

Ratan Singh Bhangu's "*Prachin Panth Prakash*"

Firstly, a story of the first appearance of the Khalsa

[Guru's striving for the *Panth*]

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PART III

[Odyssey undertaken; the debate with Siddhas]

Quatrain: Baba grew detached and set his mind on foreign travel. He recruited Mardana as companion. He slung the rebec across his shoulder.(51). Wherever it pleased him, he would cause the rebec to be played and would sit and sing the Word (Sabad). Accomplished Hindu holy persons, Muslim holy men, seekers, he would engage all, assess and keep walking on.(52). To whatever countries the Baba went, he would preach and promote adherence to the True Name.

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He put a stop to the worship of holy-men, prophets, gods and goddesses.(53). So also of mythical warriors. He discouraged miracle workers, magical formulae and charts (*tantra* and *mantras*). He neither heard nor recited them and characterised them as snares. He eliminated regard for Gugga, Lanj, ghosts and demons.(54).

Couplet: Wherever he travelled, to the countries of Hindus or those of Muslims, he preached, that what rightfully belongs to others is like 'cow's meat to one and pig's meat to the other.'(55).

Quatrain: On these lines he preached the truth and made both follow it. He read the Koran to Muslims and the Vedas to the Hindus and revealed their truths to both.(56). Once, Baba went to Achal (Batala) where the Siddhas were holding a fair. He held a religious debate with them and won them over although they worked miracles to exhaustion.(57). The 'perfect ones' (Siddhas) went to Balgodai and made pathetic appeals. After the rout, the accomplished ones went and complained, 'one Nanak has arisen as a new 'perfect person' and has humbled us all.'(58).

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On hearing it the Siddhas were arrogant, 'if he comes here, he will return defeated.' Hearing this, the respected Baba went there. The Guru continued the journey after defeating him.(59).

Couplet: At Pattan with Farid and with other holy-men at Multan up to Uchh, he held religious discussions. He left no one's reputation intact.(60.)

Quatrain: How far can we go in counting the likes of them? He went to every place where he heard of a 'perfect person.' After seeing their miracles, he weaned them away from untruth and made them adhere to Truth. (61).

Couplet: Like this he toured the Punjab and won the trust of the people. At places he built beautiful Dharamsalas and acquired adherents to his religion. (62). The entire history of that will not be written here. Those wish to, may go and see the *Puratan Janamsakhi*. (63).

Parable concerning the discussion of Baba with the Dark Age

(Anxiety of the Dark Age)

Couplet: I will look up what has been written earlier about the story of the discussion between the True Guru and the Dark Age (Kalyug).(1).

Quatrain: In part I relate the essence of Guru's word after consulting respected *Granth*. Kalyug desires to fill the hell with sinners, but the True Guru wants to see them taken out of it.(2). The 'dark age' wants to throw the sinners into hell but the respected True Guru wanted to take them out.(2). Kalyug wants to see the sinners drowned whereas Baba wants

them to swim over (to salvation). Baba, does not abandon his innate nature. He wanted the whole world to swim across.(3).

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The Kalyug felt aggrieved, 'Nanak has snatched my court. I want my justice to prevail. Nanak wants his religion to prevail.'(4). 'I and he have no meeting ground.' Kalyug came playing with this idea. He who has the need to hear the story may look up other books. (5).

Now begins the southern account

(The southern Odyssey)

Couplet: Then the Guru started walking in the southern direction on the southern tour. He took along Mardana to read religious stories and to sing the Word.(1).

Quatrain: Wherever he visited places of pilgrimage, temples, he saw them all desecrated by Turks. Temples had been destroyed and Mosques erected in their midst. The images established within had their noses broken.(2). On seeing this, the Baba uttered a revelation in poetic form. This I am quoting in this book. "You have blessed Khorasan with a leader and have terrified Hindustan. No Mughal went blinded and no holy-man met the challenge.' (3).

Inverted Couplet: Kalyug had left no power in any god. All places worshipped by the Hindus had been desecrated. (4).

