wear Five Symbols (*punch kakars*) as a common denominator binding the Sikhs together into a brotherhood of people all striving to reach the same religious objective; *Keshas* (unshorn hair and untrimmed bread keeping the God-given form of man whole, intact); *kanga* (comb for disciplining the *keshas* - (air on the head and the chin signifying cleanliness); *kara* (steel bracelet on the wrist as a symbol of steel-heartedness, of accepting iron discipline in peace and war); *kacha* (breeches reaching up to knees as a mark of discipline and self control), and *kirpan* (sword as a symbol of freedom from oppression and servility and for protection). This not only revolutionised the entire physical appearance of the people, but with the equipment of these requisites they generated the feelings of invincibility also. Corresponding to the Five Symbols are the five rules of life laid down for the Khalsa: *Nam, Dan, Ishnan, Kirt-Karna* and *Wand-Chhakna*. The Khalsa is to recite five *banis* daily. Guru Gobind Singh defined the spiritual characteristics of the Khalsa – the culmination point of *gurnat* (essentials of religion) and *gurdarshan* (essentials of philosophy), in one of his beautiful verses:

“He who keeps alight the unquenchable torch of truth and never swerves from the thought of One God; he who has full love and confidence in God and does not put his faith even by mistake in fasting or worshipping tombs, cemeteries, cremation-grounds or monasteries; he who only recognises One God and makes no fetish of pilgrimages, alms, penances or austerities; and in whose heart and soul the light of the Perfect One shines forth, he is to be recognised as a true member of the Khalsa”. (*Ist of 33 Sawaiyyas*)

*guru khalsa asl main sher hai  
adu jis se khdtte haiii har waqt bhai*

The patriotic saint-warriors deeply drunk with the immortalising draught of the Tenth Lord's *amrit* of the double-edged sword holified by the recitation of five *banis* over it and dedicated to the service of God and humanity, fought against the heavy odds with magnificently heroic determination and Spartan impetuosity amidst the hilarious shouts of *Sat Sri Akal* (Glory to the Eternal Lord); humbled the pride of the aggressive mighty Mughal army eclipsing its glamour by inflicting crushing defeat on it and establishing the supremacy of the Khalsa's military genius. They sanctified the period of their history with deeds of marvelous valour, bravery, chivalry and sacrifice because of the indelible stamp affixed on their minds by the image of the Father of the Khalsa, the unconquerable Guru Gobind Singh – the Guiding-Star of his beloved Khalsa's destiny, their mainstay and guardian-angel in times of storm and stress, and the perennial source of inspiration and enthusiasm to them.

The Tenth Master recognised "all humanity as one", all human beings fundamentally alike belonging to the same species and equal before the Eyes of God, and drew people of various religions and castes into his fold of universal brotherhood and casteless fraternity unique in spirit and character and commanded unflinching and unquestionable obedience from them. Himself immersed in love divine and philosophy of light Guru Gobind Singh most emphatically proclaimed the supreme truth that God could be realised and attained by love and love alone – love for God – love for God's children. Love is the only doorway to God:

*sac kahon sun leho sabhai  
jin prem kio tin hi prabhu paio"*

(*Sudha Sawaiyyas*)

"To the East and West  
Wherever one seest,  
He pervades as Supreme Love"

(*Jap Sahib*)

The Tenth Lord was essentially a Man of God, divine in origin whose prayer was for the good of all and whose victory was the victory of God bearing no enmity to any one". His idea of religion practically consisted of the practice of *Nam* and *Sewa*. He was the dedicated servant of humanity with universal outlook, intense love and infinite faith in the Almighty God and practiced truth in words, thought and deed.

*who haq ka sarapa parastar tha  
khuda ki muhabat main sarshar tha*

He bestowed on women equal rights with men in all respects and forbade the killing of infant daughters as also the practice of *sati* or the custom of self-immolation of widows on the pyres of their dead husbands, at that time widespread in its prevalence. He was totally opposed to cast distinctions, untouchability, hypocrisy and renouncing of the family and society. He laid a good deal of emphasis on honest and truthful living and greatly upheld the dignity of labour and domestic work.

Guru Gobind Singh was a prodigious linguist, an eminent and profound scholar and a sublime poet and thinker of deep mystic insight and ardour who wrote extensively, forcefully and chivalrously in his own flawless, inimitable and virile style covering a wide range of subjects in Braj frequently highly Sanskritised, Hindi, Persian and Punjabi and created his eighteen poetical works, including his autobiography, born of necessities of war, replete with erudition, energy and enthusiasm, altering the people's mode of thinking, developing new attitudes in them, giving them wider horizons and inspirations altogether changing their mental outlook and infusing new spirit in them generating revolutionary impulse and awakening in the country and inflaming them into deeds of valour. These eighteen poetical works of the Tenth Lord – his emotional and spiritual build-up – are preserved in the voluminous "*Dasam Granth*" compiled posthumously by Bhai Mani Singh, one of his most trusted and scholarly disciples who spent nine years at the task. The great Guru gave top priority to art and literature and there were at his *Darbar* about 52 renowned poets, scholars and musicians, including Bhai Nand Lal Goya, who were greatly patronised and given considerable monetary rewards for their inspiring compositions and literary works.

Guru Gobind Singh's heroic struggle against injustice and tyranny was in conformity with the spirit of the teachings of Guru Nanak who had himself condemned most vehemently the oppression practiced by Mughal invaders and aimed at emancipation of the people from all bondages – spiritual, social and political. The inner principles of Sikhism as originally enunciated by Guru Nanak and substantiated by the eight succeeding Gurus were vigorously pursued by the last, Guru Gobind Singh with intense realism and foresight and steadfast devotion in order to achieve elevation of the fallen-ones and virtuous as also the elimination of the tyrants. In the words of Dr. Gokal Chand Narang 'Gobind himself, in fact, as well as his work was the natural product of the process of evolution that had been going on ever since the foundation of Sikhism. The harvest which ripened in

the times of Guru Gobind Singh had been sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was undoubtedly forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak." Mr. Joseph D. Cunningham had paid glowing tributes to the great Guru, "The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and he filled them with a lofty longing for special freedom and national ascendancy. Gobind saw what was yet vital and he rekindled it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames". In the words of Sayyad Mohammed Latif, "In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. He was a law-giver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his *masnad* and a *faqir* (saint) in the society of the Khalsa".

Guru Gobind Singh's supreme contribution to the history of India is, that he strengthened the ties of human brotherhood and promoted the cause of democracy and secularism, which cut across all artificial walls and barriers, end oppression and tyranny and develop social conscience among the people. He democratised religion, spiritualised militarism and equalised the human beings, elevating them to the highest pinnacle of spiritual grandeur, setting their souls free and filling their hearts with a strong spirit of self-reliance, patriotism, freedom and national ascendancy. The message of the great Guru is, namely, to meditate on God's Name, to do service through the *deg* or the community kitchen and use the *tegh* or the sword to defend the oppressed and achieve victory positively, "*Deg tegh jag meh dou caleh*". But all this is to be done in the name of God. For the Guru said, "The Khalsa belongs to God, and victory also is of God". Since the time of Guru Gobind Singh *deg* and *tegh*-*Guruka-Langar* and the *Kirpan* have become the *sine-qua-non* of the Sikh fraternity and these go hand-in-hand: "*Deg Tegh Fateh*".

Self-respect, human dignity and freedom in fact were the greatest weapons ever used by the Guru in uplifting the people for equal justice for all under one God. Sikhism holds that all men are essentially pure and infinitely perfectible as we can see in the personality of Guru Gobind Singh, who, in a brief span life of 42 years, fully developed and harmoniously integrated all his latent powers and a resplendent facets of his high personality Guru Gobind Singh's righteousness of cause sincerity

of purpose and his *Charhdi-kala* injection through the administration of '*amrit*' were primarily responsible for the success of the mission in upholding *dharm*a and uprooting oppression and tyranny in whatsoever brand or form it was perpetrated.

The Tenth Divine Master was a many splendoured genius and the mightiest breath of life that ever animated human clay. He was a perfect Unitarian, a supreme saint warrior, a redeemer, a saviour of human brotherhood and dauntless spokesman of the under-privileged and the exploited sections of humanity, revolutionary of crusading zeal, a great spiritual leader, a true patriot, a great nation-builder, a versatile scholar, a poet of rare sensibilities, a born administrator, a matchless military, a organizer and a general of exceptional capabilities. He had an impressionable mind, fascinating and magnetic personality, overpowering looks, generous habits and an unsurpassable sacrificing nature. All these traits of character and personal qualities contribute to the creation of a great tradition that has survived the opposition of physical might and the onslaughts of time. In his own unique personality Guru Gobind Singh combine knowledge, action and love – *gyan*, *karam* and *bhakti* – Arjun, the man of Action, and Lord Krishna, the guide to action – rolled into one. He was a superhuman in thought, spirit and action, who opened the gateway for all to come in to stand liberated, imbued with the strength of soul and spirit. He was the Messia who delivered the people of their serious maladies and ailments, social, political or spiritual with his panacea of holy militarism and patriotic saintliness. He remarkably instilled in the people the sense of equality and the ideas and feelings of liberty and fraternity, almost a century ahead of the French Revolution.

The revolution which Guru Gobind Singh organised was characterised as '*Dharam Yudh*' directed against tyranny, oppression, bigotry and injustice from whatever quarter or community it emanated. It was not a fight against any religion or community to protect or promote the interest of a particular sect, creed or people nor was it aimed at acquiring any territory or fuling over others and hence is to be distinguished from a Christian crusade of medieval Europe for territorial expansion, Muslim Jihad directed towards plunder and forcible conversion of others at the point of sword and the wars waged and fought in olden days in India over women. It was a moral war waged for the victory of good over evil, for the triumph of righteousness over tyranny and oppression. His sword raised aloft to extirpate evil embodied in itself all the forces of energy harnessed to righteousness. He fought

battles wresting power from evil hands to ensure peace for the good of mankind and he gave the entire credit for his victories to the masses, the community of the pure and God-conscious men from whom he withheld nothing but gave all and everything. His concert of *Dharam Yudh* was, indeed, a remarkable blending and fusion of *bhakti* and *shakti*, the two inseparable qualities of perfect man. The former symbolised spiritual and moral values of life springing from devotion to God and the latter represented strength and ability to face danger and stern problems of life and the force to be used only in a righteous cause, such as self defence and protection of the weak and the oppressed and support of the exploited and as a remedy of the last resort against the dehumanised and brutalised tyrant. In his famous couplet

*Chun kar az hama hil-te dar guzasht  
Halal ast burden ba shamsher dast*

in the *Zafarnama*, the Epistle of Victory – epitome of his buoyant optimism – addressed to King Aurangzeb, Guru Gobind Singh, the Lord of the Plume and the Lord of the White Hawk riding his famous blue charger justified his action in unsheathing the sword when all the other peaceful avenues for the redressal of wrongs were totally and irrevocably exhausted:

“When all efforts to restore peace  
Prove useless and no words avail  
Lawful is the flash of steel then and  
Right is the sword to hail”.

With rock-like and unshakable faith in God, and undying and indomitable spirit he crusaded and fought against the tyrannical Mughal Empire and its reactionary feudal henchmen, the hill chiefs under extremely unfavourable circumstances and emerged victorious, vividly portraying the ultimate triumph of spirit against all impediments. His daring exploits struck terror in the hearts of the oppressors and enthralled and emboldened his own followers. His military exploits were one ceaseless round of prodigious feats of valour and victory, a tale of romantic exploits richly embroidered with brilliant flashes of victory in the cause of righteousness and defence of afflicted mankind. Indeed, the great Guru during the whole of his stormy voyage of life across troublous waters ceaselessly fought and resolutely stood against evil and reaction in every field, whether religious, political or social and with tenacity of purpose and an undaunted spirit the Prophet of ‘*charhdi-kala*’ and optimism, believing firmly in victory as the creed of life and ever conscious of the righteousness of his cause sang most joyfully and

heroically his unsurpassable hymn which has now come to be regarded as the Sikh National Anthem:

‘Grant me this boon; O God from Thy  
Greatness,  
May I never waver from doing righteous  
acts.  
May I fight without fear all foes in life’s  
battle,  
With confident courage, claiming victory to  
my side.  
May my highest ambition be singing Thy  
Praises,  
And may Thy glory be ingrained in my mind.  
And when the span of life reaches its end,  
May I die fighting heroically in the battle-  
field.”

(Epilogue to *Chandi-Charitar*).

Guru Gobind Singh bore untold hardships and sufferings most cheerfully for the vindication of the principles of justice and freedom. He sacrificed his all at the altar of Dharma and motherland-his father, mother, his all the four sons and thousands of his dear and near ones, but remained calm and self-possessed with matchless fortitude. In fact, he created history with a unique record of sufferings for faith, justice and liberty. His heart was constantly in tune with the Will of the Almighty God, neither losing the qualities of love and compassion for the humanity as a whole, nor giving way to despair even in the darkest moments of life. In the thorny wilderness of Machhiwara he faced innumerable hardships in most adverse circumstances. Surrounded by wild animals, sleeping on a heap of stones on chilly winter nights, eating wild berries and walking on thorns and bushes with his feet blistered and bleeding, this man of super-human energy and self-confidence, indomitable courage, unbending will and patriotic determination emitting sparks of fervour while striking the impediments, envisaged the downfall of the tyrannical Mughal Empire and the victory of the Khalsa. Unnerved by tragic losses and terrible sufferings, this apostle of freedom and love – the staunchest optimist ever seen by the world – in a spirit unprecedented anywhere in the annals of human history with unflinching faith in the Infinite Lord burst out in the following famous lyric, the song that was symbolic of his true spirit:

“Go, tell the Beloved Lord  
The condition of His-yearning devotees,  
Without Thee, rich coverings are an agony to us.  
And to live in the comforts of our households

Is like living with snakes.  
The flasks of drinks are like unto a cross,  
And the cup we drink from has an edge like a dagger  
O Beloved, Thy turning away from us,  
Is like the knife of a butcher.

With the Beloved in heart, a mattress of straw would  
please us.

Without Him, rich dwellings are like burning hell to us.

(Dasam Granth)

Finally he laid down his own life for upholding  
the cause of righteousness and eternal *Dharma* for  
the protection of the weak and the oppressed and for  
punishing the wicked and the aggressor as ordained by  
the Immortal God who had commissioned him for the  
task of liberation.

He moulded the human spirit and character afresh with  
a new life and purpose and so intensified it as to enable a  
few men to do the work of thousands in uprooting evil  
and promoting the cause of righteousness. He ultimately  
succeeded in his work of uplift done for the whole  
mankind, fulfilling the divine mission and the purpose of  
God on earth. Verily, Guru Gobind Singh's life constitutes  
a glorious saga of unparalleled sacrifices and marvelous  
achievements:

*"tun shahid te pita shahid tera  
nale teri suntan shahid satgur,  
tun sarvansh dani be na ir yodha  
sara jagat hai tera murid satgur.  
khopar wic pa khun dularian da  
kita jaha tun roshan ciragh satgur,  
Mitia zulam hanera tenur hoia  
sara desh hai tera murid satgur.  
tera sant-sapahian da dharam rabi  
zinda hovandai har camkaur magron  
sava lakh nal ik laran wale  
tun amar te wada shahid satgur."*

The Sikh religion was completed in 1708 when Guru  
Gobind Singh vested his full authority in the Khalsa Panth.  
On 6 October 1708 in the sacred assembly of the Khalsa he  
exhorted them to lead a life of piety and practical activity  
compounded with iron determination and immense  
generosity and to be always in buoyant spirit *Chardhi-Kala*  
and never to lose faith in their ultimate victory, while  
giving them the last and enduring message of his mission.  
He abolished the tradition of personal Guruship once for  
all. He declared in so many words that henceforth "*Adi-  
Granth*" commonly and reverentially called "*Guru Granth  
Sahib*" which embodied the wisdom of all the Ten Gurus

put together shall be the Eternal Guru, and not any person  
in human form.

*bani Guru, Guru hai bani  
vic bani amrit sare"*

After the prayers, he went round the Holy Granth four  
times and placed five paise and a coconut in front of the  
Granth Sahib and then reverently bowing his head before  
the Holy Scripture – the Universal Bible of the people and  
the common spiritual treasure of the mankind – crowned  
"*Guru Granth Sahib*" as the Permanent Guru of the  
Sikhs.

"So had the Eternal Father ordained, And therefore I set  
up the Khalsa Faith to grow.

Hear ye all my Sikhs the Father's behest for the future,

From now the Granth, the Divine Word, is the Master.

The Guru Granth is the embodiment of the spirit of the all  
the ten Gurus,

With a heart pure and clean, with a faith unbounded and  
serene,

Let the Khalsa seek the Master in the Divine Word,

For the Divine Word, the Granth, is the Guru, the Master  
from today."

The Founder of the Khalsa Brotherhood – Equalitarian  
Global Fraternity – a man in flesh and blood whose like in  
point of greatness, sacrifices and achievements has never been  
seen by the world, the champion of the poor and the helpless  
and the oppressed, a singular elevator of the fallen ones, a true  
servant of mankind with the halo of heroism a lover of peace  
and freedom and an uncompromising enemy of injustice, evil  
and tyranny and a resplendent face left this earth to shine  
for ever in the hearts of the people. This happened on 7  
October, 1708 when he breathed his last at Nander (Sri Huzur  
Sahib, one of the four highest seats, *Takhats*, of Sikh religion)  
and his light mingled with that of other nine Gurus before  
him and became one supreme soul.

The Khalsa Brotherhood built by Guru Gobind Singh  
on spiritual foundations have braved the test of centuries  
and will last for ever maintaining their God-given form  
and character, fostering the feelings of brotherhood, never  
fighting shy or afraid of doing deeds of virtue, with a vital  
life of light, love, service, respect and glory, free from  
injustice, tyranny, superstition and cant, and with devotion  
and loyalty to the Tenth Divine Master's lofty ideal – One  
God, mankind one.

Pritam Singh

# The Epistle of Victory

After the battle of Chamkaur, Guru Gobind Singh wrote two letters to Emperor Aurangzeb. The first, called *Fatehnama* (Letter of Victory), was written in Persian verse at Macchiwara. Although it was lost for some centuries, recently about a third of it was located and the translation of that portion was reproduced in *The Sikh Review* of April 1954.

The second and more familiar letter is known as the *Zafarnama* (also meaning Epistle of Victory). It too was written in Persian verse and its contents indicate that one or several of Aurangzeb's letters had been received by the Guru after his writing of the *Fatehnama*. Verse 23 for instance, appears to be a reply to some previous communication of Aurangzeb's in which the Emperor had expressed regret over what had happened at Chamkaur and had put the blame for the deceitful act on his generals. Aurangzeb possibly emphasised his oaths once more but Guru Gobind Singh refuses in this letter to believe him and thus subject his forces to being trapped again.

Verse 54 shows further that Aurangzeb had approached the Guru, both through letters and personal envoys, expressing regret for all that had happened. In those communications he showed his desire to meet Guru Gobind Singh and it appears that Aurangzeb tried to win over the Guru again by his oaths. But Guru Gobind Singh repeatedly made it clear that the house of the Guru commanded spiritual sovereignty of the world so all temporal kings, however great, were in no way superior to him. Previously, Babar had gone to Guru Nanak, Humayun to Guru Angad, Akbar to Guru Amar Das so Aurangzeb must come to him in the same spirit.

But Guru Gobind Singh doubted Aurangzeb's sincerity and was almost sure that the Emperor would not come to the Guru. He was positive that once more Aurangzeb's oaths and promises were false. But, as a special messenger had come with the Emperor's letter, the Guru wrote a befitting reply, strongly reprimanding Aurangzeb for his past behaviour.

Guru Gobind Singh pointed out (verse 95) the very deceitfulness of the Emperor. At that time the Mughals and other Muslim conquerors, who were haters of idolatory, generally attacked the Hindu kings on the pretext of



Painting by Kripal Singh.

destroying idolatory and perpetuating the worship of one God. Yet in this instance Aurangzeb had joined forces with the idol worshipping hill rajas (whom the Guru had already defeated in about eight battles) against the Sikhs who believed in one God.

In verse 65, Guru Gobind Singh, while recognising himself as a spiritual sovereign with allegiance only to God and acknowledging no other king or emperor to be above him, did not hesitate to show the righteous way to Aurangzeb. The Guru's idea of a perfect temporal ruler was set out in arguments in the *Zafarnama* to the effect that: 'No claim to the throne or any temporal rule could stand, neither the king's nor the people's, if they did not recognise the throne or the rule to be God's. A throne was not setting in which to become ego-ridden but was a place where one must fold his hands in prayer and humility.

