

Guru Gobind Singh: The Measure of Greatness

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Gobind had achieved the victory, he had made himself master of the imagination of his followers; but a more laborious task remained, the destruction of the empire of unbelieving oppressors. He had established the Khalsa, the theocracy of Singhs, in the midst of Hindu delusion and Muhammadan error; he had confounded *Pirs* and *Mullas*, *Sadhs* and *Pandits*, but he had yet to vanquish the armies of a great emperor, and to subdue the multitudes whose faith he impugned. The design of Gobind may seem wild and senseless to those accustomed to consider the firm sway and regular policy of ancient Rome and who daily witness the power and resources of the well ordered governments.

Gobind was killed in 1708 at Nander, on the banks of the Godavari. He was in the forty-eighth year, and if it be thought by any that his obscure end belied the promise of his whole life, it should be remembered that :

"The hand of man

Is but a tardy servant of the brain.

And follows, with its leaden diligence.

The fiery steps of fancy.

That even Muhammad was a fugitive from Mecca, the lance of an Arab might have changed the history of the world' and that the Achilles of Poetry, the reflection of truth left Troy untaken. The lord of the Myrmidons, destined to a short life and immortal glory, met an end almost as base as that which he dreaded when struggling with Simois and Scamander and the heroic Richard of eastern and western fame, whose whole soul was bent upon the deliverance of Jerusalem, veiled his face in shame and sorrow that God's holy city should be left in shame and sorrow, that God's holy city should be left in the Possession of infidels. He would not behold that which he could not redeem, and he descended from the Mount to retire to captivity and a premature grave.

Success is thus not always life measure of greatness. The last apostle of the Sikhs did not live to see his own ends accomplished, but he effectually roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people, and filled them with a lofty although fitful longing for social freedom and national ascendancy, the proper adjuncts of that purity of workshop which had been preached by Nanak. Gobind saw what was yet vital, and he relumed it with Promethean fire. A living spirit possesses the whole Sikh people and the impress of Gobind has not only elevated and altered the constitution of their minds, but has operated materially and given amplitude to their physical frames. The features and external form of a whole people have been modified and a Sikh chief is not more distinguishable by his stately person and free

and manly bearing, than a minister of his faith is by a lofty thoughtfulness of look, which marks the fervour of his soul, and his persuasion of the near presence of the Divinity.



Guru Gobind Singh: Birth of a Nation

*Syed Mohammed Latif**

** History of the Punjab (1889)*

Historians agree in eulogizing the great merits of Guru Govind Singh. In him were united the qualities of a religious leader and a warrior. **He was a lawgiver in the pulpit, a champion in the field, a king on his *masand*, and a *faqir* in the society of the Khalsa. He was the right man for the needs of the time.** Sikhism in the beginning, namely, in Nanak's time, would soon have been extinguished, had its founder adopted the same plan as that recommended by Govind, viz., the free exercise of the sword in defence of religion, the *Adi Granth* of Nanak was confined to instilling into the minds of the Sikhs a spirit of meekness and humility. But a crisis was now at hand. Govind perceived that the times had changed, and was consequently determined to keep pace with them. He saw that the passive conservatism of his ecclesiastical predecessors was not suited to the time and did not tend to the diffusion of the religion. He therefore instituted a new code of law which not only treated of religious subjects, but infused a spirit of valour and emulation into the minds of his followers and inflamed them with zeal for deeds of heroism and bravery in the field. He incorporated in it a narrative of his own exploits in a glowing and even hyperbolic style. He placed the four great sects of the Hindus on the same level, and declared that none was greater than the other, thus adding materially to the strength of his nation. He laid the foundation stone of that vast fabric which the Sikh nation was, not long after, enabled to build on the ruins of the Mohammedan power in the Punjab and emancipated his tribe from foreign thralldom and persecution, giving it the character and rank of a military nation. He instituted the "*Guru Mata*" or "State Council" which met at Amritsar. To this state council, the Sikhs of all denominations were admitted, and on opportunity was given them of expressing their opinions on political matters as a federative republic. His aims were high and the task which he had undertaken was great. Though he died broken-hearted, tired of life, far from the scenes of his exploits, yet the credit is due to him of having founded a political community of no mean order, for he taught a vanquished people how to obtain political ascendancy and national freedom. His persevering endurance in the midst of calamities and disasters was equal to his bravery and valour in the field, and, although he did not live to see his great ends accomplished, yet it is acknowledged on all hands that the conversion of a band of undisciplined Jats (given to rapine and plunder or to agricultural pursuits) into a body of conquerors and a political corporation, was due entirely to the genius of Govind, whose history is closely interwoven with that of the Sikhs as a nation.



Valour of Sikh Soldiers*

Pak. Maj Gen. (Retd.) M. Khan

** Indo-Pak war, 1971.*

"...the main reason of our defeat* was Sikhs fighting facing us. We were helpless to do anything in front of them. Sikhs are very brave and they have a great craving for martyrdom. They fight so fiercely that they are capable of defeating an army many times bigger than theirs.

"....On 3rd December 1971, we fiercely and vigorously attacked the Indian army with our infantry brigade near Husainiwala border. This brigade included Pakistan army's fight or Punjabi regiment together with the Baloch regiment. Within minutes we pushed the Indian army quite far back. Their defence posts fell under our control. The Indian army was retreating back very fast and the Pakistani army was going forward with a great speed. Our army reached near the Kausre Hind post. There was a small regiment of Indian army appointed to defend that post and their soldiers belonged to the Sikh Regiment. A few number of the Sikh regiment stopped our way forward like an iron wall. They loudly greeted us with the ovation of '*Bole-so-Nihal*' and attacked us like blood thirsty hungry lions and hawks. All these soldiers were Sikhs. There was even a dreadful hand-to-hand battle. The sky filled with roars of '*yaa Ali*' and '*Sat-Sri Akaal*'. Even in this hand-to-hand fighting the Sikhs fought so bravely that all our desires, aspirations and dreams were "...In this war. Lt. Col. Gulab Hussain, Baloch Regiment, got killed. With him Major Mohammed Zaef and Captain Arif Alim also died. It was difficult to count the number of soldiers who got killed. We were astonished to see the courage of those handful of Sikh soldiers. When we seized the possession of the three-storey defence post of concrete, the Sikh soldiers went onto the roof and kept on persistently opposing us. The whole night they kept on showering fire on us and continued shouting the loud ovation of '*Sat-Sri-Akaal*'. These Sikhs soldiers kept on the encounter till the next day. Next day the Pakistani tanks surrounded this post and bombed it with guns. Those handful of Sikhs got martyred in the encounter while resisting us, but other Sikh soldiers then destroyed our tanks with the help of their artillery. Fighting with great bravery they kept on marching forward and thus our army lost its foothold."

"....Alas, a handful of Sikhs converted our great victory into a big defeat and shattered our confidence and courage."

"...The same thing happened with us in Dhaka (Bangladesh). In the battle of Jaissur, the Sikhs opposed the Pakistani army so fiercely that our backbone and our foothold was lost. This became the main and important reason of our defeat. **The Sikhs' fancy for martyrdom and mockery with death for the sake of safety and honour of the country, became the sole cause of their victory.**"

The bravery and spirit of sacrifice of Sikhs were respected and honoured by one and all.

