

Grade: 7

Course: Virṣā (ਵਿਰਸਾ)

Lesson Number: 10

Unit Name: Methods of Survival in the 18th century

Title: The Relentless Spirit of the Khālsā (ਖਾਲਸਾ)

Standards

Standard 2: Methods of Survival in the 18th Century

- Students identify and understand the Sikh (ਸਿਖ) guerrilla tactics of the 18th Century and how these were employed to successfully gain political ascendancy.
 - Students understand the battle method of Dhāī-Phaṭ (ਢਾਈ ਫਟ) while being introduced to Ratan Singh Bhaṅgū's (ਰਤਨ ਸਿੰਘ ਭੰਗੂ) work. Other important ideas include the implementation of the Rākhī system and undermining of the foreign authorities.

Objectives

1. Students will learn how the spirit of the Khālsā survived the period of persecution in the 18th century.
2. Students will look at this concept through the lens of the vocabulary that developed around this time period.

Prerequisites

- Students should be familiar with major events of 18th century Sikh history such as the Vaḍā and Choṭā Ghalūghārā (ਵਡਾ ਅਤੇ ਛੋਟਾ ਘਲੂਘਾਰਾ) and the invasions of Ahmad Shāh Abdālī (ਅਹਮਦ ਸ਼ਾਹ ਅਬਦਾਲੀ) and Nādir Shāh (ਨਾਦਿਰ ਸ਼ਾਹ).
- These events are presented in the previous lessons

Materials

- Article entitled “The Relentless Spirit of the Khālsā”
- Blackboard or chart paper and writing material

Advanced Preparation

- Although all the information for this lesson is located in the article, the teacher may want to do some more research to supplement their knowledge of sayings and expressions that became common amongst the Sikhs during the 18th century.

Engagement (15-20 minutes)

- Greet students and give them a couple of minutes to settle down and take out their notebooks.
- Students should already be familiar with the major events of the 18th century so the teacher should begin the class by reminding students that this was a turbulent time for the Sikhs in Pañjāb.
 - They experienced a brief period of success at the beginning of the 18th century under the leadership of Bandā Singh Bahādar (ਬੰਦਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਬਹਾਦਰ) but were again victimized by the Mughal government until they managed to gain hegemony in the area by reorganizing themselves into *Misals*.
 - In the middle years of the 18th century, many Sikhs were forced to leave their homes and live in the Lakkhī (ਲੱਖੀ) jungle, the sandy deserts of Rājputānā (ਰਾਜਪੂਤਾਨਾ) and the forests of the Shivālik (ਸ਼ਿਵਾਲਿਕ) Hills.

- They faced persecution under Zakrīā Khān (ਜ਼ਕਰੀਆ ਖਾਨ) and Yāhīā Khān (ਯਾਹੀਆ ਖਾਨ), many Sikhs were massacred in the Vaḍā and Choṭā Ghalūghārā and were sentenced to die when captured because they would not give up their faith.
- At this point, the teacher should explain to the students that during this stressful situation, it was very important for Sikhs to stay in high spirits or Caṛḍī Kalā (ਚੜਦੀ ਕਲਾ). Ask students, how might the Sikhs have maintained Caṛḍī Kalā during this time?
- Ask students how they relieve stress and maintain high spirits when they are under a lot of pressure due to school, family obligations, etc.
- Ask students how they would feel if someone told a joke when they were under a lot of stress. Would it help them forget about their situation? Would the humor distract them from the pressure they faced? In other words, how does laughter help relieve stress?

Exploration (35 minutes)

