

Opposition of the Guru by the High-Caste Hindus

The Kashatri Kings and the Brahmins reacted to the Guru and the Khalsa Dharma in their typical manner. They came out openly against Guru Gobind Singh and his noble mission. The Brahmins could not tolerate the breaking up of the caste system and the discarding of the tradition of Janju-wearing. They created a furore over this. The Rajas of the surrounding hill tracts were set against the Guru by the Brahmins who declared that the Guru had denigrated Hindu Dharma. These Rajas were already jealous of his growing power and saw a challenge to their own supremacy in his crusade against caste distinctions. The Brahmins incited them to hound the Guru persistently without giving him a breather so as to break his spirit and disperse his bedraggled crowd of an army. Guru Gobind Singh invited the Hill Rajas to join the Khalsa Dharma. The Rajas belonging to the high caste could hardly be expected to respond favourably. They rejected the offer disdainfully and reacted despicably and deceitfully at later times.

O, Hindus! There can be no more ungrateful people than you. No other nation can boast of ingratitude of a deeper hue than you. No other nation has in her the fell spirit of disregarding her patriots. Who can be more savage and hell-bent on torturing the true lovers of her land?

The Guru—The great Gobind Singh—was preparing to sacrifice his all for thee, was busy wholeheartedly to lift thee out of thy degraded state to a higher level of self-respect and decency and yet thy people stand against him out of jealousy and selfishness! This is all due to the ungratefulness, hatred and jealousy that is suffused in thy veins. It is because of this perverse stuff in you that you have been condemned to slavery.

In short, the Rajputs who claimed to be great fighters and stupid Hill Rajas turned against the Guru. The latter, commenced making preparations against him with a view to harassing him. But the heart of Guru Gobind Singh was dauntless and nothing could trouble him. The Hill Rajas fired the first shot against him in a cowardly and unsoldierly way. They asked him to leave their territory, get out of Anandpur and pay for the damage and destruction caused by his people. This compensation should be made in hard cash. In the case of non-compliance with these conditions, the combined army of the Hill Rajas will march against him. The Guru's father Guru Tegh Bahadur had bought the land and had set up a village there. The Guru, a fighter by instinct and a crusader for freeing the country from foreign dominance, could not be expected to submit to such terms. *He sent back the reply that he would pay the claimed damages with his sword and re-purchase his stay at Anandpur with bullets.* The Rajput Kings did not like the tone and tenor of this reply. Their blood rose in vengeance and they drew their swords. They attacked Anandpur a number of times. I give below a brief account of these attacks:

The Guru had delivered a telling blow to the false faith and useless religious wrangles of the

Brahmins, and the Mullahs by establishing Khalsa Dharma in the teeth of the silly and indiscreet storm of Hinduism and the fanatical flood of the Muslims. He was yet to defeat the Imperial forces of the Muslim Emperor of Delhi, for which he was making plans. Some have opined that these plans of the Guru bordered on madness and were impracticable.

It was rashness verging nothing short of madness for a destitute person to aspire to clash with a mighty power. This opinion itself sounds meaningless when we consider how single individuals like Nadir Shah, Babur had carved vast empires in Asia. They gathered men around them and then some more men and thus gathering power they marched to their destiny. What is needed is courage, an indomitable heart and the help of self-sacrificing, devoted followers. The Guru would have succeeded in his mission but for three factors. He could not in his time destroy the Muslim Empire. But he left it tottering and had created a virile people and a strong wave of nationalism to complete the task still left undone.

The greatest factor that could not let him succeed was that he was not a deceitful person like Shivaji. He considered it below his dignity as a preceptor to resort to ruse and duplicity and wanted to succeed through physical skill and prowess only. Diplomacy and deceit are the heart and soul of warfare, but the Guru abhorred them.

