

# Guru Gobind Singh

His Life and Teachings



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**THE LIFE & TEACHINGS OF**

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**GURU  
GOBIND SINGH**

**AMRITA SHARMA**

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*To Yugal Kaku,  
an admirable man of many talents  
who I've always aspired to be like.*

## **BIRTH**

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs, was born to Guru Tegh Bahadur and Mata Gujari on December 26, 1666, at Patna Sahib in Bihar. Though he came into the world that day, the story of his birth began much earlier. Much before his mortal birth, when he was in a state of bodiless spirit, he received the divine message to go into the world, and carry on the work of the ninth Guru of the Sikhs and his father-to-be, Guru Tegh Bahadur Singh. It was for this divine work that Guru Gobind Singh was sent into the world.

Guru Gobind Singh's father, Guru Tegh Bahadur, wanted to spread the message of God and teach the significance of the Name to people of far flung areas. So he decided to undertake a tour of the eastern parts of India. He visited places like Agra, Banaras, Gaya and Allahabad. In Allahabad, Mata Gujari's womb received the divine spirit and light of

Guru Gobind Singh and she conceived the great soul. From Allahabad they passed Banaras, Sasaram, Gaya and reached Patna in May 1666.

From there he had to leave for Assam and Bengal. Before leaving he told his wife that she must name their son Gobind. And it was on December 26, 1666, that the tenth Guru of the Sikhs was born. Following the instructions of Guru Tegh Bahadur the boy was named Gobind. Guru Tegh Bahadur was in Assam when he heard the good news of the birth of his son through a special messenger who came all the way from Patna with the glad tidings. There were celebrations everywhere and large quantities of food and clothes were distributed among the poor. The Guru was overjoyed because he knew the child would grow up to preach the true religion and Name of the Immortal One.

On the same day, an unusual thing happened. A prominent saint of that period, known as Pir Bhikhan Shah of Karnal, instead of bowing to Mecca in the west bowed to Patna in the east. When his surprised disciples asked him the reason, he explained that in the city of Patna a great saint had been born who was to destroy evil, sin and



false religion. In a few days he set out to meet the holy Guru. Reaching his doorstep, he asked Mata Gujari for a glimpse of the holy child. Since he had actually come from hundreds of miles she let him see the child. As soon as he saw the child-Guru, he made a deep bow and placed two earthen pots of sweets before him, one of which he had bought from a Hindu's shop and another from a Muslim's shop. He did this to see which section of people the Guru would favour. The child-Guru, at this point, put one hand on each as if to say that he would favour both. This pleased the Pir and he left for Punjab, a satisfied man.

## **CHILDHOOD**

The tenth Guru spent his first five years in Patna itself and had his basic schooling there. Along with the religious scriptures, he also studied the Bihari language at Patna. His uncle, Bhai Kirpal, trained him in archery and swordsmanship and soon he became a great marksman. When Guru Tegh Bahadur returned from Dacca to Patna he saw his five-year-old child for the first time, and kissed and embraced his divine boy. The Guru blossomed under the spiritual guidance of his father, but it was short-lived since Guru Tegh Bahadur had to leave Patna for Anandpur.

Gobind Rai, as he was called then, was the beloved of many people in Patna including a large number of Muslims. The child had a charming personality which attracted everyone he met, even for a short while. He was a wonder boy ever since his childhood. His words always came true. Even before he was six years old he had learnt Hindi,



Marathi, and Gurumukhi. He was a very bold and courageous boy, and had all the qualities of a great man and a natural leader. He was very fond of playing the soldier and was often the leader of his playmates. He used to divide his friends into two groups and acted out actual war scenes to give his friends lessons in archery and sabre-rattling. During his early years, he gave clear signs of the sort of life which he was to lead later. He was active and full of mirth. He was bold and fearless.

One day, he was playing with his friends in one of the main streets of the city. The chief officer of the nawab of Patna happened to pass that way, accompanied by his bodyguard and a number of officers. When the nawab's servants called upon the boys to salute the nawab, the child-Guru stopped his friends from doing anything of the sort. He was aware of Aurangzeb's cruelty and oppression towards Hindus and Sikhs, and refusing to salute the emperor's men was his way of standing up against him. Soon his fame for working miracles spread far and wide. In the same city lived a pandit called Shiv Dutta, on the banks of river Ganga.

One day, when he reached the holy river for his prayers as usual, he found the child-



Guru there. He had heard of the miracles of the boy and asked the Guru to make him see his chosen deity, Lord Rama. Gobindji smiled and asked the pandit to close his eyes. Slowly panditji was lost deep in meditation. Suddenly within his mental vision there appeared a beam of light, and he felt as though Lord Rama was standing right before him. Then he saw the vision of Lord Rama getting coalesced in the form of the child-Guru. He was overwhelmed with emotion, and when he opened his eyes he fell at the feet of the child-Guru, who, he realised, was the incarnation of Lord Rama. Smilingly the child-Guru placed his hand on the head of pandit Shiv Dutta, who felt that his worship had been finally rewarded. He related the incident to Raja Fatehsingh of Srinagar, the then capital of Garwal, who had no child of his own, and asked him to seek the blessings of the Guru.

And so, one day, Raja Fatehsingh told his wife about the child-Guru and they decided to visit him. The very next day they reached his house and were welcomed warmly by Mata Gujari. She was most surprised when they expressed their wish to be blessed by her five-year-old son. The child, Gobind, was playing in the courtyard at that time when he was called in to bless the couple. The Guru looked



at the stick in the Raja's hand and taking it from him he touched the Rani's head five times with it, blessing her. In no time, the Rani was expecting a child and she went on to give five children to the king.

Gobindji had no attachment whatsoever to any worldly things. One day, his mother gave him two gold *karhas* (thick bangles) and asked him to wear one on each wrist. After a few days she was surprised to see only one karha on his wrist. When she questioned him, he calmly told her that he had lost it. When she angrily asked him to take her to the place where he had been playing, he took her near the Ganga and threw the second karha also into the river. Then he told his amazed mother that he felt burdened and weighed by the karhas which to him represented the worldly temptations. He said that he wished to only follow the path of his father and Nanak Dev. His mother was very pleased with her child. She told him that she was proud of his noble sentiments, which she knew would help him to accomplish great deeds in future.

It was 1672, and the annual Baisakhi fair was nearing. Gobindji was really eager to join his father at Anandpur, but he was told that



they could go only when summoned. As if by miracle, the summon soon arrived. The political scene was filled with tension as the persecution of Hindus continued, and there was danger of hostilities from Aurangzeb. In such circumstances, Gobind Singh's father thought it best for the family to be together, and so he asked them to come to Anandpur.

