

THE SIKH MARTYRS

(Part-I Upto 1762)

Stories of their unique sacrifices with
about 200 objective type
questions and their answers

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	
GURU ARJAN DEV JI.....	7
GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI.....	9
BHAI MATI DAAS, SATI DAAS & DAYAL DAAS.....	11
THE FOUR SAHIBZADAS	13
BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR.....	16
BHAI TARA SINGH.....	18
BHAI MANI SINGH.....	20
BHAI BOTA SINGH & GARJA SINGH.....	22
BHAI MEHTAB SINGH & SUKHA SINGH.....	24
BHAI TARU SINGH.....	25
SARDAR SUBEG SINGH & SHAHBAZ SINGH	26
THE SMALLER HOLOCAUST	27
THE SIKH WOMEN MARTYRS	28
BABA DEEP SINGH	29
THE BIGGER HOLOCAUST	30

INTRODUCTION

This booklet contains brief life stories of the Sikh martyrs up to 1762. More than 200 objective type questions based on these stories along with their answers are being given at the end.

It is a pity that our children and youth have very little knowledge of their glorious past. I wish them to know their sublime heritage, understand the greatness of their religion and appreciate the honor of belonging to it.

The sufferings and sacrifices our ancestors went through with so much dignity and steadfastness should make our children and youth feel very proud of their roots and fill their hearts with so much strength that they should be able to overcome any difficult situation. Our ancestors made unique sacrifices for protecting human rights, honor, and faith of not only the Sikhs but also of others. 18th Century was an important period in the history of the Sikhs. Their unparalleled sacrifices and sufferings brought fruit when they succeeded in *beating back* the invaders and became master of the land in the first half of the 19th Century.

A well known poet has written:-

Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And departing leave behind us
Foot prints on the sand of time.

This is an effort to draw the attention of our coming generations to the foot-prints of our great ancestors and make their (our children's) lives sublime. If the present neglect shown by us to the religious education of our next generation continues, it is bound to prove extremely detrimental to the future of our children and eventually our community. Our youth will soon forget not only the names of our great Gurus but also their number.

I would request all the parents to pay special attention to the religious education of their kids. We need to talk to them about the Sikh way of life with pride and explain to them how rich and unique our heritage is. I agree, they have a lot of distractions but I also strongly feel we can still guide them on the right lines. Talking to them in Punjabi at home, sending them to the Sikh youth camps, and providing them with simple story books on the history of Sikh religion can be very useful. Generally, all Gurdwara libraries should be able to provide such books. It is high time that we the parents pay immediate attention to this highly essential but neglected duty to our kids.

Being a student of the Sikh history myself, I wish to share with the young readers some of the stories of our great Sikh martyrs. I have avoided details, and mention of many city names and dates to keep it simple and interesting and to the point for the young readers. At the end of the stories I have added about 200 objective type questions (with their answers). I shall feel myself very fortunate if this humble effort of mine proves worthwhile.

I hope, this would be found useful in teaching our children not only at the Sikh youth camps but also at homes as well as at Gurdwara Sunday schools.

I am thankful to Captain Kanwar Harbhajan Singh, a dedicated selfless great missionary who has been working as a torch bearer for our children by holding Sikh youth camps for them internationally since 1972. It was he suggested and encouraged me to write this book for the youth. I know of many a young Sikhs who had given up their faith but were brought back by him and his dedicated IGS counselor's team's efforts. May he and his team of counselors continue to serve the Khalsa Panth for ever!

I am thankful to the Almighty Waheguru, who gave me the strength to undertake and complete this book even after undergoing two major surgeries during the last two years.

Your suggestions are always welcome. Thanks,
SAWAN SINGH

GURU ARJAN DEV JI
(1563 - 1606)
THE FIFTH GREAT GURU!

Guru Arjan Dev ji was the youngest son of Guru Ram Das ji, the Fourth Guru. His mother's name was Mata Bhani ji. He was born on April 15, 1563 and designated as the Fifth Guru in the year 1581 at the age of 18. He led the Sikhs for 25 years and was martyred in 1606, when he was only 43 years old. Guru Arjan Sahib completed the work on the Tank (*sarover*) at *Amritsar* and built a beautiful *Harminder Sahib* (Temple of God) in the midst of it. He got the foundation stone of *Harminder Sahib* laid by a Muslim saint Mian Mir. *Harminder Sahib* is also known as *The Golden Temple* because of its gold plated domes and the outer walls. *Harminder Sahib* has four doors signifying that it is open to all without any consideration of caste, creed or status.

Golden Temple soon became a very important place of worship for people of all faiths. Guru Sahib helped in the establishment and growth of new trades and professions in the city of *Amritsar*. Some of these trades were banking, embroidery, carpentry and horse trading. Sikh traders were sent to *Afghanistan* and *Central Asia* for buying good horses. The trade in horses helped the Sikhs in developing a great interest in horseback riding and horsemanship.

Guru Sahib opened another center of worship at *Taran Taaran*, where also a big temple and a tank (*sarover*) were built for the comfort of the devotees. The foundation stone of this temple at *Taran Taaran* was laid by Guru Arjan Sahib himself. A house for the lepers was also built near the Temple.

Guru Sahib compiled the *Adi-Granth* (the sacred Sikh scriptures) by putting together the hymns of the first four Gurus, some of the Hindu and Muslim Bhagats and added his own to them. The first version of the *Adi Granth* was completed in 1604 with Bhai Gurdas ji's assistance. Guru Sahib was a great poet. *Sukhmani Sahib* is also one of his great compositions.

People of all faiths adored Guru Sahib. Guru Sahib's popularity and influence grew over the people with every passing day. They came to take his blessings in large numbers from all over the country. This worried the Mughal Emperor Jahangir. In his own words, he wanted to put an end to this traffic.

Jahangir soon learnt that his own son Khusro, who had revolted against him, had also gone to Guru Arjan Sahib for his blessings. This gave him the desired excuse to accuse Guru Sahib of helping his enemy with money and moral support.

Deewan Chandu, a Hindu official in Jahangir's court bore a grudge against Guru Sahib for rejecting his daughter's hand in marriage for Guru Sahib's son. He took the responsibility to torture Guru Sahib to death.