Secondly, the Guru did not create openings for getting close to the Hill Rajas. On the other hand, the two parties drifted apart to the extent of open hostility for one another. The very house was divided against itself. Instead of putting up united resistance against the common enemy, they fought against one another. This war was forced on the Guru ere he had gained sufficient strength for the trial of arms with Delhi. Since the Hill Rajas had used the pretext of defending their religious traditions to justify their unwarranted attacks on him, he as a Guru and dauntless person had to take up the gauntlet. Thus the two parties were engaged in a mutually destructive conflict.

The third and the last factor was the lack of proper training of his men in the art of war. They were all men of indomitable courage and had the capacity and the will to fight till the last. But the lack of proper training and weapons was a very big handicap for them while facing numerically far superior and better equipped armies. If only they had more time for practising warfare!

The First Attack: Guru Gobind Singh was hunting in the foothills with his followers. The first attack on him was launched by Raja Alam Chand and Raja Ballia. The Guru and his men were poorly equipped, and the two Rajas, wanted to exploit his - this disadvantage. The Guru with his small band of men faced them boldly and engaged them in a fierce battle. A pitched skirmish took place, for a short time. Raja Ballia was killed in the encounter and the Guru and his men won the day in the first battle.

The Second Attack: Angered at their ignominious defeat, the Hill Rajas sought the help of the Subedar of Sirhind, who despatched a force. Thus reinforced, the Rajas again attacked Anandpur. The battle raged for thirty days. Pierced by an arrow in the ear Paindey Khan fell dead. Dina Beg ran away from the field. The victorious Sikhs pursued the retreating enemy up to Rohtak. Ajit Singh, the eldest son of the Guru Gobind Singh displayed great valour in the field.

Kesri Chand was also killed in the battle. It is said that the enemy brought an elephant to break open the portal of the Anandpur fort. Duni Chand, a Kashatri Sikh was ordered by the Guru to intercept the elephant, but he ran away. The Guru then asked Bachittar Singh to confront the animal. Before becoming a member of the Khalsa, he was a Lubana (a low caste) by caste. He faced the elephant manfully and gave its trunk such a deep gash with his sword that the brute ran away in panic. This incident highlighted the difference between the Sikhs of the Guru and the Brahmins and the Kashatri of the time. How low the Kashatri had fallen, how brave had become the Sikhs, whatever their erstwhile caste was! After this victory, the Guru marched to Kiratpur from Anandpur.

The Third Attack: The second defeat was rankling in the minds of the Rajas. They tried to involve the Subedar of Sirhind fully now. It is said that - Rupees twenty thousand were given to the Subedar in cash and Raja Bhim Chand offered him the hand of a female from his family. The Subedar was won over to their side. The Guru had rallied some more men around him and had built four more forts for emergency use. The Guru well knew the result of opposing the Emperor of India. He had not been able to consolidate his -position fully. The continuous warfare with the Rajas had not allowed him to finalise his schemes. He had only a small number of Sikhs with him and no source of income except what his poor, half-famished Sikhs offered in cash or kind. The Guru had some Pathan with him, but their number was so small as to be insignificant in a major engagement. With the help of the forces of Sirhind, the Raja attacked the Guru at Kiratpur on 17 Maghar of Samat 1755 (1699 A..D.).

The Guru and his Sikhs fought bravely, but it was difficult to hold such large hordes there. So the Guru returned to the Anandpur Fort. His Sikhs displayed signal acts of bravery. Among such fighters was one Joga Singh who is mentioned in *Janam Sakhis*. In the days when preparation of this engagement was afoot, he was called to Peshawar for his marriage. His Guru had asked him to return forthwith after the ceremony. Joga Singh left after the completion of the circumambulations in connection with his marriage, though his father forbade him. *The Sikhs were made of such stuff.* The siege of Anandpur lasted some days, the Sikhs fought valiantly. Guru Gobind Singh went over to the Raja of Sohli, who had invited him. This battle has been less mentioned by the English historians, but all *Janam Sakhis* have given accounts of it.