

birth he said that he was meditating on the almighty on the Sapat Sring Mountain which is situated near Hemkunt.

ab main apni kathā bhūnno: tap sādhat
jeh bhidh mohe āno.
hemkunt parbat hai jhān,
sapat sring sobhat hai tahān,
sapat sring tah nām kahūnē
pānī rāj jah jog kamāvā,
tah ham adhik tapanyā sūdhī

Now I will tell my own story.
How from a life of austere contemplation
I came here.
Where there is the Hemkunt Mountain,
There is a place called Sapat Sring.
Sapat Sring is the name of the place
Where Pandu (the father of the Pandavas)
went to practice yoga.
In this place I meditated deeply on God.

Bhai Vir Singh, our saintly and most learned scholar, following the explanation given by Kavi Santokh Singh, has explained it the other way round. Their interpretation is that Guru Gobind Singh meditated at Hemkunt near Sapat Sring, which means seven peaks. This seems to be an error. Some scholars explain the word Pandu as Pandavas. This also is wrong. The Pandavas never went to these mountains for meditation but towards the end of their lives they are said to have gone to the Himalayas for the end of their earthly

existence. It was the father of Pandavas, Pandu Raj, who went to Sapat Sring to do penance to expiate some serious sin he had committed. Two of his wives accompanied him and one of them died there.

In the *ūd-purb*, chapter 119, 47 to 50 of the Mahabharat, is written

The Kaurava Rajkumar Pandu on fruits and roots as his diet, with both his wives to Nagshat Mountain. There they stayed for some days. Then he crossed the Charath, Kalka and arrived at Gandhmadan. The *siddh mahārishi* of this mountain attended him. From here they reached Dyanum Sarovar. A little distance from here is Hanskut (later called Hemkunt) where Pandu arrived at Sapat Sring where he performed great *tapasyā*.

This proves that it was Sapat Sring where Guru Sahib meditated. This place is close to Hemkunt. Principal Teja Singh in his interpretation misinterprets it as meaning the Pandavas, which makes an even greater mistake in dragging Hemkunt to a place called Patna. There is no Sapat Sring there and there is no evidence that Pandu ever performed any *tapasyā* there. Principal Teja Singh takes this statement to be either a literal or a figurative form of speech. He says that when Guru Gobind

saw this place he psychologically imagined himself to have done great *tapasyā* there in his past birth. However, Guru Gobind Singh's autobiography covers more than half his life on this earth and there is not a single statement which may be considered imaginary. Therefore we must assume this explanation to be not only wrong but also baseless.

Another unique feature of this autobiography is Guru Gobind Singh's discourse with God when he was not quite willing to leave His lotus feet, but to fulfill His will and purpose he had to go. "I send you," said God, "as My own son to create a Panth with a new spiritual consciousness. Wherever you go, lead people to the path of righteousness and prevent them from indulging in evil."

"But," said Guru Gobind Singh, "I humbly stood before the Lord with folded hands and with my head lowered I said, 'The new Panth will flourish only if Thou helpst me, O Lord.'" He added, "For this purpose God sent me to this world. Whoever calls me God will be doomed to perdition. Know me to be but a servant of the supreme Being. Whatever God said to me I will declare. I will not fear anyone. Stones I will not worship. Hypocrisy I will

not let come near me. I will but sing the name of the Infinite."

Unfortunately the autobiography ends at a very early period. Had it included the story of the creation of the Khalsa it might have been a greater document. Anyway the battles which are described could never have been depicted by other writers the way Guru Gobind Singh has depicted them, even if he had used available contemporary accounts.

Towards the end of the autobiography is given the plan of Bachiter Natak that was yet to be completed. He said, "I will write about the life story of the *avatārs* as Thou revealest to me, O God. I first wrote a Chandi Charitar. It was a short version. Now I wish to give a more detailed version."

