

The 'Story' of Naina Devi

During his hilly sojourn Guru Gobind Singh was busy planning for the future and gathering the necessary wherewithal for the execution of his plans. Either under the influence of Pandits or of his own, the Guru decided to hold a Yajna and light the sacrificial fire at a special place. He prevailed upon the Pandits to perform the Yajna to call up the Devi to give her blessings for the destruction of the enemies. All things needed for the Yajna were stored at Malkar (Naina Devi) Hill. Some well-known Pandits of Benaras were sent for. Kalidas and Keshodas were two of the famous Pandits often mentioned in the chronicles. Pandit Bishambar Dass was also deputed for the Yajna. The sacrificial fire was lit for many days but no Devi appeared. Their earlier claims belied, the Brahmins now claimed that unless some holy man (*Mahatama*) was sacrificed in offering to the Devi, she would not make an appearance.

With a smile Guru Gobind Singh informed the Pandits that there couldn't be a holier man than they; so one of them should be offered to the Devi. It is said that all the Pandits either on the pretext of urination or bathing, disappeared from the scene, leaving the Yajna incomplete.

When none of them turned up, the Guru caused the remaining stuff of the Yajna to be thrown into the sacrificial fire. A giant flame rose up on the hill that could be easily seen for miles around, which made the people believe that the Devi had made an appearance.

The authenticity of this episode is questionable. It appears that some overzealous followers of the Guru, banking upon the credulity of the ignorant, had concocted such an improbable story. They were misled by the prominence their Guru had given to the Devi in his writings. She was the heroine of two epic poems, where her exploits had been graphically eulogised. *It seems farfetched that the Guru should resort to such a drama to impress upon the people that he had the Devi to help him in his battles.*

Guru Gobind Singh has said in unequivocal terms that he never believed that such beings had any godly powers. How could he then make offerings to them? He had condemned in the strongest possible terms the worship of these creations of Akal.