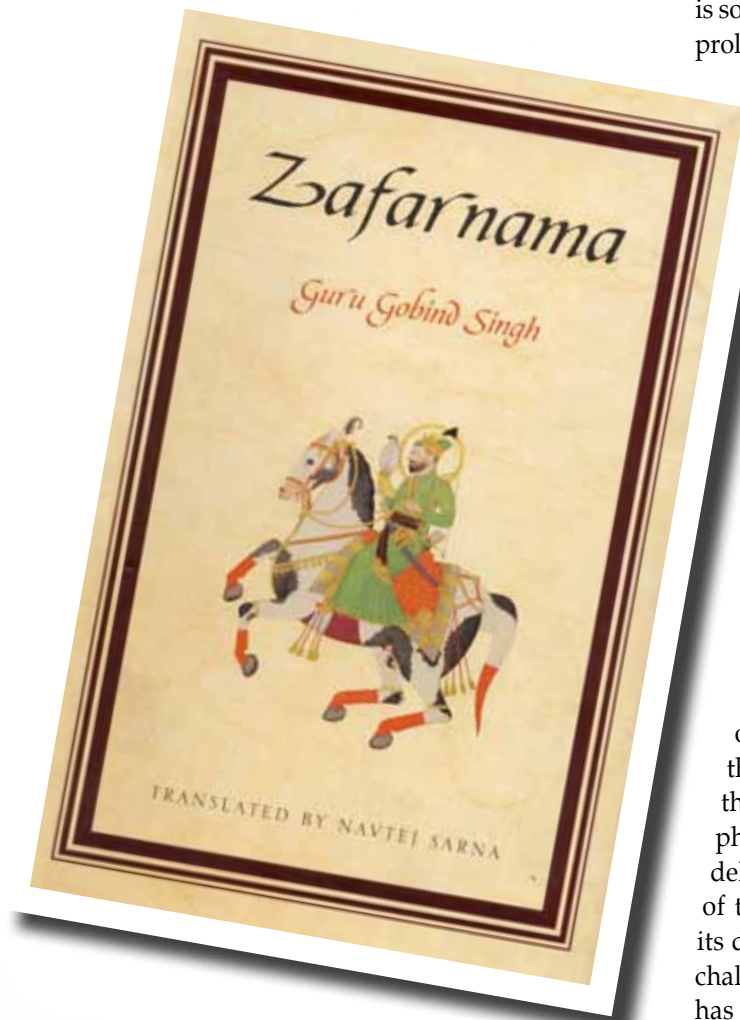
This rule of leadership as set forth by Guru Gobind Singh is still the Sikh ideal of rulership and stands good for all rulers of the past, present and future. The moment rulers go astray from this ideal, rulership is crippled no matter what the system or government may be.

**Dr Trilochan Singh (from *The Sikh Review*, 1956)**

# Zafarnama

In this brilliant new translation, Navtej Singh Sarna, presently India's ambassador to Israel and lately spokesman for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of India, brings out in electrifying manner the power of Guru Gobind Singh's poetic genius and passionate disavowal of tyranny which remains relevant today—and for always.

This Introduction to the book is offered to readers of the *Nishaan*, with permission of the author and publishers of ZAFARNAMA, with selected stanzas adorning the following pages.



*Chun kar az hameh heelate dar guzasht  
Halal ast burdan bi-shamsher dast*

When all has been tried, yet  
Justice is not in sight,  
It is then right to pick up the sword,  
It is then right to fight.

These are perhaps the most often quoted words of the *Zafarnama*, the 'Epistle of Victory', written by Guru Gobind Singh to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, sometime in 1705. Besides the tone of fearless defiance, these are emblematic of the poetic power and philosophical underpinning that is so evident in the *Zafarnama*, like in all the writings of the prolific tenth Guru of the Sikhs.

Written in Persian, its 111 stirring stanzas echoing the influence of Firdausi's *Shahnama*, the letter holds up an uncompromising mirror to the Mughal emperor. It indicts him and his commanders against a spiritual frame of judgement and exposes their lack of morality in governance as well as in the conduct of war. It foresees the end of an empire that is dominated by falsehood and whose innards have been hollowed out by spiritual decay. At the same time, it is a brilliant exposition of the Guru's own spiritual beliefs, his political and moral philosophy and the true nature of God and Creation.

An understanding of the *Zafarnama* presupposes some familiarity with the immediate historical events it refers to - the battles between the Sikhs and the Mughal army along with the supporting hill rajas, the evacuation of Anandpur by the Sikhs on the basis of false oaths sworn on the Quran by the Mughals, the historic battle of Chamkaur, the martyrdom of the Guru's four sons, and thereon. To grasp the full philosophical message of the *Zafarnama* it is necessary to delve deeper and to trace, even if briefly, the emergence of the Sikh faith as an independent religion as well as its development as a political movement that ultimately challenged Mughal rule in northern India. In short, one has to go back to the time when Guru Nanak (1469-1539)



کمالِ کرامات قائم کریم  
رضا بخش رازق رهاک و رحیم

*Kamaal-e karamat kayam karim  
Raza baksh razak rahak o rahim*

He is the immortal Lord,  
Eternal, all powerful  
Giver of joy and salvation,  
Bountiful and merciful.

نه ساز و نه باز و نه فرج و نه فرش  
خداوند بخشنده عیش عرش

*Na saaz o na baaz o na farsh  
Khudawand bakshindeh aish arsh*

Without pomp or glory,  
Or armies to command,  
Giver of pleasures and joy  
From His generous hand.

began the moral and spiritual renaissance of a populace steeped in ignorance and superstition. This renaissance was to become, under the guidance of the tenth Guru two centuries later, a miraculous transformation of the human spirit that would see an oppressed people fight bigotry and religious persecution with scarcely imaginable courage.

When Nanak, the first Guru, was born in 1469 in Talwandi, the times were marked by religious bigotry, moral decay and political persecution. The ordinary people had retreated into orthodoxy, blind superstition and ritualism perpetuated by a self-serving priesthood. In his own words:

*The dark times are like a knife,  
The kings are butchers,  
Dharma has taken wings and flown,  
In the dark night of falsehood,  
The moon of truth  
Cannot be seen.*

*Var Majh*

Hope for an urgently needed moral and spiritual regeneration lay in the trends started by the Sufi movement in Islam and the Bhakti movement in Hinduism, both based on a passionately personal expression of love for the Divine. To these movements, Guru Nanak brought an understanding purely his own which would take the idea of an individual's personal experience and expand it to a widespread religion for the common man, indeed an integrated philosophy of life that would be based not on ascetic denial but on an affirmation of the reality of this world with the ultimate truth.

Guru Nanak's message was simple and he spread it through his prolific writings and extensive travels in all directions: God was one and supreme. He was the all-pervading Creator-fearless, timeless and self-existent who

could be realised only through His own grace. All men were equal; discrimination on the basis of caste or creed as well as the suppression of women was to be denounced. He advocated the righteous life of a householder against that of the ascetic. This world is a reflection of Divine purpose and man's duty is to improve the condition of his fellow beings through love and compassion, through right conduct. Practical virtue, rather than abstract piety, is the preferred way. Honest work, charity and the remembrance of the true God's name is the path to salvation. He denounced the oppression and tyranny of the ruling classes, protesting against the invasion of Hindustan by Babur who had 'charged with his wedding party of sin from Kabul'. He lamented the suffering inflicted on innocent citizens, particularly the womenfolk. His reaction was not just of an eyewitness but also of a philosophical sage, a visionary and a poet. The shortcomings of the age, the profligacy of rulers, the nature of the Divine Will and the suffering that mankind has to endure when the cosmic principles on which the world rests are ignored were all brought out in his compositions which are renowned for their spiritual depth and literary beauty. This protest could be regarded as the genesis of the clash of the Sikh faith with the Mughal Empire.

When Nanak settled down in Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi after more than twenty years on the road, he gathered around him a congregation which was a precursor to the community that was to follow. Here he taught the way of true worship of God, the discipline of true reflection and meditation as well as the rejection of outward form and false status based on caste or wealth. Here started the practice of kirtan, the singing of praises of God. Here too were seen the beginnings of the institution of langar, or the communal kitchen. A new community, with its own tradition of companionship, its values and

اماں بخش بخشده و دستگیر  
رضا بخش روزی ده و دل پذیر

*Ama-baksh bakshindeh o dastgir  
Raza baksh rozi deh o dilpazir*

O Merciful One  
Who protects and guides,  
O Charming One  
Who forgives and provides.

که صاحب دیار است اعظم عظیم  
که حُسن الجمال است رازق رحیم

*Ki sahib dayarast azam azim  
Ki husn al-jamal ast razak rahim*

The greatest of greats,  
Master of every sphere,  
Merciful, kind sustainer,  
Beauteous beyond compare.

beliefs was thus born in Punjab. In the immediate context of the *Zafarnama*, the words of the British historian Cunningham, are appropriate: "It was reserved for Nanak to perceive the true principles of reform, and to lay those broad foundations which enabled his successor Gobind to fire the minds of his countrymen with a new nationality, and give practical effect to the doctrine that the lowest is equal with the highest, in race as in creed, in political rights as in religious hopes."

The next four successors of Guru Nanak were to consolidate the evolving faith in different ways by their contributions. The first successor, Guru Angad, who had been a firm Hindu devotee of the Devi before he came under Nanak's influence, was chosen by Nanak over his own sons because of his devoted service to the community at Kartarpur. He moved to Khadur, where he continued to build a disciplined community, and developed a local script into a distinctive form of writing for the community's scriptures – the Gurmukhi script. He collected Nanak's hymns and made copies for each centre of the community, adding his contribution of short verses.

The third Guru, Amar Das, moved his centre to Goindwal on the river Beas and assiduously consolidated the new faith. He made the langar an integral part of the Sikh church – even Emperor Akbar is said to have eaten from the communal kitchen when he visited the Guru. He wrote extensively himself (891 of his hymns are included in the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy scripture of the Sikhs) and even compiled the writings of his predecessors, also adding many hymns of well-known Bhaktas like Namdev and Kabir. The congregation increased considerably during his time and he organised twenty-two *manjis* or centres, appointing local agents or *masands* to organise worship, initiate new disciples and collect offerings. He made very significant

social innovations that were to form an important aspect of a distinct Sikh cultural identity, including the prohibition of the practices of sati and purdah, as well as the propagation of widow remarriage and inter-caste marriages.

The Guru-ship moved on thereafter to Ram Das, his devoted disciple and son-in-law, who chose to build a town by an expanse of water between the Ravi and the Beas. This town would get the name of Ramdaspur, and later, Amritsar; the expanse of water would house the Harmandir Sahib (the Golden Temple). The Sikhs were encouraged to make contributions in cash, kind and service for the excavation of the tank and the growth of the town; in fact, the spirit of voluntary labour remains strong in Sikhism to this day. His compositions further enriched the growing body of religious literature and included the marriage hymns that are sung at Sikh weddings.

Introducing the principle of heredity (though not primogeniture), Guru Ram Das nominated his youngest son Arjan Mal as his successor, arousing the anger of his eldest, Prithi Chand. Dissension in issues of succession was not unknown in the development of the Sikh faith and, in fact, had been in play since the sons of Guru Nanak; it lay behind the need for each of the three successors of Nanak to move to or found a new town. Guru Arjan completed the Harmandir Sahib, asking Mian Mir, a Muslim Sufi saint, to lay the foundation stone. The simple and modest temple, as it then was, had none of the trappings of extravagance usually associated with such buildings. It was lower than the surrounding land and not towering above; it had four entrances and was thus open to people of all castes. The Harmandir was to undergo destruction and desecration many times at the hands of invaders such as Ahmad Shah Abdali, and would be given its present spectacular form by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in the nineteenth century.

شہنشاہِ خوبیِ دہ و رہنموی  
کہ بیگون پیچوں چوں بے نموی

*Shahenshah-e khubi deh o rehnamu  
Ki begun bechun chun benamun*

Mightiest of emperors,  
Giver of good, guide without peer,  
Ethereal and formless,  
He is unique, beyond compare.

کہ صاحبِ شعور است عاجز نواز  
غریبِ الپرست و غنیمِ اللگداز

*Ki sahib shaour ast aajiz-nawaz  
Garib ul-parast o ganim ul-gudaz*

The wisest of the wise,  
Protector of the weak,  
Destroyer of tyrants,  
The keeper of the meek.

During Guru Arjan's time, Amritsar grew not merely as a place of pilgrimage but as a spiritual centre and source of inspiration for the Sikhs. To provide a core to this inspiration, Guru Arjan began work on compiling the Sikh scriptures with his maternal uncle Bhai Gurdas as his scribe. The compilation included the writings of the first four Gurus as well as his own; in addition, the writings of Muslim and Hindu saints like Farid, Namdev, Kabir, Ravi Das and many others who were of kindred spiritual belief were also included. The result was the Adi Granth, consisting then of more than 5,000 hymns, and classified according to thirty-one ragas according to which they would be sung. The Adi Granth would be given its final shape by Guru Gobind Singh.

On 16 August 1604, Guru Arjan installed the Adi Granth in the Harmandir with Bhai Buddha as the first Granthi or reader. During these years, which were marked by benevolent relations with Emperor Akbar, the Sikh community flourished with a sense of a distinct identity and was not restricted to Punjab alone. Sikhs could be found in Kashmir and Kabul, Delhi and Agra. This good fortune, however, came to an end with the death of Akbar. Emperor Jahangir was uncomfortable with the popularity of Guru Arjan and was keen to put an end to the 'false traffic' that he believed the house of the Guru had carried on for several generations. He was also under the impression that the Guru had supported the rebellious prince Khusrau against him. Encouraged by the Guru's detractors around him – both orthodox Muslims and orthodox Hindus – Jahangir ordered the arrest of the Guru and his family. In Lahore, the Guru was severely tortured and made to sit on a hot plate while sand was poured on him. Ultimately, the Guru achieved martyrdom when he perished in the river Ravi. But before that he had sent word that his eleven-year-old son Hargobind should be nominated the sixth Guru of the Sikhs.

The pacific martyrdom of Guru Arjan was to start a new tradition in the faith – the demonstration of one's convictions through the ultimate sacrifice. It showed how one man, without the use of physical strength and force, could defeat oppression morally. In the words of the Sikh savant Dr Balbir Singh, Guru Arjan showed through his martyrdom that "the oppressor can do no more than take your life, and even when he takes it does not fall in his hands and you do not lose it, because it was never yours to begin with; you had already handed it over to your Master."

But Guru Hargobind knew that his father's martyrdom would not awaken the comatose conscience of the oppressive regime. His answer was the introduction of a martial spirit into the pacific faith; the Sikhs were taught to take up arms, but only in self-defence and for the right cause. Wearing two swords around his waist—one for spirituality (*peeri*) and the other for temporal power (*meeri*) he gathered a body of soldiers around him and spent much time on martial exercises and hunting. These developments were, in a way, a challenge to the state. The fledgling army clashed with the Mughals on several occasions and emerged victorious, showing that Mughal writ could be successfully challenged. A new spirit of armed defiance and pride in their prowess had entered the consciousness of the Sikhs which was celebrated by the singing of heroic ballads, accompanied by the blood-stirring strains of the sarangi at the Akal Takht, the new temporal seat of the faith built right across from the Harmandir Sahib which had already become the spiritual centre. There was a further accretion to a distinct identity with the Guru's renewal of the importance of Amritsar and his focus on strengthening community institutions. For the last decade of his life Hargobind retreated to the settlement of Kiratpur in the Siwalik Hills on the banks of the Sutlej, choosing his grandson Har Rai to succeed him.

کے قولِ قرآن کند اعتبار  
ہماں روز آخر شود مرد خوار

*Kase qoul-e Quran kunad itibar  
Haman roz aakhir shavad mard khwar*

Such oaths on the Quran  
Whosoever does believe,  
Will be wretched at the end,  
Destroyed, beyond reprieve.

چوں کار از ہمہ حیلتنے درگذشت  
حلال است بردن بہ شمشیر دست

*Chun kar az hameh heelate dar guzasht  
Halal ast burdan bi-shamsher dast*

When all has been tried, yet  
Justice is not in sight,  
It is then right to pick up the sword,  
It is then right to fight.

Guru Har Rai was a man of peace and prayer, and his seventeen years as Guru were rather uneventful. For the most part he had to move deeper into the hills, yet he managed to travel extensively to spread Nanak's message. He did incur the wrath of Aurangzeb who saw him as siding with Dara Shikoh, his rival and brother, in the succession struggle. When the ruthless and despotic Aurangzeb succeeded to the Delhi throne after killing his brothers and imprisoning his father, he summoned Har Rai to Delhi. The Guru sent his son Ram Rai who succeeded in pleasing the emperor but only after deliberately misreading a verse from the Granth which the emperor had believed to be derogatory of Islam. This turned his father's mind away from Ram Rai and he appointed his second son, the five-year old Har Krishan, as his successor. The child-Guru was also summoned to Delhi by the emperor who wanted to pursue the issue of succession to his own advantage by supporting the claims of Ram Rai. However, Har Krishan was struck down by small pox, and before he died he indicated that an older person living in the village of Bakala would be the next Guru. This was none other than Tegh Bahadur – the youngest son of the sixth Guru, Hargobind – who had spent long years in meditation.

Troubled by envious kinsmen who resented his succession, Tegh Bahadur moved to a new centre that was to become one of the most revered places in Sikhism. This was the village of Makhawal in the Siwaliks. He renamed it Anandpur, the abode of bliss. Tegh Bahadur travelled extensively to far-flung congregations in the Gangetic plains, Delhi, Mathura, Agra, Allahabad and Varanasi. Then leaving his family in Patna, he went on further to Dhaka and Assam. It was at Patna that his only son, Gobind, was born on 22 December 1666.

Meanwhile Punjab was reeling under Mughal oppression. Aurangzeb had unleashed a frenzy of religious

persecution, ordering the demolition of schools and temples of all 'infidels'. The dreaded *jizya* tax was reimposed on all non-Muslims. Matters came to a head when a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits came to Guru Tegh Bahadur, requesting him to save them from the conversions being enforced by Aurangzeb's governor, Ifthikar Khan. After deliberating over the matter, the Guru stated that if the emperor could convert him to Islam, the Pandits would follow suit. This was a direct challenge to Aurangzeb who ordered that Tegh Bahadur be brought to Delhi in fetters. Tegh Bahadur did not wait for his captors but began moving towards Delhi of his own accord. When finally arrested, he was brought to Delhi in an iron cage on 5 November 1675.

The Mughals challenged the Guru to perform a miracle or convert to Islam. When he refused, three of his close companions who had joined him of their own volition were killed in his presence: one was sawn into two, the second boiled alive and the third burnt alive. Thereafter, the Guru himself was beheaded in the market square of Chandni Chowk; the revered Gurdwara Sisganj now stands at that spot. A terrible storm then raged through Delhi and during the storm, a humble Sikh called Jaita recovered the Guru's head and took it to Anandpur to the Guru's son Gobind. The body was similarly smuggled away by another follower, Lakhi Rai, a cotton merchant to his own hut on Raisina hill and the hut was set afire to cremate the body. Gurdwara Rakabganj in New Delhi is the solemn memorial in white marble built on this site.

Of his father's martyrdom, Guru Gobind Singh was to later write in *Bachitra Natak*:

*At the departure of Tegh Bahadur  
The world was shrouded in grief;  
Lamentations in the world of men,  
But in the world of God there was praise.*

ترکار تیر و ترنکار کماں  
برآمد یکے ہاے ہو از جہاں

*Tarkaar teer o tarankar kamaan  
Baramad yake hai hu az jahan*

So fearsome the scream of arrows  
So awesome the twang of bows,  
That from a cowering world  
A loud cry at once arose.

کہ ایں مرد را ذرہ اعتبار نیست  
چہ قسم قرآن است یزداں یکیست

*Ki een marad ra zarah itibar nest  
Chi qasm-e Quran ast yazdan yakest*

There can be no trust in a man who  
Swears on the Quran and One God,  
But values not the holy oath  
And is false to his given word.

Guru Tegh Bahadur had demonstrated that the human soul could not be caged and that bravery was not only that of the sword. The truly courageous had no fear of death – death was not a punishment but a prize to which true warriors of the spirit had a right. It was not an end to be feared but a beginning of eternal life. A unique sacrifice had been made in defence of religious freedom: the spirit had notched up a great victory over despotism. The stage was set for a series of cataclysmic clashes. In the next round, steel would be infused in the soul by the sacrament of the double-edged dagger.

When the nine-year-old Gobind held his father's severed head in his hands, he was only too aware of his unique heritage: fearless martyrdom to defend the essential rights to life and belief. He also knew how he would carry this legacy forward: injustice and cruelty had to be given an appropriate response. As Cunningham wrote: "He resolved upon awakening his followers to a new life and upon giving precision and aim to the broad and general institutions of Nanak. In the heart of a powerful empire he set himself the task of subverting it, and from the midst of social degradation and religious corruption he called up the simplicity of manners, singleness of purpose, and enthusiasm of desire."

Those early years at Anandpur were years of preparation both martial and spiritual. The grief at Tegh Bahadur's death gradually gave way to an enthusiasm for the tenth Guru who had grown into a sharp-featured, tall and wiry man, handsomely dressed and impressively armed. Anandpur turned into the birthplace of a new nation. It began to see martial exercises and sports-horse racing, musket shooting, archery and swordsmanship. A huge war drum, known as the Ranjit Nagara, was built and installed; its booming beat announced a hunt or a mealtime in the communal kitchen.

