

Martyrdom of Sahibzada Baba Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Baba Fateh Singh, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh Jee



Imagine for just one moment, the feeling of complete and utter separation. Picture, for a second, being in a situation where you are falsely imprisoned, refused the basic human necessities of food and water, and then being placed in a tower so high and cold, that the very air around you becomes a deadly threat to your existence.

It is an awful thought, but it is even more frightening to think that two boys of the ages of just 5 and 7 were put in these very conditions, for no reason other than being the sons of Guru Gobind Singh Jee.

In today's Sikhi Explored, we are going to take a look at the moment in our history that defined the meaning of bravery and will always be a moment of inspiration to us all...

The story begins when Anandpur Sahib was under attack from the Mughal forces in 1705. After eight long months of being at siege, the Sikhs left the fort. Upon leaving, the Sikhs made for the river Sarsa, and there a battle was fought between the Khalsa and the Mughal forces. In the chaos that ensued many of the Sikhs got separated, and one group that was disbanded from the original party was the mother and two younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh Jee, namely Mata Gujri Jee and Baba Zorawar and Fateh Singh. (See last weeks Sikhi Explored for more details).

The three of them were in grave danger, and as the boys were so young and their grandmother, Mata Gujri was around 80 years old at the time, they were extremely vulnerable. Determined to get to safety they walked from early in the morning till nightfall, and while crossing a forest they had a chance encounter with a man called Gangu Brahmin. He happened to have worked in Guru Jees kitchen and after persuading Mata Gujri, he led the three of them to his village Saheri, where he promised them safety.

Whilst Gangu was walking, he noticed a bag Mata Gujri was carrying. It was full of gold coins, and the thought of becoming rich overwhelmed Gangu. He had worked in Guru Gobind Singhs kitchen for 21 years, but the opportunity to become wealthy had quickly consumed the weak mind of Gangu and he had become a slave to one the five evil vices, lobh (greed). It is written in Guru Granth Sahib Jee :

ਇਸੁ ਦੇਹੀ ਅੰਦਰਿ ਪੰਚ ਚੋਰ ਵਸਹਿ ਕਾਮੁ ਕਾਰੋਧੁ ਲੋਭੁ ਮੋਹੁ ਅਹੰਕਾਰਾ ॥

Within this body dwell the five evil vices: sexual desire, anger, greed, emotional attachment and egotism.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਲੂਟਹਿ ਮਨਮੁਖ ਨਹੀ ਬੂਝਹਿ ਕੋਇ ਨ ਸੁਣੈ ਪ੍ਰਕਾਰਾ ॥

They plunder the Nectar, but the self-willed manmukh does not realise it; no one hears his complaint.

Guru jee teaches that it is these five vices that attribute towards any of our wrong doings, weakening our spirituality and acting in such a way, that the mind can become gripped by them without us even being aware of it. And so strangled by greed, Gangu took Mata Jee and her grandchildren to his house and during the night, crept into the Mata Gujris room and stole the gold coins.

When Mata Gujri awoke the next morning, she saw that her gold had been taken. She asked Gangu politely if he knew what could have happened. Although she didn't accuse Gangu, he reacted aggressively and began to make a big scene so all the villagers could see. "How could you accuse me of something like this!" Gangu exclaimed. "I have given you shelter in my home and this is what I get in return?". Following this, Gangu went to Morinda and still bound by the hope of getting wealthy, informed two police officers (Jani Khan and Mani Khan) that he had in his possession, the son and mother of the notorious Guru Gobind Singh.

Wasting no time, they arrested the two sahibzade and Mata Gujri. The villagers were shocked at the treachery of Gangu. They could not believe that three innocent people were being arrested for no reason. But nevertheless the corrupt state officials knew the value of these two heirs of the Guru and took them away, keeping them imprisoned in a cell in Morinda Jail with no food or water. They informed Wazir Khan, who was the Governor of Sirhind (equivalent to prime minister in modern day terms) whom ordered the three Sikhs to be brought to him in Sirhind. There, they were imprisoned in a tower called Thanda Burj. In December, it is extremely cold in India and this tower was designed for watchmen to have the best vantage point of the town and so from all four sides there were no walls, making it bitterly cold for the young boys and Mata jee. To add to their discomfort they were kept starved and the guards made sure they had minimal clothing on to keep warm. The conditions were treacherous, with cold winds sweeping in from all sides, and Mata Jee had to keep the two young children close to her body to prevent them from freezing.