- Distribute the article “The Relentless Spirit of the Khālsā”.
- Get students to make a list of all the words in the vocabulary of the 18th century that occur in the article.
- The teacher should review the vocabulary and definitions once the students have completed the reading.
- While the students are reading the article, the teacher should write the following expressions on the board:
 - Rāj karegā Khālsā ākī rahahi na koi.
Khvār hoi sabh milaiṅge bacahi sharan jo hoi.
ਰਾਜ ਕਰੇਗਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਆਕੀ ਰਹਹਿ ਨ ਕੋਇ॥ ਖ਼ਾਰ ਹੋਇ ਸਭ ਮਿਲੈਂਗੇ ਬਚਹਿ ਸ਼ਰਨ ਜੋ ਹੋਇ॥
 - Mannū asāḍī dātrī, asīm Mannū de soe,
Jiurū Jiurū sānūrū vaḍhadā, asīm dūmṇ savāe hoe.
ਮੱਨੂ ਅਸਾਡੀ ਦਾਤਰੀ, ਅਸੀਂ ਮੱਨੂ ਦੇ ਸੋਏ।
ਜਿਉਂ ਜਿਉਂ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਵਢਦਾ, ਅਸੀਂ ਦੁੰਣ ਸਵਾਏ ਹੋਏ।
 - Khādā pītā lāhe dā, bākī Ahmad Shāhe dā.
ਖਾਦਾ ਪੀਤਾ ਲਾਹੇ ਦਾ, ਬਾਕੀ ਅਹਮਦ ਸ਼ਾਹੇ ਦਾ।
 - Ciṭṭhī likhe, Singh Botā.
Hath hai soṭā, vic rāh khalotā, Ānā gaḍā, paisā khotā.
Ākhīm Bhābo Khāno nū, yūm ākhe Singh Botā.
ਚਿੱਠੀ ਲਿਖੇ, ਸਿੰਘ ਬੋਤਾ।
ਹਥ ਹੈ ਸੋਟਾ, ਵਿਚ ਰਾਹ ਖਲੋਤਾ, ਆਨਾ ਗਡਾ, ਪੈਸਾ ਖੋਟਾ।
ਆਖੀਂ ਭਾਬੋ ਖਾਨੋ ਨੂੰ, ਯੂ ਆਖੇ ਸਿੰਘ ਬੋਤਾ।
 - Sir jāve tām jāve, merā Sikhī sidhak nā jāve.
ਸਿਰ ਜਾਵੇ ਤਾਂ ਜਾਵੇ, ਮੇਰਾ ਸਿਖੀ ਸਿਧਕ ਨਾ ਜਾਵੇ।
- These expressions became popular during the 18th century and most students will probably be familiar with some, or all of them (students will be familiar with the first tuk as the one said in Ardās - ਅਰਦਾਸ every day).
- Once students have finished the reading and have had a chance to look at the board, ask students to volunteer meanings for each of the sayings.
- When all students have understood what each expression means, ask the class what each expression tells us about the spirit of the Khālsā during this time.
 - For instance, the first tuk reassures Sikhs that the Khālsā will be victorious, which helps them through the present period of persecution.
 - The second expression allowed the women in Mīr Mannū’s (ਮੀਰ ਮੱਨੂ) jail to face the

- massacre of their children with extreme stoicism and patience.
- The third and fourth expressions display the Sikhs' attitudes towards the invasions of Abdālī and their resistance to the heavy taxes as well as the genocide of the Sikhs during this period.
- The fifth expression reminded the Sikhs of the sacrifices of martyrs such as Tārū Singh (ਤਾਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ) and inspired them to stay true to their faith and their beliefs.

Explanation/ Extension (5-10 minutes)

- After the lesson, ask students to apply what they learned in their own lives. Ask them to write a Sikhī-inspired slogan or expression that will remind them to maintain high spirits when times are stressful.
- Ask the students to volunteer to share their expressions with the class.
- The class can vote on expressions that they would like to see displayed in the classroom.

Evaluation (On-going)

- Encourage students to use their slogans in times of stress.
- Get them to hand in their list of vocabulary for assessment.

Teacher Resources

- Singh, Kulwant (Eng trans.). Sri Gur Panth Prakash, Rattan Singh Bhangoo. Institute of Sikh Studies, Chandigarh, 2006.
- Singh, Santokh. The Relentless Spirit of the Khālsā, The Gurū's Word & Illustrated Sikh History. Princeton: Spiritual Awakening Studies, 2000.

The Relentless Spirit of the Khālsā (ਖਾਲਸਾ)

Under such ruthless persecution, the Sikhs were left with no option but to leave their homes and take shelter in the Shivālik (ਸ਼ਿਵਾਲਿਕ) Hills, Lakkhī (ਲੱਖੀ) jungle, and deserts of Rājputānā (ਰਾਜਪੂਤਾਨਾ). They lived under great hardships. The only redeeming feature was the help of Khulāsās (ਖੁਲਾਸਾ) who provided for them secretly by giving individual refuge, or sustenance, in times of dire need.

It was in these times of persecution that the inspiring couplet, “Rāj karegā Khālsā, ākī rahai n koi. Khvār hoi sabh milainge, bace saran jo hoi” (ਰਾਜ ਕਰੇਗਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਆਕੀ ਰਹਿ ਨ ਕੋਇ॥ ਖੁਰ ਹੋਇ ਸਭ ਮਿਲੈਂਗੇ ਬਚਹਿ ਸਰਨ ਜੋ ਹੋਇ॥). The Khālsā will be victorious from East to West. The Khālsā shall be free and **sovereign** and will rule. No one will dare resist its mighty power, after suffering from internal conflicts, all shall unite. Those in their protection will gain stability and progress. Again, it was during these times of persecution that the practice of Akhaṇḍ Pāṭh (ਅਖੰਡ ਪਾਠ), the uninterrupted reading of Gurū Granth Sāhib, was started. In these Akhaṇḍ Pāṭhs, it was usual for the veterans of Buḍā Dal (ਬੁਡਾ ਦਲ) to recite Gurbāṇī while the members of Tarunā Dal (ਤਰੁਨਾ ਦਲ) listened.

