

# 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 VI

\* **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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#### The incident at Anandpur

('Masands put to the sword')

Quatrain: Now listen to the story of Anandpur. It remained to be told and is now tending that way. If I write everything about how enmity with the hill people developed, the book will become voluminous.<sup>1</sup> The *Gurbilas* has said much about it. It is proper to state the portion neglected by it. So I will not elaborate much. Too much elaboration will make the book heavy.<sup>2</sup> He who desires to hear more can consult the *Gurbilas*. I will state a seminal part of that also, so as to connect what has been related to what is yet to come.<sup>3</sup>

Couplet: When the True Guru took up the sword as a solution to making the *panth* more powerful, he cultivated affection of the Khalsa to the neglect of all others.<sup>4</sup>

Quatrain: The True Guru developed great affection for the Khalsa. The Guru gave whatever was best to the *panth*. Wherever there were Masands and Mewras (Guru's representatives), in their places the True Guru despatched the Singhs.<sup>5</sup>

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At the Gurdwaras and in his presence, he entrusted all communication, supplication to the Khalsa. He entrusted all estate, treasury and public relations, to the Khalsa.<sup>6</sup> Errand-runners (*mewras*) and the local heads of congregations (*masands*) were instructed to either become Singhs or shed all respectability and even life. The *masands* resented this, as a dagger struck at heart.<sup>7</sup> They went and complained to mother that the Guru had become disoriented. He was scattering everything valuable among the Singhs, desiring that they somehow come to possess the country.<sup>8</sup> 'How can lowly Jats, be made kings? He wants sheep to tear up lions. If sparrows can kill hawks, then political power can come to the lowly Jats.'<sup>9</sup>

Couplet: 'If on hearing this, the kings send their armies, the Guru will find no place to hide and all will be arrested and killed'.<sup>10</sup>

Quatrain: The mother accepted, 'what you have said is true.' She summoned all the financial advisors and managers and all stated that the Guru had become possessed.<sup>11</sup> Ever since he has invoked the sword, it has reacted angrily. He is supporting enmity with kings. They will lay siege and kill everybody.<sup>12</sup> Now all gathered to find a solution. Jujhar Singh was designated to succeed him. The True Guru became angry on hearing this and said, 'a sort of madness had affected them all.'<sup>13</sup> When the 'wind' struck the *masands*, they set fire to the *Guru Granth*. They had a cenotaph built on that spot. They pledged villages to the place.<sup>14</sup>

Couplet: They weaned away a large number of Guru's followers into new allegiance to this place. On hearing such things, the *masands* were eliminated.<sup>15</sup>

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Quatrain: The True Guru's order to the Khalsa was, 'put the *masands* to the sword.' Some were eliminated with weapons, some by making them pull the plough, some were dragged to death and some others were fried in oil.<sup>16</sup>

Couplet: If I write other things, the book will become bigger. Those who want to satisfy themselves may look up the *Gurbilas*.<sup>17</sup>

### **The battle of Anandpur**

(—‘we will not let Sikhi be lost’— )

Couplet: Mata Gujri also then forbade the True Guru ‘why have you entrusted everything to the *panth* of the Khalsa’?

Quatrain: ‘These quarrelsome people fight much. We will bear responsibility for their bad deeds. The ones you call your very own Khalsa in adversity they will not stand by you.’<sup>12</sup> ‘You have discarded those born to you. These sons of others will be of no use’. Mother’s words were not heeded to. Then the True Guru spoke,<sup>3</sup> ‘Hear mother Gujri, on listening to the people’s complaints, you are uttering denigration of the *panth*. This will reflect on your house. You have been misled by back-biters, pay no heed to calumny against the *panth*.’<sup>4</sup>

Couplet: Then the True Guru ordered the respected Khalsa like this: ‘entertain no fear of anyone. Grab food wherever you find it.’<sup>5</sup>

