

illustrated MARTYRDOM TRADITION



"Martyrdom Tradition; Illustrated"

At the time of the publication of 'ARDAS', I had expressed the hope that the Sikh tradition of martyrdom would be published in four volumes, the first of which would cover the glorious account to the martyrs who had died till the establishment of the 'Khalsa Raj'. I am glad that the volume has since been printed.

In this volume, the glorious accounts of all the martyrs, from Sri Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the 'King' among martyrs, to Baba Gurbax Singh have been given with apt illustrations. By dwelling upon the holy words of the martyrs and their portraits, one feels convinced that they stood the ordeal on the strength of the Faith ingrained in them by GURBANI the Holy Name. The Sikhs have been firmly enjoined upon that:

**"Those who fear are lost in fear;
Disdain who fear, are free from fear."
Nothing could now frighten or force down the Sikhs.**

I am pleased to note that all the books published by the Dharam Parchar Committee of S.G.P.C. have found wide acceptability among the Sikh circles, and I have no doubt that they have met a long standing need.

In the next volume, the accounts of the brave martyrs and General of note who lived and died during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh and the subsequent battles would be incorporated.

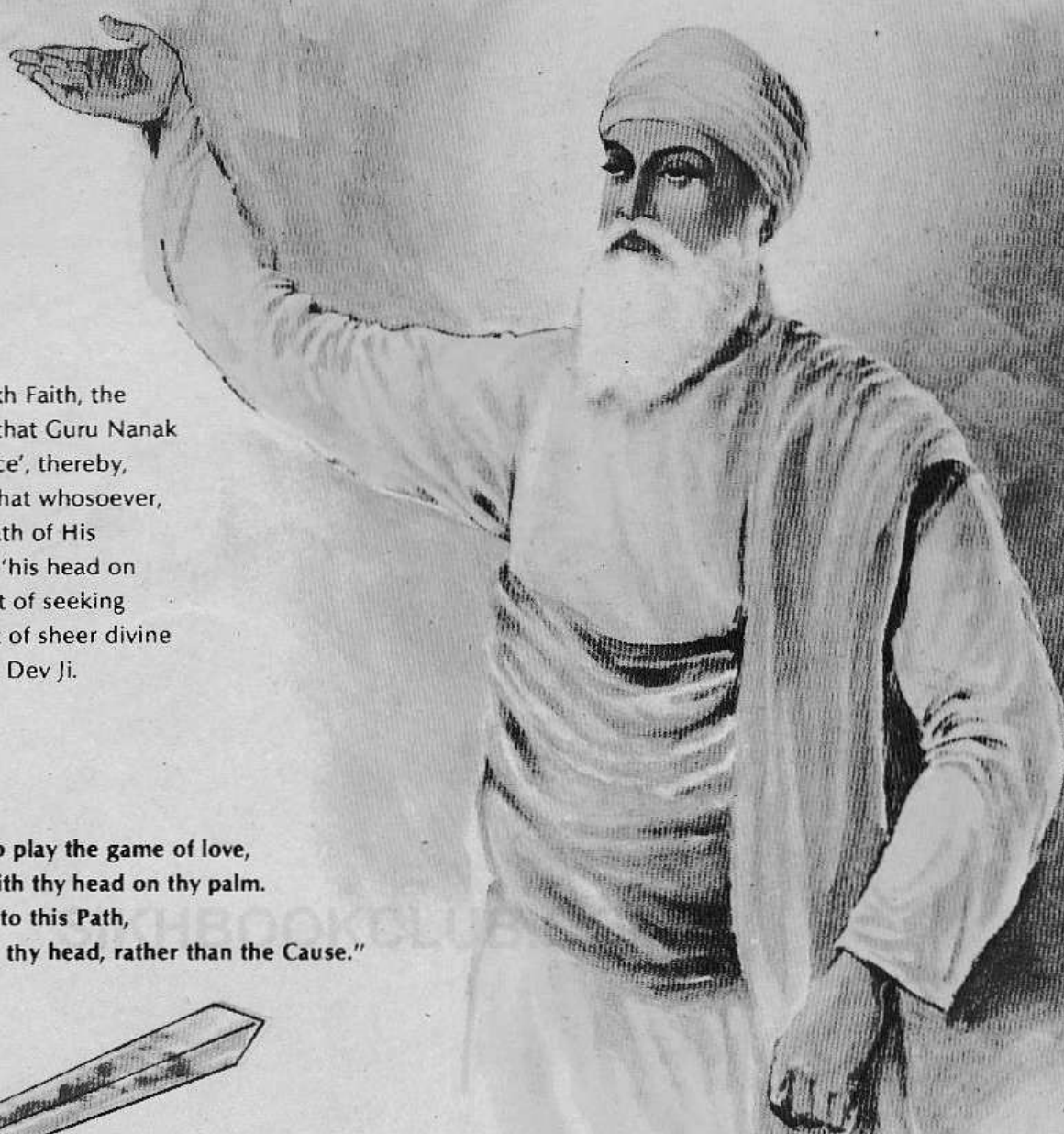
This volume is being presented to the Panth on the occasion of the two hundredth anniversary of 'Sultan-ul-Quam', Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, which falls on 22nd October 1983, and which is being celebrated with great enthusiasm. Let the 'Panth' ever remember the words of this Great General.

**"Let not the Misle divide the Panth,
Let us unite and save the Panth."**

20th October, 1983
Sri Amritsar

Humble Servant of the Panth
Gurcharan Singh Tohra
President
Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee.

Chief Adviser	: Dr. Inderjit Singh
Author	: Principal Satbir Singh
Design & Art Work	: Sardar Devinder Singh Artist
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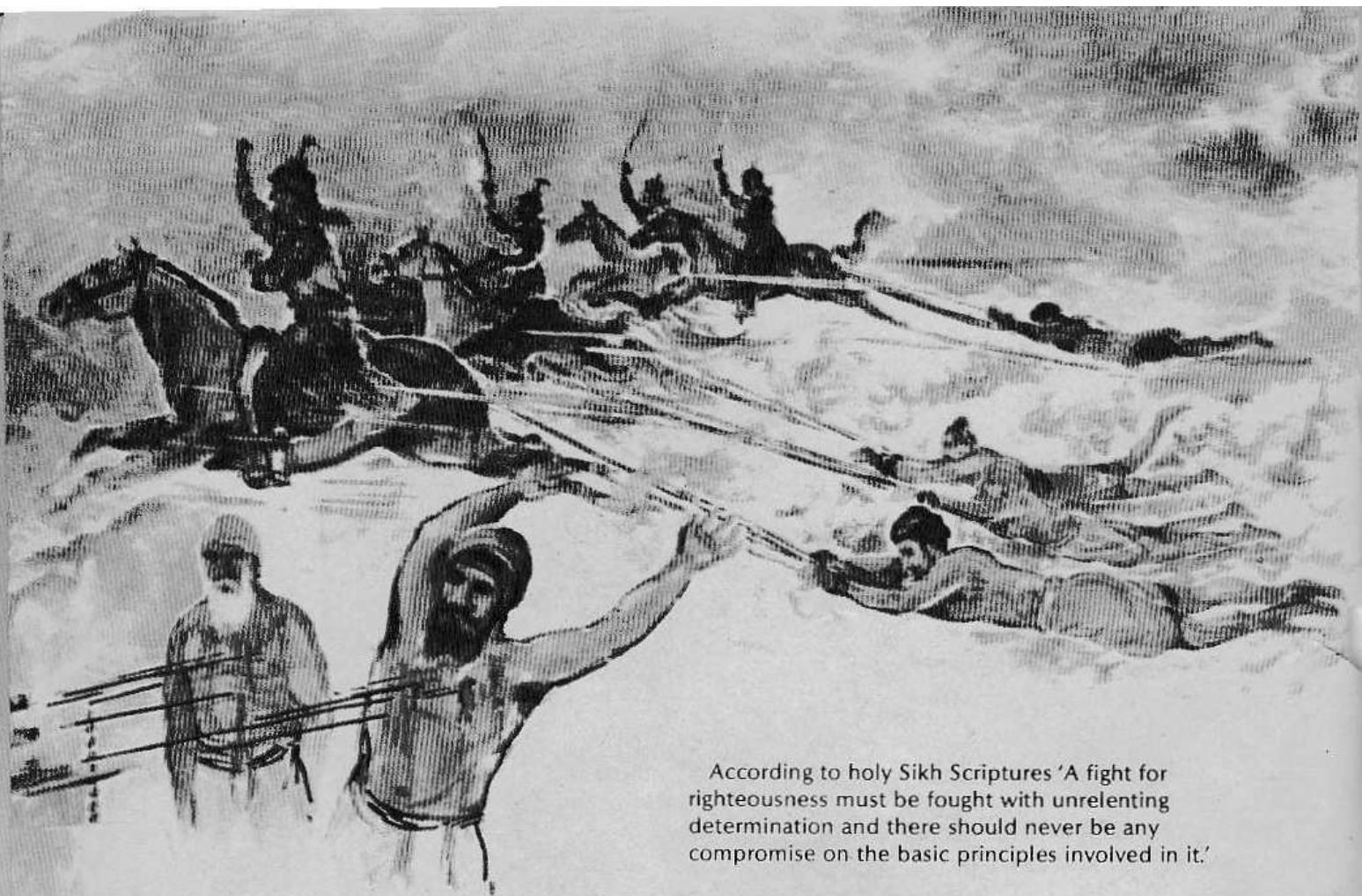


While founding the Sikh Faith, the first foundation stone that Guru Nanak laid was of 'Self-sacrifice', thereby, specifically enjoining that whosoever, wished to enter the path of His Faith, must come with 'his head on his palm'-not to a spirit of seeking any obligation, but out of sheer divine love. Said Guru Nanak Dev Ji.

"Shouldst thou wish to play the game of love,
Come unto my Path with thy head on thy palm.
And, once you step unto this Path,
You may well give up thy head, rather than the Cause."



Similarly, Guru Arjan Dev Ji has also enjoined on the intending Sikhs to accept the ideal of death first'. According to the Guru, 'every true hero must be enthused at the prospects of a righteous fight'. In holy Gurbani, he alone is accepted as a true hero who would prefer to be cut to pieces rather than give up fight for righteousness. The same ideal is enshrined in the commandment of Sri Guru Angad Dev Ji to Bhai Maloo that 'the odds involved in the fight for righteousness should not deter a true Sikh'. In similar strain, Guru Amar Das had ordained that 'Although every Sikh must be basically kind-hearted, yet, when it comes to defending the Truth, he must resolutely face every odd'. The Lord himself comes to the aid of such a person and humbles his adversary according to the Guru. Sri Arjan Dev also said that 'he who is martyred in such a fight, attains to such a divine bliss that even the holiest of holi yogi would envy. Guru Hargobind Ji had also enjoined on every Sikh that while the Sikh should extend warm hospitality to every guest, he must also keep his arms ready for dealing with any misguided adversary.



According to holy Sikh Scriptures 'A fight for righteousness must be fought with unrelenting determination and there should never be any compromise on the basic principles involved in it.'

On no account must a man,
Abandon the field ever;
Neither show a sign of weakness,
Nor must he yield ever.

Thus, for every Sikh, it is an article of faith to fight for righteousness and universally accepted principles of Truth. The concept of courting martyrdom for a higher cause—not out of any compulsion, but as the sovereign right and even the Souvenir of a true hero was an absolutely new Ideal. Says, Gurbani :

"To court death for an approved cause,

Is the right of every true Hero."

Since long, people in India had been so misled that no one had any awareness whatsoever, of the merits of the exalted status of a martyr. The people had been taught to believe that every pain they suffer from, is the direct result of their past evil actions. Even when Lord Rama suffered the pangs and privations of a life in jungles for some higher principles, it was believed that he had to suffer because his father, Dasrath, had inflicted suffering on the parents of 'Sarwan'. If sin alone was the source of every suffering then, who could court voluntary suffering? The Sikh Gurus brought about a fundamental changes in this attitude by proclaiming that suffering in certain circumstances, are a boon and a blessing of the Lord Divine'.





