

LIFE & EXPLOITS
OF
BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

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by

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CONTENTS

Foreword	vii
Editors' Note :	
Historiography of Banda Singh Bahadur	ix
Preface	xxv
Introduction	1
I Birth, Parentage And Early Life	5
II Visited By Guru Gobind Singh	9
III Advent in the Punjab	21
IV A Brief Outline of the Situation	25
V Preliminary Operations	28
VI Pillage of Samana	31
VII Difficulties of the Majha Sikhs	36
VIII Conquest of Sadhaura	40
IX Battle of Ropar	51
X Sirhind	54
XI Punishing the Masands And Further Progress	65
XII Conquest of Saharanpur and the Surrounding Tract	68
XIII Reversion	72
XIV Regaining the Last Position	79
XV Further Fights with the Kasuri Pathans	85
XVI Plunder of Kalanaur and Batala	88
XVII Retrogression and Distruption	91
XVIII Captivity and End	98
XIX Conclusion	104

FOREWORD

The post-Guru period in the Sikh history is marked by a long-drawn struggle against their persecution by the oppressive Mughal governments which prepared ground for the political ascendancy of the Sikhs. Attempts were made at their total extirpation and prices were fixed on their heads. The most outstanding and yet enigmatic personality of this period undoubtedly has been Banda Singh Bahadur - a Rajput by birth, an ascetic by choice and playful by temperament, but whose personality and vision underwent a complete metamorphosis at a mere glimpse of the Tenth Master to whom he submitted himself as a slave (Banda), received initiation in the Khalsa-fold and provided political leadership to the Khalsa during the most turbulent period of its history.

Banda Singh fascinated both Hindus and Sikhs equally during the period of renaissance that the Punjabis witnessed during the early period of twentieth century and books were brought out mostly in Urdu and Punjabi to project Banda as hero on either side. The first work on Banda by a Sikh, was Karam Singh's biography of Banda Bahadur (1907) in Punjabi. Karam Singh accepted norms and constraints of the then emerging trends of modern historiography. Sohan Singh's *Life and Exploits of Banda Singh Bahadur* (1915) is the first work on Banda in English. He too displays a high sense of historical enquiry and he ascertains all facts by cross-checking them with the available material and critically examines the events to arrive at the truth.

I am happy that Professor Prithipal Singh Kapur and Dr. Dharam Singh, both of the Department of Encyclopaedia of Sikhism, voluntarily undertook to edit the work so as to make it available for younger generation of scholars so that they could be able to appreciate the handicaps and limitations of their predecessors. They have added a prologue to the book giving, in brief, the historiography of Banda Singh Bahadur. Herein they have surveyed and closely scrutinized the entire literary corpus on Banda, bringing out in the process the distinct shade and tenor of each work. They have also appended valuable footnotes so as to highlight what later researches have brought out.

I appreciate their endeavour which has made a very valuable book accessible to students and researchers in the field of Sikh history and that too in the year of the Tercentenary of the Khalsa.

Punjabi University,
Patiala
15 March 2000

Dr. Jasbir Singh Ahluwalia
Vice-Chancellor

HISTORIOGRAPHY OF BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

In the entire range of Sikh history, the account of Banda Singh Bahadur has remained almost an enigmatic phenomenon for the historians. Most scholars have not been able to perceive how an ascetic of some credibility, engaged in exercise of occult powers made an instant decision of joining the Khalsa-fold after a short but fateful meeting with Guru Gobind Singh in his own hermitage. The encounter between Banda and the tenth Guru has been variously described by chroniclers but the account given by Syad Ahmad Shah of Batala is both vivid and convincing. The important thing that he mentions is that the ascetic (Madho Das) fell at the feet of the Guru and described himself as his (Guru's) slave (Banda). The Guru administered him *pahul* and shifted him to his own camp.¹ He got the name Banda Singh and became a chosen disciple of Guru Gobind Singh. Having become a devout Sikh, he insisted upon the observance of Khalsa code of conduct (*rehat*)². When repeated successes came his way culminating in the fall of Sirhind, he ascribed it to the grace of the Guru and struck coins in the names of Guru Nanak and Guru Gobind Singh. Despite all this, Banda's past as an ascetic (*Bairagi*) stuck with him. The early Muslim chroniclers look at him as successor to a rebel force, Guru Gobind Singh, and as such many a time describe him as 'Guru' not understanding the implications of Guru Gobind Singh's decision to end the practice of Guru manifesting in the physical form and

vesting the authority of the Guru in the *Granth* and the *Panth Khalsa*. The authors of *Siyar-ul-Mutakhirin* and *Muntkhab-ul-Lubab* remained more concerned with the details of the atrocities committed by the forces of Banda against Muslims. Anxious to explain reasons for the discomfiture of some powerful Mughal satraps at the hands of Banda, they tried to attribute it to the occult and miraculous powers of Banda as an ascetic (*Bairagi*), which he is believed to have possessed before he entered the Khalsa-fold. Some of these chroniclers even narrate that Mughal contingents fighting against Banda carried flags on which the *ayats* (couplets) from the holy Quran were inscribed so as to ward off the evil effect of the occult powers of Banda³, with a view to obviate the fact to the naked eye that Banda was leading a mass upsurge against the oppressive Mughal regime-and that this was the outcome of socio-spiritual movement launched by Guru Nanak. Guru Gobind Singh informs us clearly, God had willed that both these two forces led by Baba (Nanak) and Babar the Mughal should come face to face to demonstrate the victory of the righteous (*dharma*) over the oppressors operating in the name of religion (*Din*) - he places the latter in the category of knaves.⁴ The Hindus were equally amazed at the spectacular success of Banda Singh against the aggressive Mughal regime. But the invincibility of the Mughals and the pain of their oppressive governance was so ingrained in their psyche that they attributed the success of Banda to his background as an ascetic (*Bairagi*) that gave him miraculous powers to lead him to success. They have ever remained diffident to acknowledge the miracle wrought by Guru Gobind Singh in transforming a *Bairagi* into a Khalsa to fight against oppression. In the early historical accounts compiled by the Sikhs like Rattan

Singh Bhangu and Giani Gian Singh, we do not find any mention of the Guru's command to Banda to remain celibate. On the other hand, we find repeated mention of Guru's evocation to Banda to adhere to the advice of the Khalsa represented by the five beloved ones (*Panj Pyaras*) and never to think of installing himself as 'Guru'. Rattan Singh will also like us to believe that some prominent *Hazuri* Sikhs felt uneasy over the blessings showered by the Guru on Banda. At this the Guru silenced them by saying that he had commanded Banda to always remain ever at the feet of the Guru and in the service of the Khalsa.⁵ It will be pertinent to make a mention of two facts of extra-ordinary significance in the history of Sikhism with regard to Banda. Guru Nanak had manifested Sikhism as an activist, dynamic spiritual force wherein there was no place for ascetic orders. Guru Nanak's encounters with *Sidhas* and *Yogis* are too well known to be recounted here. The adherents of *Udasi* and *Nirmala* denominations within Sikhism accepted celibacy for reasons other than doctrinal. Therefore the conversion of Madho Das *Bairagi* as Banda to Sikhism has to be looked upon as re-assertion of the fact that in Sikhism the spiritual as well as secular concerns carried equal import. Secondly naming Madho Das as Banda (literally bondsman) clearly defined his status vis-a-vis the Guru. But despite these clear positions available to us, Banda's historical assessment has remained replete with inaccuracies due to the amateurish historiographers ever eager to twist facts so as to paint Banda as a hero with an image that could be acceptable to their own milieu, tradition and their age-old fixation of mind. Yet it has to be conceded that by and large, the Hindus were appreciative of the reformist and dynamic content of the Sikh doctrine but they ever remained diffident to accept

that Guru Nanak had brought into being a distinct and independent religious system. They preferred to look unto the martyrdom of the ninth Guru and the creation of the Khalsa as specific measures for the protection of Hindu *Dharma*. Guru Gobind Singh, Banda and other Sikh martyrs are guaranteed a place in the galaxy of heroes of *Bharat Varsha* but in "the best traditions of Hinduism."⁶

The last decades of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of twentieth century witnessed resurgence of Hindu thought under the influence of western education and reformist zeal of the founder of Arya Samaj, Swami Daya Nand. The Punjabi Hindu mind having remained far too long in a state of bind responded enthusiastically to the idea of Vedic truth and turned to Daya Nanda's version of 'purified' Hinduism.⁷ The attempt of Swami Daya Nanda to define Hindu identity caught his imagination and the emerging Punjabi Hindu elite set itself to identify the thin lines separating Hinduism from other religious denominations that had got dimmed under the weight of myth, ritual and priestly gestures. In the process, they thought of presenting Guru Gobind Singh and Banda as heroes imbued with 'national' spirit. The idea of Hindu nationalism remains implicit in such a presentation.⁸ Daulat Rai's *Sahib-i-Kamal Guru Gobind Singh* and *Shahid-ul-Khalsa* (Swan-i-Umri Bahadur Banda Bairagi) both in Urdu and published in 1901 were first attempts in this direction. In his preface to the biography of Guru Gobind Singh Daulat Rai explains in no uncertain terms that "Guru Gobind Singh alleviated the sufferings of the Hindus" and that the efforts of Sikh Gurus fruited with ideas of "nationalism, brotherhood, love and monotheism" catching the imagination of the Hindus. He keeps the entire story close to the Hindu

ethos while relating the account of the Guru's resolve to "uphold *Dharma*, and destruction of the knaves" and scrupulously avoids any reference that could touch the sensitivities of the Sikhs.

This was perhaps a deliberate attempt to assuage the incensed feelings of the Sikhs in reaction to the critical references made by Swami Daya Nand in the *Satyarath Parkash* against the Sikh Gurus and utterings of some Arya Samaj enthusiasts.⁹ Interestingly the book has remained extremely popular with the Sikh devotees and its translated versions in Punjabi and English have run into several editions. But the story of Banda has been constructed by Daulat Rai in a different tenor. The ascetic (*Bairagi*) background of Banda is kept into focus besides the narrative being kept close to the Hindu ethos. The thrust is to present Banda as an ascetic (*Bairagi*) armed with all his miraculous powers, commissioned by Guru Gobind Singh to extirpate the Mughals and avenge the atrocities wrought by the Mughal (or Muslim) oppressors against the Hindus. This the author makes clear even in his preface to the book let on Banda.¹⁰ In the following pages, we are told that Banda was never admitted to the Khalsa-fold and was not administered the '*pahul*'. The tenth Guru asked him to remain celibate and also not to give '*pahul*' himself to those to who sought entry into the Khalsa fold and even not to embrace Sikhism himself.¹¹ For all these averments, no empirical evidence has been alluded to. The anxiety of the author seems to be to project the successes of Banda as distinct achievements of a *Bairagi* independent of the grace of the Sikh Guru. This becomes clear when we find Banda's conduct being justified while relating story of the Sikh notables objecting to some of the innovations said to have been introduced by Banda. Daulat Rai contends

that the Sikhs wrongly charged him with having become conceit aspiring to become a Guru and being unduly harsh towards them because he never took '*pahul*' or administered '*pahul*' to others and thereby Banda was not bound by *rehat* (code) enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh. The author surmises that the cause of conflict was an attempt on the part of some of the Sikhs to stand on their own and this ultimately made it possible for the Mughal emperor, Farrukh Siyar to create discord and factions among the Sikhs.¹² On the other hand, Banda is defended with such statements as "Banda treaded only on the path of Guru Gobind Singh and that he was the only one who wanted to advance the objectives of the Guru."¹³ On the fall of Banda, Daulat Rai laments that even the Hindu hill rajas never regarded him as their liberator and instead helped the Lahore Governor, Abdus Samad Khan against Banda.

When the above account of Banda was written, with the intention to serve as a stimulant to the resurgent Punjabi Hindu mind, the Sikh historiography had still to gain ground. The British officials had tried their hand at the compilation of chronicles of the rise and fall of Sikh kingdom. Their references to Banda were confined to his success as the one who shook the Mughal empire to its roots from Yamuna to Ravi or to the references to so-called 'excesses' on the Muslim population. Historians like Cunningham cast an eye on Banda who took the first step towards the pedestal for rise of the Sikhs to power in the Punjab by breaking down the Mughal administrative machinery in the *Suba* of Sirhind¹⁴ and striking a coin in the name of the Gurus. The first person among the Sikhs who tried his hand at writing Sikh history on modern lines, Karam Singh made his debut in 1907 with the publication of the *Banda Bahadur* (Punjabi)

(Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar). He was guided by the material available to him and remained far above the personal prejudices in handling the material. He mainly depended upon the collection of books and manuscripts available at the Punjab Public Library, Lahore.¹⁵ It cannot be said that Karam Singh's book on Banda was a reaction to the booklet of Daulat Rai. On the other hand, it was looked upon as a reliable historical account of Banda and it inspired the educated Sikhs to come out with a genuine historical work on Banda for the benefit of English knowing people. Sohan Singh's book on Banda the Brave can be placed in this category. The book was published at Lahore in 1915 and is the first available account of the great Sikh warrior in English.

Sohan Singh belonged to a family of devouts. His ancestor Mansa Singh, as he himself relates, joined *Budha Dal* group of the *Dal Khalsa* and got enlisted with Charat Singh Sukerchakia. Since then the family remained at Gujranwala in service of Mahan Singh and Ranjit Singh. After annexation of the Punjab, the author's grandfather took service with the British as Punjabi teacher for European civil and military officers. The author himself remained in service at Faridkot and for some time edited the *Khalsa Advocate*. From the above account, it can follow that author was among those who pioneered the Singh Sabha Movement and facilitated the founding of Chief Khalsa Diwan, Amritsar. This is amply reflected from his comments at many places. Despite all this background, in his narrative of events, Sohan Singh remains anxious to present such facts and events that could be closer to historical truth.

In his introduction, he starts with the mention of launching of a struggle against tyranny of the Mughals by Guru Hargobind. He makes a mention of the

martyrdom of Guru Arjan but does not care to discuss whether or not Guru Hargobind's policy was in consonance with the doctrine of Guru Nanak. Thereafter follows a brief record of major events including the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur and battles of Guru Gobind Singh, till the meeting of Madho Das (*Banda*) with Guru Gobind Singh. The author makes it clear in this very chapter that he ascertains the facts by cross-checking it with the available material though of secondary nature and gives credence to Karam Singh's work on Banda Bahadur. He also seriously takes note of Gokal Chand Narang's *Transformation of Sikhism*. During this period documentary evidence was given precedence over the corroboratory or circumstantial evidence. Rattan Singh Bhangu gives a vivid account of Guru Gobind Singh's sermon to Banda with special reference to principles of self-surrender, *Kul Nash* (abhorring pride for high birth) besides explaining to him that treading the path of *Guru Sikhi* (Guru's instruction) was a difficult task. Banda after listening the sermon, bowed his head before the Guru and accepted the instruction. Then the Guru gave him the name Banda Singh. Thereupon Banda touched the feet of the Guru repeatedly.¹⁶ This account is cryptic as well as suggestive of the conversion of Banda by way of administering '*pahul*'. As enthusiasts for objectivity, Karam Singh and Sohan Singh both choose not to accept this as conclusive evidence for Banda's having taken '*pahul*' at the hands of Guru Gobind Singh. Sohan Singh even takes objection to half name of Banda becoming current instead of Banda Singh.¹⁷ This is because of his zeal as a reformist.

Now we have enough evidence before us regarding Banda's having been administered *Khande-di-pahul*. According to *Guru Kian Sakhian* by Swaroop Singh

Kaushish : "After surrender before the Guru, Madho Das handed over his establishment to Hari Das *Dakhni* and himself accompanied the Guru to the latter's camp. Next morning after recitation (*Kirtan*) of *Asa Di Var* and exposition (*Katha*) of the Guru's hymns (*Shabda*) and *Ardas*, Bhai Daya Singh summoned Madho Das and asked him to get prepared for administration of *pahul*. The Guru himself gave him *karad* (*kirpan* ?), the steel bracelet (*Kara*), got the shorts (*Kachehra*) worn by Madho Das and tied small turban (*Keshki*) on his head to give him the look of a baptized Sikh. Thus Madho Das stood before the Guru and was administered *pahul* by five beloved ones led by Bhai Daya Singh. The Guru himself gave him the name Banda Singh and the congregation of Sikhs shouted Sat Sri Akal.¹⁸ Ganda Singh has since adduced many other references to conclusively prove the baptism of Banda.¹⁹ Sohan Singh accepts the injunction of the Guru to Banda to remain celibate which is highly improbable because Sikhism was conceived by Guru Nanak essentially as an activist religious system having concern with human life in its totality. In the campaigns of Banda, Sohan Singh has given more attention to Banda's capability as war tactician wherein he is tempted to compare Banda with Julius Caesar and Napoleon and draw parallels with incidents from the Hindu epics of Ramayana and Mahabharata. He is equally anxious to put the accusations of the Muslim chroniclers about the carnage enacted at Sadhaura, Samana and Sirhind successively to scrutiny because he finds them appear as acts of revenge which are against the concept of *Dharam Yudh* as explained by Guru Gobind Singh.²⁰ Sohan Singh remains satisfied to narrate that Mughal *ahalkars* were replaced and Sikhs and Hindus took their

place but he does not care to go beyond this to find that Banda's actions in the course of organisation of administration of conquered areas, were giving inspiration and strength to the poor to stand against the *zamindars* and that Banda never thought of installing himself as sole ruler and that coins were struck in the name of Gurus²¹ This is perhaps due to the anxiety of the author to remain a part of the elite which was beneficiary of the British regime. On conversions by Banda, Sohan Singh like Karam Singh is at pains to justify them as voluntary acts of both Hindus and Muslims because forcible conversions do not find a place in the Sikh scheme of religion. In an enthusiasm to prove that the Mughal Govt. felt helpless before Banda, Sohan Singh avers that Bahadur Shah requested Guru Gobind Singh "to prohibit his messenger from extending his hands further."²² This is evidently a wrong statement. But when he explains how the Sikhs got trained under Banda to adopt guerrilla tactics to give fight to trained and well equipped forces of Mughals, he is in fact pointing towards the sustained struggle of the Sikhs that followed the fall of Banda.

Describing the decline of Banda seems to have remained a painful and confusing exercise for Sohan Singh. He tries to find reasons that can stand scrutiny and for that he extensively quotes Gokal Chand Narang and Karam Singh but gets confused with the believer's version of violation of the commandments of Guru Gobind Singh, Gian Singh's allegation of Banda having proclaimed himself as Guru or the role of Mata Sundri. But in the end comes forth with the plea that the eruption of factional conflicts within the ranks of Banda and serious differences between Banda and Binod Singh could be the major reasons for the downfall and the disgrace that

Banda had to suffer in the end.²³

Karam Singh and Sohan Singh were pioneers who tried to unravel enigma that the story of Banda had remained. Sohan Singh's effort was to present a Sikh hero before the English educated elite who put the Sikhs on path to achieving political ascendancy. Banda whom Farrukh Siar described as '*Sikh Satan*' was chosen by the Guru for leadership of the Sikhs to preserve liberty and eternal spirit of chainless mind. The Sikhs who were his camp followers believed that his mission was to achieve independence and thus complete the work left unfinished by Guru Gobind Singh.²⁴ Sohan Singh and Karam Singh's work was carried further by Ganda Singh whose work on Banda Singh Bahadur (1935) tried to unfold the story in its fullness and keep it close to the Sikh ethos by resolving the mystery of some unsavoury fables woven around the personality of Banda. In between attention towards historiography of Banda was drawn when the Arya Samaj gained ground in Punjab and the Sikhs were in the grip of Gurdwara Reform Movement. In the twenties of twentieth century a well known Arya Samaj figure, Bhai Parma Nand got published his *Bairagi Bir* in Urdu wherein he reiterated the thesis that this *Bairagi* popularly called Banda never joined the *Khalsa Panth* and that he struggled only to resurrect the glory and power of Hindu *Dharma*.²⁵ But Parma Nand's whole account reads like fiction. Karam Singh took it seriously and brought out '*Banda Kaun Tha*' (Who was Banda) in Urdu.²⁶ Karam Singh extensively quoted Persian contemporary and near contemporary sources to prove that Banda was duly baptized and that he was blessed as leader of the Khalsa by Guru Gobind Singh himself. He mentions the faction fight within the Khalsa Panth;

when Banda was at the receiving end in his fight against the Mughals, as fight between the fundamentalists who boasted of having taken *pahul* from the Guru himself and the companions of Banda.²⁷

This unsavoury controversy about the credentials of Banda as a Sikh was the product of Arya Samaj's concerted attempts to define Hinduism and Hindu identity and search for heroic personalities to glorify the Hindu past and Banda's background as *Bairagi* came handy for such elements.²⁸ It is from this standpoint that historiography of Banda needs to be assessed. Sohan Singh and Karam Singh tried to lend authenticity to Banda's contribution to Sikh history. But for reasons not known, Bhagat Lakshman Singh did not include Banda in his *The Sikh Martyrs* (Published 1928, Ganesh and Co. Madras). When the omission was pointed out to him, he came forth with an essay on Banda in 1943 in his flat style and ended it abruptly by quoting Irwine 'Banda's success was however more meteoric than that of Napoleon Bonaparte.' It is necessary to make a reference to Gurdial Singh's *Shahid-i-Khalsa Baba Banda Ji* (Urdu, n.d.) at this stage. A lawyer by profession, he handles the subject analytically and takes note of both Daulat Rai and Parma Nanda's motivated treatises. He also tries to keep in mind the chronology of events in the narrative. He critically examines the events to arrive at the truth. Banda has continued to fascinate Sikh historiographers till recent times. Sohan Singh Sital produced a popular biography in 1946 based on reliable historical material in 1946. He has kept the narration close to the Sikh ethos and described Banda as the one who laid foundations of the Khalsa Raj. G. S. Deol's *Banda Bahadur* published in 1972 does not add much

to our existing knowledge. But Deol looks at the effects of Banda's rise and fall on the people of Punjab in general.

