

Guru Hargobind Singh and Emperor Shah Jehan

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Through the good offices of Nur Jehan, Hazrat Mian Mir, and others, Jehangir was persuaded not to cause any injury to young Guru Hargobind or his followers, in spite of the efforts of Chandu's coterie. But the latter had begun to inflame the mind of the heir-apparent Shah Jehan against the Guru, especially after that open skirmish with the hunt party of Shah Jehan near Amritsar. Jehangir died suddenly in Kashmir, and Shah Jehan became emperor of India. The various engagements between the imperial forces and the disciples of the Guru cover the whole lifetime of Har Gobind. The Sikhs always fought with a superhuman courage, and the Emperor's armies were worsted in all these affrays. The Guru finally left Amritsar and went to Kartarpur, and, after giving battle there, retired to the sub-montane parts of the North-eastern Panjab, where his son had already founded the town called Kiratpur. It is near this Kiratpur that Guru Tegh Bahadu later on purchased a site for his residence which he called Anandpur; it provided a solitary retreat from all outside disturbances.

Engaged in warfare with the Emperor of India, and liable always to be attacked unawares, Guru Hargobind was never at a loss, never in haste, never afraid of consequences. The date of the wedding of his daughter, Bibi Viro, coincided with the first battle of Amritsar between the Guru and the Emperor. While the rest of the Guru's family escaped in time, his daughter Viro inadvertently remained on the upper floor of the house, which by nightfall was besieged by the Emperor's troops. Bibi Viro stayed alone undaunted in the house and kept silent. When she saw a rescue party of the Sikhs coming, she refused to accompany them till they showed her father's rosary. She was then safely conveyed to the place where the rest of the family had taken refuge. While this turmoil was on, the Guru ordered that the wedding of his daughter should be duly celebrated that very night in a village at a distance of about seven miles from Amritsar which was accordingly done amid great rejoicings. Only at the bride's departure was the customary pathetic note struck, in the father's farewell message to his daughter. A daughter's marriage, with us in the Panjab, is full of rare pathos - surrounded as we have always been by danger and political turmoil. And Guru's message to his daughter is full of the tenderest feelings of a father towards his daughter.

The Master and his disciples

Thus he was, almost simultaneously, celebrating his daughter's marriage and busied with the grim business of fighting a hard battle and running to the rescue of his wounded disciples. Of this very time, it is related that two of his disciples were lying in blood and that he went to them, wiped their faces, gave them water to drink, and caressed them, crying like a father, "O my Mohan! O my Gopal, Tell me what can I do for you?" They replied, "O Master! the proof that God is, is that you are here. It was our prayer to see you with our eyes now closing forever." God bless you my friends," said he, "You have crossed the ocean of illusion."

Still yonder at Kartarpur, on the river Beas, where she had been removed for safety, Kaulan lay ill. Her burning soul of love could not stay on earth in separation from her Master. Separated from him, she fell dangerously ill. Hargobind found time to pay her a visit and, as he sat beside this heroic disciple, she passed away. Singing, into the soft music of her closing eyes, the prayer of thankfulness, she fell asleep in the very arms of God.

There was yet another great soul waiting for him at his village, Ramdas, near Amritsar: Bhai Budha, who was preparing to leave this earth. Har Gobind hastened to his side. Bhai Budha's whole soul leapt with joy on beholding the Master before beginning his last journey. The Guru said, "Bhai Budha, thou hast seen the last five Masters and lived with them and

thy realization is great. Please give me some instructions.” The Bhai replied, “Thou art the sun and I am only a fire-fly. Thou hast, out of thy infinite mercy, come to see me and to help me swim across the Sea of illusion. Touch me, touch me with thy hand, and bless me, O Master mine! Thou knowest all. Thou art the spiritual and temporal Protector of the holy. Thou art God, we all know, but how thou playest the part of a holy man into these days, only God knows. Sustain me, and let me pass Death’s door without suffering. Sustain my son Bhana, too, when I am gone and keep him at thy feet, Help me O Lord! O Saviour of thy disciples!”