Thereafter, the ideal of courting tortures, tyrannies and even death, not for narrow personal ends but, for Social good began to capture the imagination of the people. The personal percepts of the Holy Sikh Gurus followed by their followers gave birth to the Tradition of Martyrdom.

There is hardly a mode of torture which the Sikhs have not suffered. Eighteen such modes of martyrdom are known and Sikhs were made a victim of each and every one of them. However, there is not a single case when any suffering Sikh uttered a cry of pain or relented even a bit at the time of his martyrdom. As against this, even in the thick of war with an adversary, they were singularly free from any sign of rancour or revenge. Writing about Sri Guru Har Gobind Ji, a contemporary writer, Mohsin Fani, testified that even while smiting an enemy with his sword the Guru's holy face was absolutely free from any sign of anger.





History abounds in records that even in the thick of a battle, when the turban of an adversary got off his head the Sikh had withdrawn his sword in his scabbard to allow the enemy to redeem his turban. The Sikhs were essentially fighting for Truth and Righteousness. They would never rob a person of his honour, a woman of her jewellery or for that matter, cast an evil on anyone.

The high moral character of the Sikhs was, thus, the deciding factor in their victories over their adversaries, in the fall of enemy governments, the ultimate ascendancy of the Khalsa and the rise of Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia to throne with the honour of Sultan-ul-Qaum betowed on him by the Panth.

The Martyrdom tradition has a long historical trail. However here, the illustrated accounts of only those selected martyrs are being given, whose brave deeds are reverently remembered daily in our prayers. A special attempt has been made to highlight the last words uttered by these martyrs to enthuse the people to emulate their high precepts.

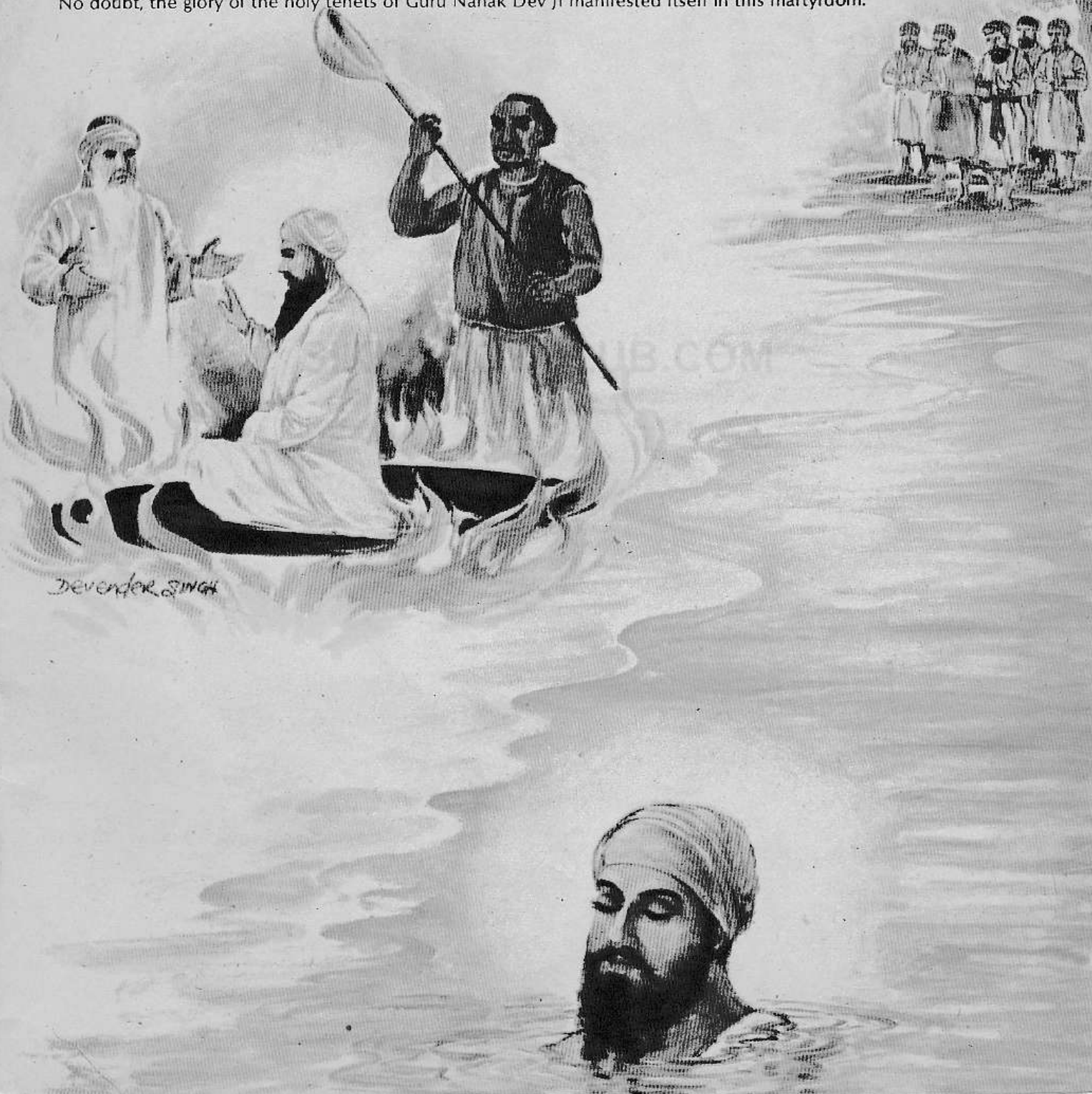
When Mughal Emperor Jahangir ordered death on Guru Arjan Dev Ji, it was specifically emphasised by him that he should be tortured to death through YASA. (Be executed by different ways.) The Lord, the Fifth Guru, was first made to sit on a red hot iron pan and burning sand was poured over him. Then, he was boiled in a big kettle. Thereafter, to inflict death he was thrown in river Ravi. All glory to Holy Guru Arjan Dev, the Lord of the Martyrs, who, even in the thick of such terrible tortures, was all the time uttering holy words.

**'O' Lord, it is a blissful pleasure
for me to abide in Thy will'.**

The following holy words were on the lips of Guru at the time of his martyrdom.

**Now the glory of Guru Nanak
'My Lord has granted my supplication
And nothing could deter me
Now the glory of Guru Nanak
Has manifested itself in all the ages through'**

No doubt, the glory of the holy tenets of Guru Nanak Dev Ji manifested itself in this martyrdom.



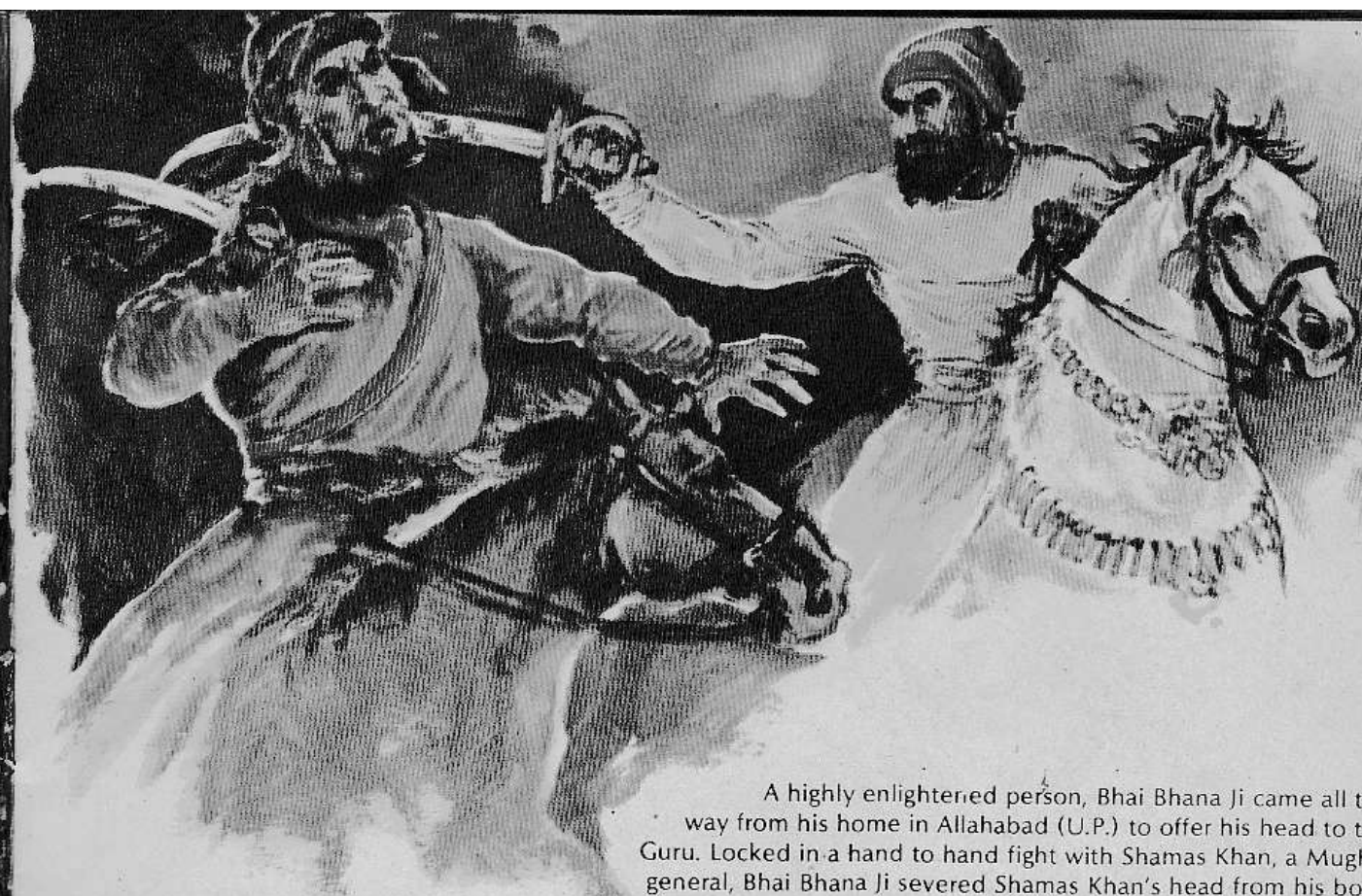


To uphold the sanctity of human dignity, Guru Har Gobind had to fight four battles. First five generals of Sikh army were Bhai Bidhi Chand, Bhai Parana, Bhai Jaidha, Bhai Paira and Bhai Langah. Each of whom was placed in command of one hundred ranks. Those who pledged their lives to the Guru sought nothing more than the holy Name. All that they asked for was two meals a day and a shirt every six months, as their uniform.

The first of these battles was fought at the site where Khalsa College Amritsar now stands. In this battle, the spirit of self-sacrifice of the Sikhs came to the surface in full abundance. By then, the Sikhs had cultivated such a courage that Bhai Jaitha Ji dared to challenge Jahangir right in his bed-room within the Agra fort. Jahangir was terribly scared thereafter.

The heroic acts of Bhai Bidhi Chand are too well known. Not once, but twice, did he scaled the walls of Lahore Fort along with a horse, to reach Malwa safely.





A highly enlightened person, Bhai Bhana Ji came all the way from his home in Allahabad (U.P.) to offer his head to the Guru. Locked in a hand to hand fight with Shamas Khan, a Mughal general, Bhai Bhana Ji severed Shamas Khan's head from his body like a pumpkin from its stem. Meanwhile, he himself was encircled by the enemy who gunned him down Şahid Ganj at Pipli Sahib (Putligarh) Amritsar commemorates the memory of this great martyr. Bhai Singha, Bhai Tota, Bhai Nihala, Bhai Loka and Bhai Ananta, also courted martyrdom in this battle. In the hand to hand fight in this battle, Guru Hargobind (Lord of Miri and Piri) inflicted such a crushing blow on Mukhlas Khan with his sword that piercing through his shield it cut as under his body all the way from head downward into two.

