

Ratan Singh Bhangu's "Prachin Panth Prakash"

Firstly, a Story of the first appearance of the Khalsa

[Guru's striving for the *Panth*]

TR. & ANALYSIS BY PROF. GURTEJ SINGH*

PART IV

NOTE: Since *Sri Gur-Panth Prakash* (by Bhangu) is in poetic form, the numbers at the end of sentences are couplet numbers and not reference numbers.

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Story of the king of Delhi starts

(Now your death beckons you)

Couplet: Hear further, the story is as follows: Pathans were kings in Delhi. I will tell how the Guru became annoyed with them and the throne went to the Mughals.¹

Quatrain: When Ibrahim Lodhi was the king, bad times followed in his accession. He arrested accomplished Jogis, Hindu saints and Muslim holy men. Hand mills were given to them to sit and grind.² 'You have misled and looted the world. None amongst has exhibited a miracle to me.' There these Muslims and Hindus (said to Guru Nanak) 'only you have the capability to have us released.'³ 'You are the one who respects the declared conduct. You are the preserver of the religious garb. The entire army is not composed of the equally brave and there is only one lion in the jungle.'⁴

Couplet: The true Guru was pleased and replied, 'you grant this honour to me although you are all capable of defending yourselves. The situation will change for the better tomorrow'.⁵

Quatrain: By making the hand-mills turn themselves for all and by exhibiting the baskets far above their heads (he) saved the honour of all holy men. True Guru's glory increased much because of it.⁶

Couplet: The True Guru revived the elephant driver's dead elephant. The mahout had served the saints, so the Guru was kind to him.⁷

Quatrain: The king became angry with the Guru on hearing of it. 'These are magical tricks of the Hindu. Banish him from the city and ensure that he is not able to enter Delhi again.'⁸ True Guru said 'I will enter again. I will establish a king at Delhi.'

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'Your death is proclaiming that the year will be 1878 (actually 1578).'⁹

Couplet: The respected Guru admonished him. He was as good as dead on the spot. The Chughtai captured Delhi after accepting to follow Baba's Sikhi. 10.

The story of the king Karun (Korah)

('There was a King called Korah' —)

Couplet: On hearing this Murray said to me, 'all doubts are cleared; the discussion with Korah has not been related, there certainly are doubts there.'¹

Quatrain: 'He existed thousands of years ago, when did he hold discussion with the respected elder' (Baba). I then replied to him, 'there is doubt about the discussion.'². 'Baba never himself related that story. The scribe recorded it as a discussion. Further, his successors were worse than him. They further added many more words.'³. 'They never found out the year or the age and never understood the intricacies of the incident. There were discussions with holy men and Siddhas, on that analogy someone wrote the discussion.'⁴.

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'The foolish did not understand the import of a debate or a story. Those who are called foolish friends, they must be counted amongst them. They confused the kernel of a beehive with a worn out moon and an oil press with Allah's eye-shadow bottle.'⁵.

Couplet: 'From the prophet to the Baba a thousand years have elapsed. These people have been citing Korah's forty great units of treasury.'⁶. 'Baba has referred to him saying 'there was one king Korah who collected forty piles in his treasury (forty *ganj*) and still went empty handed'. 7. One saint, an immortal prophet, had met Korah and enlightened him. This discussion was referred to by the foolish ones as one with the Baba.'⁸.

Story of the True Guru's Dynasty

(As a lamp is lit by a lamp)

Couplet: Then Murray asked me, 'reveal another mystery. Tell about the successor Gurus coming after Guru Nanak.'¹.

Quatrain: Then I gave him the details. 'After Guru Nanak came Angad. Should his story be discussed the book will increase endlessly.' 2. 'Next to Angad, Amardas was the Guru who laid claims to a sovereign status. He organised twenty-two provinces under himself and claimed kingship over them.' 3. 'Thereafter, Ramdas who was completely one with him, succeeded. His successors were all Sodhis.'⁴.

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Then came Arjun Guru and Guru Hargobind who took up the sword and killed Painsa Khan.'⁴. 'He assumed both, the mundane and the spiritual leadership. He defeated Shah Jahan. Commanders Lalla Beg and Kambar Beg were killed; thereafter he improved relations with the king.'⁵.

Couplet: 'After that Har Rai and Har Krishan, similarly became the godly Gurus. They granted boons to the Sikhs and the Sikhs served them.'⁶.

