

Martyrdom of Baba Zorawar Singh Ji and Baba Fateh Singh Ji

Scene: The court of the Nawab of Sarhind, Wazir Khan. It is a very cold mid-morning of Dec. 28, 1705. The court is full of high officials and some prominent citizens of Sarhind. Most of them seem to be sad and nervous, but a few seem to be excited. They are all awaiting the arrival of the Nawab anxiously because an extremely important and historical decision is going to be made about the two younger Princes – Sahibzada Zorawar Singh aged eight and Sahibzada Fateh Singh aged 6 – of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The Princes along with their grandmother, Mata Goojri Ji, got separated from Guru Sahib and the rest of the family after Guru Sahib had left Anandpur Sahib at the assurance of the joint armies of the Emperor Aurangzeb, and the Hindu Rajas of the hill states that if Guru Sahib vacated Anandpur Sahib, He would be free to live with dignity anywhere in the Country without any interference from the Governments. But the evil and immoral armies began to chase Guru Sahib soon after He had left, and attacked Him near Ropar (Roop Nagar) on the bank of the swollen Sirsa River. Because of the unsuspected attack by the enemy, everybody rushed to escape. Mata Goojri Ji, the mother of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and the younger Princes were tricked by their 22 years-long chef, Gungoo, to go with him to his village, Kherri near Ropar.

To usurp the wealth of Mata Ji, the evil and disloyal Gungoo, went to a nearby police station in Morinda and told them about the Princes and Mata Ji. Expecting a rich reward from the Nawab of Sarhind, the police of Morinda took the Princes and Mata Ji to the Nawab who got ecstatic to see them because he also expected rich reward from Aurangzeb who wanted to capture or kill Guru Sahib and His family. The Emperor always considered

Guru Sahib a big problem for him because the latter had launched a very successful movement to fight against tyranny and injustice of the Mughal rulers. Let me remind you that the Emperor had already martyred Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, the father of Guru Gobind Singh, in 1675 because He had opposed Aurangzeb's forced conversion of Hindus into Islam.

The Nawab's joy knew no bounds when he saw the Princes and Guru Sahib's Mother. The Nawab first tried to coax the Princes to embrace Islam by offering them large amount of wealth, high positions in the Government and even to marry off his daughters to the Princes. When the Princes adamantly refused all the offers, the Nawab tried the trick of punishment. He kept them in a very cold place and did not provide any blankets or any other means for them to stay warm. Not only that, the ruthless Nawab even kept them completely hungry and thirsty. The alternate treatment of allurement and punishment was tried for three days, but the brave Princes did not yield to Nawab's tactics and refused to embrace Islam under any circumstances. Even the threat of death could not deter the strong will of the Princes.

While awaiting the arrival of the Nawab, the people began to chat with one another. Here are two prominent courtiers, Ghulam Ali and Tahir Khan, who just started their conversation. Let us listen to them.

Ghulam Ali: Islam UI Lakem, Khan Sahib.

Tahir Khan: Wa Lakem Islam Ali Sahib. Say, how are you this morning?

Ali: I guess I'm Okay, but it is a little too cold for me. How do you feel this morning?

Khan: I'm Okay too; but just wondering what kind of decision his royal highness will make about the Princes, I mean the sons of Guru Gobind Singh. I must admit that let alone a child of their age, I've never seen even a soldier as fearless as they are! They are highly unusual. There's absolutely nothing childlike in them!

Ali: You're so right! An ordinary child of their age will succumb to the pressure in the absence of his parents, especially when he is in a totally strange environment and surrounded by hostile and intimidating rulers. Some children barely learn to talk at their age. And these kids? They're amazing. Not only they do not feel intimidated, they're so articulate and their logic is so forceful that sometimes our leaders find it hard to counter their arguments. How old do you think they are – hardly six and eight years?

Khan: I believe so. I too am amazed at their courage. They are so undaunted. Even the most brave or hard-core criminals begin to tremble in this Court; but these kids? They are so calm and poised all the time that it is uncanny! Yesterday, when they entered the Court, they had the audacity to wish the Nawab in their traditional salutation of "Waheguru Ji ka Khalsa, Waheguru Ji ki Fateh" as if they were in a Sikh gathering and not in the court of a Mughal Nawab whose mere name strikes terror in the heart of the enemies.