A comprehensive account and critical assessment of Banda Singh in the domain of Sikh history has yet to be undertaken. The new material coming to light in the form of a translated and readily available version of *Akhbarat-i-Darbar-i-Mualla* has not yet been fully put to use. It is interesting to note from these papers that the entire Mughal imperial machinery had to be mobilised to quell the Sikh Movement under Banda. And if Banda was compelled to surrender at Gurdas Nangal it was not an achievement for celebration by the Mughal emperor. The cause of the mutual factional fight into which the Sikhs got involved in the last years of Banda are still shrouded in mystery. About this, the present day scholar remains as ignorant as Sohan Singh was. We feel that an assessment of the entire work on Banda is the urgent need of the hour and as such we have taken this opportunity of presenting Sohan Singh's pioneering work in edited form to have a look at the historiography on Banda as a whole. We sincerely feel that reconstruction of the history of this great Sikh warrior who prepared the ground for the political ascendancy of the Khalsa is urgently called for. We hope that the present-day scholars equipped with better tools and material will do their bit.

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28. It is wrong to conclude and Feroz Chand (author of *Lajpat Rai's Life and Work*, Publication Division, 1978, 68) will like us to believe that "It was about this time that (last two decades of nineteenth century) the Sikhs happened to become aware that they were distinct from Hindus". It will be appropriate to point out that the Sikhs maintained distinct identity right from the time of Nanak. The author of *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, a contemporary of Guru Hargobind states :

"In short the disciple of Nanak condemns idol worship. Their belief is that all their Gurus are Nanak as has been said. They do not read the *mantras* of Hindus. They do not venerate their temples of idols nor do they venerate their *avtars*. They have no regard for Sanskrit language, which according to Hindus is the speech of the angels. Nanak Panthis (Trs. & Ed. by Ganda Singh from *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*. Reprint from the *Journal of Indian History*, vol. XIX Part 2, 10-11).

PREFACE

In my case, it is my own family traditions that actuated me to take up my pen to write this piece of Sikh History. Sikhism in my family began with my great-great-grand father, Bhai Mansa Singh of Khem Karan, who having received *amrit* joined the Budha Dal, and afterwards accompanied Sardar Charat Singh to Gujranwala. He adhered to the great Sardar till his last breath. He had two sons, Bhais Amar Singh and Karam Singh. The former was killed while fighting under Ranjit Singh against the Chathas of Ram Nagar, and his *samadh* exists down to this day at the Shahid Ganj situated in the premises of Sardar Charat Singh's *samadh* at Gujranwala. The latter, my great-grand father, was one of the greatest religious scholars of his time. He was as pious as he was learned, and, therefore, the Lion of the Punjab appointed him a religious tutor to his family. This duty was inherited by my grand father, Bhai Sant Singh, who was a soldier too. But after fighting in the battle of Chillianwala, he took to service as a Punjabi Teacher to the civil and military English officers at the Sialkot cantonement, all of whom have paid a very high tribute to his abilities and character. His younger brother, Mahatma Sujan Singh, was a boy of twelve when while writing with his own hands, the holy *Adi Granth*, he met a *Shabad* which caused him such an ecstasy that he stopped speaking, and eversince remained absorbed in meditation from which he never recovered the state of a worldly man.

His memory is still revered as far as Peshawar like that of any true devotee of Wahiguru, My father had inherited all the spirit of a Sikh, but he was too circumstanced to be called a great religious man. But his sermons on Sikhism and loyalty to the British were unsurpassed in impressiveness.

Thus, I was but a child when I had drunk deep the whole Sikh history. The lives of the 10th Guru, Banda Bahadur, Akali Phula Singh and Sardar Hari Singh Nalwa were my favourite study when I was a mere student of IV Upper Primary. But the knowledge of history that I had inherited and acquired from my father enabled me to distinguish between fact and fiction. And it is with this knowledge that I have ventured to write this small work which, like a gardener presenting a bouquet to his benefactor, I beg to offer to the Guru-Panth in the hope that overlooking my faults in style and diction, my brethren will accept it as a thing worth their perusal.

In arranging facts, I have had to refer to almost all the great writers of the Sikh history, such as Cunningham, Malcolm, Wheeler, Latif, Santokh Singh, Rattan Singh, Gyan Singh, G. C. Narang, Kanhaya Lal, Madan Gopal, Kaur Chand, Karam Singh, Kartar Singh, Khazan Singh, Labh Singh, Daulat Rai, Jodh Singh and others, who owe their information to the Moslem writers of the time, such as Khafi Khan, Iradit Khan, Mohammad Kasim, Syar-ul-Mutakhrin and others.

My special thanks are due to Bhai Narain Singh Gyani (whom I have given the rights of publishing this book) who supplied me with all the books that I stood in need of, to Shriman Bhai Takhat Singh, the martyr in life of the Panth, Bhai Lal Singh Updeshak of Gujranwala, Bhai Ishar Singh (Manager, Khalsa Parcharak Vidyala,

Tarn Taran) and Sant Swami Ramindra Singh Ji Virakt for their evincing interest in the work.

I don't intend stopping my labours here, as I hope some important works on Sikh Religion, Sikh Martyrdom and Sikh History will follow this within short intervals one after the other, if Almighty so willed.

Due to haste, which has been observed in bringing out this book on the occasion of the 8th Sikh Educational Conference, I have not been able to revise it thoroughly. Therefore, any omission in it will be supplied in the next edition.

30 March 1915

SOHAN SINGH

INTRODUCTION

Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Master, had shown the tyrant rulers of the time that if they continued oppressing the poor people, the followers of the great Nanak Dev, who had for over a century borne persecutions, they had been subjected to for no fault of theirs, with a calm patience and cool endurance characteristic of their nation, would take to sword in defence, in order to pay the devil in his own coin; and that the cold-blooded murder of the fifth Guru and his faithful followers must be duly punished. The brilliant exploits and bright achievements of this Warrior of God, abundantly explained the style and system in which the sacred Sikhism was now to be preached and protected. And Shahjahan, with all his resourcefulness and strength of an unopposed emperor, acknowledged in his heart of hearts what the Guru really was and with what definite object he had brandished his sword in open defiance of his rule, while the chronicle recorded that the saintly sect of the Sikhs had now changed their temper to award their enemies a 'tit for tat'.

Guru Hargobind's declaration of war was an ultimatum to the Moghul, a final warning against injustice and oppression, and his battles were a sort of samples of what the Sikhs could do, if they ever took to arms. But as in the words of a well-known Sanskrit adage '*vinash kale vipraya budhi*, i.e. when a person nears his ruin he loses all his wit and wisdom, so the Moghul tyrants would not listen to these warnings. Then things

came to such a pass that Guru Tegh Bahadur fell another great martyr to the cause of religion and righteousness. Now the cup was full to the brim, and necessitated his holy son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, vindicating the ultimatum given by his gallant grandfather, Guru Hargobind.

Now, the tenth Guru appeared as a warrior every inch, and converted his devoted followers from a peaceful community into a warlike people by dint of his divine magic wand, the holy *amrit*, which literally effected a metamorphic change in all of them at once. But he did this all as yet with the object of self-defence. Then the events of his vacating Anandpur, cajoled by a false promise solemnized by the oath of the Quran, and the enemy's falling upon him and his, in direct contravention and violation of the promise, with the indescribable trouble and torture to which the helpless Sikhs were subjected, must remain fresh in the peoples' memory so long as history exists. Further, of the four darlings of the holy Guru, two sacrificed their dear lives when fighting against innumerable odds at Chamkaur while the other two were bricked up alive in a wall at Sirhind. His beloved five (*Panj Piaras*)¹, forty *muktas* and thousands of devoted Sikhs shed their blood in many a battlefield, and their names shall ever remain 'writ large on the roll of immortality.'²

This all had taken place, and a reminiscence of it melted the hearts of even the stone-hearted. The pen trembled while recording and the tongue stammered when describing such heart-rending episodes, but anarchy still knew no end. It seemed that Providence had willed that the tyrants should meet their deserts, and that mere self-defence would not do.

The time rolled on a little further, to show to the

world how the Saviour inspired a harmless hermit to avenge all that the cruel rulers of the time had done so far. To be brief, the great part of punishing the murders of the sons of the tenth Guru and thousands of pious Sikhs and millions of innocent Hindus was reserved for the Great Man who was passing his life in solitude at the bank of the Godawari, in the heart of the Deccan, unknown and unnoticed by any one. In the forthcoming chapters, we will describe how admirably he performed the task entrusted to him, and how, with his immortal deeds of chivalry and matchless gallantry, caused his name, which would otherwise have ended in oblivion, to top those of all the makers of history.

When Lachhman Dev (the birth-name of Banda Bahadur) had left his parental hearth and home with the object of passing his life as a recluse, who knew that retirement was not the appropriate pursuit for the noble soul that abided in that frame of flesh and blood; aye, who might ever have thought that the youth, who had thrown away his arrows and bow, taking mercy on a beast of prey, would resume the same in defence of his fellow human beings? But as he was in wait of a '*Puran Guru*', a perfect guide, so he waited for years, till his object of wait, the holy Guru Gobind Singh, approached to make him what he was meant and destined to be in this world by Him who can convert a veritable idiot into a scholar and vice-versa³.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The *panch piaras* (the beloved five) were the first five Sikhs, who notwithstanding that the tenth Guru had threatened each of them, with a naked sword, drenched in

blood, that his head would be separated from his body, gladly went over to him, with a promise to adhere to him come what may. As the waving of the naked sword, apparently with the intention of cutting off 5 heads, was a mere trial, which the five *Piaras* successfully passed, the Guru happily embraced each of them, and administered them *amrit* himself receiving sweet draught of the same divine nectar from them, while the people said :

‘ਵਾਹ ! ਵਾਹ ! (ਗੁਰੂ) ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰ ਚੇਲਾ’

‘Hail Guru Gobind Singh at once a guide and a disciple himself.’ The names of these beloved five are : Daya Singh, Dharam Singh, Himmat Singh, Mohkam Singh and Sahib Singh. They represented five different castes of Hindus and their intermingling together, and with the Guru, proved the cosmopolitanism and the all-embracing character of the Sikh religion. They all fell martyrs in the battle-field, and hence are remembered by the Sikhs in their daily prayers.

2. *Chali Muktas* (forty liberated ones) were the forty Sikhs, who had first deserted the tenth Guru in his trouble, but afterwards, when jeered at by their wives and sisters, who called them cowards and would not let them come home, treacherous as they had turned, girt up their loins to remove the blot, and fought so bravely at Muksar - known after them - that all of them died of their wounds immediately after inflicting a defeat on the enemy. The Guru, pleased with their gallantry, pardoned them their former fault, condoned the breach that had once taken place in their devotion, and granted all of them eternal bliss - *mukti*. They too, like the panch *piaras*, are remembered by every Sikh in his daily prayer, down to this day.

3. In the words of the first holy Guru -

ਬਲਿਹਾਰੀ ਗੁਰ ਆਪਣੇ ਦਿਉਹਾੜੀ ਸਦ ਵਾਰ

ਜਿਨਿ ਮਾਣਸ ਤੇ ਦੇਵਤੇ ਕੀਏ ਕਰਤ ਨ ਲਾਗੀ ਵਾਰ

“I praise my own Guru and praise him a hundred times, who converted the human beings into gods, and it did not take him long to do so,” a perfect Guru can affect an unimaginable change in the character of his followers; and the change which the tenth Guru wrought in a twinkling in the life of Banda Bahadur, is but an illustration of the above quoted holy ‘*Shabad*’.

CHAPTER I

BIRTH, PARENTAGE AND EARLY LIFE

Those of my readers who have ever visited Bhimbar and Mirpur districts in the Jammu and Kashmir State and the hill tracts of the erstwhile Poonchh State adjoining them would not require a detailed description of the simple and rural way of life the illiterate and uncouth people there lead. There is no trace of civilization in any shape what to say of modern education. The contented inhabitants live upon very ordinary cultivation and hunting, the latter being their choicest enjoyment. Each of them is proud of his weapon (sword or something like this) with which he stabs or despatches off the wild beasts or game, and the richest entertainment that a hillman there can offer to a guest is a piece of *Shikar*, a reason for which these people are considered very hospitable. They are hardy, brave and unequivocal. Thieves and dacoits there are none, deception and treachery they have never heard of. But they are superstitious to the extreme, given to witchcraft and cognate whims.¹ As the writer has had an opportunity of travelling through the Jammu and Kashmir territory, he can well imagine the places and peoples he saw.

The small tract of Rajauri is already too well known in the Punjab to call for a special introduction. It enjoyed much prominence in the Jammu territory in the Punjab in the Sikh times - especially during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, the Lion of the Punjab. It was in the town

of that name there that the hero of our theme, Banda Bahadur, was born in AD 1670 corresponding to 1721 Bikrami, or 12 years after the tyrant Aurangzeb had usurped the throne of India, having imprisoned his father, *Shahjahan*, and done away with his brothers. Bhai Karam Singh, the author of the Gurmukhi book, *Banda Bahadur*, and published by the *Itihas Khojak Sub-Committee* of Chief Khalsa Diwan, is of the opinion that the exact date of his birth at Rajauri cannot be known, and conjectures that he might have appeared in the world about the year when Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born. His conjecture is quite reasonable from the historical point of view, as the tenth Guru having committed his holy soul to the Almighty in his youth, and Banda Bahadur, a youthful man then, having met him in his last days, it seems probable that if there was a difference between the years of births, it was not of more than four or five years or so, either in favour of the Satguru or in that of Banda Bahadur being older. But the author of the celebrated Hindi work, *Madan Kosh*², declares the former to be older by 4 years, when he gives 1670 A.D. or 1727 Bikrami to be the date of Banda's birth. Thus the date given by him being quite reasonable and nearly tallying with the conjecture of Bhai Karam Singh, it seems that Madan Lal had ascertained it through fairly reliable sources, and hence we tend to accept this date as true. His father, Ram Dev, was a Rajput of very ordinary means, and the only pursuit to which Lachhman Dev was given, like any boy of a pure Rajput blood, was shooting and hunting. Once it so happened that he caught a female deer, and when he stabbed her with his weapon, her two young ones, to which she was about to give birth that very day, fell from her womb, and died fluttering

there and then. This moved the impressionable youth Lachhman Dev to regret and repent his relentless conduct. He pledged not to go for hunting any more. His sense of penitence grew so strong that he turned his mind from everything mundane, and became a man of an ascetic's turn of mind. In those days, it is said his village was visited by a leading *Bairagi*³, Janki Parshad, under the influence of whose teachings he abandoned his house and household, and became a *Bairagi*, assuming Madho Dass as his new name.

First he joined a group of itinerant Sadhus, in whose company he travelled from one centre of pilgrimage to another, thereby increasing his experience and knowledge of the country, till tired of much journeying, he settled in that historic wood, Panchbati, which was once sanctified by the feet of the Holy Ram Chandra, accompanied in his exile by his spouse Sita and brother Lakshmana. In his solitude, he took to a life of meditation and devotion, by dint of which, it is said, he acquired supernatural powers so as to display wonders, sitting in his solitary hermitage, but commanding respect from all around.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *[All these details of the people and their way of life refer to the early twentieth century milieu when the book was written. We have preferred to keep these details as they are without making any reference to the changes modern life has brought about there since then. - Eds.]*
2. Says the Madan Kosh : '*Banda Guru*' (*Banda Sahib*). His father, Ram Dev Rajput, was a resident of the village Rajauri in the Poonch territory. In his 16th year Banda Guru, whose original name was Lachhman Dev, became disciple of a Bairagi (a sect of Hindu ascetics) and travelled on, making pilgrimages in company with a group of mendicants. At last, he settled at Panchbatti (a wood near the bank of the Godawari

In the Deccan - the very place where Ram Chandra, the illustrious hero of the immortal *Ramayana* took up his abode in exile and passed many days in meditation and contemplation. Then he went to Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru of the Sikhs, and entered into his discipleship and having embraced the Khalsa Panth, received the title 'Banda'. Some days after that, the Guru sent him to the Punjab to humble down the Muhammadans. Wherever Banda Sahib went, the Sikhs who were grieving the troubles of their Gurus, came to his assistance, duly armed. Thus it was that *Banda* had thousands of Muhammadans, young and old, male and female, put to sword, and their corpses burnt, razed mosques to ground, had villages after villages of the Moslems consumed to ashes and robbed of what they contained. To be brief, he subjected the Muhammadans to an extreme trouble. The hill Rajas of the Punjab dreaded Banda Sahib while the mention of his very name caused the Moslems to tremble with fear. Banda Sahib knew well how to ride and hunt. He was a man of miracles. He had married two wives, and his descendants are still found in Wazirabad. Farrukh-Siyyar, the Moghul Over-Lord of Deihl, sent an army of 20,000 and having him siezed by means of numerous tricks, ordered him to be put to death. But Banda had accomplished what he was meant for. He was born in 1670 A.D.

3. *Bairagi* or *vairagi*, literally, means one who becomes disgusted with the temporal world, and takes to meditation. But practically speaking, *bairagis* are a sect of austere Hindu ascetics who refrain from eating meat and live upon vegetables and fruits. The founder of this sect was one Ramanuja, who appeared in the 11th century A.D. *Bairagis* are known as fanatical and easily irritable people.

CHAPTER II VISITED BY GURU GOBIND SINGH

The Sikh Gurus' struggle with the tyrant Moghuls did not resemble a struggle and strife between two earthly powers, which must end sooner or later in the victory of one and the defeat of the other. Nor was it like the rising of an ambitious individual resulting either in the final fulfilment of his object or in his ultimate end and ruin. It was a movement which neither the murders of the Gurus and their so many descendants and Sikhs could suppress, nor any other means on earth could put an end to. These persecutions and murders rather fanned the fire of opposition into higher flames. Thus the martyrdoms of Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh¹ and murders of Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh² simply added to the courage of the over-courageous Guru who hit upon many other means to crush the cruel. But now finding the Land of the Five Rivers unable to afford him the safe refuge and relief even after so many severe skirmishes and battles, he found his way towards the South, where he hoped to secure a good field for his future operations against the oppressor.

In those days, Aurangzeb had given up his ghost, and had been succeeded by his son Bahadur Shah who, having defeated and put to death his two brothers, now proceeded towards Deccan to punish the recalcitrant Rajputs. Bahadur Shah was deeply convinced of the divine supremacy of the holy Guru, and it was his

conviction that no earthly influence could cow him down and make him budge even a hair's breadth from his right and righteous path. Therefore, he preferred to remain on friendly terms with him and offered high posts in the Imperial Service to him and his followers, as he knew that with their help he could untie even the most difficult knots of political complicacies. But as the Saviour did not aspire worldly power and pelf, so Bahadur Shah simply contented himself with letting the Guru Sahib have his own wish. However, His Holiness accompanied the Royal Camp up to Nanded, where a Pathan fanatic stealthily stabbed him with his sword. Much did Bahadur Shah strive to take him further, by telling off his own royal surgeons to heal up his wounds, but the Satguru would not comply, as with the earthly expedition of an ambitious monarch he had absolutely no concern while, on the other hand, his stay at Nanded³ was necessary for the performance of a metamorphosis the world had ever heard of.

With reference to Madho Dass' possession of supernatural powers, it is to be stated that he was very fond of coarse jokes. He welcomed any sadhu who came to his hut and entertained him liberally. Then he seated him on his beautiful and extremely ornate couch which he had kept, as it were, for his own use. But as soon as the victim of his joke took his seat there, without any the least dream of disgrace, the couch was upset all of a sudden by some invisible being, and bang fell the poor fellow on the ground, his face covered with awe and shame and body shivering with fear of what had happened so unexpectedly. Madho Dass simply laughed and clapped on this, thereby adding insult to injury. Thus, for this reason, the neighbouring Sadhus, even his friends and acquaintances, were much afraid of his supernatural

gift and minded his influence while Madho Dass was the monarch of all he could survey; enjoying his days in pastimes, unmindful of what was going on all around. He seemed to follow the words of a well-known Punjabi proverb - *koi mare koi jive suthra ghol patase pive* (others may live or die but we will enjoy). Nero fiddled on while Rome was burning.

Sri Guru Gobind Singh, during his stay at Nanded, had heard many stories about Madho Dass, and instead of simply smiling at them, he thought that such an intelligent and lively youth could easily be converted into a great warrior. Therefore, he made up his mind to pay him a visit and see how far he was right in his guess about the playful *Bairagi*. He went to his hut, accompanied by a number of his gallant Sikhs, but did not find there Madho Dass, who had gone somewhere out then. Therefore, it was in his absence that the Guru went into the hut and seated himself on the very same magic couch, by means of which Madho Dass used to humbug his poor innocent visitors. Further, with a view to exciting his anger, the Guru bade his followers to despatch off some of the he goats⁴ belonging to Madho Dass then grazing there, and cook them there and then. This report of a most grievous insult - by far the most from the point of view of a vegetarian *Bairagi* - spread like a wild fire, and in no time reached Madho Dass whose rage and fury knew no bounds. Determined for a revenge and to accord a condign punishment to the trespassers, he came to his hut, with face full of crinkles, and eyes flashing red in extreme anger which enhanced by far the most on the sight of the Guru occupying his couch. Before turning to the offensive Sikhs, he went straight to His Holiness, and commanded his supernatural powers to play their usual part. But with all their main

and might, they were at a loss unable to overturn the couch which had been pressed by the Guru with the point of his arrow. In short, he exhausted all his magic upon the Messenger of God but in vain. Dejected by utter disappointment, he went to the Sikhs who sat outside and merrily fed themselves upon the meat they had so forcibly procured and prepared. He used his supernatural powers similarly upon them, too. But they all ended in a total failure. Thus baffled, the poor, helpless Madho Dass was convinced of the spiritual greatness of the holy Guru, and believed that this was an exceptional case not to be coped with. Hence, finding no alternative but to pay obeisance, he fell at the Guru's feet and sincerely apologised for all the mischief he had done, promising solemnly that henceforth he would serve and adhere to His Holiness as his *banda* or slave. It is since then that Madho Das has been named Banda. The Guru finding him fit for his purpose and seeing in him just the person he was in want of, granted him pardon and admitted him to his service.

This is the unanimous version of the *Sakhis* (Sikh chronicles) about the Guru's visit to Banda. But the materialists may still be sceptic about and loath to credit it, though the modern sciences of mesmerism and hypnotism have proved all such things to be literally true.