AVATARS OF VISHNU

In this section of the Bachiter Natak Granth follows the lives of the 24 *avatārs* of Vishnu. In a brief introduction Guru Gobind Singh said that out of these 24 alleged *avatārs* he acknowledged only 10 of them as real manifestations of the light of God. Others were merely mythological conceptions. He acknowledged only the following: Machh, Kachh, Vebrah,

Narsingh, Bavan, Paras Ram, Rama Krishna, Buddha and Kalki.*

The lives of all the *avalāras* are very brief, but are completely detached from the mythological and cosmological complexities of the Puranas. The descriptions of these *avalāras* is in line with the references to them in the Guru Granth.

In the brief introduction he once more pointedly said, "Both the Hindus and the Muslims are particularizing God and quarrelling with each other with narrow sectarian views. God is one for all and the primary aim of the religion of man is to realize Him. If a person rises above these narrow views and realizes God in his heart he can rise above both the Hindus and the Muslims." "Alas," he said, "the *yogis* and the *sanyāsīs* the Jains and the Muslim *faqirs* are all looting the world with various types of hypocrisy and display of religious fervour. The true saint, the lover of God, can never remain hidden. The true love of God is always rewarded and the evil doers are ultimately punished."

Most of the lives are cut short because Guru Gobind Singh felt that the Bachiter Natak Granth might become unusually big. He frequently wrote at the end of composition:

hirdai granth ke baqbe te daravā.

Char

kathā briddh te mai daravā.

*tāūte kahī na rudra kuhānī, granth baqbe
cint puchānī.*

granth bādhā te at dar pāū.

aur lai bay anāchep yār.

Tris

The major compositions of this section are Ram Avatar, Krishna Avatar and Kalki Avatar. Although they come in the volume in the order mentioned they were not written in this order. Krishna Avatar was written in the early years when Sahib was at Paunta in *Bikramī* (1688 A.D.) while Rama Avatar which comes first, was written in 1755 *Bikramī* (1698), exactly 10 years later. This shows that the major works were written first and the minor works and sometimes in the whole Bachiter Natak Granth

arranged and compiled in the present order.

Ram Avatar has 864 verses while Krishna Avatar has 2,491 verses; Ram Avatar being a work of maturer age has a much higher literary excellence than Krishna Avatar. Guru Gobind Singh mentioned in the Krishna Avatar that 1,192 verses were composed at Anandpur before his departure to Paunta Sahib and the rest was written at Paunta. Out of the first 1,192 we have only 983 in the printed recension. He started writing at Paunta on Wednesday in the month of *Savan* 1744 *Bikramī* and he completed the whole Krishna Avatar, which he says is the Dasm Sikandh of the Bhagwat on Wednesday, *Savan* 1745 *Bikramī*. Within one year from the dates given in the Krishna Avatar it is clear he wrote about 1,509 verses. This comes to about 125 verses a month. He stopped his literary activity for a year exactly one year before the battle of Bhangani.

The arrangement of the verses in a few places have been upset in the later recensions. The following verses should have come either in the middle where Guru Gobind Singh resumed the story on coming to Paunta Sahib or at the end. They give the Guru's personal faith and philosophy and in all other compositions such

verses come either at the beginning or the end. The two verses quoted resemble the popular *caupais* of Guru Gobind Singh so closely that even an ordinary Sikh can at once recognize them to be Guru Gobind Singh's compositions:

*mai na ganesh prillam manāū.
kīan kīan kabhūn na dhyāū,
kān sūne pahcān na tim sō,
liv tāgī marī jag in sō.*

*apnā jān karo prījārā,
tum sāhib main kīkār thārā,
dās jān dai hāth ulārō,
hamrē sabb bairīan saṅghārō*

I will not commence writing with the invocation of Ganesh

Nor will I meditate on Vishnu or Krishna. They are just historical figures that I hear of but not the objects of my faith. I am inwardly devoted only to Thy feet. O Lord.

Considering me to be Thine own, be my protector and saviour, O Lord.

Thou art the Master, the Lord Supreme; I am but a servant and a slave.