Quatrain: Many times the Singhs raided the permitted territory like Kamlot and other areas. They subdued the villages of Kamlot, Jhakkhi and harassed the Doon hill areas.<sup>6</sup> People of the mountains came and initiated war. The Singhs forced the kings to retreat. They were embarrassed and went back home. The Singhs levied taxes in their territory.<sup>7</sup>

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The king of Kahlur, taking along other people of the mountains, went to Delhi to complain. These were the kings of the twenty-two ridges among them were the seven of Jalandhar ridges.<sup>8</sup> These twenty-two kings had invaded Anandpur, initiated battle, lost it and had retreated. All those kings were embarrassed. They fell in arrears in respect of tribute to the King of Delhi.<sup>9</sup> They said, ‘either you help us or we pay taxes to them. They have recruited a strong army and much money is flowing to them.’<sup>10</sup> ‘He calls himself the Guru of all Hind and has the life and death power over the kings. He calls himself the True King and designates you ‘a pretender.’<sup>11</sup> ‘He has wealth in millions and many alchemists live in his camp.’ Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur represented. King Nauranga became worried on hearing it.<sup>12</sup> ‘He may attack me some day. This unripe evil must be suppressed now.’

Couplet: The king of Delhi maintained a million strong army at the Kabul mountain pass. He wrote an order for it to fall rapidly upon the Guru.<sup>14</sup>

Quatrain: From all four sides and in a great hurry the army converged. Ordered late, it came running fast. There were Sikhs with them. They conveyed the information that they picked up in conversation.<sup>15</sup> On hearing this, an exodus took place at Anandpur. The fleeing people couldn’t find a street to leave. True Guru tried hard to pacify them. ‘the True Guru (God) will come and help.’<sup>16</sup> People ran without stopping to enquire. They did not stay at the respected Guru’s bidding. The True Guru said, ‘be brave. God will come to our help’.<sup>17</sup> Cry from all sides was, ‘it is coming, it is coming’, no strong measures could be taken. Twenty-two Dogra kings rushed and so also the twenty-two from Jalandhar.<sup>18</sup>

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Couplet: The forces from Sarhind and the Malerkotla blocked the Ropar road. Doaba was blocked by forces from Lahore and the hill forces blocked the mountains.<sup>19</sup>

Quatrain: They laid a siege on all four sides and did not let in either food or fodder. It was a great hardship for the people. The people then decided to run away.<sup>20</sup> Then the True Guru spoke thus to the people, ‘even if you run away you will not save yourselves. God will find a way of eliminating you. It may even rain fire.’<sup>21</sup> ‘We have four thousand Singhs with us and even four lakhs cannot attack us. Their lives will be dear to them. We can attack on the way out.’<sup>22</sup> The people then requested the mother (Mata) to intervene, ‘make up with the rajas.’

On hearing this, the True Guru replied, 'hill rajas are treacherous people, they will only loot and kill you'.<sup>23</sup>

Couplet: 'Treachery is their trait from the beginning of time, do not rely upon them. They will arrest everyone and put them in prison'.<sup>24</sup>

Quatrain: Mother replied, 'they swear by their stone gods, they will not be treacherous towards us.' The True Guru said, 'you test them using things of no value as decoy'.<sup>25</sup> Broken and valueless articles were prepared to test their behaviour. Transport convoy was loaded and despatched. 'Treasure has been despatched', the Guru publicised.<sup>26</sup> The rajas heard this rumour. They attacked and pillaged everything. The tricksters were thus exposed by a trick. They abandoned their religious vows for the sake of worn out slippers. They snatched old mattresses and shoes. They were ashamed to find that money eluded them. Even then the mother did not agree and said, 'I will be marching off at dawn'.<sup>28</sup>

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The people had persuaded the mother and she was firm on leaving. People had persuaded the mother to say. 'I will be in the forefront of those leaving'.<sup>29</sup> The True Guru heard this and knew within him that none of the runaways would survive. 'The world will raise accusing fingers at me'.<sup>30</sup> 'What could be done the Guru did not agree! On all four sides there were enough escape roots.' So the True Guru decided, 'let them give it in writing'.<sup>31</sup>

Couplet: Give this to me in writing, 'The True Guru persuaded us much, repeated it to tiring, but we did not accept his advice'.<sup>32</sup>

Quatrain: 'And secondly, write this, that you do not accept me as your Guru and neither do you consider yourselves as my Sikhs.' The people wrote down exactly as the Guru had demanded.<sup>33</sup> Servants, employees and attendants, the whole world of them turned their backs on him. Such was the illusion created by the True Guru that the people faced the worst of times.<sup>34</sup> People repudiated their solemn commitments. Such was the effect of bad time. More the True Guru asked them to be patient, the more readily they ran away. (35).