Guruji was arrested, taken to *Lahore* and tortured to death. He was made to sit on a red hot iron sheet and hot sand was poured over his body. Saint Mian Mir offered to intervene and convince the Emperor that nothing wrong had been committed by Guru Sahib, but Guru Sahib politely refused the offer saying "*Tera Bhana Meetha Laagey*" meaning "Sweet is thy will, O Beloved Lord". After four days of brutal torturing, Guru Sahib's half baked and blistered body was thrown into the river *Ravi* to be washed away.

Today a beautiful *Gurdwara* called *Dera Sahib* stands at this place and thousands visit there every year to pay their homage to their beloved Guru Sahib - an apostle of peace!

Guru Sahib's martyrdom resulted in initiating the militarization of the Sikhs and turning them into one of the world's greatest marshal races known as *Saint-soldiers*!

GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI
(1621 - 1675)
THE NINTH GREAT GURU

Guru Harkrishan Sahib the 8th Guru nominated Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, as his successor, before he passed away on March 30, 1664. Guru Tegh Bahadur ji was the youngest son of the 6th Guru, Guru Hargobind Sahib. He was born on April 1, 1621 at *Amritsar*. After the passing away of his father, Guru Hargobind Sahib in 1644, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib moved to *Bakala* with his wife, Mata Gujri ji and mother Mata Nanki ji.

He took charge of Guruship in March 1665 at the age of 44. Hymns written by him are included in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Sahib was a great horseback rider and extremely well trained in the use of weapons of war. He was only 13 when he participated in the 4th battle of *Kartarpur Sahib* along with his father.

Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's life may be divided into 3 periods. The first period of 23 years spent at *Amritsar* along with his father. The second period of 19 years, spent in quiet meditation at *Bakala*. And the third period of 11 years, when he extensively toured the *Northern and Eastern India* including what is now called *Bangladesh* to spread his mission. Guru Sahib founded the town of *Anandpur Sahib* - the city of Bliss!

During Guru Sahib's times, Aurangzeb, the fanatic Mughal Emperor of India launched an aggressive campaign of converting Hindus to Islam by force. He ordered demolition of all Temples and started building Mosques in their places.

Guru Sahib cautioned all his followers to be prepared for the worst and be ready to die. At the same time he started imparting them training in the use of arms and told them not to panic but to face the difficulties boldly.

In 1669, Aurangzeb, stepped up his anti-Hindu campaign and issued special orders denying government employment to all non-muslims unless they converted to Islam. He also issued instructions that all Sikh missionaries called *Masands* be banned from entering any township for spreading Guru's mission.

By May 1675, more than half of Kashmiri Hindu population had been forcefully converted to Islam. Demoralised and terrorised, a representative group of Kashmiri Pandits led by Pandit Kirpa Ram came to *Anandpur Sahib* and approached Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib for guidance and advice.

Guru Sahib told them not to worry but to send word to the Emperor that if he could convert him (Guru Sahib) to Islam, all Hindus would follow in his foot steps. Before long, Aurangzeb issued orders for the arrest and imprisonment of the 9th Guru and to bring him to *Delhi*.

Knowing that he was not going to come back, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib passed on the responsibilities of Guruship to his 9 year old son (Guru Gobind Singh) and left for *Delhi*.

Guru Sahib was arrested, chained and kept in an iron cage in the police *Kotwali* under heavy security at *Chandni Chowk* in *Delhi*.

Several seasoned top most royal Muslim missionries were deputed to persuade Guru Sahib to give up his faith and accept Islam or be prepared to die a terrible death. Guru Sahib refused to convert. To shake his resolve, three of his ardent followers who had opted to get arrested along with him, were brutally murdered one after the other right before his eyes. Having failed to persuade Guru Sahib to give up his faith, orders were issued for his execution.

On the evening of November 11, 1675, the 9th beloved Guru of the Sikhs, Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib was seated under a tree and beheaded in full public view. Following his execution, a big storm broke out, the sky was covered with dark clouds and there was lightening in the sky. Taking advantage of the situation, two brave Sikhs appeared from the surging crowd and soon Guru Sahib's severed head and body were gone. Bhai Lakhi Shah managed to take Guru Sahib's body to his house in the village of *Rakab Ganj* where he and his family placed Guru sahib's body inside the house and put their house on fire to avoid suspicion. On the other hand Bhai Jaitha ji picked up his beloved Guru's bleeding head and ran towards *Anandpur Sahib* - about 200 miles away to hand over the Guru's head to his son, Guru Gobind Singh ji for being cremated properly.

The place where Guru Sahib was executed in *Chandni Chowk* in *Delhi*, a magnificent marble *Gurdwara Sis Ganj*, stands in his memory. A beautiful white marble Gurdwara stands at the place where Guru Sahib's body was cremated. It is known as *Gurdwara Rakab Ganj* (in *Delhi*). The location where the 9th Guru's head was cremated by the 10th Guru Sahib in *Anandpur Sahib* stands a Gurdwara called *Gurdwara Sis Ganj*.

BHAI MATI DAAS, SATI DAAS & DAYAL DAAS

Bhai Mati Daas and Bhai Sati Daas were real brothers. They belonged to the well known City of *Jhelum*, now in *Pakistan*. They were devout disciples of Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib - the ninth Guru. Their father Bhai Praga, was a prominent saint-soldier of Guru Hargobind Sahib - the sixth Guru. Bhai Dayal Daas was another trusted disciple of the ninth Guru.

All the three were with Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib when he was arrested on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. Since they refused to be separated from Guru Sahib, they were also arrested, chained and taken to *Delhi* along with their Guru.

The *Qazis* (a team of Muslim theologians) decided to torture and kill the Guru's companions right before his eyes, if they refused to embrace Islam. The *Qazis* thought that the sufferings of his followers would shake his resolve and he would agree to become a Muslim.

