

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 II

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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Couplet: Bowing at the feet of Guru Nanak and invoking Guru Gobind Singh; I write about the origin of the Khalsa, may they help me.¹

Quartet: I now write the story of the Singhs, as it was told by our ancestors. I also heard it from other elders who were many faceted Sikhs.² I relate this according to my understanding. Love inherent in soul and body destroys fear and favour. As I had related it to the English people, I will retain the same general pattern and the context.³

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Dhabai (Count Benoit de Boigne) was a French foreigner, employed by the Marathas as military servant. One brigade was entrusted to him. He remained their servant for many years.⁴ When he became old he longed to go to his native land. He sold all he had and departed. Peru (General Pietre Perron) was his sister's son. The rest he entrusted to him.⁵

Couplet: This Perron increased his strength from one camp to three or four. He settled on the territory he occupied on the Ganges between Agra and Delhi.⁶

Quartet: Marathas became apprehensive and desired to occupy his territory. Perron struck upon a plan. He sold the country to the English and went.⁷ He departed in 1860 (1803 CE) after ruining the Marathas. The British occupied the area. Gloom spread over the house of Marathas.⁸

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Colonel (David Ochterloney) entered Delhi. The Singhs marched and laid siege to Delhi. They loosened the English grip over it.⁹ The English commander was angry at heart as he could not prevail against the Singhs. The English inquired from the King, 'who has assigned territory to the Singhs?'¹⁰

Couplet: 'What enemy have they killed? What job have they accomplished? The king may name the favour.'¹¹

Words of the king of Delhi:

Quartet: The king replied, 'no king has written assignment to them. They have rendered no service, they have killed no enemy.'¹² 'Nizmal Mughal (Nizam-ul-Mulk Mansur Ali) invited Nadir Shah. He had Delhi destroyed. Rouhella Nazibudaullah invited Ahmed Shah and had the power of (Sadashiv) Bhau, the Maratha destroyed.'¹³ 'He became tired and returned on his own. Like this the country remained rebellious against him.' Like this, firing a salvo against the Singhs, the wicked king uttered a falsehood.¹⁴ He characterised the Singhs as 'subjects' and did not reveal that they were the Khalsa Panth.

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He gave no information about the Gurus, or of the struggle that persisted between the Gurus and the kings.¹⁵

Couplet: Retaining spite in his mind, he did not say anything about how the respected Guru Nanak emerged, how his glory increased further and how he had been kind to Babar.¹⁶

Quartet: The wicked person did not relate: how the Mughals tormented Hind, how they bothered the Gurus, or of how the Gurus made a firm resolve and gave their heads but did not give up the determination, how enmity between the kings and the Gurus prevailed and

how the *Panth* was created on the Gurus' orders. To aid the *Panth* the sword was invoked and sons were sacrificed to it.¹⁸ Their own bodies were sacrificed to the sword, to the damnation of the rulers. These strivings of the Gurus for the sake of the *Panth*, were not related by the wicked man.¹⁹

Couplet: The infant sons of the Guru were sinless and guiltless. He did not relate their plight. Innocent children were arrested and their heads were cut off.²⁰

Quartet: Then Bahadur Shah pleased the Guru. He showed his strength and helped him to become the king. Eventually Banda was sent who snatched it from him. Sovereignty devolved upon the true (essence of) Khalsa.²¹

Couplet: He stated nothing about the Gurus, about the *Panth*, or about the many years of intense and protracted struggle between the Kings and the saintly Gurus.²²

Inverted couplet: Scalps of the Sikhs were removed and they were hacked to pieces joint by joint. Stakes were erected in every village. That is how the Mughals lost their strength.²³

Quartet: He did not relate the entire story of Nadir. He had sacked and massacred Delhi. He himself was plundered by the Singhs on his way to Kabul and Kandhar.²⁴

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Then Ahmed Shah Abdali settled occupying Lahore and also entire Delhi and Agra. He was ousted by the Singhs. The Singhs occupied his province.²⁵