But even the most bigoted historians have admitted that Madho Dass was a *Bairagi* fanatic, residing at the bank of the Godawari near Nanded whose hut the tenth Guru happened to visit. But finding a stranger occupying his couch, his wrath knew no control, so much so that he assailed His Holiness in order to give him a good lesson for his meddlesomeness. But the Guru's able remonstrance at once attracted his attention so that he

controlled himself and listened to His Holiness with rapt attention. 'Youngman', saith the Guru, 'thou who art so wroth with me, a stranger, for a trivial matter, art quite ignorant of what has taken place, and is further being wrought in thy country, and what calamities have so far befallen thy brethren, including thy own dear and near ones. My poor fellow! If thou hadst used thy this valour on those that visit thy hut, thou couldst certainly have served thy motherland much. What a pity if thou shouldst waste thy worth in wilderness.' Such like words, fall from the lips of the Saviour as they did, made an indelible impression on the listener's heart who remained literally spell-bound as long as the speech continued. 'Sufficient', said Madho Dass, 'it is sufficient now my Lord, I want simply to know what service I can render my afflicted countrymen and co-religionists. You seem to have brought a divine message for me which I will obey at any sacrifice. Verily, I was in wait of a perfect guide, which I have found in you. Do kindly make any command, and I will obey'. 'First let me know who and what thou art', was the question. 'I am thy slave (*banda*)⁶ my Lord, and now that I have fallen at thy holy feet, I will recognize none else,' replied Madho Dass, who since then has been remembered as 'Banda' or slave of the Guru. Then he mentioned, in detail, his parentage, residence and his whole adventure, ending in his arrival and permanent settlement at that remote place. Assured of the sincerity of his pledge of *servus servorum*, and finding in him the man worth the mission, the *Satguru* related to him the whole story of the evacuation of Anandpur Sahib, the trouble and torture to which the faithful Sikhs had been subjected by the treacherous tyrants, the martyrdom in the battlefield of Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and the way in which Zorawar Singh

and Fateh Singh had been bricked up alive by the order of the godless Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sirhind, instigated by that devil incarnate, Sucha Nand Khatri, etc., etc. The Guru also explained the general situation in the most impressive and instructive possible way so that the brave Banda at once girt up his loins to wreak a full vengeance⁷ of all this. In a word, he was so much bestirred that he could wait no longer. He asked the Guru Sahib to give him some men to guide him as well as a note of introduction to the Sikh community in the Punjab.

The Guru Sahib then gave him twenty five most trusted of his followers as also a letter in writing to all his Sikhs in the Land of Five Waters, immediately to assemble under his flag with the laudable object of punishing the murderers of the four *sahibzadas* and Sikhs. Besides, His Holiness gave him five arrows⁸ from his own quiver in token of a divine support from himself, and preferred the following five important injunctions, assuring him that he would be victorious in all his operations so long as he acted upon them, but that he would at once fall if he acted in contravention of them :

1. Not to take rest until the Moslim anarchy had entirely stopped ;
2. To do everything in consultation with five Sikhs⁹, and to begin every action with an *ardas* or prayer to God;
3. Never to disregard the position of the community, and never to style himself as Guru;
4. Never to start a separate sect; and
5. Never to sow wild oats, or spoil his celibacy by wooing a female. So on and so forth.

Thus, the first injunction inspired him with perserverance and good resolution, and the second enjoined co-operation, unity and democracy, dispensing

with egotism, self-aggrandisement and idea of autocracy, while prayers meant devotion to and dependence upon God. Similarly, the third and the fourth commands maintained the superiority of community interests over an individual personality. The fifth injunction emphasized the necessity of purity of character in a leader. And how all these injunctions, taken together, represent the mission of the tenth Guru can be fairly imagined. These five injunctions, *mutatus mutandis*, are issued to a Sikh, when he is baptised¹⁰.

It remains to be decided whether the Guru had administered *amrit* to Banda before he started on his expedition to the Punjab. The history is not certain on this point, and all that the different historians have recorded on it is the result of a mere conjecture. But as reasons often succeed in approaching the true point, so let us see in what way reasons decide. Bhai Karam Singh, after a small discussion, arrives at the conclusion (page 27 of his Punjabi work *Banda Bahadur*) that Banda never took *amrit*. But the same writer very soon contradicts himself on the next page of his book when he says that the Rajput blood surging in his veins boiled most vigorously under the spirit of *pahul*.¹¹ Bhai Gyan Singh Gyani, the venerable author of *Panth Parkash* and *Shamsher Khalsa*, too, does not clear this most important point when he says on page 2164 (latest edition then available) of the latter work that the Guru considering him a brave man made him a Sikh of his own¹² and named him Banda Singh. But this seems to be ridiculous on the very face of it, and fails to hold water as the history proceeds a little further. It is too well-known to call for an evidence that a Sikh is always addressed by full name, so much so that it is considered an insult to call him by half name. For instance, if you call a Gulab

Singh as Gulab, he would fall foul of you and give you a lesson for the insult. How could then a leader of Banda's position be expected to tolerate his being addressed by half name and why would the Sikhs have liked to insult their leader in this way ? Bhai Rattan Singh Shahid, the grandson of the gallant Mehtab Singh of Mirankot¹³ the illustrious assassin of Massa Ranghar of accursed memory, enjoys the special credit of recording, in his valuable epic, the *Prachin Panth Parkash* (of which the *Panth Parkash* of Bhai Gyan Singh is said to be but an adaptation) what he had heard from his father and grandfather, the eye-witnesses of these scenes, is quite silent on this point. But if Banda, at whom the eyes of the whole Panth were rivetted, had taken *amrit*, he would certainly have recorded it, the most important event of his life as it would have been, from the Sikh point of view at least. It is said that of all the European writers of the Sikh history, Cunningham is the most reliable. But he does not mention that Banda ever took *amrit*. Still, notwithstanding that all the vernacular and English historians are one on this most important point, that bigoted writer, Syad Mohammad Latif, says, in his *History of the Punjab*, that Banda was initiated into the *Pahul* and became a disciple of the Guru which simply betrays the ignorance of that Islamic author of the Sikh annals.

Then there is another very strong proof of Banda having never taken *amrit*. When finding that, given to self-aggrandisement, he began to declare himself Guru, and tempted by Cupid did all that the tenth Guru had prohibited, the Sikhs had censured and deposed him : one of the conditions on which they offered pardon was that he should take the holy *amrit*, so that he might not again act against the tenets of the Gurus. Can there be a stronger testimony of Banda having so far remained

devoid of *amrit*?¹⁴ He was certainly as true a follower of Sikhism as a devoted Sahajdhari can be. But as the tenth Guru, whose terms of trial in case of 'Panj Piaras' were so strong and awe-inspiring, would never initiate a mere novice without a long probation and hard examination, he let Banda first prove himself worthy of *amrit*. Hence the Guru asked him to go to the Punjab and render whatever service he could to the Panth till his brilliant deeds of daring and sacrifice entitled him to initiation into the pure fold of the '*Khalsa*' which is thinner than a hair but sharper than sword. He admitted into it only those who placed their heads on their palms, and devoted their all to its cause. There is, therefore, not a shadow of doubt in the fact that Banda underwent a trial, which he passed, certainly most successfully in the beginning, but in which he sadly failed in the end.¹⁴ Hence, his own end so miserable! What a contrast does this furnish to the present time when the holy *amrit* is so liberally thrown on mere fickle aspirants who, ignorant of its worth, totally disregard it in their deeds, while before the world they boast that they are *amritdharis* ! Would that now-a-days, too, the *Panth* followed the Guru in administering *amrit* and prescribed a strict trial in the connection.

Well, the long and short of all this is that the devoted Banda took upon himself the duty of leading a crusade in the Punjab, and the Guru bestowed upon him all the necessary spiritual blessings and temporal resources with the five injunctions that have already been detailed above.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The two elder sons of Sri Guru Gobind Singh, who died fighting at Chamkaur, against the endless odds of the Moghul.
2. The two youngest darlings of the Saviour, who were bricked up alive at Sirhind, the order of the tyrant Wazid Khan, the Governor of the place.
3. *There is no historical evidence to support the author's view as to why the Guru travelled southwards. On the contrary, there is unanimity on the point that the Guru travelled southwards along side the Emperor's caravan so as to continue the dialogue that had been initiated with him. It is also believed that the Emperor unnecessarily prolonged the dialogue without conceding anything which prompted the Guru to part company, - Eds.*

But here Bhagat Lakshman Singh, in his valuable English book, the *Life and Work of Guru Gobind Singh*, which is the latest historical production of the pen of a Sikh writer, differs with Bhai Karam Singh, the author of *'Banda Bahadur'* (Punjabi) and records that the Guru received his fatal wound after his separation from Bahadur Shah. Says he : 'The Emperor did not feel himself sufficiently strong to comply with the demand made. He allowed days, weeks and months to pass without doing anything. The Guru must have felt annoyed, when he found that his wishes were not respected by the man who had come to the throne through his own instrumentality. But it appears that the Emperor was able to keep him in good humour; and when he had fairly succeeded in restoring order at his capital he left for Rajputana to suppress a rebellion of the Rajputs in Jaipur and Marwar. When he was engaged in this occupation, the Guru separated from him to pay a visit to *Nanded*, a small town on the Godawari.' He says further, 'There is no evidence on record to show that while in the Deccan, the Guru opened communications with the Mahratta chieftains during his sojourn in their country. It may be that improved relations with the Moghul Emperor might have suggested to him the adoption of peaceful ways for the amelioration of his people and avoiding a coalition with a people in open revolt against the Moghuls; or he might have quietly lived among the Marhattas with a view to cultivate relations with them in order that he might count upon their assistance in time of emergency. But though he did not live long enough to raise recruits in Maharashtra for service in the Punjab, his conversion of a Bairagi, subsequently known in history as *Banda*, more than outweighed the advantages of a possible alliance with the Rajputs or the Marhattas.' However, this difference does not in the least affect the thread of history.

4. The Sikhs never kill females. [*The common practice among the Sikhs is to eat the meat of he-goat only - Eds.*]
5. A quarter of a century before this, people used to pass a general verdict of 'superstitious' on all such statements, and called them mere 'myths', 'fables' and fictions. But the science of mesmerism has now revealed all these wonders to be true and bare facts. Thus, where a wooden toy can be shown as a beautifully caparisoned horse suiting the strong thighs of a knight, and again in a twinkling, transformed into a double henced dromedary, there overturning a couch and displaying such like other wonders can no longer be considered a fiction. But as all these feats of mesmerism can be performed upon a weaker mind, the divine soul that rested in the Guru's

body could not be subjected to these jokes, hence the bafflement of Madho Dass, who, seeing his science prove a failure in case of His Holiness, became at once convinced of the Guru's position, and yielded to its incontestable greatness. On the other hand, as the Guru had come with the object of making use of a genius of the time and converting him from a mere playful Sadhu into a true defender of religion and champion of the so many oppressed peoples of India, none could be happier than he, at the achievement of such an unprecedented conversion.

6. Cunningham says : 'Banda signifies *'the slave'*, and Suroop Chand, the author of '*Guru Ratnawali*', states that the *Bairagi* took this name or title when he met Govind (Guru Gobind Singh ?) in the South, and found that the powers of his tutelary God Vishnu were ineffectual in the presence of the Guru. Thenceforward he said, he would be the slave of Govind'.

7. Histories may say so. But can it be believed that a man hitherto quite a stranger condescended to start simply for taking a revenge of the murders of the sons of a person, who was neither his relative nor friend before, without any the least consideration ? The historians have, therefore, committed such a blunder on this point, as they did in saying that Sri Guru Gobind Singh roused him to revenge the murder of his father, Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur. Those who are thoroughly acquainted with the tenets of Sikhism will never believe that its very founder ever stooped so low as to ask anybody to take the revenge of the murder of his own sons. The reality, therefore, was that His Holiness entrusted Banda with the noble task of waging war against the tyrants and defending the oppressed against the oppressor, in discharging which duty, Banda, of course, punished the oppressors of Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, the Nawab Wazir Khan and Khatri Sacha Nand.

8. It is said that the Guru first gave his sword to Banda; but the Sikhs snatched it off from him saying that it was meant for the use of none else but the Khalsa Panth.

9. A Sikh quorum consists of five men, and anything which is approved by five men is accepted by the whole Sikh nation. First of all, the tenth Guru initiated his beloved five - the well-known five (*Panj Piaras*) of blessed memory - into the Khalsa Panth, and invested them with the powers of an advisory committee. Ever since that day, a Sikh resolution has always required the unanimity of at least five men, to be passed.

10. [At the time of baptismal ceremony (administering *pahul*) no injunction is pronounced exhorting the Sikhs to remain celibate. This is also not a part of *Rehat Maryada*. - Eds.]

11. Another name for *amrit*. The practical difference between *pahul* and *amrit* is that the former consisted in water, touched by the toe of a Guru, being administered to his disciple, whereas *amrit* (nectar of eternity) is prepared and administered by a group of five pious and true Sikhs, whose own lives and characters, too, may be such as to put a good effect on the recipient. So much so that the selfless Guru himself received the *amrit* from the hands of his '*beloved five*', while the public wondered and said : -

'ਵਾਹੁ ! ਵਾਹੁ ! (ਗੁਰੂ) ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਆਪੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਚੇਲਾ' -

'Hail ! Guru Gobind Singh at once a Guru and a disciple himself.'

12. Or converted him to Sikhism.

13. Bhai Mehtab Singh of Mirankot, who entered the Golden Temple (Amritsar), alone and single-handed, and cut off the head of Massa Ranghar (the pagan Mahsud Khan) who was sitting and enjoying dances within the holy precincts there. Mehtab Singh was in the desert of Bikaner when he received the heartrending report of this sacrilege, and determined to award the satan his deserts, so as to set a deterrent on such godless acts in future, he hid himself all the way to the Holiest of Holies,

where he caught the devil red-handed, and despatched him off amidst his dear and near. Bhai Mehtab Singh's worthy name will ever be most affectionately remembered in the Panth, among those, of its leading champions and martyrs.

14. At most of the Sikh Gurdwaras, *amrit* is actually sold. The Bhai's there lend 5 K's to the recipient, taking them back from him as soon as the ceremony is over. Then the effect the life and character of such a guide put on those of the neophyte can better be imagined than described. I regret to have to remark that with all their staunchness, the Singh Sabhas, too, are not much particular about ritual, hence the present paucity of sincere Sikhs in the Panth now-a-days. What we want is true followers of our religion, though they be less in number, in the words of the holy order :

ਜਉ ਤਉ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਖੇਲਣ ਕਾ ਚਾਉ । ਸਿਰੁ ਧਰਿ ਤਲੀ ਗਲੀ ਮੇਰੀ ਆਉ । ।

ਇਤੁ ਮਾਰਗਿ ਪੈਰੁ ਧਰੀਜੈ । ਸਿਰੁ ਦੀਜੇ ਕਾਣ ਨ ਕੀਜੈ । ।

'Shouldst thou desire to play the game of love, place thy head on thy palm and come unto my lane. If thou hast not to mind giving thy head, only then put thy foot on this path.'

CHAPTER III

ADVENT IN THE PUNJAB

It has already been stated that Banda started from Nanded with only twenty-five Sikhs but the holy mandate that the Guru had granted him was sufficient to gather the whole Panth, young and old, rich and poor, under his banner, come what may. The Guru's teachings at Nanded had put such an impression on him that he would not rest till he had heard from his Sikh companions, on his way to the Punjab, the whole story of His Holiness' adventure, and the persecution to which his sons and Sikhs had been subjected. This added fuel to the fire of his fury, and strengthened further his resolution to punish the tyrants. Banda was confident of his success as he knew that under his leadership the Sikh lions could inflict defeat after defeat in the very teeth of the enemy, however strong and resourceful, and that under the Guru's patronage, victory and triumph would accompany him in all his operations. He was a Rajput by birth and therefore a born soldier, while encouragement from the Guru and company of the dauntless batch of Sikh warriors, who had already fought many a bloody battle, banished from his heart all the apprehensions that one might entertain about the Moghul's strength. Thus it was that the devoted Banda put his launch of hope into the deep of enterprise.

The Guru had told him to beg from *Wahiguru* (God) whatever he might stand in need of and assured

him that his prayer (*ardas*), offered in co-operation with the five Sikhs, would be granted without fail so long as he had trust in God and did the right. So, he had first to try how far the Guru was true in his assurance.¹ For instance, it is said that on their way to Punjab, Banda and his handful of Sikh companions ran short of provisions and funds, and began to stare at one another's face. At once, it struck Banda to offer an *ardas* (prayer) to Father Almighty. Now as Providence had willed that Guru's man should succeed in his enterprise, no sooner the *ardas* was over that a Lubana Sikh appeared there, and presented a sum of Rs. 500/- which he had made by keeping the *dasvandh* or tith of his income, and reserved for presentation to the Panth.² This episode confirmed his faith in the Guru's cause being supported by God. But it was soon followed by another event which provided him a good deal with the 'sinews of war,'³ and enabled him to distribute a large amount among his followers. It so happened that when the party were digging and preparing ground for camp after the customary *ardas*, a *gagar* (a brazen pitcher) full of gold coins (*ashrafis*) was found buried there.

Encouraged and emboldened by such like providential circumstances, Banda went on in hot haste on his noble mission of defending the defenceless and befriending the forlorn, and complying with the humane wish of the sympathetic Guru to stamp out tyranny and spread peace and order, to protect the orphans and preserve the chastity of Hindu maids, matrons and widows. As he had the writ of the holy Guru to introduce him to the Khalsa Panth, he circulated the following message to all those who ground their teeth for revenge:

The tenth Guru hath deputed me, his 'slave'

To revenge upon the Turks,

spent up on the maintenance of his army and feeding the paupers - the first thing the Sikhs do whenever they assemble. This habit of generosity and hospitality endeared his name to all the subjects, Sikhs as well as Hindus, who being oppression-ridden found in him a veritable source of relief. Then he announced that he would consider it his duty to protect the people against the dacoits, who roamed these days as hungry wolves do in jungle. This he gave a practical proof of, when at a village of his halt, he faced a large gang of dacoits whom after a bloody skirmish, he beat and defeated, letting not a single life in the village be lost. This added to his esteem among the people, on the one hand, and struck terror into the hearts of the lawless men, on the other. The Sikhs, too finding him successful in all sorts of trial, recognised and followed him as their patent leader. Such reports about him spread far and wide so that people brought to him complaints and received justice. Thus, Banda, who had so far refrained from interfering with the government, found himself called upon to do so now.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This also goes a great way to prove that Banda had not received amrit, or else he would never have thought of verifying the Guru's gifts to him.
2. Would that our Sikh brethren took a leaf out of the book of the Sikhs of yore, and minded to devote a part each of their income to the support of *Panthic* institutions.
3. Money.
4. ਲੈਵਨ ਕੇ ਬਦਲੇ ਤੁਰਕਾਨ ਤੇ, ਮੋਹਿ ਪਠਿਓ ਗੁਰ ਸੈ ਕਰ ਬੰਦਾ ।
ਮਾਰ ਖਵਾਰ ਕਰਾਉ ਬਜੀਦਹਿ, ਦੇਹੁ ਉਜਾੜ ਲੁਟਾਇ ਸਰੂੰਦਾ ।
ਲੈਕਰ ਵੇਰ ਗੁਰੇ ਪੁੜੈ ਫਿਰ, ਮਾਰ ਗਿਰੀਸ਼ ਕਰੋ ਪਰ ਗੰਦਾ ।
ਏਤਕ ਕਾਜ ਕਰੋ ਜਬ ਮੈ, ਤੁਮ, ਜਾਨਯੇ ਮੋਹਿ ਤਥੈ ਗੁਰ ਬੰਦਾ ।।

CHAPTER IV

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE SITUATION

It was after a thorough survey of the then prevailing situation that Banda considered it worth his while to defy the Moghul power openly. And the reason for his doing so is not far to seek. The Government, though apparently based and founded on a system, had nearly lost all its vitality : practically the Moghul power was at its last gasp, having been deprived of all its force. The Province was divided into *subas* or divisions which were further partitioned into *sarkars*, sub-divisions or districts. Thus, for instance, Sirhind was a *sarkar* or sub-division under the Delhi division. All this appears to be a very reasonable arrangement, quite akin to the present management; but it was mere in name while all the petty governors of the so called *sarkars* were practically answerable to no higher authority. Similarly, the head of a division was attached to the throne of the Emperor only nominally, while otherwise he was a despotic ruler for all intents and purposes. Such was the state of the administration not long after Aurangzeb's death, though in his lifetime, too, it was only like a fruit, good-looking but rotten at the core. As history repeats itself in all ages, it did so in case of Aurangzeb also. In the words of a Persian sage '*raiyyat choon bekh ast sultan darkhat*', i.e. while the ruler is a tree, the ruled are its root. A ruler who oppresses his subjects does nothing but cut his own root. Embodiment of anarchy and prototype of

tyranny as he was, Aurangzeb had imposed a capitation tax (*jazia*) on each Hindu head, while doors of service were quite shut against all the non-Muslims. Hindus were subjected to indescribable tortures at the slightest fault, without being heard in defence. If an oppressed Hindu complained against a Mohammedan, he was further persecuted for having complained against a follower of the Prophet. Thus, the Aesop's well-known fable of 'wolf and lamb' quite suitably applied to the relations which existed in those days between the rulers and the ruled. In a word, the cup of tyranny was full to the brim and the oppressed people always sat bathed in tears, sending forth dolorous cries of lamentation to the Creator of the Universe. Though they could not complain loud, as they were at once gagged, throttled and strangled if they ever did so, yet were in wait of some suitable opportunity of finding relief which came at last through the agency of that celebrated messenger of the tenth Guru, the gallant Banda.

