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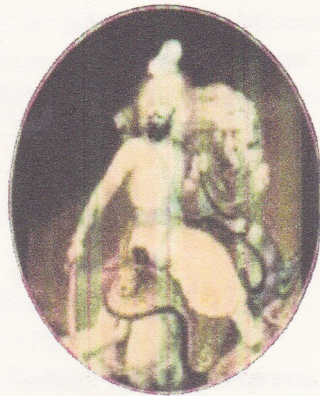


(God is one, all glory to Him)

*Spiritual Master, Poet, Peerless Warrior  
Nation Builder & Sarbans Daani*

## **GURU GOBIND SINGH JI** **(1666- 1708)**

**Gurmukh Singh OBE (UK)**



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# Guru Gobind Singh Ji

(1666 – 1708)

**Spiritual Master, Poet, Peerless Warrior, Nation-builder & *Sarbans Daani***

*“For this purpose was I born: To spread righteous living, to raise the saintly people and to destroy the evil doers.”* (Guru Gobind Singh, Bachittar Natak)

*“Guru Gobind Singh, as a man of the people, a leader extraordinaire, a farsighted administrator, community organizer and as a tactician, strategist and general in war and peace, remains unparalleled.”* (Dr I J Singh of USA)

## Guru Gobind Singh, Nanak X

**Born: 22 December 1666\***

**Guruship: 8 July, 1675**

**Main battles: 14 battles fought between 1688 (Battle of Bhangani) and 1705 (Battle of Muktsar).**

**Literary works: Included in Scriptures collated as *Dasam Granth***

***Sarbans Daan*: A living martyr who sacrificed his whole family to accomplish his mission.**

**Departure for *Sach Khand* (demise): 7 October 1708**

(\*Note: Some contemporary sources give Guru Gobind Singh's date of birth as 18 December 1661)

### Childhood

Guru Gobind Singh was born at Patna Sahib in Bihar, on 22 December 1666 (see footnote\*) and named Gobind Das. He was the only son of Guru Tegh Bahadur, Nanak IX (1621 – 1675). His mother's name was Mata Gujri.

He spent the first few years of his life at Patna and attracted much local attention and affection from Hindu and Muslim communities due to his exceptional qualities.

He was born while Guru Tegh Bahadur was on a preaching tour of Bengal and Assam.

Muslim saints like Bhikhan Shah of Ghuram and Araf Din of Lakhnaur came to see him and were impressed by his wisdom. A Hindu saint, Shiv Dutt, and the local Raja Fateh Chand of Patna and his wife and many people saw divinity in him and became his devotees.



Bhikhan Shah came to see child Gobind Das.

### From Patna to Anandpur

In 1670, the Guru family started the long journey of over 1,000 miles to Punjab, staying in many towns on the way. Gobind Das was liked and admired by all. The family reached the village of Bakala in Punjab and

in 1672 moved to Chakk Nanaki, now known as Anandpur Sahib. The land had been purchased from the ruler of Bilaspur (Kahlur) by Guru Tegh Bahadur in 1665. People came to see young Gobind Das and brought valuable presents. His tutors included Sahib Chand, and Persian scholar Qazi Pir Mohammad. He also received training in military skills and horse riding.

### **Unique sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur**

Emperor Aurangzeb (emperor from 1658 to 1707) had started religious persecution by forcing the Hindu majority and non-Muslims to convert to Islam. He especially targeted the Kashmiri Brahmins with the willing support of Iftikhar Khan, his bigoted governor of Kashmir from 1671 to 1675.

A group of Brahmins, led by Pandit Kirpa Ram of Matton (Kashmir), came to Guru Tegh Bahadur for help. He was also advised by Gobind Das that he was the most saintly and respected leader in India and was best qualified to take up the noble cause for the freedom of religion. Guru ji agreed to discuss the matter with Aurungzeb. He anointed Gobind Das as the next Guru on 8 July, 1675. Three days later, on 10 July 1675, accompanied by three Sikhs Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Sati Das and Bhai Dayal Das, he set out to meet Emperor Aurungzeb. They were arrested on the way by the orders of Aurungzeb and brought to Delhi. In his dialogue with Aurungzeb, Guru ji advised religious tolerance. The Emperor refused and offered the Guru the usual choice of accepting Islam or death. Unhesitatingly, the Guru and the three Sikhs chose death. They were tortured and finally martyred at Chandni Chawk, Delhi, on 11 November 1675.