Thirteen more Sikhs shared martyrdom in the battle. When the Guru was tending the wounds of the seriously injured Bhai Mohan Ji and Bhai Gopal Ji, their last supplication to the Guru was that they may be blessed with the boon of discarding their mortal frames in his holy presence.

**We seek of you, a boon, O' Lord,
If time is come to breathe our last,
May on earth our Journey end,
In thy presence and holy hands,**

The boon was granted and both of them attained to the glory of martyrdom.

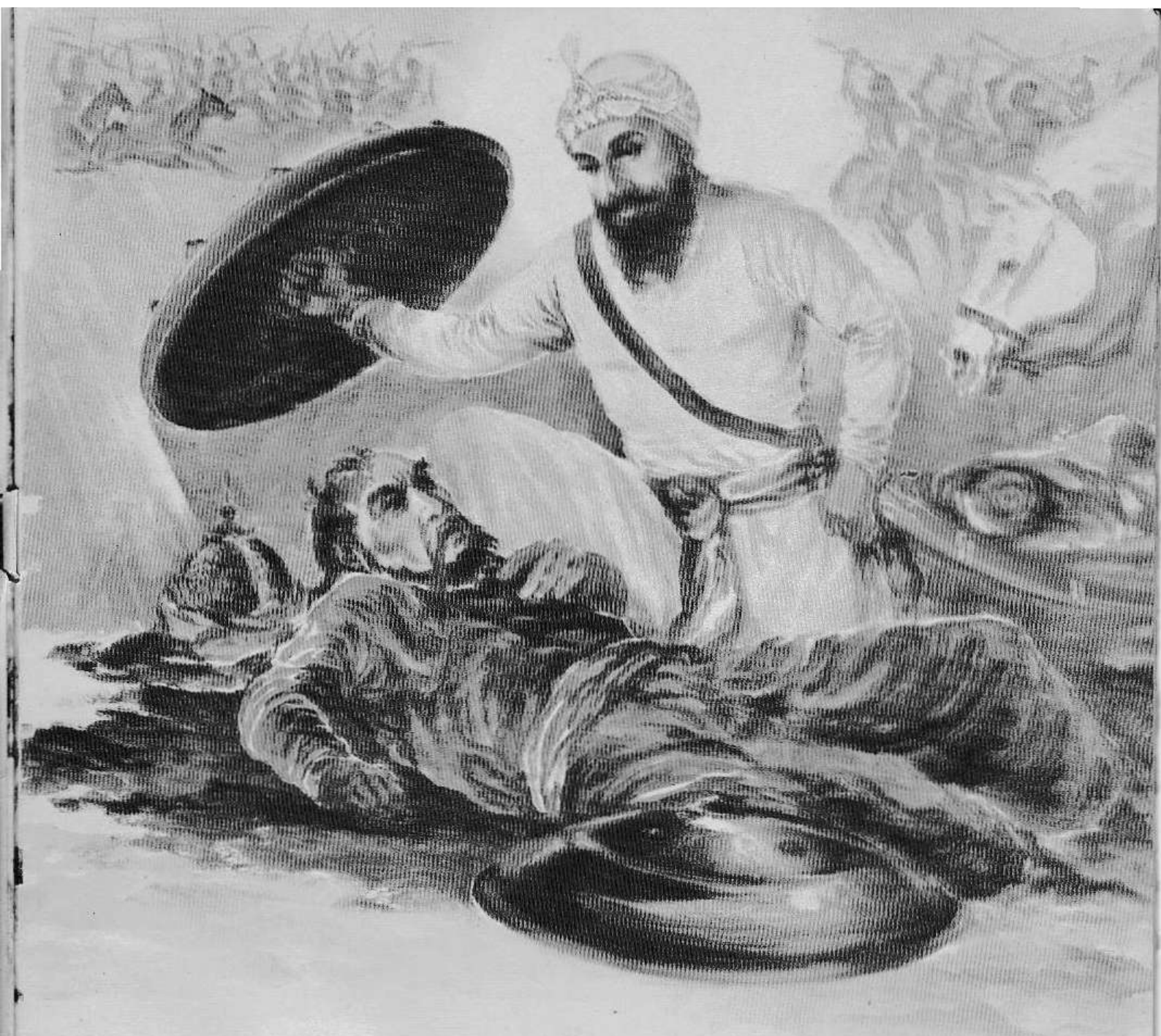




In the second battle at Sri Har-Gobindpur, Bhai Mathra Ji 'Bhatt' fought with conspicuous courage. Having covered his entire body with armour, Bairam Khan considered himself invincible. However, when he opened his mouth to throw a proud challenge, Bhai Mathra Ji thrust his dagger into it and killed him with one stroke.

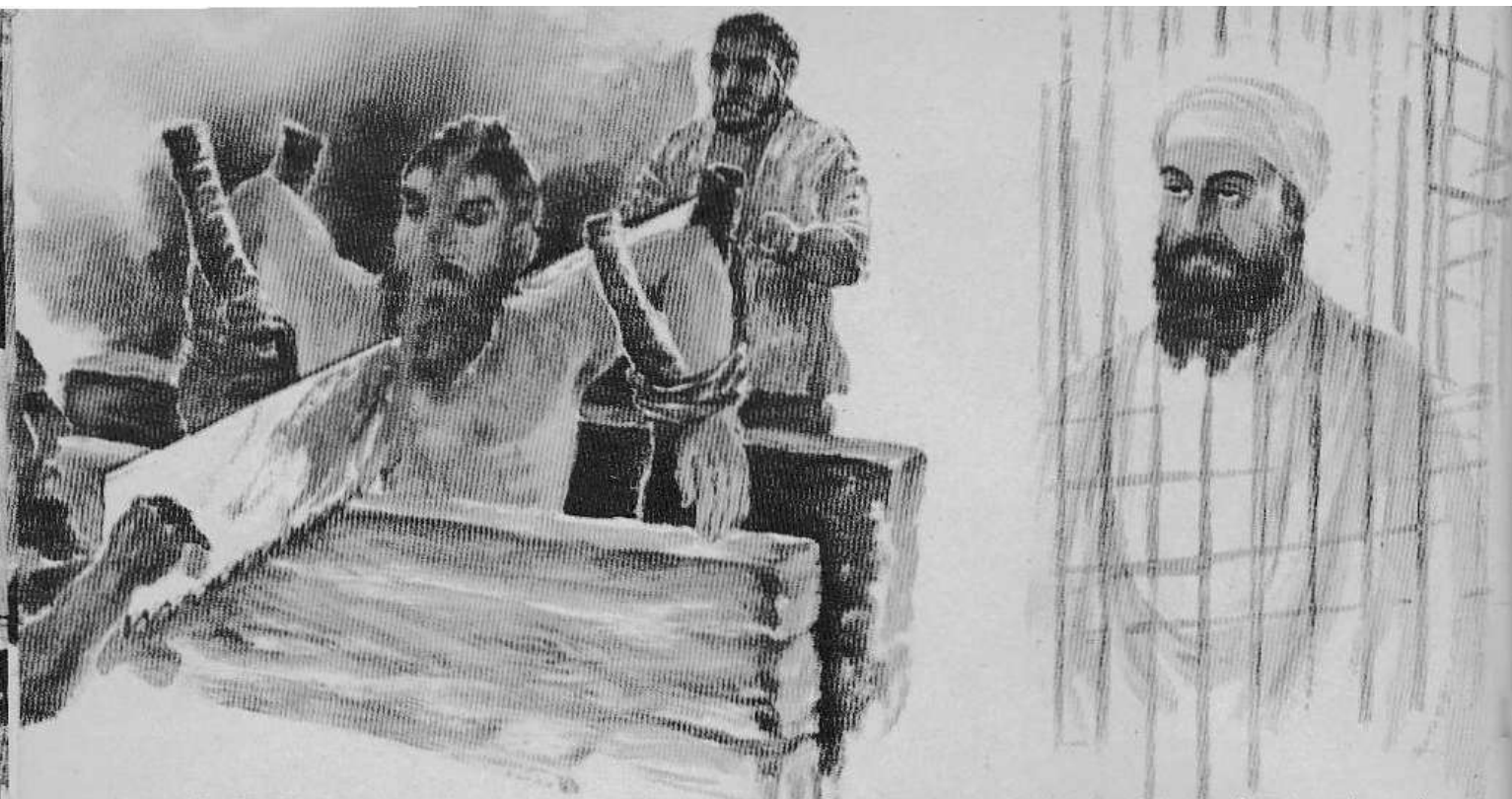
In the third such battle, near Nathana, Qamar Beg and Lala Beg led the enemy attack. The holy Guru Har Gobind smote Qamar Beg with such a force and dexterity that his sword ran so sharply through his body that Qamar Beg still looked all but whole.





In the fourth battle at Kartarpur (Jullundur) Painde Khan, the traitor, led the attack against Guru Har Gobind. The Guru allowed him to attack him first. Painde Khan made many abortive attempts on the life of the Guru, but, himself fell a victim to the very first blow of the Guru. The sun was shining at its peak. Alighting from his horse, the Guru shaded the face of Painde Khan with his shield and asked him to recite the holy words from Quran in the last moments of his life. Painde Khan, however, replied, "My Lord, thy sword alone is my holy word" and uttering thus breathed his last. Thereafter, Guru Har Gobind went to Kiratpur and settled there.

During the pontificate of Guru Har Rai, the Sikhs had cultivated such courage and uprightness that nobody among them would countenance a coward or a sycophant. When Guru Har Krishan retired to Bangla Sahib and Aurangzeb waited at its doors for just his holy glimpse, the Guru refused him the boon because he had usurped the throne through stratagem by killing his father and brothers.



Guru Tegh Bahadur injected new life into the sleeping souls of his Countrymen by bringing home to them that :