Couplet: When the True Guru asked the Singhs to write it, the respected Khalsa did not write it. 'By our own orders, we will not destroy the nation'.<sup>36</sup>

Quatrain: 'We are the very storehouse of commitment', said the Khalsa, 'we will not give up commitment for the sake of life. Even to save our lives a hundred times we will not throw away Sikhi'.<sup>37</sup> 'Where you order us to stay, there we will stand as long as we breathe, without even lifting a foot.' The Singhs appeared endearing to the respected True Guru. Moved to happiness the Guru spoke: <sup>38</sup> 'Blessed is the Khalsa and blessed is the *panth* of the young. They have preserved the seed of Sikhi, deeming it to be more valuable.' Then the Khalsa asked him, 'please point to us where the siege is the thickest'.<sup>39</sup> Then the True Guru ordered, 'you be wherever I am'. The Khalsa accepted the instructions. On hearing this, the people broke into a disorderly retreat.

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Couplet: Taking all his sons with him he prepared himself. At the time of sunset he marched from Anandpur in the direction of Ropar.<sup>41</sup>

Quatrain: Of the well-known ones, the dearest ones of the Guru, some Singhs were asked to march at the rear. Similarly some were asked to march in front. Some were placed on the flanks.<sup>42</sup> To help the families (non-combatants), the True Guru concealed them in the middle of it and despatched them. The hill people attacked them from behind but the Singhs repulsed them. <sup>43</sup> In front, water rose in the Sarsa rivulet, disaster lurked in both directions. The people lost patience. Some went elsewhere and the non-combatants somewhere else.<sup>44</sup> He who turned back was looted by the hill people. Those of them in front, who

entered the river were swept off by the current and lost.<sup>45</sup>

Couplets: Water subsided at day-break and the river became passable. They lost patience and made a haphazard entry.<sup>46</sup> Only two sons remained with the True Guru. It so happened that the younger ones went with the elder (Guru's) mother.<sup>47</sup>

Quatrain: It was a time of extreme difficulty for everyone. They went in several directions. The situation there was the same as had had been faced by Sri Krishan.<sup>48</sup>

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As after the defeat at the hands of Kalyavan, the god had to take shelter in the cave of Muchkand. Pahari armies attacked in great numbers. Every foursome was separated.<sup>49</sup> Gunpowder and guns became wet and failed to fire. Nobody was left with shoes on his feet. Such was the calamity which struck everyone.<sup>50</sup> The rivulet flowing in front drowned whatever was left. In front lay Ropar, stronghold of the Turks where many Pathans had been killed.<sup>51</sup> Most of them had joined the True Guru's service and had received countless gifts from him including horses and fine clothes. They became faithless and served no purpose.<sup>52</sup>

Couplet: The True Guru had bestowed expensive dresses on them. In their skirmishes with the hill people, the Guru had helped them.<sup>53</sup>

Quatrain: The Guru went to their houses. On being called upon, they turned their faces away. These people had built a strong mansion. The Guru wanted to give a fight from within it.<sup>54</sup> They shut the doors and did not let him enter. The river swept away this very mansion. All the Pathans and Lodhis became faithless. The True Guru had said that their houses would not remain (intact).<sup>55</sup> Then the Guru turned towards Kotla (Nihang Khan). They readily opened their doors for inspection. The Guru did not like it. It was not a mansion suitable for giving a battle.<sup>56</sup> The True Guru went further and looked in the distance. He saw minarets on high ground at Chamkaur. The True Guru rode in that direction. He reached and saw a sprawling mansion.<sup>57</sup>

