

The Battles of the Pre-Khālṣā (ਖਾਲਸਾ) Period

In October 1686, the Hill Chieftains collected a force of 30,000 men, and under the leadership of Rājā Bhīm Cand (ਰਾਜਾ ਭੀਮ ਚੰਦ) and Fatah Shāh (ਫਤਹ ਸ਼ਾਹ), they rode towards Pāumṭā (ਪਾਉਂਟਾ). Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib's army consisted of around 4,000 Sikhs as well as a number of *Udāsīs* (ਉਦਾਸੀ) and *Paṭhāns* (ਪਠਾਨ). Except for Mahant Kirpāl Dās (ਮਹੰਤ ਕਿਰਪਾਲ ਦਾਸ) and a few others, most of the *Udāsīs* had deserted the *Gurū*. The *Paṭhāns* who had taken up employment under *Gurū Sāhib* on the recommendation of Pīr Buddhū Shāh (ਪੀਰ ਬੁੱਧੂ ਸ਼ਾਹ) were all bought over by Bhīm Cand. They were promised a free share of the loot at Pāumṭā. The *Gurū* informed Pīr Buddhū Shāh about the unfaithful behavior of the *Paṭhāns* and he himself led his Sikhs to a place six miles outside Pāumṭā, also called Bhaṅgāṇī (ਭੰਗਾਣੀ).

On hearing about the unreliable *Paṭhāns*, Pīr Buddhū Shāh was greatly disturbed. Immediately, he called his sons and he rushed to *Gurū Sāhib's* side with 500 to 700 of his followers. Pīr Buddhū Shāh and his sons fought bravely in this bloody battle as did his followers. Besides several hundred Sikhs, two of Pīr Buddhū Shāh's sons and a large number of his followers died in the fighting. The treacherous *Paṭhāns* were astounded to see confectioners and cattle-grazers, who had never handled swords or shields, fighting like trained soldiers and killing many a haughty *Paṭhān* and hill-men.

Rājā Harī Cand (ਰਾਜਾ ਹਰੀ ਚੰਦ), one of the hill chieftains, shot a volley of arrows at Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib; one hit the horse and one hit his waistband. It was then *Gurū Sāhib's* turn and his arrows wreaked havoc in all directions, killing numerous opponent soldiers, including Rājā Harī Cand. With his fall, the rivals lost courage and before darkness fell, they fled from the battle field.

The victory of the *Gurū* silenced the adversaries who had thought of the *Gurū's* army as a miscellaneous rabble of unskilled householders. Their prestige rose and their morale strengthened. After the battle of Bhaṅgāṇī, the *Gurū* returned to Makkhovāl (ਮੱਖੋਵਾਲ) where he strengthened the city of Anandpur (ਅਨੰਦਪੁਰ) by building forts all around it.

Taking advantage of Aurāṅzeb's (ਔਰੰਗਜ਼ੇਬ) protracted absence from Dillī (ਦਿੱਲੀ) and the consequent lax administration in the Pañjāb (ਪੰਜਾਬ), the Hill Chiefs withheld the payment of tribute to the Emperor. The *sūbedār* (ਸੂਬੇਦਾਰ) of Lāhaur (ਲਾਹੌਰ) sent Ālim Khān (ਅਲਿਮ ਖਾਨ) to subdue the *rājās* with military force. The Hill Chiefs sought help from Gurū Gobind Singh who joined the forces of defense against the Mughal forces. Ālim Khān encamped on an elevated ground under the cover of an improvised wooden fortress near Nadaun (ਨਦੌਨ), a small place situated on the bank of the Biās (ਬਿਆਸ), about 20 miles east of Kāṅgrā (ਕਾਂਗੜਾ). They commanded specific advantage from that position. Bhīm Cand impetuously advanced to give battle to Ālim Khān. The Muslim General and his supporters fought vehemently but the determined might of the allies pushed them back. The unerring arrows discharged by the *Gurū* terrified the Mughal army. Rājā Bhīm Cand abandoned his attitude of defiance towards the *Gurū* and the next few years at Anandpur passed in peace.