**"Those who fear are cowards
And, those who frighten are fools".**

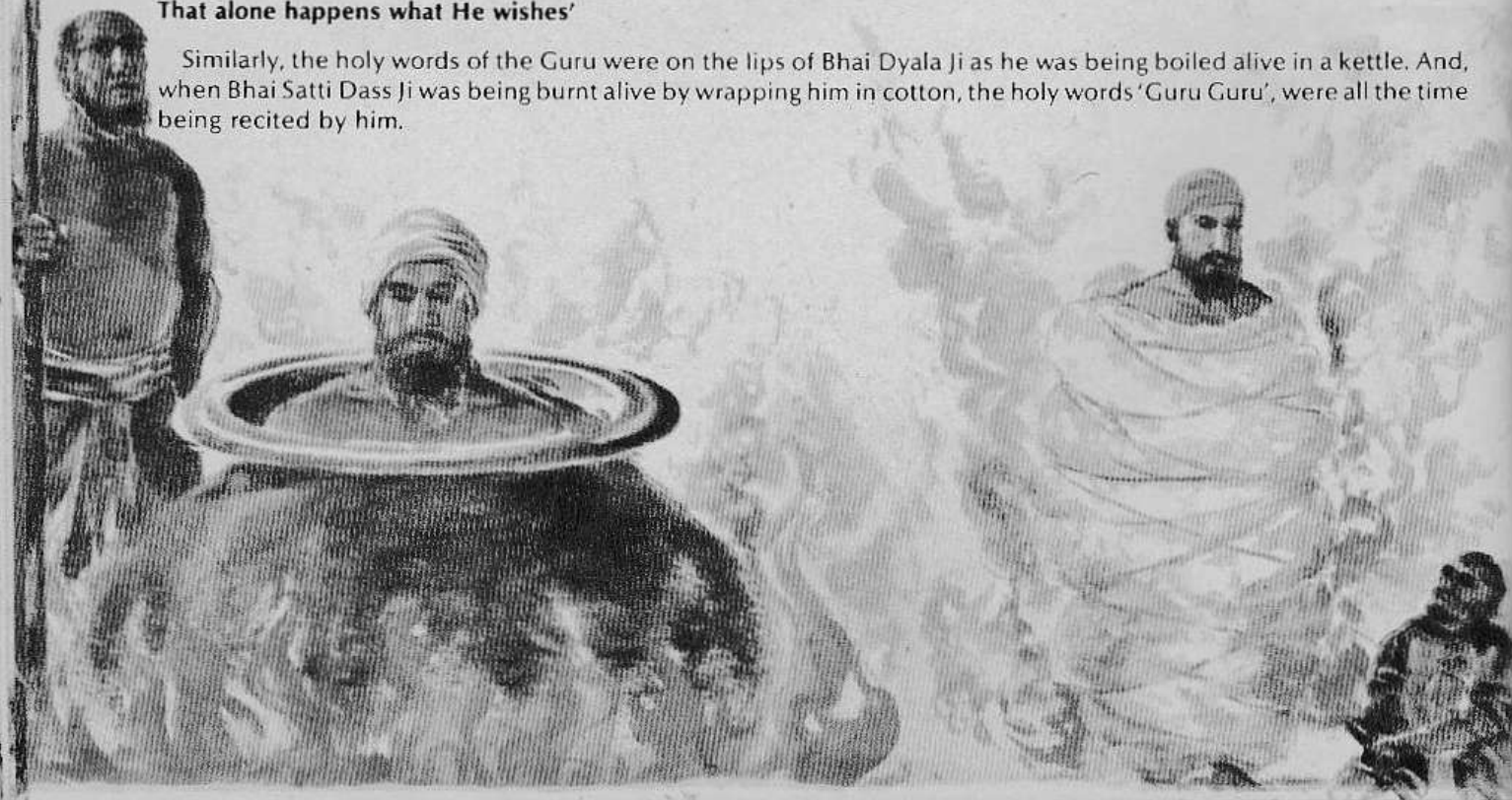
He alone is a divinely enlightened person 'who fears not and frightens not'.

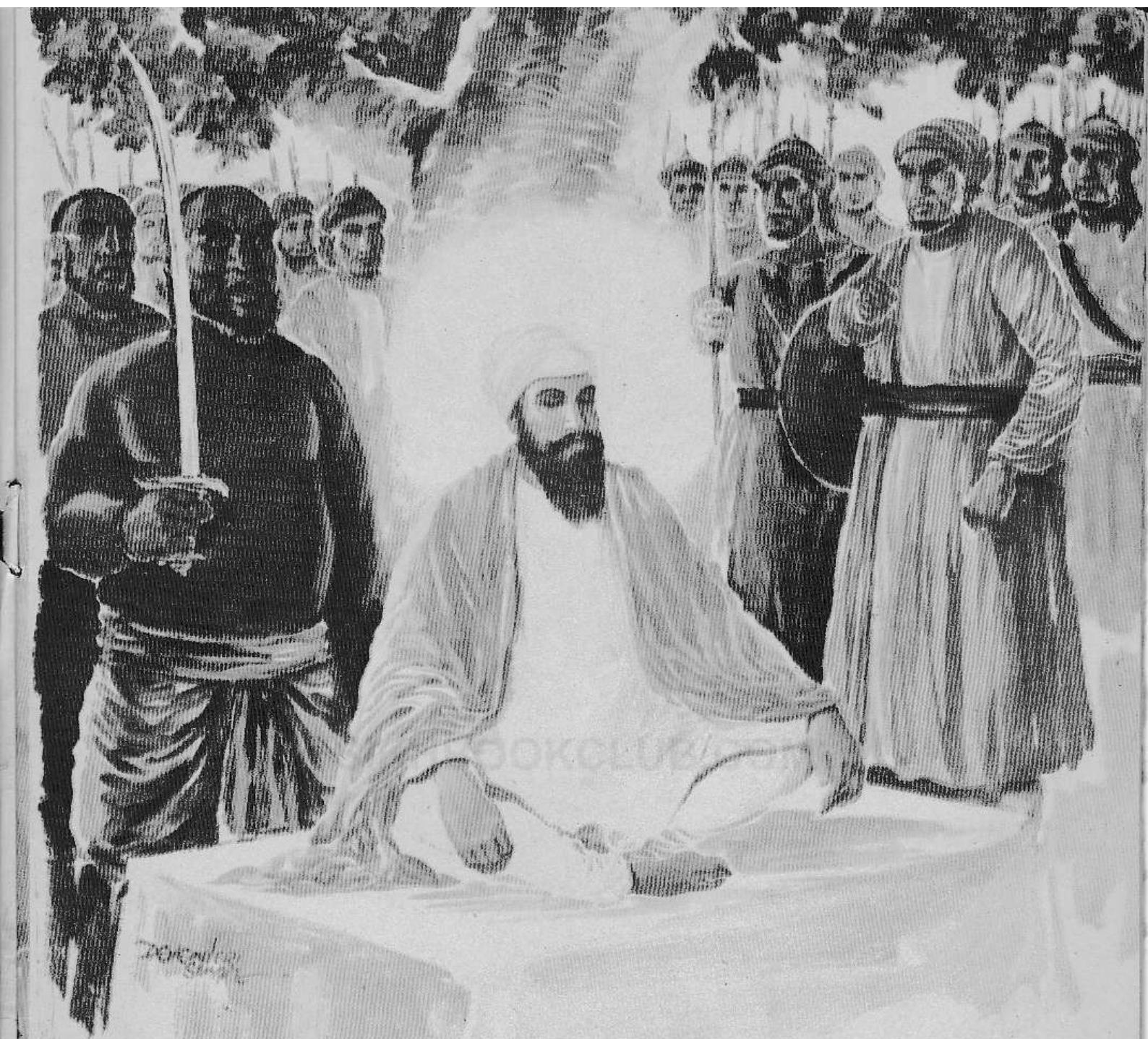
**'He alone is an enlightened soul, says Nanak
Who frightens none, and fears none.'**

Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred under orders of Aurangzeb. However, prior to him, Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Dyala Ji and Bhai Satti Das courted martyrdom in his holy presence. Bhai Matti Dass was sawed alive in twains, but, from each part of his body the holy recitation to this effect could be heard.

**'Nothing is born and nothing perishes
That alone happens what He wishes'**

Similarly, the holy words of the Guru were on the lips of Bhai Dyala Ji as he was being boiled alive in a kettle. And, when Bhai Satti Dass Ji was being burnt alive by wrapping him in cotton, the holy words 'Guru Guru', were all the time being recited by him.





At the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur in Chandni Chowk Delhi was rocked with a terrible storm as is vouchsafed by the following words of 'Panth Prakash', that from then onward :

**'The Delhi Empire was on the wane,
And, Turk's hold was never the same again.'**

Many a Muslim Pirs even had then prophesied that the Mughal rule was all but dead. Bhai Jaita Ji and Bhai Adda Ji showed rare feats of valour by taking away the holy head to Anandpur Sahib and similarly, Bhai Lakhi Shah and his son, Nigahia, took the holy body at Rikab Ganj and cremated it with due respect by putting their own homes and huts on fire.

**Strong echoes were heard in Delhi Lanes
of the all around prevailing wall,
Lakhi and Nigahia took the body away
Leaving the crowds all but dazed.'**



The Nation was now bestir with a new life. Increasing number of Sikhs were now returning to Sri Anandpur Sahib. The more brave among them were feeling more restive. At Paunta Sahib, the holy Guru infused new life into the dead souls. The indomitable mood of the Guru is evident from the answer that he sent to Bhim Chand. "You are going on a marriage festival. But if you dare to cross this way, you will be served with a feast in which you will find shields for plates, swords for kettles, cannon balls for 'Ladoos' (a Punjabi Sweet Meal) and quiver of arrows for 'Jalebis' (a Punjabi Dessert). The Sikhs of the 'Lord of aigrette' showed rare feats of valour in the battle of Bhangani. Lal Chand, a confectioner, killed one of the most renowned general of the day with his shovel, Mahant Kirpal Chand made short work of Hayat Khan merely with his club and Sango Shah laid low Nijabat Khan with his scimitar. The sons of Pir Budhu Shah courted martyrdom in the bravest of manner. Hari Chand charged three arrows at the 'Lord of aigrette', The first of which grazed past his ear, the second struck his steed, while the third penetrating through his buckle touched his body.

**'As the arrow struck
Anger was then kindled'.**

Saying this, Guru Gobind Singh struck down Hai Chand with his very first arrow. The ultimate victory thus, lay with the Panth and the enemy ran away from the field in great disorder.



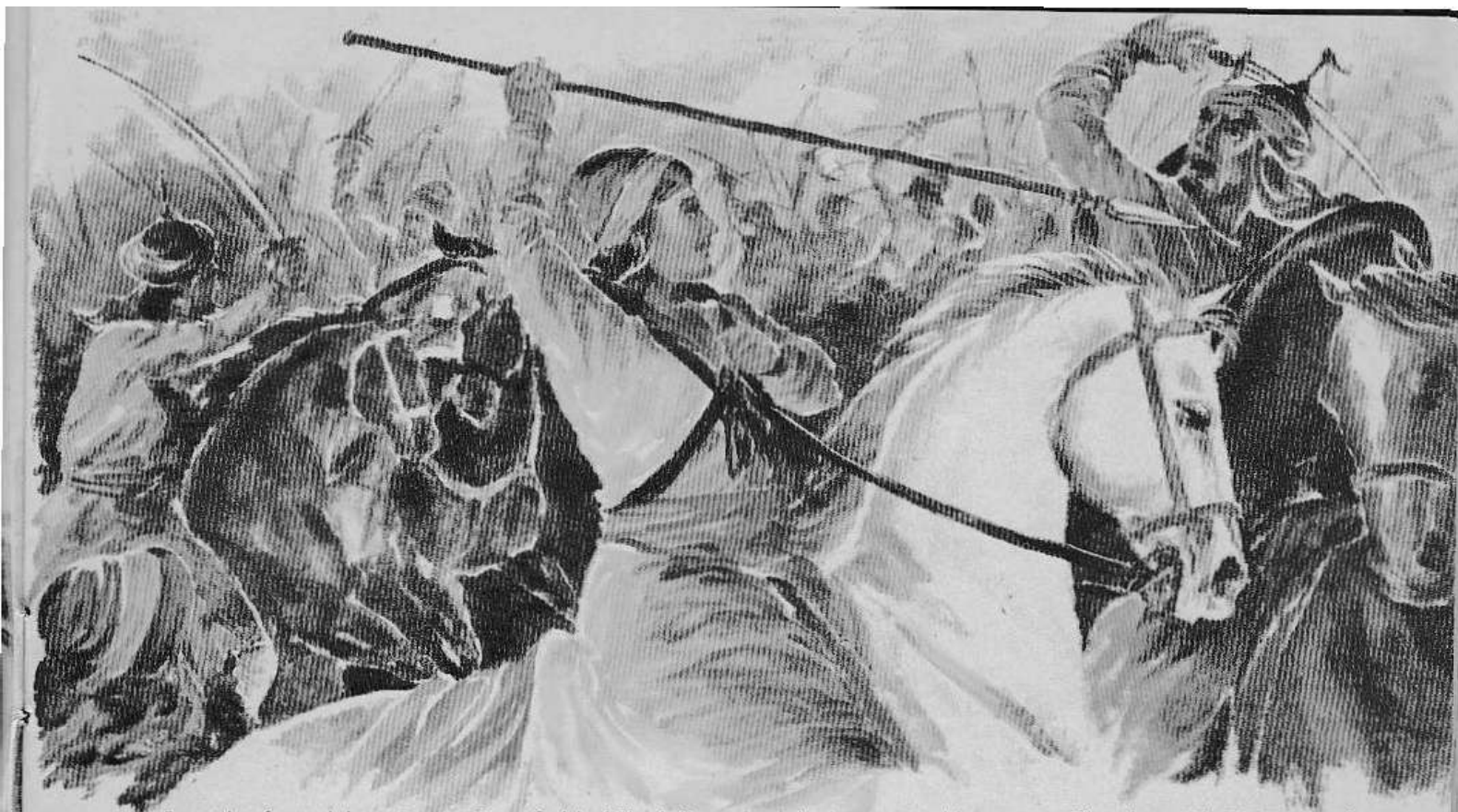


Many more battles were fought, but no body could match feats at Anandpur Sahib. Sitting in the lap of his Father, Baba Zorawar Singh was watching Baba Ajit Singh in action against the enemy. Baba Jujhar Singh busied himself in promptly bringing back the arrows that had missed their mark. The baptism of 'Amrit' changed the 'Sikhs' into 'Singhs'. Thereafter, it looked as if the people were vying with each other to raise the 'Citedal of Freedom'. Literally a single 'Singh' could now challenge a legion of a Lakh and a quarter. Bhai Bachitter Singh successfully faced a ferocious elephant with just his spear. And Bhai Udhai Singh and Bhai Jeewan Singh, heroically fought against Raja Kesari Chand and their forces respectively.