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(End of Part VI)  
- To be continued

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### **Martyrdom of the elder princes – Battle of Chamkaur**

Couplet: The owner was apprehended from outside, he caused the doors of the mansion to be opened. Some Singhs entered along with the Guru, both the princes were amongst them.<sup>1</sup>

Quatrain: The Malerkotla forces came and laid siege. There was no grain in there. They had no strategy of warfare. The entire army stormed the walls.<sup>2</sup> The Khalsa met the attack with those hand held weapons that still remained with them. Pathans were beaten and repulsed. In the meanwhile Nahar Khan attacked.<sup>3</sup> He came enquiring, 'is there Guru somewhere? Point him out to me and I will reach there.' The True Guru then spoke to him and said, 'defend yourself; the arrow is coming in your direction.'<sup>4</sup> The arrow pierced his armour and struck him in the chest going right through him. He swung and fell to the ground. Some of his men carried away his body.<sup>5</sup>

Couplet: Majority of those who had come with Nahar Khan were killed, some by the True Guru, some by the Khalsa and the rest by the blows of the princes.<sup>6</sup>

Quatrain: His brother Khwaza Khizar came to know the news. He was well known as a brave person. He came like an intoxicated elephant but his face turned yellow on seeing the dead body.<sup>7</sup> He saw the True Guru in the image of a lion. He shamefully hid his head behind a wall. The True Guru challenged him much, 'let me and you fight it out.'<sup>8</sup>

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On seeing the True Guru's arrows, he was overcome by fear. He himself remained sitting behind the wall. He ordered others to attack.<sup>9</sup> Then Wazir Khan suddenly came there. He also came and joined battle. Thereafter the hill people came there. They also exerted themselves much.<sup>10</sup>

Couplet: All became tired of exertion but could not breach the place. They laid siege and settled down after suffering many casualties.<sup>11</sup>

Quatrain: Now, I relate the story of those inside. There were no grains anywhere inside. The wall itself was not well built and had no ramparts<sup>12</sup>, behind which the defenders could save their heads and freely wield their weapons. There was not even a grain to roast. Had it been there, where was the time to eat?<sup>13</sup> Gunpowder and lead were exhausted and not an arrow was left in the quivers. No water could be found for the injured. Such was the difficulty that they faced.<sup>14</sup> Their arms became tired of wielding weapons. The bodies became tired. There was no strength left in them. Still the Singhs did not relent. They ran to wherever the attack was more determined.<sup>15</sup>

Couplet: Then the True Guru told the Singhs, 'lead and gunpowder are exhausted. Hold your swords and walk briskly around the mansion.'<sup>16</sup>

Quatrain: The Singhs agreed to it. They circumambulated the mansion in pairs. Such was the strategy adopted there that more would come when the first died.<sup>17</sup> Many Singhs met death thus sallying forth. The true Guru noticed that only few more were left. He then said, 'do not now venture out. Holding your swords, stand near the wall.'<sup>18</sup> The Turks realised that the gunpowder and lead had finished inside the building. All of them from all sides attacked together making loud noises.<sup>19</sup>

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Some were on foot and others were mounted, dust arose and fog ensued. They placed ladders and grabbed the wall. The Singhs cut off their hands.<sup>20</sup>

Couplet: As they climbed from all sides and reached the wall with their hands, the Singh cut their hands off. Their strategy did not pay and they fell to the ground.<sup>21</sup>

Quatrain: They had one or two shots each. They fired them when they came too near. They fell the Turks singly and in twos and threes. Many bodies of the Turks piled up there. When such pandemonium was prevailing there, Prince Jujhar Singh made a decision in his mind. Such life is not worth living, where father dies fighting and the son lives on.<sup>23</sup> Abhmanyu died while his father Arjun was living and so also Meghnath died while Ravan lived. This is the known tradition of knights that we renounce the breath within the sight of fathers.<sup>24</sup> He grabbed the sword and sallied out. He killed and fell whosoever resisted him. That side was devastated. It appeared to the enemy that an entire army had come and attacked.<sup>25</sup>

