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The Muslims who saved the life of Guru Gobind Singh

Abstracts:

It has been preached that Muslims invaded Paonta and Anandpur several times (between 1688 and 1705) and tried to kill Guru Gobind Singh. This is a blatant lie. First of all, it was the Hindu hill rulers who attacked the Guru at Paonta Sahib and Anandpur Sahib. Secondly, yes, some attempts were made to kill Guru Gobind Singh, and these attacks were carried on by the rulers (who happened to be Muslims) and not the Muslim public. On the other hand, the Guru had friendly and family relations with several Muslim families which helped the Guru when his life was in danger. When Guru Gobind Singh left Anandpur in December 1705, he was given asylum by Nihang Khan (of Kotla Nihang Khan). Further, it was two Muslim brothers who helped the Guru in escaping from Chamkaur. Again, it was five Muslim holy men who escorted him from Machhiwara to a safe zone. The Sikhs cannot pay the debt of these Muslim families.

Keywords: *Sikhs, Muslims, Guru Gobind Singh, Savious of Guru Gobind Singh.*

It is widely propagated that Guru Gobind Singh had to fight 16 battles against the Muslim rulers. But, this is totally false. Guru Gobind Singh had to fight the following battles during whole of his life:

1. 18 September 1688, battle of Bhangani: the Guru was attacked by Fateh Singh (a Hindu Rajput ruler of Garhwal, now Uttarakhand province)¹
2. 19 March 1690, battle of Nadaun: the Guru helped the army of the Hindu ruled state of Kehloor and other Rajput states when they were attacked by Alif Khan, a general of Lahore province. It was not an attack on the Guru, but the Guru sided with the hill rulers.²
3. 19 August 1695, attack by Rustam Khan, son of Dilawar Khan (Deputy Governor of Lahore). Due to flood in rivulet at Anandpur, this army had to retreat, and no battle was fought.³
4. 19 February 1696, battle between Hussaini (a general of Lahore province) and the hill rulers (especially Ajmer Chand of Kehloor state). Some Sikh soldiers fought against the Lahore army (the Guru was not present in this battle).⁴
5. 6 May 1696, battle between Jujhar Sinh Handa (a Hindu Rajput general of Lahore province) and the hill rulers (especially Ajmer Chand of Kehloor state) against some rebel hill rulers. Some Sikh soldiers fought against the Lahore army (the Guru was not present in this battle).⁵
6. 23 June 1698, battle in the hills of Kangra. Guru Gobind Singh had gone in the hills for hunting. Here, Raja Balia Chand of Kangra and his general Aalam Chand too were wandering for the search of a game. As they were more in numbers, they attacked the Guru. Udey Singh and Aalam Singh were leading the Sikh hunting party. In this hand-to-

hand battle Raja Balia Chand and his general Aalam Chand both were badly wounded.⁶

7. 29 August 1700: attack on Taragarh Fort (5 km from Anandpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.⁷
8. 30 August 1700: attack on Fatehgarh Fort (Anandpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated in this battle too. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.⁸
9. 31 August 1700: attack on Agammgarh Fort (Anandpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.⁹
10. 1 September 1700: attack on Lohgarh Fort (Anandpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated. Raja Kesri Chand (maternal uncle of Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur) was killed in this battle. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.¹⁰
11. 7 October 1700: attack on the Guru at Nirmohgarh hill (near Keeratpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.¹¹
12. 12 October 1700: attack on the Guru at Nirmohgarh hill (near Keeratpur) by mercenaries of Sirhind army, under the command of Rustam Khan and Nasir Khan, brought by Ajmer Chand ruler of the state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). In this battle Rustam Khan and Nasir Khan were killed.¹²
13. 13 October 1700: attack on the Guru at Nirmohgarh hill (near Keeratpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of the state of

Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.¹³

14. 19 October 1700, battle between the Sikh soldiers and the Ranghar Muslims of village Kalmot (Muslim army was not involved in this battle). Guru Gobind Singh was present in this village but he did not participate.¹⁴

15. 13 January 1703, attack on the Guru near Chamkaur, by Sayad Begh and Alif Khan, brought by Ajmer Chand (Rajput ruler of Kehloor state). Sayad Begh and Alif Khan were badly beaten.¹⁵

16. 16 January 1704, attack on Taragarh Fort (Anandpur) by Ajmer Chand ruler of Rajput state of Kehloor (Bilaspur). The Bilaspur army was badly defeated in this battle too. No Muslim soldier participated in this attack.¹⁶

17. 7 December 1705: battle at Chamkaur in which 50 Sikhs fought against 700 soldiers¹⁷ from Malerkotla army led by Nahar Khan (brother of Sher Mohammed Khan chief of Malerkotla state).

One can see that the Royal army was not involved in any of these operations (except Chamkaur). 9 of these 17 attacks were launched by Hindu hill rulers, four attacks were made by mercenaries paid by Hindu hill rulers; and, the three of the rest were joint operations by Governor of Lahore and the Hindu hill rulers. Even the attack at Chamkaur it was an action by the police chief of Rupar on his own behalf and the invading army was from Malerkotla state, and, not the Royal Mughal army. Aurangzeb did not even know about these operations till he was given reports about these events.