Thus, while the government was crumbling at the foundation, ready to tumble down at a single shock, the subjects were exceedingly sick of it, praying in their heart of hearts that they might soon be rid of it. Therefore, in his opposition of the former, Banda was quite confident of the support of the latter, and when he began to meddle with the law, not only the professed followers of the Gurus, the actual Sikhs, joined him, but also the leading Hindus of the villages surrounding his camp liberally financed him, each contributing his quota to his funds for the maintenance of *deg*, the rations, and *tegh*, the sword or arms or ammunition.¹ Thus, he was not a solitary outlaw or a single-handed adventurer, but was rather a resourceful revolutionery deputed by the power Divine

to pave the way for a better and a humane rule which as a sure effect of his and his contemporaries' efforts did not take long after that to be established. I mean the blessed rule, the advent of which was the subject of the prophetic prescience of the Ninth Guru.² Now let us see how this assertion is correct to a letter.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. In the Sikh nomenclature 'deg' denotes hospitality and 'tegh' signifies bravery, while literally these terms mean 'cauldron' and 'sword' respectively.
2. Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, who only a day before his martyrdom had prophesied the British advent in India, or the approach of the power 'greater than the great Moghul,' to quote the words of H.E. Lord Hardinge from his State Entry Durbar Speech. *[Such statements were often made current by the British rulers to ensure the loyalty of the Sikhs, and as such it cannot be accepted. - Eds.]*

CHAPTER V PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS

'Should you be threatened by thieves, dacoits or wayfarers or troubled by a Mohammadan bigot, be he an official of the Empire or a private man; should your own lives or that of your dear or near be in danger; or should you find that somebody, instigated by the ruler of the time, metes out any sort of injustice or illtreatment unto you, report it to me at once, and I will redress your wrongs in no time,' was the general order issued by Banda to whosoever met him or came to him. It had such a speedy and sure effect that people considered his presence in their midst or near them as a veritable boon while the offenders dreaded him as a nightmare.¹ But how long could such a political propaganda remain unknown to the Government? Nor did Banda wish that his presence should remain in oblivion. He rather announced it with the beat of drum so that he might find a match to try his strength on. Moreover, his punishing the dacoits and enforcing his own rule wherever he went, thereby taking law into his own hand, could not escape the special notice of the Emperor who now cautioned his governors, especially that of Delhi and under him the sub-Governor of Sirhind as to their duty towards the Empire against such an invincible enemy whose very declarations and announcements were most terrifying and awe-inspiring. Wazir Khan², whose own conscience always cursed him for his most shameful and

cowardly act of butchering to death the innocent children of Guru Gobind Singh, was always afraid of a punishment. So, when he heard of the declarations of Banda, his scare and anxiety knew no limits. Like Shakespeare's Macbeth, fearful apparitions danced before his eyes, and the harrassing scenes of tortures occupied his imagination. He was apprehensive of retribution, but when he was informed of this great actor's appearance on the stage of politics, his apprehension became doubly sure. But as hope lasts till one's last breath and remedies are applied even in a most hopeless case, he hit upon many and various plans to nip the danger in the bud and suppress the Sikh-rising before it could assume serious proportions. For the fulfilment of this sinister object, he first began with the Sikhs in his own employ, Ali Singh, Mali Singh, Gurdial Singh, Suba Singh and others, the *zamindar* residents of the village Salaudi, who had been overheard talking about the advent of Banda, the Great Messenger of the Tenth Guru. He called them to his presence and made untoward remarks against the Guru and Banda, at which the Sikhs demanded their salaries, expressing their intention to go away. As this was a sufficient pretence for the tyrant to torture them, he sent them to prison, saying that he would further deal with them the next morning. The order was no longer pronounced than obeyed. But the Sikhs had already detected his motive and were sure of imprisonment. Therefore, they had, in anticipation, won over the *Daroga* in charge of the jail to their side. Thus, it was at the dead of night that all of them broke open the doors and fled away, reaching upto a safe distance till day dawned. Wazir Khan was informed of the catastrophe in the morning. The *Daroga* wept, cried and

beat his head, saying that the prisoners had escaped, eluding all the possible vigilance on his part. Thus this well-known batch of brave Sikhs joined the forces of Banda whom they explained all about Wazir Khan and Sirhind which simply led to his (Banda's) sharpening of arms and quickening his aim further.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. It is said that the tyrants, who knew that sooner or later they would have to meet their deserts, for the tyranny wrought by them on the poor and innocent creatures of God, had themselves come to believe that Banda was leading a punitive expedition which would never let them scot free. So much so that in their dreams even they saw dreadful scenes of his progress, and got up crying till they knew that all this was a mere chimera and production of a dream.
2. *[The author throughout the book names him Wazid Khan. In this respect, he seems to have followed Bhai Santokh Singh and Giani Gian Singh who also erroneously named him Wazid Khan. See Mahan Kosh, p 1080. - Eds.]*

CHAPTER VI PILLAGE OF SAMANA

Samana¹ was the first important town which fell a prey to Banda's excursion. Being a sub-division, or so to say a district of the sub-province of Sirhind, with nine important *parganas*² under it, it was inhabited by a large Muslem gentry consisting of Moghuls and Sayyads, well-to-do and well-off in every respect. The *amils* or the leading executive officials of this place had always been a source of trouble to the poor Hindus whose complaints against them had so far proved a mere crying in the wilderness. Numerous reports of all this and the wealthiness of the place had reached Banda who now turned to making it an object of his practice to prove how 'well begun is half done'. With a view to strengthening his force further, he sent word³ to all the gangs of dacoits belonging to places near and far to join him in the plunder of the place where wealth had been accumulated for so many years past, and which owing to it being a residence of members of the ruling nation had so far been unapproachable to them. All obeying the call, the bugle-sounded 'march'. When they reached the town of Kaithal - a *pargana* of Samana - they were informed that a treasure full of the revenue collections of the Malwa province would halt on its way to the capital at a village near by. Nothing could be farther from the gallant Banda's heart than missing such a golden opportunity. Immediately he hid himself to the spot and

fell upon the Moghul guards like a thunderbolt, cutting them into pieces and taking possession of the treasure. The report at once reached the ears of the Governor of Kaithal who with all the soldiery and constabulary at his disposal came to meet the Sikhs whom they found, quite beyond their expectations, a stronger match. But as the Muhammadans were all mounted while the Sikhs were mostly pedestrians, the latter hit upon entering the neighbouring wood which was full of hedges. It was difficult for the horsemen to search the pursued. Therefore, getting down the horses, they went into the wood. But the clever Sikhs immediately came out, and catching the horses appeared before the un-horsed enemy whom they gave a very good lesson for their folly. Many lost their lives while the leaders ran away back to their head-quarters, dispirited and downcast. Banda distributed this booty proportionately among his own followers, and the group he had gathered around himself, who all became convinced of his unselfishness.

Now, rather with a redoubled vehemence, the triumphant Banda and his victorious followers turned towards Samana which was awaiting its doom. The haughty Moghuls had a very low estimate of the invaders and considered all reports about them as mere manufactured and got up ones. And how they were belied by the reality when they came out to face that formidable force can better be imagined than described. They would have run away if it had been possible, but run they could not with their wealth and wives. In a twinkling was the Sikh sword seen working a terrible havoc upon the enemy who were cut into pieces as carrots and radishes are cut with a knife, their corpses swelling into heaps through which flowed rivulets of blood. The Sikhs fought, each to his heart's content, vying with one another

in their work of slaughter, some with a view to wreaking vengeance, others with the object of punishing the tyrants in obedience to their Guru's order. The battle being over, they entered the town like famished lions, and gratified themselves with a further slaughter and plunder - only the Hindus escaping. But Banda and his army alone were not responsible for this ravage. It was for many years past that the relentless Moghuls of Samana who were so respectable as to appear before public in palanquins⁴ and to reside in palatial houses, had been oppressing their Hindu neighbours so much so that in the persecution and murders of the two younger sons of the Tenth Guru, some of them were quite directly interested. For those reasons, all A, B, C, D, X, Y, and Z joined the victors, and did what they liked, each to gratify his personal spite against individual Moghuls. Ah what a good lesson the fateful end of that prosperous town furnished to those who, unmindful of future, oppressed the weak. And what a pity if still we should forget the advice of that world-famous sage Sadi : "*ai zabardast zerdast azar garam takai bimanad en bazar*" which means "Thou, O high-handed fellow, how long wilt thou continue oppressing the weak ?" The jaundiced writers of the type of Sayyad Latif accuse Banda of high-handedness, tyranny and useless bloodshed. But whether punishing the tyrants who butchered innocent babies and infants, spoil the chastity of poor *pardadar* females and plundered and put to sword in the broad day-light thousands of harmless males and females, is a tyranny or an act of justice is left to the conscientious reader to judge and decide. Rama and Krishna liberated the people from trouble by putting an end to the tormentors of mankind. None "out of bedlam" accuses them of cruelty. Thousands of years have gone by, but they are honoured and sung down to

this day. The name of the benign British Government is enshrined in every loyal heart and will ever be remembered most gratefully because they emancipated the world from tyranny and in order to set the example, might have hanged up batches after batches of the tyrants who sucked the blood of their fellow human beings. Dare then anybody, with a clear human conscience, call such a humane and merciful Government a cruel Government? Again in the words of Sadi, doing good to the vicious is nothing but harming the virtuous.⁵ So, in meting out the oppressors of people exactly what treatment they deserved reflects an everlasting credit on that great champion, Banda Bahadur, in whom the Hindu damsels and children in those days had found to be a veritable God-sent for the simple reason that he protected their lives, honour and wealth. And this is what is essentially required in a noble human being.

History says that hundreds of Moghul ladies, who were afraid of a disgrace at the hands of those neighbours whom their husbands had oppressed for no fault, lost their lives, some by felling themselves from the roofs of their palaces and others by drowning or strangulating themselves when they found no way to escape. This was certainly a most creditable act, and it is most regrettable that the poor wives had to suffer for the evil deeds of their imprudent husbands who simply reaped what they had sown.

Most of those who had fled away with their lives, leaving all their wealth lying there, never returned to reside again at Samana. Thus, it was within a few hours that a beautiful town, furnished with palatial buildings and beautified by metalled streets and macadamised bazars, was converted into a large heap of ruins⁶ which

exist down to this day in testimony of the first important achievement of Banda the Brave. It is said that each and every member of the Sikh army made, from this plunder, sufficient money to live upon for many days to come while it added much to the resources of Banda in his further expeditions.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The native village of Jalal-ud-din, the executioner, by whom Guru Tegh Bahadur had been put to death. *Transformation of Sikhism* by G. C. Narang.
2. Corresponding to the modern tehsil.
3. [The statement is untrue. No historical evidence is available in support of it. The reality is the other way round : some rogues and robbers did join his army under the guise of Sikh crusaders - *Eds.*]
4. It is said that 22 leading Moghuls of Samana were entitled to the honour of coming out in palanquins.
5. ਨੇਕੀ ਕਰਦਨ ਬਾ ਬਦਾਂ ਅਸਤ ਚੂੰ ਬਦੀ ਕਰਦਨ ਬਾ ਨੇਕਾਂ ।
6. ਨਦੀਆਂ ਦੇ ਵਿਚ ਟਿੱਬੇ ਦਿਖਾਨੋਂ ਥਲੀ ਕਰੇ ਆਸਗਾਹ

Thus my lord who changeth rivers into rocks and converteth a desert into a fathomless ocean.

CHAPTER VII
DIFFICULTIES OF THE MAJHA SIKHS

So far it were the Malwa Sikhs who had joined Banda in his preliminary expeditions as there was no serious difficulty in their way to come over to him. Thus, those of them that feared none else but God and always longed to be able to serve their Guru spared no moment to meet his Messenger, Banda, as soon as they heard of his approach. For instance, the brave Sikhs of the type of Ali Singh and Mali Singh of Salaudi, whose account is found mentioned in the preceeding pages, got at him even at the risk of their own lives as well as of those of their dear and near while Choudharis of Phul¹ and other worldly-wise men supported him with men and material, but refrained from appearing personally on the stage, as though they had full sympathy with their Panthic cause but were doubtful as to its ultimate success against the redoubtable Moghul whose strength they believed to be comparatively much more, nay incomparable. All of them were afraid lest, in case of failure of this expedition, they and their families should have to bear the brunt of the ruler's wrath. They were justified, too, in their fear, but true patriots never mind such consequences. The case of the Majha Sikhs was quite different, and though they yielded to none in their yearning to join the Guru's flag, they were prevented from doing so by many hindrances placed in their way by the Government. For instance, strict orders were issued to the managers of

caravan-serais and inns as well as to the officers in charge of roads and ferries to the effect that no Sikh should be allowed to pass, and that there should be a thorough and sifting search in this connection. The Malwa Sikhs were certainly free from such impediments as their way to Banda was quite open and easy whereas the Majha Sikhs had to pass ferries before they could reach their destination. But they were too brave to be cowed down by such difficulties which were but trifling straws before the storm of their good resolution. They managed to elope one by one or by twos or threes, mixing themselves with the parties of traders going up to the hills which did not arouse the least suspicion of the officials. Fortunately for them, they were met by a set of passengers who, apparently merchants, had surging in their veins the pure Sikh blood, and who never refrained from doing whatever service they could render to their beloved Panth, unmindful of the fatal consequences of their patriotic conduct in those days of bias and bigotry. They were Kishora Singh, Peshawra and Ram Singh, traders of Kiratpur.² They helped a large number of the Majha Sikhs to assemble at their places at Kiratpur and entertained them with hospitality befitting their faith. What a good contrast does their example furnish to that of the present-day loafers who professing themselves to be Sikhs could let the important Panthic movements die out for want of funds, but would not part with a broken farthing to support them, simply because they were browbeaten and put out of countenance by a non-Sikh *Choudhari* or *Lambardar*. I remember a Sikh *shahukar* refusing to subscribe for a religious movement for the cowardly reason that the Muslem Tehsildar of his place did not like his doing so. Thus, it was in the midst of an awful

fire of the Moghul tyranny that there lived noble personages who served their brethern at any cost while nowadays, in spite of the numerous blessings of the Pax Brittanica, we sadly lack such like specimens of moral courage - look at this picture and look at that ! Thus, when the Malwa Khalsa were plundering the royal treasure and pillaging Samana, their Majha brethren were assembling in a solitary hill corner and concerting means how to reach the front. It is said that when the report of the occupation of Samana reached them, they cut their lips and wringed their hands for their inability to have been there. But still they were not much late, or over-late rather, as while they had mustered themselves to the north, Banda was proceeding from the South, there lying Sirhind between them and him, which none of the two parties could pass and meet each other unless Wazir Khan had been done away with.

Tired of much waiting, they sent two of their men to Banda, asking what steps they should take to reach him sooner. In reply, Banda advised them to come towards Kharar, while he himself, by that time, hoped to be at Chhat or at Banur, only one or two stages from Sirhind. As soon as the Majha Sikhs received this welcome message, they were puffed up with joy and hied themselves towards the proposed rendezvous.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. That critical writer, Dr. G. C. Narang, in his Transformation of Sikhism, divides the army under Banda's command into three classes, says he :-

The first class comprised the true and loyal Sikhs, who had sat at the feet of Guru Govind (Singh ?) and had been touched by the Promethean fire which animated the great pontiff himself. They rallied round Banda in a spirit of devotion and self sacrifice

to carry on the crusade against the enemies of their race and religion. They had no booty, no self aggrandisement, as their object, on the contrary, hundreds sold all their little belongings, purchased arms and flocked to the new leader with a fixed determination either to win the fight or to suffer martyrdom.

"The second class consisted of mercenaries who had been recruited and sent on to Banda by such chieftains, as Ram Singh and Tilok Singh of the Phool family, who, not being quite sanguine about the success of the new movement did not like to run the risk of losing court favour and their possessions, and could not venture to join personally the army of Banda. They secretly paid for the arms and accoutrements of large bodies of troops, and keeping themselves in the background continued to help the movement in a clandestine way.

"The third class was entirely composed of the irregulars who were attracted to Banda by the love of booty and plunder. They were professional robbers and dacoits, men of reckless daring, who hailed the movement as a golden opportunity offering prospect of plundering cities and towns instead of solitary wayfarers or caravans of merchants.

2. *[Kiratpur is an historical Sikh town in the present-day Ropar District. - Eds.]*

CHAPTER VIII CONQUEST OF SADHAURA

Meanwhile, Wazir Khan was day and night busy doing all that he could to set Banda's efforts at naught. But as his end had drawn nigh, all his attempts proved futile. For instance, when the Sikh army was besieging Samana, his spies, not more than four or five in number so that they might not be easily known, were present there with the object of counting the force, surveying their resources and gauging their strength. But the Argus-eyed Banda at once detected them; though he contended himself with cutting their noses and ears and sending them back to their mischievous Master, with the message that a similar fate was awaiting him, too.

The plunder of Samana was soon followed by that of Ghuram, a village close by to the east. From thence, he advanced still further eastward as that direction was evidently far more advantageous than the west, comprising rich Mohammadan towns and affording a nearer reach to the Majha Sikhs. But Banda was not a mere indiscreet or indiscriminate plunderer as he always pardoned those who sued for pardon, and with whom he found no serious fault. For instance, when he descended on a village named Thaska which lay on his way to Shahabad, a rich town (it now belongs to the modern-day Ambala District) inhabited by wealthy Muslem Jagirdars, the people there fell at his feet, begging mercy, which was granted. Thus, whereas Samana and

Sadhaura were mixed with dust, the fortunate little village Thaska continued to enjoy absolute peace and liberty. Similarly, the historic town of Thanesar was left untouched for the reason of it being a place of antique sacredness.

But Shahabad he would not leave. So, the Sikhs ravaged it to their heart's fill, and those of the Moghul, Sayad and Shaikh residents escaped that ran away with their lives, leaving all their belongings there.

From Shahabad the victorious Khalsa turned towards Kunjpura, the native town of Wazir Khan who had sent a strong force and artillery for its defence. But nothing could resist the irresistible sword of the brave Sikhs who took possession of all his ammunition and artillery and despatched all his soldiers to their ancestors. This frustrated Wazir Khan's remaining ray of hope and all assurance that he now gave to his people seemed a mere hollow show, meant only to keep up their spirit.

During their halt at Kunjpura, a few of the Sikh soldiers, while out-walking, visited a neighbouring village, named Teha, where they saw a number of Mohammadans celebrating Bakrid by slaughtering cows. The gallant sons of the Guru could not tolerate such an unholy scene. With swords drawn, they fell upon them. But being small in number, two of them were killed, while others were surrounded in a building. This report soon reached the main Sikh army who approached the spot with the speed of lightning and put all young and old of the place to sword. This action of Banda acted as a deterrent upon the sacrilege of cow-killing in future, so much so that whereas thousands of dumb-driven cattle were butchered earlier on a Muhammadan festival, now not a single cow was killed. This endeared the Sikhs to the Hindus who

supported them with all they had. Then came the turn of Mustafabad which also was ransacked in the broad day-light. It was on or about that occasion that the Hindu Mahajans of Sadhaura, a well known town quite near by to the north, approached Banda with dolorous complaints against the Muslern *amils* (executive officers) of the place. Said they : "Our ruler, Nawab Usman Khan, and his proteges, are so obstinate and unjust that they impose on Hindus, taxes that are four times more than those levied upon the Muhammadans. They slaughter cows in our lanes and streets, nay before our very houses, and leave their blood and excrement there. They do not permit the Hindus to perform their religious ceremonies, nor allow the burning of the dead. They had the venerable Pir Budhu Shah slain for the mere accusation that he had helped Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Bhangani"¹ So on and so forth. This account of high-handedness and tyranny enraged that champion of the oppressed, Banda, into an extreme fury. Blood surged in his eyes, and immediately did his giant hand fall upon his scabbard from which he took his sabre and forthwith ordered for a march. The order was obeyed and in a short time the Sikh army was seen at Sadhaura. Now when the Nawab received the news of their arrival, his despair and consternation knew no limit. He and his followers were dumbfounded by the stories of Banda's achievements and supernatural powers and were in a fix whether to face the calamity or flee away with lives. But flee they could not, as in the twinkling of an eye the whole town was surrounded by the Sikhs who would not let even an ant pass unnoticed.

Sadhaura was the seat of a very important and old *pargana* of Sirhind, and was inhabited by well-to-do

Pathans and Sayads. It was in the time of Khizar Khan, the ruler of Delhi, that a *jagir* of Rs. 60,000/- was granted to the owner of this town, Sayad Nizamuddin, whose descendent Sayad Budhu Shah (also known as Sayad Badr-ud-din) had rendered a great service to the Tenth Guru, in a battle against the Moghuls.² There was another party in force, called the Shaikhs, whose leader Usman Khan was an embodiment of devilry, and as such subjected the poor Hindus to much disgrace and trouble. Though he knew that he was no match for the gallant Sikhs, yet he had fortified his position as much as he could, and had called upon his friends from places near and far to defend him. The Sikh artillery and archers continued the siege for over eight hours which the besieged adequately responded to, and there appeared to be no hope of an easy victory. But the pious Banda had so far remained aloof from action and kept sitting aside, absorbed in deep meditation as was his wont. So far the balance of the battle was quite equal, but as under such circumstances, the loss of the besiegers is always heavier than that of the besieged who are protected by the edifice they are sheltered in, Fateh Singh and Bhagtu Singh, commanders, afraid lest the equilibrium should, in course of time, bend into the enemy's favour, went to him and asked if he would come to the scene only when all had been killed and the day had been won by the enemy. This was a taunt which the brave Banda could never tolerate. So, he got up at once and drawing his bow let fly his first arrow which, by the Guru's kindness, was nothing but a message of death. It was followed by another agent of disaster and destruction which spread an uncontrollable panic amongst the enemy who had heard many stories of

Banda's miracles and wonderful feats of magic. Blindfold, as if the arrows had been accompanied by a dark storm of dust covering their eyes, they ran to and fro forgetting their positions and use of arms.³ It is said that imagination has always an affect on one's heart which cannot be easily removed. So, although Banda might have simply come to the army, and his very appearance like that of a Julius Caesar, a Napoleon or a Hari Singh Nalwa amidst his followers, might have inspired his men with further spirit and courage, yet the enemy thought that he had brought his magic to destroy them with. It is said of Julius Caesar that he used to commence his attack after his army had exhausted all their physical strength, but that his appearance amidst them infused in them a spirit which always proved irresistible. Hence there was a victory. Similar has been the case of all the natural leaders whose exploits the history has ever recorded. And Banda was certainly a typical example of this sort. He never joined a battle from its very inception. He rather kept sitting aside, contemplating and meditating; when he found or was informed that the condition was critical, he rose like a lion from his cave, and with a single roar fell upon the enemy, drawing the sacred bow which the holy Guru had granted him. The bows of the chivalrous Ram Chandra and Lakshmana of the *Ramayana* and that of gallant Arjuna of *Mahabharata* were always associated with the victory which their masters achieved in a battle. Similarly associated with nothing but victory was Banda's bow which he had received from the Tenth Master. And just as Arjuna's bow owed its origin to Indra or some other god of the Hindu pantheon, so did Banda's bow and arrows represent a gift of that god of gods, Sri Guru Gobind Singh, there being no denying that associations

must have their effect. And this was the only magic which he possessed, and which he lost when he deviated⁴ from the injunction of his Giver of spirit, the Guru.

