

Guru Tegh Bahadur

The Unique Martyr

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by

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Introductory

Hindustan has been a land of cowards, especially since 1000 A. D. when Mahmud Ghaznavi poured his hungry hordes into this country through the North-Westren gates. Ghaznavi's invasion was preceded by a long line of invaders starting with Alexandara, who came sprinting and galloping into India without any fight given to them worth the name. The picture might not have been so gloomy in the past but, since the times, the history of India has been written, it has definitely proved itself to be such. India can be proud of the deeds described in *Mahabharat* as a model for the present generations no doubt, but these are the scenes of civil war and not any war against the foreigners. Some thinkers have begun to consider this *Mahabharat* as a mythical story,¹ an imaginary tale or a folklore. Those who regard it as historical truth, place its occurrence some where in third a fourth millenium B.C. The date is too old to make the events a matter of pride for the present generations. The character of Hindustan has changed out of all recognition in the long intervening period. The cowardice exhibited in the recent millenium has washed off the bravery of the ancient Hindustan. The Muslim invaders never found any resistance; they would repeat the invasion every year, loot and go back, laughing and joking.

The cowardice is something inherent in the Hindu society which has been caste ridden since its very inception. The *Brahmin*-dominated society could not be anything different. The *Brahmins* could not themselves be brave because they were never to fight any battle, nor plan any, as it was not their function. They were

1. Sarkar, D.C. : The Tribune dated 15.9.75.

to be preserved as a National Curio. In the war they must be moved to the securest place because if they survive, they would be able to revive the similar society, which others could not. The *Vaishyas* and *Sudras* were prohibited from fighting; their function was to serve the *Kushatryas*, and *Brahmins*, the '*Swaran Jatis*'. How could Indians in general become fearless and brave? The *Kushatryas* monopolised all fighting and consequently bravery was confined to them. The invaders coming from outside always proved braver, but after settling here, when they were absorbed in the Hindu society and made Hindustanis, they also became cowards. That has been the history of the invaders before the advent of Muslims who refused to be absorbed into this caste ridden society.

In reality the Hindu culture dominated by *Brahmin* does not allow any body to become brave. As admitted by the reformers of Hindu society belonging to *Brahmo Samaj*, *Prarthana Samaj* and *Arya Samaj*, the Hindu society has become affected by polytheism, idolatory, ritualism and caste crystallisation. All these beliefs make the people coward. A polytheist stands before his gods and goddesses, begging for some boon and trembling before their wrath. Ritualism makes the people run after the performance of some rites at the cost of action. They want to achieve things simply by performance of some rites, *Yagas* and *Havanas* without doing what is essential. Similarly a belief in miracles and magic makes them men of inaction. Belief in astrology compels them to look to some powers other than their own. Sacredness of cow and *Ahimsa* added to this weakness of cowardice. At the time of fighting against Muslims they would place a herd of cows in the vanguard. This they did at Somnath and at many other places. *Ahimsa* might have helped them in cultivating feminine virtues but it cut at the very roots of the masculine virtues as bravery and courage. The *Bhaktas*, the *Yogis* and the *Rishis* fled to the hilly hideouts when the invaders were mercilessly trampling over the sacred soil of their motherland. The *Rishis*, living in similar places, turned mere intellectuals and spiritualists. When the leaders are such, how could the followers become fearless and brave? Muslim invaders from the very beginning reminded them of their weakness by practical demonstration of their own power but Hindustanis stuck to their self-imposed weakness like a magnet.

The Indo-Muslims preserved their masculine virtues by not allowing themselves to be absorbed by Hindu society.

Bravery is the antithesis of cowardice; it is the product of fearlessness in man. Fearlessness is the primary virtue. It is essential for the achievement of any ideal one likes, for it is the starting point. If you fear, you would not be able to make any change in the society, which always moves in the old grooves, opposes any change and tends to be static. Fearlessness is essential for a revolution and resurrection of any community. This can be brought about by sacrifices. Fearlessness depends upon the teachings and the concept of life which are projected by a particular religion. Fearlessness is connected with emotions and faith which are the contents of religion. Mere rationalistic philosophy does not cultivate emotions and faith. For the development of this trait of character, we have to turn to the religious teachings which the religion of Hindustan did not provide in the right amount.

Fearlessness is not an end in itself; it is needed to enable a man to make a sacrifice for some common cause of human welfare. Sacrifice can be of three kinds : of wealth, of comforts of life and of the life itself. The last one is the most difficult but it is most efficacious in the achievement of the object. It can produce two results : a change in the attitude of the aggressor through its effect on his conscience and a change in the character of the masses who retaliate, rise up and fight for their rights collectively with whatever they can lay their hands upon. Generally the aggressor is not moved. The masses, therefore, rise in revolt with such a force that the aggressor is annihilated.

We have to study the history of the Punjab of the 17th and 18th century in this context. We have to study how the Mughals terrorised Hindus and Sikhs, how Hindus remained inert and inactive and how Sikhs revolted. We have to find the political tensions that affected the whole life of the people and the part played by the Sikh *Gurus*, especially Guru Tegh Bahadur. In this book we will study how Guru Teg Bahadur first armed himself with the required power, how he awakened the masses, then how he gave a final jolt to them by placing his own head at the altar,

and then how the Sikhs reacted and resurrected the community by organising themselves in the form of the *Khalsa Panth* which disintegrated the Mughal empire. Thus the Guru awakened the people and made them a formidable force.

In the drama of the disintegration of the Mughal empire and resurrection of the Hindu community three actors have played the chief parts : *Guru, Sikh* and *Singh*.