“Thou hast already entered the Realms of immortals,” said the Master, as he placed his hand on the forehead of his old disciple; and Bhai Budha passed away.

Where Har Gobind could not go, he made response in Dhyanam; and in act, this response was continuous and unbroken amid all struggles of the outer life. Manohardas, a great saint, the great-grandson of Amardas, died at Goindwal. The Master plunged into deep prayer for him. As he came out of his Samadhi he said: Mano-Har-stealer of the heart! Triumph! Triumph for him! Great saint of God!”

Har Gobind sent an invitation to Anand Rai (King of Joy) the son of Mano-Har of Goindwal. Anand Rai came; and Har Gobind put his shoulder under the palanquin on which Anand Rai was raging, and bore him little distance. Anand Rai alighted and bowed down saying, “Why doest thou treat me with so great a kindness? I am naught but the dust of thy holy feet. What if the bamboo grass grow very high? It can never equal the fragrance of the sandal-tree.”

“Without service of His saints, man is a barren rock”, said the Master. “In the service of His saints, he is God.”

Har Gobind, though hunted by the imperial hordes and continually liable to sudden dangers from them, was always calm and collected. When Painde Khan, once the trusted general of Har Gobind, whom the latter had brought up from boyhood as his pet cavalier, turned against him, went over to the side of Shah Jehan, and reappeared as leader of a hostile army, the Guru rose early as usual and sang Japji and Anand songs. As he was chanting hymns and praying, his Sikh generals came in hot haste to inform him of the approach of the Moghal forces. The Guru said: Be calm. There is nothing to be afraid of. All comes as our Creator wills.” Painde Khan got engaged in a pitched duel with Hargobind. The ungrateful Painde uttered profane words to the Master, who replied, “Painde Khan, why use such words when the sword is in thy hand, and I give thee full leave to strike first?” Painde Khan, bending low, aimed a sword-blow at the Master, who avoided it. Again Painde Khan struck with similar result. Har Gobind was trying to play with his old and beloved servant, and, if possible, to awaken in him his original sense of fealty. But Painde Khan grew more and more angry and desperate; his attack became deadly and Har Gobind dealt a blow under which he fell. From this blow he regained his old sense of discipleship; and, as he lay dying the Master took him in his arms, thereby readmitting him to grace. The death of Painde Khan is one of the most pathetic scenes in the life of Har Gobind. As he sat shading Painde Khan’s face from the sun with his shield, he addressed him lovingly: “O Painde Khan, thou art dying.” The fully-awakened Painde Khan replied, “O Master, from thy sword has already flowed into my mouth the Elixir of Immortality. Master, thy sword-cut is my *kalma* now!”

Har Rai, his grandson, always wore a heavy gown and once as he was passing through Har Gobind’s garden, the folds of his flowing gown struck a flower, which fell down, torn from its branch. The Master saw this and said to Har Rai, ‘My son! always go about with due care, lest you disturb the slumber of union of some blessed ones, and tear them away from God

as thou hast torn this flower from its branch.” Har Rai thenceforward, all his life, gathered the folds of his gown in his hand wherever he went.

Har Gobind found in Har Rai the spirit of Nanak: this time in a more subtle and mystic form, and it was at Kiratpur that the Master gave his throne to him and left for his heavenly abode. It is written by the Dhyanee disciples who were present at the time of the departure of Har Gobind Sahib from the earth that the face of heaven flushed rose-red and that they heard the soft singing of a million angels in the inner firmament in one spiritual concourse of joy.

The Master, before giving up his body, said: “Mourn not; rejoice in that I am returning to my Home. He who obeys my word is ever dear to me, and in the guru’s word is his beatitude. Fill yourselves, O disciples! with the song of His Name and live immersed in its ever-increasing inebriation divine.”