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Now starts the eastern narration

(Odyssey towards the east)

Couplet: The Baba bore in his mind a thought of tour to the east. Where ever untruth had enveloped truth. He wanted see how it could be revealed. (1).

Quatrain: First of all the True Guru had a bath at the Ganges and visited the places of the learned at Rishikesh. He crossed to Vallabhi land beyond. All the people there had adopted the dress of Jogis.(2). This place was dedicated to the eighty-four accomplished holy-men (Siddhas). Its name was Gorakhmatta. The 'dark age' (Kalyug) held sway there although the Siddhas made intense efforts.(3). There the Baba preached the True Name and Gorakhmatta came to be called Nanakmatta. He saw Badri(nath), Kidar(nath), Jagannath in the Orrissa country and went further.(4).

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Just as asafoetida (*hing*) makes the bag leather scented, the Truth like *hing*, (makes skins scented) but even on search cannot be detected. Sajjan the Thug was known as a great devotee. He used to slit people's throats under the camouflage of devotion.(5).

Couplet: The True Guru went, imparted true knowledge to him and made him a follower. Many such persons were made followers, who can count all of them.(6).

Quatrain: He persuaded the *thugs* to abandon *thugge*. All were diverted from the wrong path and brought them on to the right path again. He made them adherents of Truth, the Word and the truthful tales. 'Places for practise of religion' (*dharamsalas*) were constructed at many places.(7). He brought Sikhs together in congregations (*sangat*) and made them adherents of the True Name. They were so set on the road to compassion and religion; that they would serve others before eating themselves.(8). The same persons would praise the Baba. The Guru praised them. They would affirm, 'he saved us from untruth and has made us adherents of the Sabad and Truth.'(9). He went to the Bengal country, to the Assam (Kamrup) country and crossed over to the country where woman ruled (matriarchic society prevailed). Some say, Shivnabh was said to be a king of some country. The True Guru made many people followers (Sikhs) there. (10).

Couplet: Baba went to those countries where the dishonest dominated. They became Sikhs,

congregations were formed, They came to recognise God.(11).

Quatrain: Kalyug departed from there. I am not writing all but few condensed accounts. Were I to write all incidents, the book would increase, without my finding an end. (12). Then Baba went ahead somewhere and entered the sea.

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He traversed Ceylon. From there he went to many other places of which I do not know.(13). Baba alone knows of what he did. How can I describe his capabilities? How can a son describe father's birth?(14). To that country he certainly went, where misguided, foolish and untruthful ones were many. Wherever he set his foot, he spread religious faith and right conduct.(15). He established places to practise religion there, created acolytes and adherents to compassion. He who came seeking glory was so satisfied by the Guru.16.

Now the Western Story

(Mecca, Medina)

Couplet: Mardana Said to Baba, 'Craving in the mind still remains. We travel around much but have not seen the Kaaba.'(1).

Quatrain: Then the Baba spoke to him and said, 'why did you not say this to me earlier? What was this delay for? I would have shown it to you on your asking.'(2). Then the True Guru made him close the eyes. On opening they stood in Kaaba the place of (pilgrimage) *haj*. Firstly he took him on pilgrimage to Roza (Mecca) and afterwards to other places.(3). Baba camped on the rear side at a place where the road had been sealed. It had been closed for the reason that it would open up on its own, on the approach of a *pir* (holy man).(4). Such was the Guru's impact that it opened up wide even without a key. This astonishing incident was witnessed by the custodians and they realised that a holy man (*pir*) had arrived. (5).

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Couplet: To begin with the custodians assumed that a (Muslim) holy man of *wali*'s rank must have come since the strong door had opened up. 'Let us try to locate him.' (6).

Quatrain: They searched but failed to locate a *wali*. All touched (the gate) but were unable to open it. All of them tried hard collectively but instead the other gates there also remained firmly shut.(7). There with the Baba's spiritual power, it opened up effortlessly although it had remained shut to all. The custodians were much worried. This was a new and unusual happening.(8).