Couplet: His son Taimur was forced to retreat on the road littered with dead bodies. He departed after cautioning his descendants never to come this way again.²⁶

Quartet: Then came his grandsons who were beaten back by the Khalsa. Ever since its inception, the *Panth* has been struggling to resist, the wicked king spoke of them as his subjects.²⁷

Couplet: A wicked person will not give up wickedness as a snake does not give up its venom. Even if often treated to milk, it does not refrain from biting.²⁸

Quartet: He did not relate a single fact. He told deliberate lies on purpose. The general wrote down whatever he was told without sifting falsehood from truth. Hindus and Muslims were enemies right from the beginning due to original religious contentions. If telling a lie could kill an enemy, a Muslim would not avoid telling it against the Hindus.³⁰

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Couplet: Soak the arm in oil and stick sesame seeds (*sesamum orientale*) to it, violate as many oaths and kill the Hindus, these are the Prophet's instructions to them.³¹ Rattan Singh has written properly whatever he had heard. Listen attentively, O Saints, as I elaborate it further.³²

Now is written the context of the second story

['how the Khalsa appeared'..]

Couplet: The king said, that none had bestowed sovereignty upon them, but that 'they are my subjects who became rebellious after the invasions of Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah.'¹

Quartet: The English then recorded, as it such. No one passed on the right to rule to the Singhs. They do not have a document, no one has bestowed sovereignty upon them.² As the Delhi king told them they wrote in a book, compiled hurriedly on instructions. 'If the Sikhs have no document and no one has bestowed the right to rule on them, how can subjects be allowed to remain in rebellion? They will be divested of the territory'. When the English committed this to writing, the wicked Mughal was filled with happiness.⁴

Couplet: Why should not the Turk be happy, why should he refrain from falsehood, Turks and Hindus have always been (locked) in religious conflict.⁵

Quartet: Several years went by like this. Ranjit Singh troubled the people. They brought over the English. They were established at Ludhiana.⁶

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Couplet: Eighteen hundred years and sixty-four (1807 CE) more had passed. They expelled Ranjit Singh's forces from this to the other side (of the Satluj).⁷

Inverted couplet: It was solemnly settled that, 'we will not look (covet territory) beyond the Satluj.' To assure the people it was written that this country was a protectorate.⁸ Couplet: Ochterloney, the military commander, remembered what had transpired. When he came and met the Singhs at Ludhiana, he asked the same question.⁹ [Quartet] A thought about the information given by the king, occurred to the general. The general was assisted by Captain Murray, whom everyone knows.¹⁰ The general called him, seated him near and instructed him thoroughly. 'Write about the origin of the Singhs, of how the Khalsa first become sovereign.'¹¹ 'Are the matters truly as the king of Delhi had related or has the Mughal deceived us?'

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'Hindus and Turks have nothing in common, why would the Muslim tell the truth?'¹² 'How did these Jats kill the king's governors and why did the king lose to his subjects? The Mughals possessed twenty-two provinces and many islands in the ocean.'¹³ 'The entire Hind was with them. What calamity did destroy them? Subjects are sheep and rulers are lions, rulers hawks and the subjects are quails.'¹⁴ *Couplet*: 'How did the sheep kill the lion or how did the quail kill the hawk? The defeat of rulers at the hands of the subjects is a miraculous happening.'¹⁵ 'Are they indeed miraculously empowered or is it a *Panth* of someone powerful? Write about all this accurately, so that the ultimate truth is known'.¹⁶ Murray said to the general as the king of Delhi had stated. 'Let the same version may be written and sent to the king London.'¹⁷

Quartet: The English general was a learned person. He did not accept Murray's advice. 'If the king has related falsehood, it will lead to my being dubbed a liar.'¹⁸ He also took note of the other aspect. He was older and more cautious. That general had observed the enmity prevailing between the Singhs and the kings.¹⁹ If what the king said is true, then all the people will support it. If the king has uttered falsehood, then truth must be sifted from falsehood.²⁰ He asked, 'locate some old manuscript. Like this I must be convinced. Let a writing in which there is not even a grain of untruth, be sent to London.'²¹