Now Banda gave his order for a final attack which proved unbearable for the enemy and he gave way. Poor Usman Khan, the tyrant, was caught and tied to a tree where he died in that miserable condition, his corpse being exposed to the kites and and vultures who fed to their fill on that sumptuous feast of human body. Then the Sikhs put to sword all who came in their way, excepting those who had nothing to do with the mischief. They are also said by some to have dug up the Mohamedan graves and burnt the bones they found therein. This done, Banda Bahadur declared his occupation of the Fort and the town, and stationed his own guard there. But afraid of a further more dangerous action, the leading Mohamedans came enmasse, and fell at Banda's feet, asking pardon and promising not to tease or trouble any Hindu in future. The magnanimous Banda forgave them their lives, but he never knew that beneath their supplications those mealy-mouthed designing people had a very sinister motive. They had hit upon a trick, and while they themselves came to sue for pardon, they had secretly despatched a man with a letter to Wazir Khan of Sirhind, asking him to come unawares with his army and surprise Banda and his force all of a sudden. This was a plot which, but for its disclosure, would have resulted in a heavy loss to - if not in the utter destruction of - the Sikhs. But fortunately, the cat was soon out of the bag. The malicious letter was thrust into a hollow piece of bamboo and handed over to a courier. But he was hardly out of the outskirts of the town before a camelman of Banda, took the bamboo from him in order

to beat his refractory animal therewith; and hollow as it was, it broke into pieces, and the letter fell out of it. The camelman picked it up and took it to his master along with the courier. Banda was simply astonished to read its contents which he secretly conveyed to his councillors and sardars who cut their lips in extreme anger.

Now he summoned the self-same Moslems, who had come to beg pardon, and inquired what should be the punishment of the person who deceived his benefactor in that way. As they had not even dreamt of their letter having been so caught, they at once replied that such a mischievous fellow should be tortured to death without the least mercy. No sooner had this verdict fallen from their lips than the mighty Banda ordered for a general massacre of all the Mohamedans of the place. Some historians say that Banda ordered that those of them who entered the grand building, known after Budhu Shah, would be spared, while all others would be killed. But the Sikhs first did away with those who remained outside, and thereafter massacred those who had gone into that house, thereby putting an end to one and all.⁵ The place is called "*Katal Garhi*" or "Slaughter house". It exists down to this day.

Another interesting episode in the conquest of Sadhaura was the burning of the great mausoleum of Kutab-ul-aktab, the grandson of Sayad Nizam-ud-Din, the founder of the dynasty. It was a belief - a superstition rather - that should the corpse of a Hindu pass by that mausoleum, it never burnt even though it were covered with gun powder. This was why no Hindu dared reside in that part of the town. When Banda came to know of this, he ordered the mausoleum itself to be consumed to ashes, thereby putting an end to a standing nuisance for

ever. But Bhai Karam Singh, author of the Punjabi booklet *Banda Bahadur*, totally denies this fact as well as the story of the general massacre. Says he : "The facts seem absolutely to acquit Banda of the accusation of *Katal Garhi* and burning the Mausoleum of Abdul Wahab (*Maktab-ul-aktab*). The people of the surrounding villages were tired of the high-handedness of the Qazis, the Sayads and the Sheikhs and when they found an opportunity to revenge, they took it without informing Banda of their intention. It was impossible to spare those who would have gone into the *haveli* of Shah Badr-ud-Din. But this, too, seems incredible that those who never took to arms should have been butchered indiscriminately. As the *haveli* belonged to the Sayads, only big Sayads, Qazis and Sheikhs might have availed themselves of it, and as the people were sick of them, they did not leave a single person alive. The genealogical tree shows that the number of killed did not exceed forty or fifty. But as they were indiscriminately murdered, the place was named '*Katal Garhi*' or 'Slaughter house'." ⁶

The same seems to be the case with the *khankah* or the mausoleum. The people had become sick of the superstition that a Hindu corpse, passing thereby, never took fire; so in a fit of annoyance they arranged faggots there and put the place to fire. But even common sense once arrives at the conclusion that if Banda had intended to destroy the place, he could raze it to the ground and separate its very bricks from one another. Or if he had desired to burn it, then should he have left it with a half-burnt roof only ? It is a mere exaggeration to say that Banda had the Muslem tombs dug up and the corpses consumed to ashes together with the boxes that contained them, and had innumerable mausoleums and mosques

demolished. But these accounts are not credited even by the *Sahwani* Sayads, who are justified in hurling any accusation they can concoct and manufacture upon Banda, the admitted tormenter of their forefathers to whom all these accounts refer and relate. And the most evident proof of their being false is that the magnificent edifices of *Ganji* flame and '*Maktab-ul-aktab*' are still in much the same condition as they were before the invasion of Banda. And this proves how our people out-heroed heroes in exaggerating facts.

Another incident bears ample testimony to the aim and object with which the greatest champion of the time was sent to the Punjab by Guru Gobind Singh and illustrates how he missed no opportunity of protecting the weak and humble against the strong and high-handed. There was a village named Kapuri, lying at a distance of only three or four kos⁷ from Sadhaura. It was the place of residence of one Aman-ullah who having been the Governor of Kathiawar (Gujrat) in the time of Aurangzeb, had made a large fortune by dint of which he had converted the village into a piece of paradise. However, blinded by bigotry, he spared no means to trouble the Hindus, whose properties and females were always in danger at his tyrannical hands which he extended as far as his resources allowed him. His son Kadur-ud-Din had inherited all the vices of his father to which he added many more in those days of 'might is right'. He was an infernal being, the very embodiment of devilry in that part of province, where his very name had become a source of terror to the poor Hindus. He was voluptuous to the extreme and no Hindu maid or matron whose beauty attracted his heart could escape his clutches. It is said that to gain his vicious ends he resorted to various

tricks. For instance, once disguising himself as a Hindu, he got access into a Khatri's house at Amritsar, and succeeded in kidnapping a beautiful damsel and carrying her away to his village. Such reports the philanthropic Banda could not bear to hear. So, before attacking Sadhaura he thought it imperative to pay a punitive visit to Kapuri where he seized the satan, Kadur-ud-Din and condemned him to a death which he well deserved because of his dark deeds. This action very much prevented the strong oppressing the weak who now sang loud in Banda's praise.

From Sadhaura, the victorious Sikh army went towards North-West, with the object of meeting their Majha brethren who were so impatiently waiting for them at Kharar. But the towns of Chhat and Banur, so much haunted by the Mohammadan tyrants, remained to be conquered. The Hindus of these places had already approached Banda with loud complaints against the *qazis* and *amils* who injured their feelings and insulted their religion by killing cows and carrying the killed in open. They also outraged the chastity of Hindu females, and did this all without the least fear of punishment; Banda arrested all of them, awarding every culprit a condign punishment with a view to setting an example.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Twarikh Guru Khalsa.*
2. The battle in which Fir Budhu Shah took part on Guru Gobind Singh's side was fought against the hill rajas and not the Mughals. - Eds.
3. It is not for us to discuss whether Banda was really a master of miracles and magic. But we can't help remarking that, whatever he was he was, his very appearance at the scene of battle struck such a terror into the enemies that they knew of nothing

but running away.

4. *[Some writers do attribute Banda's fall to his so-called deviation from the Guru's command. On the other hand, the Sikhs under Banda Singh Bahadur were defeated because of the disunity among their own ranks. It is another matter that the Mughal authority played its own role to break the unity of the Sikhs who had united under Banda Singh Bahadur's flag. For details, see Introduction, - Eds.]*

5. This general massacre was the first that a Hindu or a Sikh conqueror wrought on the Mohammadans; but it was done in punishment of a most grievous offence - a most heinous sin consisting in cheating a benefactor, who with all his followers would have been destroyed in a twinkling, had the plot been allowed to reach fruition. But the memories of Changez Khan and Nadir Shah are cursed down to this day for their ordering for indiscriminate massacres of the poor innocent human beings.

6. To Karam Singh we gladly refer now and then for the simple reason that his work is based on inquiries which he personally made on spots, and that the book is a publication of the Itihas Khojak (Historical Research) Sub-Committee of the Chief Khalsa Diwan, whose very aim and object consist in verifying facts about Sikh history.

7. Or say about 5 miles (8 kms.)

CHAPTER IX BATTLE OF ROPAR

The progress of the Majha Sikhs towards Kharar was retarded by the Pathans of Maler Kotla under their leader, Sher Muhammad Khan, who for his valuable services to the Moghul crown enjoyed high distinction among his contemporaries. This Sher Muhammad Khan's uncle, Nabi Khan, was killed in the battle of Chamkaur while his other uncle, Khizr Khan, (whom Guru Gobind Singh has called Mardoode Khan or the cowardly Khan in his *Zafarnama* for his having shown white feathers and running away with his wife), was still present with him burning with the deepest spite against the gallant Sikhs. They had been liberally supported by the Nawab of Sirhind who strained his every nerve to supply every possible means to finish up Banda before the latter could reach Sirhind and trouble him. Thus, while on the one side there were all the worldly resources and on the other only the true spirit of the Guru counting on none else but the Giver of all strength, the battle began in right earnest. Streams of blood flowed through the hillocks of the killed and the wounded; but there was no knowing as to who would win. Loud shouts of 'Akai, Akai' and 'Ali, Ali' rent up the welkin, so much so that frightened by so much constant and continuous bloodshed, the holy Phoebus too covered his luminous face with his usual dark shroud and retired to his temporary repose. Therefore the battle was drawn,

allowing the parties full twelve hours to recruit each his lost strength. But the haughty Muslims were labouring under a wrong impression. They thought that the resourceless Sikhs had now lost all their strength and that it would not take them long, the next day, to inflict upon them (the Sikhs) a decisive defeat. 'Oh where will the devils go, when there will be no way for them to escape, Aha, the homeless Bairagi will find a home in our prison tomorrow', was the unanimous boasting of the presumptuous Moghuls. But who knew that quite the contrary would be the case as Providence had ordained otherwise. There is no doubt that the Sikhs had suffered much and were evidently under a great disadvantage, financially as well as numerically. But spiritually and from the point of view of *esprit-de-corps*, they were far stronger a match, and the calm hours of the night gave them a good time to muster forth their spirit and strength and to prepare themselves so as to meet the enemy with a redoubled vehemence in the morrow's fighting. Furthermore, their coreligionists who were ambushing in the hills of Anandpur formed a strong reinforcement and joined them with all the arms and ammunition they had.

Now the sun rose with the unclouded splendour and the brave Sikhs, having duly answered the call of nature, and bathed and remembered their Creator, sprang upon their arms as the bugle sounded the usual call and the Khalsa drum (the *Ranjit nagara*) thumped the war note. On the other hand, the enemy, confident of victory, ordered his very first attack to be the final, so as to leave nothing outstanding for the remaining part of the day. But they had erred in their estimate and their expectations were mere castles in the air as this time the Khalsa

appeared to be far more stronger than the previous day, being unmoved and immovable notwithstanding that the Muslem artillery and gunnery were the most terrible. Unmindful of any loss or sacrifice under the heavy fire of shot and shell, they fell upon the enemy and reduced the battle to a hand to hand fight. Then the victory was theirs.

The wretched Khizr Khan, who had come this time with the express object of giving the Sikhs an exemplary punishment loudly declared in the battle-field that the only means of escape left to them was to lay down their arms and surrender. But this demand was replied to by a heavy shower of arrows and shots, one of which struck Khizr Khan, driving his ghost out of his body and leaving all his malicious designs undone there and then. As this tremendous shock of the death of their leader the soldiery could not bear, they took to heels, declaring victory in favour of the Khalsa. Much did the ambitious Sher Mohammad Khan endeavour to rally his men, calling upon them to save their faith from such a disgrace, but all this proved a mere crying in the wilderness. Poor fellow, he lost his uncles and kith and kin. He himself received serious wounds and retired from the field down-cast and crest-fallen. When the report of this victory reached Banda, his pleasure was simply unlimited, so that he himself went out for the reception of the triumphant force. Thus, the vociferous ovations and loud shouts of "Sat Siri Akal" rent the firmament spreading terror and awe all around.

CHAPTER X

SIRHIND

The mention of this very name brings before the mind's eye the whole tragic scene of the cold-blooded murder of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh. How the innocent brothers in company with their venerable, dear grandmother, Mata Gujri, the noble spouse of the martyr Guru Tegh Bahadur, and birth-giver to the Saviour, were separated by the then calamitous circumstances from their holy father and elder brothers; how tossed about by distress, they considered it worth their while to count upon their servant-companion, the accursed Gangu Brahman, for shelter, and how being cajoled by him, they condescended to put up at his house in a hamlet near by; how they were robbed of all they had in the dead of night and how when they complained of this they were threatened with being exposed; how they were actually exposed by that infernal knave who went to the local officer and reported the presence of the mother and the two sons of Guru Gobind Singh at his house; further how the darlings of our Saviour with their loving old grandmother were caught and carried to Sirhind; how they were offered all the pleasures of the world and other temptations to embrace Islam; how they refused point-blank and kicked away all the alluring temptations, and preferred death to all the mortal power and pelf, and last but not least, how they were bricked up alive to

the extreme sorrow and grief of their grandmother who could not survive the shock. All these heart-rending episodes at once assemble before imagination, with the mention of this single unholy name, and with those all, on the other side, we remember Nawab Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand Khatri, the bloody perpetrators of the tragedy. Now as the Sikh expedition was mainly aimed at this very place, the combined force of the Majha and the Malwa Sikhs under his command arrived near it, with their blood boiling in their veins with enthusiasm and anger.

But Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, too, was not sleeping carelessly. He had rather hit upon many acts of anticipation, all of which failed one after the other. Now hearing that the Khalsa had come too near to be avoided, he arranged with a mischievous Hindu (a nephew of the devilish Sucha Nand, some say) to go over to Banda, with one thousand men, and state that tired of the Nawab's highhandedness upon him and his family, he had now come with his devoted followers to join the Khalsa with the object to wreak a vengeance. He and his men had been promised very tempting rewards by the Nawab, should they succeed in doing away with Banda or playing such a part as might tend to an utter defeat of the Sikhs. He did as he was desired to do. No doubt, the intelligenant Banda knew that it was a mere trap set for him, but acting up to the Divine saying *jite sharan ai hai : tite rakh le hai*, i.e. whosoever cometh under Thy shelter, Thou savest him, he would not like to punish a person who had come apparently under his shelter. So, with an explicit warning that if he turned a traitor he would be awarded an exemplary punishment, the man with his 1000 men was admitted to the Sikh

force. But the devils could not play the part they were entrusted with till in the pitch of the battle, when they were found inclining towards the enemy, they were severely beaten, and given their deserts along with the whole Mohammadan army. This proves the liberal-mindedness of Banda, and his trust in God in his right task.

Now the last trick that Wazir Khan played was to send a threatening message with a view to cowing him down with bombastic words. Said he, 'I have banished thy Guru from his motherland, and sent his sons and many Sikhs to the other world. My power is immense and unconquerable, because I have the Emperor's support whereas thou a mere beggar with a beggarly band, and therefore a tiny sparrow, art daring to fight out a hawk. But bear then in mind that none on earth would be able to suppress my wrath, or ask me to change the order that I will pass upon thee and thine when I catch thee. The only safe course for thee, therefore, is to turn back, giving up thy evil design of invading Sirhind.' To this Banda replied that he was certainly a mere *Bairagi*¹, neither proud of his power nor actually possessing anything to be boasted of. But as said he, 'thy own wicked deeds will be sufficient to punish thee; I shall not have to exert myself much for that. That turn back I should never, while come I must is the order of my Lord which I must obey, come what may. Thou shouldst, therefore, prepare thyself to meet me, and not waste thy time as well as mine on sending cowardly messages and bogus menaces.' This reply disappointed Wazir Khan for ever, and therefore the fate of Sirhind was inevitable.

The daily reports of Banda's achievements all

around had assured the people of Sirhind of his approach to that very centre of his aims, and now that he was heard to be only at a few miles distance, the consternation and panic there can better be imagined than described. Some were anxious about their females and children while others were in a fix as to where they should conceal their money and belongings. But all this fear had fallen in the share of the unlucky Mohammadans whereas the Hindus were quite confident of their remaining absolutely undisturbed and unmolested. They were rather buoyed up with the hope of revenge and retaliation after so many centuries of distress and trouble. But the family of Sucha Nand was an exception to the rule. Thus, just as frightened people do under such circumstances, many left their houses unshut and unlocked and ran away to whatever direction they found safe, while others, who were less pessimistic, buried their valuables under the ground, and sat content to see which way the wind blew.

As to the array of armies, Wazir Khan had spared no pains to fortify himself - the long line of artillery, howsoever dull and unrefined, but sufficient enough to strike terror and inspire influence in those days, the tremendous dark rows of the moving mountains, the elephants, the mounted gunners, archers, lancers and swordsmen in the front, to the right, to the left and behind, surrounding the innumerable columns of the drilled pedestrians, all of whom had been solemnly pledged to do and die for the sake of religion; in the view of those benighted people religion; consisted in nothing but oppressing the non-Muslims. And while Wazir Khan himself held the general command and marshalled the whole army, the Maler Kotla's neighbouring Sardars were each second in command, so far as his own force

was concerned. Thus, in strength and resourcefulness, each of the commanders vied with the others, concocting various plans as to how he would succeed in being the first and foremost of all in attacking the terrible Khalsa and capturing the so-called *fons et origo* of their strength, the formidable Banda. But who knew that Providence had willed otherwise, and that all these elaborations would frustrate like clouds before wind? Human strength is nothing if not supported by Almighty and though the Sikhs were comparatively very small in number and their resources, compared with those of the enemy, were very limited, there being no artillery, no good horses, no elephants and no armoury and ammunition, and only arrows and blunt swords being all that the Khalsa could boast of, yet the Divine blessings on that good cause on the one hand and the curses² of the world - an invisible host of sins the devil had committed, trumpet-tongued and wind-winged, invoking destruction and death for the tyrants - on the other, were practically acting as the strongest reinforcements. Besides, the robbers, dacoits and highwaymen of the country, who had witnessed so many previous successes of the Khalsa, joined them with the object of feeding fat on the plunder of the rich town of Sirhind.

This is, in nutshell, a description of both sides³ when the battle began, on or about the 1st of Har Sammat 1767 Bikrami, corresponding to 30 May 1710 and 242 Nanak Shahi.⁴ The deafening shouts of "Sat Siri Akal" and the din of "Din Din" or "Ali Ali" startled the celestial beings. First the Mohammadan artillery wrought a tremendous havoc as the Sikhs had nothing to respond to it with; and what they counted upon were the arrows with which they had simply enshrouded the atmosphere.

But how could the thin, pointed sticks counteract the effect of heavy shots and shells which were doing away with hundreds in a twinkling. Tired of such a clear disadvantage, the desperate sons of the Tenth Master decided to die a nobler death, and sallied forth enmasse towards the cannon, and inspite of the heaviest loss they sustained in doing so, they reached those black agents of death and snatched them off from the enemy, thereby putting an end to the advantage of artillery. Now began the hand to hand fight in which the Khalsa was evidently the most practised and in the course of a few minutes, there appeared heaps of the dead and the dying. But still the enemy enjoyed the advantage of his numerical strength and superiority of resources.

Up to this time, Banda had remained habitually aloof, witnessing the scene of bloodshed from a distance, till, afraid lest the Sun should set in favour of the enemy, his second in command approached him with the request to play his usual role. Then rose he like a famished lion from his cave and sprang upon the enemy like a bolt from the blue. His appearance encouraged the Khalsa by far the most while it struck a universal terror among the enemy. Just as Julius Caesar, all of a sudden and with a single attack, turned the tables of fortune against the thitherto obviously winning Gauls, similarly the irresistible Banda, with a single sally, changed the whole scene. The only hindrance in his way was the impassable row of tuskers; but he cut his way through them as successfully as Napoleon crossed the snow clad Alps, seeming to say, "*there shall be no Alps*". And his brave followers followed his very heels, so that their sabres fell with each and every motion that Banda's hand made. Now this was the most critical moment. All the loafers -

the robbers and highwaymen - had scattered away before the very first attack of the enemy, so that there was none in the field but the faithful followers of the Guru whom only the hand of death could prevent from action, and for this reason they were far stronger a match for the mercenaries of the Nawab who, in their heart of hearts, were quite convinced of the justifiableness of the Sikh expedition, but were sticking to their positions simply bound by order, awaiting when the Nawab fell and they fled. And they had not to wait for long now.

The ubiquitous referee of the field, the Sun, became tired of his day-long presence and was anxious to declare one party or the other defeated or the battle drawn when an arrow struck Wazir Khan, felling him down from his horse.⁶ Immediately after his fall, his army turned their backs, leaving the field in favour of the victorious Khalsa. But they were hotly pursued, and a space of five or six miles was covered with corpses.

The wretched Wazir Khan reaped what he had sown. He was lingering between life and death as his legs having been tied with a rope, he was dragged through the bazars of the town. And when this had been done, he was fastened to a tree where his corpse furnished a feast to kites and condors. Thus died Wazir Khan, the persecutor and torturer of the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh and hundreds of Sikhs. That he was wept by none, there can be no denying. His example proves the theory of retribution before death. His son, unmindful of the plight of his father, ran away to Delhi with his family and with whatever wealth he could carry with him leaving the rest to the conquerors.

Then the Sikhs turned to that Satan in a Hindu appearance, Sucha Nand, who had suggested to the

Nawab the bricking up alive of the Guru's darlings, saying that they were but the young ones of a snake, and hence should be done away with before they are capable to strike. He tried his utmost to collect his belongings and abscond himself with impunity. But how could he elude the vigilance of the Khalsa who had come with the explicit object of punishing him and his Nawab. So, they caught him and piercing his nose put a nose-ring therein. Then like a bear, he was carried by a string, from lane to lane, till he succumbed to the extreme trouble which this process had caused him. Thus ended the existence of another wretch. His son, too, was killed, it is said, with all the members of his family in order to show to the world that this was the punishment of the person who had abetted the butchering to death of two innocent infants, while all others recommended their release. And this fact alone is sufficient to justify any action that might have been taken against the two tyrants, Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand, and in description of which the historians evidently differ much.

It may be noted here that the town of Sirhind, for the reason of its very important situation, on the way to Kashmir, had become a veritable repository of riches in the time of Moghul rulers, though its prominence in geography dates from the time of Feroze Shah Tuglak. The reason why the Khalsa considered it worth their while to plunder and pillage it was that Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand had, by their wicked deeds, drained it off good men and attracted to it only the vile and the vicious,⁷ of whom it must needed be cleared them that it had come under the Sikhs sway. The welcome Akali flag waved in place of the Muslem banner, and peace and protection were declared to the subjects for the future. It

is said that plunder continued constantly for three days, but that there was no massacre further than the families of Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand. But the orders of plunder was mere in name, while all those who had been troubled by Wazir Khan or Sucha Nand or their connections and relations,⁸ as well as the dacoits of the adjoining places, fell respectively upon those they had enmity with and on those they knew to be well-to-do as soon as they heard that the army was let loose on the town. Thus, though the Sikhs, too, had, each of them, enriched themselves with the booty, the dacoits and robbers carried away cart—loads of valuables from Sirhind.