That morning they all awoke early to recite their morning prayers and soon after, Wazir Khan's soldiers came to take Baba Zorawar and Baba Fateh Singh to his court. As Mata Gujri was tying their dastaara (turbans) on both of the boys, she did what all loving mothers would do and reminded the small singhs to remain brave and not be intimidated by Wazir Khan. She told them, that today they would be given an option. And whatever they choose, they should remember who they were and what their father and faith stood for. Mata Gujri said, "Dearest children, don't do anything that will taint the turban of your father". (It is a saying that the turban of a Sikh, is their honour and to tarnish that, is highly disrespectful). She instructed them to say "Sulaam" when they entered the court and act accordingly. They in reply, told their grandmother not to worry and reassured her that they would not let her down.



Upon arriving at the court of Wazir Khan, they saw the King sitting in his throne higher than everybody else. I can imagine for most people this would have been one of the scariest and frightening situations. All around them they could see soldiers, clutching their weapons threateningly and nobody around them that they could turn to for support. You must remember now that these are the sons of the King, Guru Gobind Singh Jee; Their upbringing would have been fitting of a prince, but now they were faced with hardships and tyranny in all directions.

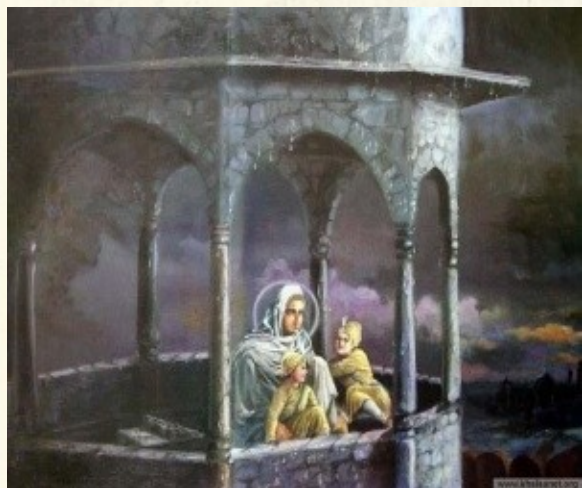
But regardless of the situation, they stayed true to their name; Singh. And as they entered, like fearless lions, they raised their heads and loudly gave fateh to Wazir Khan. "Waheguru Jee Ka Khalsa, Waheguru Jee Ke Fateh!" they said, with their hands folded. The king and his men around him were astonished. Nor did the young boys show any signs of fear and nor did they incline to the slightest of bows to this 'King'. Wazir Khan, noted the bravery of the singhs but was desperate to convert them to Islam. He felt it would be such a disgrace for Guru Gobind Singh if he could get his sons to convert, resulting in Guru Jee losing respect all over India. He began to tempt them into changing their faith. He offered them anything they could imagine. But the young boys refused..

Wazir Khan promised that he would marry them to beautiful princesses, give them wealth, and a life of luxury in palaces. But no matter what they were offered, they both adamantly refused not to leave their religion for anything. They proudly would say 'Our Guru, our father did not lack in wealth, that we are now desperate for it! In fact our father threw his wealth in the river Sarsa.' But soon, Wazir Khan started to threaten the children, that if they don't accept Islam the consequences would be dire.

At this point, the Sahibzade were not aware of the condition their father or their brothers were in and to take advantage of this, Wazir Khan said "Look boys, we have already killed your father and your brothers so be warned, there is nobody left to help you now!"

Hearing this, the children's blood boiled and they angrily said: 'Be very careful with what you say and do not lie! No one is able to kill our father. When your soldiers face him in war, their legs start to shake"

Wazir Khan felt embarrassed but the young singhs continued, "And to which brothers are you referring



to Wazir Khan? Which two brothers have you killed? From the day we took amrit we have thousands of brothers. And all the Sikh that took amrit, they are now our family? So which two have you killed?"

The King was astonished with their spirit. He was quick to realise that these were no regular children. For which two boys of 5 and 7 upon hearing of the death of their family could give such spirited answers? He sent them back to the tower. Yet again, they were given no food and kept hungry. But a man, named Moti Raam¹ was deeply upset when he saw the three innocent people being kept in these harsh conditions and despite knowing his actions would be punishable by death, he snuck up to the

tower and gave milk to the Sikhs. The next morning the soldiers returned to take the young boys to Wazir Khans court again. But this time they had closed the main entrance to the court and instead only opened a small door to the side. This of course, was a plan by Wazir Khan to force the boys to bow their heads to the King upon entering. However the Singhs proved to be smarter than the Moghuls had thought and did

