

After the Battle of Chamkaur

How did the Guru escape from there? It is said that the remaining three Sikhs started shouting at night that the Pir of the Hindus, meaning the Guru was slipping out. The shouting created consternation and an uproar in the Imperial army. Utter confusion reigned amongst them and making use of this diversion the Guru slipped out in the darkness of the night, bare-footed and with a blistering heart. He moved towards the jungle.

Leaving the Guru at this stage, let us turn to the sad and heart-rending story of his two small sons. After the exodus from Anandpur and the crossing of the turbulent Sirsa stream, the mother of the Guru with her two younger grandsons took shelter with an old servitor of the family, Ganga Ram, a Brahmin, of village Kheri that falls in Ropar district. The Guru's mother had taken with her some gems and hard cash. The old Brahmin servitor was filled with greed. He thought of usurping this wealth and informing the Subedar of Sirhind about the presence of the Guru's mother and his sons. His wife remonstrated with him saying that he had eaten the salt of the Guru and should not betray him.

The glitter of the gold and the gems blinded him, blotted all sense of shame and gratitude from his mind. He stole these from the old lady and informed Nawab Jani Khan, about her and her grandsons. Jani Khan passed on the news to his superior, the Subedar of Sirhind. The old servitor committed a despicable crime. *But for a Brahmin it was nothing extraordinary.* He had been sucking like a leech the life-blood of others for thousands of years without compunction or mercy. For his wants and livelihood, he had never been averse to deceiving his master, his king, his people, and his country. He had deceived all of them too readily, without a twinge of his conscience. The entire history of India is full of instances of such treachery. They are shameless and ungrateful deceivers for the sake of their pleasures and selfish ends. They feel no shame in begging either in private or openly like the mendicants.

Informed by the treacherous Brahmin, the Nawab got the lady and her grandsons arrested and sent them to Sirhind as ordered by the Subedar. The Nawab also came to know about the gems and gold which the ungrateful Brahmin servant had stolen. So he took the Brahmin along with the booty and produced him before the Subedar. This Brahmin god (the epithet "god" is applied to the Brahmin all over India) got nothing for his treachery and ungratefulness other than the saving of his dirty skin. The two sons of the Guru, Zorawar Singh aged nine and Fateh Singh

aged seven, were produced before the Subedar, who in the first instance sentenced them to one year's imprisonment in a Tower, known as the Chandal Burj till today.

Later on he summoned them to appear before him and urged them to embrace Islam and then lead a life of luxury like royal princes. He warned them that if they failed to heed his advice, they would be put to the sword. Do you know what these two tender and innocent kids said in reply?

They declared that they were the sons of Guru Gobind Singh and the grandsons of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the king among martyrs of the nation and the country. In their veins ran the blood of their redoubtable father and their noble grandfather. *Islam did not appeal to them and no temptation or hope of any reward could make them embrace it.* They did not want to buy their lives at the cost of the Khalsa Dharma. They held their lives very cheaply and cared not two hoots if it flew out of their limbs; Death held no terror for them. They would not go against the mandate of Akal and embrace the faith of the enemies of their country and Dharma. Their answer was worthy of their noble descent. It was the elder of the two sons who made this bold reply. He asked if conversion to Islam could save them from **Death**? If die they must, why not die nobly for their country and the Khalsa Dharma?

This bold reply stunned the Subedar of Sirhind. Then seething with wrath he ordered them to be beheaded. The world is not entirely full of heartless and devilish people only. Here and there are to be seen good and noble souls. Even in this gathering of bloodthirsty men was one such noble soul - *Nawab Sher Mohammad Khan of Kotla*. Addressing the Subedar, the Nawab questioned the justice of punishing innocent children for the fault of their father. He wanted to know what injunction of the Holy Quran permitted the slaughter of the innocent. This gory act of great injustice could perhaps have been averted. But there was in that assemblage a Kashatri Dewan Sucha (Truthful) Nand, opposed to the Guru, who counselled their killing, holding it unwise and impolitic to save them arguing that it is not wise to bring up the young ones of an asp after killing it because the wolf's whelp has the making of a future wolf.