Those of the connected *parganas*, which refused to come under the new aegis, were duly punished and thereby reduced to subjection. Having thus established his government, the mighty Banda conferred the command of the army upon Baj Singh and appointed Ali Singh as his assistant, while to Fateh Singh he gave the governorship of Samana.⁹ So on and so forth. As a sweeping action, he replaced all the Mohammadan officials, Kanungos, etc. whom Aurangzeb had appointed in place of Hindus, by all those whom that bigoted monarch had turned out of employment. This is the brief history of the fall of the accursed town and province of Sirhind¹⁰ where *Sahibzadas* Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh had fallen martyrs to their holy religion, kicking off all the temptations and allurements of the world. The Sikhs in a fit of fanaticism, as it were, razed to the ground all the lofty buildings which furnished abode to the haughty Moghuls, who in their pride of power recognised none else among God's creation. So much so¹¹ that down to this day even, no Sikh would like to visit the place, but picks up a brick from the ruins, and throws it into the Ravi¹², showing thereby how particular

we are in retaliating the wrongs done to our religion.

NOTES AND REFERENCES :

1. Banda at that time was no longer a *bairagi*. He had become a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh and had attached Sirhind as such. Eds.
2. According to Sikhism God is annoyed only when His creatures are annoyed, in the words of the Tenth Guru : 'ਖਲਕ ਖਲਕ ਕੀ ਜਾਨ ਕੇ ਖਲਕ ਦੁਖਾਵੈ ਨਾਹਿ । ਖਲਕ ਦੁਖੇ ਜਬ ਨੈਂਦ ਜੀ ਖਲਕ ਕੋਧੇ ਤਾਂਹਿ'
3. The names of the Sikh Sardars who fought in this battle were Fateh Singh, Karam Singh, Dharam Singh and Ali Singh Malwais and Baba Binod Singh, Baj Singh, Ram Singh and Sham Singh Majhels, all of whom had placed all their resources at the disposal of the Panth, and were always willing to sacrifice their lives for its cause, which they held dearer than their dearest in the world. What a contrast to the present day Sikhs!
4. The historians differ as to the date of Banda's invasion on Sirhind. But at any rate, the date must be consistent with the contemporary facts, and a reasonable time after the death of Aurangzeb in 1707 A.D. and the holy Guru's visit to Nanded and conversion of Banda. It is upon this datum that I have placed the theorem of date, in which the majority of the writers agree with me.
5. The war-cry of the Sikhs. It literally means 'True is the Timeless One'.
6. Some say that his elephant was running in panic towards Sirhind that the animals feet fell on a tomb so that he staggered and the Nawab fell down on the ground.
7. Originally all religions are philanthropic and humane and as 'religion' is the medium of man's communication with God, so oppressing His creatures has never been approved by any founder of a religion be he Budha, Christ, Zoroaster or Mahomet.
8. Mohammadan *ahlkars*, *amils*, & c., who blinded by bigotry oppressed their non-Muslim neighbours.
9. That professional Sikh historian, Bhai Karam Singh says : 'At that time 28 *ahalkars* of Parganas yielding an annual rent of 52 lakh of rupees stood with their heads bowed before Banda, and the Khalsa reigned supreme from Dehara to Tarawari. The tract of Samana had been given to Fateh Singh while the territory of Thanesar was placed under Commander Baj Singh's Singh brother Ram Singh and Baba Binod Singh. The Governorship of Sirhind was placed incharge of Baj Singh with whom lived also his third brother Sham Singh, while his 4th brother was in attendance upon Banda. Who knew that there would come a day when the coarse Jats of Mirpur Patti will go out on elephants and rest in glass windowed and doored palaces. Baj Singh's name was at the top of all others in the time of Banda. He was a select warrior, countless to the extreme, while his brothers too were in no wise inferior. This was the reason why all the high offices in the Sikh government were given to them and they exercised influence on the whole army. The account of Banda throughout shows that he was not mistaken in placing his trust in Baj Singh, because this brave man adhered to him till his last breath, till at last in company with him, he fell martyr at Delhi.
10. It is said that Sirhind had in her palmy days superseded even Lahore in wealthiness.
11. In history, facts are not few or far between to prove that Sikhs are soft like silk but hard like adamant. Thus, when not interfered with, they are the humblest of all people, but when they are unjustifiably teased they are more ferocious than a tiger.

Their anecdotes of the time of Sri Guru Nanak Dev and his four holy successors, compared with those after that, furnish an evident illustration of this assertion.

12. *[The word Ravi here is apparently wrong here. In the Sikh tradition Sirhind is called an accursed (gurumari) town, and no Sikh would wish to visit it. As a symbolic gesture of endeavouring to destroy the town, a Sikh would take a brick piece from the ruins and throw it into the rivulet that flowed nearby. - Eds.]*

CHAPTER XI
PUNISHING THE MASANDS
AND
FURTHER PROGRESS

As Banda's mission consisted in vindicating Sikhism and the Sikhs, and defending the oppressed against the oppressor, he always attentively listened to the statements of the afflicted people and spared no pains to redress their wrongs. This was why he won a universal sympathy, and with all his habit of enforcing discipline with a palm of flint and a finger of iron, the people liked and loved him as their veritable champion and liberator. For instance, a Sikh musician, Bulaki Singh, reported that the Masands of the village Ghuram¹ interrupted him in his prayer; and, to add insult to injury, broke his guitar and beat him black and blue without any rhyme or reason. The report of such a disgrace to a co-religionist simply infuriated the Guru's man who at once got at the spot and meted out a condign punishment to the culprits, setting a deterrant for the future. These Masands, it need be mentioned here, were the descendents and followers of Ram Rai, the eldest son of Guru Har Rai, the seventh Guru, who when the latter sent him as his representative to Aurangzeb, gave up moral courage, and with a view to pleasing the king, whose displeasure meant only the death of the displeaser, misinterpreted a *shabad*² (hymn) which contained some remarks against the Mohammadans, attributing it to an error on the part of

the copyist. In punishment of this fault, the holy Guru, notwithstanding that he was the first of his progeny, ordered Ram Rai never to come before him and deprived him of inheritance, spiritual as well as temporal. But for that mistake, Ram Rai might have succeeded the Guru, as his eldest son, for he possessed many virtues, too; and though blood is thicker than water; the self-less Guru never liked to exempt a person from a punishment for the reason of his being his own son. Ram Rai unhesitatingly obeyed the command, and left his home with the object of living in exile. He settled at Dehra Dun where he breathed his last in the due course of nature. But since that moment, the holy Guru neither ever talked nor heard of him. How this anecdote proves that our Gurus loved truth (inviolability of the scriptural text, in this case) above all things, and how they commanded their followers to do the same, we leave to the conscientious reader to judge. It was for this reason that the Masands missed no opportunity of placing difficulties in the way of the Sikh propaganda.

History says that nearly the whole of the ruling family of Malerkotla had been destroyed by the Sikhs, partly at Chamkaur and partly at Ropar while its remaining representatives were gathered to their ancestors in the battle of Sirhind. Now the only figure there was Nawab Gulsher Mohammad Khan whom the Sikhs accused of having entombed a chaste Hindu woman, Anup Kaur, a maid of the Tenth Guru whom he had siezed after the evacuation of Anandpur and tried to convert her to Islam. But the resolute lady preferred death to giving up her religion, and committed suicide. With the object of punishing Gulsher Mohammad Khan, Banda urged his force to Malerkotla. But fortunately for the man and the

place, there was a *sahukar* at whose house Banda, in his days of asceticism had sojourned - kindness which he gratefully remembered. That *sahukar* implored him to spare the town as well as the life of the Nawab, and accept from him a present of Rs. 5000 besides homage as over-lord. Thus it was that Malerkotla escaped pillage which, but for the intercession of a friend of Banda's, was quite inevitable.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This village, falling in his way, had once before, too been over-run by Banda.
2. It runs thus :-

ਮਿਟੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਣ ਕੀ ਪੇੜੇ ਪਈ ਘੁਮਿਆਰ । ਘੜਿ ਭਾਂਡੇ ਇਟਾਂ ਕੀਆ ਜਲਦੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ । ।

ਜਲਿ ਜਲਿ ਰੇਵੇ ਬਾਪੜੀ ਝੜਿ ਝੜਿ ਪੈਨ ਅੰਗਿਆਰ । ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰਤੇ ਕਾਰਨ ਕੀਆ ਸੋ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ।

The clay of a Mohammadan's tomb (with which his corpse is assimilated in the course of time) is made use of by potter, who makes wares and bricks of it (and throws them into fire), and it cries as it burns and burns, and embers fall from it. The Creator alone, O Nanak, knows the cause of all that he hath created". In this *shabad* the holy Guru has proved that though the Moslems abstain from burring a dead, yet in the long run it does burn, though in a different shape. Ram Rai, in order to appease the king, said that the real word was *Be Iman* (the Faithless) but that the copyist had erroneously written it 'Mussalman'.

CHAPTER XII
CONQUEST OF SAHARANPUR AND THE
SURROUNDING TRACT

Now the progress of the mighty Banda was absolutely unchecked, as who would have liked to invite death by encountering such an invincible force which had destroyed the powerful Nawab of Sirhind, the youngest of all the faujdars ? And those that still came in his way soon scattered away as straws before a storm, or met with defeat and death at the hands of his invulnerable van which like the cow-catcher of a mail train crushed everything that stood in its way. Thus soon was reached the rich and flourishing town of Saharanpur¹ which the Khalsa took and plundered without firing a shot. Then came the turns of Behut, Ambeta and Nanauta.² The last-mentioned witnessed a pitched battle ending in the victory for Sikhs who ransacked it so that it has since been called '*Phuta Shahr*' or the ruined town.

But the *fons et origo* of all mischief, the contemptuous Jalal Khan, who had fortified himself at Jalalabad, 20 kos (48 kms.) to the south of Saharanpur, still remained to be dealt with. Banda wrote to ask him to release the poor innocent Singhs whom he had so cruelly confined and troubled, or else he would wage war upon him in which case no excuse whatsoever would be heard. But as Jalal Khan was made of a little harder stuff, he retorted in rather stronger terms. Said he; "Don't hope to find in me the Nawabs of Sadhaura or Sirhind,

and if you have to fight me with that much estimate of strength, you are sadly mistaken. You are welcome to fight, as I am sure you will soon reap the result of your folly. My army consists of *Khaibri* Pathans whom the very appearance of death even cannot intimidate. So, bear you in mind that you will have to face such a people and not the timid inhabitants of Hindustan. And, the Sikhs I will not set free under the threat of war. But in the words of the familiar saying *dil ra ba dil garesat* - mind understandeth mind, the Sikhs had already forethought the result of the message. Hence, they had set out towards Jalalabad before the reply reached them. But it quickened their paces, so that with forced marches they arrived the outskirts of that town. There they were met by Pir Khan and Jamal Khan, the two nephews of Jalal Khan.

Now the battle began in a right earnest from both sides, and continued for three days, ending in the death of Jamal Khan and Pir Khan both. Then Jalal Khan sent his son, Dindar Ali Khan, with a reinforcement of 700 sturdy men, who appeared at the dawn and provided much courage to the surrounded Pathans. It was a pitched battle in which the pick and flowers of either side fell in the field. Dindar Ali Khan succeeded in carrying away the dead bodies of his cousins³, and retreated towards the town which the Sikhs hastily besieged. But they did not seem to throw their hearts into it because each of them had his horse already over-loaded with cash and gold⁴, and therefore wished to go home and enjoy the fruit of his labour. Moreover, heavy rains had turned the elevated town of Jalalabad into an islet surrounded by water which it was fatal to attempt to cross against the arrows and shots of the besieged. Hence, they gave up the siege and retreated towards Karnal. It is a pity that

the vindictive Jalal Khan had all the Sikhs, in custody with him, butchered to death.⁵ It is by far the most deplorable that the Khalsa should have cared more for money than the lives of their brothers in faith whom they had come to release from the clutches of a tyrant. This reason, therefore, is hardly credible, and that unfavourable weather and paucity of resources recommended retreat, seems rather more probable. In reward for a success against the otherwise irresistible Khalsa, the Emperor promoted Jalal Khan to the Faujdarship of Saharanpur.⁶

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The author of '*Banda Bahadur*' says: 'When Banda prospered, nearly the whole tract of Deoband embraced Sikhism, and though the seed had been sown long before that, yet the everyday victories of the Sikhs encouraged them in their faith far the more. Jalal-ud-Din (the governor of the district ?) could not bear to hear this, and sent for all the Sikhs of Onharsa. Among them was one Kapura (Kapur Singh ?) who had been appointed the leader of the Sikhs of that tract, by Banda. He wrote to him all about themselves and invited him to punish the Mohammadan tyrants there. Thus, though he had intended conquering Doaba after the conquest of main Doab, Banda made up his mind to reduce Saharanpur, as soon as he heard of the Sikhs' troubles there.'
2. On 11th July 1710 A.D. according to '*Banda Bahadur*'.
3. Their pacca tombs still stand on the general road from Saharanpur to Delhi, close to the *takia* of *Kale Shah - Banda Bahadur*.
4. The *Shamsheer Khalsa* says: "In these days Satyuga reigned supreme in the Sikh camp, as for the fear of Banda none touched the others' belongings. So much so that among the Sikhs, there was not a medicum of falsehood, the practice of adultery, theft, back-biting misrepresenting, fault finding and such like other evils. For instance, A would not care to touch B's bag, even if it were full of pearls. What a contrast to the present day Sikhs!
5. This whole account has been taken from '*Banda Bahadur*' which owes its this information to Khafi Khan and the family history of Jalal Khan.
6. According to Bhai Gyan Singh, Saharanpur and Jalalabad had already been conquered and pillaged by the Khalsa in 1766 Bikrami, each of these places having been taken after a bloody battle, so much so that the fort of Jalalabad had to be scaled and entered in by the brave Singhs, who with the Alexandrian pluck set at naught all the efforts of the hardy Rohillas to prevent them from getting in. But they

did not consider it worth their while to continue possession of these places, so prominently near Delhi as they were, hence their retreat to Lohgarh, where they kept all their booty. Thus Jalal Khan, who sputtered so much about his strength, had once experienced the hands of the Khalsa and had rains not set in; he would have this time been plucked up root and branch and awarded the fate of his contemporary Wazir Khan of Sirhind, so as not to boast of an encounter again with the Khalsa.

CHAPTER XIII

REVERSION

On their way back, the Khalsa took Karnal. But history regrets that he (Banda) should have refrained from falling upon Delhi which lay quite near by, unguarded and unprotected during the absence of Emperor who was away to Deccan. But for this omission the Khalsa would quite practically have become the rulers of the whole of India without much ado. The question, why such a glaring omission, naturally arises in the careful reader's mind, but there was justification for this too. The name of Delhi was still a big one, and the Khalsa who had become tired of a long expedition and each of whom had much for him to be contented with, they thought lest the matter might assume serious proportions, rendering it difficult for them to retreat. They, therefore, would not like to run the risk of losing each his booty, hence the omission. But they decided to come, next time, to Delhi, without fail.

Thus, it was that stationing a garrison at Lohgarh, and leaving Sirhind and other conquered places in charge of trusted leaders of his army, such as Baj Singh, Baba Binod Singh and others Banda went into the mountains to pass some days in solitary meditations, away from the din of battles and the hum and buzz of populace. There was, therefore, a regular recess in the army, whose gallant members went home, with a mind to come back when called.

But the tremendous loss which their operations had inflicted upon the Empire and the terrible quake which their actions had caused to the Moghal administration could not be overlooked or forgotten, and Emperor Bahadur Shah was yet at Ajmer, on his way back from the Deccan, that numerous complaints and reports from the various governors and vicegerants reached him, and he was thunderstruck to know of the progress which the Khalsa had so far made under a mere *Bairagi*. It is said that when in the Deccan the Majesty had received reports about the Sikh-rising and the capture of Sirhind, attended by the destruction of Wazir Khan and Sucha Nand had written to the Tenth Guru to prohibit his messenger from extending his hands further. But the Guru simply avoided compliance by a diplomatic reply¹. So on and so forth. But the means of communication being very dilatory in those days, His Majesty could not know more about the Khalsa in the Punjab till he reached Ajmer or Delhi.

The Sikhs had plundered the country in the very heart of the Delhi Province, and did all this in the broad day light under the very nose of the government but none dared to come in their way. The Subah of Delhi trembled at their very name, what to say of others, who were simply looking to them for support. There is not a whit exaggeration in the fact that the Sikhs had become a terror in the country and that with a view to escaping their hands, many well-to-do and wealthy Muhammadan families left the Punjab for good and took up residence in other safer provinces. Thus, there was a general consternation among the subjects, and the government were in a fix as to how to rid themselves of the calamity. Therefore, to begin with, His Majesty issued orders for a

punitive expedition and sent a force of 12000 or thereabout under Akhgar Khan, accompanied by the Governor of Delhi. This formidable expedition was joined by thousands of Mohammadan volunteers, and the combined forces were met by Baba Binod Singh, accompanied by several other leading Sardars at Ladwa. But the latter were routed. Then there took place another battle at Shahabad, in which the Khalsa was again worsted which proved that in the absence of their gifted leader, Banda Bahadur, it was impossible for them to hold on against such a tremendous force. Sirhind, too, was retaken by the enemy and the Sikh Governors turned out. When news of such a trouble to the nation reached Banda, he at once came out of the mountains² with what force of Sikhs he could assemble, and proceeded straight to Sirhind. His very appearance - nay the very report of his appearance - was sufficient to spread terror. The Muslim hearts began to beat fast with fear while the Hindus had a merry time of it. Wazir Khan³, the Nawab of Sirhind, was beaten near Ropar and ran away to Delhi⁴, where his report against Banda topped all exaggeration, and the Emperor who had been simply overwhelmed by such alarming news issued express orders for an expedition, and despatched a strong force under Mohammad Amin Khan which, joined by the armies of the hill rajas, swelled to an innumerable host. They were met by Banda with 40,000 men near Shahabad, and a most bloody battle ensued. The brave Sikhs fell upon the enemy, sword in hand, and the presence of Banda infused such a spirit into them as could not be cowed down by any strength. The enemy left the field after a heavy loss.

But hardly a week had passed before a large reinforcement approached, and the Imperial army

overtook the Khalsa again near Ladwa. But the rains having set in, they scattered away with a loss while Banda and his army went safely towards Lohgarh.

Now the Emperor was simply restless and in an extreme wrath : he wondered what was there in the Sikhs which the mighty forces of the Empire could not overcome. So he sent his choicest men - Asad Khan, the son of Khan-i-khanan, and Faujdar Shahab-ud-din, and others with him.

The fort was so carefully surrounded that there was left no way for the Sikhs to run away. The valiant Banda and his brave men fought as much as they could till constant attacks from the enemy and starvation greatly reduced the number of the garrison, and it seemed certain that all of them would either be killed or caught. Thus it was that Banda rose up for a final sally with the determination to die a hero's death. But there came forward a Sikh⁴, whose appearance just resembled that of Banda and made a most wonderful offer "Babaji", said he, "do you know how we the followers of Satguru value your precious life ? You have so far done much; but you have to do much more still. But if you die in this way, all our aims will remain incomplete and unfulfilled. On the other hand, our lives are bound to be sacrificed for the cause of the Guru, and eversince we fell at his holy feet, we have set apart ourselves and all ours for his service. It, therefore, does not matter much if one or many of us be killed. Fortunately, for us my appearance resembles yours, and I have hit upon a plan, whereby your valuable life can be saved though mine may be lost. Let me put on all your garments with your turban and crest, and appear to the enemy as if I were you. Befooled this way, they will fall upon me, and I will

engage them for as long as I can till you with as many of your followers as possible could flee away, far into the mountains by the back wall". This was indeed the bravest offer that a follower had ever made for the safety of his leader.

But as the gallant Banda was never expected to accept it, he declined it point-blank with many thanks. Said he, "My dear brother, certainly such an offer of sacrifice is the thing that none else but you could make. But I regret I consider it below my spirit to accede to it. I would rather die a warrior's death than stoop so low as to save my own life by giving that of a dear brother - a curse which would remain for ever. But Gulab Singh⁶, as this was the name of the Sikh, was too determined to mind Banda's refusal, and his arguments attracted the attention of the whole garrison so that the majority supported him and demanded of Banda to comply. Now he had no alternative but to accede to the plan.

Thus it was that the martyr Gulab Singh appeared in the garments of Banda, so that his very sight excited the enemy to enter the fort, believing that the Sikhs had offered to surrender. Meanwhile Banda and a few Sikhs made good their escape through the back wall. The siege of Lohgarh⁷ was an episode, with which the sacrifice of Gulab Singh will ever be remembered as one of the noblest events the history has ever recorded. Thus while the Fort of Lohgarh lay open before the imperialists, the dexterous Banda with many of his followers retreated into remote Himalayas, too far and away to be pursued and searched. It is said that Gulab Singh was caught alive and, amidst the greatest triumph, carried to the Emperor. But when it was ascertained that he was not the real man, His Majesty's despair and anger were

boundless.⁸ The men responsible for this folly were degraded and put to the greatest shame instead of being richly rewarded.