(i) *Guru* is a person who possesses intuitive knowledge of the Eternal Truth, the essence of the universe. In him the secret and Divine Light glows. By his spiritual power he can hear the Primordial Sound. He has completely purged himself, of selfness thus making room for the Divine Self. He is in tune with the Infinite and is at one with the Supreme Soul. He is wholly absorbed in the Will of God. Divine Reality can use such a person as a channel of Grace and Power. Through him the Supernatural flows into the world. He can impart spiritual knowledge to others. Thus he leads the people.

(ii) '*Sikh* is one who travels towards the house of Truth that the *Guru* has built.'¹ *Sikh* does not mean mere '*Shishya*' (as used in Sanskrit), the pupil, the taught, disciple, or a follower. A mere allegiance to a person or a doctrine does not make one a *Sikh*. "A *Sikh* is one who is dedicated to Truth ; he who travels towards the Truth that the *Guru* has built." A *Sikh* is, therefore, one who values truth above all other things of the world. Those who follow the teachings of *Sikh Gurus* can be called *Sikhs*. But if I simply say that *Guru Nanak* is my *Guru* I do not become a *Sikh*. A *Sikh* is one in whose character there is regeneration ; who is advancing towards the Truth under the guidance of the *Guru*. He is learning and is following the path of Spiritual perfection : he has not realised Perfect Truth as yet ; he is on the way.

Sayeth Fourth Nanak :—

"A *Sikh of Guru* is he who contemplates on the Lord's Name early in the morning."²

1. "ਜੇ ਬਹੀ ਸਚ ਧਰਮਸਾਲ ਹੈ ਗੁਰਸਿਖ ਲਹਿੰਦਾ ਭਾਲ ਕੇ ।"

(ਜਿਰੀ ਰਾਗ ਮ : ਪ)

2. ਗੁਰ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕਾ ਜੋ ਸਿਖ ਅਖਾਏ
ਸੁ ਭਲਕੇ ਉਠਿ ਹਰ ਨਾਮੁ ਧਿਆਵੈ ।

(ਗਉੜੀ ਮ : ੪)

*"A Sikh is he who
always contemplates on God."*¹

Sayeth Guru Nanak :—

*"Search for Truth is Sikhism."*²

(iii) '*Singh*' is a Sikh (Truth finder) who has reached his destination, who has shed off and destroyed his ego and personality, who, thus, has no particular name and is designated by the generic term '*Singh*'; he has reached his goal and has perfected himself. Valour and bravery are essential constituents of human personality but these qualities are in addition to others. These are needed for protection of the oppressed. Without these one is not perfect; but in Sikhism emphasis is not on this quality. The term '*Singh*' has a religious and spiritual significance as explained above. If the Sikhs were compelled to fight and they showed valour and bravery in action, it does not mean that emphasis was shifted from spiritual outlook to earthly attitude. To call a *Sikh* a 'lion' in physical sense is a mistaken view. Sikh is a seeker of Truth and *Singh* is a Sikh who has realised the Truth and achieved the ideal put before him.

About the character of a *Singh*, sayeth Guru Gobind Singh :

*"A Singh is he, who is in constant communion with God without a thought of the other."*³

This was the character of the *Guru*, *Sikh* and *Singh* that brought a revolution and threw off the shackles of age long slavery.

India should be proud of this community of *Sikhs* and *Singhs*, who revolutionised the social structure of India, who introduced democratic element in it, who revived the ideas of monotheism,

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| 1. ਸਿਖਿ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਧਿਆਇਆ । | (ਗੋਡ ਮ : ੪) p. 863 |
| 2. ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਖਿਆ ਗੁਰ ਵੀਚਾਰਿ । | (ਆਸਾ ਦੀ ਵਾਰ) p. 465 |
| 3. ਜਾਗਤ ਜੋਤਿ ਜਪੈ ਨਿਸਬਾਸਰ
ਏਕ ਬਿਨਾ ਮਨ ਨੈਕ ਨ ਆਨੈ ।" | (ਦਸਮ ਗਰੰਥ) |

who refuted polytheism, idolatory, castism and asceticism, and whose ideas were later on taken up by *Brahmo Samaj*, *Prarthana Samaj*, and *Arya Samaj*, the reformist movements of Hindu society, although all of them failed in shaking the Hindu society drenched in *Puranic* religion.

This movement of revolutionising Hindu society was started by Guru Nanak ; it passed through different stages and reached its climax in the times of Guru Gobind Singh. It remained passive for most of the time but it became aggressive when there was no other alternative left. It combined feminine and masculine virtues and produced saint soldiers, which is the need of the day.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was a perfect saint, an outstanding soldier, a reformer, an awakener, a revolutionary, a nationalist and a martyr whom Hindu India must always commemorate. They owe to him their resurrection.

Chronology

Dates of Sikh Pontificate

1. Guru Nanak Dev	1469—1539
2. Guru Angad Dev	1539—1552
3. Guru Amar Das	1552—1574
4. Guru Ram Das	1574—1581
5. Guru Arjan Dev	1581—1606
6. Guru Har Gobind	1606—1645
7. Guru Har Rai	1645—1661
8. Guru Harkishan	1661—1664
9. Guru Tegh Bahadur	1664—1675
10. Guru Gobind Singh	1675—1708
11. Adi-Granth & Khalsa Panth	1708

Dates of the Rule of Afghan and Mughal Kings

1. Sikandar Lodhi	1497—1517
2. Ibrahim Lodhi	1517—1526
3. Babar	1526—1530
4. Hamayun and Suris	1530—1556
5. Akbar	1556—1605
6. Jahangir	1605—1627
7. Shah Jahan	1627—1658
8. Aurangzeb	1658—1707

GENEALOGY

House of Baba

Guru Nanak Dev (I) (1469—1539)

Guru Angad Dev (II) (1504—1552)

Guru Amar Das (III) (1479—1574)

Guru Ram Das (IV) (1534—1581)