Bhāi Nand Lāl ‘Goyā’ (ਭਾਈ ਨੰਦ ਲਾਲ ‘ਗੋਯਾ’)

Bhāi Nand Lāl ‘Goyā’ (1633-1713), a great scholar of Fārsī (ਫਾਰਸੀ), was one of the fifty-two poets of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਸਿੰਘ ਸਾਹਿਬ). He was born in Ghaznī (ਗਜਨੀ) in Afghānistān in 1633 and was thus 23 years older than *Gurū Sāhib*. His father was Divān Chajjū Rām (ਦਿਵਾਨ ਛੱਜੂ ਰਾਮ), Chief Secretary of the Governor of Ghaznī. He was an intelligent child, and in a short time acquired great efficiency in Fārsī and Arabic languages. He had a natural aptitude for poetry and began composing poetry at the age of 12 under the pen-name Goyā. He lost both his parents by the age of 19. Finding no suitable opening for his talents in Ghaznī, he left for Multān (ਮੁਲਤਾਨ). There he married a girl with a Sikh (ਸਿਖ) background and found work too. Later he was appointed chief secretary under Dārā Shikoh (ਦਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਿਕੋਹ), due to an acquaintance of his father, named Vāsif Khān (ਵਾਸਿਫ ਖਾਨ). His wife being of Sikh background used to recite Gurbānī and knew Gurmukhī as well, and since Bhāi Nand Lāl was also of the spiritual bent, he also began the singing of Gurū’s hymns. In those days Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib’s name was on everyone’s lips. Bhāi Nand Lāl made up his mind to meet Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib. Leaving his family behind, he left for Anandpur, not realizing that he would never ever return to Dillī again. According to Gurū kīām Sākhīām (ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀਆਂ ਸਾਖੀਆਂ), Bhāi Nand Lāl arrived in Anandpur (ਅਨੰਦਪੁਰ) on Vaisākhī (ਵੈਸਾਖੀ) day of 1682 and received Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib’s blessing. He spent his days with *Gurū* in mystical contemplation and composed poetry in which his spiritual experience is the pre-eminent element. He is said to have kept free kitchen (Laṅgar - ਲੰਗਰ) at Anandpur, which was commended by *Gurū* as a model for others to follow.

He is an honored Sikh of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib whose name continues to be remembered with affection and esteem. His poetry in Fārsī has formed a place of its own in the Sikh canon and religious tradition. It is held in great reverence just like the compositions of Bhāi Gurdās (ਭਾਈ ਗੁਰਦਾਸ) and can be sung along with the hymns of Gurū Granth Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ) at Sikh congregations. Bhāi Nand Lāl wrote 10 pieces of work: 7 in Fārsī and 3 in Pañjābī (ਪੰਜਾਬੀ). They consist of:

Zindagīnāmā (ਜ਼ਿੰਦਗੀਨਾਮਾ)

The author called it Bandgīnāmā (Book of Prayer) and composed it in Fārsī. Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib changed its title to Zindagīnāmā (Book of Life). Its theme is the “love of Vāhigurū (ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ) and devotion to Gurū;” Vāhigurū is described as Creator of Universe and as One who has imparted life to all creatures. It contains 510 verses and is believed to be his first piece of work, which he wrote after he shifted to Anandpur to join the *Gurū*. At places, the verses echo those in the Gurū Granth Sāhib.

Divān-e-Goyā (ਦਿਵਾਨ-ਏ-ਗੋਯਾ)

It is a collection of 63 *gazals* (ਗਜ਼ਲ). This work contains his personal spiritual experience and in many ways explains the spirit of Gurbānī. Some scholars have translated this particular work in Pañjābī.

Tausif-o-Sanā (ਤੌਸੀਫ-ਓ-ਸਨਾ)

It is in prose, but contains a few verses at the end. It is in praise of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib. This work is full of Arabic and difficult Fārsī words.