After leaving Anandpur Sahib, the Tenth Lord reached banks of Sirsa rivulet in the ambrosial hours of the morning. He was being hotly chased by the enemy forces, another section of which was lying in ambush in the marshes ahead. However, notwithstanding the most critical situation, the Lord cried a halt to his forces and deputing a chosen few of his men for keeping the enemy at bay, engaged himself in the morning prayer of 'Asa-di-Var' right in the midst of the battle field. Thus, he did not allow a dent in the holy discipline of the daily prayers (NIT NEM).





Stopping for a night at Ropar, Guru Gobind Singh Ji reached the improvised fortrees at Chamkaur. Bhai Sahib Singh, Bhai Himmat Singh, Bhai Mohkam Singh of the five beloveds and Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jujhar Singh courted martyrdom in the holy presence of the Guru. The Lord of aigrette himself hailed the martyrdom of his sons. When at the time of the evening prayers, the Singh asked the Guru as to how he felt about the martyrdom of his sons, the Lord who sacrificed his all for the Panth, is reported to have replied :

"I have earned the blessings of the Lord for having sacrificed my sons for a good cause".

"The Khalsa, today, has earned a place of honour in Lord's Court."

At midnight, with the sound of a conch and clapping of hands, the Guru escaped through the enemy ranks, and the remaining Singhs including Bhai Sangat Singh courted martyrdom amidst cries of **'Khalsa, Khalsa and Akal Akal.'**





On the other hand, new chapters of heroism were being written in the foundations of Sirhind. Sahabzadas and holy Mother, Gujri were bought as prisoners to the cold Tower (Thanda Buraj) from the house of the treacherous Gangoo of Kheri. Moti-Ram a home-servant, supplied milk to the holy souls who did not have anything to eat since many days. When holy Mother Gujri impressed on her young 'SAHIBZADAS' to remain firm and steadfast in their Faith at the time of their departure for appearance in court, they had said 'Revered Mother, we will consider ourselves fortunate if we are sacrificed at the altar of our Faith.

**"Blessed indeed we'll be, Our Mother,
If we are sacrificed at our Faith's Altar."**

When, in the open Court, first, baits were thrown to the SAHIBZADAS and then, they were threatened with dire consequences, Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh bravely replied that

**"You are perhaps not aware of
the glorious traditions of our House'.**

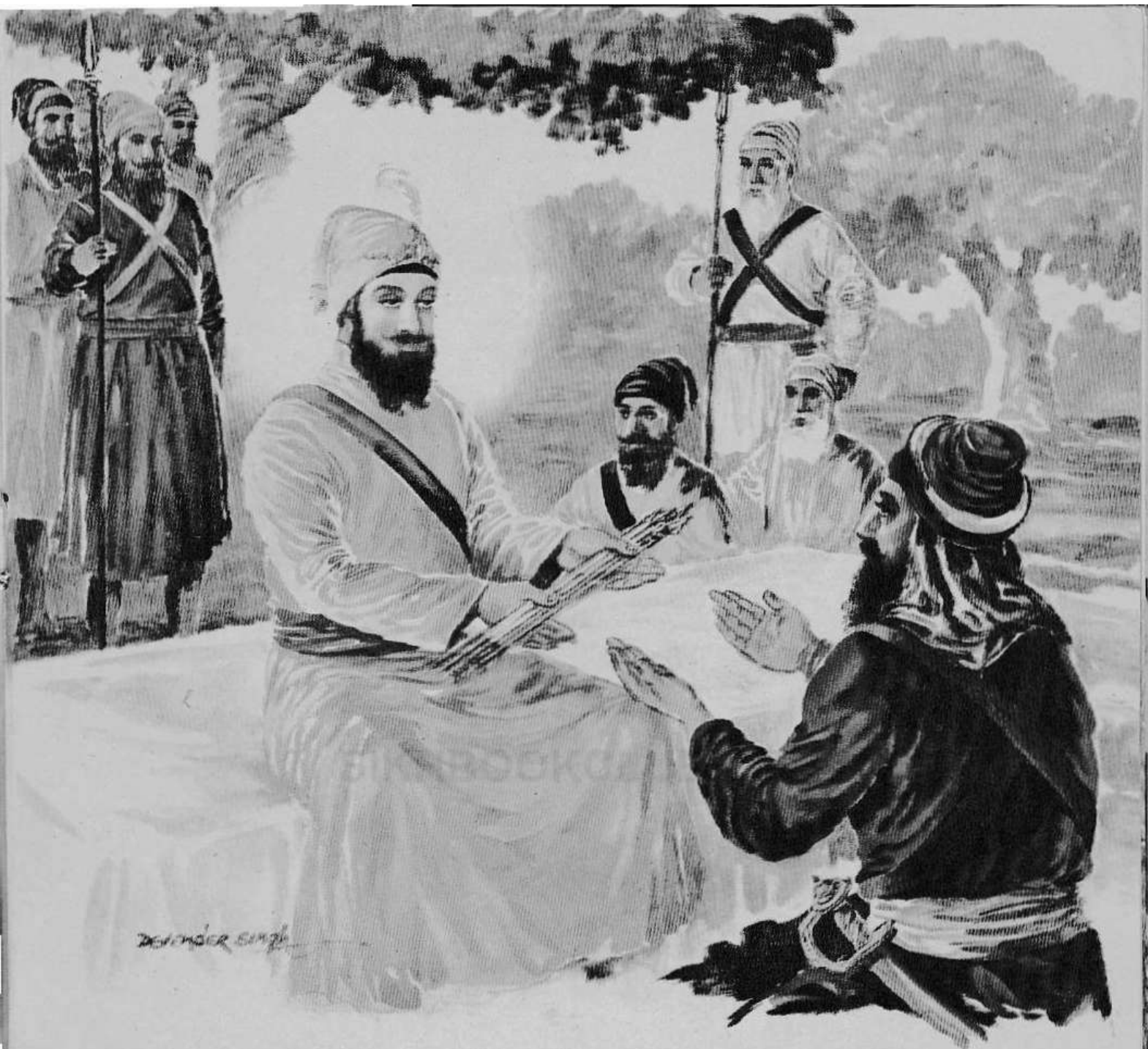
Said they,

**'In our Great House, this is the tradition
To uphold Faith even in face of destruction'.**

Orders were then issued to brick them alive. When the orders were being carried out and the Qazi once again tried to wean the young souls away from their path, they said again,

**We'll never foresake our Faith
We'll never accept your ways,
We'll rather give our heads
Like our Great ancestors did."**



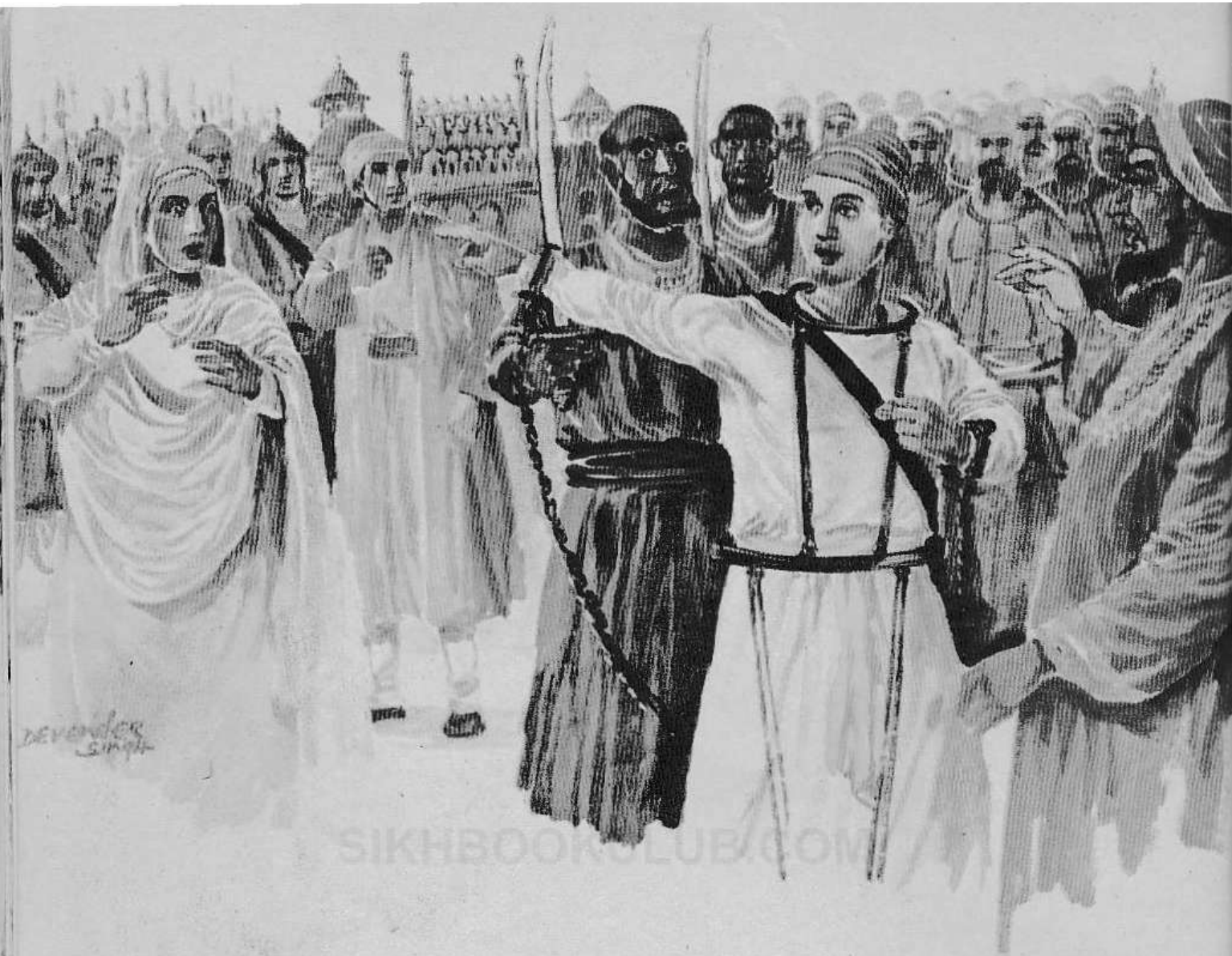


Mai Bhago took the lead to go round the villages to tell the people that no quarter should be given to those who have turned their back on the Guru. The forty 'Muktas' (emancipated Souls) responded to her call to court martyrdom at Muktsar.