Bhai Mati Daas was taken in chains to *Chandni Chowk*, a well known public place in *Old Delhi*, under a heavy guard. He showed wonderful self-confidence and his face beamed with glory. A large crowd had gathered there. The *Qazis* persuaded him to accept Islam and threatened to torture him to death by cutting him into two, by running a saw through him, if he refused. Bhai Mati Daas said, "Do not waste your time. I prefer to die than to give up my faith." They asked him if he had any last wish. Bhai Mati Daas said, "Yes, stand me with my face towards my Guru, so I can see him till the last moment of my life." His wish was granted. A big saw was placed on the center of his head and each end of it was held by a strong *Pathan*. As they started to cut him down, Bhai Mati Daas's blood began to flow down his face and neck. But he did not show any sign of physical suffering. He was calmly chanting '*Japji Sahib*'. His body was soon sawn into two. He died a brave death but didn't give up his faith.

Bhai Sati Daas was the next to be taken out of the prison. He was given the same choices. He was told if he embraced Islam he would be given a high position and plenty of pleasures, and if he refused, he would meet the fate of his companion. Bhai Sati Daas was firm like a rock in his resolve. He refused to accept their offer and said that he was anxious to join his companion.

He was wrapped in cotton soaked in oil and burnt to death. Till his last breath, he was calm and continued to recite the sacred '*Japji Sahib*'.

Next was the turn of Bhai Dayal Daas. He belonged to a Gursikh family from *Multan*. Many of his relatives had already been martyred at the hands of Muslim rulers.

The *Qazis* made him the offer to embrace Islam and enjoy life, or he would be boiled alive. He refused their offer and calmly said he would not give up his faith. A man of

strong resolve, he remained firm and kept his gaze at his Guru's feet. He was seated in a large vessel filled with boiling water. Fire was lit under the vessel. He sat in the boiling water with no sign of discomfort and kept on repeating the Guru's hymns until his soul left his body.

These inhuman torturous acts took place on Nov. 11, 1675.

THE FOUR SAHIBZADAS

Baba Ajit Singh, Baba Jujhar Singh, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh were the four Sahibzadas (sons) of Guru Gobind Singh ji. Generally, we use the word 'Baba' for an old man but it is also used for a person, worthy of respect. At the time of their martyrdom Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh were *17 and 15* years old, and the two younger brothers, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh were only *9 and 7*.

Baba Ajit Singh was an excellent swordsman. He was also expert in the use of other weapons of war like bow and arrow. He started taking part in Sikh battles against tyrants, early in life.

Once a young Hindu *Brahman* came to Guru Gobind Singh ji at *Anandpur Sahib* and requested him to help him as some *Pathans* had abducted his newly-wedded wife. Baba Ajit Singh offered to recover the young *Brahman's* wife. With a few brave Sikhs he chased the *Pathans*, overpowered them, and recovered the young lady and restored her to her husband.

In the year 1704, when Guruji had to leave the besieged fort of *Anandpur*, all the four Sahibzadas were with him. The *Anandpur Fort* had been surrounded by the Mughal armies for several months and all supplies to the Sikhs inside had been completely cut off. To take over the control of the fort, the Mughal officers sent in a note to Guru Sahib saying that if he and his followers vacated the fort, they would let them pass through peacefully and vowed not to hurt anyone.

The enemy betrayed the Guru, violated their oath and fell upon the Sikhs as soon as they opened the gates to move out. Baba Ajit Singh with a few Sikhs held up the enemy while the rest crossed the river *Sirsa*. When all had crossed, Baba Ajit Singh and the young Sikhs in his command plunged their horses into the flooded river and joined a group of Sikhs marching ahead of them.

In the utter confusion of the battle and the river crossing, the two younger sons of the Tenth Guru along with their grandmother Mata Gujri ji got separated from the rest. While Guruji with his two elder sons and forty Sikhs hurried towards *Chamkaur*, a nearby village, where they quickly occupied a strategically located *Garhi* (a small fortress) and started preparing for their defense against the Mughal forces pursuing them from all sides, while Mata Gujri ji and the younger Sahibzadas moved on in a different direction.

The Mughal forces soon besieged the *Garhi* and decided to force open its gate. Baba Ajit Singh with the permission and blessings of his father took five Sikhs with him, went out and riddled the enemy with a continuous spray of arrows. He fought very bravely to his last breath and died a martyr's death. Guru Sahib watched his eldest son's great fighting skills and thanked God that he met a saint-soldier's death.

Baba Jujhar Singh, the second son of Guru Gobind Singh Sahib, also had the same training as his brother. He stood up and requested his father to allow him to be the next

one to go and follow his elder brother. Guruji embraced him and gave him a sword and a shield. He also went out with five Sikhs. Many mighty warriors fell upon this lad of fifteen. He fought with courage for as long as he could, till he got overpowered by the huge army. He breathed his last, fighting like a true Sikh warrior with Waheguru, Waheguru on his lips.

On the other hand, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh, the two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh ji and their grandmother Mata Gujri ji, who got separated from Guruji, moving in a different direction, reached a village nearby. There they met a *Brahman* named 'Gangu' who had earlier served in the Guru's house. He offered them shelter in his house but stole their valuables and money when the three of them were resting at night. Later, when Mata Gujri questioned him about it, he became furious and reported their presence to the village chief who was a Mughal. Both the Sahibzadas with their grandmother were arrested and taken to the Governor of *Sarhind*, who confined them in a tower of his fort where they passed a cold December night on hard floor without any bedding or food.

Next day, the Sahibzadas were summoned before the Governor. The young Sahibzadas kept up their princely dignity and refused to bow before the Governor. Instead, they uttered "Waheguru ji ka Khalsa , Waheguru ji ki Fateh" The Governor was annoyed and threatened them with torture if they did not embrace Islam. Both of them firmly refused to give up their faith. The Governor gave them 24 hours to think and consult their grandmother. He promised them many charming favors if they agreed and warned them that they would be bricked alive, if they refused.

When Mata Gujri heard all about it, she warmly hugged them and told them how proud of them she was. "Stay strong, my beloved kids, it is better to die with honor than to live in disgrace", she counseled. Next day when they were taken to the court, the Governor again made them tempting offers but they rejected all of them, and refused to give up their Sikh faith for Islam. The Governor ordered them to be bricked alive. The Governor of *Malerkotla*, Sher Mohammed who was also present pleaded for their release as they had not committed any offence, he said, but of no avail.