Quatrain: 'Then Tegh Bahadur became the Guru. He sacrificed his head for the welfare of others. He performed a great feat in the Dark Age. He saved religion and the Hindu way of life.'⁷. 'The mighty Guru Gobind Singh came thereafter. He increased the worth of the *panth* by granting it sovereignty. Just as a lamp is lighted by another so one Guru further succeeded the other.'⁸.

Couplet: There were ten respected True Gurus. I have told you their names. He asked Bute Shah to write accordingly in his book. '⁹.

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I write the story of king Nauranga's (Aurangzeb's) oppression

(— for the interest of others he sacrificed his head —)

Couplet: Then Murray again said, 'reveal this secret also, how enmity between the Gurus and kings came about?'.¹

Quatrain: Then I revealed to him how they harboured (enmity) for the Gurus. They were cordial sometimes and at other times hostile. They kept this pace never bringing matters to a head. 2. When Nauranga succeeded to kingship, he took fancy to a great sin. On one side was Naurang and on the other Guru Tegh Bahadur. Both of them drew the world's attention.³

Couplet: At the time of ascending the throne, Nauranga had promised to locate and convert every Hindu to Islam in all the twenty-two provinces.⁴

Quatrain: The whole world recognised Tegh Bahadur as a great repository of power. Whosoever was troubled by a pain sought refuge at his feet and became happy.⁵ The whole world is motivated pleasure. He who was terrified would take refuge with him. It became known to the entire world that he who seeks refuge at his feet, at once becomes happy.⁶

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Couplet: The axiom became known throughout the world, that he was a true incarnation. He who takes shelter with him, crosses over suffering.⁷

Quatrain: At that time the Turks exerted greatly, they started identifying Hindus and converting them to Islam. The Hindus became worried and decided upon the following solution: ⁸. 'Let us put the responsibility on the heads of Brahmins. The emperor might listen to then in some measure. Poor harassed Hindus folded their hands and stood before Nauranga.⁹. 'We are all subservient to Brahmins. Bring them first to Islam. We will convert ourselves to their religion.' This is the stratagem that the poor Hindus used.¹⁰. They won respite for themselves and deflected the evil on to the Brahmins. Then they summoned the Brahmins. 'Become Muslims,' they were told.¹¹. 'Come and take from me whatever you want. You will get maintenance at par with Muslims. Otherwise you can emigrate to the beyond. If you remain in my country, I will kill you.'¹².

Couplet: All of them turned back on hearing this as if they had already lost their families. If there were a direction in which to go they would migrate, where could they migrate to from the world? ¹³.

Quatrain: Brahmins were in great difficulty. No solution suggested itself during the day or the night. As an excuse for postponing (the decision), the Brahmins asked for more time.¹⁴.

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They commenced praying and undergoing austerities. They exhausted themselves but the gods did not wake up. Then the backbiters conveyed that the Brahmins are attempting a magical solution.¹⁵

Couplet: On hearing this king Nauranga became furious and made the religion of Hindus disappear from Kashmir.¹⁶

Quatrain: He despatched messengers towards Kashmir. They received the orders and left without delay. Hindus were forcibly rounded up and were all

converted to Islam.¹⁷. Hindus tried hard to save themselves by hiding. All others were converted to Islam. On hearing this, fear paralysed the entire world. Then the Brahmins came to the True Guru.¹⁸.

Couplet: They came from Kanshi, from the Ganges, from Kurukhsetra and other places. All of them gathered together and came to Guru Tegh Bahadur with an appeal.¹⁹.

Quatrain: All the Brahmins who came, pleaded, 'we heard you to be the True Guru and have come to your door. You are a warrior, the clear manifestation of Brahma. You sustain the Brahmin and the cow.'²⁰. 'We are now in a heavily stressful situation. Please save us now. You are the True Guru Nanak the powerful; please preserve the Hindus in Hind (India).'²¹

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King Nauranga has decreed that Hind is to be render seedless of Hindus. Brahmins are to be converted to Islam first of all and the remaining Hindus thereafter.'²². 'Brahmins are their leaders, the general masses will follow them into Islam. This is the plan of Nauranga. Being in sudden extreme fear, we have come to you.'²³. 'If you are the brave True Guru then save the entire Hindu system from drowning. Or you convert first to Islam and we will follow you into it. You are a warrior, pick up your sword. Comfort all the Hindus. You receive a lot of wealth and are a master of countless kinds of power.'²⁵.