Considering me Thy humblest servant, inspire me with the grace of Thy saving hand

And destroy all my enemies from the root.

In the end Guru Gobind Singh said that he had translated the whole of the Dasm Sikandh with the sole purpose of inspiring the people with the will to be perpetual fighters of the battle of *dharma*, "*Avar bāsnā nāh prabh, dharam judh ke cāe.*"

*The Guru Granth and Bhai Gurdas also accept only 10:

cf: *bīan lie avalār das, vair vīrodh jodh saṅghārē,
mach, kuch, varāh rūp narsing hoc bāvan bodhārē,
pararām, rām, kīan ho, kīk kīlākī at akānkārē.*

Bhai Gurdas

*brahmā bīan mahet dev upāyā brahme dīte bed puṛā tāyā
das avalārī rām rājā āyā, dāū mārē dhārē hukam sōbāyā.*

This reference and the repeated urge in Guru Gobind Singh's poems for his followers to be fighters may give the wrong impression to many (as unfortunately many Sikhs and non-Sikhs have) that Guru Gobind Singh exhorted the Sikhs only to be wielders of the sword and fighters on the earthly plane. Neither was Guru Gobind Singh's conception of the sword the sword of offence, as has been sufficiently proved, nor did his conception of *dharam judh* mean merely fighting political enemies with the sword. Real *dharam judh* begins with our determination to conquer our own lower natures with the light of true wisdom. I am giving no doctrine or theory of my own by explaining Guru-ji's words as I conceive them to be. But Guru Gobind Singh with his own pen cleared this misconception exactly at the point where it was likely to arise. In the very next verse, which is the last verse of Krishna Avatar, as an epilogue he said:

*dhara jio tek ko jag mai, mukh te hari, cū
 mai judh bicārai,
 dek anil as nīl rahai, jas nāo caqai, bhav
 oḡar ārai,
 dāstef dhām banē thā tan, budh so dīpak
 jio vjārai,
 gyanāik kī baḡhni mano kāth lai kōtarā
 kutār bulārai*

Krishna Avatar 2492

Great are those souls in this world,
 On whose lips is ever the name of God
 And who in their hearts ever content
 fighting the battle of life.
 Their body is a fleeting frame that
 not last forever.
 On the boat of His name, the word,
 cross the fearful ocean of life.
 Their intellect is aflame with the light
 wisdom,
 Their discriminative mind handle
 broomstick of knowledge in a
 way
 That with it they sweep all cowardly
 falsehood, out of their inner self

This is the battle of life, and the *dharam judh* for which we always be prepared. Only those have lordly sway over their battle of life can fight other than of *dharma (dharam judh)* on physical and mental plane and temporal and spiritual glory: such a one can rightly wear handle Guru Gobind Singh's and be his true saint-soldier *kā'sā*. None else, none else.

AVATAR OF BRAHMA

While the *avatārs* of Vishnu political *avatārs*, saviours with sword; the *avatārs* of Brahma scholars. They are saviours with pen. In the first 20 verses introduction is the invocation to God

*bin ek ārai nām; nahī aur kāmā
 jē mān hai gurde; tē jān hai anbh*

Handwritten text in Gurmukhi script, likely a portion of the Dasam Granth. The text is arranged in approximately 25 horizontal lines, with some lines containing numbers (e.g., 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25) on the left margin. The script is dense and fills most of the page area.

hin tās avat na jān, cit ān bhāv na ān;
ik mān jai kartār, jil hoe anū udhār;

Besides the sustenance of His name,
Nothing ava... nothing prevails;
Those who accept the doctrine of Gurudeva
(Guru Nanak)
They will realize the infinite Being.
Believe no other besides Him,
Entertain no other faith in thy mind.
With single minded devotion sing of the
Creator
Who will ultimately be thy saviour.

Then Guru Gobind Singh men-
tioned that he had just finished the
story of the 24 *avatārs* of Vishnu and
now he would relate the seven *avatārs*
of Brahma. These are: Balmik,
Kashyap, Sukra, Baches, Vyas, *reis*
of the six systems and Kalidas.