When Gobindji was leaving Patna, people gathered around him in despair and sorrow. They felt the pangs of separation from the child who had somehow made a very strong place for himself in the hearts of Hindus and Muslims alike. Gobind Rai was given a very tearful farewell by the people of Patna who had grown to love him dearly.

After leaving Patna, Gobindji passed through Dhampur, Banaras, Ayodhya, Lucknow and Kirtarpur, finally reaching Anandpur. There he was welcomed with great joy. Large crowds of people gathered around him to have a glimpse of the wonder-boy. Thousands of people were fed that day by his father, and alms were distributed to the poor. The news of his arrival reached far and wide, and people came from everywhere with gifts such as bows and arrows as these were his favourites. He loved to organise armies and



enact battles, and he spent most of his time playing outside his home.

This period of his life can be described as the happiest. He was usually busy with games. He had the privilege of getting spiritual guidance directly from Guru Tegh Bahadur himself; his mother and grandmother doted on him; and he spent his mornings and evenings in meditation. He had already learnt Sanskrit and Persian as well as the Sikh scriptures. Special and suitable arrangements were also made for training him in horsemanship and use of arms. At night hymns from *Guru Granth Sahib* were recited to him, to which he listened with rapt attention. His father also arranged for his formal education in martial arts and weapons-wielding, since he knew that Gobindji would need the sword to fight tyranny and injustice in the land. His blissful life in Anandpur was unfortunately cut short.

One day, when he came home to greet his father, he found a group of strangers seated before him with sad and downcast faces. His father too had a grim expression on his face and was lost in thoughts. When he asked him the cause of his worry, Guru Tegh Bahadur disclosed to him that the whole country was

being terrorised by the bigot Aurangzeb and the Hindu *dharma* was facing a serious crisis. When Gobindji was told that the condition could improve only if an able and pure soul sacrificed his life for dharma, he promptly suggested that no one but his own father was suited for the sacrifice, since there was none more noble and holy than him. When a surprised Guru Tegh Bahadur asked what would become of him and his family, Gobindji earnestly and calmly replied that Lord Almighty would take good care of them. Guru Tegh Bahadur was extremely delighted to hear these noble sentiments expressed by his dear son. Thus he decided to sacrifice his life for the cause of dharma.

When Aurangzeb heard of Guru Tegh Bahadur's decision, he immediately sent his officials to arrest him in July 1675. And at the tender age of nine years, Gobindji assumed the charge of being the Guru. He was installed as the tenth Guru of the Sikhs.



## **THE EMERGENCE OF THE GURU**

On November 11, 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was publicly beheaded in Chandni Chowk. After the execution his body was left in the open to serve as a reminder to all rebels. Only a low caste Lubana Sikh named Lakhi Shah had the courage to secretly take away the headless body in a cart to his hut, which was at the outskirts of the city. He erected a pyre within his hut so that it looked like an accident to an outsider. Another low-caste Sikh named Jaita took the Guru's head stealthily and brought it to Guru Gobind Singh, who embraced and thanked the loyal man. The Guru, who was a little over nine years, then cremated the head of his father with due Sikh rites.

He was, however, deeply grieved to learn that the execution of Guru Tegh Bahadur had shattered the whole Sikh community and demoralised them. None had the courage to claim the body and some even denied their

religion when interrogated by the Muslim officials. Guru Gobind Singh was aware that their community was in the grip of fear, and this had not only weakened them but even broken their unity. He knew that revenge or active resistance at that moment was not right. He realised that the most important thing at that time was to bring the people together and unite their forces. For this, he decided to give them a dress code which would give them a common and distinct identity.

The young Guru had to face the gigantic task of infusing a new spirit of bravery and fearlessness into the people. And so, the first thing he did on becoming a Guru was to awaken his countrymen urging them to lead a decent life. Together with this, he began his drive of social reforms trying to eliminate religious hypocrisy and evil practises of the society. He managed to turn the people of Punjab into fearless soldiers. He was also aware that positive thinking was very essential for social progress and upliftment of society. So, he raised an army of poets and scholars too whose main purpose was to infuse the Hindu masses with a new life. The Guru himself was a good poet. He also stressed on sports to keep his men physically

active and strong, as well as mentally alert. The people, under his determined will and guidance, gave him all their support and soon his army grew in size.

Anandpur became a massive army cantonment. The Guru started procuring and distributing all sorts of arms and weapons. His army was soon growing in numbers. The Guru issued strict orders that no one was to attack anybody or usurp another's rights except for the sake of honour or protection of the oppressed.

The Guru followed the daily tradition of his forefathers. He woke up early in the morning, about three hours before sunrise, and after having his bath he recited the *Japji*. After that he attended the mass congregation in the open and bestowed *Namden* to the vast multitude. The *Guru Ka Langar* was always open for everyone and anyone. The Guru himself supervised the distribution of food and greeted the people with warmth and affection.

New recruits joined his army every day. There was great enthusiasm among the people who came from far-off places to become his followers and join his army. With so many men Guru Gobind Singh got a new drum



made known as *Ranjit Nagara* to summon his large army. A mere sound of it drew the brave Sikhs before him. At that time, only kings were entitled to own drums and the Ranjit Nagara was an open sign of authority or revolt against this practice. Some people went and complained to Mata Gujari about Guruji's preparation for war, and requested her to dissuade him from the dangerous path of revolt. Mata Gujari immediately advised Guru Gobind Singh to devote himself to religion, and forsake the use of arms and weapons. He calmly and respectfully told her that he was only following the path of Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur, and assured her that they would use arms only against tyranny and injustice. He also reminded her that God had sent him to help the oppressed and downtrodden. He also told her that he was guided solely by religious spirit. On hearing this Mata Gujari blessed him and prayed that the Guru be given strength and courage to fight the tyrants. He addressed his brave soldiers of the *Sant-Sena* (army of Saints) and asked them to remain firm and true to their pledge of safety and protection of the dharma and the country. He also told them that the days of testing their chivalry

and faith was quite near now. But his soldiers were undaunted; they were infused with courage and were ready to face any enemy.

## **THE NEW PANTH**

Guru Gobind Singh wanted to create a casteless society. Therefore, in the year 1699, he sent out invitations to all Sikhs to gather for a special meeting on Baisakhi day. After the morning prayers he got up, and addressing the crowd told them that the goddess of power wanted the head of a brave soldier. He asked one of his soldiers to come forward. After a moment's silence, a man named Dayaram, a Khatri of Lahore, offered himself for the sacrifice. Guru Gobind Singh then went with him inside his tent and when he came out his sword had drops of blood dripping from it.