Gobind Das, as Nanak X, excelled in poetry, music and martial arts. He was peerless in archery and horse riding. He moved to Paonta on the bank of the river Yamuna and stayed there till 1685. There, many reputable poets came to him. Some literature attributed to the Guru was written there.

### **Vaisakhi 1699: Revelation of the Khalsa**

In 1699, the Guru invited Sikhs from the Indian sub-continent and beyond to gather at Anandpur on the Vaisakhi (the harvest festival) day which was on 29 March that year.

With a sword in his hand he tested the faith of 5 volunteers in turn. Each was willingly prepared to give his head to the Guru and was taken inside a tent. Each time, the Guru came out without the volunteer but with his sword dripping with blood. The atmosphere was awe-inspiring. However, there was relief when the Guru finally came out with the volunteers with a glow on their faces. They were the first *Panj Pyaray* (the Five Beloved Ones), the nucleus of the Order of the Khalsa, the God-centred and pure, the Army of God. They came from diverse backgrounds as follows:

1. Bhai Daya Singh - Trader from Lahore
2. Bhai Dharam Singh - Farmer from Hastinapur
3. Bhai Himmat Singh - Water bearer from Jagannath
4. Bhai Muhkam Singh - Cloth printer from Dwarka
5. Bhai Sahib Singh - Barber from Bidar

They were wearing uniform clothes as are worn by the *Panj Pyaray* seen leading Sikh religious processions these days with drawn swords in their hands.

The Guru gifted them with the Panj Kakaars, the Five-Ks as the Articles of faith as follows:

- Kesh: to keep uncut hair covered with a *dastar* (turban).
- Kangha: a wooden comb.
- Kara: an iron or steel bracelet worn on the wrist.
- Kirpan: a sword.
- Kacchera: short breeches.

(EHRC Guidance on Sikh articles of faith: [http://sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smspublications/sikh\\_articles\\_of\\_faith\\_guidance\\_final.pdf](http://sikhmissionarysociety.org/sms/smspublications/sikh_articles_of_faith_guidance_final.pdf))

The Guru then prepared *Khanday Baatay di Pahul* or *Amrit* (ambrosial water of immortality) by putting water in an iron bowl, into which was added sugar by the Guru's wife, Mata Sundri. The Guru stirred it with a double-edged sword, the *Khanda*, while reciting *Gurbani* (Guru's Word). The *Amrit* thus prepared was then administered to each of the *Panj Pyaray*. They were given the surname "Singh" (lion). The surname for women was "Kaur" (meaning princess).

At his request, the *Panj Pyaray* then initiated the Guru himself following the same procedure, and thenceforth Guru Gobind Das himself became *Khalsa*, Guru Gobind Singh.

Thousands of men and women followed to take *Amrit*. They were the *Khalsa* sons and daughters of Guru Gobind Singh and Mata Sahib Kaur. They were taught their code of conduct: in addition to keeping unshorn hair, the Guru forbade the use of tobacco, eating meat slaughtered according to Muslim ritual and extra-marital sex. The initiation of men and women from different castes into the ranks of *Khalsa* also institutionalized the principle of equality in Sikhism regardless of one's caste or gender. **So emerged the casteless egalitarian Order of the Khalsa saint-warriors of Akal Purakh, the Timeless Being (*Khalsa Akal Purakh ki fauj*).**

### **Defensive battles fought by Guru Gobind Singh**

Reports were reaching emperor Aurangzeb about Guru Gobind Singh's continuation of Guru Nanak's liberating mission and the emergence of the Order of the *Khalsa*. The subservient Hindu hill rajas were made aware of Aurungzeb's wish and attacked the Guru under various pretexts to seize his possessions.

The Guru saw his life's mission as resistance of tyranny. He fought fourteen defensive battles between 1688 and 1705. A long siege was laid against Anandpur from May to December 1704 by the combined forces of the treacherous Hindu hill rajas and Mughal forces. The Guru left Anandpur to fight the epic battle of Chamkaur in Punjab in early 1705 on the way.

During these battles he also taught the *Khalsa* what is a just war, the terms of engagement, not to strike a fallen foe and to be compassionate even in the battle-field. In his composition, the *Zafarnama*, which was a defiant letter of victory to emperor Aurungzeb at the end of these battles, he mentioned some of these issues.