Ali: Remember also when they were brought before his royal highness the first time? They refused to bow to the Nawab saying they do not bow before anyone else other than the Guru and God. I could not believe my eyes and ears at that time.

Khan: And their resolve not to change their religion to embrace Islam is

unreal! No material wealth or high office in the Government seems to interest them. The Nawab had promised them all such luxurious offers, but they quickly shot them down saying that all such things are mortal and short-lived. Faith in Allah is the only everlasting thing, and they don't want to lose that.

Ali: Amazing! Even an offer of royal brides from the Emperor's family did not appeal them!

Khan: And, can you believe that no punishment, not even the threat of death seems to daunt them!

Ali: did you know that ever since their denial to embrace Islam, they have not been given any food or even a drink! They are forced to sleep on the floor without any blankets to cover them in this bitter cold weather of Poh (December). They still are firm in their resolve! I find it hard to believe that they are still alive.

Khan: I have never seen such brave and determined children. Not only that, every time they are presented before his royal highness, their determination seems to have strengthened.

Ali: No doubt. His royal highness has tried every conceivable carrot- and-stick approach, but absolutely nothing seems to affect them.

Khan: and it is not that they are brain-washed about their stand; they have very logical response against every proposition made to them to embrace

Islam. In fact, even Qazi Sahib cannot counter all their logical arguments. They make everybody speechless.

Ali: Isn't that unbelievable! The frustration of all the top officials is evident now. Everybody is impressed with their Divine Knowledge as well.

Khan: They leave me in awe! Another thing; their faces are always pleasant and smiling, and show no sign of fear or stress even though they have been put in handcuffs and shackles to put more pressure on them for submission. I have no idea what type of material they are made of! No wonder that Qazi Sahib feels a little uncomfortable in front of them.

Ali: If these young children are so amazing, I wonder, what their father, Guru Gobind Singh would be like! I haven't seen him, but he must be an awesome man!

Qazi Noor Muhammad arrives in the Court and joins the pair.

Qazi: I overheard you talking about me and praising the non-believers. Allah will never forgive you.

Khan: Welcome Qazi Sahib. Islam UI Lakem.

Qazi: Wa Lakem Islam.

THE DECISION: An Historical Play

Written by Dr. Devinder Singh Sekhon PhD
Thursday, 07 March 2013 15:46

Khan: We were not praising anyone. We were just wondering what kind of fate is awaiting the sons of Guru Gobind Singh.

Ali: We heard his royal highness is going to deliver his decision today. And, of course, you'll have the biggest say in this matter. That's how your name came up.

Qazi: (Showing conceit) That's true. Normally, Nawab Sahib does not turn down my advice. I am sure the children will meet the fate they deserve.

Khan: What do you mean by that, Qazi Sahib? Khan was overcome by surprise.

Qazi: You fully understand what I mean.

Khan: No, Qazi Sahib. I don't.

At this point an official announces the arrival of the Nawab who is accompanied by Such Nand, a very influential Hindu courtier, and by Sher Muhammad, the Nawab of the neighbouring state, Malerkotla.

Official: Attention all! His royal highness, Wazir Khan, the great Nawab of Sarhind, and the champion of Islam has arrived in the Court.

Everybody rises and after the Nawab had taken his seat, everybody settles in their seats.

Nawab: As you all know, we've gathered here today to listen to the response of the younger sons of Gobind Singh to our propositions. I am sure you are all aware of the very generous offers that we have made for them to embrace Islam. The religion of Islam is the only true believer of Allah while the followers of all other faiths are infidels. These children are still innocent and do not understand the importance of Islam. We are doing them a favour by accepting them into Islam. I do not want to hurt them in any way. But, if they refuse, then we'll have to think of some other means. Qazi Sahib has been working very hard to persuade them to convert. He has explained all the virtues of the great Religion. He spent a long time with the children last night too. Let's listen to what good news Qazi Sahib has to share with us.

Qazi Noor Muhammad rose in his seat and began to say.