At the same time, the Guru, with his amazing talents, concentrated on literary and spiritual acquisitions. He learned Persian, Arabic, Sanskrit, Braj and Avadhi, and studied the ancient classics and texts. His poetic genius was to result in a cornucopia of highly accomplished literary work, beginning with *Chandi di Var*, a virile ballad replete with vivid imagery that depicts the contest between gods and demons in inspiring martial rhythm. This would be followed by several major works marked by spiritual depth and artistic beauty: *Jaap Sahib*, *Sudha Sawaiye* (psalms), *Akal Ustat* and *Shabad Hazare* (Songs of Divine praise), *Bachitra Natak* (an autobiography), *Chaubis Avtar*, *Chandi Charitra* and many others, including the *Zafarnama*, collected in the *Dasam Granth*, a text distinct from the *Adi Granth*. One of the abiding elements of his poetry and philosophy was the metaphor of the sword, the symbol of Shakti, of Durga, indeed of God Himself. The sword was not a weapon of aggression but of righteous action to preserve truth and virtue; in truth, it was more a shield than a sword. This was the sacrament of steel, true and uncompromising, that would weld a new and fearless nation from a passive and demoralized mass.

The Rajput rajas of the surrounding hills watched Guru Gobind Singh's growing influence with consternation. It was not only the splendour of his court that disturbed them but also the casteless nature of the community that he was nurturing, which they saw as a challenge to their time-honoured feudal systems. They also saw the Guru's education, martial training and patronage of the arts as attempts to equate himself with Rajput rulers. The first challenge came from Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur (or Kahlur) who demanded that the Guru hand over a richly embroidered canopy and a well-trained elephant. When rebuffed, he had to be persuaded by his fellow rajas not to go to war with the Guru; the truce, however, would prove to be temporary.

دگر شورشِ کیمبر کینہ کوش  
زمردانِ مردانِ بیرونِ رفتِ ہوش

*Digar shorish-e kaibar-e keeneh kosh  
Ze mardaan-e mardan birun raft hosh*

The screaming arrows rained death,  
Each one to its target sped,  
And the bravest of your men  
Were counted among the dead.

کہ او بے محابست شہنشاہ  
زمین و زمان را ہم و پاتشاہ

*Ki o bemahab ast shahenshab  
Zameen o zaman ra ham o patshah<sup>17</sup>*

He is the King of Kings,  
Truly the Fearless One,  
King of the heavens and earth  
Master of all Creation.

One of the hill rajas, Raja Medini Prakash of Sirmur, differed from his clansmen and made friendly overtures towards Guru Gobind Singh. Finally, in 1685, the Guru accepted his invitation to visit Nahan, the picturesque capital of Sirmur. There he was warmly received and spent several days in discourse and in hunting game in the surrounding jungles. While out on the chase one day, he was captivated by the scenic beauty of a spot beside the Yamuna, a few miles below the spur of Nahan. The Guru decided to set camp here and named the place Paonta, after the *pavor* foot that his favourite horse had implanted on the soil. Today a serene gurdwara stands on the banks of the river at the same spot.

The years at Paonta were to be the most creative of his life. He devoted himself to his favourite outdoor activities with his followers and contemplated deeply on the state of the nation and the challenge of reviving the human spirit. He also produced supremely sublime poetry that sang praises of the Almighty and aimed to infuse a new spirit into the populace. A number of poets from all over the country (his poetic court included fifty-two-gathered about him) and their creative activity turned Paonta into a cultural and spiritual centre. Sikh lore has it that one day the poets complained to the Guru that the noisy river disturbed their concentration and it is in accordance with the Guru's command that the Yamuna at that spot flows soundlessly to this day.

The huge amount of literature produced at Paonta, along with translations of ancient Sanskrit texts, including the Mahabharata, Puranas and Niti Shastra, into Punjabi and Braj were compiled into a massive anthology called *Vidyasagar*. This huge exercise had a purpose: to bring about a renaissance of ancient knowledge and thus facilitate a spiritual awakening by making the people aware of a heritage they could be proud of, and for this it was necessary

through translation to take these texts from the obscure and self-serving possession of the priests and render them comprehensible to the masses. Unfortunately, this valuable compilation itself was lost later during the crossing of the Sirsa River in flood after the evacuation of Anandpur; some of the translations survived through copies made outside the *Vidyasagar* collection.

The tranquil life at Paonta was brought to an end by the hill rajas who had amassed an army headed by Bhim Chand Kahluria and Raja Fateh Shah of Shrinagar to challenge the Guru. The two armies met at the field of Bhangani, six miles from Paonta on 22 September 1688. Guru Gobind Singh suffered early setbacks as five hundred Pathans who had been commended to his army by a Muslim divine and follower, Pir Buddhu Shah, broke their loyalty and moved over to the other side. Buddhu Shah then joined the Guru with his four sons and seven hundred followers. The Guru's followers, though not professional soldiers, fought with tremendous spirit and resolute determination. The Guru himself took the field and confronted the brave hill chief and ace marksman, Hari Chand Handuria. With Hari Chand's death, the victory at Bhangani belonged to the Guru and his followers, a decisive demonstration that they could not be trifled with. Guru Gobind Singh was to later describe Bhangani as a 'purposeless' battle that had been foisted upon him.

Anticipating that other battles would follow, the Guru returned to Anandpur and began the building of defensive fortifications. The forts of Anandgarh, Fatehgarh, Lohgarh and Keshgarh were built on strategic natural features. Sure enough, fresh challenges presented themselves. Raja Bhim Chand, the treacherous hill raja who had ironically made his peace with the Guru now sought his assistance to challenge the Mughal commander from Jammu, Alif Khan, who had

هر آنکس که ایمان پرستی کند  
نه پیمان خودش پیش و پستی کند

*Har aan kas ki iman parasti kunad  
Na paiman khudash pesh o pasti kunad*

Those who are firm of faith  
And true believers of God,  
Break not their promises thus  
But stay firm to their word.

خداوند ایزد زمین و زمان  
کنند است هر کس مکین و مکان

*Khudawand aizard zameen o zaman  
Kunand ast har kas makin o makan*

Supreme Master of all,  
From Him Creation takes birth,  
Maker of all living beings,  
Of the heavens and of earth.

been sent to enforce tribute from the recalcitrant hill rajas. In a quick and decisive action at Nadaun on the Beas River, Alif Khan was defeated with the help of the Sikhs.

But this victory would have repercussions. The news from Nadaun and the growing strength of Guru Gobind Singh reached Aurangzeb in the Deccan. Incensed, he issued a royal edict in November 1693 preventing the Guru from gathering his followers. This had little effect on Anandpur. Guru Gobind Singh sent out word that his followers should come to celebrate Baisakhi at Anandpur and that they should travel armed, their hair and beards unshorn, so as to openly announce their identities. Mughal pickets guarded the paths but, refusing to be daunted, the Sikhs gathered in strength at Anandpur in March 1694. Baisakhi was celebrated with great fanfare. As was only to be expected, news of this defiance too reached the emperor in the Deccan.

Several attempts at subduing the Sikhs followed. First, Dilawar Khan, the provincial Mughal chief from Kangra, sent a force under his son to surprise the Sikhs but when the Mughal army reached Anandpur in the dark of the night it was taken aback by the stentorian war cries of the defenders and the booming beat of the Ranjit Nagara. Unnerved by the ready response, the Mughals deserted the field. Another expedition under the commander Husain Khan, aided by the duplicitous Bhim Chand, set course for Anandpur but were diverted with a dispute with Raja Gopal of Guler. In the battle that ensued, the Guler chief was victorious with the help of a small body of Sikhs. A livid Aurangzeb then sent an expedition under his son Muazzam, who was to later succeed him to the throne as Bahadur Shah. The commander of the prince's army, Mirza Beg, exacted a heavy toll from the hill rajas but they decided to leave the Guru alone, probably due

to the intervention of the poet Bhai Nand Lal who was a devotee of the Guru and had also served as secretary to Prince Muazzam.

These clashes finally gave way to a few years of peace and the Guru devoted these to contemplation and literary activity. He completed the autobiographical *Bachitra Natak* and supervised the translation of the Upanishads and other classical texts. He also turned his attention to the organizational structure of the Sikh communities. A fundamental change was made by the abolition of the institution of *masands* (officials appointed to administer the far-flung congregations) that dated back to the time of Guru Amar Das. The *masands* had become corrupt, divisive and venal. Once freed of their tyranny and corrupt practices, the congregations established a direct link with Anandpur. The time was now ripe for the most dramatic transformation of the community.

The Baisakhi festival of 1699 arrived in an atmosphere of high expectation. A special command had gone out to the congregations to gather in large numbers at Anandpur. About eighty thousand followers gathered to celebrate the festival with a meditative Guru Gobind Singh. When the Guru appeared before the gathering he most unexpectedly drew his sword and demanded that one person come forth from the congregation and sacrifice his head for the sake of the faith. The audience was dumbfounded; the Guru seemed to have lost his mind! Some left in panic but the majority sat quietly. Finally, a man called Daya Ram came forward and offered his head. The Guru took him into tent and came back, his sword dripping with blood. The call for sacrifice was repeated another four times and four men – Dharam Das, Mohkam Chand, Himmat Rai and Sahib Chand, came forward in response to the call of the Guru and were similarly 'sacrificed'. According to some

versions, the blood on the sword is believed to be that of slaughtered goats.

After this unprecedented turn of events, the Guru brought back these very five men from the tent, dressed in new robes with turbans on their heads. These men were to be the *panj pyaras* or the five beloved ones. They had overcome the most debilitating of enemies – fear. They would form the core of the order of the Khalsa, or the Pure, which was about to be born. Guru Gobind then performed the simple yet immensely significant ceremony of baptism. He poured clean water into an iron bowl, added sugar to it, and stirred it with a double-edged dagger as he recited verses from the sacred writings. Thus, with the combination of sweetness and steel was prepared amrit-or ambrosia-which was administered to each of the five Sikhs by the Guru with a rousing cry of *Sri Waheguru ji ka Khalsa, Sri Wahegure ji ki Fateh* (The Khalsa belongs to the Glorious God; the Glorious God is Victorious). The rallying cry remains with the Sikhs to this day.

The baptism was a rebirth for the five into a new family, a casteless brotherhood of inspired belief. It was the end of the debilitating boundaries of their caste, their creed and ritual. Each one of them was to henceforth carry the surname Singh, or Lion, and to carry the five emblems of the brotherhood. These are the five Ks of Sikhism: *kesh*, or unshorn hair and beard; a *kangha*, or comb to keep the hair tidy; *kara*, a steel bracelet; *kachh*, short breeches in keeping with the demands of soldiering; and *kirpan*, a sword. In another unexpected move, the Guru then asked the *panj pyaras* to baptise him in the same manner as he had baptised them. He was not to be their superior but was to be merged into the brotherhood. The Guru was not only the Guru but the disciple too; the brotherhood of saint-soldiers, ready to die for the righteous cause, was created in his image and became his alter ego.

The creation of the Khalsa was the apogee of the work started two centuries earlier by Guru Nanak. The martial elements infused by the tenth Guru were to be tempered by the strong spiritual context created by the combined teachings of all the Gurus. Strength was to be exercised for the right cause and never for aggrandizement or aggression. The community was inspired by belief in the One God and preached the equality of man; its preferred action was the amelioration of man's condition in relation to society rather than individual piety or asceticism. Ritualism and idolatry were denounced; the congregation and community were promoted as an important part of life. The Khalsa was to hold the sword in one hand and the rosary in the other.

The Guru's message to the initiates was clear: "You will love man as man, making no distinction of caste or creed ...

You will only bow your heads to your Master. You will never worship stock, stone, idol or tomb. Remember always, in times of danger or difficulty, the names of the masters: Nanak, Angad, Amar Das, Ram Das, Arjan Dev, Hargobind Sahib, Har Rai Sahib, Har Krishan, Tegh Bahadur. I make you a rosary of these names and you shall not pray each for himself, but for the entire Khalsa. In each of you the whole brotherhood shall be incarnated. You are my sons, both in flesh and spirit." With this inspired and creative act, Guru Gobind Singh started a new era, an age of chivalry and gallantry in which ordinary and suppressed people would become stout-hearted saint-soldiers, crusaders against oppression. He had taught the sparrows to hunt the hawks.

But the going would not be smooth. The hill rajas, whom the Guru invited to join his growing community at Anandpur, refused to do so. In a petition sent to Delhi they vented their jealousy at his growing influence: "The Guru has established a new sect distinct from the Hindus and the Muhammadans, to which he has given the name of Khalsa. He has united the four castes into one, and made many followers ... He suggested to us that if we rose in rebellion against the emperor, he would assist us with all his forces, because the emperor had killed his father, and he desired to avenge his death ... We cannot restrain him and have accordingly come to crave the protection of this just government against him ... Should you delay to punish and restrain him, his next expedition will be against the capital of your empire."

In response, Aurangzeb, still in the Deccan, dispatched two Mughal commanders, Painsa Khan and Din Beg, to deal with the Sikhs. Aided by the hill rajas, the Mughal forces joined battle with the small but determined band of Sikhs. Painsa Khan was killed by Guru Gobind Singh in single combat and the Mughal army was routed. The hill rajas fled the battlefield only to regroup after a while and lay siege to Anandpur. Once again, the siege had to be lifted in the face of stiff resistance. Several such skirmishes followed over the next three years but the Sikh community at Anandpur held fast. Finally, in the winter of 1704, the largest ever combined force of the Mughals and the hill rajas that had ever been put together descended upon Anandpur only to be met by a determined, planned and aggressive response. When several bloody battles only resulted in huge losses for the attacking army, they settled down to a comprehensive siege. All food supplies were cut off and even a hill stream that used to supply water to Anandpur was diverted.

Despite brave, lightning strikes by the Sikhs for the replenishment of supplies, the situation inside the city gradually worsened. Messages came from Aurangzeb, authenticated by vows on the Quran, assuring safe passage



for the Guru and his entourage if he evacuated Anandpur. Ultimately, not willing to subject his loved ones to starvation, the Guru decided to leave. His party consisted of his mother, Mata Gujri, his two wives and four sons along with about five hundred Sikhs.

The royal promise, of course, was only made to be broken; the Guru's party was attacked as they reached the banks of the flooded Sirsa River. Ude Singh, one of the Guru's most skilful commanders mounted a rearguard action – and died in the process – to allow the others to ford the river. Several Sikhs died in the chilly waters and the party was dispersed in the confusion of pursuit. Mata Gujri, the Guru's mother, along with his two younger sons, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, were escorted by an old retainer, Gangu, to his village; the two wives were escorted to Delhi. The Guru was left with his two elder sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and a band of forty Sikhs. Pursued by a reinforced Mughal army he reached a small mud fortress in the village of Chamkaur.

Here, on 22 December 1704, was to be fought a battle rare in the chronicles of gallantry. The Sikhs came out in batches of five to meet the huge pursuing army and each man fought his way to a brave death. Both sons of the Guru, Ajit and Jujhar, as well as two of the original *panj pyaras*, Mohkam Singh and Himmat Singh, were killed in hand-to-hand combat after causing havoc in the Mughal ranks. At the end of the day the Guru was left with only five Sikhs. They entreated him to escape, saying that if he lived the Khalsa would flourish. Presented with the command of the five Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh left the fortress, extinguishing the night torches of the enemy even as he left. Three of the Sikhs were to ultimately catch up with him while the remaining two would continue to battle till their last breath.

The Guru roamed alone in the wintry nights in the forest of Macchiwara, without food or shelter. It was in this state that he composed the heart-rending verses of *Mittar Piare nu*.

Tell the Beloved Friend of the condition of his followers:

Without Him, the comfort of soft beds is a plague,  
Life in palaces may well be a serpent,

The jug of wine is a cross, the cup a dagger;  
Without Him, life is a butcher's knife itself.

The rough dwelling of a friend is welcome,  
And hell itself to live the life of the rich.

Finally, reunited with his three companions from Chamkaur and aided by two friendly Pathans (Ghani

Khan and Nabi Khan) Guru Gobind Singh wended his way through searching enemy patrols and reached the village of Jatpura where he learned of the fate that had befallen his mother and two younger sons. The servant Gangu had betrayed them and handed them over to Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind. The nawab offered the two young boys, aged eight and six, blandishments to convert them to Islam. When they adamantly and fearlessly refused, they were bricked alive. (Some chroniclers believe that they were extricated from the wall and then put to death by the sword.) Mata Gujri died of shock when she heard the news. The nawab of Malerkotla intervened unsuccessfully with Wazir Khan to spare the lives of the boys. (Malerkotla has since enjoyed a unique place in Sikh lore and has become synonymous with inter-communal harmony. Even during the bloody communal riots that marked the Partition of India, no Muslim was harmed in Malerkotla.)

The Guru received the horrible news with equanimity and fell into prayer, thanking the Almighty for giving him the opportunity to render to Him what belonged to Him. He then proceeded to the village of Dina. Here he received from Aurangzeb a conciliatory message inviting him to meet him in the Deccan. While historians differ on exact details of the sequence, it is generally believed that this message was in response to a letter written to the emperor by the Guru after Chamkaur, a letter titled *Fatehnama*. The Guru now responded with the *Zafarnama* and dispatched it to the Deccan with two Sikhs, Daya Singh and Dharam Singh. Aurangzeb, according to the version of traditional Sikh chroniclers, was so moved by the letter and impressed with its forthright fearlessness that even as he lay sick in bed, he dictated a letter to his wazir in the north, Munim Khan, to show friendship towards Guru Gobind Singh and invite him to meet the emperor. The letter was sent to Delhi in the hands of the emperor's mace-bearer Muhammed Beg, accompanied by the two Sikh messengers.

While all this was happening, the Guru had moved on to Khidrana which housed the only reservoir in the area. Here a pitched battle was fought with the forces of Wazir Khan, the nawab of Sarhind. A small band of forty Sikhs fought to their death. They were from among those who had deserted the Guru during the siege of Anandpur and now sought redemption by laying down their lives. The daily Sikh prayer or *Ardas* remembers them as the forty 'saved ones' (*muktas*). The spot of the battle has since been known as Muktsar or the Pool of Salvation.

Guru Gobind then continued his travels through the Malwa area of Punjab. This was then a rather thinly populated

area, still very much a scrubland and jungle with agricultural settlement confined to the banks of the rivers. Here he began to revitalise the people with his presence and teachings. A large number of the peasants came under his influence and the Sikh faith took firm roots in the area. Finally, he took off his armour at a spot near Talwandi Sabo and rested. This place became known as Damdama, or the place of repose. During his nine-month stay here, thousands of people took the baptism of the double-edged sword. It was here too that the Guru, with the help of his confidant, the scholarly Bhai Mani Singh, put together the authorised version of the Adi Granth. To the first version of the Granth that had been put together by Guru Arjan were added the hymns of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur. His own writings would later be put together after his death by Bhai Mani Singh in the *Dasam Granth*. Damdama became a gathering point for scholars and poets and the Guru likened the place to Kashi (Varanasi) as a centre of learning; subsequently, Damdama developed a strong tradition for scholarship and calligraphy.

Leaving behind the tranquility of Damdama, the Guru set out again. While historians again differ on the purpose of the journey, it seems probable that the Guru had not heard of the impact that the *Zafarnama* had had on the emperor, and the air being rife with rumours of the failing health of the ninety-year-old Aurangzeb, he set out to seek the meeting. When he reached Rajputana in February 1707, however, he received news that the emperor had died in Ahmednagar.

A war of succession immediately broke out among the Mughal princes. The eldest, Muazzam Shah, known to be a liberal man, sought assistance from Guru Gobind Singh. The Guru recalled that Muazzam had earlier ignored his father's dictate to wage war on the Sikhs. A detachment of Sikh soldiers aided Muazzam in his battle against his rival Azam Shah in June 1707, and as a result of the victory, Muazzam ascended the throne in Delhi as Bahadur Shah.

A cordial meeting took place between the emperor and the Guru at Agra. All courtesies were extended by the emperor. Guru Gobind then decided to accompany him to the Deccan to quell a rebellion by another prince, wanting to utilise the opportunity to continue the dialogue with the emperor and seek a settlement to the troubles in Punjab. After many conversations, and by the time they reached Nanded, it was obvious that the emperor was not willing to take a real stand on issues such as reining in the hostile Wazir Khan of Sarhind and curbing the tyranny of the Mughal functionaries. Once again, this is the version of the traditional Sikh chroniclers and little is known from Mughal sources about the discussions.

While in Nanded, the Guru attracted many followers including the ascetic Madho Dass, who would later wreak vengeance on Sarhind as Banda Bahadur. However, Nanded was also to be the scene of tragedy. Disturbed by the possibility of the growing entente between the Guru and the emperor, Nawab Wazir Khan of Sarhind had infiltrated two assassins into the Guru's congregation. One evening, they made their way into the Guru's tent and stabbed him near the heart. Drawing his sword, the Guru killed one of them; the other was beheaded by the Sikhs who rushed in. Although the Guru's wound healed well, it reopened a few days later when he attempted to stretch a powerful bow. On 7 October 1708, Guru Gobind Singh died from excessive bleeding.

Even as he ebbed, the Guru drew upon his tremendous inner strength and gathered his followers around him. He directed them to revere only the Adi Granth after him; the Holy Book would be their Guru and would become known as the Guru Granth Sahib. It contained the spirit of all the Gurus. The Khalsa would be the Guru itself; the Guru had merged into the faith.

In his short span of forty-two years, Guru Gobind Singh had achieved his near impossible mission. Facing personal tragedies with a calm resolve not reserved for ordinary men, he had brought about a miraculous transformation of the spirit of a people, infusing in them a self-belief and spiritual strength with which they could fight oppression and tyranny. He made fearlessness a way of life and righteous valour a philosophy. He was a true saint-soldier whose martial prowess was matched by his spiritual achievement. The *Zafarnama* is a short but powerful example of his forthright, fearless philosophy as well as of his literary poetic genius.