Couplet: Amidst the dust and low visibility prevailing there, no distinction between enemy and friend was possible. There was much confusion which caused killing own forces.<sup>26</sup> After killing many Turks there, respected Jujhar Singh attained martyrdom. After him came Zorawar Singh, he was seen striking like a lion.<sup>27</sup>

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Quatrain: On seeing the brother he could not bear the grief. Holding the double-edged sword rushed to follow him. He went and employed weapons like his brother, dealing death to those who resisted.<sup>28</sup> Some he touched with his sword and some with the shield. Whosoever was touched was cut up. None stood against him. They were killed with guns.<sup>29</sup> Like this both the brothers attained martyrdom there against the Pathans. This is what happened to both the children of the Guru in the year 1762 (1705 CE).<sup>30</sup>

**More about the situation at Chamkaur**

(....I returned my sons)

Couplet: Fighting thus continued until the time of sunset arrived. The leaders retreated to the camps after setting up watch posts all around.<sup>1</sup>

Quatrain: They arranged intense vigil all around with man standing next to man. More with more men were posted. In between them, none could penetrate at night.<sup>2</sup> One would surmise, 'the Guru will not be contained' and then again, 'how will he fly off?' In all four directions are his would be captors. A hundred thousand surrounded him.<sup>3</sup> Neither can he grow wings and fly away to some place, nor can he enter into the earth. Very rightly, the Guru was in real difficulty. It was as the people had speculated.<sup>4</sup> The True Guru could think of nothing viable. He had no fighting forces left. The princes had attained martyrdom. It was a matter of serious concern for the True Guru.<sup>5</sup>

Couplet: 'I have returned my sons' thought the True Guru. 'There appears to be no escape for me and others. Whatever happens is His Will.'<sup>6</sup>

Quatrain: However, it is well that the Turks are responsible for our deaths. The words of our ancestors have been fulfilled. Now let me bestow Guruship on the Khalsa. He placed the mark of Guruship on the Khalsa.<sup>7</sup>

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Where the Guru himself was sitting, he ceremoniously installed Sant Singh. He himself carefully tied his own turban on the head of Sant Singh.<sup>8</sup> His own aigrette he put on his head and made him wear his own dress. The Singh was made to sit in the position of a Guru, as Guru Nanak had anointed Angad.<sup>9</sup> The Khalsa was asked to come and pay ceremonial respects. The True Guru bestowed sovereignty upon the Singhs. Sant Singh was instructed thus: 'do not be captured. Become a martyr.'<sup>10</sup>

Couplet: Jeewan Singh Ranghreta, who was known for wielding the gun well, was seated in another tower in the middle. He was all alone.<sup>11</sup>

Quatrain: Others were seated at other crucial places though the gunpowder was exhausted. Of all the Singhs there were forty here. They were tired and tormented by sleep. The Guru was much concerned about those who lay wounded and dead. There was Ghani Khan a Pathan with the Guru. His brother reached there.<sup>13</sup> He called upon the Guru, 'come out we will look after you.' This call reached the Guru's ear. He called the Pathan and explained matters to him.

<sup>14</sup> 'Take me with you and I will make you eternally happy.' The Pathan was complete in faith and replied, 'I certainly will take you along.'<sup>15</sup>

Couplet: There was a concealed passage in a tower. The Guru had it opened. He wore a short sword around his waist and held another in his hand. He put some gold coins in his pocket.<sup>16</sup>

Quatrain: As the True Guru emerged and plunged forward, he could not proceed further because of the stationed guards. The True Guru then shouted within their hearing, 'the Hindu has escaped.'<sup>17</sup> 'Escaped!' cried everyone all around. The True Guru repeated (the cry) in the same manner. Asking the Pathan to march ahead, the Guru penetrated the Turks and rapidly advanced towards the river.<sup>18</sup> Advancing and attacking, he reached the tall grass. Going further, he spotted a person grazing buffaloes.