Qazi: Your royal highness, I'm sorry to say that despite my best efforts, I do not have any good news to share with you. I've tried every possible way to convert them explaining them that they if they embrace Islam, the Emperor, Aurangzeb, will be very pleased with them, and they will be married in the Royal family. Not only that, they will get independent states to rule where they will enjoy all the worldly comforts in this life. I also clarified to them that after death they will go directly to Heaven where they will be received by Allah Himself, and they will get eighty-four beautiful divine brides each to serve them. I also told them that if they refuse to embrace Islam, they would be brutally punished to death.

Nawab: A—n---d!

Qazi: They have only one response: We have no interest in being rulers, royal brides or in going to heaven. The most precious thing for us is our own Religion which we will never renounce at any cost, even if we have to die. They are very firm in their resolve.

Nawab: I cannot believe it! How could such young children not be interested in worldly comforts, or not be afraid of death! What could they possibly know about their own religion at such a young age!

Qazi: Sire, at first, I was also under the same impression that they would not know much about their religion, but, after talking to them, I was extremely surprised to learn how much they knew about their religion. Sire, I feel that they are a big threat to us.

Nawab: In what, in what way? (The Nawab seemed very nervous)

Qazi: For example, when I lied to them that their father had been killed in the battle, and that now they were without any support, they bluntly refused to accept saying that nobody had the power to kill their Father in a battle. Then they said that even if He had been killed, their real Father, Waheguru, was always alive and was with them all the time. And when I asked them what they would do if they were set free, guess what they said.

Nawab: W—h—a---t! (The Nawab did not seem to be ready to hear that).

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Qazi: They said that they would disseminate the Teachings of Guru Nanak, gather a large army to fight against injustice and tyranny, and kill all the immoral and evil rulers like, like, like -----

Nawab: Like w—h—o? There were clear signs of fear on the face of the Nawab.

Qazi: I --- I--- I can, can, can't say that, Sire. The Qazi wiped his face.

Nawab: Why not? T—e—I---I , t —e—I—I me. The Nawab was getting anxious.

Qazi: Like, like, like, y- --o---u, Sire. I felt like killing them then and there, but did not have your royal highness's orders at the time.

Nawab: Are they that rebellious?

Qazi: Certainly, Sire.

Sucha Nand (addressing the Nawab): Your royal highness, I had always maintained that the off-springs of a snake would always be snakes when they grow up. They can never be your friends. Like father, like sons. These venomous snakes must be crushed - the sooner, the better – otherwise we will have to repent deeply.

NawabSher Muhammad: Such Nand Ji, I cannot believe that you can think so low! There is a big difference between snakes and humans. Many great people are known to have been born to very ordinary people or in some cases even to sinners and vice versa. Look back at your own history. Prehlad, a big devotee of God was born to an evil king. Your great Rishi, Balmiki, was a robber and look how he got changed! Kans, an evil king according to your beliefs, was born to a noble king Uggarsen. So, how can you have such malicious thoughts about the innocent Princes. They are innocent angelic young children of merely six and eight years. Let alone Islam, no religion allows killing of children. If, for whatever reason, you consider their Father your enemy, go kill Him if you can. But, why should the innocent Princes be the target of your helplessness? They are so Divine; how can you even think of hurting them?

Nawab: Nawab Malerkotla, you seem to be forgetting that their father killed your brothers. It is time to avenge their deaths.

Sher Muhammad: How can I forget the death of my brothers! But, they were killed in the battle field fighting for some principles. There was no personal enmity between the two parties. If they had the chance, they might have killed the Guru. If I want to avenge the death of my brothers, I'll do that in the battle field. But I cannot support any cruel and unjust punishment for the innocent children.

Sucha Nand: If you do not kill them now and set them free, I warn you that all of us will repent to no end. As Qazi Sahib says they will really raise armies dethrone you and kill all of mercilessly. I propose death for them not because I enjoy killing children, but because I want to protect you against the impending danger. Do not look at them as children; they are your future enemies – the future which is not too far away. Moreover, killing your enemies for your own protection is no sin in any religion. It is the only wise

decision.