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji wrote to Aurangzeb, the then king, an 'Epistle of Victory' - 'ZAFARNAMA' which contains a very significant verse to the effect that 'A stone may cause a dent in gold any may even break it but, even then, a stone remains essentially a worthless stone while the gold, in howsoever broken form, continues to command the same value' In another verse, the Guru said :

**"When the affairs are past redemption,
By all other means of peaceful intention,
It is just to wrest thy rights,
Through thy sword and a righteous fight'.**

At the holy city of Nanded (Maharashtra) Guru Gobind Singh decided to wind up his mortal manifestation saying, that 'the Ten holy souls in human forms had completed their Divine Mission' He then bowed his head before the holy Guru Granth Sahib and, thus, installed the Holy Word as the Guru in perpetuity. In this way, after merging his soul in the 'Holy Word' and his body in the Panth, he merged his Light in the Light Divine.



Guru Gobind Singh Ji sent Baba Banda Singh to Punjab together with a band of his chosen 'Singhs', with the blessings that whenever he engaged himself in a fight for righteousness, he could always depend upon his divine help.

When the 'Order of the kettle and the Sword' did ultimately prevail, under Banda Singh, the centuries old rule of tyranny was shaken to its very foundations. His victory over Sirhind heralded a rule which was universally acclaimed as a reign of righteousness.

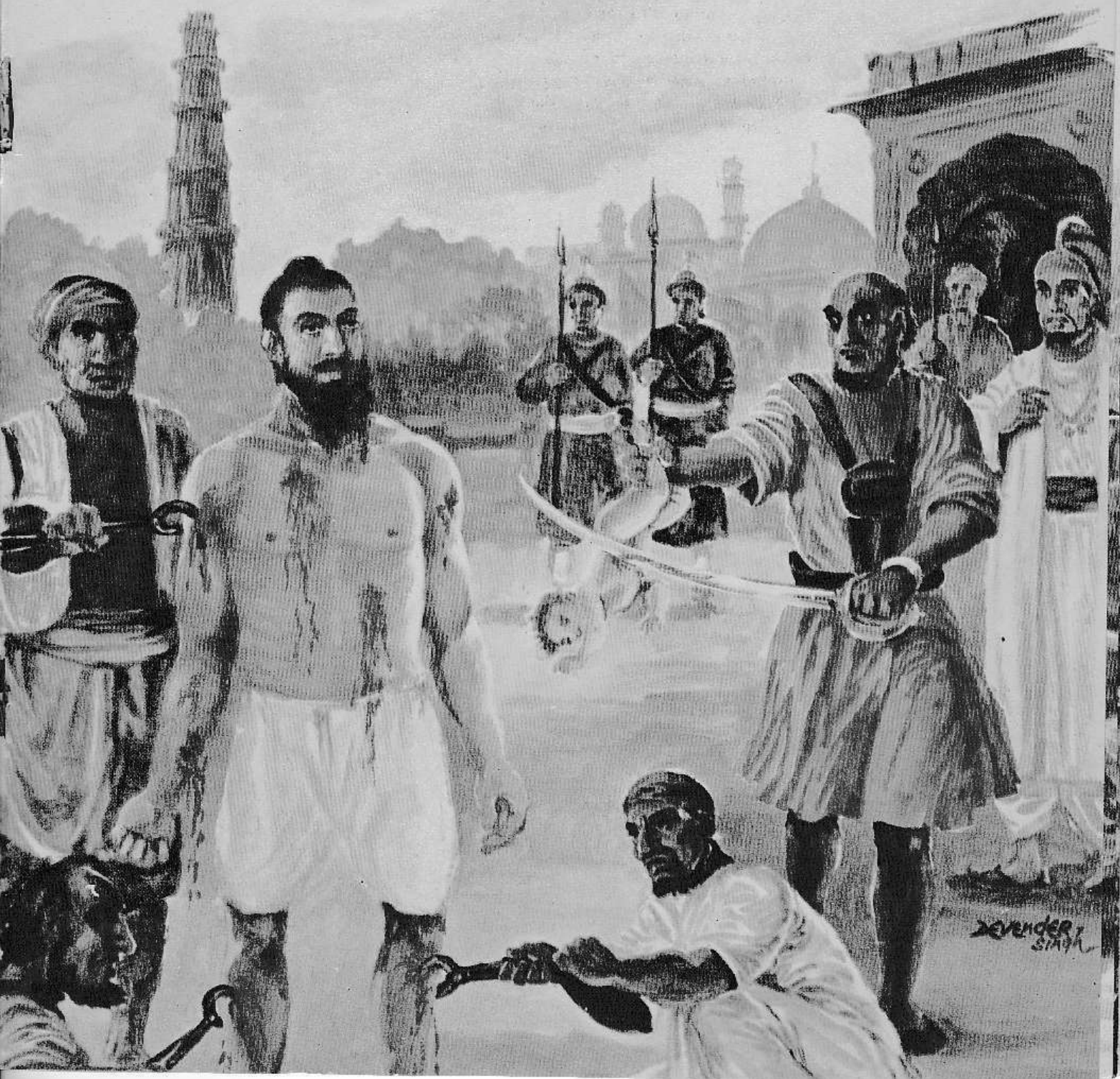
In 1716, however, the overwhelmingly large allied forces of the enemy stormed the improvised fortress of Gurdas Nangal to capture all its inmates. These Sikh prisoners were subjected to severest of persecutions, but, true to their Faith, not even a single of them relented even in the face of martyrdom. When questioned about their fate they would always say that they would willingly submit to the divine will. Taking them at last to Delhi, they were all put to death.

A newly baptised boy of very tender age was one of them. Learning about the impending fate of her son, her mother managed to have a royal decree issued for his release, on the plea that, being all too young, he had been misled; otherwise, he had nothing to do with Sikhism. Just when the boy was on the point of being executed, her mother showed the royal decree to the 'Kotwal' to secure the release of his son. When the executioner let him go, the boy protested as to why he was not been martyred alongwith his brethern-in-Faith. On being told that his mother had disclaimed his being a Sikh, he cried out aloud :

**'My mother is telling a lie;
I am heart and soul a Sikh and, as such,
there should be no delay in my martyrdom.
My real Mother is Holy Sahib Kaur and the
Holy Guru Gobind Singh is my Father.'**

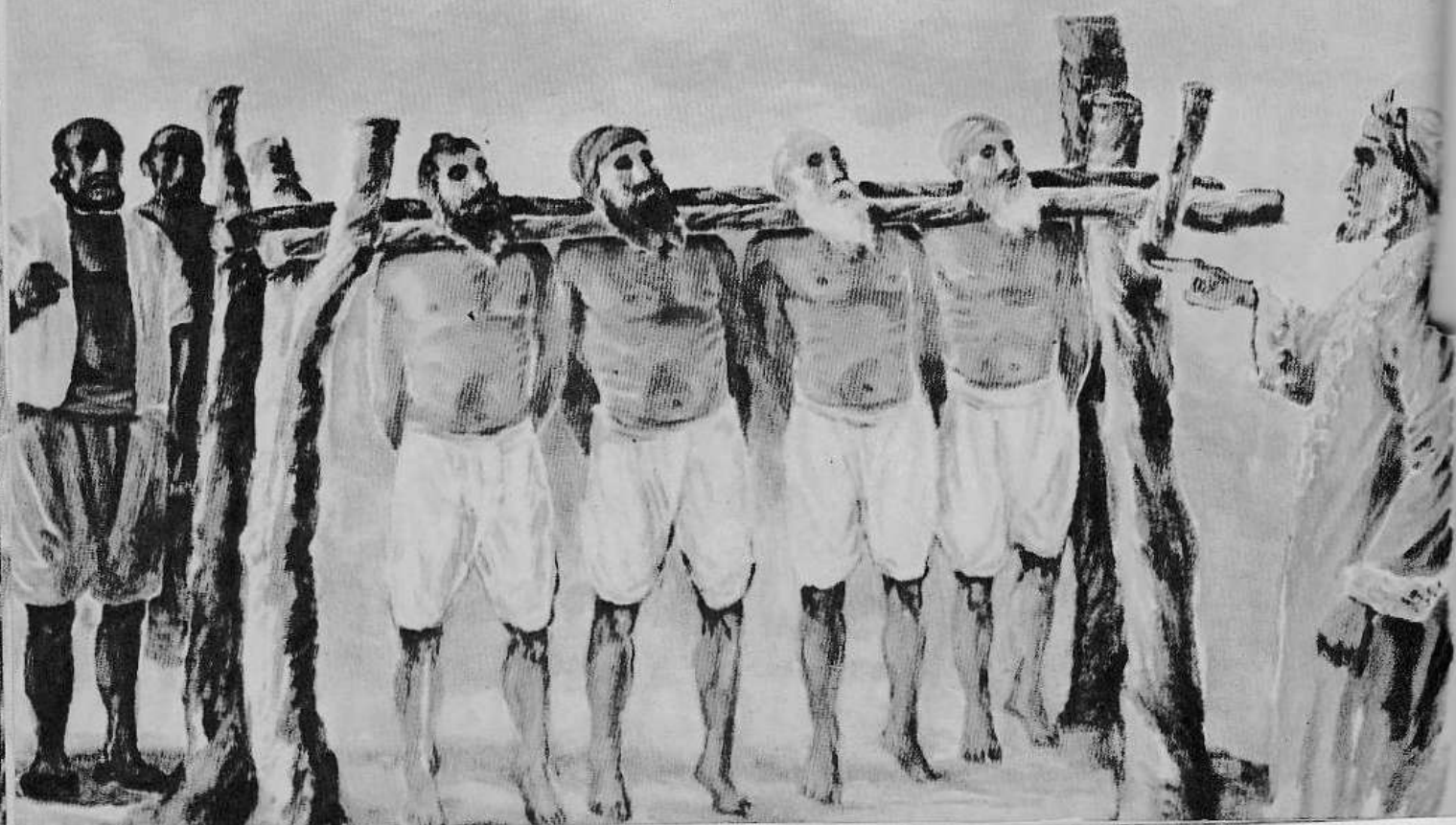
The boy was executed, but, he left a shining trail behind.

Baba Banda Singh and his close associate Baba Baj Singh were martyred at a site near 'Qutub Minar' and the mosque of Khawaja Biktihar Kaki. His flesh was pinched apart with pincers, his body was battered to bits and, worse still, his tender son, Ajai Singh was mercilessly martyred into pieces before his very eyes. But, Baba Banda Singh, the very embodiment of steadfastness, remained true to his Faith till his last breath. When Farukh Sayyar asked him as to how should he be treated, Baba Banda Singh showed the climax of courage by firmly telling him at his face: 'Just as a king treats another king'. When again questioned as to what type of death he would wish to meet, he said, 'the same as you want for yourself.'



This was the beginning of a long tradition of Martyrdom. A royal proclamation was issued to the effect that whosoever by Guru Nanak's Faith should be put to death forthwith wherever he may be found. Increasing number of Sikhs were, thereafter, tortured to death in every conceivable way. However, all glory to the Sikhs, that not even a single of them ever relented even in the face of sure death. Panth Parkash presents the picture of that age in these moving words :

Some were broken on the wheels,
And, some were hanged unto death;
Some were blown by the cannons,
And, some were stabbed unto death;
Of some, the heads were cut by sword,
And, some were drowned or dragged to death;
Many a more was battered to bits
And, thousands thus were done to death;
Seizing some, their heads were cut,
And, others lost their limbs to death;
Some were divested of their eyes;
And some were scalped unto death;
Thus, young or old, if he wore the hair,
He was sure to meet the death.