Couplet: 'Hindus are ten times the number of Muslims in Hind. Should you take up the double-edged sword to resist they will all come and join you.'²⁶.

Quatrain: 'Guru Nanak's word had not sanctioned the use of sword to the Turks. It had prophesied that when he is killed, the Muslim rule would be destroyed. This was the True Guru's blessing.'²⁷.

Couplet: 'Should it benefit you, I would not delay to offer my head. I will immediately go and pull up its roots from God's Court.'²⁸.

Quatrain: The Brahmins then thought, 'when will he die and when will the roots be pulled out? They will convert us to Islam this year, when will you die and save us?'²⁹. 'A boat is useless after a person has drowned; milk is of no consequence after one has starved to death. Thirst of one, who dies of it, cannot be quenched even if one is bathed in water.'³⁰.

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Couplet: Then the True Guru said to the Brahmins, 'say this and save yourselves: convert the Guru to Islam and then we will all join him.'³¹.

Quatrain: The Brahmins then went and did exactly as the True Guru had instructed them. 'First convert the Guru and the whole world will follow him.'³². This was suggested by the Brahmins and was accepted as sound by the Muslims. Nauranga started pursuing the Guru. He sent officials to search for him.³³. On the other side the True Guru prepared himself as he had committed to the Brahmins. The Guru himself travelled and reached Delhi. He had himself arrested at the home of the Turks.³⁴.

Couplet: Standing at the gate of Delhi, he sent his shawl. It was offered at a confectioner's shop in order to reveal himself. ³⁵.

Quatrain: The word went around that the Guru had been arrested. The person they were looking for was discovered at home. This is how he fell into the hands of Nauranga; this is how the True Guru voluntarily courted arrest.³⁶ After imprisonment, he was tortured much. A Mughal was sent to him. He spoke rudely and threatened torture. 'Convert to Islam,' he ordered.³⁷ 'Come, show a miracle. Give tangible proof of your claim to Guruship; because of which you call yourself the True King and condemn us as a pretender. Either show some strength or else convert to Islam. Show us a miracle and come to an understanding like Ram Rai.'³⁸

Couplet: The true Guru then spoke like this: 'Ram Rai did not do well. He walked off with adulation but has unleashed the devil for those coming after him.'⁴⁰

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Quatrain: 'Since he showed you a miracle, you demand the same from me. To the holy men it sticks like a sin. He has ruined everybody.'⁴¹ 'Everybody does not have the capacity for miracles. You do not release anyone without performance of miracles. I will not exhibit a miracle. It will condemn those coming after me.'⁴² 'Miracles are a calamity for holy persons and for kings. Both are created to obviate catastrophe. Holy men strive to eliminate it.'⁴³

Couplet: 'Miracle is another name for cataclysm. I do not perform them. Should you inflict disaster upon me, God will ask you to answer.'⁴⁴

Quatrain: Then Nauranga became angry, 'you want to live by mere talk? Either you embrace Islam or accept to die.'⁴⁵ 'I will kill you by sealing you up in raw hide and leaving you in the sun. As the sun dries up the leather, you will receive your punishment.'⁴⁶ 'You have exploited the world by proclaiming yourself a Guru. Now how will you not convert to Islam? You maintain distance from us, are the Muslims not as good as the Hindus?'⁴⁷ The True Guru realised, 'my time had come. The time I was looking forward to, has arrived. One may worry about an uncommon happening. No one lives permanently in this world which is but a pathway.'⁴⁸

Couplet: Then the True Guru realised that the time had come. Delay now was improper. The head must now be laid down to assign blame to him.⁴⁹

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Quatrain: Then the True Guru spoke like this: 'you will see that He, whom I worship, is Great. I will show you this miracle that you will not be able to get my head.'⁵⁰ 'The miracle will be that the sword will strike my head but will not cut it. Bring an exceptionally sharp sword, which has always cut on striking.'⁵¹

Couplet: Having said words to that effect, the Guru took bath, came and sat on the low platform. By employing this strategy, he caused his head to be decapitated.⁵²

Quatrain: He gave his life but did not abandon the firm resolve. He preserved his tradition and religion. He saved his body from the raw hide. He assigned the responsibility for beheading him on the Turk.⁵³ Those fools did not discover the strategy, 'he is determined to place the responsibility of his beheading on the State.' This is how the Guru performed the great happening and accepted to die for the welfare of others.⁵⁴

Evidence (of the) Bachittar Natak

Couplet: On the head of the king of Delhi, he broke his mud-vessel and departed to God's place. None who came to the world has performed the act like the one that Tegh Bahadur performed. On Tegh Bahadur's departure the world was plunged into grief, cries of sorrow arose from the earth and those of victory from the land of gods.

