

GURU GOBIND SINGH

Unparalleled Sacrifice of His Father

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

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

The growing power of the Sikhs was rankling in Aurangzeb's eyes. On learning of the Guru's help for the Kashmiri Brahmins, he became incensed. He summoned the Guru to Delhi. He summoned the Guru to Delhi. The Guru installed Gobind as his successor informing him that he was going to offer his head for the cause of Righteousness in obedience to the Akal Purakh's command. The Guru

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

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

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