

Operation Blue Star revisited

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There are some wounds, which do not heal easily. If wound is given on body, it may heal in due time but if wound is inflicted on your soul and that too, by your own people, it never heals. Wounds inflicted on Sikh psyche in June 1984 by Congress government are such wounds.

It was 3rd June of 1984. Hundreds of Sikhs gathered at Harimandir Sahib (Golden Temple, Darbar Sahib), Amritsar to celebrate the martyrdom day of Guru Arjun Dev ji. Guru Arjun Dev ji about whom Bard Mathura has described in Sri Guru Granth Sahib as:

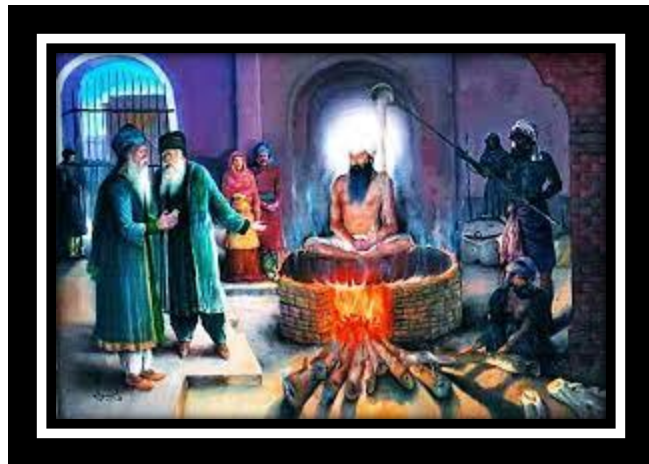
ਧਰਨਿ ਗਗਨ ਨਵ ਖੰਡ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਸ੍ਰੂਪੀ ਰਹਿਓ ਭਰਿ
॥ ਭਨਿ ਮਬੁਰਾ ਕਛੁ ਭੇਦੁ ਨਹੀ ਗੁਰੁ ਅਰਜੁਨੁ ਪਰਤਖੁ
ਹਰਿ ॥

He is totally pervading the earth, the sky and the nine regions of the planet. He is the Embodiment of the Light of God. So speaks Mat'huraa: there is no difference between God and Guru; Guru Arjun is the Personification of the Lord Himself.

Guru was martyred by the orders of Mughal emperor Jahangir on 16 June 1606. Jahangir ordered that Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the fifth Sikh Guru to be sentenced to death by *sasha* law which means blood should not fall on ground. the Guru Arjan Dev ji had refused to stop preaching his message of God as started by Guru Nanak Dev Ji and it was not liked by Jahangir. The Guru was made to sit on a burning hot sheet while boiling hot sand was poured over his body. After enduring five days

of unrelenting torture, Guru Arjan Dev was taken for a bath in the river. Aim was to give him more pain. As thousands watched he entered the river, never to be seen again.

The Darbar Sahib(Harimandir, now a days famous as Golden Temple) is built around a man-made pool (*Sarovar*) that was completed by Guru Ram Das ji the fourth Guru of Sikhs, in 1577. Guru Arjan Dev ji, the fifth Guru of Sikhism, requested Sai Mian Mir - a Muslim Pir of Lahore, to lay its foundation stone in 1589. In 1604, Guru Arjan Dev ji placed Adi Granth (First version of Guru Granth Sahib ji) in Harmandir Sahib, calling it the site *Ath Sath Tirath* (lit. "shrine of 68 pilgrimages"). Sikhism right from its inception was a sore in the eyes of Islamic invaders and rulers. Harimandir Sahib was repeatedly destroyed and rebuilt by the Sikhs after it became a target of persecution by Islamic invaders and was destroyed several times by the Muslim armies from Afghanistan and also



by Mughal Empire.

First attack on Darbar Sahib was in 1737 by Zakriya Khan the governor of Punjab. On his instructions , Chowdhary Massa Rangar of Mandiali (also known as Mandiala, which is in Nakodar, Punjab),

desecrated the Golden Temple in 1740. He was put to death by Sukha Singh and Mehtab Singh. Chowdhary Massa Rangar of Mandiali was the most notorious and in charge of the Amritsar circle. He desecrated the Golden Temple by smoking and drinking inside there while watching dancing girls. Armed watchmen were posted around for his safety. He tortured and killed Bhai Mani Singh Ji who was one of the most beloved & highly spiritual Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh ji and also responsible for the overall management of the complex.

In October 1757 Ahmed Shah Abdali launched his fourth invasion on India. As usual, the Sikhs made the task of plundering India very difficult. They would constantly harass his troops using guerrilla tactics and would rescue countless Hindu women who were being kidnapped and taken to Afghanistan to be sold as slaves. In order to break the Sikh power base, he attacked and destroyed Harimander Sahib completely in 1757. The sacred Sarovar (pool) was polluted with debris and animal carcasses. The Sikhs decided to liberate Harmander Sahib under the leadership of Baba Deep Singh Ji in 1757. After a fierce battle, Baba Deep Singh was martyred but the Sikhs were successful in their quest and were able to celebrate Diwali there. They started the process of cleaning and rebuilding of the site on Vaisakhi 1758. The numerically and materially superior Afghan had been humbled by the Sikhs. The shock victory led to Abdali wishing to exterminate the Sikhs once and for all.