He again asked for a soldier for sacrifice and this time a man called Jat Bhai Dharamdas of Delhi offered himself. Guru Gobind Singh repeated this three more times and Bhai Mohan Chand from Dwarka, Bhai Saheb Chand of Bidas and Bhai Himmat Chand of Jasannath, three main disciples, offered themselves.

When the Guru entered the camp for the sixth time the crowd was surprised to see him return with the five disciples. They then realised that Guru Gobind Singh was only testing their courage. The whole crowd ecstatically shouted slogans in honour of the Guru. Guru Gobind Singh then embraced all the five men and said that they were the *Panj Piare* or his five beloved men.

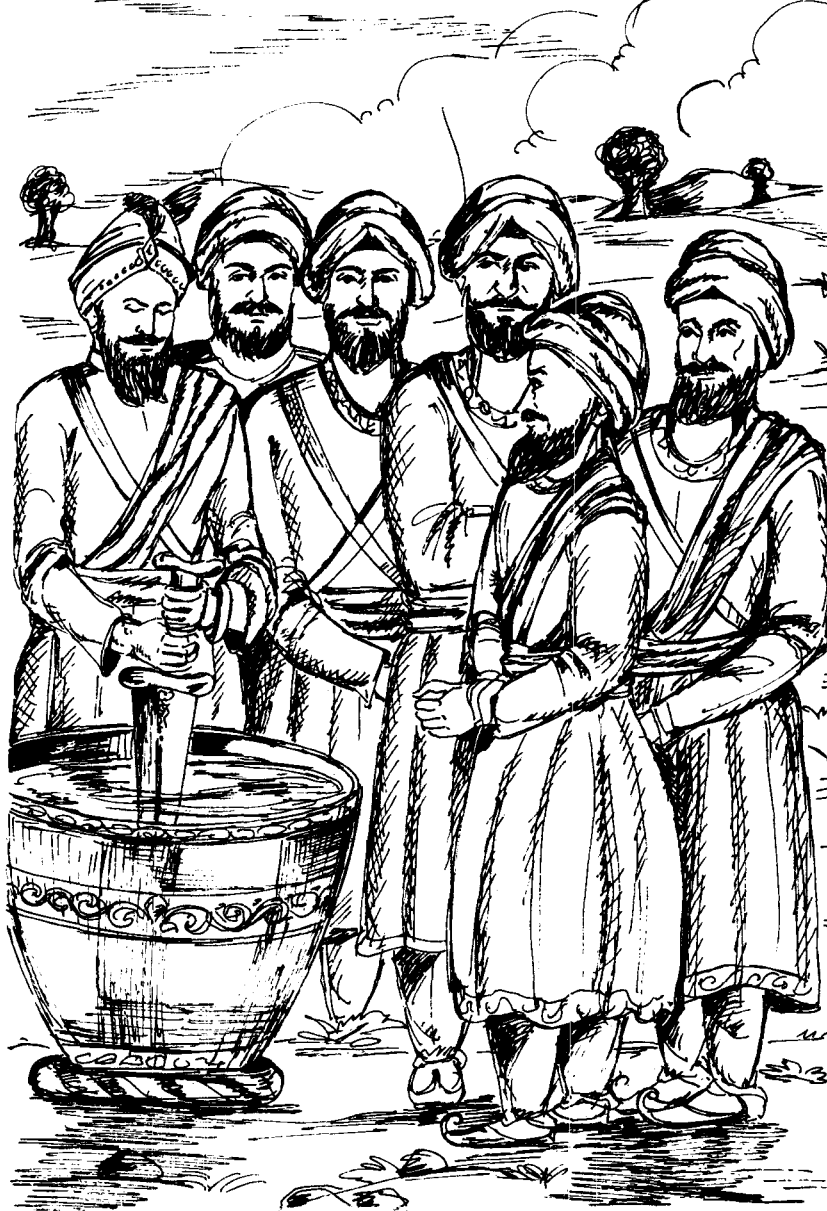
On that day Guru Gobind Singh announced a new *Panth* altogether, by the name of Khalsa. Since Khalsa meant 'Pure', this Panth was to unite all its members by the bond of purity and eliminate all distinctions of high and low, rich and poor. He further ordained that the disciples of his Panth must imbibe *amrit* or holy water, and lead a simple and pure life. He said that any person who partakes of this amrit would be changed from a jackal to a lion, from a sparrow to a hawk. He also added that people from all castes were welcome to take the amrit provided they gave up and forgot their previous castes forever, since his purpose was to combine them all into one brotherhood, the Khalsa.

He then demonstrated to everyone present, how amrit was to be made. He took fresh clean water in a vessel of steel. He knelt



beside it like a soldier and asked his five beloved men to stand before him in a semi-circle. They were told to fix their eyes on the Guru and their minds on God. He then asked them to stir the water in the steel vessel with a *khande* or two-edged sword, while he recited the sacred verses of *Gurbani* which he had selected for the ceremony. Then, to show what wonderful power the amrit possessed he put some of it aside for the birds to drink. Just then two sparrows came there and sipped it. Then they flew to a distance and suddenly started to fight fiercely like two kings fighting for a kingdom. Each was bent upon killing the other. They continued fighting till both were dead. Then, turning to his Sikhs, he told them that they too will become fierce, brave and warrior-like, on partaking of the amrit.

Seeing this, a Sikh went to the Guru's wife, Mata Jitoji, and informed her of the amrit which the Guru had prepared and its effect on the two sparrows. When Mata Jitoji heard this she decided to go and sweeten the amrit. She bought some sweets called *patashas* and took them to the Guru. He was very pleased to see what she had brought. He then explained that the amrit which he had prepared was going to produce brave,



fearless, courageous and just men, and though these qualities were going to be very useful and important in the times to come, these could also prove dangerous and harmful. The sweets brought by Mata Jitoji would combine it with peace, a loving-nature and sweetness of temper. He then asked her to pour the sweets in the amrit so that the Sikhs could be brave, strong, fearless like lions, and yet possess a sweet nature. He then baptized his five beloved men, and asked them to drink from the same vessel, which shocked many and pleased the others. He then added 'Singh' to their names and said that thereafter all Sikhs must have the suffix 'Singh' attached to their names. The crowd cheered at this announcement since 'Singh' meant a lion, thus eliminating all differences between them and putting an end to any inferiority complex.

He then told the gathered Sikhs that they should carry arms for the defence of their principles, their faith and their country. They should never show their back to the enemy in a battle. They should live and act according to the Three Golden Rules laid down by Guru Nanak. He asked them to help the poor and the needy, and protect the weak. They should

give up their previous castes and accept only one caste, the Khalsa. They were not to indulge in drinks or any other intoxication. To strengthen this unity, he chalked out five essentials for a true Sikh which would not only unite them, but also give them a distinct identity. These five things were (1) *Kesh* (uncut hair), (2) *Kaccha* (underwear), (3) *Kangha* (comb), (4) *Karha* (thick bangle), and (5) *Kirpan* (small dagger).