O, Mother India, these are your offspring. Your most favourite, the eldest Brahmin son (Gangs Ram) had already shown his true colours of deceit, ungratefulness, shamelessness, indecency and inhumanity. Now be proud of your second worthy son, the Kashatri, Dewan Sucha Nand who felt no hesitation in wreaking his vengeance on the Guru, by sending his tender sons (of the ages of

7 and 9), to certain death. He was not to be outdone by his elder Brahmin brother, in meanness, jealousy, cold-blooded inhumanity and devilish-ness. These are your true begotten sons. These mean and selfish sons cause you endless pain and greatly torture your mind. These sons of yours are consumed by jealousy and hatred for your other children. They are thirsty for the blood of their own brethren and like *leeches*; they are even engaged in sucking it. O, woebegone Mother, whom can you accuse and complain against when your own children are eager to kill one another? O, who can defend you then?

O, Mother, you have been seen the work of your Brahmin and Kashatri sons, who claim preeminence over your other sons. Now Guru Gobind Singh has taken with him your lowly son, the Shudra, to defend you. But the jealous, mean and haughty elder brothers won't let them gain enough strength to achieve their goal. In their wickedness the wretches — the ignoble elder brothers, — work against you and their own good. Their wisdom has been consumed by their wickedness. O, Mother India, pray to the Almighty for your sons. Supplicate the Lord to teach them to love one another and foster firm bonds of brotherhood.

After a day or two the children of the Guru's children were again invited to embrace Islam. Glowing pictures of luxurious living, big Jagirs and great riches as rewards and dignities were drawn before them. But Zorawar Singh was unmoved and reiterated the reply given earlier that they were not tempted by the short and inglorious life of pleasure. They would rather die than give up the Khalsa Dharma. They were the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, undaunted by death. They would court death smilingly. They challenged him to do his worst. These words cut the Subedar to the quick and he ordered that they should be bricked alive. The erection of a wall was started around them. *They stood unperturbed. There were no tears in their eyes, no tremor on their lips, no trembling in their limbs, no beads of perspiration on their foreheads, no paleness on their faces. What stead-fastness, what courage, what fortitude, what super-human capacity for making sacrifices!*

Just imagine, dear reader, what kept them calm, unconcerned and unmoved under such trying circumstances? This courage, this fearlessness, this spirit was instilled in them by their father, Guru Gobind Singh. When the wall rises higher, the younger brother aged seven shows some signs of uneasiness. Zorawar Singh addresses his brother saying, "O, Fateh Singh, shout Wahe-Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Wahe-Guru Ji Ki Fateh (The Khalsa belongs to God and victory is in His hands), I hold you answerable to your vows to your father and your mother's milk! Do not lose

heart in the face of tribulation." Fateh Singh steadies himself. What a glorious show of manliness for a child of seven!

The wall reaches the level of their chests and inches higher. Their breathing is obstructed and they feel suffocated. At this critical juncture, they are urged again to choose between Islam promising life and refusal meaning death. Their answer is the same but they add that they see heaven across the wall, on the other side in front of them, they feel no pain. They cherish their Khalsa Dharma and are not prepared to bargain for miserable life. They feel blessed as they carry out the command of the Lord Akal. The wall reaches the level of their heads, and then covers them. The two tender hearts are stilled for ever. *They died for their Dharma and their Motherland. They died to live for ever in the hearts of men. They died to revive Hindu Dharma. They died to give eternal life to their Khalsa Dharma. They showed the world that a nation that bears brave children like them never dies. Hallowed is the land which gives birth to such valiant progeny.*

Compare them with fully grown men who bid good-bye to their religion for a handful of coins. Compare them with long-beards who for the sake of a woman forsake their faith. Some of them join the fold of Mohammed. Some others of them swell the ranks of the followers of Christ. My country-men, these were the children who signed with their blood, the Immortal Document of the Love of their father. Krishan avenged himself on the enemies of his father, only after growing to full manhood. We cannot compare this feat of his maturer years with the exemplary courage shown by these kids of seven and nine. Their father was not there to guide or order them and yet they braved death for his faith and principles. They were not grown up and sturdy like Krishan but they out-did him in courage and steadfastness.