Gaṇjñāmā (ਗੰਜਨਾਮਾ) (Treasure book)

It renders homage to *Gurūs* whom the poet recalls in his deep personal devotion and veneration. It is written both in prose and in poetry. The poet calls Gurū Nānak Sāhib (ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹਿਬ), the supreme darvesh (ਦਰਵੇਸ਼) and all his successors being one with him in spirit, embodying the same message. The book concludes with his humble supplication to Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib that his life may be dedicated to *Gurū* and that he may forever remain attached to his feet.

Jot Bigās (ਜੋਤ ਬਿਗਾਸ) (Pañjābī)

It contains 43 couplets. It is mainly devoted to the explanation of Gurū Arjan Sāhib's (ਗੁਰੂ ਅਰਜਨ ਸਾਹਿਬ) Jaitsarī kī Vār (ਜੈਤਸਰੀ ਕੀ ਵਾਰ), with special reference to Ten *Gurūs* being of one spirit, one life. This is often deemed as an exposition of the Fārsī works in Pañjābī but that is not the case, this is an entirely independent piece of work.

Jot Bigās (ਜੋਤ ਬਿਗਾਸ) (Fārsī)

It contains 175 couplets and is a laudation of Ten *Gurūs* and their spirit being one. This composition is in deep reverence of *Gurūs* and depicts how the spirit of Gurū Nānak Sāhib passed on to his successors. He calls Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib “ਹੱਕ ਹੱਕ ਅੰਦੇਸ਼, ਬਾਦਸ਼ਾਹ ਦਰਵੇਸ਼”—a complete man.

Rahitnāmā (ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ) (Pañjābī)

It is in the traditional form of poetry where a dialogue between the *Gurū* and the disciple is on. During the dialogue between Bhāi Nand Lāl Goyā and Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib, the latter expounds the rules of conduct laid down for a Gursikh (ਗੁਰਸਿਖ). This discourse took place at Anandpur on 5 December 1695, i.e., before the creation of the *Khālsā* and is written in Pañjābī.

Tankhāhnāmā (ਤਨਖਾਹਨਾਮਾ) (Pañjābī)

Tankhāh, a Fārsī word, means salary, reward or profit, and *Nāmā*, also Fārsī, denotes an epistle or a code. It was composed in Pañjābī after the creation of *Khālsā*. In Sikh usage, however, *Tankhāh* stands more for a religious penal code. Any Sikh, who received Pāhul (ਪਾਹੁਲ) (nectar of the double-edged sword) for initiation into the fold of the brotherhood of *Khālsā*, if commits a breach of Rahit and is found guilty of Kurahit (ਕੁਰਹਿਤ) (misconduct) is subject to be fined and is called a *Tankhāhīā*. This concept of *Tankhāh* is based on the concept of forgiveness. Once a Sikh admits and seeks forgiveness for his mistake in front of Pañj Piare (ਪੰਜ ਪਿਆਰੇ) (the five beloved ones) he is rewarded with a particular *sevā* (ਸੇਵਾ). After the *sevā*, as decided by Pañj Piare, has been performed, that Sikh is once again considered a member of the *Khālsā*. The last verse of *Tankhāhnāmā*, which the Sikhs usually recite in unison after Ardās (ਅਰਦਾਸ), contains the well-familiar verse, *Rāj karegā Khālsā* (ਰਾਜ ਕਰੇਗਾ ਖਾਲਸਾ).

Dastūr-ul-Inshā (ਦਸਤੂਰ-ਉਲ-ਇਨਸ਼ਾ) (Fārsī)

It is a collection of letters in Fārsī written to his relatives and friends. These serve as a model for letter writing and contain invaluable historical information regarding the political, social and economic conditions of Gurū Gobind Singh Sāhib's time.

Arz-ul-Alfāz (ਅਰਜ਼-ਉਲ-ਅਲਫਾਜ਼) (Fārsī)

Written in Fārsī, it contains the praise of the Almighty along with *Gurūs*. In this composition Bhāi Nand Lāl also gives his interpretation of Sikh concepts. Alexander Von Humbolt, who has translated some of Bhāi Nand Lāl Goyā's work in “The Pilgrims Way,” has this to say about him: “Goyā was