Sher Muhammad: That's an imagination of your guilty conscience only. Neither these young Princes nor their father are enemies of any individual. Their father, Guru Gobind Singh has been following the Teachings of Guru Nanak, and like Him, is fighting against oppression and injustice. He is neither against Muslims nor Hindus. In fact, many Muslims are his followers including Peer Budhu Shah and a high ranking army officer, Said Khan, who actually came to kill the Guru only about 3-4 months ago. He wants equality among all the people, and wants the lowly and the downtrodden to have self-respect and lead a life of dignity. Basically, He is preaching the same ideals as of Guru Nanak and the Prophet Muhammad Himself. Guru Nanak was the apostle of justice and equality among all human beings. Sucha Nand Ji, have you already forgotten the supreme sacrifice of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the grandfather of the Princes, who gave His life to protect Hindus? How can you forget that as a Hindu, yourself?

Sucha Nand: I do remember Guru Tegh Bahadur and his sacrifice, but, I fail to understand why the Brahmans went to him for protection in the first place. What were they complaining about? We Hindus are enjoying all the facilities in the Muslim regime. We are holding high government offices and have complete religious freedom. Muslim rulers are very fair and just. But, if some people still want to incite the masses against the regime and break peace, the rulers have to use some force to keep them under control. In doing so, there may be some repression and injustice, but the Muslim rulers are no more cruel or unjust than any other ruler. In fact, it is the Sikh Gurus who are teaching the people to be intolerant of some injustice or discrimination here or there. I believe that God has created some people to rule and others to be ruled, and the latter should not complain about their fate.

(The Qazi was listening happily because his unholy thoughts were being echoed by a Hindu)

Sher Muhammad: if that's what you believe in, I'm really disgusted, and I can see why you have such a high position in the Government. But, unlike your idea of the "just and fair" rulers, I can guarantee that these Princes will be nothing like them. They will grow up to serve the masses and will not be any threat to anybody. (Addressing the Nawab) I will ask you, your highness, to set the Princes free with dignity right away. (Sher Muhammad was visibly disturbed at the attitude of the high officials).

Sucha Nand: Do so if you wish. But you will be very sorry for this action. I suggest that they be publically tortured as much as possible before killing them to send a message to the Sikhs that a similar fate is awaiting them. I will not support their release. (Sucha Nand was very emphatic).

The Nawab was listening carefully and seemed to be leaning towards Such Nand's position.

Qazi: I fully support Such Nand Ji's views. These non-believers deserve no mercy. Even though they are very young now, they will grow up soon to be our worst enemies. Every adult is a child to begin with. We are not sure if their father has been killed in the battle of Chamkaur or not. If he is alive, we will be nurturing more trouble for us. Sucha Nand Ji was absolutely right when he said, "Don't look at them as children now, they are our future enemies." And,, I want to add that these enemies are very clever and they can woo the masses against us any time.

Nawab: So, what do you recommend?

Qazi: Severe punishment before death. I propose burying them alive in a concrete wall.

Sucha Nand: That's very appropriate.

Sher Muhammad (slapping his forehead): Oh, No! You men are lower than even cockroaches. Let alone good Muslims, you are not even human beings. Allah is watching you. Be afraid of His justice. (he leaves the Court).

Nawab (addressing the guards): Execute the suggested punishment. Bury them alive in a concrete wall. (He too leaves the Court).

Sucha Nand and the Qazi smile at each other. Most of the people in the court were seen wiping their tears.

NOTES: (1) The Princes were indeed walled-in with bricks, but the wall fell when it had reached the height of their chests. At that point the Princes were beheaded by the orders of the stone-hearted Nawab and the Qazi. Mata Goojri Ji recited Jup Ji Sahib and left this mortal world.

(2) About three and a half years later, in 1709, Baba Banda Singh Bahadur with the blessings of Guru Gobind Singh gave a crushing defeat to the army of Wazir Khan and killed him and his supporters including Sucha Nand. The town of Sarhind was completely demolished, and the territory fell under the Sikh Raj.

(3) The year when Guru Sahib left Anandpur is mentioned to be 1704 by most writers/historians. □ But the total time does not add up to the date when Guru Sahib left this mortal world in Sept-Oct 1708. To account for the time in-between the day when Guru Sahib left Anandpur and the day He left the mortal world, the date of leaving Anandpur had to be Dec 22-23 1705.