3rd Invasion By Ahmed Shah Abdali (Durrani) was in 1762. On 5th February 1762. Afghan army numbering 150,000 soldiers fell upon a large gathering of Sikh men, women and

children. In the ensuing desperate battle, over 30,000 Sikhs were killed, this became known as the Vada Ghallughara (The Great Holocaust). Harmander Sahib was blown up once again by Abdali, and the Sarovar was polluted with refuse and the entrails of cows and bullocks. During the cannon fire, a brick from Harmander Sahib struck Abdali on the nose. This injury later became cancerous and led to his death in 1773. In spite of the high casualties suffered, the Sikhs gathered at Harmander Sahib in October 1762 to celebrate Bandi Chhor Divas. Abdali thought that the Sikhs had almost been destroyed so he sent a large force to finish the Sikhs off, once and for all. Although outnumbered, the Sikhs defeated Abdali's Army and caused him to return to Afghanistan. The Sikh Spirit and their love for Harmander Sahib shone through yet again.

The construction work of the present day Harmandir Sahib took place in 1764 under the leadership of Sultan-e-Quam Sardar Jassa Singh (1718-1783) and other leading Sikh Misl Sardars and Jagirdars under Kaar Seva. Large Sikh congregations assembled at Amritsar to help rebuild Darbar Sahib. Harmandir Sahib was finally completed in 1776. Maharaja Ranjit Singh visited Darbar Sahib in 1802 after seizing Amritsar from Sardar Gurdit Singh Dhillon and his Mother Mai Sukkhan of Bhangi Sikh Misl. Maharaja laid it in marble and copper in from between 1820-1831. Overlaid the sanctum with gold foil by 1830.

Harimandir Sahib has ever been the center of Sikh politics. After independence of India, country was divided in states based on language but Punjab was left. Punjabi Suba agitation (*morcha*) was launched in year 1950 to get Punjab state based on Punjabi

language. After long fight Punjab state was divided in three parts, Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. Akali became quite powerful after the formation of Punjabi Suba, and Congress party was ousted out of Punjab. Indira Gandhi, the prime Minister of India somehow wanted to oust Akali Party from Punjab. Sant Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale was made a stooge against Akalis. A demand for Khalistan was made by a section of Akalis and favored by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. Sardar Zail Singh helped to form a party called "Dal Khalsa" which high jacked an aircraft and took it to Pakistan. Punjab was thrown in the forest of terrorism. Bhindranwale was forced to take shelter in Akal Takhat which gave excuse to Indira Gandhi to attack Harimandir Sahib.

In June 1984, on the Shaheedi Gurburab of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, Indian Prime Minister Shrimati Indira Gandhi ordered the Indian Army to launch an attack on Harimander Sahib and over 40 other Gurdwaras, on the pretext of 'flushing out militants' who have assembled at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib in the Complex. The operation named "Operation Blue Star" was carefully timed under a media blackout, to cause maximum casualties as innocent Sikh devotees were gathered there in high numbers. As news of the attack traveled, Sikh Jathas started to converge towards Harimander Sahib, but they were stopped by forces.

At Shri Harmander Sahib itself, around 150 number of followers of Bhindranwala held out against 15,000



Indian army troops armed with the latest weaponry (including chemical weapons) for over 12 Days. The army was taken aback by ferocious resistance they faced and suffered high casualties. In the end, they brought in tanks support and destroyed Akal Takhat Sahib. The army proceeded to set fire to the Sikh reference library and destroyed and stole manuscripts which had centuries of history and heritage. Harimander Sahib itself had over 300 bullets fired into it. The sacred Sarovar was a pool of blood & bodies. Shri Akal Takhat Sahib which was established by Guru Hargobind Sahib, the sixth incarnation of Guru Nanak was totally demolished, which later was build by Sikhs by kaar seva.

In November of 1984, Bhai Beant Singh & Bhai Satwant Singh assassinated Indira Gandhi for her heinous crime and demonstrated again that the spirit of Sukha Singh & Mehtab Singh lives on in the Sikhs.

Having been failed by the justice system after the 1984 attacks the Sikhs resorted to direct action and started fighting back, using Harimander Sahib and the Akaal Takht Sahib as the anchor point. In response to this, the Government started to plant its agents in and around the Harimander Sahib Complex and infiltrated it. In April 1986, the Sikhs had gathered there for a pre-planned meeting. In order to stop them, Indian Commandos stormed the complex, killing and arresting several Sikhs who were inside. The operation was code named Operation Search (later called Operation Black Thunder)

On this occasion, most of the Sikhs had been persuaded not to fight because they feared the loss of innocent life. Therefore most of them surrendered to the Army peacefully. A second attack in May 1988 saw the complex being attacked again with more Sikhs being killed. Government infiltrators also desecrated the inside of Darbar Sahib by excreting within it and later 'surrendering' to the police.

Enough has been written about the last 3 Invasions as it is a brief account. It is very deep and vicious. Despite these attacks, Harimander Sahib stand splendor as ever. Those that seek to destroy it should look back at its history and that of those tried to desecrate it, to see what remained of them and their empires.

It is vital for all regimes to note that the Sikhs have never compromised their right to freely assemble at Shri Harimander Sahib and to conduct their campaigns from there. It is the centre of Sikh Spiritual & Political affairs. It has also been the centre of resistance against the tyranny of many of India's Rulers. Those regimes who wish to quash the Sikhs should understand that

the KHALSA is destined to be free and sovereign

History has shown that if you befriend the Sikhs they can be the greatest of friends. However, if you attempt to cross them, they can become the most dangerous of enemies.