And much did Asad Khan endeavour to catch Banda by sending out a searching force and himself waiting at the Lohgarh Fort for three long months, but all in vain. The Sikhs who had been taken prisoners, were subjected to the severest persecutions which they all bore with the utmost patience, befitting their nation. It is said that when the order for shaving their heads and chins was issued, they all refused point-blank to comply and each of them offered his life instead. This order offended the free Khalsa so much that they made several attacks on the garrison and caused much trouble, being tired of which Asad Khan, handing over the charge of the Fort to an assistant, went back to his substantive post.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. [This is factually a wrong statement. The Guru had departed in 1708 A.D. and sack of Sirhind came afterthat. - Eds.]
2. In the Summer of Sammat 1767.
3. This Wazir Khan is a different person from Wazir Khan, the former faujdar of Sirhind. He was afterwards killed in a duel, by a Sikh Kehar Singh, who cut off his head and took it to Banda.
4. It is said that the whole country upto Sirhind was again in the possession of the Khalsa.
5. His original name was Gulaboo and he supplied tobacco to the Imperial army; but having embraced Sikhism he joined the Khalsa, and did such an unparrelled act of self sacrifice, as proved how the spirit of the Satguru could turn a mere pigmy into the noblest son a mother ever gave birth to.
6. His example stands second in number in the Sikh history, the first being that of Bhai Sant Singh, who having in his appearance the likeness of the tenth Guru, professed to the Moghal hersemen, who pursued His Holiness after his escape from Chamkaur, that he was none else but Guru Gobind Singh, and thus saved the life of his Saviour.
7. G. C. Narang, in his *Transformation of Sikhism* quotes Iradit Khan, who was an eye-witness of the whole scene. Says Iradit Khan, "Shah Alam's orders to his it were

to the effect that they were not to attack the Sikhs in their strong posts, under any pretence, but were to use every means in their power to induce them, to sally forth from the forts. After the contending parties had remained inactive for some days, Khan-i-Khanan sallied forth with a number of his troops to reconnoitre his adversary's position. When, however, he had arrived within cannon-shot of their position, the enemy opened fire on the royal troops, while their musketeers and archers who occupied some of the surrounding elevations volleyed in their messages of death in quick succession.

"The Imperial troops could no longer be held in check. The order was given to advance to the attack. Khan-i-Khanan dismounted from his horse and led his troops to foot up the most difficult heights, driving the enemy from there with great slaughter. This scene passing within sight of the Royal troops, the chiefs and soldiers, emulous of glory, waited not for orders, but hastened to join the attack in great numbers, while the emperor and the four princes who accompanied him were eager spectators of the whole scene. The Imperial troops carried all before them, driving the enemy from the heights surrounding the fortress. The Sikhs were compelled to retreat to the central fort which had only narrow approaches, difficult of access to recommend it, without affording good means of resistance. The defenders fought desperately, but would have been completely annihilated, had not the darkness of night given them a further reprieve by rendering friends and foes undistinguishable to each other. The attack was renewed about dawn and the fort taken after a short struggle. The Sikh Captain effected his escape during the night by a narrow path leading from the fort to the hills, which had escaped the general's notice, and retreated into the wildest parts of the snowy range of the Himalayas, The Guru (Banda) knew well how to disguise himself, and so dexterous was he in this accomplishment, that his most intimate acquaintances were unable to recognise him when he wished to evade detection. When he wished to be known he appeared as a prince in the richest and most showy garments. When secrecy was his object, he generally took the guise of a *jogi* or *sanyasi*." The only difference between us and Iradit Khan is that wherever in this book we have used the term enemy we have by it meant the Moghul whereas being a Muhammadan he has used this term for the Sikhs, the friends of justice and enemies of anarchy and oppression.

8. When he was taken prisoner, the Emperor admired his devotion, but did not spare his life - Khafi Khan quoted by G. C. Narang.

CHAPTER XIV

REGAINING THE LAST POSITION

When Banda heard this, he again came out of his mountain recesses and took possession of Sirhind. But the Emperor, who was soon informed of this, again personally appeared on the scene with a formidable force suiting his royal position. Banda finding himself unable to encounter them again disappeared in the mountains with the result that Sirhind was once more in the hands of the Moghul.

Meanwhile Banda went as far through the mountains as Sindh (?), and, with his proselytising spirit¹, succeeded in making many converts to Sikhism whose descendants exist there down to this day.

This bafflement inflicted such a shock on the Emperor's heart that he actually turned insane, and the kafiophobia developing into lunacy, the poor fellow died of this disease in S. 1769 Bikrami corresponding to 1712 A. D. after taking the lives of hundreds of innocent *sadhus*, whom he took for Sikhs and of thousands of poor dumb asses whose very braying he took for the sound of Banda's horn².

As usual, Bahadur Shah's death caused disturbances in the Government so that for some time 'fist right' reigned supreme among the governors and *nazims* everyone of whom tried his utmost to assume independence. It was but natural, therefore, that Banda should appear on the stage at that time. And so he did when with a force of

fifteen thousand Sikhs he regained control of Sirhind without having had to fire a shot. Having done this, he issued a circular calling upon the Hill Rajas to pay him homage. They all obeyed without a single exception. Banda reduced Ropar, Kotla and other important places after which he turned his attention to the rich tract of Doaba.³

Banda's influence was so great that even the most dreaded chieftains would not pluck up the courage to encounter him. So, the only recourse for them was to pay homage, make presents and secure pardon which was hastily granted under liberal conditions. The subjugation of Phillaur which was affected without firing a single shot was followed by the conquest of the wealthy town of Phagwara which surrendered after a small skirmish of about half a day. This event spread a general consternation and panic throughout the Doaba tract. Then Rahon was reached and reduced in no time reminding the historian of '*veri veni veci*'. (I came, I saw, I conquered) of that great Empire-maker of Rome, Julius Caesar so much so that Inait Khan, the rais of that place, who for his terrible plundering onsets all around, was dreaded as a terror of the country joined the Khalsa army. Similarly was Jullundur subdued. The Nawabs Saif Ali Khan and Faiz-ullah-Khan and others of that place saved their lives and honour by making presents in cash as well as in kind.

However, Banda was pleased to wrest half of the territory from the Muhammadans and confer it on a Hindu Choudhri named Jawahir Mal. It is needless to say that with the conquest of an important town, the adjoining villages, hundreds in number, surrendered themselves of their own accord without in the least exciting the

conquerors' anger. Thus, Banda who was not particular about taking territories, but simply contented himself with punishing the culprit, and redressing the wrongs of the afflicted, and depriving the former of and conferring upon the latter the governments of the places which he conquered. He was, therefore, a king-maker rather than a King.

But he was yet to face the most terrible enemy in the very neighbourhood. Shamas Khan of Kasur, though in charge of the whole of Doaba, was actually the ruler of Sultanpur. He was brave as well as wise and was specially in the good books of the Moghal Government. Being thoroughly aware of Banda's strength and alive to the then weakness of the Moghal rule, he had preferred to connive at the Khalsa's doings in the neighbourhood, and did not consider it worth his while to bring upon him a calamity which he thought could easily be avoided by a mere connivance on his part. But in the meanwhile he was secretly fortifying himself as much as he could against this inevitable trouble.

However, he could not avoid this for long, as Banda soon sent him the following ultimatum at Sultanpur which was the seat of Shamas Khan's Government : 'The only means of your safety are to pay homage to the Khalsa and in future consider yourself their tributary, to release all the Sikhs you have so far imprisoned, and to send with the bearer a considerable quantity of ammunition, or come yourself with all your treasure'. So on and so forth. Needless to say that this message, from Banda as it was, took away the faujdar's breath. But he hit upon a very able trick at that juncture. While he made all his men ready, and by all means possible secured the co-operation of the leading men of the subjects- he sent a

small quantity of ammunition, replying that the Khalsa might kindly accept that much for the once while more would be sent soon afterwards, and that he had not the least hesitation in obeying the orders and doing what was desired. This he did simply to assure the Khalsa of his obedience and thereby to keep them unaware of the secret preparations he was making against them. He proclaimed it with the beat of drum that he was going to wage a crusade (a religious war) against the *kafirs* and that whosoever had a love for the Prophet should come forward, and, by joining his co-religionists, ensure for himself the pleasures of paradise. This proclamation succeeded in assembling over a lakh⁴ of Mohammedan fanatics, so much so that even ordinary workmen who had never experienced a battle before, carried swords and guns with the object of fighting the Sikhs who, on the other hand, satisfied with Shamas Khan's promise of homage assured by his sending some ammunition, were quite unaware of this calamity, and forgetful of Sultanpur were issuing orders to the heads of *parganas* to obey the Khalsa rule.

Thus, it was all of a sudden that these numberless odds met the Khalsa at the outskirts of Rahon. The dauntless Banda⁵ knew well the disadvantage under which his army had been placed. But he would not refrain from showing the enemy the unconquerable spirit and strength of his force. Therefore, with a single attack they fell upon them reducing the battle at once to a hand to hand fight. Thousands fell dead so that the number of the killed among the Muhammadans rose up to fifty thousand. But thousands, or rather more than a hundred thousand, were still alive while the Sikhs were hardly a tenth of them, and they too without any resource or

reinforcement.⁶ Thus, first the Khalsa took shelter in the fortress of Rahon, and as soon as evening set in they disappeared to the other side, befooling the enemy who remained there rubbing his hands in a dismal despair. Shamas Khan contenting himself with such a dearly bought victory and stationing his men at Rahon returned to his headquarters. But the vigilant Khalsa came back at once, and putting the faujdar's men to sword, again occupied Rahon and placed their own *thana* there. After that Shamas Khan did not soon turn to them. It is said that he fought as many as 20 battles with the Sikhs, each of which caused him a heavy loss of men without any material gain to him. And, as will be described in the next chapter, the poor fellow was at last killed in a battle with the Sikhs. The occupation of Rahon was followed by the conquest of Jalandhar. Thus, the progress of the Khalsa was not uncontested and uncurbed till it received a fatal blow in the time of Farrukh Siyyar.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. This testifies to Banda's sublime object, and proves how faithfully, up to that time, he kept in mind the Guru's commands.
2. It is said that when the capricious Emperor neglected his promise and failed to comply with the tenth Guru's demands, the latter told him that before long his Sikhs under Banda would, at the point of sword, enforce all that he had then peacefully demanded and would everrun the soil of the Punjab, reducing and ransacking Sirhind and punishing all the tyrants, and that he (the Emperor) himself would succumb to the grief which would then overwhelm his heart. Thus, when Bahadur Shah found all his efforts prove futile, he recalled the Guru's prophecy, and the extreme shame of having turned ungrateful to his greatest benefactor, who, by killing Azim Shah with his own arrow, had got him the throne of Delhi, deprived him of his senses. [*The last statement is incorrect. Eds.*]
3. The districts of Hoshiarpur and Jullundhur. I have followed Bhal Gyan Singh in this narration, though other reliable writers, particularly the author of 'Banda Bahadur', have recorded the events relating to the plunder of Doaba and battles with Shams

Khan before the battle of Lohgarh. They also place the subjugation of the hill chiefs before the battles of Doaba. But while I find no reason to refute their data, I don't consider the good old Bhai Gyan Singh's finding less reasonable or uninteresting. Before or after, but there is no denying that the battles with Shamas Khan form the most important part of Banda's career. And it, seems rather more credible that Bahadur Shah - considered himself called upon to appear on the scene personally, when he was informed that even his choicest chief - Shamas Khan had failed to subdue the Sikhs. G. C. Narang, too, refers to Shamas Khan having worsted and slaughtered the Sikhs with a force of one hundred thousand men, as one of the attempts that were made to extirpate the Sikhs before the siege of Lohgarh. Thus placing both the assertions before the reader, I leave it to him to decide in favour of one or the other.

4. Khafi Khan estimates the number of infantry at 20 thousands and that of crusaders at 1½ lakh - Banda Bahadur. G. C. Narang believes the number to be one lakh. Thus there can be no denying the immenseness of the Mohamadan force compared with a few thousand Sikhs whom they took by surprise.

5. Most of the historians say that Banda was absent from his army at that time, and that it was his absence that encouraged Shamas Khan to surprise the Khalsa and dispirited the latter so as to flee away. And this view seems to be correct in as much as in this battle there is no special mention of Banda, as it is in those in which he fought personally.

6. The great difference between the circumstances was that while the Moghal force was richly provisioned and constantly reinforced, the Khalsa was cabined and cribbed from all sides so that neither provisions nor help could dare reach them. Under such circumstances, they considered it worth their while to quit the field quietly after inflicting a heavy loss on the enemy, and to recreate and refresh themselves. And if the enemy was so imprudent as to pursue them, they turned at bay and destroyed his remaining strength. Therefore, wise commanders never ran the risk of pursuing them, as they simply contented themselves with a victory gained at a heavy cost of men. When this curious way of injuring the enemy and escaping with immunity was explained to Nadir Shah, he was simply wonderstruck.

CHAPTER XV
FURTHER FIGHTS WITH THE KASURI
PATHANS

Soon afterwards Shamas Khan was removed from the office of *faujdar* of Doaba. He therefore, went over to his uncle Byazid Khan, the Governor of Jammu. This man, also called Kutb-ud-Din Kheshgi, was a chief of Kasur, and had by dint of good service to the throne risen to the high position of a vicegerent of the Moghul Emperor. He was apparently brave and dauntless, but in his heart of hearts he was so afraid of Banda that once he beguiled his time by lying aside near Panipat and assuring the Emperor that he was in wait of the Kafir with the object to catch him alive as soon as he passed that way. But like his nephew Shamas Khan, he too could escape Banda's hand only so long as the latter did not turn to him. But now that Banda had descended on Pathankot which belonged to the Jammu province, he could not refrain from an encounter. So, accompanied by his nephew, Shamas Khan, who was proud of his so-called past successes against the Sikhs, and a considerably large army, he met the Sikhs near Raipur, the seat¹ of his Government. But the clever Khalsa soon showed their backs, running away neither much speedily so that they might not become invisible, nor too slowly so that they might not be overtaken by the enemy who, unmindful of their trick, was pursuing them hotly. It is said that the aged uncle had advised his imprudent nephew to stop

there and return to Rajpur² which had been properly fortified by his son Shadad Khan who had already been sent ahead; but the arrogant Shamas Khan would not agree, and believed this pretended flight of the Khalsa to be real defeat. But they soon gave him a good lesson for his foolhardiness as after a few miles' run they turned to him and his uncle, accompanied by the swiftest of their men who had outstripped the others, and lo, the slaughter began. The Sikh sword worked like a machine. The self-confident Shamas Khan was killed in the midst of the field while Byazid Khan was seriously wounded. Their men, too, were cut pell-mell, but the survivors were soon joined by others who were coming behind as well as reinforced from Raipur. But the Sikhs again urged their horses so that in a twinkling they were no more in the field. Poor Shadad Khan only succeeded in carrying the dead Shamas Khan and the dying Byazid Khan who succumbed to the wounds a couple of days after at Raipur. But he would not pursue the running Sikhs now.

The author of the '*Banda Bahadur*' in Punjabi assigns a prominent space to the mention of this peculiar trick of the Khalsa. Says he : Almost all writers have considered such a clever flight of the Sikhs to be nothing but a defeat. But to be true, all have been mistaken, and it was only one Qazi Nur Din (Mohamed) who understood the real object of it. He had personally witnessed many a battle of the Sikhs in the Punjab in company with Ahmad Shah Abdali. Says he in his *Jang-Nama* :-

"The Sikhs are accustomed to run away all of a sudden while fighting. But this should not be taken to be a defeat, because anyone who pursued them at such a flight, realised his folly after a distance of two or three

kos as when the Sikhs find that their pursuers have outstripped the main army, they assemble at once with the same alacrity with which they had scattered. Under such a circumstance not a single person of the pursuers escapes death.'

In corroboration of this assertion, Nur-ud-Din has referred to a battle which he saw with his own eyes. In that, first the Sikhs ran away, but afterwards they fell upon their pursuers. This was why Ahmad Shah Abdali used to direct his commanders to keep standing on their legs rather than pursue the Sikhs if they ever ran away from the field.

NOTES AND REFERENCES :

1. According to *Banda Bahadur* this battle took place in 1768 Bikrami. But my finding is that these events followed the battle of Lohgarh. However, this difference does not tell upon the chain of the story in general, as before or after, these took place one after the other when the Sikh movement was in its full swing.
2. [*Raipur and Rajpur seem to be the same place. - Eds.*]

CHAPTER XVI
PLUNDER OF KALANAUR AND BATALA

The iron-handed Bahadur Shah was succeeded by the happy-go-lucky Jehandar Shah¹, and the stern thoughts of administration and conquest gave way to the Epicurian principle of eat, drink and be merry, so much so that all the matter-of-fact men of Bahadur Shah's regime were replaced by procurers, minstrels and buffoons; the latter were bestowed with high titles and they instead of attending to their respective official duties always danced attendance at the Royal Court and beguiled time in luxury and licentious pursuits. That such an effeminate king could not long hold the reins of a government which had already become a hot bed of antagonism and rivalry can better be imagined than described. So, hardly a year had passed before Farrukh Siyyar, who was governing Bengal, succeeded in deposing him and ascending the throne himself with the help of the Sayyad brothers, who are remembered in history as king-makers.

The public calamities are either preceded or accompanied by an attack by nature in the shape of storm, earthquake, epidemic, deluge or famine - this is well endorsed by experience. If the miserable time of the deposition and imprisonment of poor Jehandar Shah and the ascension of the usurper Farrukh Siyyar was attended by bloodshed and massacre, it is also associated with the visit of the severest famine India had ever

experienced.² Thanks to the present advanced and enlightened rule, the boon of locomotion has obviated all such dangers by equalising prices : the trouble of a famine could be estimated only by those who lived in that age. Added to that, the indifference and apathy of the rulers enhanced the misery by far the most. It is said that parents left the children, husbands their wives and vice versa, and that man killed man and there appeared cannibals even in the most civilized quarters. As it is beyond the scope of the present work to give a detailed account of the then state of things, we content ourselves simply with the remarks that the Indian annals had never recorded a more miserable period.

But the Sikhs could not much avail themselves of the advantage of such a lethargic government as their strength had been too much destroyed and their number reduced to a too low one to enable them to rise in prominence. But notwithstanding even this, they made plundering descents and carried away whatever fell in their hands. On the other hand, constant successes and victories had turned the head of Banda just as they could have that of anybody else. Forgetful of the Guru's command, he had, soon after the conquest of Sirhind, married a wife by whom he had a son too. So, he passed his time in his mountain recess and came out very seldom and went back soon with as much wealth and valuables as he could get. This furnishes the strongest proof of his absence in the unfavourable battles that followed the occupation of Sirhind. Thus, Cupid now began to degenerate and demoralize the mighty man in whose praise the history has hitherto sung so much. But the faithful Khalsa had not much minded this defect as they thought that the corruptness would end there.

Jehandar Shah had appointed one Zabardast Khan to the governorship of the Punjab. But Farrukh Siyyar at once replaced him with Abdus Samad Daler Jang. He was too timid to be able to prevent the progress of the Khalsa who now under their leader Banda plundered and pillaged the whole territory of Kalanaur, Batala³ and Achal. These wellknown towns which enjoyed special importance in the Moghul times were known to be the repositories of wealth throughout that part of the Province. In Batala, there was an important Mohalla inhabited by the Qazis and other prominent functionaries of the Government who had fattened themselves with the wealth of Hindus, and were dreaded as blood suckers of their fellow human beings. Needless to say that they all as well as the butchers who killed kine for them were each awarded suitable punishment, and the town was sacked and the Muslim buildings levelled to the ground. This done, the Khalsa extended their hands further to the plains which aroused the anxiety of the bigoted Farrukh Siyar, who had at the very moment of his ascension sworn not to take rest till he had extirpated the whole Sikh nation.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Towards the end of Sambat 1769 Bikrami (1712 A.D.)
2. 1770 Bikrami (1713 A.D.)
3. Kalanaur was the place where Bairam Khan placed the crown of Indian empire on Akhar. Batala too was the residence of the religions guides of the Mogul times who in the garb of religion, perpetuated the darkest deeds of cruelty which demanded the Khalsa punishing them.

CHAPTER XVII
RETROGRESSION AND DISRUPTION

It is easy, say the hoary sages, to encounter a tiger and a lion, to subdue a wild elephant and a rhinoceros, to swim abreast a flood and to hem a tide, to cut level mountains and divert rivers and seas; nay it is not a big thing to fight battles, breast shots and shells and reduce forts and conquer countries, if compared with the conquest of self, which in our terminology is called *man or nafas-i-ammara*. Man undergoes the severest austerities and bears the hardest penances, keeps fasts, lives in the midst of fire under the burning rays of the tropical sun, shadeless and exposed; passes his days and nights in the petrifying snows, clotheless and naked. So on and so forth. But a single attack of 'self' frustrates the effect of all these penances in a twinkling, and renders him once more a slave of slaves - worse than a loafer, a pigmy. Farhad cut open the mountains in order to bring down waters for the garden of his beloved Shirin, but could not withstand for a second the attack of this 'self', when he was informed that his sweet-heart had breathed her last; so much so that without thinking that it might be lie, or that a mortal had at last to die, he felled the same hatchet on his own head with which he had accomplished so difficult a task. Julius Caesar conquered the whole West with a part of the East, times without number turned the defeat of his army into a decisive victory; in short, he carried the banner of Rome to the

farthest possible point in those days. But when the moment of his own trial came, he failed, so much so that the murder of such a great man, the greatest of great, was termed 'tyrannicide'. Who has not read of the power and prosperity of Alexander the Great. Up to the age of 32, he had become the greatest conqueror and Porus surrendered before him and the kingdoms of Turkey, Persia and India lay prostrate before his mighty sword. But such a strong man, too, could not subdue the 'self' which, on the other hand, succeeded in hastening his death.

Pages of History teem with examples of political ascendancy; but how many of them have stood the trial of 'self', finds its answer only in 'very few', hence the holy saw, *'Men who may be called really great are rare and very few.'*¹ Therefore, it cannot be remarked that a mother has never given birth to a son who could conquer or overcome his self, as the lives of the Gurus furnished the best examples of the sort. Guru Arjan Dev could easily insure a pleasant and prosperous life by agreeing to the offer of the devilish Chandu; for the ninth holy Guru it was not difficult to have become the right hand of the great Moghul, and Guru Gobind Singh could bring the whole range of mountains under his sway and successfully defy the Emperor of India, or on the other hand, by a peaceful submission to the Moghul, could acquire as much wordly power and pelf. But how the first preferred burning sands to pierce his body and the red hot iron plates and pans roast up his skin and flesh; how his grandson, Guru Tegh Bahadur, sacrificed his own head at the altar of religion, and last but not least how his peerless son, our holy Saviour, gave sacrifice after sacrifice, bade his own two darlings to fight and

die, and let the other two be walled up alive, but budged not a hair's breadth from his path of duty, are examples of victory over 'self', which cannot be excelled or even paralleled so long as history exists.