Guru Gobind Singh and the Sikhs vacate Anandpur

In March 1705, the armies of Rajput states: Kahloor State (Ajmer Chand) and Handur State (Nalagarh), put siege to the city

of Anandpur. The siege continued for about 8 months. During this period no one could enter or leave the town; hence problem of food compelled Guru Gobind Singh to leave the city. On the night of 5 and 6 December, Guru Gobind Singh and about 500 Sikhs who were present in the city left in 5 groups to be united again at Chamkaur.

Great service by Nihang Khan and Bibi Mumtaz

After leaving Anandpur, Guru Gobind Singh his two elder son (Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh) along with a few Sikhs, reached Kotla Nihang Khan (a village adjacent to Rupar (now Ropar) and entered the mansion (a sort of fortress) of Nihang Khan. Bachitar Singh, one of the companions of the Sikhs, had been badly wounded in a battle at Malikpur Rangharan (about 6 km from Rupar). Nihang Khan had been a great friend of Guru Gobind Singh. Even his father Naurang Khan, grandfather Aalam Khan and great-grandfather Shamas Khan had been friendly to all the Gurus. Nihang Khan served the Guru and his companions with food and other necessities. It was early hours of the morning of 6 December. When it was dark, the Sikhs began leaving Kotla Nihang Khan in small groups. Guru Gobind Singh too left his mansion and went to Chamkaur; he was escorted by Aalam Khan (son of Nihang Khan) up to village Bur Majra village.

When the Guru and the Sikhs had left Nihang Khan's mansion, some enemy of Nihang Khan saw some of them coming out of his mansion. He went to Rupar and reported this the police chief of Rupar. The police chief took some policemen and reached Nihang Khan's mansion. By this time Guru Gobind Singh and all his companions had already left. In the mansion only Nihang Khan, his wife Bibi Nasira, son Aalam Khan and daughter Mumtaz were present in the house. Besides, Bachitar Singh, who was

seriously wounded and was not in a position to move, was present in a room. The police chief asked Nihang Khan that he had received report that some Sikhs were present in his mansion, Nihang Khan told him that no Sikh was present in his house and he offered him to check all the rooms. The police chief checked all the rooms and found no one there except the family. Only one room was locked from inside. Bachitar Singh was present in that room. He was being attended by Bibi Mumtaz. When the police chief of Rupar asked him as to who was inside that room, Nihang Khan told them that his daughter and his son-in-law were inside. In the meanwhile Mumtaz spoke from inside the room, and, this satisfied the police chief who apologized for misinformation and left Nihang Khan's mansion.¹⁸ On the other hand Bachitar Singh, however, could not survive and died after a few hours. The following day, Nihang Khan arranged Bachitar Singh's cremation with the help of two local Sikhs Gursa Singh Gahunia and Bagga Singh.¹⁹ Before the raid by the police chief of Rupar, Nihang Khan's son Aalam Khan (who married to the daughter of Rai Kallha, the chief of Raikot) had escorted Guru Gobind Singh for a few kilometres on way to Chamkaur, where all the Sikhs were expected to reach the following day.

Battle at Chamkaur

The Guru reached Chamkaur before sunshine on the morning of 7 December. Within a couple of hours his two elder sons and 47 Sikhs (total 50 persons) too had reached Chamkaur. Budhi Chand Rawat, who had a big mansion (fortress) in the village of Chamkaur, asked the Guru and the Sikhs to take rest in his mansion (fortress). As the Guru and Sikhs were dead tired after a foot journey of several kilometres, they went to sleep. In the meanwhile, some enemy of Budhi Chand, on seeing the Sikhs

there, went to Rupar and reported the matter to the police chief of Rupar. At that time, a unit of 700 soldiers from Malerkotla, under the command of Nahar Khan (brother of Sher Mohammed Khan, the Nawab of Malerkotla) had arrived in Rupar for some expedition. The chief of Rupar asked Nahar Khan to proceed towards Rupar.²⁰ The Malerkotla soldiers reached Chamkaur and put siege to the mansion where the Guru and the Sikhs had taken refuge. Soon, fighting began. Guru Gobind Singh was an expert of usage of bow and arrow. He shot an arrow at Nahar Khan, and the latter fell down and died instantly. Although their commander was killed still the Malerkotla soldiers continued fighting. It was a hand-to-hand fighting. It was a wintery evening of December month, hence soon it was dark; and, with this battle too stopped. By this time, several soldiers of the invading army as well as 43 of the 49 Sikhs present in the mansion (fortress) had been killed; one of the Sikhs being too young had escaped in the darkness and had fled Chamkaur. Now, only the Guru and 7 Sikhs were present in the mansion (fortress).