After this, he asked his five beloved men to prepare the amrit as he had done. Then he requested them to baptize him as he had done them. When the astonished men hesitated, he told them that having been baptized and having partaken the amrit from the same vessel they were no more his disciples. He asked to be made a 'Singh' too by baptism. The beloved men obliged and baptized him in the same manner. Then the Guru formally declared that his name would no more be Gobind Rai but Gobind Singh.

And thus was born the new Panth of the Khalsa — a nation of saint-soldiers, who worshipped one God, who were friends and servants of man, and enemies of all tyrants—all equal in all respects. Thus Khalsa was Guru Gobind's ideal state of man—brave,

fearless, strong as a lion, yet sweet, humble and loving.

He gave numerous instructions to his disciples, and the people felt a new awakening in their dormant minds. Men who had either lived as slaves of so called upper castes or in fear of tyrants were now converted into brave warriors under the Guru's leadership. They were ready to give up their lives for their Guru without a moment's hesitation or fear. Guru Gobind thus put life into his Sikhs and gave them a strong, powerful personality.

## UPHOLDING THE CAUSE

Around this time Guru Gobind Singh received an invitation from Raja Medni Parkah, chief of the Himalayan hill state of Nahan, to visit his state. The Guru gladly accepted the invitation and he reached Nahan on April 14, 1685. Here he founded a fort which he named Paonta. He often sat here on the beautiful banks of the Jamuna and thought of ways and means to free his countrymen from sin and suffering, and slavery. He was painfully aware of the social, religious and political tyranny that was being practised everyday against his people. In order to fit himself for the inevitable struggle, the Guru practiced every form of manly exercise such as riding, hunting, archery and sword-play.

At Sadhaura, about 25 km from Paonta, there lived a Sayyid fakir named Pir Budhu Shah. When he learnt that Guru Gobind Singh was staying so near him, he came over to meet him. The Guru received him warmly.

The Sayyid confessed to the Guru that he was a sinner and was, therefore, very afraid of his life after death. He begged the Guru to forgive his sins and save him from God's displeasure. He pleaded to be guided by the Guru and be shown the right path. The Guru asked him to repent his sins with his whole heart and resolve never to do wrong again. He advised him to always do good things and help others. He assured the Pir that if he led a humble and truthful life he would have no fears about his life after death. Sayyid Budhu Shah was relieved on hearing such soothing words, and promised to live and act as advised by the Guru. Then he returned to Sadhaura, a peaceful man.

A few days after Sayyid Budhu Shah's return home five hundred Pathans, in military uniform, came to him. They had been employed in the army of Emperor Aurangzeb but had been dismissed for a minor fault. No one was ready to employ them anymore for fear of the mighty Mughal army. They begged the Pir to get them employed somewhere. Sayyid Budhu Shah decided to help them. He knew that Guru Gobind Singh had employed a large number of Muslims in his army. He took the Pathans to the Guru and requested

him to enlist them in his army. The Guru willingly agreed, and took them in his service. He also gave them handsome salaries which really satisfied them. The names of these Pathans were Haiyat Khan, Kale Khan, Niyabat Khan, Umre Khan and Bhikhan Khan.

The new Panth created by the Guru was received warmly by everyone. But many rulers of the nearby hill states felt that it threatened their authority and existence, and so, on April 16 1689, the hill-chiefs, under Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur, attacked the Guru's army which was stationed at the fort of Patna near the village of Bhangani. However, when the Pathans heard of the attack four of the five Pathan officers, with the four hundred soldiers under them, decided to desert the Guru. They went over to the enemy's side. Only one Pathan officer, Kale Khan, and the soldiers under him remained faithful to the Guru.

When Sayyid Budhu Shah heard of the Pathan's desertion he felt really guilty since he had asked the Guru to take them in. He decided to make amends for this by helping the Guru himself. And so, he joined the Guru along with his two brothers, his four sons and his seven hundred disciples.



Meanwhile, five hundred *Udasi sadhus*, who had been availing themselves of the rich food served in the Guru's kitchen were also disappointed at the news of the attack. They were afraid of being sent to fight the enemy by the Guru, and so they decided to run away during the night. Their leader, Mahant Kirpal, was the only Udasi who did not go. Next morning, when the Guru was informed about the desertion, he smiled and expressed his satisfaction that the root i.e. the leader, was still there, which meant that the tree would still grow and bear fruits. He also added gravely that had the leader also fled, the Udasis would have been banished and forsaken forever from Sikhism, which would have meant their end.

The Guru stationed his army near the village Bhangani. A severe battle was fought but the Guru's army, with brave soldiers like Sayyid Budhu Shah and Mahant Kirpal, drove the enemy away like a hurricane. They shouted God's name like thunder, and charged with all their strength. Sayyid Budhu Shah, his brothers, his sons and his disciples all fought with great bravery and devotion. Two of Sayyid's sons and several disciples fell fighting for the Guru. Mahant Kirpal also fought with bravery. He

challenged Haiyat Khan, one of the four Pathan officers, who had deserted the Guru, and killed him with his wooden club. When the Pathans had run away, the Guru applauded the Mahant generously. The Guru's enemies suffered heavy losses and fled. Guru Gobind Singh's army finally won the battle of Bhangani, and the forces of the hill-chiefs retreated after a crushing defeat.

After the battle, when Sayyid Budhu Shah went to take leave of the Guru with his surviving sons and disciples the Guru embraced him, and told him that he had proved to be a true lover and worshipper of God. He assured the Pir that his sons had not died but become immortals, since they had done their duty faithfully and bravely. He presented his turban, and his comb with loose hair in it to the Sayyid. He also gave the Pir a *Hukumnama* — an order to his Sikhs to treat the Sayyid and his descendants with due respect and kindness. Sayyid Budhu Shah then returned home, proud to have served his Guru like a true soldier-disciple.

The Guru stayed at Bhangani for a few days to give proper cremation to all the dead soldiers and to take care of the wounded. Then he returned to Anandpur. There, to

ensure the safety of the city against attacks he constructed five forts, which were named Anandgarh, Lohgarh, Fatehgarh, Kesgarh and Holgarh.

