

# Significance of Zafar Nama: A Moral Basis for Khalsa Commonwealth

*Dr. Sukhdial Singh\**

*\* Deptt. of Punjab Historical Studies, Punjabi. University. Patiala 147 002.*

When Guru Gobind Singh Ji went to Talwandi Sabo, which later came to be known as Takht Sri Damdama Sahib, he was so filled with his purposeful mission that he made his residence there.

The Guru-prophet had been victorious in the battle of Khidrana (Muktsar). Looking back at the tumultuous struggle he decided to write a letter to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb, exposing the misdeeds of the Subedars and lesser court officials. By this letter in Farsi significantly captioned Zafar Nama the declaration of moral victory – he meant to bring home to the Emperor the repressive policies he pursued. The following is the summary of the letter:

“Fortunate are you Aurangzeb. You are designated the emperor, known for dexterous swordsmanship, a keen rider, intelligent scholar of Qur’an, and a skilled ruler, skilled in wielding weaponry. You are the great carver of kingdoms and collector of wealth. You are firm in the battlefield as a mountain. Your generosity is profuse, your position exalted. Your supposed loftiness is as that of the Pleiades. Yet how macabre is your justice, your attributes and your regard for religions other than your own. Indeed you are far from attributes of your own religion. Alas, a hundred times Alas, for the exercise of your sovereignty; strange is your decree. I simply wanted to teach a lesson to the Hindu Hill chiefs who were divided by civil strife. They worshipped idols, while I was the idol breaker. Yet you chose to protect them, and joined them to expel me out of my sanctuary at Anandpur.

I have no faith in your solemn oaths wherein you even chose to make Almighty God as witness! I have not an iota of confidence in you. All your officials proved to be deceitful. One who puts faith in your oath on the Qur’an is inviting disaster. Had I not taken you on your word upon the Qur’an I would not have chosen the path I did. I knew not that your hunch men are crafty and deceitful like a fox, else I would not have driven myself to this state of affairs. If you want to see your promise on the Qur’an, I could send the (relevant) document for sure to you.

What could my Forty men do when your countless hordes of men pounced upon them unawares at Chamkaur. These oath-breakers attacked them suddenly with swords, arrows and muskets. I was constrained to engage in the combat, and I fought to the limits of my physical ability. When affairs and circumstances pass beyond the region of diplomacy and reason it is lawful in faith to unsheath the sword.

Your hordes came charging like blue-bottles and all of a sudden spread in a loud bang. The soldiers of your army who advanced beyond legitimate defences to attack my position fell deluged in blood. When I saw that Nahar Khan entered the fight I quickly gave him the taste of my arrow. Many soldiers who came with him, and boasted of their prowess, ignominiously deserted the field of the battle. Another warrior, of Afghan blood, advanced like a flood. He made many assaults, received many wounds and was at last killed, after he had killed two of my Lions - Singhs. Cowardly Khawaja Mardud remained behind the wall and did not come out like a man. Had I but seen his face I would certainly have bestowed an arrow on him too. But how could Forty men – the bravest of all – succeed when opposed by countless host. Eventually when the light of the Sun spread and the darkness of the night receded God guided me the way to escape.

I am but a slave and a servant of *Akal-Purakh*, Timeless Being, who is the King of Kings. I am ready to obey His order even at the cost of my life. God is without fear. He is the True Emperor of earth and heaven. He is the Master of both worlds. He showed me the way to save myself. What can the deceitful enemy do when God is on one's side? He gives me deliverance and points out the way to His creature.

While you –in arrogance, look upon your army and wealth, I look upon His effulgent Power. You are proud of your empire; I am proud of the refuge of God. It matters not that my Four Sons were martyred, my Khalsa remains behind, ever ready like a coiled snake. What bravery is it to quench a few sparks; you are stirring up the fire to rage all the more. My Khalsa would light fires right under the hoofs of your horses. So be wise, Aurangzeb, smite not mercilessly with the sword, else the sword of the All-mighty shall smite you.”

The above letter of moral triumph is known as *Zafar Nama*, literally the letter of victory. Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh were sent to the Deccan to deliver the letter to Aurangzeb. The Emperor at that time, was at Ahmadnagar in Peninsular India, while the Guru was at Talwandi Sabo in the North. There was nearly nine months gap between the delivery of the letter to the Emperor and the Guru's own departure for the Deccan in missionary odyssey. During these nine months many things happened at and around Talwandi Sabo. In fact, the Guru's stay at Talwandi Sabo proved by far the most fruitful for the Sikh lore as well as for the inhabitants of the Malwa. The Guru visited many villages in the region. In one trip the Guru visited Bhagi Wander, Kot Samir and Chak Bhai Ka. Here, the Guru was given a warm reception by Bhai Ram Singh, a grandson of Bhai Bhagtu. The Guru also visited Bathinda and stayed there for seven days. While returning to Talwandi Sabo, Guru Gobind Singh Ji visited Mehma and Bhokari. Bhai Dalla, Bhai Fateh Singh and Bhai Ram Singh were with the Guru during these visits. In consequence, hundreds of thousands of Jats of the Malwa region accepted *Amrit* and joined the Khalsa brotherhood. Equally important it was at Talwandi Sabo that Guru Gobind Singh ji created the new recension of *Adi Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. There were Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions which had not been included earlier, though space had been reserved. It was a moral and spiritual ordainment and imperative to include the compositions of the Ninth Guru. The legendary Bhai Mani Singh, the Guru's trusted scholar, was the blessed scribe of this final edition of the holy *Granth*.

Meanwhile, Bhai Daya Singh and Dharam Singh were successful in delivering *Zafar Nama* to Aurangzeb. The impact of the letter on the Mughal Emperor was overwhelming. In consequence, Aurangzeb invited the Guru to meet him in the Deccan. The orders were issued to the Governors of Lahore and Sarhind to provide Guru Gobind Singh Ji with appropriate escorts at the borders of each province, as also to defray any traveling expenses if demanded.

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