Couplet: 'Let the year-wise account of occupation of territory by the Singhs be compiled after evaluating the account of their battles and the general condition of the country.'²²

Quartet: Murray made efforts on obtaining instructions. He summoned Maulvi Bute Shah and asked him to write a book depicting the origin of Singhs.²³ 'Write for me as it actually happened do not adulterate it with any untruth.'

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'The book will go to the king at London and will be published in other continents also.'²⁴

Couplet: After so instructing him and explaining every thing to Bute Shah, he asked him to write the true story of the progress of the Singhs.²⁵

Quatrain: I had gone to that gathering and became worried on hearing the discussion. This Maulvi is a Muslim, he will not relate the glory of the Sikhs.

²⁶ I discussed it over with Murray and requested him to seek my opinion on his writing. On seeing it his remark was 'he has not stated the whole Khalsa story'.²⁷

Couplet: So Murray became my friend. He sent for me again and requested, 'write an account of the origin of the Khalsa, as it happened.'²⁸

Quatrain: Then I said, 'hear this Captain Murray, you are relying on a Muslim. Enmity prevails between the Turks and Hindus right from the beginning. It is in the nature of a protracted ongoing feud.'²⁹ 'Turks censure the Hindus and the Hindus constantly condemn

the Turks. Captain Murray replied, 'we, the English, are clever and knowledgeable.'³⁰ 'Just as a swan can separate water from milk, we can sift the truth from falsehood. You may write the truth without hesitation. If it is untrue, we do not write it.'³¹ 'When the English people go to alien lands, they compose and bring back their entire history. Whatever of it is particularly accurate, that alone is sent to the king of London'.³²

Couplet: Then Murray said to me, 'just tell me this, how did the Singhs acquire territory and which king bestowed it upon them?'³³

Quatrain: My reply to him was like this, 'kingship was bestowed upon the Singhs by the True King'. 'Who is the True King', asked Murray. I said, 'King Nanak of course'.³⁴

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Murray said, 'Nanak was a fakir, what had he to do with procedures of sovereignty?' I replied, 'he was the king of kings, the true sovereign in the mundane as well as the spiritual world.'³⁵ 'He had caused many fakirs to become kings. He elevated several fakirs to higher spiritual status. He himself remained unaffected by it all. This is how he became the king of kings.'³⁶ 'Those who touched the feet of King Nanak, became so powerful, that their sparrows killed hawks and their goat-kids did tear up the lions.'³⁷

Couplet: 'Those who had a hundred thousand cavalry, and thousands of heavy guns, they who sat on thrones exercising sovereignty, were destroyed by the servants of Nanak.'³⁸. 'Those, whom his servants condemned by striking with a cannabis-waste ball in absentia, could not stand up to them and were immediately destroyed'.³⁹

Thirty-two line verse: 'Dear (reader), Murray then said to me the words, 'describe the method by which Nanak attained sovereignty'. Hear O! saints, friends and brothers, this is what I told him: God Himself summoned him and persuaded him saying, 'assume sovereignty, through you alone will I exercise power,' embraced him and said, 'you must now go, be named Nanak, be born amongst the Bedi social group. Protect those who seek refuge in you and destroy the wicked with a vengeance'.⁴⁰

Quatrain: Murray said, 'relate to me the circumstances in which God invested Nanak with sovereign power'. Hear accomplished saints, as I had replied to him: great strife arose in the dark-age (Kalyug), ir-religiousness had increased, and religion had declined. Lured by lucre, the kings had lightly abandoned all kingly duties.'⁴²

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Those who had come into the world as originators of 'paths,' even their followers had wavered from the path. Money and attachment had beguiled them all. Losing sight of broader spirituality, they sought to benefit only their own clans.⁴³

A couplet from the respected holy mouth

'Kalyug became the knife wielded by the kings turned butchers. Religion acquired wings and flew away. The dark night of untruth descended. The moon of truth was nowhere rising.'