The Muslims dealt with these tender boys with the same cruelty which was in evidence in their heartless treatment of the innocent grandnephews of their Prophet in the battlefield of Karbla. To this day the Shins and other Muslims remember the occasion with lamentations and heavy hearts. But the brave Sikhs have taken this inhuman treatment of their Guru's children in their stride.

When the old mother of the Guru came to know about the heart-rending tale of her grandson's deaths, she was overwhelmed by the heartlessness and the cruelty of the perpetrators of this dastardly act and died. Let us turn from this horrendous tale of human ungratefulness, of

mean, unmanly revenge, of inhuman treatment of young children at the hands of grown-up men holding high positions, and turn to the exploits of the Guru.

The Guru started walking bare-footed in the dark night when thorny bushes and way-side thorns could not be made out. How could he escape unscathed? His feet became blistered and were bleeding. Still he walked till day-break. The Imperial army tried to track him at night and also during the day, the heaps of the dead-bodies were sorted out to find his body but without success. Not knowing where to look for him, the authorities sent search-parties in all directions.

Since the Sun had risen, the Guru, certain of being pursued, went to sleep in a thicket, with a couple of clods under his head for a pillow. He was dead tired and had not slept for many nights with the result that he slept very soundly during the day. He passed the night at the same spot without eating anything. There is a Gurdwara now at this place. In the small hours of the night, he marched to the east of Machhiwara town and passed the day in a garden. An edifice known as Charan Kanwal (Lotus Feet) stands in his memory. Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan, two Pathan brothers came to their garden for a walk and recognised Guru Gobind Singh because they used to bring horses to him for sale. They judged from his tattered clothes and his physical condition that he had come from a battlefield. They were under debt of the Guru for his past favours and had earned handsomely through dealings with him. *They were Muslims but were men enough not to act in an ungrateful manner.*

Instead of harming the Guru or informing the Imperial forces about him, they escorted him safely to Behlolpur. The three Sikhs of the Guru who had escaped from Chamkaur in the ensuing confusion after their announcement regarding their Guru's exit also reached there. They had dressed themselves like Muslims and were looking for their Guru. A column of the Imperial army, looking for the Guru, arrived in neighbourhood. The Guru and his comrades took shelter with one Gulaba Singh there, who personally took them to the house of Qazi Pir (or Mir) Mohammad. The Qazi and the Guru were old friends. The Qazi proved his true humanism and friendship. After deliberations, it was decided that the Guru should be declared a Muslim Pir and dressed like one be taken to Malwa region. Accordingly, the Guru was declared *Uch Da Pir* (The Pir of Eminence), seated on a cot raised high as per the custom prevalent then and accompanied by the Qazi, Ghani Khan and the three Sikhs in Muslim garbs, was taken out of Behlolpur. The Guru, attired in blue robes, was taken from one village to another in the direction of Malwa.

What a company it was, strange and holy. How courageous and bold on the part of the Guru to put himself at the mercy of Muslims, when his own people, the Hindus, for whose defence and welfare he was struggling, had betrayed him, when the entire resources of the Muslim Empire of the time were ranged against him, and when every Muslim hand was raised against him. Human mind staggers to take in the situation, what a man the Guru was! His shrewd judgement of men was proved true. He saw no Hindu worth the name, to afford him shelter and also he had no faith in their word of honour or their honour itself. Had he trusted his life in the hands of any Brahmin or Kashatri, it would not have been worth a dime. The two Muslims justified the trust reposed in them and at least they escorted him safely to Malwa. The Guru in the guise of a Muslim Pir was taken to village Ghungrali and after buying weapons from Jhanda Mistri, the group arrived at the Dera of Mahant Kirpal Dass, in village Haer, who refused to give shelter to a rebel against the Emperor. See, how a Hindu had behaved!

From there, the group moved farther and at last arrived at the house of Rai Kalha, the Rais (dignitary) of Raikot, in village Jatpura. Though a Muslim, he entertained them well. The Sikhs presented horses and weapons to the Guru at that place. The Guru also learnt there what had befallen his aged mother and his two younger sons. The Guru heard it all with equanimity and thanked Akal Purkh for the consummation of His Will. *The Guru declared there that a day would come when the Khalsa would raze Sirhind to the ground to avenge their innocent brothers. These words were a sort of legacy for the Sikhs who proved them true.*