Guru's Life Saved by Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan

Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan were residents of Machhiwara town. They were the sons of Bibi Umri, the *Bhua* (father's sister) of Nihang Khan (hence cousins of Nihang Khan of Kotla Nihang Khan). For some time, they had been in the employment of the Nawab of Malerkotla. On 7 December, they got information of the siege of the mansion (fortress) of Chamkaur, where Guru Gobind Singh was trapped. They decided to save the Guru. They took with them an additional dress of a Pathan soldier and reached the fortress. They hung the dress on the blade of a spear and conveyed the same to the Guru. The Guru wore the dress and came out of the

mansion (fortress) in the dress of a Pathan soldier. The two Khan brothers escorted Guru Sahib from Chamkaur to Machhiwara.²¹

The Guru Escaped with the Help of Qazi Chiragh Din and his companions

The Guru spent three days at Machhiwara. In the meanwhile Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan approached Qazi Charagh Din of Ajner village (near Khanna) a Muslim holy man and told him the situation and asked his help. Qazi Charagh Din readily agreed and he called Inayat Ali of Nurpur, Qazi Pir Mohammed of Saloh, Subeg Shah of Halwara and Hasan Ali of Motthu Majra. They carried the Guru in the dress of a holy man 'Uchch Da Pir' and helped the Guru to escape to Jungle Des (Bathinda district). During this journey, the Guru spent a day with Rai Kalha the chief of Raikot (whose daughter was married to the sone of Nihang Khan of Kotla Nihang Khan).

To sum up, Guru Gobind Singh would have been killed at Chamkaur on the morning of 8 December 1705. It was Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan who saved his life; and, it was Qazi Chiragh Din, Inayat Ali of Nurpur, Qazi Pir Mohammed of Saloh, Subeg Shah of Halwara and Hasan Ali of Motthu Majra gave the Guru escape to Jingle Des.²² The Sikhs are so grateful to Nihang Khan, Nabi Khan, Ghani Khan, Qazi Chiragh Din, Inayat Ali of Nurpur, Qazi Pir Mohammed of Saloh, Subeg Shah of Halwara and Hasan Ali of Motthu Majra. Sikhs can never pay the debt of these families. Thousands of Sikhs visit graves of Nabi Khan, Ghani Khan at Machhiwara and pay their homage to them. The Sikhs have preserved the tomb of Qazi Chiragh Din at village Ajner (in Ludhiana district), and thousands of Sikhs make regular visits to his tomb to pay homage to him.

Reference:

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- 1 Sewa Singh, *Shaheed Bilas*, stanza 59. Also Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi, account of Ramanas.
 - 2 Sewa Singh, *Shaheed Bilas*, stanza 65. Also Bhat Vahi Multani Sindhi, account of Puar Baloots.
 - 3 Sarup Singh Kaushik, Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 53 (sakhi=episode).
 - 4 Bhat Vahi Bhadsan Pargana Thanesar, account of Jallane Puars.
 - 5 Sarup Singh Kaushik, Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 54.
 - 6 Sarup Singh Kaushik, Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 64.
 - 7 Bhat Vahi Toomar Binjaunts.
 - 8 Bhat Vahi Jadobansis, account of Barhita Kannaunts.
 - 9 Bhat Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind, account of Jallane Puars.
 - 10 Bhat Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind, account of Jallane Puars. Also Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 68.
 - 11 Bhat Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind, account of Jallane Puars
 - 12 Piara Singh Padam, Vaaran Guru Gobind Singh Kian, p. 67. Also: Bhat Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind, account of Udanas.
 - 13 Piara Singh Padam, Vaaran Guru Gobind Singh Kian, p. 67.
 - 14 Bhat Vahi Talaunda, pargana Jind, account of Jallane Puars.
 - 15 Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 74.
 - 16 Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 75.
 - 17 'Zafarnama' (wrongly attributed to Guru Gobind Singh) mentions the number 10 lakhs (one million), which is horrible distortion of history. *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* (by

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- Inayatulla Khan Ismi) mentions the number 700. Also see: Irfan Habib & J S Grewal's *Sikh History from Persian Sources*.
- 18 Bibi Mumtaz, the daughter of Nihang Khan, took father's statement made to the Rupar police officials and she vowed to spend the rest of her life as the widow of Bachitar Singh. She spent several years of her life and Naurangpur, Jhandian and Bari, about 15 km from Kotla Nihang Khan. Her **grave** has been built on a small hill in Naurangpur village. In her memory, a grand memorial in the name of 'Gurdwara Mumtazgarh' has been built in between the villages of Naurangpur, Jhandian and Bari. Thousands of Sikhs visit this Gurdwara every month to pay homage to Bibi Mumtaz.
- 19 Sardha Singh Gahunia, *Jiwan Birtant Koltla Nihang Ke Pathanonn Ka* (1841), p 33. Also: Bhat Vahi Talaundha, Pargana Jind, and, Bhat Vahi Multani Sidhi.
- 20 *Ahkam-i-Alamgiri* (by Inayatulla Khan Ismi). Also see: Irfan Habib & J.S. Grewal's *Sikh History from Persian Sources*, pp. 15, 97, 98.
- 21 Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 81.
- 22 Guru Kian Sakhian, sakhi 82.