**Navtej Singh Sarna** studied Commerce and Law at Delhi University and joined the Indian Foreign Service



in 1980. He had earlier served as a diplomat in Moscow, Warsaw, Thimphu, Geneva, Tehran and Washington DC as well as at New Delhi.

His publications and writings include a novel based on the life of Maharaja Duleep Singh and *The Book of Nanak*.

# Zafarnama

EPISTLE OF VICTORY

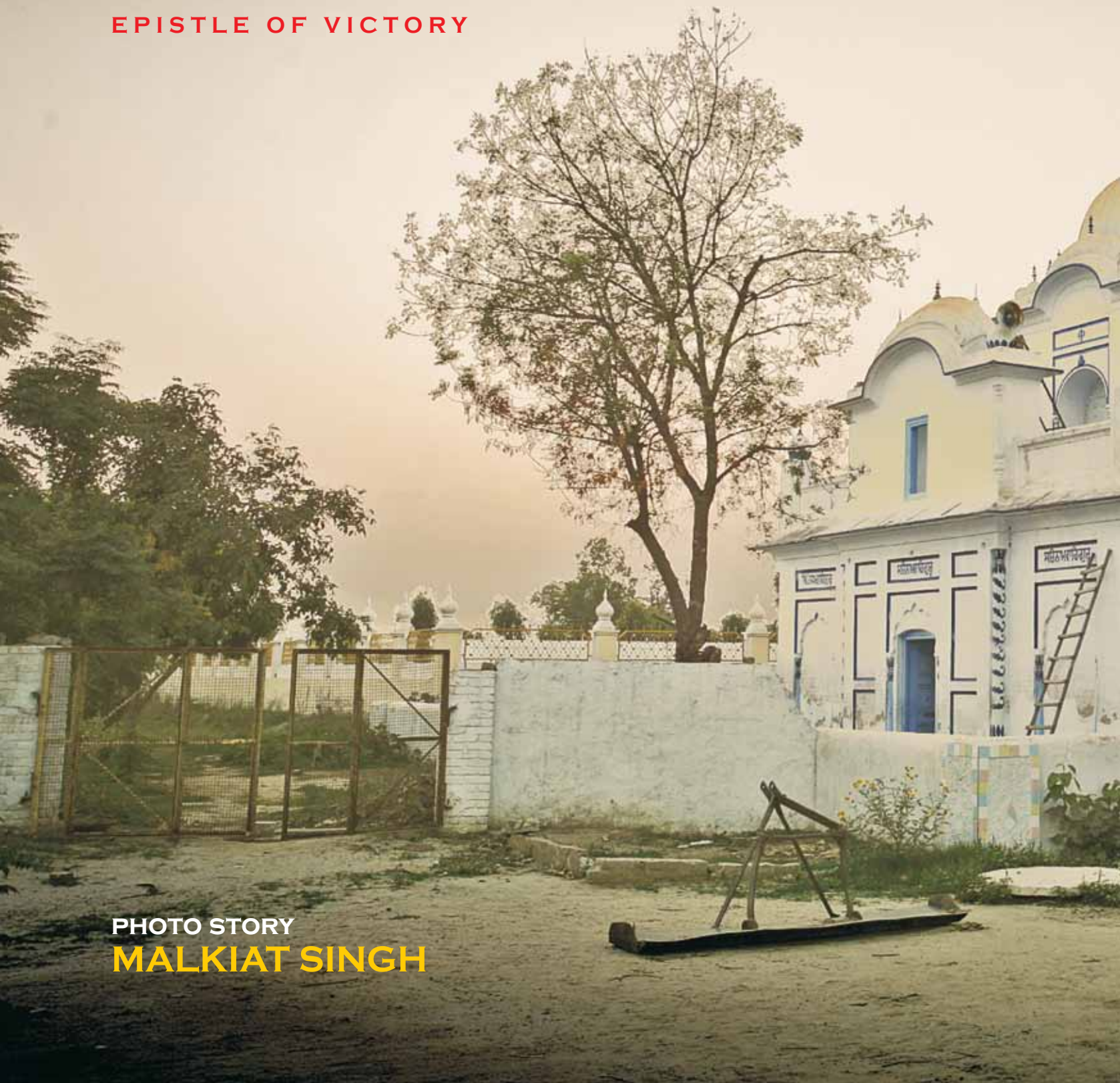


PHOTO STORY  
MALKIAT SINGH

GURDWARA ZAFARNAMA SAHIB IS SITUATED ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF DYALPURA BHAIKA VILLAGE IN THE DISTRICT OF BHATINDA. DURING GURU GOBIND SINGH JI'S STAY AT BHAI DESU JI'S RESIDENCE IN DINA VILLAGE, HE WOULD OFTEN COME TO THE DENSE FOREST HERE WHERE HE COMPILED THE ZAFARNAMA. THE GURUDWARA WAS BUILT MUCH LATER AT THE PLACE WHERE SIKH WARRIORS GATHERED TO HONE THEIR WAR-LIKE SKILLS.





Zafarnama

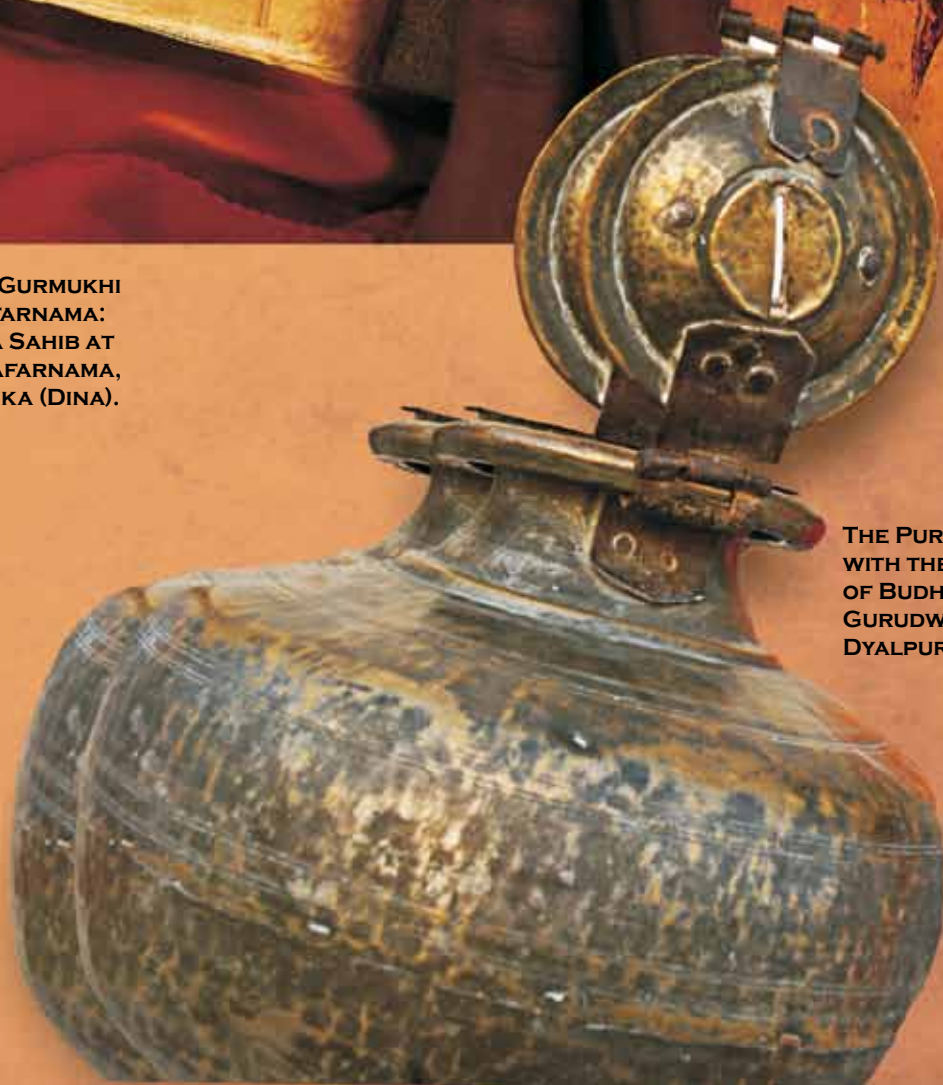


SEEN AT THE ENTRANCE GATE OF GURDWARA ZAFARNAMA SAHIB IS A NIHANG MAHAKAL OF BUDHA DAL.

WALL PAINTING OF GURU GOBIND SINGHJI ON HORSEBACK WITH HIS BAAZ. IN A DERA NEAR GURUDWARA ZAFARNAMA, DYALPURA BHAIKA (DINA).



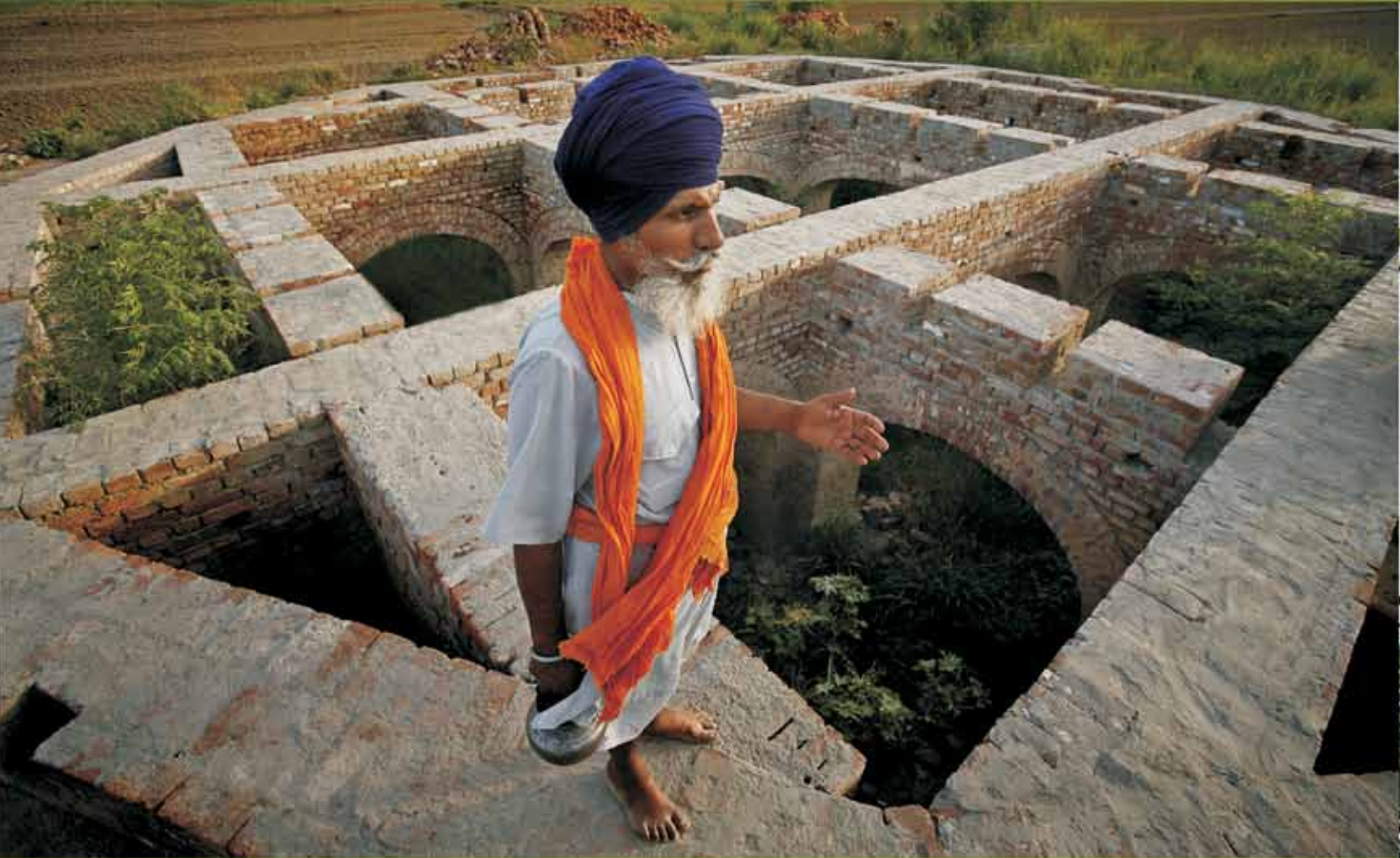
HAND WRITTEN GURMUKHI VERSION OF ZAFARNAMA: FOLIO OF GUTKA SAHIB AT GURUDWARA ZAFARNAMA, DYALPURA BHAIKA (DINA).



THE PURATAN GOLAK WITH THE NIHANG SINGHS OF BUDHA DAL. (AT GURUDWARA ZAFARNAMA, DYALPURA BHAIKA (DINA))

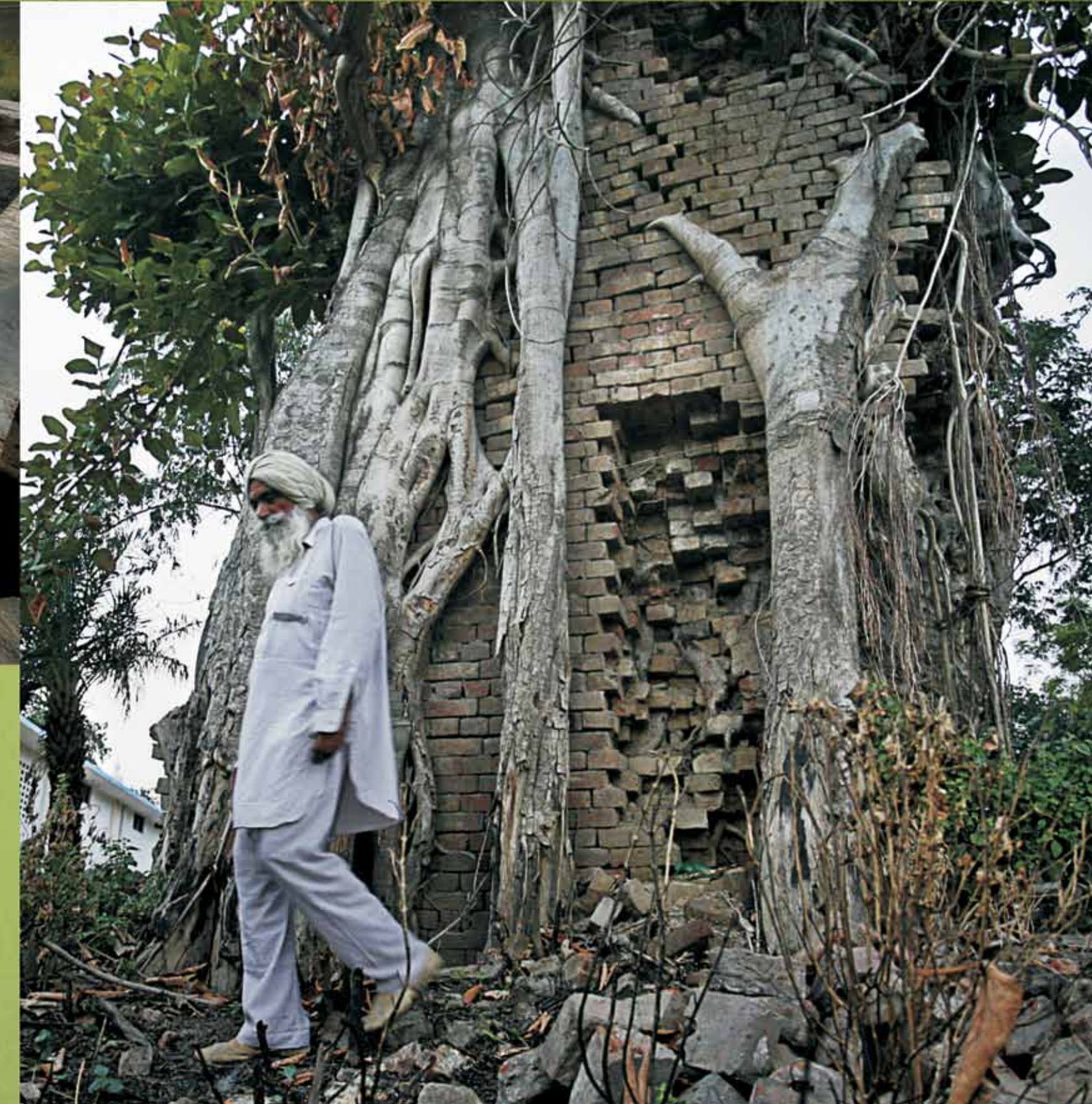
# Zafarnama

BASEMENT OF THE OLD STRUCTURE OF THE SEVEN STORIED TAKSAAL WHICH IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BELONGED TO BHAJ MANI SINGH JI.

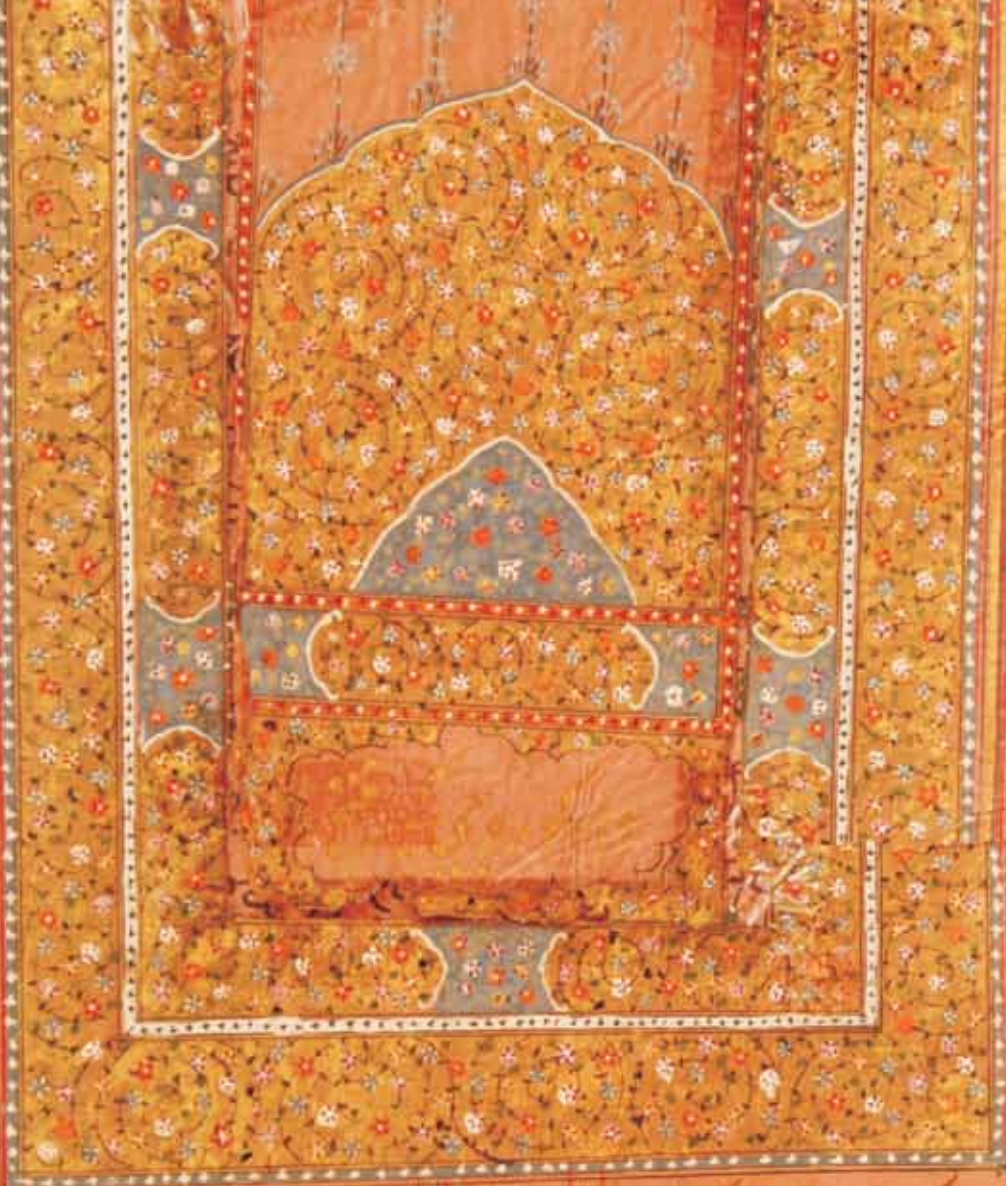


THESE *PURATAN SHASTRAS* OR ANCIENT WEAPONS WERE DISCOVERED DURING THE RE-CONSTRUCTION OF GURDWARA ZAFARNAMA SAHIB AT DYALPURA BHAIKA VILLAGE.

NATURE ENGULFS MAN MADE STRUCTURE NEAR THE TAKSAAL AT GURUDWARA ZAFARNAMA, DYALPURA BHAIKA (DINA).







99231



A FOLIO OF AN ILLUMINATED PAGE OF THE ZAFARNAMA FROM A DASAM GRANTH AT GURDWARA BHAI DAYA SINGH AT AURANGABAD.

