

Editorial



Why did Guru Gobind Singh ji go to Nanded and what happened next.

Guru Gobind Singh ji travelled to Nanded accompanied by Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, son of Aurangzeb, in 1707-1708. To understand as to why they came to be together when the Mughal rulers were otherwise fighting against the Gurus and their followers, it's necessary to briefly know the background leading to this event.

The popularity of Guru Arjan Dev, the 5th Guru of the Sikhs, caused much concern to the Mullahs and in particular to Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (1569-1624), leader of the Naqashbandi School of thought which countered the liberal policies of Emperor Akbar's reign, the 3rd ruler of the Mughal dynasty. They all prodded Emperor Jahangir, for strong action against Guru Arjan Dev. Jahangir wrote in his autobiography titled 'Tuzk-e-Jahangiri', "The Hindus going to this Guru is understandable but even the stupid Muslims are going to him. I think I will ask him to either change his ways or accept Islam."

Guru Arjan Dev was arrested in June 1606 on flimsy charges and as an alternative to being let-off, conversion to Islam was offered. But he stood his ground and was tortured to death in Lahore now in Pakistan. By torturing a divine personality of Guru Arjan Dev's eminence, Jahangir had unwittingly started digging the grave of the Mughal Dynasty.

The attitude of Shahjahan was no better but Aurangzeb's maltreatment of non-Muslims went beyond all reasonable limits. He unleashed a reign of terror upon the Hindus by forcibly converting them by the sword besides strongly opposing the Sikh Gurus.

It is known that the Koran justifies the use of sword if other coercive ways don't make 'non-believers' accept Allah as the only God even though such 'non-believers' maybe very devout in their own ways and believe in one formless God. And Aurangzeb's effort to spread Islam in India was highly appreciated by the Caliph of Islam who lived in Baghdad, Iraq.

According to the 'History of Kashmir' by P. N. K. Bamzāi, when Aurangzeb's atrocities became unbearable, the Brahmins of Kashmir went to the holy Amarnath cave in the higher snowbound ranges of Himalaya to pray to Lord Shiva. At night, as they slept, one of them saw Lord Shiva in his dream telling him. "No one can save Hindu religion now except Guru Teg Bahadur, the 9th Guru of the Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib in

Punjab."

According to Bamzai a group of 500 Kashmiri Brahmins came to him on 25th May 1675 led by Kirpa Ram Dutt, a Sarasvat Brahman of Matan, near Srinagar (he later became Kirpa Singh).

After listening to their predicament, Guru Teg Bahadur was deeply concerned. Just then Gobind Rai, the 9 year old son of the Guru who later became Gobind Singh, walked into the room where he saw everyone in a pensive mood. When he asked his father the reason for their predicament, he told him everything. When Gobind Rai asked, "What is the remedy for it, dear father?" his father said, "It demands sacrifice by a personality of high eminence." Gobind Rai said, without batting an eyelid, "There is no other soul of eminence in the whole country other than you, dear father."

It was indeed remarkable that a minor son asked his father to sacrifice himself at the altar of justice and righteousness and that too for the sake of people who were idol worshiper.

Guru Teg Bahadur preferred martyrdom to conversion. By living up to the expectations of the Brahmins, of which they were very sure, he saved Hindu religion from permanent extinction forever.

With the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur the grave of the Mughal Dynasty -which Jahangir had started digging- was complete.

The martyrdom of his father motivated Guru Gobind Rai, the 10th Guru of the Sikhs, to prepare for a big event. Since he was only 9 years old he marked time to prepare himself for the future. When he came of age, he created the 'Khalsa Panth', the Brotherhood of the Pure in March 1699 to defend the meek and hapless.

Guru Gobind Singh lost two of his four sons in the battle. The other two along with their grandmother were entrusted for safe passage to his cook Gangu Ram, a Kashmiri Brahmin of Kaul Gotra. He turned them over to the Governor of Sarhind for a prize. They were bricked up alive for refusing to accept Islam and their grandmother died of shock seeing the cruelty meted out to children who were just 7 and 9 years old.

Jawaharlal Nehru, mentions in his autobiography that Raj Kaul, Gangu's son was allotted a Jagir (perpetual land-lease) by Mughal Emperor Farrukhsiar near a canal west of Delhi about the year 1716. The family name 'Nehru', according to him,

originated because of the residence being next to a canal meaning a Nehar in Persian.

Once the news about the martyrdom of his sons reached Guru Gobind Singh, he wrote a severe indictment called 'Jafarnama' (moral victory) to Aurangzeb -a masterpiece in Persian language-exposing his double standards and immoral rule. When Aurangzeb read it, he regretted but it was too late. The Emperor fell ill shortly thereafter and died on 20 February 1707.

When Bahadur Shah(Muazam) became the Emperor after Aurangzeb, his younger step-brother, Azam Shah declared himself the next Emperor and ascended a make-believe throne at Ahmadnagar though the capital was Delhi.

Once the war of succession became imminent, Muazam sent a request to Guru Gobind Singh for military help. Guru Sahib was by then camping at Sirsa and the request for military help was unusual. A change of attitude was, perhaps, necessitated after the Mughal Commanders observed the fighting tenacity of the Guru's followers.

Guru Gobind Singh agreed to give military support on two conditions: Firstly when Muazam becomes the Emperor he would treat all his non-Muslim subjects as equals and secondly he would hand over to the Guru all those who committed atrocities upon his Sikhs.