Now let us see whether or not the hero of our present story, the valiant Banda, got through successfully this hardest of all examinations. It has already been mentioned that when Guru Gobind Singh gave him his five arrows and 25 faithful Sikhs and deputed him to conquer the Land of the Five Rivers, he issued to him five injunctions, guaranteeing victory as long as he obeyed them, and a dismal downfall and destruction as soon as he neglected or violated the same. Now in the foregoing chapters it has been clearly shown how success and victory accompanied all his operations, and how amidst the most unfavourable circumstances even, he escaped capture and death, till pride turned his head and Cupid and Mammon tempted his mind so as to forget all the commands of his holy benefactor, the great Guru. It is said that since the first conquest of Sirhind, he began to manifest symptoms of egotism and self-aggrandisement, and his conduct savoured of a disregard for Sikhism. When he visited the State of Mandi after his subjugation of the hill chiefs, he was attracted by the beauty and blandishments of a harlot, so much so that he took her in marriage, and here it was that the hitherto chaste and celebrate Banda, whose mind was immovable like the Himalyas, turned into a licentious person, and, alas, not content with one wife he married another sweet-heart.² Much did the devoted Sikhs dissuade him from such a dangerous conduct which, they said, would simply tend to his falling from the pedestal of glory into the mire of misery. But a 'fig for the vicar and we will enjoy' was

the case there, and the pity of it was that when the poor faithful Khalsa were falling victims to the Government *zulums* and fighting and dying for the true religion, Banda enjoyed his days peacefully in his mountain recess with his 'better halves' if they be rightly styled thus.

Not alive to his mistake, he rather attributed his actions to his being infallible and being answerable to no earthly being. This prerogative, he said, he had secured by dint of his deep meditations which had rendered him invulnerable in battle and unconquerable in war, and when the Sikhs reminded him of the Guru's five commands, he replied that they were to be obeyed only so long as the Satguru was alive, and that, as after his demise he himself was the next Guru, he need not mind them now. Thus he put on the attire and crest of the Guru, and exhorted the Sikhs to bow before him. He began to use pillow and to have an elevated seat in durbars, and openly declared himself as the Successor of Shri Guru Kalgi Dhar (the Guru who wore the Plume). Not this alone, he decided to replace the practice of the Sikh *amrit* (*khande di pahul*) by *charan pahul* (consisting in the water touched by his feet being administered to the Sikhs) and to introduce 'Darshani Fateh' instead of 'Wahiguru Ji ka Khalsa Wahiguru Ji ki Fateh'. This offended the men of the Guru, and whenever there was durbar or a celebration, it ended with a hot discussion and debate, often resulting in disputes and quarrels. But faithful to the order of their Holiest of Holies, the Sikhs still adhered to him and always joined together in a battle against the Mohamedans. However, the fire of disunion remained smouldering, though it had not so far risen into flames.

Further, it is said, that the crafty Farrukh Siyyar hit upon a very successful plan to ruin Banda. He prevailed,

by threats as well as promises, on Mata Sundari, the spouse of Guru Gobind Singh, who was then at Delhi, to write to Banda³ to give up the conduct of a warrior, and take to peaceful living as a Jagirdar of the Emperor. His refusal to comply the mother further excited to circulate a strict order to the Panth to disassociate themselves from the man who had disobeyed the order of their Guru's Spouse and had replied in rather insolent terms. The Khalsa obeying the Mother, the Emperor availed himself of the opportunity to secure their sympathy against Banda, who, it is said was at last defeated and captured with the Tat Khalsa's help.⁴ If this account be taken at its face value, then Farrukh Siyyar had no doubt hit the nail on the head. But the argumentative author of '*Banda Bahadur*' totally and emphatically belies this, as he says, had this been a fact, personages like Baj Singh, who was one of those sent by the Guru, would never have adhered to him till the last and died as martyrs at Delhi. They would certainly have gone over to the Tat Khalsa. And this single argument is sufficient to refute all the arguments in favour of the Tata Khalsa having ever joined the Moghul force as well as to deny the episode relating to Mata Sundariji. Therefore, they seem to be mere stories, manufactured to make the subject interesting. But there can be no denying that due to his licentious and selfish conduct, Banda had lost the spirit with which he used to win battles, and it had alienated from him that hearty sympathy with which the Sikhs used to follow him before. His end, therefore, was near and inevitable, alas!

But inspite of all these unwelcome circumstances brought about by his own demoralization and degeneration, and the predominant power and strict administration of Farrukh Siyyar, Banda once more

overran the country from Multan to Jalandhar on the one side and from Jhelum to Ambala including Lahore on the other, so much so that he attended the Vaisakhi fair openly at Amritsar where he also held a great durbar. But this was the last and most glorious period of his career which like the meteoric glory of Napoleon soon ended with his downfall and death.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. ਜਗੁ ਮਹਿ ਉਤਮੁ ਕਾਢੀਐ ਵਿਰਲੇ ਕੋਈ ਕੋਇ, Guru Granth Sahib, V, P. 867.
 2. [It is obligatory for the Sikhs to be householders. Any injunction asking one to remain a celibate throughout his life is against the Sikh doctrine. The story of Banda's falling for a Mandi damsel is based on mere hearsay, without any historical evidence. - Eds.]
 3. There is no unanimity as regards the *hukumnama* issued by Mata Sundri. Scholars differ if she really issued one or if she did, was it on her own or under coercion of Emperor.
 4. It is said that the Raja of Kallor entertained Banda as his guest, and when the latter was fast asleep, he stole off the *pothi* or the book, which contained the *mantras* wherewith he had controlled the supernatural beings, who served him during the battle and remained always at his beck and call. It is since then that the decay of Banda's power began. Though orthodoxy will be loath to credit such superstitious stories, but there can be no denying that with the loss of celibacy his spirit began to dwindle.
- Dr. G. C. Narang gives the following causes of Banda's failures : -
- i. The vigorous rule of Farrukh Sayyar.
 - ii. The second cause of Banda's failure, of course lay in his own conduct. He was after all not a regular convert to Sikhism and had enjoyed spiritual leadership in his own limited sphere. He did not enter into the spirit of Sikhism as it had been modified by Guru Gobind Singh. Its theocratic character he had grasped, but he does not seem to have fully realised that Gobind had given it a distinct individuality, and any efforts however laudable, to treat it otherwise, would fail. He tried to tamper with it and modify it in such a way as to make it appear less sectarian and more national in character. The general tone of its tenets, and the protection of the cow which formed an outstanding feature of Banda's mission had rallied the Hindus to his banner. Still there seemed to be something exotic in Sikhism, which in Banda's opinion detracted from its value as a lever for the uplifting of the Hindus. Accordingly he tried to give a more decidedly Hinduistic tone by altering some of its distinctive institutions. (a) The long hair, the most prominent badge of Sikhism and most important under Govind ceased to remain an essential feature of Sikhism under Banda. (b) The eating of animal diet had been encouraged by Govind, but Banda, being a Vaishnava, discountenanced it and exhorted the Sikhs to refrain from it. (c) He substituted 'Fateh Dharma, Fateh Darshan' instead

of 'Wah Guru Ji Ka Khalsa Wah Guru Ji Ki Fateh' which was certainly a very serious innovation. (d) Nor did Banda fully understand the democratical character of Sikhism. One of the four-fold advice given to Banda by Guru Gobind Singh was to behold Lord in the general body of the Khalsa and never to do any thing without consulting the sense of the Khalsa. Banda acted upon this advice in the beginning, but his successes made him indifferent to the opinion of the Khalsa. *Panth Parkash* states that Guru Govind's widow being won over by the Government was to write a letter to Banda urging him to make his submission and give up fighting. He refused to comply with the letter. The lady then addressed a circular letter to all the true Sikhs to cease to have anything to do with the insolent innovator. This is said to have precipitated the breach between Banda's followers and the "tatwa Khalsa". The learned Doctor's remarks that the long hair ceased to remain an essential feature of Sikhism under Banda and that the animal diet was encouraged by the 10th Guru are merely as baseless as they are uncalled for. That Banda's Sikhs upto this time wear long hair is the strongest proof of Banda having never failed to maintain this most essential requisite of Sikhism. What he did was to style himself a Guru and administer '*charan pahul*' to his followers, who were enjoined to keep and respect long hair as particularly as a true Sikh. As to eating the animal diet, while the 10th Guru never prohibited it, he never encouraged it in his teachings, which are absolutely silent on the point. But there can be no denying that the Saviour allowed only the Jhatka meat in case of the meat eaters, while the use of a Mohammadan butcher's meat was strictly condemned. And this is what is enjoined upon a Sikh when he takes *amrit*. However, it seems interesting to quote G. C. Narang further on the subject. Says he : '*Panth Parkash* also says that the Sikhs were further weakened by certain conciliatory measures taken by Farrukh Siyyar or his deputy in Lahore. Five hundred Sikhs who were disaffected towards Banda were taken into service on a rupee a day and the rest were pacified by the grant of Jhabbal near Amritsar with a revenue of Rs. 5,000 to the Durbar Sahib at Amritsar. The conditions of this 'treaty' were as follows : -

1. The Khalsa shall refrain from committing depredations in the country.
2. The Khalsa shall not help Banda.
3. In case of a foreign invasion, the Khalsa shall fight for the emperor.
4. There shall be no reduction in the pay or the Jagir of the Khalsa.
5. No Hindu shall be compelled to embrace Islam and no sacred place of the Hindus shall be destroyed or desecrated.
6. The Hindus shall not be treated harshly and their religious susceptibilities shall be respected.

All these circumstances combined to alienate the Tatwa Khalsa from Banda and the relations between Banda and Tatwa Khalsa once strained, became never cordial again. Many faithful Sikhs left Banda's army, and one of their great leaders, Bhal Binod Singh Trehan, deserted Banda when he was reduced to straits in the fort of Gurdaspur. In fact Banda had never had the same whole-hearted support of the Sikhs after the conquest of Sirhind. The career of Banda which promised to be crowned with glorious success was thus cut short by his sacerdotal ambition, incomprehension of the true nature of Sikhism, the machinations of the Moghul Government and the demoralization which for a time Farrukh Siyyar's persecuting hand spread into the ranks of the Khalsa.

CHAPTER XVIII CAPTIVITY AND END

The news of this fresh havoc exasperated the Emperor most and he issued express orders to Abdul Samad Khan, the Governor of Lahore, to put an end to the trouble. The said Governor, joined by the *hakims* of Eminabad, Pasrur, Patti and Kalanaur, Raja Bheem Singh of Kattoch and Dhru Deva of Jasrota¹, each with a large army, led this greatest and final expedition against Banda who, being informed of all this, had already commenced to throw up a fort at Kot Mirza Jan near Kalanaur as he knew that he was then not strong enough to fight the innumerable odds² of the enemy in an open field. But Providence now would not allow him to fulfill his object as the fort was as yet only half built when the Imperial army took him by surprise. And as was expected of him, he fought most bravely, inflicting heavy loss on the imperialists. But he was compelled to leave that unsafe fort and to retreat from post to post till he took shelter in a building - called the *Haveli* of Bhai Duni Chand - at Gurdaspur. It was most closely besieged, and all the ways of coming in and going out strongly guarded and shut. Sikhs fought manfully so long as they had provisions. They came out in groups and killed a large number each time, till the means of sustenance remained available, but once having them exhausted, there appeared no alternative but to die or surrender. But the valiant Banda adopted former course, and sallied forth from the *Haveli*, sword in hand, and was taken prisoner

fighting.³ The diligent author of the '*Banda Bahadur*' (Punjabi) gives another detail of the end of the Gurdaspur siege and capture of Banda. He says that the daily and fresh reinforcements were rendering the siege stronger and stronger, while starvation was reducing the number of the besieged. To add trouble to misery, there arose a quarrel between Baba Binod Singh and Banda so that both drew up their swords and had not Kahan Singh, the son of the former, come between, one of them would have been despatched off. The bloodshed was avoided, but angry words and altercations would not cease till it was decided that Baba Binod Singh should leave the *Haveli*. This the Baba accepted and the brave old Sikh fell upon the besiegers sword in hand, and piercing the apparently impassable rows, disappeared soon from the sight. Finding that if further pressed, the hungry and thirsty Sikhs would be goaded to desperation and that it was just possible that like Baba Binod Singh, all the others might escape, inflicting heavy losses on the besiegers, the clever Abdus Samad Khan sent word⁴ that if the Sikhs vacated the fortress, their lives would be pardoned. Trusting this word of honour, the sinking Khalsa caught at a straw, but no sooner did they come out than they were captured, including the celebrated Banda.

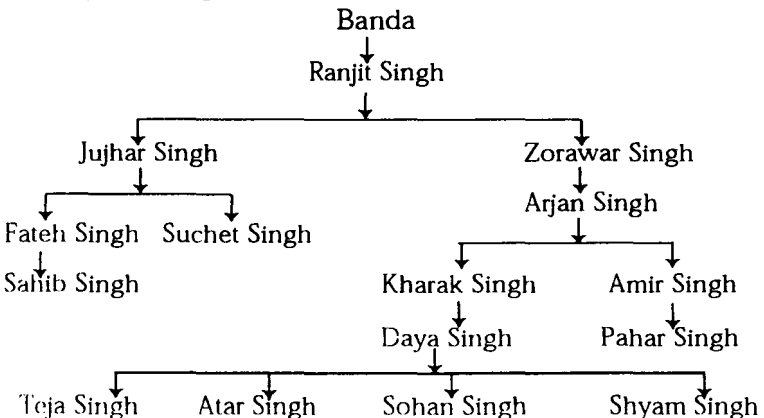
Now it is for the reader to imagine how by dint of selfless love for the national cause and union the whole propaganda flourished and prospered, and how speedily and easily that most difficult task of punishing the murders of the Sahibzadas was accomplished, and afterwards how selfishness, disunion and disruption hastened the downfall of such a great man, the mighty Banda, whom now with all his personal strength and spirit, with all his so-called magic and sorcery, we see but a poor helpless

prisoner in the hands of the self-same Moghuls who dreaded his very name. Alas, there lies in cage the lion whose very roar intimidated the most dauntless warriors, and whose single spring was sufficient to set at naught all the efforts of the enemy in battle! What a proper lesson does this whole story teach us! Woe be to us if we still take to the same ruinous course, that led to the destruction of the mightiest of mankind!

The account further is nothing but a most doleful tale of misery and persecution. The vindictive Moghul, with a view to avenging all that had been wrought by Banda and his followers, allowed all sorts of torture and trouble that a spiteful mind could hit upon. Accounts of such like events are always exaggerated, and in order to gratify their readers the bigoted Mohamadan historians have vied with one another in their descriptions of how Banda and his adherents were caught, caged and killed. But none of them could conceal the extremeness of persecutions and the unsuppressible temper of the spirit, with which the leader and the followers bore all this, without a single exception, refusing all the offers of honour made by the Emperor, and sticking to their faith to the last. And this is what we mean to show. We Sikhs are habituated to imagine all the persecutions that our Gurus and ancestors had welcome for the sake of religion. And this frightens us never. But what pains us the most is to hear that such and such renegade apostatised when an occasion of trial came. From the Sikh point of view, therefore, the end of Banda and his men was comic rather than tragic, as they all left this world with the pleasure that the worldly troubles and tortures could not cow⁵ them down to give up their dear religion. "Some of the Sikhs", says Cunningham, "were put to death and their heads were borne on piles before Banda and others

as they were marched to Delhi with all the signs of ignominy usual with bigots, and common among barbarians or half-civilized conquerors. A hundred Sikhs were put to death daily, contending among themselves for priority of martyrdom, and on the eighth day Banda himself was arraigned before his judges. A Mohammedan noble asked the ascetic from conviction, how with all his knowledge and understanding, he could commit crimes which would damn him into hell, but Banda answered that he had been as a mere scourge in the hands of God for the chastisement of the wicked, and that he was now receiving the meed of his own crimes against the Almighty." This last view Cunningham seems to have borrowed from Mohammedan writers like the author of *Siar-ul-Mutakhirin* and Khafi Khan whereas the fact is that when questioned this way, Banda simply answered that as he had disobeyed the orders of his Guru. So all the persecutions, he was being subjected to, were in punishment of that mistake, and that he was rather grateful that he had been punished in this world so that nothing remained for him to suffer in the next. Further, the Emperor himself enquired from him in what way he would like to be killed. "Just the way in which His Majesty would like to meet his own death" was the reply. And Bhai Gian Singh describes how this prophecy was fulfilled to a letter when Farrukh Siyyar fell from his horse and his foot being caught in the stirrup he was dragged on the road by the frightened animal till he succumbed to the trouble and was found dead. To be brief, after the severest and most diabolical and cold-blooded persecutions, consisting in his own son being placed in his lap and killed by him with a knife given him for the purpose and in his own body being torn to pieces with red hot irons, he was tied to the foot of an

elephant and dragged to death. But Giani Gian Singh and Bhai Karam Singh are supported by Malcolm when they assert that Banda did not actually die then. They say that when the executioners, considering him dead, threw away his body near the river Jamna, a faqir took him up, and by giving constant warmth he found some traces of life in him. He, therefore, healed his wounds and nursed him properly. Having thus recovered, Banda fled to the Punjab in disguise. This also is said that two of his followers who were wandering there in disguise of Mohammadan fakirs, picked him up and carried him secretly to the Punjab. The latter view seems to be more reliable. But though Banda did not actually breathe his last in 1716 A. D., his political career had ended there and then, as he is said to have passed his remaining days in a state, quite unknown to the world around, till he left this world in 1741, or 25 years after his capture. His tomb lies at a distance of two or three miles from Bhabbar (Bhimber) in the erstwhile Jammu State and a fair is held every year where thousands of Bandai Sikhs assemble from all parts of the Province. The present Mahant of the shrine during the early years of this century was Teja Singh, and the following geneological tree shows the dynasty of this great man : -



NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. *Ibrat Nama* quoted by G. C. Narang.
2. A large army of chosen warriors and a powerful artillery - G. C. Narang.
3. Budh Singh's *Riselal - Nanak Shah*, quoted by G. C. Narang.
4. This version is supported even by the bigoted Latif.
5. Among them there was a boy, minor and under teens. He was the only son of his widow mother, who approached the Emporor, weeping and crying, and said that her son was not a Sikh and that therefore he might be pardoned. Melted by the dolorous cries of the female, His Majesty ordered that the boy should be set free. But when the fact was known to the boy, he protested against the order saying that he was a Sikh of the Guru and that he was quite willing to die in company with his brothers. Thus, it was amidst the continued remonstrance of his mother that he gave his dear life at the altar of peace. This version is supported by Khafi Khan, and we hope to dwell upon it in detail, in a separate pamphlet.

CHAPTER XIX CONCLUSION

Bhai Karam Singh, the author of the *Banda Bahadur* (in Punjabi) gives a description of the personal appearance and character of Banda; and so does the venerable old Bhai Gyan Singh Gyani, the celebrated author of *Panth Parkash* and *Shamshir Khalsa*. They have also enlarged upon the descendents and the sect founded by that great man, showing thereby that there is a very slight difference between them and the Tat Khalsa. But I think, I need not discuss the authenticity of the facts related by them, and hence conclude my little work with an attempt to show what lesson this whole epoch-making period in the annals of India teaches us, and how history repeated itself just as it did in all times. That 'example is better than precept' finds the greatest illustration in the Tenth Guru converting in a twinkling an austere hermit, totally averse to battle and bloodshed and too self-complacent to fall for his countrymen, into the greatest warrior of his time and the mightiest champion of the freedom of conscience and unity of nation. The holy Guru possessed a life, which was more effective than any oration. His was an example of self-sacrifice which none else in history has excelled; hence, a few words from him brought about a miraculous change in that renunciant.

Then the task, to accomplish which His Holiness sent Banda with 25 of his devoted followers, abundantly

explains his object-viz protecting the oppressed against the oppressor. And that Banda was enjoined to pray to God for anything that he might stand in need of and never to do anything without consulting the Khalsa, amply testify to the principle of piety and the doctrine of democracy, or in other words, the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man, being the very basic rule of Sikhism; and any deviation from them is considered a gross deviation from the path of the ten Gurus. And how Banda's rise and fall furnish the greatest example of the sort is clear from the facts related here.

That union is strength while disunion is the bane of mankind cannot find a better illustration elsewhere, and Banda admitted it when he was questioned at Delhi as to what his distress after such a great success was due to. So if the Guru Panth realizes it even now that it has lost so much in disunion, my labour will have been adequately repayed. The five injunctions that the Tenth Master issued to Banda contain in nutshell the vast meaning of Sikhism, and any Sikh who acts up to them must shine resplendent. Further, they are cosmopolitan, always open and available to anybody who likes to act up to them. The life of Banda, therefore, furnishes an instructive study to anyone in this world of light and learning.

The patience with which Banda and his associates bore all the tortures they were subjected to and their bold refusal to give up their religion in the face of the severest of persecutions show how the Sikhs of yore loved their principle. The history of Sikh martyrdom contains examples of bravery and self-sacrifice which the spartans should covet. But how miserably they have degenerated now-a-days while all other nations are

improving, thus furnishing a most deplorable contrast! Now that there is no tyranny and no lawlessness, and the doors of education and advancement are equally open to the peer and the peasant, we are enveloped in a torpor that never becomes a nation which has so proud traditions as the Khalsa.

Banda's person was lean, size stately and complexion shallow. He had a hobby for riding and the only arms with which he fought were sword and arrow. Physically he was not so strong as he was nimble and brisk. In dexterity he had surpassed even Shivaji, and was a matchless master of mesmerism and other occult sciences. His was a spirit, most fearless and undaunted, and no physical influence or oppression could ever intimidate or cow him down. In a word, he possessed all the qualities of a great warrior, and was a natural leader of people. He never counted upon the help of great men and a large number, and always preferred sincerity and faithfulness of his small number of poor followers, to a large body of time servers. In military tactics he was the genius of the time. He fought in an open field when he considered his strength sufficient enough for an open encounter; otherwise he took shelter in a fort or shifted up to the mountains. But personally he was so fearless that he always went forward amidst showers of the shots and shells, never feeling in the least that his life was in danger. He was thoughtful and farseeing withal, and could easily foretell future events from the then existing circumstances, so much so that his proficiency of guessing was interpreted into the power of second sight. The ignorant and bigoted writers of the type of Latif have painted him as black as possible and called him savage, revengeful and blood sucker; but this

only proves their want of a knowledge of reality and blind bigotry whereas in truth Banda was a friend of the weak and oppressed and was therefore the greatest enemy of the tyrants whom he gave each an adequate lesson with his own hands. To be brief, he died like a true and a gallant warrior and had before his demise, most admirably accomplished the noble task, the Guru had entrusted him.