### **Martyrdoms of Sahibzaaday (sons)**

The Guru's two younger Sahibzaaday (princes), Fateh Singh aged 5 and Zorawar Singh aged 8, were captured with their grandmother, Mata Gujri. The Sahibzaaday were bricked alive by the Nawab of Sirhind. Mata Gujri passed away on hearing of their death. Both his older sons, Jujhar Singh aged 13 and Ajit Singh aged 17, died fighting impossible odds at the epic battle of Chamkaur.



The combined Mughal and hill raja forces failed to kill or capture the Guru. He left the fortress defiantly and supported by Muslim and Hindu devotees headed towards the western

regions of Punjab. On the way he sent a letter of victory called the *Zafarnama* to Aurungzeb reminding him of betrayal of promise and the unethical and unjust conduct of war by his army against his family.



**Guru Gobind Singh carried away in disguise as Uch-da-Pir by Gani Khan and Nabi Khan brothers through enemy lines.**

### **Punjab to Nander (Takht Hajoor Sahib)**

The last battle of Muktsar was fought with the pursuing Mughal army on the way to Damdama Sahib (Sabo ki Talwandi) where the Guru stayed for 9 months and established a Sikh centre for learning.



(Mai Bhag Kaur leading the Sikhs at the battle of Muktsar.)

The Guru started from Damdama travelling southwards. Aurangzeb died in Ahmednagar on February 20th, 1707. In the war of succession, as requested by prince Muazzam (later Bahadur Shah), the Guru sent a small force of selected warrior Sikhs to support the prince. He had promised the Guru to be a just ruler. Bahadur Shah succeeded to the throne and invited Guru Gobind Singh to his coronation. He received the Guru with great respect and presented him with a robe of honour and a jewelled scarf (*dhukhdhukhi*).



Emperor Bahadur Shah receiving Guru Gobind Singh (1707)

The Guru reached Nander (now Takht Hajoor Sahib) in August 1707 with some infantry and three hundred cavalry equipped with weapons. Here, a *bairagi* (recluse indulging in austerities), Madho Das, a former prince, realised that he had wasted his life. He became a Khalsa of the Guru as Banda Singh Bahadur. He received temporal-spiritual training from the Guru and was sent to Punjab at the head of a small force to start a peoples' war of liberation. In due course the Khalsa numbers swelled and "Banda Bahadur" established a regime of the people and introduced reforms including land reforms.



Banda Singh Bahadur receiving command of the Khalsa army from Guru Gobind Singh.

### Departure for *Sach Khand* (The Realm of Truth)

Two assassins, Jamshed Khan and Wasil Beg, were sent by Wajir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind to kill the Guru at Nander. Jamshed Khan stabbed the Guru while he was resting and was himself killed by the Guru. The other was killed by the Sikhs while trying to escape. Wazir Khan himself was killed when Sirhind was taken by the Khalsa army led by Banda Singh Bahadur. The stab wound was deep and the Guru passed away on 7 October 1708 after instructing the Sikhs to follow the Eternal Word Guru, Guru Granth Sahib.

### Compositions attributed to Guru Gobind Singh

Dasam Granth, which literally means the “Tenth Volume”, is a collection of compositions *attributed* to the Tenth Guru. There is no final agreement by Khalsa Panth, **selectively or wholly**, regarding the authenticity of these compositions. Many scholarly studies are available which address this controversy. However, the Granth includes *Jaap Sahib*, *Savaiye* and *Benti Chaupai* which are part of the *Nitnem* (daily Gurbani recitation) and part of the *Amrit Sanchar* or Khalsa initiation ceremony in the *Sikh Reht Maryada* (Sikh Code of Conduct).

### None Other Like Guru Gobind Singh

This year (2017), as we celebrate the 350<sup>th</sup> birthday of Guru Gobind Singh, it is only by meditating on the meaning of *Sarbans Daani* that we can appreciate his supreme sacrifice. *Sarbans* means the entire family. *Daan* is giving away for the benefit or the good of someone else. *Sarbans daani* is one who gives away or sacrifices his all, his entire family, for others, so that others may live better lives.

In case of Guru Gobind Singh, the *sarbans daan* of his parents and four Sahibzaaday, was for his beloved Khalsa; and through the Khalsa for a better future for his countrymen and for *sarbatt da bhalaa* i.e. wellbeing of whole humankind.

We need to bear in mind, that this was a land, where before the Guru period, sacrifice for a righteous cause was unheard of. Wars were for own possessions or kith and kin. The Vedic myths did not promote any sense of mission or vision for general good. This was a society divided by caste, ritualism and superstition, which Guru Gobind Singh awoke from slumber, to produce saint-soldiers, invincible warriors for the righteous cause, by sacrificing his all and then remaining in *Chardhi Kalaa* i.e. positive spirit never accepting defeat. He thanked *Waheguru* (Wondrous Enlightener) and said “What if four sons have died, for thousands (of my sons and daughters) live on!”