Writing the life story of the one upon whom the Spirit of God First descended ('those amongst whom Nanak was born')

Couplet: Then Murray again said, 'tell me everything about the year, the era, the country and the place.'¹

Statement of Rattan Singh:

Quatrain: Listen! the year was 1526 of king Bikramajit (1469 CE) and the place was Talwandi of Rai Bular. It is near Lahore, in the direction of Kasur.² The clan was of Khatri called Bedis, into this clan he had descended. That clan into which Nanak took birth was deeply religious.³ An appropriate occasion had arisen in the Age of Truth the 'half-man-half-lion incarnation' had taken birth in this clan. In the Second Eon when the time came Rama was born in the same clan. ⁴ In the Third Eon, Krishna was born to them on

such an occasion. In the same process, this clan was allotted for Nanak's birth. His father's name was Kaludas and Tripta was his mother's.⁵

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Couplet: Religiously, they were amply endowed but were deficient in wealth. In part because of the clan and because of their meritorious deeds, he came and took birth.⁶ At an auspicious time, under the auspicious constellation, in the auspicious house of the twelfth astrological segment, on an auspicious lucky occasion (he was born).⁷ On his birth, the glory of his parents was enhanced much. The earth itself yielded nine kinds of wealth along with all kind of occult powers and accomplishments.⁸

Quatrain: When the earth was dug up to bury the placenta there the wealth was discovered. Happiness of the parents increased much. Particularly knowledgeable astrologer was invited to make predictions.⁹

Couplet: Astrologer wrote out the birth-chart feeling much gratification at heart. On seeing the beauty of the child, he smiled profusely again and again.¹⁰

Quatrain: The birth chart was written out by him. It was explained at length to mother and father. The astrologer said, 'let him be revered. A perfect man has arrived. Glory appears to attend his person. He is the blemish-less person'. He drew out and placed 'N' before them as first letter, from the word Nehkalank (blemish-less). He was named Nanak after Nehkalank.^{11,12} Anyone who came to see him felt happy and was greatly charmed. He would long to see him many times and would not be satiated with looking at him.¹³

Couplet: Some said say he was a wielder of miraculous powers, some said he was an incarnation. Yet others asserted he would be a king under the imperial umbrella.¹⁴

Couplet: Rich felt like offering wealth to him and the poor found wealth in serving him.

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Some tested him by rendering service. They made wishes and received boons and their fulfilment.¹⁵ As the Guru revealed steady growth, people came to see him in every waxing phase. He would tell them what was in their minds and would tell them of the unknowable and unfathomable.¹⁶ Kalu loved him as a son and wished he would take over work. He went wherever he was sent and would never disobey his father.¹⁷ He would always utter (true name) **Satnam** and would ever talk of God, the Doer. This he preached to all the children and made them call upon the True Final Cause.¹⁸

Couplet: He made a stringed musical instrument out of reeds and handed it over to Mardana. They would sit playing and singing the word with all the children in choir.¹⁹

Quatrain: Should all the childhood stories be related, the book will increase endlessly. So I must exercise restraint and relate only the seminal ones.²⁰ (I relate) how he played with children, of how he ruined the crop and made it whole again and of how Balwand Rai Bular saw the Baba when a cobra was casting the shade of its hood over his face.²¹ Many other miraculous happenings took place. The Rai heard of some and some he saw with his eyes. Because of them Rai's heart was captivated. He sent for him and honoured him.²²

Couplet: Balwand invited him and honoured him, offering his son as playmate. Inside the harem and outside it Nanak ran around and played.²³

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Inverted Couplet: Just as a touch of the philosopher's stone turns iron into gold, Rai became elevated. Murray was told that the Rai found a ministerial post at Delhi.²⁴