After the massive defeat at Bhangani, Raja Bhim Chand decided to make friends with the Guru. He sent a message to the Guru with his peace proposal. The Guru told them that he had nothing against Raja Bhim Chand and he was willing to forgive and forget. When the hill-chief came to hear of this, he came to the Guru and asked his forgiveness. The Guru willingly forgave him and agreed to regard him as a friend and an ally. This friendship brought about a period of peace, but it was shortlived. The reason was that many hill-chiefs had not paid the tribute to the Emperor of Delhi for a number of years. And so, in 1690, Moin Khan, the Governor of Jammu, sent Alif Khan, a military commander, to collect the tributes. Alif Khan sent word to Bhim Chand and others to pay up or get ready for battle. Raja Bhim Chand immediately sought the Guru's help. The Guru advised him to resist the demand since yeilding once would mean more demands in the years to come. He agreed to fight on their side, and a battle was fought at Nadaum which ended in the success of the allies.

Sometime later, a general named Hussain Khan was sent to collect the tribute and finish the Guru. Meanwhile, the friendship between the Guru and the hill-chief, Raja Bhim Chand, also ended since his successor Raja Ajmer Chand considered the Guru more of a threat than a friend. He and many other hill-chiefs paid the tribute and joined the invaders against the Guru. But before attacking Anandpur they decided to kill Raja Gopal of Guler, who had not yielded. But he fled to the Guru and sought his help. Guru Gobind Singh sent his strong army under the command of Bhai Sangatia Singh and a bloody battle was fought. The enemies were ruthlessly attacked. Hussain, his two military officers, Raja Kirpal Chand of Katoch and many other hill-chiefs were slain. The rest of the enemy forces fled in terror. Ajmer Chand saved his life by running away from the battle. The Guru won the battle, but lost Bhai Sangatia Singh and seven of his companions.

The success of Guru Gobind Singh in the battles of Nadaum and Guler caused a great deal of anxiety to the emperor. He immediately sent his son, Prince Muazzim (who later came to be known as Bahadur Shah Zafar), to control the Guru. The prince

then took his position at Lahore and sent a strong force to punish the Guru and the rajas. The rajas were severally punished but with the help of Bhai Nand Lal, who was the secretary of the prince and also a devout Sikh, the Guru was left in peace. The prince had heard so much about the Guru and his greatness that he soon became an admirer of him. He arranged matters in such a way so that the Mughal court did not have any complaints with the Guru, and thus did not trouble him.

Guru Gobind Singh was very pleased with the state of affairs, since he was also in favour of peace for the accomplishment of his spiritual mission. He did not want war or disturbance of any kind, but the hill-chiefs who were very bitter about the levelling of all classes and castes were bent on working against him. They felt he was destroying their religious and social structure and found him a threat to themselves. They wanted to get rid of him at any cost. They wanted to attack him but were afraid of defeat, and so they constantly planned and plotted to harm the Guru in every possible way. Then one day, they had their golden chance. Guru Gobind Singh had gone out for hunting in the hills.

He had only a small party of Sikhs with him, but ones who were ever ready to lay down their lives for the Guru. Two hill-chiefs, Balia Chand and Alim Chand, came to know of the Guru's presence in the hills with a small party of Sikhs. Seeing their golden opportunity to kill him, they decided to fall upon him suddenly. They first attacked a group of Guru's companions who had scattered about in search of game. The Guru's men fought bravely, but they were too few to stand for long. They had to retreat. At the time of attack the Guru was at some distance from the scene and could not see what was happening. Just then, a Sikh came running to him and informed him of what had happened. The Guru rushed to that place, shouting, "*Akal Akal Sat Sri Akal!*" When his shout was heard by the retreating Sikhs it filled them with fresh courage and resolve, and they turned back to face the enemy with the same loud cry. They fought like lions and fell upon the hillmen. Alim Chand's right arm was chopped off during the fight, after which he ran for his life. The other hill-chief, Balia Chand, was thus left alone to face the Guru's army. He was soon shot dead by the Guru's men. When the hill troops saw that one of



their chiefs had fled from the field and the other was dead, they also took to flight. After the battle, the Guru and his men resumed their hunting excursion.

After this battle, things became worse between the two sides. The hill-chiefs had now become the mortal enemies of Guru Gobind Singh. They were now determined to kill the Guru. So they sent a representation to Delhi with a complete report of the "lawlessness" of the Khalsas, and the danger they posed to the imperial power. Emperor Aurangzeb was at that time engaged in warfare in the Deccan, so the hill-chief's representation was received by the *subedar* or viceroy of Delhi. It was then forwarded by him to the emperor for orders.

However, while the hill-chiefs were awaiting the emperor's orders or their petition they got a chance to waylay and attack the Guru. He had gone to Kashmir on the occasion of solar eclipse where a big religious fair was to be held. He wanted to spread the message of Guru Nanak to the assembled pilgrims, and also to buy horses for his army.

The hill-chiefs who were also present at the fair saw that the Guru had only hundred



soldiers with him. They saw this as their chance to capture or kill him by attacking him on his way back to Anandpur. However, though the decision to waylay him had been made, no chief had the courage to actually do it. They were still deciding what to do when they heard that two Muslim generals named Sayid Beg and Alif Khan were on their way to Delhi from Lahore. They had five thousand soldiers each in their command. The hill-chiefs immediately decided to hire the two generals to fight the Guru. Raja Ajmer Chand promised each of them one thousand rupees a day, and the two men agreed to fight. However, of the two, Sayyid Beg was a religious man and he became curious about the Guru he was being hired to kill. And whatever he learnt, made him admire and respect his opponent. So he withdrew from the Muslim army against the Guru. The other Muslim hireling, however, attacked the Guru when he was near Chamkaur Sahib. The enemy forces were very strong but the Guru did not lose heart. He and his men fought bravely. The news of the attack soon reached Anandpur and four hundred soldiers immediately set out to join the Guru. The Muslim hirelings though afraid now, were too

many. Saiyed Beg was filled with admiration and wonder as he watched the Sikhs fight with their heart and soul. He then felt that his withdrawal from the enemy's side was not enough. So he went upto the Sikhs and offered the services of his army and himself. The Guru agreed, and soon he and his men were seen fighting against Alif Khan and his army. Seeing his position shaken Alif Khan ordered his army to retreat. He was pursued by Saiyed Beg and the Sikhs for quite a distance.

When they returned, Saiyed Beg went to pay his respects to the Guru. He told the Guru that he was a servant of Aurangzeb but now he wanted to serve the Guru and his Khalsa. The Guru willingly took him into his service. Saiyed Beg also gave all his wealth to the Guru to assist him against the enemies. The Guru began to trust Saiyed Beg a lot, and he remained faithful and trustworthy all his life.