Truly, the world has produced none other like Guru Gobind Singh.

## Relevance of the Khalsa Today

Guru Nanak Sahib (1469-1539) meditated on the human condition and the future of humankind. According to Bhai Gurdas, the Guru saw a “burning world”. Like the authors of the Earth Charter, five centuries later, Guru Nanak also saw the need for “a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace.” (Earth Charter)

He revealed his vision and mission for the New Age. His mission, as it unfolded over the next two centuries guided by the same *Guru Jyot* (Guiding Light) in 10 Guru-persons to 1708, laid the foundation for the Order of the Khalsa, the Khalsa Panth.

There were three stages of Guru Nanak’s mission: firstly to contemplate on the qualities of the Creator Being; secondly to interpret these qualities to reveal a *God*-centred being, the Khalsa; and thirdly, to show the temporal-spiritual (*miri-piri*) path of social activism for the Khalsa to follow.

Guru Nanak meditated on the qualities of the Creator Being and described them as:

The ONE, all-pervasive Creator of all universes, with eternal virtues, who does not fear or favor any one/thing, is not against any one, is the embodiment of timeless-ness and deathless-ness, does not take physical life form/does not incarnate, is self-existent; may be known with the guru’s grace/guidance.

Khalsa is a manifestation of certain *God* qualities through *God*-centred beings. The Khalsa is revealed when the illusion between the Creator Being, His creation and His true devotee is removed. The Guru and His Sikh as the Khalsa, become one and the same. Serving *God* and His creation becomes the pre-condition for reaching *God*’s holy presence.

Thus, like the sculptor who reveals the beautifully proportioned statue from a solid block by chipping away the bits which conceal it, through *Jote-Jugat* (Divine Light and methodology) process through Ten Guru persons, the Khalsa was finally revealed (*pragteo Khalsa*) by Guru Nanak in His tenth human form as Guru Gobind Singh on the *Vaisakhi Day* in 1699. (The day is celebrated on 14 April each year.). The Sikh *Sangat* (congregation) of Guru Nanak, had reached institutional maturity.

Guru Nanak set out to create a benign regime of love, humility and justice, the *halemi raj*, in which no one inflicted pain on another. The path shown was that of Khalsa Panth. The sacrifice demanded for treading the path of *God*-love and truthful conduct was to accept death while living: complete surrender of ego-centric self.

As a corollary to fearless and truthful behaviour expected of the *Khalsa*, the Guru prescribed a disciplining and distinct identity for the Sikhs, as well as principles and a code of conduct as constants in a changing world, to provide spiritual stability.

The Khalsa keeps unshorn hair (*kesh*) symbolising a saintly disposition and completeness of the human body and soul (hair to be covered by a *dastar* - Sikh turban); wooden comb (*kangha*) to keep the hair tidy; a steel bangle (*kara*) representing the *God* quality of infinity and symbolising discipline and allegiance to the Guru; a sword (*kirpan*) reminding a Sikh of his duty to defend the weak, human dignity and honour; and a pair of shorts (*Kaccha*) to cover human nakedness, to allow agile movement and symbolising chastity.

The Khalsa provides for all, promotes equality and sharing, sees the human race as one, defends the human rights of all, and defends diversity in a spirit of global unity. Thus the responsibility of the Khalsa as the “Army of the Timeless Being” (*Khalsa Akal Purakh ki Fauj*) was clearly laid down by the Guru. The Khalsa is taught that:

“The Creator Being created the air and the environment, which created water and brought life on earth. Nights, days, seasons, wind, water, fire and nether worlds, therein he created limitless diverse species with interdependent modes of life. In the midst of these He established the earth as His temple. The Earth is the sacred place where we practise righteous conduct (*dharma*) to achieve the

ultimate purpose of this life, which is nearness to the Creator Being. We must not desecrate this temple of God."

(Quote from the author's interfaith presentation at Windsor Castle, "Common faith in our future" on 14 November, 2006.)

The same concepts have a peculiarly modern ring when we read the UN Charter, The Earth Charter and international human rights treaties and instruments.

The Khalsa's responsibility to face today's global challenges derives from the egalitarian Khalsa tradition of sharing and serving enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and evolved over many centuries.

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