not fall for this ploy. They bent their knees and made sure they entered without bending their necks. The King was frustrated by the continued show of intelligence by these very small boys. He was fed up of trying to politely lull them into his way of thinking and became more forceful. The sahibzaade spent the day in the company of a man called Sucha Nand, who was given the task of converting them to islam. He took them to bazaars (shop parades) and told them they could go into any shop and take whatever they wish. They refused, and out of sheer audacity went into a shop selling weapons to select some shaastar. After many failed attempts of persuading the boys, again they were returned to the tower where Mata Gujri anxiously awaited their return. Out of



love, Moti Raam returned to serve them milk. As the third day approached, Mata Gujri remembered their mother, Mata Jito Jee who had passed away in 1700, at the way her sons were bravely going to their death. Wazir Khan had met with the Qazi and decided that the sons of Guru Gobind Singh Jee had to be killed. They were scared that if they were released, they would surely grow up to be lions like their father and put an end to their tyrannical rule.

As the Sahibzaade arrived at their court, they were told how they were going to be killed. Wazir Khan thought by reading out their death sentence to these young boys, fear would succumb them and they would surely save their lives by simply converting. But the boys shook their heads. They did not want anything but to have the love of the Guru and God enshrined in their hearts, and die as Sikh. Wazir Khan warned them, that when they would be dead, nobody would even come to pick up their bodies...

First Image- Mata Gujri and the Chotte Sahibzade kept imprisoned (sikhiwiki.org) Second Image- <http://www.allaboutsikhs.com/old/youth/images/b16.jpg>

¹Moti Raam did great seva for the sahibzaade. And I would like to pay homage to him and his family, as after the shaheedi of the chotte sahibzaade, Wazir Khan found out about his heroic sewa and killed all his family. His children were buried in sand, and had sweet yoghurt put over their face. Hungry dogs were then set loose on them. Waheguru.



Mockingly, he jeered that it will be only birds that will come and take parts of your body. But the sahibzaade were not moved or frightened by these taunts, but were in fact happy! They replied "Please pray that there are many many birds that come take our body and carry our parts into the sky".

Wazir Khan and all the ministers were baffled by this response, and they asked the boys what they meant. To which the singhs said "The higher the birds take our body into the sky, we only pray that in the future that there will be Nishaan Sahibs (flags) raised as tall and high as that" Everyone felt threat-

ened by this answer and wanted to quickly execute the boys. The Qazi announced that the two young singhs of only 5 and 7 years of age, would be bricked alive. Onlookers saw this act, and many were disgusted at how clearly innocent children could be killed like this. First the shins and feet of the sahibzaade

were pierced using pincers, so that they would bleed slowly and suffer tremendously. The wall was then built around the young boys, encapsulating them within. The executioners made sure the wall was straight and when the knee caps of the young singhs obstructed it, they were broken. The wall reached the shoulders of the younger sahibzade, Fateh Singh. And at this point Zorawar Singh, his elder brother began to weep. It was the first time either of the brothers had shown any kind of emotion. Upon hearing this, Fateh Singh told his brother not to be disheartened and the soldiers began jeering, asking him why he was crying. But Zorawar Singh was not upset because he was afraid of death. Nor was he crying because he felt helpless or anxious at the thought of never seeing his father or grandmother again but because he felt it was unjust that his younger brother would be killed first. He told him "I am the older one. I am ashamed that you came into the world after me and you are going before me as well. I should have been the first to die". Wazir Khan then asked for the last time if they wanted to change their minds. But by now, it was clear that the real Sikhs of the Guru, would much rather prefer death than the dishonour of leaving their faith. So on the 26th December 1705 the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh Jee became shaheeds and the youngest martyrs the world has ever seen.

When Mata Gujri heard of their death, she merged her soul with God and left this world. The body of the two sahibzade and Mata Gujri was cremated by Todar Mal Jee, after he paid a great sum of money to take their bodies from the Mughals.

When Guru Gobind Singh Jee heard that his two younger sons had also been killed, he uttered the line "In putran ke sis per var diye sut char, Char muye to kya hua jeevat kai hazar"

(For the family of my Khalsa, four of my sons have sacrificed their life, but so what if four are dead, when thousands more are alive)

This goes to show that Guru and his gursikhi were prepared to sacrifice everything for the Khalsa. We should consider ourselves so lucky that our religion has been founded on such love and bravery..

Waheguru Jee Ka Khala, Waheguru Jee Ke Fateh