رضا بخش رازق رنا کو رحیم  
 رضا بخش روز دہو دل پذیر  
 کہ سیکون بچوں چون پانگون  
 خداوند بخشندہ بخش دوش  
 عظام دہو بچو حاضر حضور  
 خداوند روز دہو ہر دیا  
 جو حسن الحال است رازق رحیم  
 غریب الیہ است و نفیم الخراج  
 حقیقت شناسو نیی الکتاب

کجا کر امانت قایم کریم  
 امان بخش شدہ دستگیر  
 شہ شاہ خوبادہو رہنمون  
 نہ سازونہ بازونہ فوجونہ فرس  
 جهان پاک زہر است ظاہر ظہور  
 عطا بخش پاک پروردگار  
 کہ صاحب دیار است اعظم عظیم  
 کہ غلب شہور است عاجز فواج  
 زندہ اور زندہ نور و تاب

INSIDE GURDWARA BHAI  
SAHEB DAYA SINGH AT  
AURANGABAD.



**GURDWARA BHAI SAHEB DAYA SINGH AT AURANGABAD. MUGHAL EMPEROR AURANGZEB HAD MOVED HIS HEADQUARTERS AT AURANGABAD WHEN HE CAME TO THE DECCAN TO QUELL THE MARATHA REBELLION. BHAI DAYA SINGH AND DHARAM SINGH, TWO OF THE PANJ PYARAS, SENT BY GURU GOBIND SINGH TO DELIVER THE ZAFARNAMA TO AURANGZEB HAD FIRST ARRIVED AT AURANGABAD BUT ON DISCOVERING THAT THE EMPEROR HAD SHIFTED TO AHMADNAGAR, THEY FOLLOWED HIM THERE. FINDING IT DIFFICULT TO MEET HIM, THEY RETURNED TO AURANGABAD AND BHAI DHARAM SINGH RETURNED TO PUNJAB TO SEEK GURUJI'S ADVICE. MEANWHILE BHAI DAYA SINGH, ESTABLISHED CONTACT WITH SOME INFLUENTIAL MUGHAL OFFICIALS AND SUCCEEDED IN DELIVERING THE ZAFARNAMA TO AURANGZEB. THE HOUSE WHERE HE STAYED AT AURANGABAD BECAME A POPULAR MEETING PLACE FOR SIKHS AND METAMORPHOSED INTO THE GURDWARA WHICH IS SITUATED IN DHAWNI MOHALLA AND KNOWN AS GURDWARA BHAI SAHEB DAYA SINGH.**



# Zafarnama

PAINTING HOUSED AT  
GURDWARA DAMDAMA SAHIB  
AT CHAMKAUR DEPICTS GURU  
GOBIND SINGH JI WITH HIS TWO  
ELDER SONS AND THE FORTY  
SIKHS.



GURDWARA DAMDAMA SAHIB AT CHAMKAUR MARKS THE SITE OF A GARDEN WHERE GURU GOBIND SINGH JI, ACCOMPANIED BY HIS TWO ELDER SONS AND THE FORTY SIKHS, CAME TO ON THE EVENING OF 6 DECEMBER 1705. CONSCIOUS OF THE VULNERABILITY OF THIS VENUE WITH THE ENEMY AT CLOSE PURSUIT, GURUJI SHIFTED TO A WALLED HOUSE AND FORTIFIED IT INTO A DEFENSIVE POSITION WITH MUD WALLS , CALLED 'GARHI'.

THE OLD STRUCTURE OF THE GURDWARA QATALGARH SAHIB AT CHAMKAUR IS SEEN HERE, WHICH WAS LATER DEMOLISHED AND RE-BUILT BY KAR SEVAKS.



NEW STRUCTURE OF GURDWARA QATALGARH SAHIB AT CHAMKAUR WITH GURDWARA SHAHID BURJ BHAJI JIVAN SINGH AT THE CENTRE AND GURDWARA GHARI SAHIB TO THE RIGHT.

GURDWARA QATALGARH SAHIB (SHAHID GANJ) IS SITUATED ON THE SITE WHERE MOST OF THE HAND-TO-HAND FIGHTING TOOK PLACE AND WHERE GURU GOBIND SINGH'S TWO SONS, SAHIBZADA AJIT SINGH AND SAHIBZADA JUJHAR SINGH, EARNED MARTYRDOM.

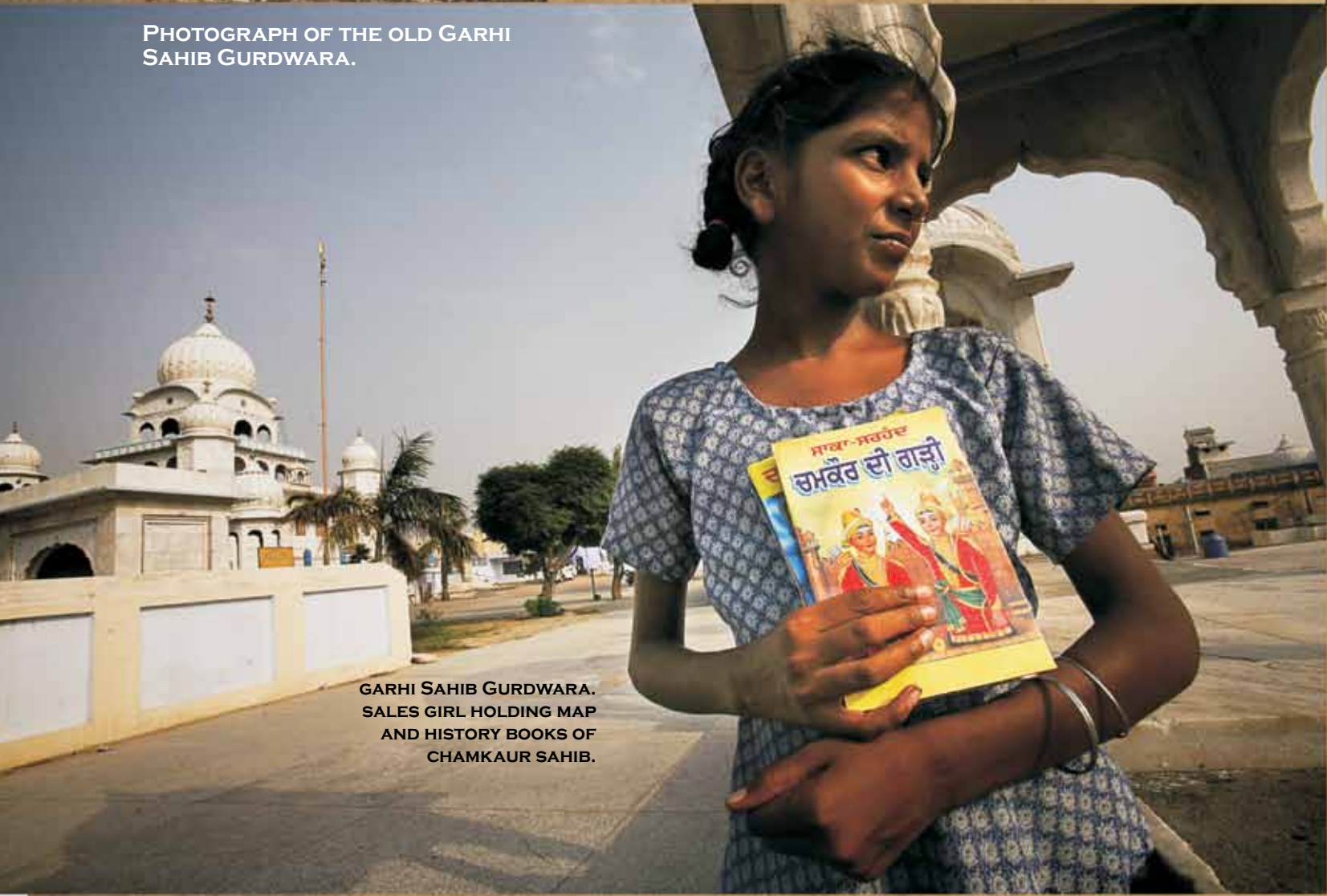
# Zafarnama



GURU GOBIND SINGH AND HIS HANDFUL OF WARRIORS DEFIANTLY TOOK ON AN ENEMY FORCE OF MANY TENS OF THOUSANDS. AT NIGHT WERE POSTED HIS SENTRIES, WHO RESTED IN TURNS WHILE THE IMPERIAL FORCE, EQUALLY EXHAUSTED BY THEIR PURSUIT, LAID A SIEGE TO THE TOWN. ON 7 DECEMBER 1705, THE BATTLE RAGED THROUGHOUT THE DAY. WHEN THEIR SUPPLY OF ARROWS AND GUN POWDER WAS EXHAUSTED, THE SIKHS, INCLUDING THE SAHIBZADAS MADE SALLIES IN SMALL BATCHES TAKING THE BATTLE TO THE ENEMY AND WERE EVENTUALLY KILLED. WHEN FIGHTING STOPPED, ONLY GURUJI AND FIVE OF HIS WARRIORS REMAINED ALIVE IN THE GARHI. THESE FIVE ASSUMED THE ROLE OF THE PANJ PYARE AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PANTH CONTINUING THE STRUGGLE AGAINST TYRANNY.

GURU GOBIND SINGH EXCHANGED HIS CLOTHES, INCLUDING HIS PLUMED TURBAN, WITH BHAJ SANGAT SINGH AND WITH THREE OTHERS. BHAJ DAYA SINGH, DHARMA SINGH AND MAN SINGH SLIPPED THROUGH THE ENEMY CORDON IN THE COLD DECEMBER NIGHT. THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE ENEMY REJOICED ON KILLING BHAJ SANGAT SINGH ATTIRED IN THE GURU'S OUTFIT BUT SOON REALISED THE TRUTH.

PHOTOGRAPH OF THE OLD GARHI SAHIB GURDWARA.



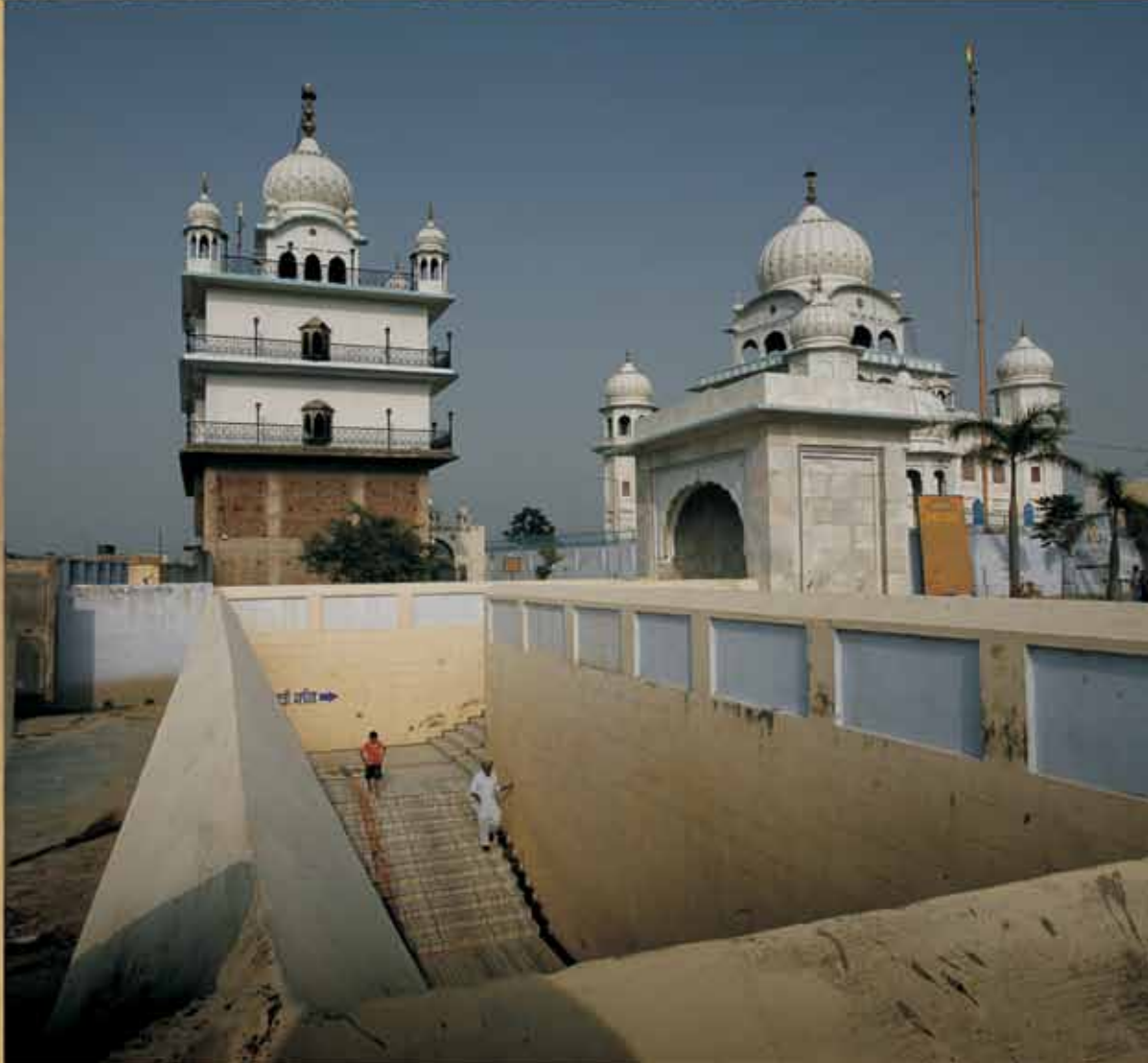
GARHI SAHIB GURDWARA.  
SALES GIRL HOLDING MAP  
AND HISTORY BOOKS OF  
CHAMKAUR SAHIB.

A VIEW OF THE DEMOLITION WORK BEING CARRIED OUT BY KAR SEVAKS AT THE OLD GARHI SAHIB GURDWARA.



VIEW OF THE HISTORIC WELL, NOW PRESERVED WITHIN THE PREMISES OF GURDWARA SHAHID BURJ BHAI JIVAN SINGH.

**GURDWARA SHAHID BURJ BHAI JIVAN SINGH:** THE LATTER WAS THE SAME BHAI JAITA WHO HAD TAKEN GURU TEGH BAHADUR'S HEAD AFTER HIS EXECUTION AT DELHI TO KIRATPUR IN 1675 AND THEREBY EARNING THE TITLE OF 'RANGHRETE GURU KE BETE' FROM GURU GOBIND SINGH. UPON HIS INITIATION INTO THE ORDER OF THE KHALSA IN 1699, HE WAS NAMED JIVAN SINGH. ACCORDING TO THE BHATT VAHIS HE WAS KILLED IN A REARGUARD ACTION ON THE BANK OF THE SARSA RIVER WHERE GURDWARA SHAIID BURJ COMMEMORATES HIS MARTYRDOM.



WHERE GURDWARA CHARAN KANWAL AT MACHHIWARA WAS BUILT, ORIGINALLY A LUSH GARDEN OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE, GURU GOBIND SINGH TOOK SOME WATER FROM THE WELL AND SLEPT ON THE GROUND USING HIS ARM AS A PILLOW.

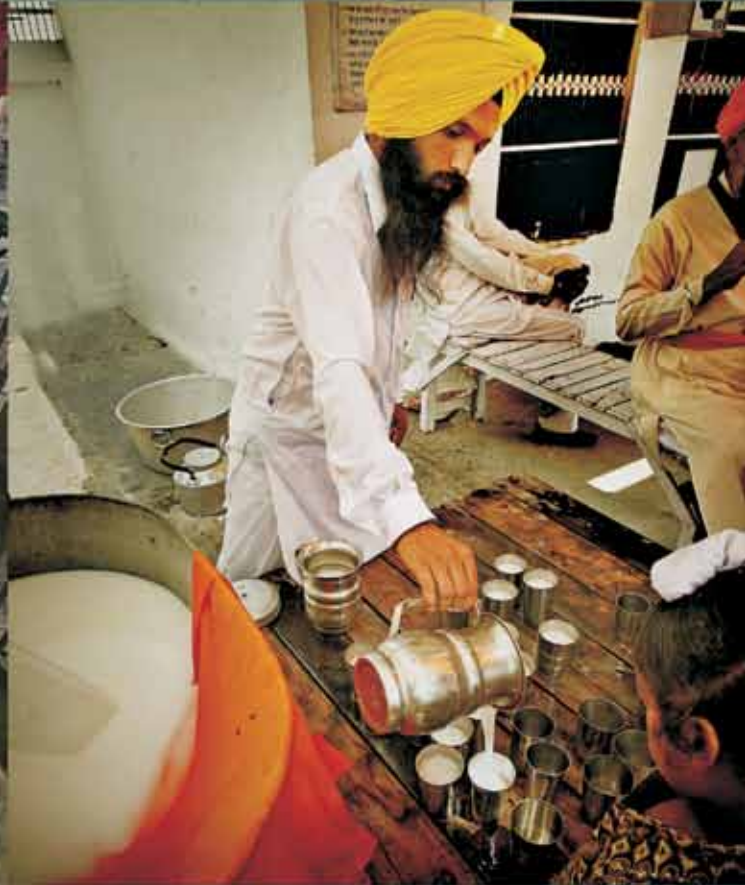


MACHHIWARA FIGURES PROMINENTLY IN THE LATTER PART OF GURU GOBIND SINGH'S LIFE. WHEN THE MUGHAL ARMY ATTACKED THE FORTRESS OF CHAMKAUR SAHIB, GURU GOBIND SINGH JI SUCCESSFULLY RESISTED THEIR ONSLAUGHT BEFORE MOVING TO THE FORESTS OF MACHHIWARA, ARRIVING THERE ON THE NIGHT OF 7 DECEMBER 1705 WHERE HE RESTED IN A GARDEN OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE.

BHAI MANI SINGH, BHAI DAYA SINGH AND BHAI DHARAM SINGH, SEPARATED FROM GURUJI AT CHAMKAUR, REJOINED HIM AS PER PLAN. GURUJI LATER SHIFTED TO THE MASAND GULABA'S HOUSE IN THE VILLAGE. IT WAS HERE THAT THE TWO ROHILA PATHAN BROTHERS GHANI KHAN AND NABI KHAN, WHO HAD EARLIER VISITED GURU GOBIND SINGH AT ANANDPUR AS HORSE DEALERS, NOW HELPED GURUJI TO MOVE FURTHER WEST, DISGUISED AS THE EXALTED MUSLIM 'UCHCH DA PIR' AND CARRIED HIM ON A PALANQUIN.



THE HISTORIC WELL AT  
GURDWARA CHARAN KAMAL  
SAHIB, MACHHIWARA.

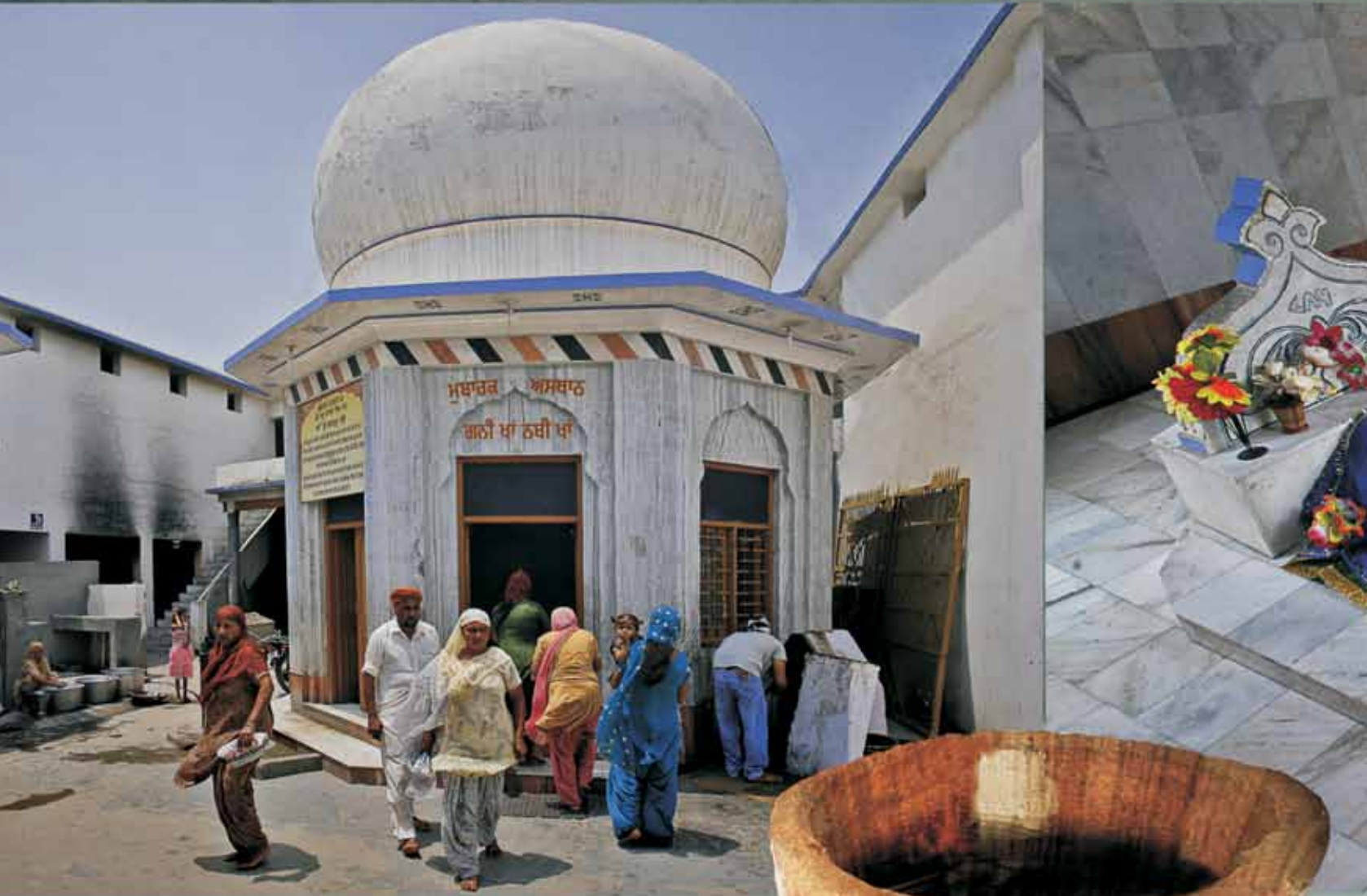


SEWADAR PREPARING LASSI  
INSIDE THE GURDWARA CAMPUS  
AT MACHHIWARA.