Couplet: Such was the conduct of the Guru that it brought shame to the Turk. Nauranga was disturbed, 'I could not understand the scheme.'⁵⁵.

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Quatrain: Nauranga was terror stricken at heart. He stopped atrocities on the Hindus. Matters settled down everywhere as cry for help reached the Master's door.⁵⁶.

Couplet: The cry of distress was heard at the True Court. The Master pondered over it. He expelled the holy men, prophets of the Turk from His Court.⁵⁷.

Quatrain: They were immediately expelled from The Region of Truth and were assigned camp behind the Court. Since then the Delhi Kingdom became progressively weaker, it is since then that the Muslim power begun its decline.⁵⁸.

Story of the Tenth King is written

('Sikhs empowered, the evil doers eradicated')

Couplet: Then from the time of the Tenth King, enmity with Mughals increased. People of mountains struck the initial spark by backbiting and it became a widespread (fire).¹.

Quatrain: Qazis incited the Mughals, Turks and made them forget the solemn promise of Babur. 'When did the Hindu give the Hind?' they said and concocted that it was given by the prophets.². On hearing this Guru Gobind Singh became angry and organised a *panth* for destroying the Mughals. He suffered destruction of all four sons. For the sake of the *panth*, he sacrificed his lineage.³.

Couplet: Then Murray asked me, 'how is it that he did not maintain both descendants and inheritance'? (Reply) 'if lineage is maintained then inheritance would not have come to harm.'⁴.

Quatrain: Accomplished Gorakhnath and Dattatreya did not maintain descent but preferred to preserve the followers.

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Muhammad also sacrificed lineage but maintained (followers) the better part of lineage. ⁵. Murray said, 'how do you blame the Turks if that was the deliberate intention of the True Guru?' I replied to Murray that the responsibility for killing the princes was accepted by them.⁶. The Guru wanted to destroy the Turks and that is why the blame came upon them. The *panth* was organised for this reason, to liberate the Sikhs and to destroy the evil doers. Even the responsibility for his own murder came upon the Turks. His intention was to increase the number of his followers. Lineage or followers can be maintained in exclusion. Even Ram and Krishan did not try to preserve both.⁸.

Couplet: Sri Ram and Krishan preserved their progeny and passed on inheritance out of love in the tradition of kings. The Guru passed inheritance on to the followers as that was the superior tradition.⁹ If one's own progeny is around, one does not cultivate love of the descendants of others. The land which abounds in weeds, in the form of sons, cannot produce food grains.¹⁰

Additional context

(—Khalsa is God Incarnate—)

Couplet: Then Murray said to me, 'explain to me in detail, how the *panth* was created by the True Guru and where that happened.'¹

Quartet: 'The Turks had an extensive empire. Their orders were obeyed in twenty-two state units. In addition they ruled over many islands in the ocean and inclusive of mountains in the north as well as the south.'² 'The entire country was subject to them. How did the Singhs then increase in numbers and influence? How were the subjects able to rise in revolt? Where had their armies gone?'³ 'Did they receive no news of Singhs? Did the Turks have no enmity with the Gurus? Had the Turks and the Singhs patched up? Or did they not consider the *panth* to be a third entity?'⁴

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'Or was there no one wise enough amongst them to realise the implication of (creation of) Singhs? Did the *panth* not lay claims to sovereignty or did the *panth* remained hidden from them?'⁵

Couplet: O Sikhs of the Guru! Hear how I answered him: 'this Panth was not born in secrecy. The *panth* of Singhs cannot remain hidden. Singh *panth* was created for the struggle. Singhs took birth armed with weapons.'⁷ 'Singhs received initiation of the double-edged sword. It was their first meal. Singhs wear the quoits (*charka*), miniature knives on their heads how can they remain concealed like those who wear tiger-claws?'⁸ 'The perfect Guru created the *panth* essentially for the struggle. Sovereignty cannot be obtained without resistance. At the very inception, the Guru invoked the method of warfare for the purpose.'⁹

Couplet: 'Enmity between the Gurus and kings had increased. As Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed his head, his Sikhs would not compromise.'¹⁰

