

From Where and for Whom the Guru Started His Mission

He found the foot-hills of Northern Himalayas most suitable for his purpose. It was unimaginable that the caste-proud Rajputs even in their distressed condition would follow him. The Hindus of Western Punjab had lost their valour. The Kashartris of Central Punjab were physically and spiritually debilitated, and were not suitable for the task the Guru had in his mind. The people of Bengal, Madras and Maharashtra had tired of fighting the Muslims and the difference in their languages was too great to be surmounted. The youth of these provinces had not been prepared for such a task. There was very little chance of success through their efforts. The North-Eastern belt of Punjab had to some extent been influenced by the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. Some Hindus of this area had rendered deeds of self-sacrifice, which had deeply impressed the people of the surrounding areas.

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

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

two-fold, the acquisition of weapons by the Guru and martial spirit by his Sikhs.

In keeping with the change, the Guru assumed a lordly demeanour laying aside his ascetical robe. He now always kept a sword at his waist whether sitting on his cushioned seat or outside and held court every morning and evening and often organised contests of skill in martial arts and handling of weapons. Stirring poems, full of patriotic fervour and heroism were sung and recited, alongwith devotional hymns. Guru Gobind Singh himself penned *Kavits* and other poems in different metres that aroused courage and quickened the blood of the listeners. He had detailed fifty-two poets that adorned his court, for writing stirring verses on the exploits of daring in the face of heavy odds, accomplished by Indian heroes and warriors of yore. He kept bards at his court who always sung songs, full of heroic lore and national grandeur. In his anthology called the 'Granth of the Tenth Guru' some portion is devoted to the wars of goddess Durga against the demonic hordes. It is penned in such metres, couched in such virile words and forceful metaphors, and is full of such heroic overtones as vibrate and delivered in such a style that the listeners are overcome with the warmth of martial emotions even in winter. *Since this portion on the exploits of the goddess is included in the granth, some people have erroneously concluded that the Guru was a devotee of the goddess.*

Let me declare here unequivocally that the Guru worshipped the Formless Lord Akal only. He was dead set against the worship of gods, and goddesses and always preached in no uncertain words against it. His only purpose was to arouse the dormant fighting spirit of the people; the selection of the protagonists was a secondary matter. As it was, the people of the area were conversant with the mythical exploits of the goddess. Instead of inventing a new hero and inventing his exploits, it was better and more expedient, to make use of the available material. The Guru had divined correctly; his writings were highly successful in arousing the spirit of the people, filling them with martial thoughts. All this prepared his followers for the coming battles.