IT IS BELIEVED THAT GURU JI RECITED THE SHABAD *MITTRA PYARE NU* AT THIS WELL. GURDWARA CHARAN KAMAL SAHIB AT MACHHIWARA CONTINUES TO DRAW WATER FROM THE SAME WELL, WHICH IS BELIEVED TO BE FROM WHERE THE GARDEN WAS WATERED IN BEGINNING OF THE 18TH CENTURY.





**'MUBARAK ASTHAN': EXTERNAL VIEW OF THE SAMADHI OF GHANI KHAN AND NABHI KHAN IN THE PREMISES OF GURDWARA UCHCH DA PIR AT MACHHIWARA**

**THIS ORIGINAL MUTT (EARTHEN VESSEL), KEPT IN GURDWARA CHAUBARA SAHIB AT MACHHIWARA IS BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN USED TO DYE GURUJI'S CLOTHES IN BLUE COLOUR.**

**SAMADHI OF GHANI KHAN NABHI  
KHAN AT MACHHIWARA.**



**SAMADHI OF GHANI KHAN AND NABHI KHAN AT MACHHIWARA IN LUDHIANA DISTRICT. A VENERATED SEAT OF MUSLIM SAINTS IN SOUTH WESTERN PUNJAB, GURUDWARA UCHCH DA PIR WAS ESTABLISHED HERE AFTER 1947 IN THE PRIVATE HOUSE WHICH BELONGED TO THE DESCENDENTS OF THE BROTHERS GHANI KHAN AND NABI KHAN.**

**BOTH BROTHERS WERE WELL AWARE OF THE DANGER THAT GURU GOBIND SINGH WAS IN AND YET, THEIR RESPECT FOR THE SIKH GURU WAS SUCH THAT THEY RISKED CERTAIN DEATH DESPITE WHICH THEY WENT TO REQUEST HIM TO COME TO THE SAFETY OF THEIR ABODE AND HAD HIS CLOTHES DYED IN BLUE TO TRAVEL IN SAFETY.**

# Zafarnama

INSIDE VIEW OF THE BURJ AT GUDWARA  
LOHGARH SAHIB IN DINA.



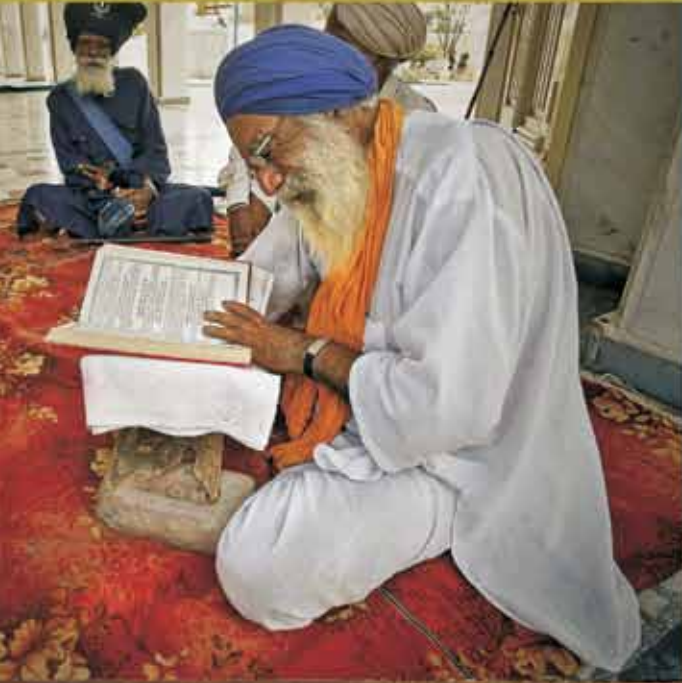
GURU GOBIND SINGH JI STAYED AT DINA WHERE HE SCRIPTED THE FAMOUS EPISTLE OF VICTORY, THE ZAFARNAMA IN PERSIAN TO MUGHAL EMPEROR AURANGZEB.



## ਸੰਖੇਪ ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਪਾਤਸ਼ਾਹੀ

ਇਸ ਪਵਿੱਤਰ ਅਸਥਾਨ ਵਿਖੇ ਰਾਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ  
ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਇਤਿਹਾਸਿਕ ਕਾਲਮ  
ਵਾਰ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਪੰਥ ਨੂੰ ਜੋਧੇਬੰਦ ਕੀਤਾ। ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਸੰਗ  
ਵਿਚ ਜਫਰਨਾਮਾ ਲਿਖ ਕੇ ਭੇਜਿਆ। ਜਫਰਨਾਮਾ  
ਰਿ ਤਸਰੀਫ਼ ਦਰ ਕਸਬ  
ਮਾਲਵੇ ਦੀ ਧਰਤੀ ਨੂੰ ਅਨੇਕਾਂ ਵਰਦਾਨ ਬਖ  
ਵਰਦਾਨ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਅਵਠੀ ਜੰਗਲ ਦੇਸ ਕ  
ਹੋਏ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਮਾਲ  
ਪਿੰਡ ਦੀਨੇ ਵਿਚ ਰਾਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ 3 ਮਰ  
ਸਿੰਘ ਅਤੇ ਭਾਈ ਦਇਆ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਨੇ ਇੱਥੇ ਹੀ

THE NEW GUDWARA SAHIB  
AND THE SAROVAR AT DINA.



**ਇਤਿਹਾਸ ਗ: ਲੋਹਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ  
ਹੀ ਦਸਵੀਂ ਪਿੰਡ ਦੀਨਾ (ਮੋਗਾ)**

ਪਿਤਾ ਸ੍ਰੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ ਮਹਾਰਾਜ 22 ਪੰਚ ਸੰਮਤ 1162 B.E. (1605 ਈ) ਨੂੰ ਆਏ ਅਤੇ ਇੱਥੇ ਗਦੀ ਦੇਸ਼ ਤਰਖਾਣ ਦੇ  
 ਵਰਨਾਮੇ ਕੀਤੇ। ਇਸ ਅਸਥਾਨ ਦਾ ਨਾਮ ਲੋਹਗੜ੍ਹ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਰੱਖਿਆ। ਅਨੰਦਪੁਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਤੋਂ ਬਾਅਦ ਇੱਥੇ ਪਹਿਲੀ  
 ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਅੰਮਿਰਤ ਖਾਨ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਇੱਥੇ ਹੀ ਮੁਗਲ ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਔਰੰਗਜ਼ੇਬ ਨੂੰ ਫਾਰਸੀ  
 ਵਰਨਾਮੇ ਵਿਚ ਇੱਥੇ (ਦੀਨਾ-ਕਾਂਗੜ) ਦਾ ਵਿਸ਼ੇਸ਼ ਵਰਨਣ ਕੀਤਾ  
 ਮਸਬੂਤ ਕਾਂਗੜ ਕੁਨਦ ਵਜਾ ਪਸ ਮਲਾਕਾਤ ਬਾਹਮ ਸਬਦ 1758 (194੮)  
 ਨ ਬਖਸ਼ੇ ਅਤੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਕਾ ਮਾਲਵਾ ਕਹਿ ਕੇ ਵੰਡਿਆਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਯੁਕਤੀ ਵਿਚ ਦਸ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਵੰਗਮਨਾਜ ਹੋਏ  
 ਤੇ ਦਸ ਕੀ ਬਹੁ ਅੰਨ ਉਪਾਏ, ਅਬ ਤੇ ਦੁਗਣਿ ਜੋਗੇ ਅੰਨ ਗੁਣੈ ਜਮਾਏ ॥  
 ਮਾਲਵਾ ਜਿੰਤ ਕਿੰਤ ਬਿਦਤਾਏ, ਉਪਜੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਰੋਸਰ ਹੀ ਮਲਵਈ ਕਰਾਏ ॥  
 ਤ ਮਹਿੰਨਿ 13 ਦਿਨ ਨਿਵਾਸ ਰੱਖ ਕੇ ਸੰਗਤਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਤਾਰਦੇ ਹੋਏ ਇੱਥੇ ਮੁਕਤਸਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਨੂੰ ਜਲੇ ਗਾਏ। ਭਾਈ ਧਰਮ  
 ਥੇ ਹੀ ਲਾਮ ਪਿਤਾ ਜੀ ਪਸੋ ਜਫਰਨਾਮਾ ਲੈ ਕੇ ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਔਰੰਗਜ਼ੇਬ ਨੂੰ ਪੇਸ਼ ਕੀਤਾ ।



# Some Wars Are Just

Three scholarly-sounding phrases – jus ad bellum, jus in bello, and jus post bellum -- elegantly hide the ugly truths about wars. They mean three fundamentals about war: its cause, conduct and consequences. During the Guru period and following it, Sikhs fought many a battle. In fact they were so busy warring that they had little time to savor the treasures of their own scriptural heritage. One major consequence of their battles has been the reputation they acquired as a fighting people, and as the British dubbed them, “a martial race;” this dubious compliment has followed and defined them into modern times.

Why did Sikhs fight quite so much? First, we need to explore the nature of wars, both just and unjust. Theories of just war rest on several considerations. Did competent authority declare the war and was the enemy clearly identified? Were the reasons for waging war justified? What was the risk to non-combatants? Were alternatives to war honestly and fully explored? How was the war conducted; were the means appropriate to the end? And what was the goal of war: destroying the enemy or capturing his property?

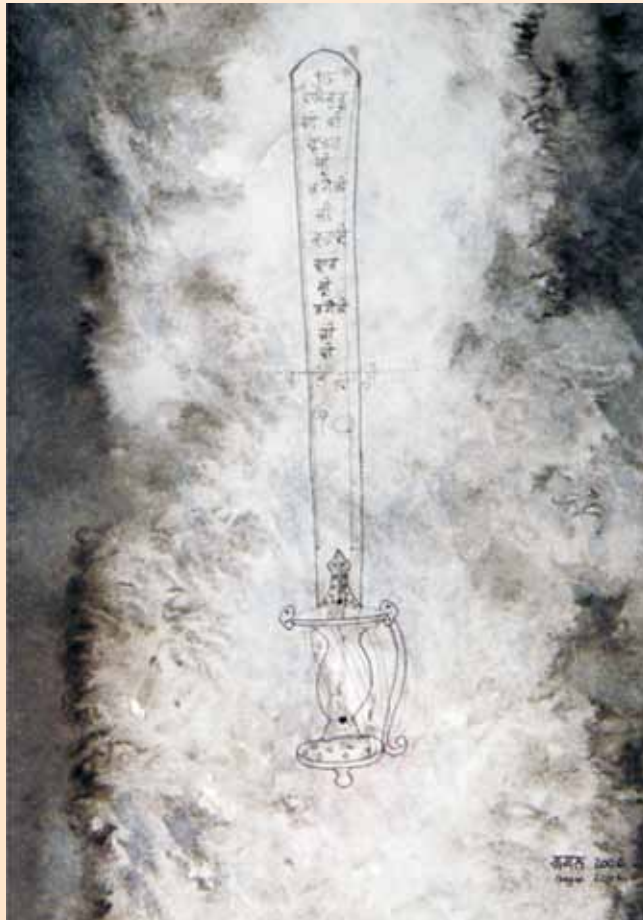
Every western historian of war begins with Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. I am tempted to jump past them into the issue of Sikhs and their wars. But since these two iconic figures of Christianity laid the groundwork for modern notions of just and unjust wars, let's first explore very briefly what they have to

say. Augustine, who did not write specifically about war, starts his discourse with the admonition from the gospels about returning violence for violence. Turning the other cheek was his first preference. I suppose, in modern terms, his caution could be used to argue against the idea of preemptive war, such as in Iraq. And how about the preemptive bombing of Iraqi nuclear sites by Israel on the grounds that it would prevent future losses, which would certainly be larger.

Both Augustine and Thomas Aquinas are emphatic that a call for war must be obeyed if it comes from competent authority, such as God. An example of this is the command from God requiring Abraham to kill his son. These days, it is the Jihadists who most often use “God’s command” as justification. I am also reminded of the fact that during the 1960s, it was Cardinal Spellman who went around painting the sign of the cross on helmets of American soldiers on their way to Vietnam. Similar strains

can be found in the excited utterings of Lt. General Boykin of the American Army in defense of the Iraq War. Does this also mean that one may not protest a call for war by a legitimately elected president, such as the Vietnam War? And what about the Iraq War, which was declared by authority of an elected president, but was a preemptive strike driven by faulty intelligence?

Waiting for competent authority would also immediately condemn guerilla actions. In this largely



post-colonial era, we should not forget that colonial masters did not exit because of civic actions, but when faced with armed civilians. Lacking sophisticated weapons, guerillas are forced to wage war from within the protective enclaves of civilian populations. Although Augustine argues most convincingly against killing non-combatants, organised armies will kill civilians: witness our actions in Vietnam and our dropping of atom bombs on civilian centers in Japan.

Thomas Aquinas provides three reasons for just war: competent authority, just cause, and good intent. The problem is an adept lawyer can cite excellent precedent for either side, or good intent on behalf of either protagonist in the conflict. The victor perhaps can always rest his case on Thomas Aquinas's criteria. Many of these issues are well dissected from the western worldview by Michael Walzer in several books.

Perhaps we would do well to step into Sikh military history by keeping in view the words of Saint Augustine about wars. He said: "...if any experiences them or even looks on at them without anguish, his condition is even more tragic, since he remains serene by losing his humanity."

Since many wars stem from a deep sense of profound injustice, in order to pursue the discussion on a just war, we must first distinguish revenge from justice. Both revenge and the need for justice arise from the conviction that for the grievous injury, no recourse is available. Even though revenge is a kind



of wild justice, they are certainly not the same. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth constitutes revenge, though it is not without some justice. Justice says, "You killed my son so you must atone for your crime." The method of atonement or its amount would vary depending upon the society and the circumstances.

A need for revenge is still pervasive in societies where legal safeguards are weak and society does not guarantee equal justice. Revenge also remains a major cause for war between peoples and nations

in civilized and highly structured societies. Justice and avenging of wrongs constitute a dominant theme and have a prominent place in Sikh philosophy and history; pure revenge does not. Often the distinction gets lost in the heat of anger but it remains crucial. Sikh ethics hold for strict accountability, although in the mores of rural Punjab, feuds can run for generations.

“Revenge” and “Avenge” are similar words with a world of difference. Revenge shoots wildly; justice aims exactly and exactingly. It is a distinction that must be kept in mind during war. When the United States bombed Afghanistan because it was harboring Osama bin Laden, the mastermind behind much of terrorism, the attack killed and injured a lot of innocents. Would that make the American response largely punitive, with little expectation that it would attain justice?

Take, for instance, the killing of Indira Gandhi in 1984 by Sikhs. It is not regretted by Sikhs for she, as the prime minister, ordered the attack on the Golden Temple, and that too on a holy day when thousands of innocent pilgrims would be caught unawares. I am convinced that political leaders should be ousted from office by ballot, not by bullet. But basic to her assassination was the widespread certainty of the Sikhs that in the Indian system, an honest inquiry into the army attack in which thousands of Sikhs were killed would never occur. In other words, the Indian system would not provide them justice at any time at any price. This was not an unrealistic assumption. I remind the readers that following Indira Gandhi’s assassination in 1984, within three days, thousands of Sikhs were killed in organized, staged killings all over India. For years, the Indian government stonewalled on an inquiry despite having agreed in writing to conduct one. Now 21 years later, ten governmental inquiry commissions have come and gone, but justice still waits.

There is no question that from the time of Guru Nanak, justice has been a cornerstone of the Sikh viewpoint. Justice cannot be compromised and that provides just cause for war. Guru Nanak’s God is a just but a merciful God, not an angry or vengeful one as you might find in the Old Testament. Therefore, from its beginning, Sikhism has differentiated between justice and revenge, and tempered justice with mercy.

Guru Nanak and the subsequent Gurus waged a different kind of war. They raised their voices against





Gagan 2005





injustice without regard to any adverse consequences to their lives or property. They repeatedly spoke against the excesses of the rulers, and spent time in jail for doing so. Yet, when the son of the same king who had jailed Guru Nanak came to visit the Second Guru, he was welcomed. Anger was not allowed to define Sikh behavior. Guru Arjan accepted martyrdom rather than compromise his principles during the reign of Emperor Jehangir. But Guru Hargobind, the son of Guru Arjan, did not pursue a vendetta against Jehangir. Revenge or vendettas had no place in the Guru's philosophy although he was also a son of Punjab, where the killing of a father would never

be forgotten and rarely forgiven. Even though Guru Hargobind fought his battles against Muslims, he built a mosque for Muslims that still stands. He also ordered that enemy soldiers that fell in battle be buried according to Muslim rites.

Incidents from Guru Gobind Singh's life are even more illustrative. They indicate how difficult some choices can be. His father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, was not a Hindu himself, but he chose martyrdom in order that Hindus would be able to practice their own faith. Aurungzeb was the emperor then. Guru Gobind Singh's two older sons died in battle, his two younger sons were walled up alive. He fought many wars with Aurungzeb's armies. Yet, when Aurungzeb seemed remorseful and anxious for peace, the Guru responded forgivingly and started on a journey to the other end of India to confer with him.

When in the middle of battle, Sikh warriors noted a fellow Sikh, Bhai Ghanayya, tending to the injured foes, they complained to Guru Gobind Singh that Ghanayya was giving aid and comfort to the enemy. Ghanayya was summoned. His defense was that in a fallen enemy he saw not an adversary, but another human being in need. The Guru commended him. As a result of the wars the Gurus fought, it would have been an easy and tempting matter to hold on to territory and establish an autonomous Sikh land. But Guru Gobind Singh never pursued such a goal. Even enemy soldiers paid tribute to the character of the Sikh soldiers who never molested women or seized property. Sikhs freed Punjab and adjoining parts of India and built a formidable kingdom, but that did not happen until

a hundred years after Guru Gobind Singh.

In the midst of battle, Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter, *Zafarnamah*, to the emperor, in which he clearly stated that when all other means have failed, it is just and rightful to take to the sword (“*Choonkar az haman heeltey dar guszash, halaal ast burda(n) baa shamsheer dast*”). This couplet has been much cited by Sikhs to justify war, and by their opponents to paint Sikhs as warmongers.

Arguably, there are some murky areas in our history that do not allow for easy interpretation. At the end of his life, Guru Gobind Singh entrusted the command of the Sikhs to his lieutenant Banda Bahadur. Banda returned to Punjab accompanied by five Sikhs and an epistle from the Guru. He established an army; thousands of Sikhs and non-Sikhs swarmed to him. This army marched across Punjab and, in a very short time, controlled most of it. Banda set up an administration in Punjab, instituted the first land reform in the history of the area, and in 1713, just five years after the death of Guru Gobind Singh, minted coins in the name of the Gurus. We are justifiably proud of his record.

But historians contend that Banda’s army wreaked absolute havoc in Sirhand, while leaving the neighboring Muslim town of Malerkotla unscathed. Sirhand was the town whose satrap, Wazir Khan, had ordered the killing of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. The chief (*Nawab*) of Malerkotla had protested the order to kill minor children for the professed misdeeds of their father. Sikhs remembered his act of kindness. In fact, it is even now the only Moslem pocket in Punjab.



I must confess that even three hundred years later, there is anger in most Sikhs that two little boys six and seven years of age were so mercilessly killed in Sirhand. And this is accompanied by a sense of satisfaction that Banda and his men had not forgotten them. Perhaps what Edmund Blake said would be a more appropriate reminder to this nawab: “He who makes law a curse, by his own law he shall surely die.”

But wars make judgment difficult. When the city of Sirhand was razed, did that act transform a quest for justice into the lust for revenge, in which innocents’ blood was shed, as is often alleged?

This would not be consistent with Sikh teaching? Alternatively, did the destruction of the city-state of Sirhand occur during a bloody house-to-house campaign to destroy the control and command structure of the nawab? Also, there is evidence that many mercenaries and opportunists joined Banda's army when they sensed that he would be the victor. Many of these might not have been sufficiently indoctrinated into the principles of Sikhism. Many may have welcomed the opportunity to get even with their tyrannical rulers. Wars are difficult times; not every action can be controlled. History is unclear; written records or ancillary material are scanty. There is certainly no evidence that Banda discriminated against his Muslim subjects in the territories that he controlled.