Quartet: 'Guru Tegh Bahadur sacrificed himself at Delhi. He had pulled out the roots of the king of Delhi. Guru Gobind Singh perceived that by now the roots of the Turks had dried up.'¹¹ 'Still the tree would not fall if it was not cut down. Or it would fall only in a strong breeze. He created the storm of the double-edged sword, by this method to strike and fell it.'¹² The True Guru raised his own sword to finish off the political power of Turks. In his heart the True Guru reasoned thus: 'of what use is unbeneficial sovereignty to me?'¹³

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'I occupy the seat of Nanak at whose feet sovereignty resides. What do I care for sovereignty? I will bestow it on my servants.'¹⁴

Couplet: The True Guru gave thought to entrusting political power to the Rajas: 'let me make all the kings of the mountains wield the double-edged sword.'¹⁵

Quatrain: Eventually the True Guru realised that they would never offer to follow him. Why should, greatness be thrust upon them gratis. It will be like kissing someone else's son.¹⁶ They worship stones and would not be wetted by water. They were the confirmed original ungrateful people in the neighbourhood of the Guru. 'They call themselves Rajputs soldiers. They will never accept that the Guru gave them sovereignty. Now let sovereign power rest among the poor Sikhs. They will acknowledge that the Guru has given it to them.'¹⁸.

Couplet: Political power should go to the poor so that the contrast is complete. This is the compassionate house of the Guru known for elevating the deprived.¹⁹.

Quatrain: Seven of the lowest castes and the twelve just above them know nothing of politics, and are addressed as 'rustics and weeds' by the world. They are called, petty traders, peddlers. Ironsmiths and carpenters are the lowest castes. Mercy be on the lowly tailors and wine sellers. Traders in milk, the uncouth, herd grazers, low caste Kamboj and *sudras* count for nothing with anyone, (so also the) water carriers, barbers, Aroras, pot makers, Sainis, gold-smiths, outcastes, leather dressers.

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The bards and Brahmins who lived by begging, actors, salt traders and clay workers; 'on these poor Singhs, I will bestow the sovereign power so that they consider the Guru as their benefactor'. Then the True Guru summoned and exhorted the Sikhs, 'hold weapons and defeat the Turks.'²³.

Couplet: The Sikhs did not agree. They were afraid of the Turks. 'They have a huge army. They are not likely to abdicate political power or to vacate the lands.'²⁴.

Quartet: The Sikhs did not agree to the proposition: 'how can we get rid of the Turks? We are to the Turks what sparrows are to huge hawks or what sheep are to wolves.'²⁵. 'How can you make the deer kill the lion? How could the mountain stream water flow up the mountain. `These Mughals and Pathans are born soldiers and we are mere humble Jats, barbers and carpenters.'²⁶. 'You have located all those who belong to the low castes. They are also disarmed. Call upon the Rajput kings they will serve your purpose better.'²⁷.

Couplet: The true Guru regretted, 'what have these Sikhs done? I desire to entrust political power to the Sikhs. They have refused it.'²⁸.

Quatrain: The respected Guru was all knowing. He discerned the real causes. The (prevailing) mode of initiation, drinking water touched by the Guru's feet, inspires peaceful nature. It does not contain wonderful courage.'²⁹.

Couplet: 'They wear the saintly knotted woollen strings and humble caps on their heads. (A word meaning) slave is a proper name for them. Infinite compassion is a part of their personalities. It does not allow them to hold weapons.'³⁰.

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Quatrain: 'Now the Sikhs must be physically transformed. They must exude power, and inspire fear. They must be given striking names. The form of initiation must sharpen them up.'³¹. This is what the True Guru decided upon and thoughtfully followed it up with action. A knight's appearance, with long head hair and turban tied on head, would look extremely handsome.³². Name 'Singh' was in the tradition of

knights. The respected Guru considered this to be best. In his mind he decided upon initiation of the double-edged sword. 'This will make the Khalsa determined to prevail.'³³. 'This is how they will acquire kingly habits and every individual in every saddle will aspire to kingship. Reeds must be beaten into steel and the initiation of the double-edged sword will make them habitually hold the double-edged sword.'³⁴.

Couplet: 'The Khalsa must imbibe the attributes of God and aspire to attain complete Godliness. They must never accept subservience of another than the One True King.'³⁵.

Quatrain: They must not pay homage to ghosts, phantoms, Gugga or Sakhi Sarvar. They must not wear the saffron mark, the sacred thread or wear their loose waist cloth. They must eat from one vessel as people of one caste.³⁶.

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(End of Part IV)

- To be continued

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