When the news of the victory of the Khalsa army reached Aurangzeb he realised that the Sikhs of Punjab, under the leadership of Guru Gobind Singh, were quite a threat to the imperial power. He ordered his troops to attack Anandpur and annihilate the power of the Sikhs. And so, in the year 1700, a strong

Mughal army of twenty thousand troops attacked Anandpur. The rulers of the hill states who were defeated in the Battle of Bhangani also sided with the Mughals. But the Guru was not at all discouraged. He encouraged his brave soldiers and boosted their morale with courageous words. The Sikhs fought most valiantly for the sake of dharma. They were not afraid to sacrifice their lives and were determined not to let the enemy step into their holy precinct. Under the command of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikh soldiers launched such a deadly assault on the combined forces of Aurangzeb and the hill-chiefs that they retreated hastily. Guruji killed the Mughal commander, Painde Khan, with his own sword. Another Mughal commander fled with his forces. The brave Sikh soldiers chased them upto Ropar.

One of the generals leading the imperial army was Saiyed Khan who was the brother of Sayyid Budhu Shah's wife. Saiyad Khan had heard a lot about the Guru from his sister and brother-in-law who were his known devotees. From what he had heard, he greatly admired the Guru. When he saw him on the battlefield, Saiyed Khan felt a strong desire to submit to the Guru and bow before him. But



his pride and position as the general of the army stood on the way. The Guru knew what was passing in Saiyed Khan's mind. He decided to help him out of his struggle. He went and stood right before the general, who shot at the Guru but missed. He had never missed before, so he tried again. The Guru came even closer, and Saiyed Khan tried again but missed again. Then the Guru advanced still nearer, but Saiyed Khan just could not pull the trigger. He finally gave up and, alighting from his horse knelt down before the Guru. Touching his feet he offered himself as a servant to the Guru. The Guru then gave him the gift of true name. Saiyed Khan, however, did not actively assist the Guru. He fought no one anymore. At the Guru's bidding he went to Kangra and spent his days meditating and thinking of his Guru.

After Saiyed Khan became the Guru's disciple his place in the army was taken over by Ramzan Khan, who fought bravely against the Sikhs and destroyed the city. On thinking carefully the Guru realised that the city was not safe anymore, and so he and his men retired into the fort. The Muslims, however, plundered the fort and destroyed a lot of property. Then a few kilometers away from

Anandpur, they encamped. They were in high spirits, having defeated the Guru, and spent their time feasting and drinking.

The Sikhs wanted to avenge their defeat, so they took the Guru's permission to fall upon the imperial army during the night. The Guru's eldest son, Sahibzad Ajit Singh, led them into the night and took the Mughals unawares. Hundreds of them were killed by the Sikhs while the others fled. The Sikhs took control of the stolen booty, as well as their camp.

The emperor was really upset when he heard of the disaster of his army. He questioned his troops and was told that they were caught unawares. The emperor then made a few enquiries about the Guru from one of his soldiers, who was all praise for him. He told the emperor that he was a true saint, a lover of God and his children, and was equal to one lakh men on the battlefield. The emperor was so displeased on hearing all this that he dismissed the man from service at once. But he could not forget what was said of the Guru, and it distressed him terribly. He decided to use his full strength against the Guru and put an end to his life and activities. But the court advised him to use a little tact

and get the Guru to come to his court. He suggested that if they succeeded in winning him over, he could prove to be a real powerful ally for them. The emperor agreed to this proposal and deputed the Qazi to convey his message to the Guru, wherein he asked the Guru to come and meet him for a frank talk. He also added that if he came he could be treated as holy men are treated by the kings, but if he refused then it would not be good for him.

When Guru Gobind Singh received the Qazi and this message, he knew it would not be wise to trust him. He had not forgotten how Aurangzeb had treated his own father, brothers, their families and other holy men. He knew that he would be falling into a trap if he went to the emperor's court. He sent a message back saying that the emperor had been violating God's orders by persecuting non-Muslims. He also added that he would not meet or talk with him till he gave up his cruel ways and stopped ill-treating God's children. The Guru also conferred a robe of honour on the Qazi before he left.

On the other side, Raja Ajmer Chand and the other hill-chiefs were deeply distressed to see that the glory and the power of the Guru

and his Sikhs were increasing day by day. They began to fear that they would soon lose their kingdoms to the Guru. So they got together and decided to send another petition to the emperor. In it they implored the emperor to send a strong army to crush the Guru once and for all. They assured him of the support of all the hill-chiefs and their troops. Raja Ajmer Chand himself undertook the task of presenting this petition to the emperor. Aurangzeb was in the Deccan at that time. So the hill-chief proceeded there with his petition. By the time he reached there the emperor had received the Guru's reply to his invitation. Both the things together made him really furious and he ordered all the troops under the nawab of Sarhind and Lahore to attack the Guru. The armies of twenty-two hill-chiefs also joined them along with the Ranghavs and the Gujjars, who were also Muslims.

The Guru was thus posed with a difficult situation, but he did not feel the least disturbed. The brave Sikhs were all set to lay down their lives fighting for him. The battle raged in full fury. The Nawabs were shocked to see their soldiers being knocked down one by one, since they had thought it would be an



easy victory this time. The fighting grew really fierce the following day and both sides suffered heavy losses, but the Guru's enemies lost more soldiers. It began to look almost impossible for the allied forces to defeat the Sikhs in this battle too.

Among the Sikhs, at the Guru's darbar, was a man named Bhai Kanhaeeya. He was a peace-loving, devout Sikh with a very compassionate heart. It was because of this that he had not partaken of the Guru's amrit to become a soldier. His main aim in life was to serve the weak and the needy, and to care for the wounded and sick. At the end of one day's fighting, some Sikhs complained to the Guru that he was helping the enemies. They said that all the enemy soldiers felled and wounded by them were treated and cared for by Bhai Kanhaeeya, as a result of which they got well to fight them again. On hearing this, the Guru sent for Bhai Kankaeya. When he appeared the Guru asked him if he was indeed helping the enemy, as his soldiers said. But Bhai Kanhaeeya humbly replied that his Sikh brothers were highly mistaken, since he was neither serving Sikhs nor Turks. He was only serving the Guru. When the Guru asked him how was that, Bhai



Kanhaeeya explained that he was following the teachings of the Guru himself who preached that whenever someone clothed a naked man, or fed a hungry person, or gave water to a thirsty man he was serving the Guru indirectly. Bhai Kanhaeeya confessed that the Guru's words were so deeply engrossed in his heart and mind that he could only see the Guru's face in all the wounded soldier's — Sikhs or Muslims — that lay before him.

The Guru was deeply touched by Bhai Kanhaeeya's devotion and selfless service. He applauded his good work and explained to the others that other soldiers were enemies as long as they fought and bore arms, but once on the ground, felled or wounded, they were just men, sons of the Father above. He then gave the devout Sikh a pot of ointment to help him in his service. He blessed the Sikh for his good work and assured him that God would be very pleased with him. From that day onwards the followers of Bhai Kanhaeeya came to be called *Sewa panthis*, and till today they form an orthodox and honorable sect of Sikhs. They live by honest work and accept no money or offerings for their services.