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He had recognised the Guru and had started announcing loudly.<sup>19</sup> The True Guru handed him gold coins. Upon he shouted all the more. The Guru saw that he might succeed in the attempt to get him captured. He would not be mollified by any means.<sup>20</sup>

Couplet: The Guru lunged forward and thrust his dagger into his stomach. He grappled much but was released only when his breath flew away.<sup>21</sup>

## Writing about the happening at Machhiwara

(... accepted after purifying with the all steel dagger)

Quatrain: When the True Guru went further, he reached near Machhiwara. After settling the True Guru, the Pathan went and brought along Gulaba the Khatri.<sup>1</sup>

Couplet: Listen to the story of Machhiwara of how the Guru stayed at the house of a Khattri and of how the Sayyad Pathans served him by carrying him on their heads.<sup>2</sup>

Quatrain: He served some food. The Guru ate while remembering (God). At sunset he brought him inside. The mansion became his abode.<sup>3</sup> One or two Singhs walked to the place. The Guru ordered them to conceal themselves. One day the Guru ordered a goat. He had it slaughtered by the Singhs. As the True Guru ate meat, bones were thrown into the house of the Turk. On seeing the bones the Turk remonstrated and abused the Khattri, 'you throw bones into my house!'<sup>5</sup>

Couplet: Then the Khattri approached the True Guru saying, 'I am an extremely weak person. I will be killed should the Turk comes to know.'<sup>6</sup>

Quatrain: The True Guru threw money. The Qazi took the bribe and kept quiet. Like this the Guru stayed here for ten days and then desired to march on.<sup>7</sup>

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The Pathan persuaded the Sayyid to collaborate and they had a dress prepared for the True Guru. They assumed the appearance of *hajis*, let the hair loose and put on blue dresses.<sup>8</sup> They had similar dresses prepared for the Sikhs. Pathans held the ritual prayer water containers and started on the journey.<sup>9</sup> They went announcing (the Guru) as the holy man of Uchh. Their names were Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan. Thus they went lower in the direction of Multan and reached the village Kanech.<sup>10</sup>

Couplet: There lived a *masand* there whose name was Fatta. The True Guru called him and said, 'somehow help me in the onward journey.'<sup>11</sup>

Quatrain: 'Give me the mare you have. I will give you plenty of money instead.' Bad times then descended upon him. He refused, 'for giving the mare to you I will hang.'<sup>12</sup> Then the True Guru said to him, 'you will not escape death by hanging even now.' He was later taken to Lahore and hanged. The effect of the True Guru's word on him could not be negated.<sup>13</sup> When the True Guru was marching rapidly ahead, the Turks surrounded him at Doraha public rest house. They said, 'let the holy man stay here overnight and accept our hospitality.'<sup>14</sup> The Sayyid Pathans wriggled out of the situation saying, 'the holy man is on perpetual ritual fast. He speaks little, tells beads and breaks fast with only a grain of barley.'<sup>15</sup> The other acolytes will accept your feast' this is the arrangement they came to.

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Couplet: The Singhs were now afraid, 'what will now happen to us? How will we be able to retain our commitment to faith, to the Guru and the world?'<sup>17</sup>

Quatrain: The True Guru then advised them, 'stir it with the all steel dagger.' No one ever stands converted by force and intimidation. One is converted (to Islam) only by companionship of a Muslim woman.<sup>18</sup> 'You may also find justification in another manner. Conceal some food and bring it along. If some doubt still lurks in your minds, immerse yourselves five times in the tank at Amritsar.'<sup>19</sup> The Sikhs did as suggested. The Turks enquired, 'why did you touch it with the dagger?' The Pathans replied, 'a new religious law (*shariat*) has been promulgated. To do that is now lawful for the *hajis*. When in the morning, they uncovered the tray and looked at the food, their minds were at rest on seeing sweet-butter pudding and rice. From there they travelled to Mohi, Lamma Jattapura and camped at Bhagta.<sup>21</sup>

(End of Part VI)

**- To be continued**  
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