Abiding in village Van, Bhai Tara Singh engaged himself in the spread of religion and providing succour to the Sikhs in distress and, thus, earned the blessings of the Guru. When an expedition was sent from Lahore to apprehend him, a scout informed him in time to enable him to escape. However, Bhai Tara Singh refused to avail the opportunity saying,

**Why an escape bid should I make,
When martyrdom do I long to take.**

The informant ought to have known that the 'Body' of a Sikh is sanctified only by the touch of arms.

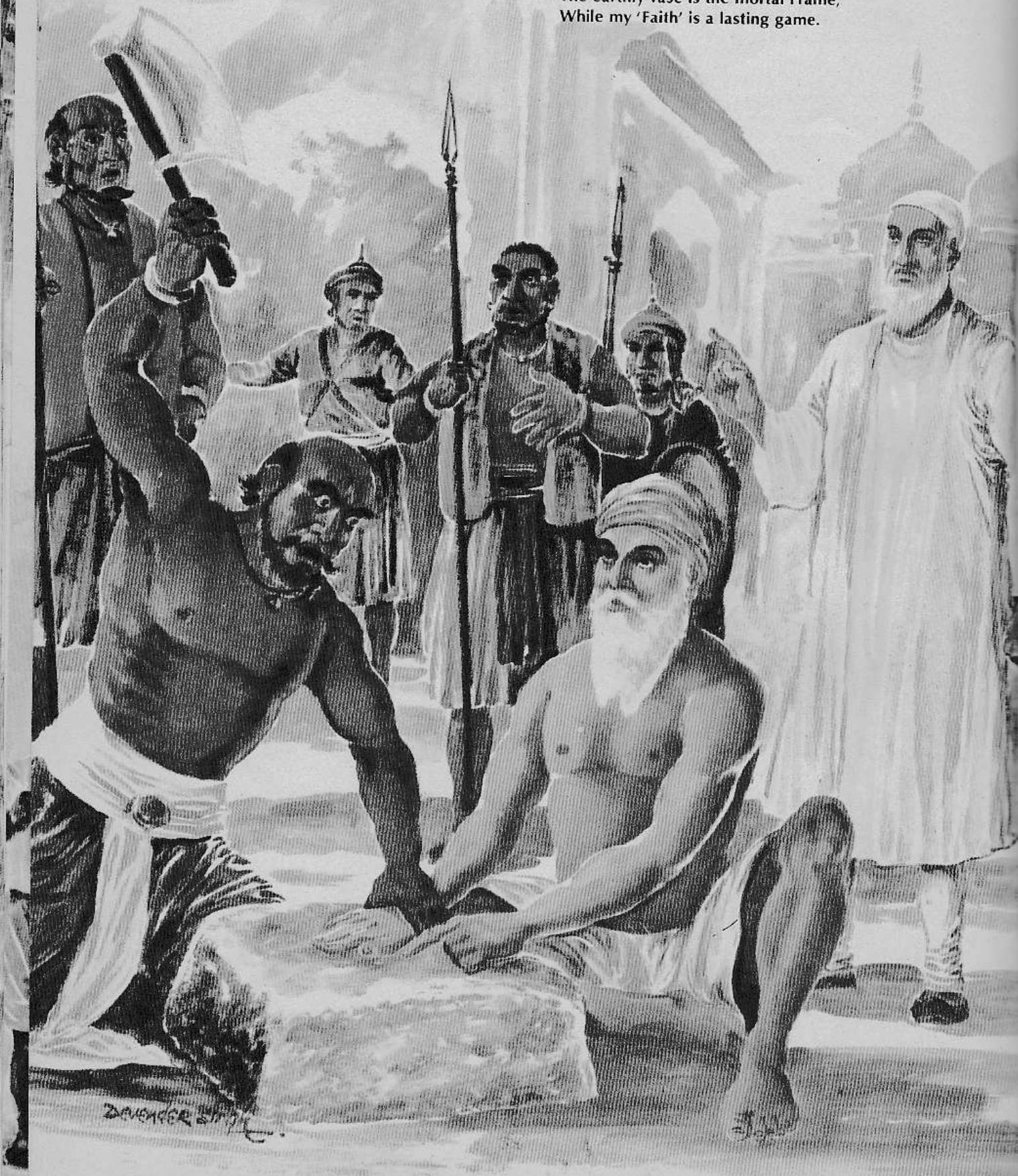
**That Human body alone is pure,
Which willingly suffers arms, for sure.'**

while fighting he was martyred



Bhai Mani Singh who was as true a Sikh as a real saint, had his limbs cut to pieces, but, even under the spell of such terrible tortures, these words were all the time on his lips :

What do I care for earthly vase
If my sacred 'Faith' is safe.
The earthly vase is the mortal Frame,
While my 'Faith' is a lasting game.



While on the one hand the Sikhs were courting martyrdom, on the other, generals like Jathedar Darbara Singh, Nawab Kapur Singh, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Sardar Jassa Singh Ramgarhia, Sardar Charat Singh Sakharchakia, Sardar Sham Singh Nagoke, Bhai Kahan Singh, Baba Binod Singh were writing new chapters in heroism. After the martyrdom of Bhai Tara Singh and Bhai Mani Singh, the 'Panth' decided to meet suitable retribution to the enemies of the 'Panth' by mounting frontal attacks on the Mughal strong holds, and by plundering the royal treasures. The common aim united the Sikhs in bonds of such uncommon love and self-sacrifice that :

None'ud ever stake his claim,

Nor'ud seek individual fame.

And

Their earnings they put in a common lot

To hold back some, none ever thought.

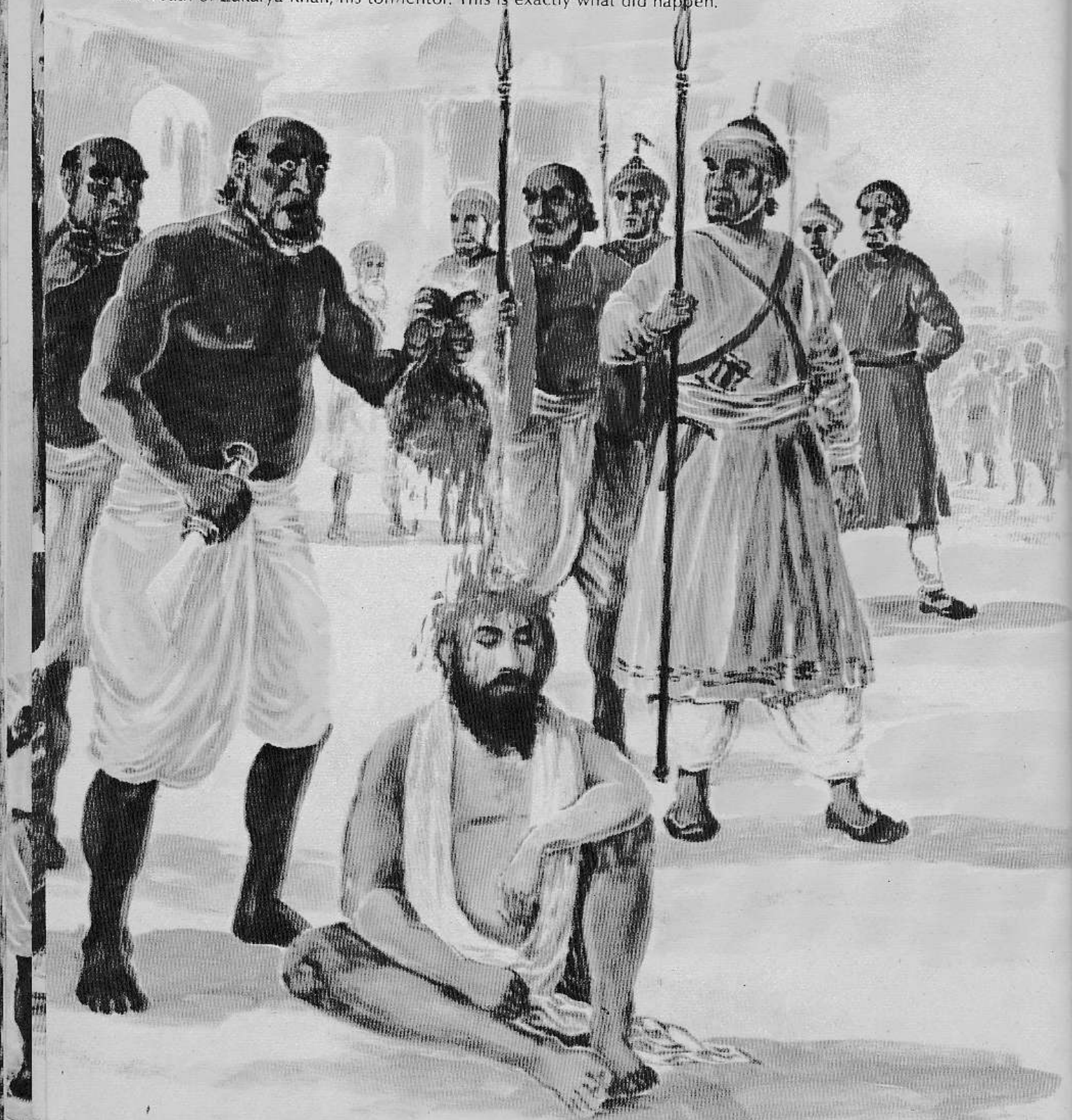


By courting death at a very tender age, Bhai Haqiqat Rai had spread new colours on the horizons of spring-the BASANT.

Bhai Tara Singh and his sister would carry cooked food on their heads to supply it to the suffering Sikhs. On secret information, both of them were arrested and brought to Lahore. The residents of Lahore, however, secured the release of his sister by paying a heavy ransom of Rupees One Lac, because, in those days it was sincerely believed that;

**It is hundred times worth more,
To save a Sikh or many more,
Than to serve the Brahmin or cow,
Or their ways in preference tow.**

To martyr Bhai Taru Singh, his hair was mercilessly scraped off along with his scalp. Bhai Taru Singh stood the ordeal most bravely and all the time kept on reciting Japji Sahib. He had vowed that he would leave his mortal frame only after the death of Zakarya Khan, his tormentor. This is exactly what did happen.