"Whatsoever a man sows, so shall he reap," the Bible reminds us. This thought is also repeatedly found in Guru Granth. Clearly the need for revenge was not the driving force in the lives of the Gurus, the quest for justice was. To seek justice is a duty.

Waging war is a difficult choice. Some old documents from the early eighteenth century juxtapose sentences on the need for waging war right next to or within paragraphs that talk about other aspects of a Sikh life. Particularly relevant here is a line that exhorts Sikhs to wage every day; it is from the *Tankhah-namah* by Bhai Nand Lal, a respected associate of Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master. Even more telling is a hymn widely read whenever Guru Gobind Singh's birthday or the initiation of the Khalsa are celebrated, and this line is usually ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh himself. It enjoins the Khalsa to keep the name of God on the lips and war in their hearts (*mukh tey har, chit may(n) judh bicharey*). When the historical documents on the derivation of the Sikh code are examined, such sentences lead one to the inevitable conclusion that waging war everyday is a Sikh's duty; we usually acknowledge this with an apologetic smirk.

But I think neither the smirk nor the apologetic stance is necessary. Yes, the Khalsa are directed to be armed with a *kirpan*. Certainly, the *kirpan* is a weapon that has become largely symbolic of the principled awareness of being prepared to defend oneself and those in need; to lay one's head on the line for justice. If waging war on others every day were the need or the intent of the injunction, the nature of the weapon would have changed with

the times. Fitness -- mental, physical and spiritual -- the state of mind of a soldier and a crusader, is the injunction. And keep in mind that the only true *jihad* or crusade is an internal one.

The Second Amendment endows Americans with the right to be armed. The meaning is to be prepared for war, not to engage in war needlessly, and not to strut around threatening others. The Sikh teaching on being armed (*shastardhari*) needs to be similarly interpreted. In the present reality, being intellectually, morally, mentally, spiritually as well as physically disciplined and prepared speaks of many different weapons and a different armory. In this, the most powerful weapon remains the mind.

Yet, in the oft-quoted lines above, Guru Gobind Singh exhorted Sikhs to wage war every day. But, people argue about who said these words, and in what context. Let's explore this by first assuming that it truly reflects the teaching and is a literally true rendition of the words uttered by Guru Gobind Singh, and represents what he really meant.

Clearly, Guru Hargobind and succeeding Gurus maintained an armed militia. Guru Hargobind fought four battles, but during the last years of his life, he sought peace most assiduously. The succeeding Gurus maintained militias but did not fight any wars until Guru Gobind Singh. Guru Tegh Bahadur fought in battles as a young man before becoming the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh fought several battles, but like Guru Hargobind, not during the last years of his life. In fact, he then pursued peace.

If the lines attributed to him that Sikhs should wage war every day are truly reflective of Guru Gobind Singh's mindset about war, we would then have to conclude that he was not true to his own teaching. That is, when he concluded in *Zafarnamah* that weapons were to be picked up only when all other (peaceful) means had failed, he was not following his own instructions that war be waged everyday, not only when absolutely necessary.

The facts remain; Guru Gobind Singh did not wage an aggressive war even once, but fought only when war was thrust upon him. This would indicate, not his love for battle but his readiness for it, and his strong preference for peace. No Guru ever fought to win land or to rule over others; why then should a Guru (or his Sikhs, for that matter) wage war,

unless as a defensive response to naked aggression, or in response to otherwise unavoidable temporal or contingent challenges, when no other alternatives exist?

It seems to me that one must consider several possibilities here. Scholars disagree about the authenticity of the Tankhah-namah; it might well have some extraneous material, not originally penned by Bhai Nand Lal. In the documents we have available to us, this line might have been added or copied out of context. Such limitations of writers and misinterpretations are not uncommon in old historical sources. Witness how often readers conclude from Hindu mythology that is mentioned in the Guru Granth, that Sikhism is but a further elaboration of Hindu belief.

My reasoning is similar when I encounter the line cited earlier and attributed to Guru Gobind Singh, which asks Khalsa to nurture thoughts of war in the heart. Again, the context is important. The only way the meaning of this line could be consistent with the life of Guru Gobind Singh would be if he was referring to fighting the enemy within us. Countless times in Guru Granth, lust, anger, avarice, attachment and ego, are identified as the five cardinal sins; it is against these that we are asked to wage a daily, unending crusade, lest they master us and destroy us from within.

The convolutions of history, and the misinterpretations or errors of scribes cannot be held against Guru Gobind Singh, particularly if the words clearly contradict how he lived and died.

Guru Gobind Singh was not a pacifist, nor are his Sikhs, but his life also exemplifies certain conditions for war. Non-violent methods of conflict resolution must be exhausted. You do not go looking for war; it must be thrust upon you. Wars are not to be fought for conquering territory, enslaving others or for economic benefit. Weapons are not picked up lightly; they are never to be used without grave and long consideration. Alternatives must always continue to be explored even during war. And arms must be laid down as soon as feasible alternatives appear. The pursuit of justice remains makes a just war. A fallen enemy is to be treated as one's own, and non-combatants must be protected. Even so, forgiveness remains at the core of all actions.

From such reasoning, I conclude that the Gurus exhorted Sikhs to fight everyday on the battlefield of the mind. This is the battle that needs to be waged everyday.

*Everything is not always fair in love and war. Wars become just, not because they are winnable or beneficent to us, but because they are unavoidable.*

**Dr. I.J. Singh**  
*All drawings by Gagandeep Singh*

**G**agandeep Singh is based in New Delhi, holds an MA in Sikh Religious Studies (Punjabi University Patiala) and a MA in Fine Arts (University of Kent) UK. He specialises in drawings and paintings on Sikh History, heritage and Philosophy. He has exhibited widely and his works are held in private collections all across the world.

"Exploration of drawing as a medium, expressing my feelings about life, reading and experiencing religion, viewing structures, forms and colours, all of this and many more tiny segments/branches have



become part of my art process, the creation of a painting.

The artworks are a series of visual letters, stories of past and the present mixed together to create a new meaning of life.

My inspiration has been the teachings of Guru Granth Sahib and the history of Sikhism. I find my drawings and paintings, the line and the subject a reflection of my thought process, a way to understand and enjoy the creative element of the Being."

# The last letters of Emperor Aurangzeb

**G**uru Gobind Singh wrote an admonitory letter *Zafarnama* to Emperor Aurangzeb, which was sent to the Emperor with two of the original *Panj Payaras*, Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh. Emperor Aurangzeb who had gone to the Deccan to quell a Mahratta rising, was then encamped at Aurangabad (Deccan). He was ailing and on his death bed.

Whether Guru Gobind Singh wrote the letter in Persian prose or in Persian verse as is now available in the language of the *Zafarnama*, is a matter for scholars to sort out. However, there seems to be little doubt that the letter, delivered to him, had opened a new vista before the Emperor; his conscience was awakened. Aurangzeb then wrote letters to his sons, Prince Shah Azim Shah and Prince Kaum Baksh, in the most pathetic of words invoking pity of the Lord and His mercy to retrieve his soul from the abysmal depth of hell where it seemed to have fallen for his sins. Reproduced below are translation of the letters Aurangzeb wrote to his sons just before his death:

## To Prince Shaw Azim Shah

"Health to thee my heart is near thee. Old age has arrived, weakness subdues me and strength has forsaken my limbs. I came a stranger into this world, and a stranger I depart. I know nothing of myself, what I am, and for what I am destined. The instant which passed in power, hath left only sorrow behind it. I have not been the guardian and protector of the empire. My valuable time has been passed vainly. I had a patron in my own dwelling (conscience), but His glorious light was unseen by my dim sight. Life is not lasting, there is no vestige of departed breath, and all hopes of futurity are lost. The fever has left me, but nothing of me remains but skin and bones. My son (Kaum Buksh) though gone towards Beejapore, is still near, and thou my son, are yet nearer. The worthy of esteem, Shaw Aulum, is far distant, and my grandson (Azeem Ooshann), by the orders of God, is arrived near Hindostan. The camp and followers, helpless and alarmed, are like myself, full of affliction, restless as the quicksilver. Separated from their lord, they know not if they have a master or not.

I brought nothing into this world, and except the infirmities of man, carry nothing out. I have a dread for my salvation, and with what torments I may be punished. Though I have strong reliance on the mercies and bounty of God, yet regarding my actions, fear will not quit me; but when I am gone, reflection will not remain. Come then what may, I have launched my vessel to the waves. Though Providence will protect the camp, yet regarding appearances the endeavours of my sons are indispensably incumbent. Give my last prayers to my grandson (Bedar Bukht), whom I cannot see, but the desire affects me.

The Begum (his daughter) appears afflicted; but God is the only judge of hearts. The foolish thoughts of women produce nothing but disappointment. Farewell, farewell, farewell..."

## To Prince Kaum Buksh (Kambakshsh)

"My son, nearest to my heart. Though in the height of my power, and by God's permission, I gave you advice and took with you the greatest pains, yet, as it was not the divine will, you did not attend with the ears of compliance. Now I depart a stranger, and lament my own insignificance, what does it profit me? I carry with me the fruits of my sins and imperfections. Surprising Providence – I came here alone, and alone, I depart. The leader of this caravan hath deserted me. The fever which troubled me for twelve days has left me. Wherever I look, I see nothing but the divinity. My fears for the camp and followers are great; but alas, I know not myself. My back is bent with weakness, and my feet have lost the powers of motion. The breath which rose is gone, and left not even hope behind it. I have committed numerous crimes, and know not with what punishments I may be seized. Though the Protector of mankind will guard the camp, yet care is incumbent also on the faithful and my sons. When I was alive, no care was taken; and now I am gone, the consequence may be guessed. The guardianship of a people is the trust by God committed to my sons. Azim Shaw is near. Be cautious that none of the faithful are slain, otherwise their miseries will fall upon my head. I resign you, your mother and son, to God, as I myself am going. The agonies of death come upon me fast. Bahadur Shaw is still where he was, and his son is arrived near Hindustan. Bedar Bukht is in Guzarat. Hyaut-al-Nissa, who has beheld no afflictions of time till now, is full of sorrows. Regard the Begum as without concern. Odiporee your mother, was a partner in my illness, and wishes to accompany me in death; but everything has its appointed time.

The domestics and courtiers, however deceitful, yet must not be ill-treated. It is necessary to gain your views by gentleness and art. Extend your feet no lower than your skirt. The complaints of the unpaid troops are as before. Dara Shakkoh, though of much judgement and good understanding, settled large pensions on his people, but paid them ill and they were ever discontented. I am going. Whatever good or evil I have done, it was for you. Take it not amiss, nor remember what offences I have done to yourself; that account may not be demanded of me hereafter. No one has seen the departure of his own soul; but I see mine is departing."

(*Memoirs of Eradut Khan*) Scott's *History of the Dekhan Part IV*

**Captain Bhag Singh (founding Editor of The Sikh Review)**

# 'Raj Karega Khalsa'

*Raj kare ga Khalsa aaki rahe naa koe  
Khwar hoe sabh milenge bache saran jo hoie*

This couplet has been, and continues to be, climatic of the litany sung by all Sikhs at congregational prayers for the last three centuries or so. This has worked as a slogan to remind followers of the Great Gurus of the ultimate triumph of truth, of their destiny and of their commitment to social responsibilities and struggle to ensure genuine freedom and equality for all human beings. It has, thus, inspired the Sikhs to make sacrifices unparalleled in history for the cause of bringing about the Kingdom of God on Earth.

A free rendering of the couplet is as follows:

"The Khalsa shall exercise political power: nobody will challenge this resolve. Eventually everyone will accept this position. And he who seeks refuge, shall be protected."

According to tradition, the couplet follows from the *Tankhah-nama* of Bhai Nand Lal, whose *Granthawali*, collected or verified from the family records of Bhai Sahib, was edited by Dr Ganda Singh. This question-answer series also records the words of the Guru, "Listen, Nand Lal to this truth; I shall cause an expression of Self-rule or Sovereignty" (*Suno Nand Lal eho sach; Pargat Karoon apna raj*). On the same page after the above statement appears this couplet "Raj Karega Khalsa" which verifies how the couplet originated and became part of the Sikh prayer.

Following this, and with the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh himself, Banda Bahadur Singh undertook his mission and after the capture of Sirhind, established the Khalsa rule in 1710 within two years of the passing of Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangoo testifies to the conviction of the struggling Sikhs about the righteousness of their cause and inevitability of their goal in his *Panth Parkash* in his description of the following two events.

- ✧ Nawab Aslam Khan of Lahore sent his emissary, Subeg Singh, to the Khalsa for peace, offering them a Nawabship. The initial reaction of the Khalsa, when the title (Nawab) was offered to Darbara Singh was, "When did we ask for it? The Satguru has promised us sovereign rule. In comparison to this, the title of Nawab appears to be a lump of clay. We claim sovereignty, which is sure to come sooner or later. What the Satguru has promised is bound to happen. The word of the Guru can never remain unfulfilled, although the *Dhruva* (Pole Star) or *Dhawala* (the legendary Bull supporting the earth) may shift their positions. How can we exchange our sovereignty with this insignificant title of Nawab? Accused be such servility." Similarly, others who were offered the Nawabship, refused the title saying, "How can sovereignty be had by begging?"
- ✧ Capt. Murray who was Charge-de-affairs of the East India Company at Ludhiana and was obsessed with the question of legitimacy of the Sikh Rule, had a dialogue with the author of *Panth Parkash*. Some excerpts:

Murray: Explain to me how did the Sikhs attain power? And who gave them sovereignty?

Answer: Sovereignty was bestowed on the Khalsa by the true Lord.

Murray: Who is the true Lord?

Answer: He is Satguru Nanak.

From this it is clear that the Sikhs, during their fierce struggle with the Mughal rulers, had no doubt about their social goal of gaining sovereignty, which is expressed in the couplet "Raj Karega Khalsa". Nobody, Hindus or Sikhs, objected to the singing of this couplet during that period, or even after that upto the Independence of India in 1947.

During the last few decades, however, the reaction has been different. In the words of Sirdar

Kapur Singh, "This startlingly tall and audacious claim has been publicly proclaimed by the Sikh people during the last three centuries, firmly and defiantly, and it has moved some to sheer ridicule, others to fright, still others to resentment and anger, many Sikhs themselves to chicken-hearted craven fear of shameless apologia, and to the political Hindus of the post-1947 euphoria, it has, almost invariably moved to greater contempt for those whom they see as already in their death throes."

Objections to this proclamation are understandable, when they come from non-Sikh quarters. However, some Sikhs have also raised their voice against this concept. Their advise is that "politics must be insulated from religion," or politics does not go well with Sikh ideology, and therefore, should be eschewed. It has also been argued that the Gurus preached only *Naam Simran* and had no socio-political directions or doctrines for their followers. Some even go to the extent of saying that any struggle for an honourable political status for the Sikhs or to ensure their identity is against the teachings of the Gurus.

Dr Ganda Singh wrote on this subject in July 1987, and his writing clearly showed that the slogan was issued by Guru Gobind Singh himself and that there was nothing wrong or sectarian about this couplet. He concluded that it was "a permanent and inseparable part of the Sikh prayer and should be recited as such on all occasions of prayers by all Sikhs and Sikh congregations, wherever they might be, in all gurdwaras, historical or other".



Young Panj Piara's lead a Baisakhi procession.



**Chardi kalhan:**  
all roads lead to Anandpur Sahib.

The controversy, however, is kept alive by stray views expressed in some quarters every now and then. The basic question is as to what is the Sikh ideology, or what the Gurus had been aiming at, or whether it is only a church of worship or a church of social policy as well. This is the fundamental question. It is the difference on this issue that has led to misconceptions, especially in the field of historical interpretation. Sikhism is not an extension of the Bhakti movement, nor were the Gurus 'Bhakti Saints' who started their own cult. Sikhism is a revealed religion and mission, indeed, the only whole-life or *Miri-Piri* religious system that appeared in India. Outside India also except for Judaism and Islam, no whole life system, combining the spiritual with the empirical, has arisen. It is not an accident that the last Five of the Ten Gurus maintained an army and the Fifth Guru had already created a "state within a state", much to the annoyance of the political power of the day who ordered his execution. It is Guru Nanak who calls God the 'Destroyer of evil-doers' and 'of the Demonical'. Again, in his *Babar Vani*, he unambiguously states that oppression is violative of the Order of God who is shelter of the shelterless and who, as the Master of the flock, is responsible to see that the weak are not oppressed.

This further clarifies two things, namely, that the Gurmukh who carries out the Altruistic Will of God, and who, for that end, creates society, has to see that in society, aggression, oppression and injustice are

resisted. In all religions, whether Sikhism, Judaism or Islam, social responsibility clearly extends to the political field as well. For, what is within the domain of God, is within man's domain or responsibility. Two facts are undeniable that while the rulers, in order to maintain their moral legitimacy, have to ensure justice among their subjects, it is righteous for the man of religion to confront oppression and injustice; and that when kings or rulers fail to be virtuous, and injustice and oppression are rampant, such a situation invites response of the man of religion.

For over 100 years, the Sikh Gurus had maintained a defensive army and initially even employed mercenaries towards that end. The point to be seen is what was the oppression to be confronted, injustice to be undone, or challenge to be met? The militarisation was progressive, until the Tenth Master created the Khalsa on Vaisakhi Day in 1699 and prescribed *Kirpan* as one of the five *Kakars*. At that time it is significant that all sons of the Guru were alive. It is important to understand that in whole-life systems, mono-asceticism, asceticism, celibacy, ahimsa, pacifism, and all kinds of negativism are rejected. This is a common characteristic of the three whole-life systems. And these fundamentals explain why this category of systems accepts socio-political responsibility and others do not. The *Kirpan* is not just a symbol. It is a *Hukumnama* emphasising two things: that the Sikh society is both permitted and enjoined to use force as



a last resort for a righteous cause and second, that Sikhism should never revert to mono-asceticism. The Kirpan as a weapon may not be of much public use today, but the injunction it represents is fundamental and eternal.

Pleading against political activities, a writer has stated "they (the Gurus) were ready to take the sword, but always in self-defence, and only as a last resort. For the *zulm* of the Governor of Sirhind, Guru Gobind tried to seek redressal from Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah, to punish the culprits and transgressors. It is also significant that when Banda Bahadur started establishing a State with help of the Khalsa, a *hukumnana* was issued by Mata Sundri to dissociate themselves from the objective which did not have the approval of the tenth Guru, and they did so, which led to the defeat of Banda Bahadur". The first point is what was the *zulm* that the Governor of Sirhind had done? Was it during the general course of his administration over the years that he had done it, or was there any specific act that was wrong or tyrannical? As far as the general administration of the Governor is concerned, there is nothing to suggest that he did anything in violation of the orders or wishes of the Emperor in Delhi. In any case, there is nothing known to have happened to which the Emperor could have taken offence, as being contrary to his instructions, or for which only the Governor had been responsible and not the Emperor. If however, the reference is to the martyrdom of the two younger Sahibzadas, one wonders if this could be the real or even a laudable reason for the Guru to depute Banda Bahadur. While there was nothing wrong with the administration of the Emperor or the Governor, it was only the execution



Sarbat Khalsa at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.

of the two Sahibzadas that furnished a good reason to the Tenth Master to seek revenge by directing Banda and the Sikh armies to do so. Also, can we accept the suggestion that the Gurus who were always the first to sacrifice their person, would in this case, seek revenge? For, it is well known that no military reaction was made after the martyrdom of the Ninth Master or the Fifth Master, except the general preparation for confrontation with the Empire or the Establishment, as a whole, for its misrule over the decades.

The Tenth Master could not be aware that the attack on the Governor meant death of thousands of Sikhs as well as their opponents. Is it suggested that revenge, involving death and devastation on a vast scale was justifiable? And, if that had really been the reason, would it serve as a good moral precedent or lesson for the Sikhs? Furthermore, assuming that only the Governor was to be punished, the Tenth Master could not be so unaware as to believe that the task could be accomplished without a major war, about which the Emperor at Delhi could not remain unconcerned. And in the event of Banda's victory and death of the Governor and the transgressors to whom the rule of Sirhind was to be handed over, would the Sikhs not accept power and responsibility? It is known to every historian that one of the greatest revolutionary and



*Epitome of the Khalsa, seen at Washington D.C*

humanitarian work the Sikh rule did was Banda's distribution of land among the poorest tillers. He created 'the Bold Peasantry', which continues to be the backbone and the fundamental strength of the Punjab economy.

It is on the basis of this precedent and tradition that, when the British Government created canal colonies and wanted to turn the clock of socialisation back by granting only tenancy rights to the colonists, the Sikhs and others agitated and

forced the Government to confer proprietary rights on them. Here, it is relevant to recall that Martin Luther, the great Christian reformer, called the peasants 'mad dogs' when they agitated for their rights against the princes with whom Luther sided. Equally significant is the fact that even in the French Revolution, which took place eight decades after Banda, the peasants and the poor or the Fourth Estate, had no place in its leadership, which rested with middle classes; nor were they among its beneficiaries. Jagjit Singh in his book *In the Caravan of Revolutions* has made a detailed comparison of the work of the Sikh Gurus with the French Revolution. Its obvious conclusion is that the characteristics, ideals and achievements of the Sikh Revolution were in every respect superior to, and more enduring than, those of the French Revolution.