## THE SIEGE

Aurangzeb was very sore by this defeat. He decided to put an end to Guru Gobind's life. He ordered the viceroys of Sarhind and Lahore to launch an attack once again on the Guru, which was led by Subedar Wazir Khan, Zabardest Khan—the commander of Kashmir, and Dilewar Khan—the commander of Kashmir. They attacked Anandpur in Dol and all the hill-chiefs joined them. The Sikhs had to face overwhelming odds. They fought bravely but the enemy soon besieged the city and the Sikh army was confined to the fort for six month. As a result, food provisions for the Sikhs fell short and this created a grave problem. Guru Gobind Singh, however, continued to boost the morale of his army by reminding them of their pledge and of the great sacrifice made by Guru Tegh Bahadur. The army was rejuvenated at his impassioned words and they charged at the enemy forces with full force.

The battle went on for three years. Some began to lose heart and begged the Guru to evacuate the fort. When their enemies became aware of discontentment, they decided to take advantage of it and made a cunning move. The commander in-chief sent a message bearing the imperial signature to Guruji's camp. Swearing by the holy words of the *Quran*, the message read that the emperor did not want to damage Guruji's forces and if he agreed to leave the town and go somewhere else, he would end the battle, since he did not want anymore bloodshed. But the Guru told them that he had no faith in the oaths and they were to be broken. The siege, therefore, continued. The hardships of the besieged were becoming unbearable, so much so, that a group of Sikhs decided to go away, against the wishes of the Guru. At this, the Guru asked all those who wanted to leave to give in writing that he was not their Guru and they were not his Sikhs. A few hundred soldiers wrote the disclaimer and went away. After sometime, the Guru's mother became in favour of going away too. At last, the Guru yielded to her wishes. He realised that the enemy was stronger at the moment and he did not want innocent people to die in the battle.

He decided to retreat for the time being, and when he told his disciples about it they approved of his decision.

So on the cold night of December 20 1704, Guruji's caravan left the town with his two wives, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, his mother, his four sons and hundreds of his ardent devotees. He managed to reach Tirathpur but the enemy forces treacherously attacked them from behind. The Guru and his army pounced upon the enemy and managed to reach the banks of the river Sirsa. But they had to stop there since the river was in spate and chilly winds blew all around. Some Sikh soldiers insisted on staying and persuaded Guruji and his family to cross the river one by one. However, on reaching the other side of the river he could not find his two younger sons, Baba Jarovar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh. He looked for them everywhere but was unable to find them. Dejectedly he left for the Chamkaur Sahib in the Ambala district, with his two elder sons, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Juhar Singh. But the enemy forces chased them here also and Gobindji fought heroically with his few soldiers. Later, on the advice and insistence of his disciples, he left for a safe place. Guruji lost both his sons also in this battle.



Mata Gujari, who had got lost in the Sirsa river, was with the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh. She happened to meet a brahmin named Gangu, who at one time had been their cook. This man, however, was lured by the ornaments and wealth in the boat, so he gave away Guruji's two younger sons and Mata Gujari to the Governor of Sarhind, Nawab Wazir Khan. The Nawab was very pleased to have the two boys of the Guru in his custody. He felt that if he could convert the two boys to Islam it would not only be a remarkable achievement, but also give a jolt to the morales of the Sikhs. So he tried to frighten the boys by telling them that their elder brothers were slain and their father was missing, but they could survive if they accepted Islam as their religion. The boys withstood all the temptations and were undaunted by threats. They did not budge from their faith, and their constant refusal made the Nawab lose his temper. He ordered the boys to be taken away and be entombed inside a wall, so that they would suffocate to death. But still the boys did not relent and sacrificed their lives for their dharma. Mata Gujari could not bear this sorrow, and so died of shock.



At that time, there lived in Sarhind a Sikh named Todar Mal. When he heard that Guru Gobind Singh's mother and his two sons were in the custody of Nawab Wazir Khan, he immediately set off to the court with a large bag of gold coins with him. But he was filled with remorse when on reaching there he found that the boys had been beheaded. Their grandmother had died hearing of the martyrdom. Thereupon, he went straight to the Nawab and sought his permission to cremate the three bodies. The Nawab agreed, but asked Todar Mal to pay a very high price for the land in which the cremation was to take place. The faithful Sikh chose the sight and paid for it with gold coins. He then cremated the martyrs' bodies and Mata Gujari's, and buried their ashes there.

On the spot where the three bodies were cremated, now stands a Gurudwara named Jyoti Swaroop.

## THE PERIOD OF STRUGGLE

After the death of his sons and many of his men at Chamkaur, the Guru left for a safer place with three of his companions. It was a dark night and the Guru got separated from them. He followed a star and finally reached a village named Kheri. By this time his feet were pierced with thorns, his clothes were tattered and he was shivering with cold. There he was recognised by two *Gujjars* (Muslims) who raised an alarm. The Guru was, therefore, forced to kill them. He then hid in the thorny bushes since the imperial enemy was after him. Meanwhile, his three companions who were also following the star found him. They informed him of the pursuing army and suggested that they move further. But the Guru's feet were sore and painful and so he urged his companions to take shelter in a garden nearby. They, however, did not leave the Guru behind and carried him on their back to the garden. There

they bathed for the first time in many days, and felt very refreshed. This garden belonged to Gulaba Masand, a devotee of the Guru, who ran to offer his services. But the Guru knew that the imperial army was chasing him and it was not safe to stay there. Besides, he did not want to cause any trouble to an innocent man. So they left the place as soon as they could.

In the same village lived two Pathan brothers, Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan. They had been in the Guru's service for sometime in the past, and when they came to know of his presence in the village they decided to help him. They went to the Guru and offered to take him to a safe place. Then, dressing the Guru in a robe worn by Muslim *fakirs*, they bore him in a litter. It was lifted by Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan in front and Bhai Mahan Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh in the rear. Whoever questioned them on the way were told that they were carrying the *uchch Pir*, which meant a 'high Muslim saint'. Moving continuously and quickly, they reached Hehar in the Ludhiana district. In this village lived Mahant Kirpal Das, who welcomed the Guru devoutly.

Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan asked the Guru's permission to go back since their work

was complete. Before they left, the Guru presented a pair of gold bracelets to them for their service. He also gave them a Hukumnama, which was a letter addressed to the Sikhs, stating that these two Muslim friends were dearer to the Guru than his own sons and should be treated with great respect.