Quatrain: When Babaji came of age, he was sent at the teacher's door to study. I told Murray the story of how the Baba instead imparted instructions to the teacher.²⁵ He exhibited many other miraculous happenings. Describing them all here would make the book too large. When Baba was married, he had two sons. He himself gave them names.²⁶

Kalu wanted him to run the shop to earn much and accumulate a large wealth. Baba would not tread that path and was much pestered by mother and father. Baba was detached and would sing *sabads* holding the rebec. He and Mardana thus remained content and would not indulge in sale and purchase.²⁸

[Management of Stores and entry into the Vein]

Couplet: On hearing that he is irresponsible, Jairam came. He was the husband of the True Guru's sister and lived at Sultanpur.²⁹

Quatrain: One of the nobles of the empire lived at Sultanpur. He was called Daulat Khan. He (Jairam) sponsored Nanak with the governor, who entrusted the granaries to him.³⁰ Should all stories of that be told, many books will have to be looked up. He who needs to know these, can refer to other religious books. ³¹ I will write their essence as I related to Murray. At that place the Baba became detached at heart. He became detached and put his heart into divinity. Always accompanied by a servant, he would go every day to the river to bathe. There he dived into the river and did not come out for several hours. ³³

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Couplet: The servant lost hope and started shouting, saying, 'he is drowned.' On hearing it Daulat Khan rushed there. ³⁴

Quatrain: On reaching there he caused nets to be cast. He would have been located had he been there. People suggested, 'he might have gone across.' He had search conducted by on the other side.³⁵ Tracers and soothsayers failed to locate him. People accepted, that he has 'been washed away afar.' Traditional mourning commenced at Jairam's house and Daulat Khan was filled with grief.³⁶ One or two days were spent like that. On the third day the Guru emerged. He was carrying the same cloth on his shoulder and was wearing (an unstitched cloth) *dhoti* around his waist. He stood like a scarecrow and would not speak. ³⁷ News spread and the people came. They surrounded him and wanted to talk to him. On hearing of it, Jairam at once rushed there and Daulat Khan was wonderstruck.³⁸

Couplet: Daulat Khan went there and brought him along. The Baba showed no emotion, the Khan tried to be affectionate.

³⁹

Quatrain: Then Daulat invited medical persons lest Nanak be tormented by illness. Baba satisfied the medicine person, much to the relief of Daulat.⁴⁰ Islamic priests and jurists argued with Baba, they accused him of being a magician resorting to blocking people's vision. Daulat did not believe what they said. He came to have faith in Baba.⁴¹ 'He is completely a divine incarnation.' He became a follower along with his family. Hindus and Turks (Muslims) were equal for Baba that is how they had turned acolytes.⁴² He would instruct both into Truth and would forbid both from inflicting cruelty. As the fame of his power spread, many people from afar came to him on hearing of it. ⁴³

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Couplet: Daulat had two wives both were without sons. They performed service and both begot two lion-like sons each.⁴⁴

Quatrain: They were called Ghazi Khan, Gajmast Khan, Mir Khan and Zol Khan. These women initiated much discussion by saying that the Baba 'has given the pairs to us.'⁴⁵

Couplet: Baba had it in mind to remain unknown in the world as yet. But he became known throughout the world. It woke up to thought of him.⁴⁶

Quatrain: Sun once arisen, cannot remain hidden, even if a hundred thousand clouds want to cover it. As Baba came to be discussed, his fame spread far and wide in short time.⁴⁷ A person whom cold has overpowered, why will he not desire to go towards fire? Multitudes were much troubled. On looking at him they felt comforted.⁴⁸ Saints and holy-men of Hindu

and Muslims who still had some spark in them, on hearing of the surprising happening, came to investigate. They looked, probed and went back subdued.⁴⁹

Couplet: He would honour those seeking honour and would inform those seeking knowledge. With whatever desire the seekers came, he satisfied them.⁵⁰

[To be continued]