It is relevant to state that in Bhangoo's *Panth Parkash*, there is a reference to a letter said to have been written by Mata Sundri to the Khalsa. In that letter there is nothing to suggest that the objective of the attack by Banda Singh was not to gain rule of the land, or that the Khalsa was forbidden to rule. In fact, on the contrary, there is a clear statement that 'the Guru had bestowed Patshahi (rule of sovereignty) on the Panth', and not on any individual. Thus, the letter, by implication or otherwise, far from denouncing the war objective of temporal sovereignty for the Sikhs, clearly records, in the words of Mata Sundri, that Patshahi was granted to the Sikhs (*Banda ko Khijmat dei, dei patshahi nahei; Dei Patshahi Panth nij, ap sache patshahi*).

This explains both the reason for the Tenth Master's deputing Banda Singh and the letter written by Mata Sundri to clarify that objective.

The writings of Taimur Shah should also be revealing to everyone, that Emperor conveyed it to the 'apostle of tranquillity and harmony', the Ninth Master, that if he desisted from political activities and confined himself only to spiritual prayers and preaching, he would have no trouble, and in fact, would be given considerable grants. But the offer was spurned, with results that are a part of history. Quoting Ghulam Hussain Khan in *Siyarul Mutakharin*, Sher Singh concludes that there were clear apprehensions of revolt by the Guru and that the revolt by the Guru would lead to the setting up of a Sikh State.

Further, quoting *Hiquiqat-i-Bana-Uruj-i-Firqa-Sikhan*, he states, that the Emperor feared that the people gathering around Guru Tegh Bahadur were emerging as a new nation (*Millat-Nau*). The unfortunate part is that persons conditioned by pacifist influences, fail to understand the saint-soldier concept.

The Ninth Guru embodied this as much as the Tenth Master. The Establishment has generally used aggression and oppression as the source of its power, and the saint-soldier, as the instrument of God's Will, must inevitably come into conflict with it. This is the eternal equation. For 'the earth belonging to the saint, is being usurped by the robber'. Hence, the struggle for its liberation. The lesson of history is that the series of martyrdoms initiated by the Fifth Guru, the Ninth Master, the Sahibzadas, the Tenth Master, is a single historical process and it would be a sheer distortion to reduce this glorious spiritual marvel to the level of an episode or personal revenge as we egoist humans would do or conceive.

Some critics have also argued that the Gurus did not establish a political state for themselves to rule, and therefore the Sikhs should also not entertain any such ambition. It must be noted that no state could be established without a direct clash with the Mughals during the Guru's time. A state could be governed either by becoming a vassal of Delhi and paying tribute to it, or by snatching a territory from the empire after an inevitable clash with it. Thus, the choice was between becoming a subordinate of Delhi and a military confrontation with the Empire. The question of the first alternative could not arise, and the second was the alternative for which the preparations were being made, the community motivated and the Khalsa created.

Evidently, confrontation could not occur before the Vaisakhi of 1699, a momentous event that transformed the Sikh religion into the Khalsa. Even the Hill Rajas were invited to join the struggle against repression, but they declined. Thereafter, the organisational and preparatory work was completed and the struggle was launched.

Advocates of pacificism frequently argue that since Guru Granth Sahib mentions that a man of religion hankers neither after worldly power nor personal redemption, political power could not be the objective of the Khalsa. The verse often quoted and misinterpreted is "*Raj na Chahun, Muk*

*na Chahun, man preet charan Kamlare.*" According to Sardar Kapur Singh, "they do not understand that these are not injunctions or commandments of Sikhism, nor statements of a doctrine, but merely clues and techniques for mood-inducement, the roots of which go to ancient Yoga texts. To interpret a sacred scripture is not a job which every man who happens to be a graduate from a university, a brave General, or a successful lawyer can properly undertake."

The question never was that the Gurus wanted an empire for themselves. What they wanted was the organisation of a community with trained motivations and aspirations to live as a fraternal people with a sense of independence and the capacity to discharge complete socio-political responsibilities, including struggle against oppression of invaders and the establishment. We have already referred to this conflict between the forces of righteousness and those of evil, oppression and injustice. The saints and gurmukhs appear not to carve out empires for themselves, but to prepare the people to live as brothers and establish a kingdom of God, or a 'dharamsal', the land for righteous living, as envisaged by God.

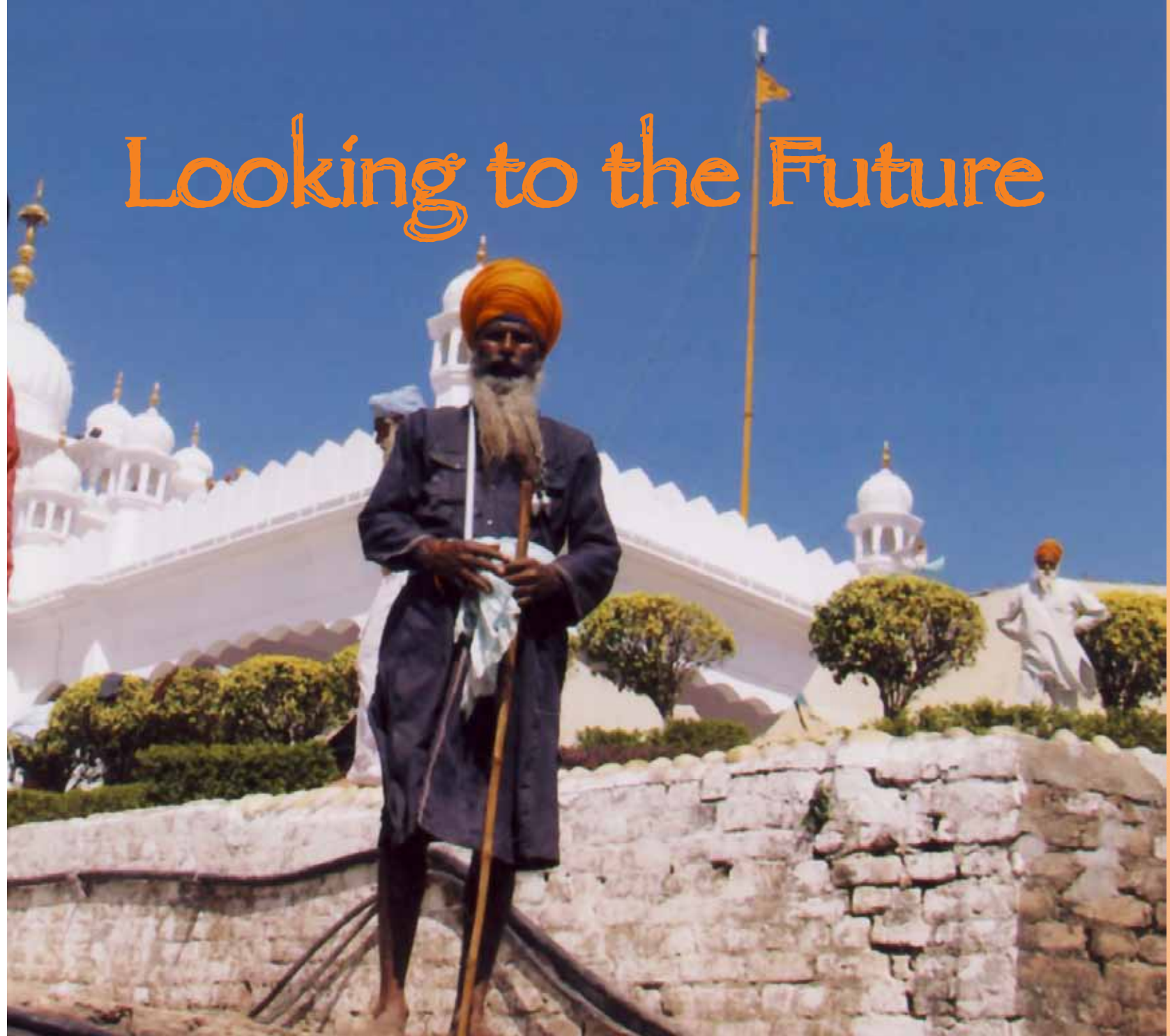
Before conclusion, let us look at the couplet 'Raj Karega Khalsa' again. It is simply an announcement that the Khalsa should look after its own affairs, empirical as well as spiritual.

What is wrong with that? In these days all sections of the population, all political parties, openly declare their intention to provide Governance—and nobody objects to that. In fact, the Government organises this exercise regularly. Why is it that the same matter is a taboo for Sikhs? Secondly, if the Sikhs are forbidden to rule in their own area, who will? It is both their responsibility and destiny to confront misrule and injustice. Can they shirk from accepting or discharging the moral and historical responsibility which is enjoined upon them by the Gurus?

It will be clear that 'Raj Karega Khalsa' is a couplet perfectly in consonance with the injunctions and thesis of the Gurus. In a *miri-piri* system, this religious responsibility is natural and essential. For this purpose, cultivation of religious and spiritual strength and stamina is essential. Hence this religious reminder and resolve, at the time of prayer before the living Guru, is natural –and essential.

*Dr Kharak Singh and Prof G.S. Dhillon*

# Looking to the Future



One cannot but commend Hans Powles who released the genie from the fuming bottle when in *Looking to the Future* he programmed the Sikhs, the Khalsa, onto the attainment of World Government rather than suffer their commitment to the narrower confines of the dusty plains of *Khalistan* or a Sikh Homeland. The feat, however, was made possible only by resuscitating a prior sesame formula for which credit must go to S. Pritam Singh, for the latter gentleman it was who, we can be assured, out of the abundance and fullness of a generous spirit, had volunteered a certain interpretation of the Sikh litany:

*“Raj karega Khalsa, aaki rahe naa koe”.*

The gentleman had equated this to *“May the true spirit of the Khalsa Brotherhood come to rule in the hearts of mankind – the spirit of Purity and Truth”.*

An ennobling translation at any rate! The sublimation of Sikh instincts appears to be the prime sentiment conveyed by the translation. Whatever else *Raj Karega Khalsa* means or might mean it must here be acknowledged at once that the rationale of Hans Powles’ enunciation is a meritorious one indeed. He aptly raises the point, *“Where is the spirit of the Akali Sikh who recognises no frontier or border?”*

In that August issue of *The Sikh Review* an article on *Sikhism and Politics* has likewise quoted from relevant literature which says of a Sikh. "He is either a sovereign man or a rebel. It was pointed out, in proper historical perspective, by the same learned and able author that there are no records earlier trends of attempts made by dubious literature coined by Dhirmalias for instance. The fake Dhirmalia scripture contains a chapter, *Var Piran Paikambran Ki* which reportedly craves fusion of Sikhs with the Islamic faith and tradition espoused by the Mughal emperors of Delhi. What else could have been more expedient and instantly beneficial to the Sikh aspirations?

Disciplining and training the Khalsa have provided the principal difficulties in the evolution of their current position. If they could only learn to exhibit accord, at least in times of need, and follow those who might be qualified and equipped to lead them; if only they would realise the necessity for taming a superbly jealous ego and see the wisdom of unity behind trained leadership; if only men of the Khalsa would imbibe the willingness to gladly proffer respect and be obedient where these are due, then the Sikhs would be a far more successful people in the contemporary world. That is all the moral there is to be learn from the pages of Sikh political history.

Not only is the Sikh spirit, or *volksgeist*, individual as well as collective, as infused by the word and example of the Gurus, capable of history has indeed proven but it also has the thrust for soaring into more universal spheres of human regulations, such as World Government envisaged by Hans Powles.

Of a geographical government it may be said, as has been said by many before, that it is desirable, if not essential, to the procurement of a certain breeding ground, with ideal condition for the survival, multiplication and advance of the Sikhs. These are the kind of deal conditions that Plato sought and recommended in his "Republic".

Unless the advantage inherent in the establishment of such a base is assured, the Sikh Brotherhood abroad is bound to wither away and die out. The charitable incline of intellectualism amongst us will do little; nor will any extent of self-laudations. Is it not true in the ultimate analysis that the Sikh ethos experienced amongst the foreign Sikh communities has its well-springs in the condition and practice of Sikhism in the Punjab and adjoining areas? The fillip that the Punjabi literature, Sikh culture, art and Sikh tradition have received in just a few short years since the reorganisation of the so-called Punjabi-Suba (province) affords practical good results of a minor experiment in this direction. This beneficial result cannot be minimised even by the argument that our neo-parliamentarians steering that new power of government in their area have left behind a foul smoky trail of disreputable party-politics, and corrupt

administration, a circumstance which can be extenuated only by the fact that Sikhs never really had any upbringing in the art of politics and the science of government fields in which pros of the older communities like Hindus and Moslems had a decided advantage over well-meaning but ignorant men of the simple Sikh peasantry.

Much depends upon that condition and practice of Sikhism in the home base of the Sikhs. Why do our educated and elite consider it intellectually fashionable to disown and disclaim a desire to have our life blood guaranteed? And who can say that the Sikh politicians were ever mentioning a 'sovereign Khalistan'? We have never heard of one. A Sikh in the Punjabi province, of the Union Territory of India, coupled with the constitutional safeguard that the interests of the Sikhs therein shall be of paramount consideration, is all that has ever been propounded on behalf of the Sikhs.

Indian statesmanship would readily see the desirability of satisfying the Sikh proposal. As an example, the diverse peoples of the U.S.S.R. had not only been allowed to maintain but were also encouraged by the Soviet Union in the exercise of their respective cultural, ethnic and regional identities, as was recognised in the case of then autonomous states of southern Russia, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and others.

A Canadian newsman who visited Uzbekistan had this to report:

"And although the nomads of yesteryear have settled down, gradually adjusting to the new ways of agriculture on well-irrigated land, they continue their national traditions and language in a republic that is larger than England or France.

The guide and driver who took us to the modern airport were Uzbeks; they told us how in education their people are given every encouragement and in business every priority, ahead of all the other nationalities because this is their land, Uzbekistan."

This series, or "reception-line", for the Soviet Indian friendship, of the said named "asthans" or republics of the Soviet Socialist Union, continued farther down south, as we came to Afghanistan. Then follows West Pakistan – which is really the western lobe of the old Punjab. Thereafter, the line of "asthans" could have borne another potential asthan", before reaching Hindustan, but instead, on the map of this particular area recent history has inscribed, for the information of the nations, declarations of two famed statesman, who were crucially concerned with the fate of this region. Lord Mountbatten had noted that the Powers were handicapped by "the political incompetence of the Sikhs." The second declaration was by Nehru to the effect that "no constitution of India would be adopted without the willingness of the Sikhs should they opt for the partition of the Punjab on the eve of creation of Pakistan

and independent India". There, in this fertile plain, stands along the G.T. Road – the famed trans-continental highway of northern India – the epitaph of "Khalsa-asthan", already being over-grown with the trailing under-growth of Indian nationalism partially obscuring the stark and fateful landmark from public view.

In the area of the afore-mentioned former southern Soviet Republics, Amu Darya and Syr Darya (rivers) drain into an inland sea of Aral. This is historically the Central Asian region from where the Scythian ancestors of the bulk of the Punjab Sikh peasantry migrated in their still southward movements. After their stop-over in the Iranian south-eastern border province of "Seistan" (Scythian or Saka-Astan) these hordes are known to have entered the Punjab from the general vicinity of the Bolan Pass and even from further south from the mouth of the Indus River, and thus spreading upwards into the Punjab by following the course of the Punjab rivers flowing down from the north. The Greek Satraps, already in control of the Punjab and Muthra area, were ousted by these new people. Here they settled. They were not so much conquerors as settlers. This accounts for the obvious concentration today of these very distinguishable people in the old Punjab, as we knew it, and in the Delhi and surrounding country.

This was the strain or blood, along with the other elements of the Punjab community, which, when quickened by the elixir of Sikhism, struggled for and ultimately obtained the guarantees for a basic human dignity during the time of the Sikh Gurus and the succeeding Sikh Administration.

This was the unique amalgam of the peoples of the Punjab whom Sikhism fused into an ideal socio-political community. Here was a hard core of fearless men and women, during the three centuries of the humiliating and barbaric Mughal rule, who would be butchered by dismemberment, be variously sawed, baked, boiled, and skinned alive, and would suffer a variety of other forms of unspeakable torture and decapitation engineered by demonic and tyrannical imagination of man, but would not forsake their faith and determination to rebuild the crushed morale of the peoples of India.

One wonders that if perhaps a different system of federated government were to substitute the present system in India whether the historic people like the Sikhs would have a better chance of maintaining their heritage and identity?

The national leaders of India, and all their camp-followers around the world, for their own sake and for the sake of the Union of India, honestly need to regard the endemic Sikh proposal even with greater sympathy and consideration, in that, not only are there linguistic, cultural and regional

implications at the basis of the Sikh proposal but also historical and constitutional ones. To quote the brilliant author of *Sikhism and Politics*.

"That the Khalsa is a State is the earliest clear idea that has emerged in Sikh epiphany and that has been accepted as the true Sikh postulate for the last three hundred years. This was much before Hegel stated that "only those people can come under our notice which form a State."

If the demand lacks competence and solidarity amongst the Sikhs themselves today, when it is, or ought verily to be, the national and secular duty of the Hindu and Muslim majority leaders themselves, through the policies of the government of India to foster a proper organisation amongst the Sikh minority as would help them carry this object to fulfillment. This is what India owes to, and needs to do for, the Sikhs today. After all, a great deal of the efficiency and stability of the *Sikh Sarkar*, under Ranjit Singh, were attributable to the shrewdness and ability of the Dogra and other Hindu, as well as Muslim, Ministers of the Sikh administration. It was with their support and loyalty that under Ranjit Singh the History of India was able to produce a refreshing and glorious chapter which marks a reversal of the foreign invasions into north-western India. For once the peoples of this part of India were no longer the conquered but conquerors of all that lay between them and the Khyber Pass and beyond. In this brief chapter, India, through Ranjit Singh, became the arbiter of the Afghan kings and their fates.

Say, where are those gloriously fired and faithful Hindus and 'Fakirs', or their descendants, today when history is waiting to be repeated? Was it easier for the faithful Hindu and Muslim generals of the *Sikh Sarkar* to lay down their lives gallantly, even when left leaderless, in the battle-fields of Ferozeshahar and Subraon, to save the Punjab from the British, than it is today to list the civil support of India's government of a small, harmless constitutional concession to the Sikhs? May these lines inspire a soul-searching on the part of the Indian majority so that they would find it in their hearts to do the right thing by the Sikhs. No matter or question is solved, until it is solved right.

From the point of view of the Sikhs themselves, of course, *Raj* (Government) has been recommended by the Tenth Guru. In the *Dasam Granth*, Chapter *Loh-Parkash*, Guru Gobind Singh decreed:

*raj bina nahin dharma calay hae  
dharam bina sab dalay malay hae.*

(Without Government the Faith cannot prosper; and without Faith all is naught).

Gurminder Singh Deol



## Chet (March-April)

*Chet basant bhala bhavar suhavde*

It is the month of Chet  
 It is spring. All is seemly,  
 The beautiful bumble-bees  
 The woodlands in flower;  
 But there is a sorrow in my soul  
 For away is the Lord my Master.

If the husband comes not home, how can a wife  
 Find peace of mind?  
 Sorrows of separation waste away her body.

The koel calls in the mango grove,  
 Her notes are full of joy  
 But there is a sorrow in my soul.

The bumble-bee hovers about the blossoming bough  
 (A messenger of life and hope)  
 But O Mother of mine, 'tis like death to me  
 For there is a sorrow in my soul.

How shall I banish sorrow and find blessed peace?  
 Sayeth Nanak: When the Lord her Master comes  
 home to her  
 Then is spring seemly because she is fulfilled.

# Vaisakh

## Vaisakh (April-May)

*Vaisakh bhala sakha ves kare*

Beauteous Vaisakh, when the bough  
adorns itself anew  
The wife awaits the coming of her lord  
Her eyes fixed on the door.  
'My love, who alone can help me cross  
The turbulent waters of life,  
Have compassion for me and come home,  
Without thee I am as worthless as a shell.  
Love, look thou upon me with favour  
And let our eyes mingle  
Then I will become priceless beyond  
compare.'

Nanak asks: 'Whither seekest thou the  
Lord?  
Whom awaitest thou?  
Thou hast not far to go, for the Lord  
Is within thee, thou art His mansion.  
If thy body and soul yearn for the Lord  
Is within thee, thou art His mansion.  
If thy body and soul yearn for the Lord,  
The Lord shall love thee  
And Vaisakh will beautiful be.'







## Jeth (May-June)

*Mah jeth bhala pritam kiu bisrai*

Why forget the beloved Lord in the good month of Jeth?

The earth shimmers in the summer's heat  
 The wife makes obeisance and prays  
 Let me find favour in Thine eyes O Lord,  
 Thou art great and good  
 Truth manifest and unshakable,

Of attachments art Thou free.  
 And I, lowly, humble, helpless.  
 How shall I approach Thee?  
 How find the haven of peace?

In the month of Jeth, says Nanak,  
 She who knoweth the Lord  
 Becometh like the Lord.  
 She knoweth Him  
 By treading the path of virtue.