The Guru then stayed with Mahant Kirpal for a few days. But when he heard of the imperial orders against sheltering or helping him in anyway, he decided to move on. From Hehar he moved to Jatpura. There he met a Muslim named Rai Kalha, who was an important and a rich person of Jagraon and Raikot. He was also a devout admirer of the Guru. He too had heard of the imperial orders against helping or sheltering the Guru. But it did not stop him from inviting him to his home. He took good care of him and served him with utmost devotion. The Guru then asked him to send somebody to Sarhind to get information about the fate of his mother and sons. The messenger sent by Rai Kalha returned in a few days. When Guruji heard of his sons death he took it very calmly, and replied that his sons had become immortal by their sacrifice. He was glad they had died for dharma, and said that he was ready to

sacrifice not two, but two thousand sons. He blessed his sons' deaths, for he knew that it was the harbinger of the end of the Mughal and Turkish rule in India. He consoled his devotees by saying that death should not weaken the resolve to uphold dharma. He then told them that this righteous war would continue as long as there was even one Khalsa left to fight.

After this, the Guru moved on to Dina in Firozpur, where he stayed with three brothers — Shamira, Lakhmira and Takht Mal. When the Nawab of Sarhind learnt of this he ordered Shamira to arrest the Guru, and bring him to Sarhind, but he ignored it. From there, the Guru wrote a letter to Aurangzeb which he called *Zafarname* or the 'Epistle of Victory'. In it, he condemned Aurangzeb's violation of the oaths taken in the *Quran*. He referred to the attack in Anandpur by treacherous means. He denounced Aurangzeb for having no regards for his religion and also laid down the losses he and his family had suffered due to the atrocities in the name of religion. He then sent Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh (two of the beloved five) with the letter to the emperor. After much difficulty, they

reached Aurangzeb, who was on his death bed. He read the letter and was deeply moved. Through the two men, he sent an invitation to the Guru to visit him and speak a few kind words. He also wrote to the Nawab of Sarhind asking him not to trouble the Guru anymore. When the Guru received the message he was deeply touched, and set out towards the Deccan to meet him. But when he reached Baghaur he heard that Aurangzeb had died at Ahmednagar on February 20, 1707. On hearing this, he returned to Dina. The Nawab of Sarhind ignored Aurangzeb's orders and asked Shamira to surrender the Guru to him. Shamira refused again and Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sarhind, decided to attack the Guru.

Guru Gobind Singh confronted the forces of Wazir Khan on May 9, 1705. The Sikh army fought bravely and destroyed the Turkish army. He constantly inspired his brave soldiers to protect the dharma. He told them that if they could end the tyrannical rule of the Turks and the Mughals, their purpose would be fulfilled and their name will be inscribed in golden letters in the history of the country. He spurred them on to fight till victory or death was theirs. But the enemy

troops were large and they far outnumbered the Sikh soldiers. When many of the Sikh soldiers were killed, the disciples requested him to leave for a safe place. He agreed to their requests and decided to leave. But before leaving, he visited the scene of the battle. Among the Sikhs, who had died fighting, he found those forty men who had deserted him during the siege of Anandpur. With great love and affection he lifted the heads into his lap, wiped their face and blessed them. Then he came to a soldier named Bhai Mahan Singh who was still alive. When he found himself in the Guru's lap, he was overjoyed. The Guru gently asked him if he had any last wish to be fulfilled. At this, a tearful Bhai Mahan said that he could have asked for nothing more than to die in his Guru's lap. Then he requested the Guru to tear off the disclaimer. When the Guru tore it off in front of him, Bhai Mahan sighed in relief and breathed his last peacefully.

Then the Guru departed with his Pathan associates and stayed in the Lakhi jungle. He began rendering service to the needy and poor there. Having stayed there for sometime, he decided to tour the southern region of the country. But before he could leave Bahadur

Shah Zafar, the new Mughal king, sent a reconciliatory message to Guruji and he duly arrived in Delhi. The king welcomed him in his court and asked the Guru to end the long and bitter war between the two forces. The Guru replied that he too was against useless bloodshed but he wanted no oppression of his faith. Bahadur Shah assured the Guru that followers of all faiths and religions would be allowed to stay in peace, without any distinction between Hindus and Muslims. The Guru then agreed for a settlement, and they signed an honourable agreement.

Having made peace with the Mughal Empire, the Guru left on his tour to the southern states. Visiting many towns and cities in the south, Guru Gobind Singh gave *darshan* to his devotees, and at last reached Nanda, on the banks of the river Godavari. Here, a *bairagi* monk named Madho Das had his *ashram*. On reaching there, he went straight to the ashram and rested on the couch of Madho Das. When a servant informed him of the guest's conduct, he was furious and tried to overturn the couch by his magic powers. But he failed. He at once knew that the man was none other than the Guru. He immediately went and offered himself in



the service of the Guru. He was then named *Banda* (slave) Bahadur. Guruji began to hold his regular spiritual court in this ashram, and followers of all faiths began to attend it without fail.

## **THE LAST DAYS**

Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sarhind, was still the enemy of the Guru and he was aware of the close relations of the Guru and the Mughal king. As it was, the king had ordered that Wazir Khan pay three hundred rupees a day to the Guru, and so he feared that along with the money the Guru was also after his life. He hired two Pathans to murder Guruji. One of the Pathans was said to be the grandson of Painde Khan, who was slain by the Guru himself in the earlier battle.

One day, after the evening service, the Guru went to rest. While he was sleeping one of the Pathans attacked him with his sword. Guruji immediately got up and slayed the other Pathan by his sword. Hearing the commotion his disciples came in and slayed the first Pathan also. Guruji's wound was attended to, and it appeared to have healed in a few days. But one day, when he was trying to bend a bow, presented to him by a Sikh, the



wound burst open and bled profusely. Guruji now knew that his end was near. He asked his disciples to get the holy book or the *Guru Granth Sahib* to him. He then placed five paise and a coconut before the sacred *Granth*, went around it thrice and bowed before it. Then he instructed his disciples that after him, the *Guru Granth Sahib* was to be their sole guide. He asked them to follow the commands and instructions enshrined in the holy book. He also told them that there was to be no personal Guru after him; no man was to be regarded as the Guru. For all religious and spiritual matters the *Guru Granth Sahib* had to be referred to.

In his parting message, he told the Sikhs to end the system of personal Gurus, and said that he would be there for them whenever they needed him or called for him with a pure heart and a true mind. He entreated them to preserve the Khalsa uniform, Khalsa identity, and the Khalsa principles.

Then he lay down peacefully, and left his mortal form for his Eternal Home. It was October 7, 1708 A.D., when his Spirit merged with the Supreme Spirit.

