

FOREWORD

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

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

If we consider the work which Govind accomplished both in reforming his religion and instituting a new code of laws for his followers, his personal bravery under all circumstances, his persevering endurance amidst difficulties which would have disheartened others and overwhelmed them, in inextricable distress; and lastly his final victory over the powerful enemies by the very men who had previously forsaken him, we need not be surprised that the Sikhs venerate his memory. He was, undoubtedly, a great man.

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

Here in this important monograph based upon the well-known biographical writing in Urdu by Daulat Rai, we are concerned with an Indian Historian of note. He was a man of considerable insight and acumen, who rose much higher than the ordinary class of historiographers and was thus able to grasp and understand the real historical situation obtaining in India before and during the turbulent times of Guru Gobind Singh.

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

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

Daulat Rai was, of course, well-versed with the world history, so as to compare and contrast relevant situation while discussing the inimitable character of Guru Gobind Singh. He says with a sense of pride in praising his matchless hero:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

-Convener

Gurmat Sahit Charitable Trust

PREFACE

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

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

Secondly, the majority of the people know so little about this great hero that many unscrupulous people have tried to gain their selfish ends by saying many wrong and undesirable things about the Guru, his life and teachings. I was taken aback by a book in which the written out of sheer ignorance or coloured by his personal views and prejudices had tried to belittle and denigrate the mission of the Guru by misinterpreting his words and sayings. Feeling the need of consulting some Khalsa Sikhs regarding these, I was all the more surprised to learn that most of them were poorly informed, nay quite ignorant about their Guru's real views. There were some whose thoughts were not only wrong but also divergent and contradictory.

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

I am deeply indebted to my friend Lala Jawala Dass, Master of High School, Dera Ghazi Khan for his ungrudging and valuable help. I am conscious of the fact that this book is neither perfect nor comprehensive. It is an humble endeavour to correct the prevailing misconceptions about the life, works and mission of the versatile genius Guru Gobind Singh. May it inspire some day a better-equipped person to touch the theme with greater felicity.

23rd Jan., 1901

- Daulat Rai