Couplet: The custodians mentally accepted that a Hindu must have come. 'He will perform some magic and go back humbling us all.' (9).

Quatrain: They looked around and saw the Baba. They saw him in a Hindu's garb. Baba was resting with his feet out stretched. They dragged his feet to another direction.(10). The doors in that direction opened up. Those in the direction from which Baba was removed, remained shut. The custodians were extremely angry on seeing this. They threw the Baba out nearby. (11).

Couplet: Then all the doors shut themselves up, though everybody tried hard. There were Hajis from Punjab there. They recognised and introduced (the Guru). (12).

Quatrain: They said, 'He is Nanak the fakir acknowledged as a holy person both by Muslims and Hindus. He recognises Hindus and Muslims on an equal footing. Similarly they equally acknowledge him.'(13). He preaches *hak* under the name of 'truth.' He has made the world traverse the path of truth. He encourages Turks to express devotion in the Islamic manner and the Hindus in the Hindu tradition. He dissuades both from irreligion (*kufar*) and arrogance.'(14).

Inverted Couplet: 'Unless his feet touch, the locked doors will not open. If he expresses

condemnation, there is no knowing what more may happen.’(15).

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Then they thought, ‘no door opened even at our intense bidding. Our holiness thus departed.’ (16).

Quatrain: The custodians resolved like this ‘make him lay his hands on the doors. If the door opens upon his touching it, then he is the religious preceptor and we his acolytes.’(17). ‘If, he cannot open the door, we will kill him. Let us now talk to him with a sweet tongue. Let us test his powers in this manner.’(18). They stood with folded hands and spoke to him in Arabic. The Guru replied to them in the same language. He politely invited them to sit with him. (19). With folded hands they prayed ‘forgive us for the indiscretion committed by us. Please cause the door to open with the touch of your hand, enable the pilgrims to perform the Haj.’(20).

Couplet: The respected True Guru then spoke to Mardana asking him to do that. On receiving the Baba’s permission, he got up and opened the door.(21).

Quatrain: Like this, he took Mardana to see Medina and thereafter the Guru travelled beyond. They crossed all the countries commonly designated as ‘West.’ They went beyond these. (22). They went on ahead and somewhere further entered the ocean. There a meeting with (Poseidon) Varun took place. He only he knows what he does.(23). The Turks call him Khwaja Khizar, this is what they call him in their language. There Mardana became apprehensive and persuaded Baba to return to the native land.(24).

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Now the northern story

(Northern odyssey)

Couplet: The True Guru then heard of big good country to the north of the mountain (range). (The land of) many accomplished persons, saints, gods, goddesses and greatly acknowledged spiritual masters.(1).

Quatrain: To tour that country, to verify the truth or untruth about it, to assess the loss or benefit, the Guru ascended the foothills first and then the ridges. Leaving behind the black he proceeded to the white ranges.(2). I apprehend that if I give a place by place account of all places, the book will increase much. Those who need to hear about these, may hear from other books.(3).

Couplet: Where the Guru reached then, he saw no one who was proper. Everyone there was worshipping gods, goddesses, graves, residences of saints and phallic symbols.(4).

Quatrain: To whichever country the respected Baba went he would promote true preaching and adherence to (God’s) Name. Then this is what I said to Murray, ‘No one has seen the end of Baba’s story.(5). Baba’s story is very profound, perfect beings, saints and Muslim holy men have failed to fully write it. Baba went on many odysseys. I cannot describe them all. (6). Baba travelled across the sky. Baba travelled much on land. Only Baba knows where all he went or those who went with him would know it. (7). Were, I to give all geographic locations, the book would increase much and much will have to be written. Had it not been described elsewhere, I would have done so in a variety of ways. (8). So I present a brief mention. I would have laboured if they did not exist earlier. The stories which have not been related earlier must of necessity be written.(9).

Couplet: Those which were in great detail, I have abridged them. I will reveal those stories which have remained hidden earlier.(10).

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**End of Part III
(To be concluded)**

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