The two brothers were made to stand closely side by side and a brick wall started being raised around them. When they were covered in the wall upto their shoulders, the Governor again asked them to embrace Islam and go free. But these two young faces, glowing with confidence, calmly shook their heads in the negative. At this point, the Governor ordered and their heads were cut off. This is how the two younger sons of the tenth Guru became martyrs.

When Mata Gujri was told about the martyrdom of her grandsons, she thanked Waheguruji for giving them a dignified death. Then she closed her eyes and went into deep meditation. Next morning they found she had breathed her last.

Todar Mal, a rich businessman and follower of Guru Gobind Singh ji sought permission from the Governor to cremate the three bodies. He was permitted on the condition that

he paid as many gold coins as placed closely together would cover the piece of land required. Todar Mal agreed, purchased the land and cremated the dead bodies. 'Gurdwara Joti Sarup' was erected later on that piece of land. The place where the Sahibzadas were bricked and beheaded stands the *Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib*. At the site where the three were imprisoned stands the *Gurdwara* called '*Mata Gujri Burj*'(Tower). This happened in the month of December 1704.

BABA BANDA SINGH BAHADUR

Baba Banda Singh Bahadur whose original name was Lachhman Daas was born in 1670 at village *Rajori* in the *Jammu* state of *India*. His father's name was Ram Dev. He trained Banda Singh in wrestling, horseback riding and hunting. As a young man, Banda shot a pregnant deer and was shocked to watch the mother and her aborted doe die painfully. This gloomy scene changed his heart. He left his home and became a *Sadhu* (recluse). He took the name of Madho Daas. He wandered from place to place and learnt the art of magic and miracles and established his monastery at *Nander*, a place in the *Southern India*.

Guru Gobind Singh ji visited his monastery in 1708. He tried to practise his tricks of magic on Guruji but failed and became his follower. He bowed before Guruji and said "I am your '*Banda*' (slave)." Guruji blessed him and inducted him into the Sikh faith by baptizing him. He came to be named as Banda Singh. Guruji acquainted him with the history of the Sikhs and principles of the faith. On learning about the cruelties committed by the Mughals, he was filled with rage and requested Guruji to permit him to go to Punjab and punish the cruel rulers. His request was granted.

Guru Sahib gave him a drum, a Khalsa banner, and five arrows from his personal quiver and appointed him as the leader and commander of the Khalsa forces. Five Sikhs were deputed to accompany him. He was also given a few letters addressed to the leading Sikhs in Punjab. All the Sikhs were called upon to help Baba Banda Singh who was also advised to remain pure in conduct and help the needy.

When Baba Banda Singh entered *Punjab*, the Sikhs flocked to him. Village after village fell to the advancing Khalsa army led by him. He conquered *Samana* in 1709, punished the oppressors, and attacked other centers of oppression like *Kanjpur*, *Kapuri* and *Sadhaura* and went on moving forward punishing the tyrants.

Then he turned towards *Sarhind* whose Governor was responsible for murdering the younger Sahibzadas and subjecting the Sikhs to many hardships. Wazir Khan, the Governor was killed in the battle and *Sarhind* was taken by the Sikh forces. The Khalsa flags proudly fluttered all over the newly conquered Khalsa territory.

Now Baba Banda Singh was the master of the *Punjab*, east of *Lahore*. He made *Mukhlisipur*, a hilly city near *Sadhura* his capital. He repaired its old fort and renamed it as *Lohgarh* (Iron Fort). He minted his own Khalsa currency in the name of Guru Nanak Sahib and Guru Gobind Singh ji.

Bahadur Shah, the Mughal Emperor at *Delhi* learnt about the fast growing power of the Khalsa army, could not tolerate it and sent a huge army of sixty thousand to eliminate the Sikhs. The Fort of *Lohgarh* was besieged and the Sikhs came under a heavy attack of arrows and musket balls. Due to shortage of provisions and fighting equipment to face

such a large enemy force, the Sikhs realized that they could not stand a long siege and the best bet lay in moving out at once. They rushed out and cut their way through the enemy lines one night. Baba Banda Singh with his men disappeared in the hills.

There again, he reorganized his men and resources and moved on to defeat the hill chief of *Kahlur*. Other hill chiefs submitted to him without a fight. He also conquered some adjoining territories in the plains. Mughal forces kept pursuing him and he had soon to return to the hills of *Jammu*. Here he temporarily went underground and concentrated on reorganization of his troops.

Then, one day Baba Banda Singh reappeared with his men and conquered some areas of District *Gurdaspur*. But he was soon besieged by the Mughal Army and hill chiefs in the village of *Nangal* in District *Gurdaspur*. Baba Banda Singh and his men fought heroically against heavy odds and held their ground with courage. Their provisions had exhausted. He and his forces lived on grass and leaves of trees. The siege continued for eight long months. Baba Banda Singh and his famished soldiers were taken prisoners and taken to *Lahore*.

Zakria Khan, the Governor of *Lahore*, sent 740 Sikh prisoners of war with Baba Banda Singh to *Delhi*. Heads of 2000 Sikhs were hung on spears and carried along with the prisoners as a show of Mughal army's superiority over its victims. Hungry and helpless, the brave Sikh prisoners were contented with their lot. There was no sign of sorrow or dejection on their faces. They walked to their sure death with dignity and courage holding their heads high.

On reaching *Delhi*, the prisoners were taken in a procession through the *bazaars* of *Delhi*. One hundred of them were killed daily. They were asked to choose between death and Islam. They had no fear of death. Not even one gave in. They preferred death to life in shame. They had much rather die in honor than spend the rest of their lives in shame. They gladly accepted martyrdom with whispers of Waheguru on their parched lips.

Baba Banda Singh was also offered the usual choice between Islam and death. He chose to die and was tortured to death. His baby son Ajay Singh was cut into pieces and his little heart was thrust into Baba Banda Singh's mouth. Baba Banda Singh was calm and unmoved. The executioner cut Baba Banda Singh into pieces but he remained composed to the last. He achieved his martyrdom in 1716.

There stands a Gurdwara in his memory in *Mehrauli*, near *Qutab Minar*, in *Delhi*.

BHAI TARA SINGH

Sahib Rai, a powerful revenue official of village *Naushehr* was a cruel and a haughty man. He would let loose his horses in the green fields of the Sikhs and abuse and threaten them with dire consequences, if they protested. The Sikhs even offered to supply fodder free of cost for his horses if he refrained from doing this, but in vain. To avoid a confrontation, some of the poor Sikh peasants decided to leave the village and move out.

Bhai Tara Singh, a devout Sikh from an adjoining village in *Amritsar*, sent for them and provided them with food and lodging until they made some other arrangements. He was a saint-soldier and had fought bravely in the campaigns of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. He liked to help the needy of every caste and creed.

When Sahib Rai, heard of this, he tried the same old trick on Bhai Tara Singh's village. The Sikhs there, drove some of his horses away and sold the rest in the open market and used the money so obtained to feed the refugees from *Naushehr*.

Sahib Rai blamed Bhai Tara Singh for all this and lodged a complaint against him, to the Head of the County, Chief of '*Patti*', accusing him to be an old rebel who deserved exemplary punishment.

The Head of the County (*Faujdar*) was a fanatic Muslim. He sent mounted and foot soldiers to arrest and punish Bhai Tara Singh. The Sikhs of the village got together and blocked the way of the invading soldiers. The soldiers attacked the Sikhs, the Sikhs put up a brave fight and beat them back. Many died on both sides and the soldiers had to retreat.

The Head of the County reported the matter to the Governor of *Lahore*, Zakria Khan, who sent a strong force consisting of 2200 armed horsemen, forty cannons and five elephants against Bhai Tara Singh and his 22 companions.

Well aware of the odds, Bhai Tara Singh and the other brave Sikhs of the Guru, decided to stand their ground, fight to the last drop of their blood and face death boldly. The village was surrounded by the Mughal forces. Bhai Tara Singh and his men fought bravely. One by one, the Sikh warriors, fell martyrs after striking heavy casualties on the enemy forces.

By now, Bhai Tara Singh was left alone, badly wounded, yet undaunted, he called out a loud *Jai-Kara* of '*Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*' and sprang upon the enemy slicing through their ranks like lightning. A large number of Mughal soldiers fell upon him from all sides and cut him into pieces.

Bhai Tara Singh and his men died in the heroic Khalsa tradition. His martyrdom took place in 1725 A.D.

BHAI MANI SINGH

Bhai Mani Singh was born in 1644 to Bhai Mai Daas and belonged to District *Patiala*. His parents called him Mania. He along with his parents visited *Anandpur Sahib* to pay homage to Guru Tegh Bahadur ji. Bhai Mani Singh was of about the same age as that of Gobind Rai (childhood name of Guru Gobind Singh ji). They became playmates and friends. Mania did not go back with his parents and stayed on at *Anandpur Sahib*. He became a life long companion and devotee of Guru Gobind Singh ji. He fought bravely in the battles of *Bhangani* and *Nandawn* for Guru Gobind Singh ji.

Guru Gobind Singh ji baptized him and changed his name from Mania to Bhai Mani Singh and took him as his assistant in the establishment of the Khalsa Panth. Bhai Mani Singh was well known for his bravery as well scholarship. He transcribed many copies of the sacred Sikh scripture (*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*) for different Sikh Missionary Centers and accompanied Guru Sahib on his tours including the last, to the South, where he passed away in 1708. After Guru Sahib's heavenly departure, most Sikhs looked upon Bhai Mani Singh for guidance.

On the other hand, after the death of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur in 1716, the Sikhs were split into two factions. Those who regarded Baba Banda Singh as their leader were called *Bandies* and the others were called *Tat Khalsas* (strict followers of the Guru's directives). Both the factions wanted to take control of *Amritsar* and there was a likelihood of a major conflict. Bhai Mani Singh who was at that time the Head Priest of the *Darbar Sahib*, tactfully reconciled the two sides by asking them to cast lots for the control of *Amritsar*. Thus his wisdom and sweetness settled the dispute peacefully.

Bhai Mani Singh was the most learned man of his time. His exposition of Gurbani was appreciated by all. He wrote *Gian Ratnawali* and compiled the *Dasam Granth*. He prepared a revised edition of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* as directed by Guru Gobind Singh ji at *Damdama Sahib*.

Zakria Khan, a fanatic Muslim, was the Governor of *Lahore* at that time. He agreed to permit the *Diwali* gathering of Sikhs at *Darbar Sahib*, only if, Bhai Mani Singh paid him Rs 5000/-. Bhai Mani Singh agreed hoping to collect the money from the Sikhs when they come to attend the gathering. In the meantime, the Governor sent secret orders to his forces to make a surprise attack on the Sikhs on the night of *Diwali* at *Darbar Sahib*. Bhai Mani Singh came to know of it and sent out message to the Sikhs not to come to *Amritsar*. As a result, only a few Sikhs from nearby areas turned up and enough money could not be collected and paid to the Governor.

Bhai Mani Singh protested to the Governor's secret plans of attack and also explained to him why he could not pay him the money. Still he was arrested for non-payment. He was offered to embrace Islam, or pay the money or else he would be cut into pieces limb by limb. Bhai Mani Singh refused to convert and was, therefore, ordered to be killed by cutting his body at each joint. Bhai Mani Singh was 76 years old at that time. He was

cut up into pieces but this great Sikh of the Guru neither wavered nor gave up. He was calm and serene till his last breath. He was martyred in 1738 at *Lahore* near the *Lahore Fort*. The place where he was martyred is called *Shaheed Ganj*.

BHAI BOTA SINGH & GARJA SINGH

In the first half of the 18th Century the Mughal rulers and officials had taken a vow to destroy the Sikhs. It was lawful to plunder Sikh homes and destroy their property. They were hunted like wild beasts. Special rewards were offered for the capture and destruction of the Sikh men, women and even their children. Even non-officials were asked to lend a helping hand in this campaign of ruthless destruction. The Sikhs began to be haunted day and night, reported and/or killed at sight.

As a result, most of the Sikhs quickly left the plains and took shelter in far away off, like *Shivalik Hills*, forests, the sandy deserts of *Rajasthan* (a northern state of *India*) and even behind heavy bushes along the rivers. Only some of them would visit the *Golden Temple* at times during the night disguised as *Pathans* to take a dip in the Sacred Pool.

Believing all Sikhs to be dead, Zakria Khan, the Governor of *Punjab*, ordered repeated public announcements that the Sikhs were extinct in the *Punjab* and their will had been completely broken.

One night Bhai Bota Singh along with his companion Bhai Garja Singh, decided to go to *Amritsar* to bathe in the sacred tank. Both of them were spirited saint-soldiers. On the way, they overheard someone say that all Sikhs had been killed. It occurred to both the Singhs, to do something unique to prove the Government propaganda wrong and to make Zakria Khan realize that his boast was empty.

They both stood up boldly in the middle of the main road leading to *Lahore*, stopped all traffic, started collecting a nominal toll (tax) from the travelers using the road and declared that the Khalsa were the new rulers of the *Punjab*. Fearless as they were, they also quickly drafted and sent an open letter to the Governor. The letter was in Punjabi. It read like this:-

Thus wrote Bota Singh a letter,
With a big stick in hand,
On the road I stand,
Levyng an Anna for a cart,
And a pice for a donkey load,
Tell sister-in-law Khano,
That this is the message from Bota Singh.

Reading the letter in disbelief, the Governor was red with rage. He ordered an immediate dispatch of one hundred armed horsemen under a Senior commander to arrest Bota Singh. Both the Sikhs held their ground to the last, fought bravely killing many soldiers who attacked them. They fell martyrs when all the soldiers made a joint attack and the unequal fight could not last long. They died but proved beyond doubt that the Sikhs had neither been vanquished nor extinct as claimed.

Their brave deaths re-established heroism and respect for the Sikhs in the hearts of the people.

This happened in 1739 on the *Grand Trunk Road* near *Taran Taaran*, in *Punjab*.

BHAI MEHTAB SINGH & SUKHA SINGH

Nadar Shah of *Persia*, invaded *India*, overrun the *Punjab* and plundered *Delhi* in 1739. On his way back he avoided the heat of the plains and passed through the *Shivalik Hills* with all his loot that included many young Hindu girls taken prisoners, for being sold as slaves in his country.

At that point, he had no idea that many Sikh *Jathas* (groups) had taken shelter there temporarily. So, it came as a great surprise for him and his weary men, when the Sikhs suddenly fell upon them calling out their thunderous *Jaikaras* of '*Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*'. Many of his men died and many others ran away. The Sikhs recovered much of the plundered goods and got the innocent women released. Shocked as well as infuriated Nadar Shah ordered Zakria Khan, the Governor of *Lahore* (the then Capital of *Punjab*) to annihilate the Sikhs and destroy their religious places completely.

Zakria Khan intensified his campaign against the Sikhs and appointed one of his trusted men, Massa Ranghar as incharge of the *Amritsar* District. Most notoriously, Massa Ranghar desecrated the *Golden Temple* by smoking and drinking inside there and watching young girls perform dance for him.

These days Bhai Mehtab Singh, a devout Sikh of the Guru was passing his days in hiding in the deserts of *Rajasthan*. When he heard about the desecration of the *Golden Temple*, he became very angry. He took a vow to stop this disrespectful use of the sacred *Harminder Sahib*. He took Bhai Sukha Singh, another dedicated Sikh with him, as his companion. They disguised themselves as Mohammadan Revenue Officials, and filled up two bags with round pieces of baked clay. Each one placed one bag before him on his horse and galloped away towards *Amritsar*. They tied their horses to a small tree, by the '*Darshni Deori*', the main gate to the bridge to the *Golden Temple - Harminder Sahib*, and very confidently walked in carrying their bags on their shoulders. Nobody checked them as they looked like Mughal Revenue Officials going to deposit their revenue bags full of coins to the Chief Collector Massa Ranghar. When they entered the temple, they found Massa Ranghar to be drunk and busy watching some dancing girls.

Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh placed their bags before him. Obviously pleased, Massa bent forward to check them. Bhai Mehtab Singh, cut off his head with his sword, picked it up and both of them vanished on their horses before anyone knew what had happened. This took place in 1740. In 1745, when Bhai Mehtab Singh came back to visit his village, in District *Amritsar*, he was surrounded by the Mughal forces, captured, chained and taken to *Lahore*. There he was asked to choose between Islam and death. He refused to change his faith. He was ordered to be crushed between two rotating wheels with sharp teeth. The Berry tree to which his and Bhai Sukha Singh's horses were tied outside the *Golden Temple* is still respectfully touched by all devotees. The daring noble deed of Bhai Mehtab Singh's martyrdom is recalled and admired by one and all.

BHAI TARU SINGH

Most Sikhs left their homes in the 18th Century due to the constant attacks on them by the state. Some Sikhs, however, stayed on in their villages hoping nothing may happen to them.

Bhai Taru Singh a 26 year old handsome young Sikh from District *Amritsar* was one such person. He was a popular farmer who would readily help every needy person. Poor people of every religion would come to him for help. As and when possible, he would send food and other necessities to the Sikhs hiding in the forests near his village *Poola*.

Perhaps, following the state directives or to earn a pat on his back by the Mughal officials, Harbhagat Niranjania, a Hindu state official living nearby was very jealous of Bhai Taru Singh's popularity. It looked like he was out to harm the Sikhs one way or the other. When he came to know that Bhai Taru Singh was helping the Sikhs in the forests, he decided he got a reason good enough to put an end to Bhai Taru Singh's life and activities by reporting him to the Mughal authorities. He went to Zakria Khan, the Governor of *Lahore* and lodged a complaint accusing Bhai Taru Singh of supplying food and milk to the Rebel Sikhs.

Zakria Khan ordered Bhai Taru Singh to be arrested, chained and taken to *Lahore* where he would be subjected to inhuman torture and asked either to embrace Islam or get his hair cut. He was offered a luxurious and honorable life if he accepted their condition. He turned down the offer and refused to get his hair cut. "If he doesn't accept our offer, scrape off his scalp", yelled Zakria Khan to his men, trying to scare Bhai Taru Singh with the terrible pain and torture he will go through. Bhai Taru Singh nodded his head in a No and said, "I am fine as a Sikh".

Bhai Taru Singh's uncut hair together with the upper part of his head was mercilessly chiseled off. Bhai Taru Singh bore this terrible ordeal bravely and went on repeating 'Waheguru' till his soul flew from his body. This happened in 1745.

He taught us that we must live and die fearlessly as Sikhs with all our hair intact!

SARDAR SUBEG SINGH & SHAHBAZ SINGH

Sardar Subeg Singh was a big land lord and a contractor at *Lahore*. He was respected as a man of high character as well as for being a scholar of Persian. Because of his uprightness, administrative skills and integrity, he was respected even by the Governor, Zakria Khan.

The Governor of *Lahore* realized that his policy of persecuting the Sikhs was failing and there was no way he could suppress them, so he decided to pacify the Sikhs. In 1733, Zakria Khan with the permission of the Delhi Government planned a policy of reconciliation. He approached Subeg Singh to persuade the Sikhs to accept his offer of peace.

The Khalsa Leaders met at the *Akal Takht, Amritsar*, to consider the offer Sardar Subeg Singh presented to them on behalf of the Governor. The offer included the title of *Nawab* for their chosen Sikh leader along with a '*Jagir*' (an area of land as a free gift) yielding one hundred thousand rupees. They were out to reject it but Sardar Subeg Singh succeeded in persuading them and the offer was accepted. The Sikhs collectively directed Sardar Kapur Singh, who was the incharge of the Khalsa army stables to accept the title of *Nawab*.

The peace agreement was however short lived, as after some time the campaign of persecuting the Sikhs was renewed. It so happened that Shahbaz Singh, son of Subeg Singh was a very handsome young man of 18 years. He was studying Persian from a *Qazi*, a Muslim theologian. The *Qazi* was very much impressed by his intelligence, handsomeness and fine manners. He offered to make him his son-in-law, if he embraced Islam. Although Shahbaz Singh was threatened with severe torture if he refused the offer, he stood fast and expressed firm dedication to his faith.

A false case was registered against Shahbaz Singh. He was accused of using disrespectful words against the prophet of Islam. The young Shahbaz Singh was arrested and tortured. His father, Sardar Subeg Singh was also arrested on the charges that he spied for the Sikhs against the state. The two were ordered either to stand a trial or give up their faith and accept conversion to Islam.

Zakria Khan, the Governor died before the case was decided. He was succeeded by his son, Yahiya Khan who was more cruel than his father. When both the father and the son repeatedly refused to give up their Sikh faith, they were ordered to be crushed between two rotating sharp toothed wheels. They underwent the torture with great courage chanting Waheguru, Waheguru to their last breath.

Their martyrdom took place in the year of 1745.

THE SMALLER HOLOCAUST (CHHOTA GHALUGHARA)

Mughal army was killing every Sikh found anywhere in the first half of the 18th Century. Some Sikhs, driven from place to place, came to *Eminabad*, a city now in *Pakistan*. They wanted to visit *Rori Sahib*, a Gurdwara built there in the memory of Guru Nanak Dev ji. They wrote a letter to the Chief of the town, Jaspat Rai, seeking his permission to enter the city and purchase some eatables as they had not eaten in many days. They promised to stay there only for one night.

Jaspat Rai, a proud and hot tempered man, in a bid to please his Mughal superiors denied the permission and ordered his men to crush the Sikhs with full force. The Sikhs resisted the attack. A Sikh climbed on Jaspat Rai's elephant and cut off his head with one stroke of his sword. The Mughal force ran away.

Lakhpat Rai, the real brother of Jaspat Rai, was a minister under the Governor of *Lahore*, Yahiya Khan. Yahiya Khan, as you know by now, was a sworn enemy of the Sikhs. When Lakhpat Rai heard the news of his brother's death, he vowed to destroy the Sikhs. Yahiya Khan readily agreed to help him.

Lakhpat Rai got all the Sikhs living at or around *Lahore* arrested and murdered in cold blood. All of them rejected the usual offer to accept Islam for freedom and died bravely. He disallowed keeping or reading of the Sikh scriptures.

Following this, a huge army under the command of Yahiya Khan and Lakhpat Rai started to chase and destroyed about 15,000 Sikhs that were taking shelter in the marshes near the river *Ravi*. With the cutting of reeds and bushes by the Mughals for the movement of their troops, many of the hiding places of the Sikhs were lost and they were pushed towards river *Ravi*. The Sikhs had no food and ammunition. Their supply lines had been totally cut off. The river was in flood and could not be crossed easily.

Most of the Sikhs rushed through the pursuing army, fought them bravely and died. Many were surrounded, taken prisoners and killed. About 2000 of them were able to cross the river. Hungry and barefoot, they continued their journey and some of them crossed the rivers *Beas* and *Satluj* as well and headed for safer areas.

Lakhpat Rai returned to *Lahore* after killing about 7000 Sikhs. About 3000 were made prisoners and tortured at *Lahore*. As usual, they were offered a happy life if they embraced Islam. Not one yielded. They all embraced death chanting *Waheguru, Waheguru*.

This wholesale murder of Sikhs took place in 1746 and is commonly known as the '*Chhota Ghalughara*'.

THE SIKH WOMEN MARTYRS

In the first half of the 18th Century, state terrorism against the Sikhs was on the steady increase and was intensified by Mir Mannu, the new Governor of *Lahore* (1748-1753). By now, the faith of the common people in Sikhism and the strength of the Khalsa had increased tremendously. Despite Mannu's extreme torture and reign of terror, nothing could deter the Sikhs. A folk song of that period goes like this in Punjabi:

We are the plants and Mannu a sickle,

But by now, every one knows,

The more he cuts us, the more we grow.

In the first line, Mannu's tyrannical act of killing the Sikhs is compared to the cutting of the crops, with a sickle. The second and the third lines are self explanatory.

In between, when Mir Mannu got busy fighting against Abdali, a foreign invader and ruler of *Afghanistan*, the Sikhs got the opportunity to strengthen their positions in the areas already under their control. This irritated Mannu. He attacked *Ram Rauni*, a Sikh fort at *Amritsar*, blew it up and killed about 900 Sikhs there. The Sikhs started a gorilla warfare against Mannu's forces, fighting from inaccessible places, in the jungles. When Mannu couldn't follow them to their hiding places, he ordered that their women and children be arrested and brought to *Lahore*.

Sikh women and children were captured and forced to change their faith to Islam. When they refused to do so, they were deprived of sleep and food and were forced to grind grain by working stone mills. Sikh mothers watched their little babies snatched from them, being thrown up in the air to fall back on the sharp spears. Children were cut to pieces and put as a necklace around the necks of their mothers and dogs were permitted to eat the flesh of their kids before the eyes of their mothers. This took place in 1753.

These great Sikh women bore all these tortures with great courage. They meditated on God and sang sacred hymns. Not even one of them submitted or changed her faith. In the end they were all murdered in cold blood.

In the memory of these martyrs, there stands a Gurdwara called *Shaheed Ganj* in *Lahore*. We remember these wonderful Sikh women in our daily prayers.

BABA DEEP SINGH

Baba Deep Singh was a saint-soldier in the real sense of the word. He had the honor of having been baptized by Guru Gobind Singh ji himself. He had won many battles for Baba Banda Singh Bahadur. He was a well known scholar of his time. He and Bhai Mani Singh had assisted Guru Gobind Singh ji in the preparation of the final text of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* at *Damdama Sahib (Guru Ki Kanshi)*, a well known Gurdwara in District *Bhatinda*. Baba Deep Singh was in charge of that sacred Gurdwara. Copies of the sacred Scriptures written in his hand were treated as most authentic.

Ahmad Shah Abdali, a cruel foreign invader experienced a great deal of trouble at the hands of the Sikhs when he returned to *Afghanistan* after looting *Delhi* on his fourth invasion. While at *Lahore* he sent a force to destroy the sacred *Darbar Sahib* at *Amritsar*, to plunder the city and to punish the Sikhs. The sacred buildings were demolished and the tank was filled up with dirt.

On hearing this news, Baba Deep Singh ji in his late seventies was deeply pained and hurt. He decided to liberate the *Golden Temple* from the Mughal hands and vowed to celebrate the next festival of *Diwali* at *Amritsar*. He started off with five hundred dedicated young Sikhs but by the time, he reached *Amritsar*, he had about five thousand spirited companions heading towards *Darbar Sahib*.

Mean while, Jahan Khan, Deputy Governor of *Lahore*, along with a large force of mounted armed soldiers proceeded to stop Baba Deep Singh's advance. A holy war was declared by the Mughals and every able-bodied Muslim was called upon to join the Mughal forces.

The two forces met near *Amritsar*. The Sikhs fought very bravely and caused heavy casualties on the Lahore army which ran in all directions. Soon, a fresh reinforcement of a large army contingent equipped with artillery arrived and the *Lahore* forces regrouped themselves to put up a fierce fight. Sikhs under Baba Deep Singh ji kept fighting heroically as they advanced towards *Amritsar*.

Just outside the city of *Amritsar*, Baba Deep Singh received a mortal wound in his neck. He was about to fall when he was reminded of his pledge to reach *Darbar Sahib* and throw out the tyrants. He was bleeding heavily. His head had almost separated from his neck, but he didn't lose his heart. He supported his head with his left hand and plying his double edged sword with the right hand, he made his way to *Darbar Sahib*. There he fell and breathed his last in the periference (*Parikarma*) of *Darbar Sahib*.

His martyrdom took place in 1757. At the place where he was wounded stands a Gurdwara called *Shaheed Ganj Baba Deep Singh ji*. *Shaheed* means a martyr and *Ganj* stands for treasure. His martyrdom teaches us to protect our sacred places even if the price to pay be our life.

THE BIGGER HOLOCAUST (WADDA GHALUGHARA)

Although the Sikhs under Jassa Singh Ahluwalia's command occupied Lahore in 1761, and minted their own coins in the names of the 1st and the 10th Gurus, they still did not have enough manpower or war machinery to beat back the Mughal forces in a direct confrontation or a prolonged battle.

The Sikhs decided to lay a siege to the village *Jandiala* to capture Aqil Daas, an ally of Ahmad Shah Abdali, the foreign invader, who had attacked and plundered India several times before. But somehow this did not work. Aqil Daas succeeded in getting help from Ahmad Shah who was already on his way to India with a mighty force and well equipped with guns and other weapons of war.

When the Sikhs came to know of it, they raised the siege to Aqil Daas's village and moved out with their families to places they thought were safer and beyond the reach of the invader. They regrouped in villages close to *Malerkotla*, away from the main road to *Delhi*. But a few months later, in Feb.1762, Ahmad Shah took the 30,000 Sikhs by surprise near *Kupp*, a village near *Malerkotla* and surrounded them. Governor of *Sarhind* also brought in a large force to help the invader to face the Sikhs.

Though sure of their deaths, yet undeterred, they decided to give the enemy some of their toughest blows and to die fighting like true Sikhs of the Guru but never to surrender to save their lives by giving up their faith. The Sikh men threw a protective circle around their children and women and moved on as they fought, calling out their thunderous *Jaikaras* of '*Bole So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal*'!

The Sikhs gave the enemy many crushing blows as they stood their ground for several hours though wounded, bleeding and tired. Finally their circle broke. The invaders came in and a wholesale massacre followed. More than 20,000 Sikhs including their wives and children were killed in this massacre that took place in Feb.1762. This incident is called '*Wadda Ghalughara*' and those who laid down their lives but never gave up their faith are remembered in our daily prayers.

As a result of these sacrifices, people developed a great respect for the Sikhs. Soon the tyrannical rule ended and the Sikhs became masters of their state called *Punjab* (PUNJ-AB), meaning the land of 5 rivers - popularly known as the 'Homeland of the Sikhs'.