The stories of these *avatārs* are
told very briefly. There are only
two verses about Baches. Guru-ji
took Kalidas to be a court poet of
Vikramajit and considered him a poet
par excellence.

Those who may doubt the *avatārs*
of Brahma to be parts of the Bachiter
Natak will read even in the printed
Dasam Granth at the end of Krishna
Avatar:

it eri dasm sikandh purāne, bacilar nātak
grāthe kriṣṇā avatār dhyāe samāpat mast
sabh mast.

Here ends the translation from Dasam
Rikand Puraṇ of Krishna Avatar in the
Bachiter Natak Granth.

Similarly at the end of every
avatār of Brahma and Siva is written:

it eri bacilar nātak grāthe brahmā
avatār captaṇe kalidās samāpat

So ends in the Bachiter Natak Granth
the seventh *avatār* of Brahma: Kalidas

So it is written at the end of every
avatār of Rudra (Siva).

AVATARS OF RUDRA

This section is also unfortunately
not complete. Guru-ji described all
the *avatārs* of Siva from Duttatreya
to Gorakh and other *nāths* and *siddhas*
but the story was cut short at the
death of Paras Nath. The rest of
this section appears to be lost. There
are only two major stories, the lives
of Duttatreya and Paras Nath. In the
life of Paras Nath comes a detailed
reference to Machhindar and a vague
reference to Charpat.

The life of Duttatreya is given in
all its details and told vigorously.
The theory that Guru Gobind Singh
was interested in translating the life
of only those who handled the sword
is disproved by Guru Gobind Singh's
interest in these stories. Duttatreya
is said to have had 24 *gurūs*. The
photostat of the page in Guru Gobind
Singh's own handwriting is a page
from the life of Duttatreya at the
time he adopted the nineteenth *gurū*.
Duttatreya has also written the

Avdhuti Gita which contains 288 couplets and the Jivan-mukti Gita, a small but inspired work of 23 couplets. Guru Gobind Singh gave the whole of Dutta's life and philosophy in progressive evolution. He was the son of the great Rishi Atri and Anusuya.

In the life of Paras is an interesting dialogue between Machhindar and Paras Nath. Machhindar Nath tells Paras Nath that by conquering the whole world and not conquering his own mind he is yet a weakling. He would really be great if he conquered the mind; life's inner battle is of much more significance than any other battle. Then Machhindar describes the inner battle. The forces of evil are falsehood, lust, attachment, hatred, anger, envy, vanity, doubt, *Kāma* (the king of passion), ignorance and all the vices and sins come fully clad and armed. Each of these is described as living personified figures. Enmity is described as a prominent warrior of the army of evil who never turns his back on any. Its eyes are red with blood and blood-stained are its weapons. So deeply red is it in appearance that even the colour red dwindles before it in shame. It has conquered the minds of the strongest of the world; Once it comes into the

battlefield fully armed no one can check its sweeping advance (of *āniti* - peace).

On the side of the good are innumerable warriors: *dharma*, justice, valour, faith, worship, goodness, knowledge, the angels. The vanityless, humility and innumerable more are on the list. They win the inner battle that is going on in every being. In those who are spiritually conscious it is goodness and wisdom that have the upper hand. In those who sink into materialism, evil and ignorance have the upper hand. As this section is about the life of *yogis* and *sanyāsīs*, Guru Gobind Singh gave his own view on *yoga*:

*joḡi joḡ jatan me nāhi,
bhram bhram marai, kahā pac pac karai
samāji man mahi
jo jan mahā tai keh jānai param gyān
pāvai.
tab geh ek thaur man rakhai, dar dar
na dhūvai.*

O *yoḡi*, *yoga* lies not in the matter
Why are you wasting your life in
and roaming in the jungles?
Look within and search for Him
thy own mind.
He who attains the supreme reality
attains supreme knowledge.
The enlightened ones concentrate
minds on the One;
They do not prowl about and
door to door.