After Muazam agreed to the two conditions, a Jatha (Group or Troop) of Sikhs blessed by Guru Gobind Singh was sent. He did not take part in the battle since he wanted his followers to stand alone and develop their military skills for the future. Moreover, he had pronounced, when he created the 'Khalsa Panth' in 1699, that he as their Guru, would always be present among his Sikhs whenever they would remember him. Therefore Guru Gobind Singh was with them all the time in the battle.

The crucial battle was fought at a place called Jajuwan -north of Agra- on 19 June 1707 and Muazam was victorious. To permanently remove any challengers to the throne, Muazam executed his younger step-brother Azam Shah and his two sons. He thereby added some more misdeeds to the cauldron of sins setup by his father, grandfather and great-grandfather.

After Muazam became the Emperor, Guru Gobind Singh went from Sirsa and to Moti Bagh in Delhi where a Gurdwara stands on the Ring Road now. Then,

on invitation from Bahadur Shah, he went to Agra. The Mughal Emperor received him very courteously in the Durbar getting up from his throne to do so and offered a seat which was never done: Others had to remain standing. Then he presented Guru Gobind Singh with a Khilat -a trail of expensive gifts. The Khilat also included a Saif (equivalent of the Indian Khanda or the European Broad Sword) which once belonged to Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of Prophet Mohammad. The Saif was sent to Aurangzeb by the Caliph of Baghdad in appreciation of his efforts to spread Islam in India. It's now preserved among the weapons of Guru Gobind Singh at Keshgarh Sahib Gurdwara in Punjab, India.

After presentation of the Khilat, Guru Gobind Singh reminded the Emperor of the two conditions he had agreed upon but Bahadur Shah remained noncommittal. Maybe, he didn't want to antagonize many anti-Sikh elements his Court. However, instead of chastising the Emperor, Guru Sahib decided to persuade him. The Emperor requested Guru Sahib to accompany him towards the Deccan, the southern peninsula of India, where the Mughals were fighting the Marathas in the present day hinterland of Bombay. During their ride together Guru Gobind Singh reminded him about his promises on several occasions but Bahadur Shah evaded the subject.

Some anti-Sikh elements in the army tried to provoke a fight with the trusting Sikhs and a prominent Sikh named Maan Singh was killed by them. Despite the provocation, the two reached Nanded where Guru Sahib tried for the last time to persuade the Emperor. When he found him backtracking on his word, Guru Gobind Singh told the Emperor on his face that he would rule for a very short period.

By not keeping his word, the Emperor dumped some more sins into his account which started the process of putting the Mughal Dynasty into its grave.

The words of Guru Gobind Singh came true and Bahadur Shah ruled from 1707 to 1712 -for 5 years only- and was mercilessly killed in Lahore by his own sons at the age of 70. The rulers after Bahadur Shah -in particular Farrukhsiar- laid a prize on the head of a Sikh: Anyone bringing the chopped head of a Sikh got 10 Rupees as shown in art impression below. All such historic orders were recorded in the Court Diary of the Mughals called 'Darbarey Akhbaar Maula'.

Guru Gobind Singh probably knew all along that Emperor Bahadur Shah would not keep his word.

His willingness to let his Sikhs fight for the Mughals was meant to train them for bigger military confrontations which subsequently enabled them to play bigger roles in the history of north India.

It may sound coincidental but the fighter to continue the struggle against the Mughals was found by Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded itself a short distance away from the spot where he had his last meeting with Bahadur Shah. The name of the fighter was Madho Dass, a Bairagi Sadhu, meaning 'the one who had renounced the worldly life of a householder'. He was given the Pahul in September 1708: baptized with Amrit prepared with the Khanda in the same way as Guru Sahib had done for the first time in March 1699. Thus he became a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh and was named Gurbaksh Singh, meaning 'blessed by the Guru'.

However he came to be known as Banda Bahadur or Banda Singh Bahadur. This happened when he met Guru Gobind Singh for the first time sitting on his Asan or his seat in a comfortable pose. He asked in a challenging voice, "Who are you?" Guru Sahib asked, "Don't you know who I am?" Madho Das realized who he was and said, "Oh, so you are Guru Gobind Singh." Then, with due humility, he lowered his head to the ground and said, "Guru Maharaj, I am your Banda," meaning 'Male Slave'. Thus he was known as 'Banda of the Guru' and when he crushed Mughal rule in Punjab, his followers called him Banda Bahadur or Banda Singh Bahadur.

Madho Das being blessed by Guru Gobind Singh Ji after the Birs-his magical forces_were unable to move Guru Ji from the bed which made Madho Das realise the Gurus supreme Godly Powers Madho Das said to Guru Gobind Singh, "I am your Banda" meaning 'Man-Slave'.

Madho Das was named Gurbax Singh_Blessing of the Guru_When the Guru asked him what was his name he had humbly replied_I am your Banda_man_slave. dho Das was named Gurbax Singh after taking the Amrit from Guru Gobind Singh.

Gurbaksh Singh alias Banda Bahadur alias Banda Singh Bahadur shook the foundation of Mughal Empire in North India during the next seven years -1709 to 1715- and paved the way for complete liberation of Punjab from 1764 onwards. His pioneering struggle helped establish the Sikh Empire which put a stop to the six monthly raids from Afghanistan and forcible conversion of people. It was achieved at great personal sacrifices by innumerable Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh.