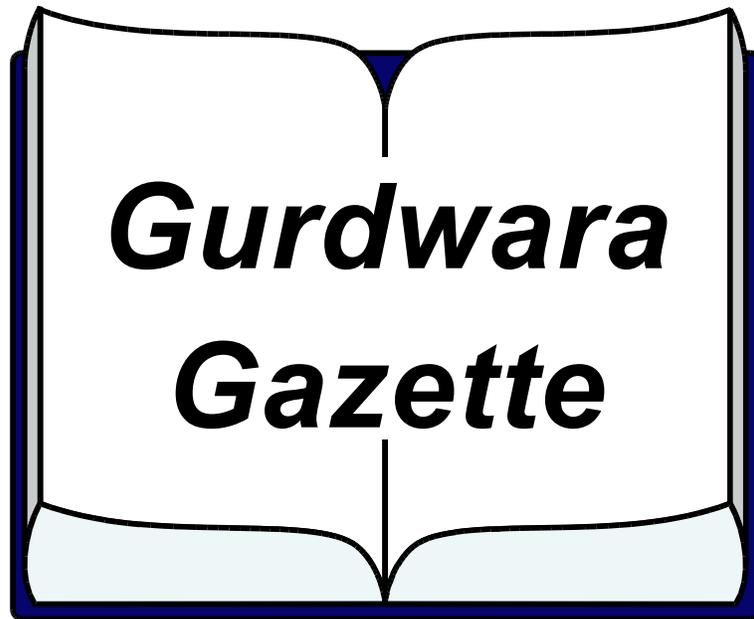


*English Section*



*Editor : Manjit Singh*

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**DAYS COMMEMORATING HISTORICAL EVENTS**  
**(16<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> August)**

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- 17 July S. Teja Singh Smundri passed away in the Lahore Jail after a long time in 1926. Office of Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee was named 'Teja Singh Samundri Hall' on his name to commemorate his contribution. (17-7-1926)
- 24 July Baba Gurdit Singh ji Komagata Maru passed away. (24-7-1954)
- 28 July Punjab Governor passed Gurdwara Act. (28-7-1925)
- 31 July Shaheed Udham Singh was hanged in London. (31-7-1940)
- 4 August A peaceful agitation for long-standing Sikh demands, known as 'Dharam Yudh Morcha' was started by the Shiromani Akali Dal, headed by Sant Harchand Singh Longowal (4-8-1982)
- 5 August The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee passed a resolution to launch Jaito Morcha. (5-8-1923)
- 7 August The Sikh Gurdwara Act. 1925 was Gazetted. (7-8-1925)
- 8 August There was a peaceful protest for the release of Gurdwara Guru ka Bagh from the control of Mahant Sundar Das. The government sided with the mahant and kept torturing Sikh Jathas for one month. But the Singhs did not leave the path of peace and non-violence and the tolerance and bravery of the Sikhs became world famous, finally the government bowed down. The demands of the Sikhs were met and the morcha ended successfully on 17th November 1922. During this Morcha 5605 Singhs were arrested and several others were martyred. (8-8-1922)
- 15 August Division of the Indian Sub-continent into India and Pakistan in 1947 by the British. Beause of this, the Sikhs were deprived off for their many historical religious places. (15-8-1947)



In continuation with the last edition:

## **Asht Ratnas- Eight Eminent Sikhs**

*-S. Surjit Singh 'Gandhi'*

We are taking pleasure while publishing these contents from the book '*History of the Sikh Gurus*' by *S. Surjit Singh Gandhi* former Head of Sikh History Research Board (SGPC).

### **Mata Bhag Kaur Ji**

Sri Guru Arjan Dev ji was vigorous preacher, besides being a great organiser and a creative genius. It was because of his proselytizing campaigns that most of the Majha people having shed off their old beliefs and embraced Sikhism. One of them was Langah, the son of Ahul Khair who was a staunch devotee of Sakhi Sarvar. As chance would have it, his friends happened to be the Sikhs under whose influence he visited Amritsar and saw Sri Guru Arjan Dev ji for himself. The illumined personality of the Guru wrought transformation of his mind and he entered into the fold of Sikhism. By degrees, through his devotion and selfless service, he rose in the estimation of the Guru who began to repose full trust in him and involved him in the tasks of far-reaching importance for the nascent Sikh community. His brother Pero Shah and his nephew Malo Shah also grew to be devout Sikhs. Malo Shah was much loved by Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib.

Mata Bhag Kaur ji was Malo Shah's daughter. Obviously she was brought up in the atmosphere which was suffused with Sikh culture. Admittedly, Mata ji was imbued with Sikh ideas and her psyches shaped accordingly. She got the chance to have the sacred glimpse of Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur ji when she was taken to Anandpur Sahib by her parents. Again she was lucky enough to be present along with other members of her family on the occasion of the installation ceremony of Sri Guru Gobind Singh ji on March 30, 1699 when the Khalsa was created at Anandpur Sahib, her family members were among the first row of the people who received baptism of double-edged sword.

Immediately after the inauguration of the order of the Khalsa, people on a large

scale were administered Khande-ki-Pahul. Mata ji also was baptised.

In A.D. 1701, battle ensued between the Guru on one side and the hill chiefs and the Mughal Government on the other side. The war was prolonged upto 1705.

When the news of the excesses of the Hill Chiefs and the Mughal Subedar of Sirhind reached the Sikhs of the Amritsar district they became red with moral rage. The grandsons of Duni Chand, Sardar Anup Singh and Sardar Sarup Singh got ready to participate in the war on behalf of the Guru. Mata Bhag Kaur ji also expressed her desire to take part in the war, Her brothers and parents did not allow her to have her way, although they themselves rushed to Anandpur Sahib to render much needed assistance to the Guru. Many more people did the same. Though the enemy had taken precautions to disallow the Sikhs to reach Anandpur Sahib, yet they would go, sometimes at great personal risk. Mata Bhag Kaur ji observed all this.

In 1705, the final battle of Anandpur Sahib took place. The Sikhs fought gallantly. The siege lasted for more than seven months. The strategy of the enemy during the siege was to force the Sikhs to surrender by fully closing their access to food and water. The effects of the strategy began to be felt as the days passed.

"None could either go or come. Then how were supplies to reach where needed? Many days did pass accordingly. And the price of food did soar to a rupee per seer.

Four Sikhs would venture for water: two would battle, two would fetch the pitchers." (Gur Sobha)

The situation deteriorated to this extent that the Sikhs did not have anything to live upon. When the enemy learnt of the distress of the Sikhs, they planned a different strategy to take advantage of the situation. They sent a message to the Guru suggesting that if he decided to abandon Sri Anandpur Sahib, he would be allowed a safe passage. Their pledge of a safe passage was unreliable, since they planned to draw out the Sikhs from within the shelter of the township and attack them. The Guru sensed their secret motive when he received the message and therefore did not accept the suggestion. At this some the Sikhs persisted that the offer of the enemy should be accepted. When the Guru did not listen to them, they disclaimed the Guru and left for their homes.

The Guru, ultimately, had to evacuate Anandpur Sahib on 5-6 December, 1705. The moment the enemy got an inkling of the departure of the Sikhs, they forgot all about their pledges and set out in hot pursuit immediately. The Guru suffered a lot but wended his way to Chamkaur where he gave a battle to the enemy. In this battle

the Guru had only forty odd soldiers while the enemy commanded a force running into lacs (according to Zafar Nama). All the Guru ji's soldiers except three suffered martyrdom. Most prominent among the Sikh martyrs were Sahibzadas. Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh and three Piyaras (beloved ones)

After this, the Guru had to move from place to place in search of security and respite for regrouping the Khalsa. While at Dina, the Guru received definite information about the determination of the Sirhind authorities to send a body of troops against him. This news also reached the Majha area of the Panjab. The self-respecting Khalsa was cut to the quick. Mata Bhag Kaur told her husband that time had come to prove their salt for the cause of the Guru. Her husband assured her of his steadfastness and readiness to make any sacrifice in this connection.

Mata Bhag Kaur, greatly heartened at her husband's gesture, drew her sword out of the scabbard, alighted a horse and called upon all those who had love for the Guru ji's cause to come forward and march to the Malwa region of the Panjab to forestall the nefarious designs of Wazir Khan. Her exhortations were specially directed at those forty persons who had come back to their homes by signing a disclaimer (Bedawa).

Mata Bhag Kaur's call had a magic effect. She like Joan of Arc of the French History led a band of soldiers to the Khidrana ki Dhab where the Guru had proposed to give a fight to the Mughal forces. On the way, she was joined by a large number of Sikhs. Some wise men from Lahore who had thought they had some influence at the Mughal Durbar also joined them.

The party met the Master between Ramiana and Khidrana. The deserters begged pardon and recommended the newcomers to this grace. The wise men advised him to give up fighting and make peace with the Emperor. They offered to act as negotiators. The Guru spurned their advice saying that it was not possible for him to make peace with tyrants. The wise men from Lahore acquiesced in quittance and returned to their homes. The Guru continued his advance to his destination.

The rest of the party headed by Bhag Kaur and Mahan Singh of village Sur Singh Wala followed Sri Guru Gobind Singh.

On reaching Khidrana, they found the tank dry. The master had for that reason moved on from the place. Bhai Mahan Singh proposed to engage the enemy there and to allow time to the Guru to reach a place of safety. Big white sheets of Khaddar (coarse cloth) were spread on the shrubs so that the enemy might think the Sikhs

were encamping there in large number. Soon the Muhammadan army came up.

The Sikhs under Mata Bhag Kaur and Bhai Mahan Singh bore the brunt of the enemy's attack. All the Sikh soldiers fought with their usual courage and power. Mata Bhag Kaur was seen fighting in the foremost rank. The Mughal soldiers did their best to overpower the Sikhs and advance towards the Guru who from a place of eminence was aiming arrows on the prominent persons of the enemy forces, but they did not succeed. Mata Bhag Kaur's movement were not only heartening to the soldiers but also manifestative of the resurgence of the Sikh ladies which had taken place under the dynamic leadership of the Guru.

The Sikhs, having exhausted their ammunition and queer of arrows, were obliged to have resource of their spears and the swords. Small bands advanced, engaged the enemies in hand to hand fights, killed several times their number, until many of them were killed or seriously injured. They themselves were incapacitated to carry on the fight. They did not win victory, nor were they fighting of it, their aim being the vindication of their faith in the Guru's cause and win over the pleasure of the Guru. All the same, they did succeed in constraining the Mughal forces to retrace their steps to their headquarter.

After they had gone, the Guru visited the scene of battle, and with a fatherly affection went about lifting the heads of the martyrs in his lap wiping their faces, and blessing them one by one. When it was the turn of Bhai Mahan Singh to be thus caressed and blessed, the Master found that there was still some life in him. After a while, Bhai Mahan Singh opened his eyes, and found himself in the lap of the Master. He was filled with supreme joy. The Guru asked him if he had any desire to be fulfilled, Bhai Mahan Singh said, "No, father,<sup>1</sup> I have seen thee. What else or more could I desire?" but if thou has taken compassion on us here, then tear off our disclaimer. "The Guru at once acceded to his request and remarked, "You have saved the root of Sikhism in the Majha. You and your companions, all forty of you are Muktas or the saved-ones, delivered from the round of births and deaths forever." Then the Guru went to the place where Mata Bhag Kaur ji was lying senseless. She had not been severely wounded but had fallen down out of utter exhaustion. A little aid revived her. She told the master what had occurred after he had left the party. He, in turn, told her of the last saving deed of Bhai Mahan Singh.

The Guru was greatly pleased with Mata Bhag Kaur for what she had done. He got her removed from the battlefield and got her wounds treated and healed.

After her recovery, Mata Bhag Kaur chose to stay with the Guru. She led the Sikh way of life in its totality.

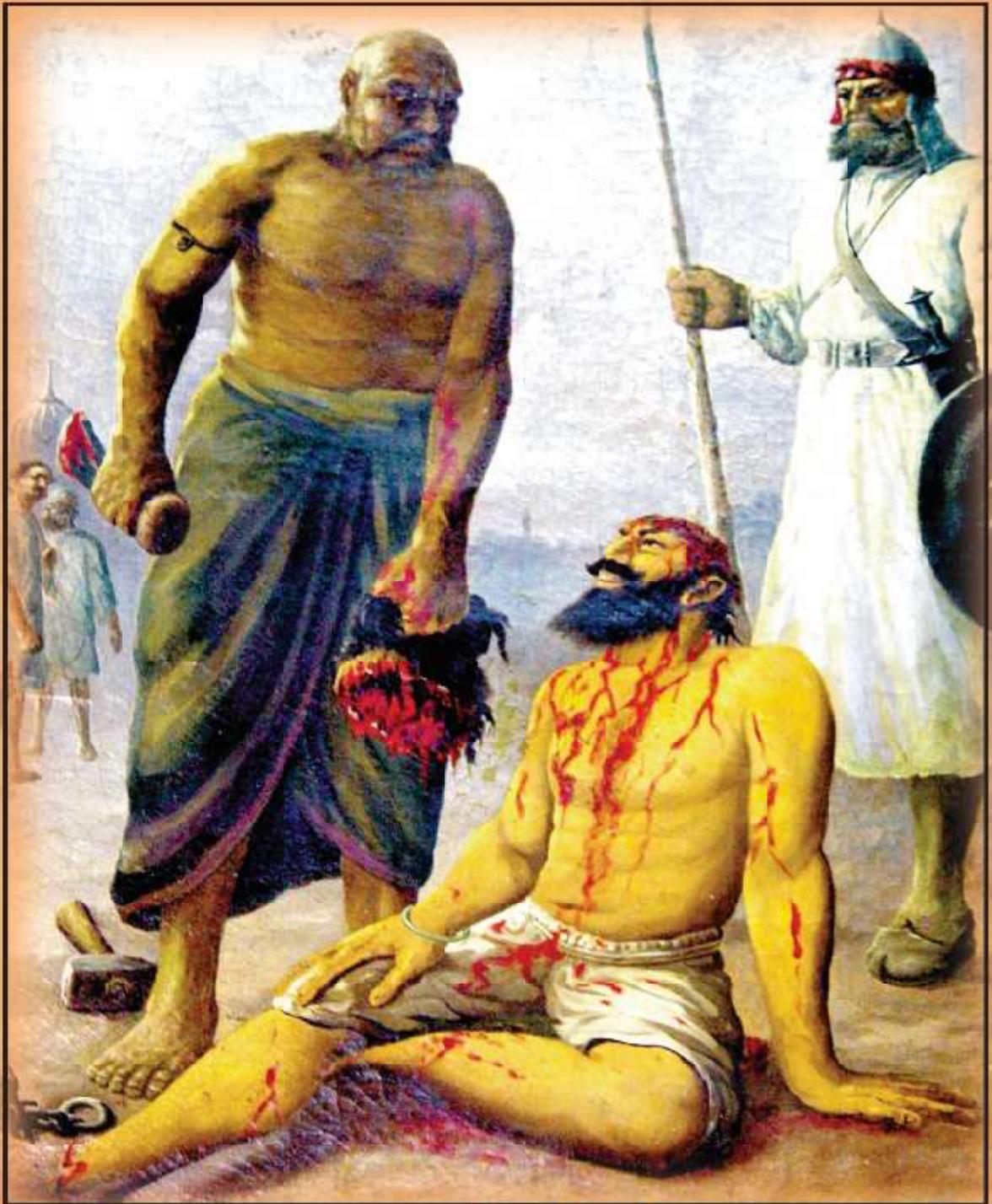
She was considered to be the Brahm Giani. According to Guru Granth Sahib, a person who remains pure in the midst of impurities and serves the people without any desire of reward for that. He is above petty consideration of caste, creed, clime and country. He, in no case, pays scant regard for the decencies of life. As a matter of fact, Mata Ji combined in herself virtues both of a saint and warrior. She was strong in character, firm in faith and unflinching in her determination. In view of these qualities, the Guru allowed her inclusion in the bodyguard of ten Sikhs, meant to guard the bed room. She used to be dressed in male attire. She remained with the Guru at Talwandi Saboki. She was one of these privileged Sikhs who accompanied the Guru in his journey to Khultampur, where Aurangzeb was sojourning. She was there in the camp of the Guru when he marched along with Bahadur Shah first to Rajasthan and then to the Deccan. She observed for herself the parleys that took place between the Guru and Bahadur Shah and noticed with interest how Banda was converted to Sikhism.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh ji and Nanded, Mata Bhag Kaur Ji went to Bidar and continued to stay there till the last breath of her life. As long as she lived, she served the cause of the Guru. Her example was that of a person embodying in herself all the virtues of a good Sikh as also of the ideal Sikh woman alive to her duties as much as to her rights, believing in perfect equality among sexes and discarding the oft-held view that woman was primarily an appanage of a man. Her performance, both in the battlefield and the sphere of proselytization spoke high of the regenerating process that Sikhism, since its inception, had set in motion. Her achievements were enduring, her character and conduct were flawless, her leadership was unquestioned, her faith was unflinching and her demeanour was striking. No wonder, she has been a perennial source of inspiration to the ladies to keep their head high and dignity aloft.

### **Reference**

1. Kartar Singh: Life of Guru Gobind Singh, p. 222.

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ਸ਼ਹੀਦ ਭਾਈ ਤਾਰੂ ਸਿੰਘ ਜੀ

Regd. with the Registrar of Newspapers of India at No. 88/57.

Postal Registration No. ASR/0323/2018-20

Without Pre-payment of Postage under License No. PB/R-002/2018-20 Valid upto 31-12-2020

Monthly **GURDWARA GAZETTE** July 2020

Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar.



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Printed and Published by Manjit Singh for Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, Sri Amritsar. Printed at Golden Offset Press, Gurdwara Ramsar Sahib, Sri Amritsar. Published at SGPC office, Tej Singh Samundri hall, Sri Amritsar on 16-07-2020