During these days of stress, a new vocabulary became current among Sikhs. It demonstrated an unconquerable will and a hilarious temperament. For them parched grams were Almonds (Badām - ਬਦਾਮ); Onion crusts were Silver pieces (*Rupā* - ਰੁਪਾ); stale hard *Capātīs* (ਚਪਾਤੀ) was sweet bread (*Mīṭhā Parshādā* - ਮਿਠਾ ਪਰਸ਼ਾਦਾ); to go hungry was to be intoxicated (*Mastānā* - ਮਸਤਾਨਾ); when there was no food left in the kitchen, the kitchen was said to be intoxicated with abundance (Laṅgar *Mastānā* - ਲੰਗਰ ਮਸਤਾਨਾ); to die was to invade the citadel of death (*Carāī karnā* - ਚੜਾਈ ਕਰਨਾ); a Sikh child was called a Bhujaṅgī (ਭੁਜੰਗੀ) or Bhujaṅgaṇ (ਭੁਜੰਗਣ), because he/she moved nimbly like a snake; and a single Singh was equal to 1,25,000 people (*Savā lakh* - ਸਵਾ ਲਖ).

Adapted from: Singh, Harbans, The Encyclopedia of Sikhism and The Gurū's Word & Illustrated Sikh History

relieving the Afgāns of much of their booty. Further, they hovered round the Afgān camp cutting off stragglers and intercepting supplies. They also ambushed the foraging parties and plundering detachments which ventured away from the main Afgān force. As their strength increased, their raids grew both in frequency and ferocity. They made frontal attacks on the Afgān vanguard, and towards the close of their struggle they did not spare even the main Afgān force. The Sikhs, thus, frequently aimed their blow at the robber instinct of the Afgān soldiers and hit his mind and morale through his belly. Over a period of time the Sikhs were, thus, able to convince the Afgāns that while it was easy to plunder in India, it was difficult and risky to convey the booty through the Pañjāb. This way, they made the Afgān trade by arms unprofitable.

The Sikhs never permitted themselves to be maneuvered into a pitched battle of sufficiently long duration with Abdālī's forces. They would only offer him a battle when Abdālī was not in a position to accept it, either due to the urgency of returning home or because his soldiers were already exhausted. Defensively, the plan best adopted by them was to offer nothing tangible to the enemy to attack. They never tried to impede the advance of Ahmad Shāh except on few occasions in which they suffered heavy losses. They appeared where he was not, threatening his base camp or the advance guard, and disappeared as soon as the main Afgān force arrived on the scene. This way they exhausted and demoralized the Afgān soldiers and then, as usual, confronted them with battle when they were eager to return home. Although the Sikhs could never achieve a decisive victory over Ahmad Shāh in this manner, he ultimately lost. "Guerrillas never win wars but their adversaries often lose them."

Tactics and combat method

The tactics of the Sikhs were not static and were usually worked out by the men on the spot. Ratan Singh, whose account is based on contemporary oral evidence, was told by a former veteran that one basic tactic of the Sikhs was: "Hit the enemy hard enough to kill, run, turn back and hit him again; run again, hit and run till you exasperate the enemy, and then, melt away." Their entire theory of war is summed up in the word *Ḍhāī-Phaṭ* (ਢਾਈ ਫਟ) or two and a half injuries. They considered approach, and all that goes into the making of it when element of surprise is to be secured, as one secret of success. This they called one *phaṭ* or injury and regarded it 40 per cent of their battle activity. The half *phaṭ* was the sudden swift shock action which put the enemy off his balance. Then they suddenly withdrew before the enemy could strike back and disappeared to where he could not chase them. They considered speedy and orderly withdrawal to be the second secret of success or the other complete *Phaṭ*. Kāzī Nūr Muhammed (ਕਾਜ਼ੀ ਨੂਰ ਮੁਹੰਮਦ), who fought against the Sikhs, sums up their science of war as follows: 'To face the enemy like a hero and then to get safely out of action.'

They practiced all types of harassing tactics such as ambush, dusk and dawn raids, but their favorite was to lead the enemy into baited traps. Unable to destroy the whole Afgān force, and unwilling to let it remain intact, they devised a method of killing it bit by bit. With this object in view they would lure a section of the enemy to chase them, and when this section was cut off from the main force, they would wheel round and encircle it. When facing the main Afgān force, a party of them would gallop forward and come to a sudden stop to discharge its muskets. Then they would wheel round, making room for the others, and thus they kept up uninterrupted fire and smashed the enemy lines. Forster says that their mode of attack was different from that of any other cavalry in Asia. In those days, when retreat meant rout and dispersal meant defeat, the Sikhs successfully dispersed to operate and returned to renew the attack. These were entirely new elements which the Sikhs introduced in the north Indian warfare of the period under review.

Source: http://www.sikh-history.com/sikhhist/events/war_strategy.html

Adapted From: Gupta, Hari Ram. History of the Sikhs. Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, New Delhi, January 1999