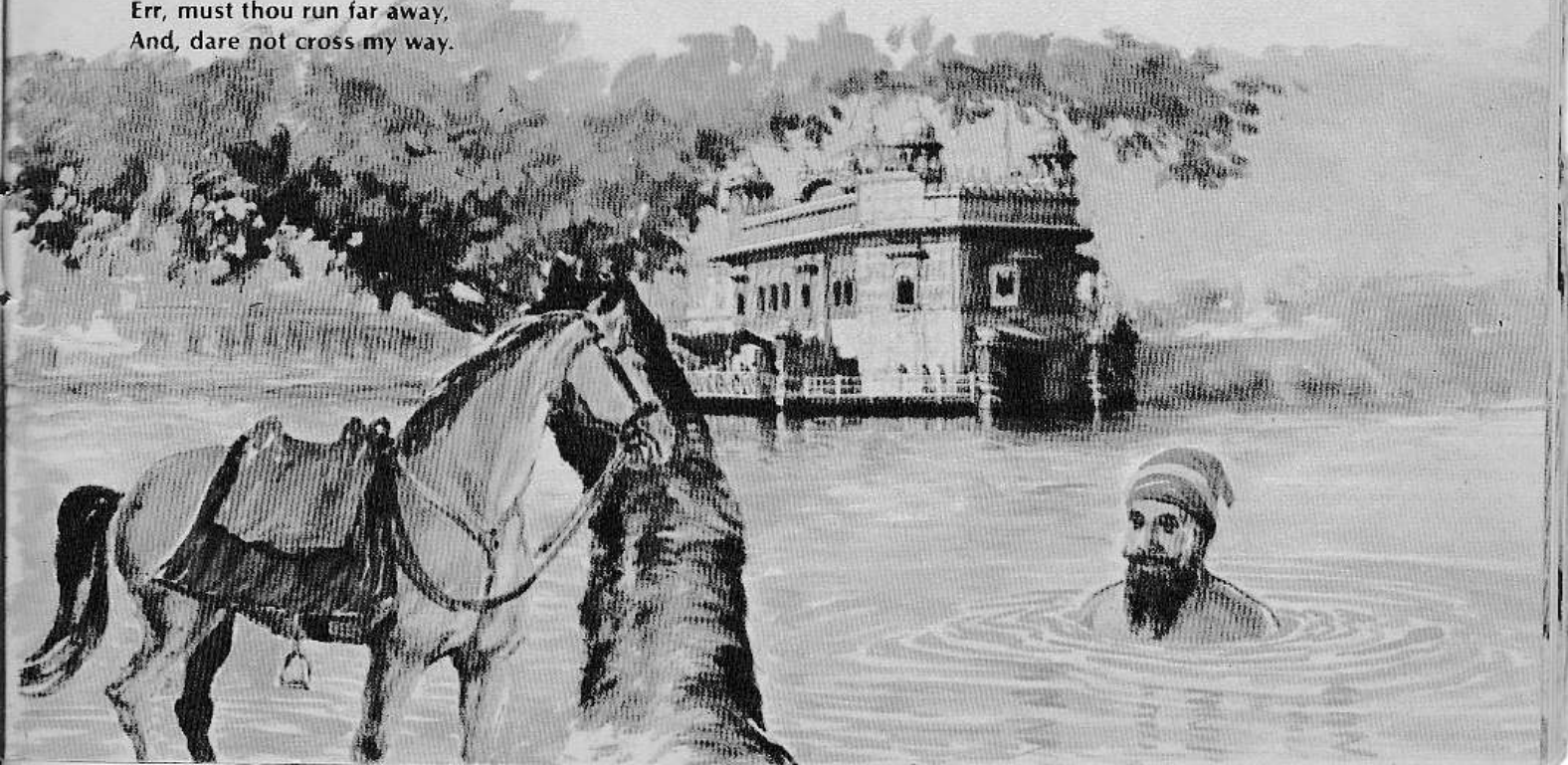


By chopping off the head of MASA RANGHAR, Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh meted out due punishment to him for violating the sanctity of Sri Harmandir Sahib. On coming to know about the enemy boast that the Sikhs came to Amritsar for a holy dip only at night and that they dare not do so in daylight, Bhai Sukha Singh, like a true Sikh, accepted the challenge. He came to Sri Amritsar in broad daylight, had a holy dip and shouted aloud.

For a holy dip, in daylight,
Have I come, and, not at night,
Hence, 'ud I force my way,
And, 'ud never steal my way.

And, bathing in the holy tank, he threw a counter challenge to the enemy.

Is there anyone who 'ud dare,
To come forth for a battle fair,
Err, must thou run far away,
And, dare not cross my way.



Bhai Subeg Singh was a government contractor who, for sometime, had served as the 'Kotwal' of Lahore as well. When he and his son, Bhai Shahbaz Singh, were being mounted on the wheels to be broken alive, the father and the son, on seeing the wheels in action exclaimed :

**Blessed is the hour, blessed the wheel,
Blessed Thy will, and blessed our weal,
For our Dharma to mount the wheel,
A boon it is for our bodies to feel.**

When the Qazi advised Bhai Subeg Singh to save his son, Shahbaz Singh, for the continuance of his lineage, Bhai Ji is reported to have said ;

**When our Guru for a righteous call,
Sacrificed himself and his all,
Why then should I save my son,
When he did not save his sons.**

The father and his son upheld the glorious traditions of Sikhism even at the cost of their lives.

Similarly, when Bhai Mehtab Singh was about to be martyred by fastening him down in the ground inside the fort and he was asked about his last wish, he had said :

'Let me have just a glimpse of Bhai Taru Singh after which you may do anything to me', because

**I am so much bound to him,
That I wish to die with him.**





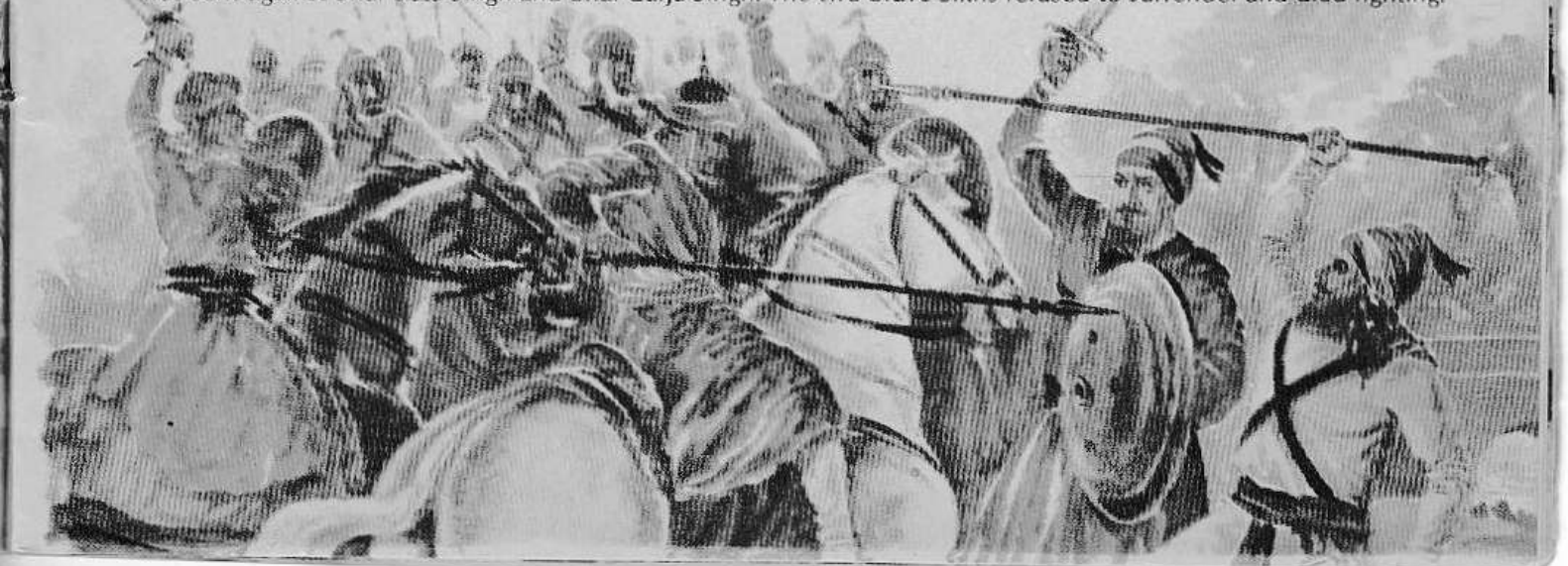
The Home hearth's of the Sikhs were plundered, their killing officially allowed and prices fixed on their heads — Rs. ten for a mere information about them, fifty for the actual arrest of a Sikh and eighty for his severed head. Under such conditions, the Sikhs were forced to seek shelters in hills, marshes and distant wastelands. Not once, but, five times over, the Sikhs had to pass through such an ordeal.

**Not once but five times over
Sikh had to seek such cover.**

On One such occasion, it was officially claimed tht the Sikhs had been completely wiped out from Punjab. To expose this claim, and to asset the sovereign status of the Sikhs, Bhai Bota Singh wrote a letter to Zakarya Khan,

**With a big stick in my hand,
On the road do I stand,
An anna for a cartload,
A pice for a donkey load,
Do I levy with full force,
Sovereign, the Sikhs are as perforce,
Let know Khano, my sister-in-law,
That Singh Bota knows no Law.**

And, thus posting himself near Serai Nuruddin, he started collecting tolls from as the passers by. At last a huge force was sent against Bhai Bota Singh and Bhai Garja Singh. The two brave Sikhs refused to surrender and died fighting.



From 1st to 30th June 1746 countless number of Sikhs were killed in the marshes of Kahnuwan, for which it is known as 'the smaller holocaust.' The brave Sikhs were content to eat half-baked food cooked on their sheilds placed on the burning sand, but, even under such conditions they uphold the Cause of Sikhism. Even while passing their days in jungles, they never wavered in their faith in Holy Gurbani, meditation on the holy Name and service of the people.





Bhai Rattan Singh Bhangoo has drawn a very moving picture of the camp life of the Sikhs living in Jungles in these words :

Some with, Rabab 'ud recite the hymn,
 Some with care their horses tend
 Some their arms 'ud fondly mend.
 Some 'ud charge their bows or guns,
 Of some the fingers charged the quoit
 And some 'ud press the Singhs in quiet
 Some 'ud Fan the Sikhs with hands
 Some fetched the water from distant Lands
 To help bathe their fellow Singhs.
 Thus no Singh rivalled any Singh.
 Each was keen to serve the Singhs.

It is after hearing and reading about such thing that Cunningham had remarked that lofty thinking, Divine Faith and baptism of the 'Amrit' marks out the Sikhs as singularly brave people.



Mir Mannu went to the ultimate limits of persecuting the Sikhs, including their womenfolk. He would have their children cut to pieces have them strewn into strings to be put around the necks of their mothers. However, the brave Sikh women bore all their tortures with the name of God on their lips. A doggerel expressed the Sikh sentiments thus :

Mir Mannu is our Sickle
We the fodder for him to mow,
The more he reaps
The more we grow.



On learning about the desecration of Sri Darbar Sahib, at Damdama Sahib, Baba Deep Singh immediately started towards Amritsar after offering prayers and taking a pledge that he would avenge the sacrilegious act by offering his head in the holy premises. When on the outskirts of Sri Amritsar his head was severed in a hand to hand fight with Jamal Khan some of the Sikhs accompanying him remarked, 'Baba Deep Singh you have yet to redeem thy pledge because Sri Amritsar is still at a distance of about two miles' Baba Deep Singh immediately retrieved the head in his left hand and fighting and cutting his way through the enemy ranks, he managed to reach the holy precincts of Sri Harmandir Sahib where he placed his head and left for his heavenly abode.





Abdali led repeated invasions on Punjab with a view to make it a part of the Afghan Empire. Gathering at Sri Akal Takhat Sahib the Sikhs passed a Gurmata that they would not allow Punjab to become part of either the Afghan or Mughal Empire. For such purpose the Sikhs resolved that after sending the families to safer places, a decisive battle should be fought with the Abdali. However, Abdali forestalled their move by taking them unaware in a sudden surprise attack near Kup on 5th Feb. 1762. This is known as 'Bigger Holocaust' in which about fifty thousand Sikhs lost their lives. However, even such a huge loss could not cause even the slightest dent in the morale of the high spirited Khalsa.

The same night, after his evening prayer, as a Sikh was passing through the heaps of the dead bodies, he was raising the slogan :

**Khalsa now is purer and stronger
Shorn of weakling & the adulterers.**



When on the eve of 'Bigger holocaust', Sardar Charat Singh Sukarchakia counselled that Misl Sardars should be allowed to fight under their own individual banners, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia strongly denounced this suggestion and gave a new direction to the Panth by saying :

**'Let not the Misls divide the Panth
Let us unite to save the Panth'.**

The very embodiment of courage, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, acquitted himself admirably as a leader in this battle. When his Body guard, in an effort to save his Master encircled by the enemy, whipped his horse as that it should rush out of the battlefield Sardar Jassa Singh shouted at him thus :

**'A grave injustice 'ud thou do me,
By driving out my horse and me.
The Singhs, for sure, 'ud mock at me,
That Jassa Singh from field did flee.
How would them I ever face
Would n't mock they, at my face ?
I am known as king of Khalsa,
Don't you make me jackal of Khalsa,**

Sardar Jassa Singh suffered twenty two wounds on his person in the battle with an equal number on the body of Sardar Charat Singh as well.

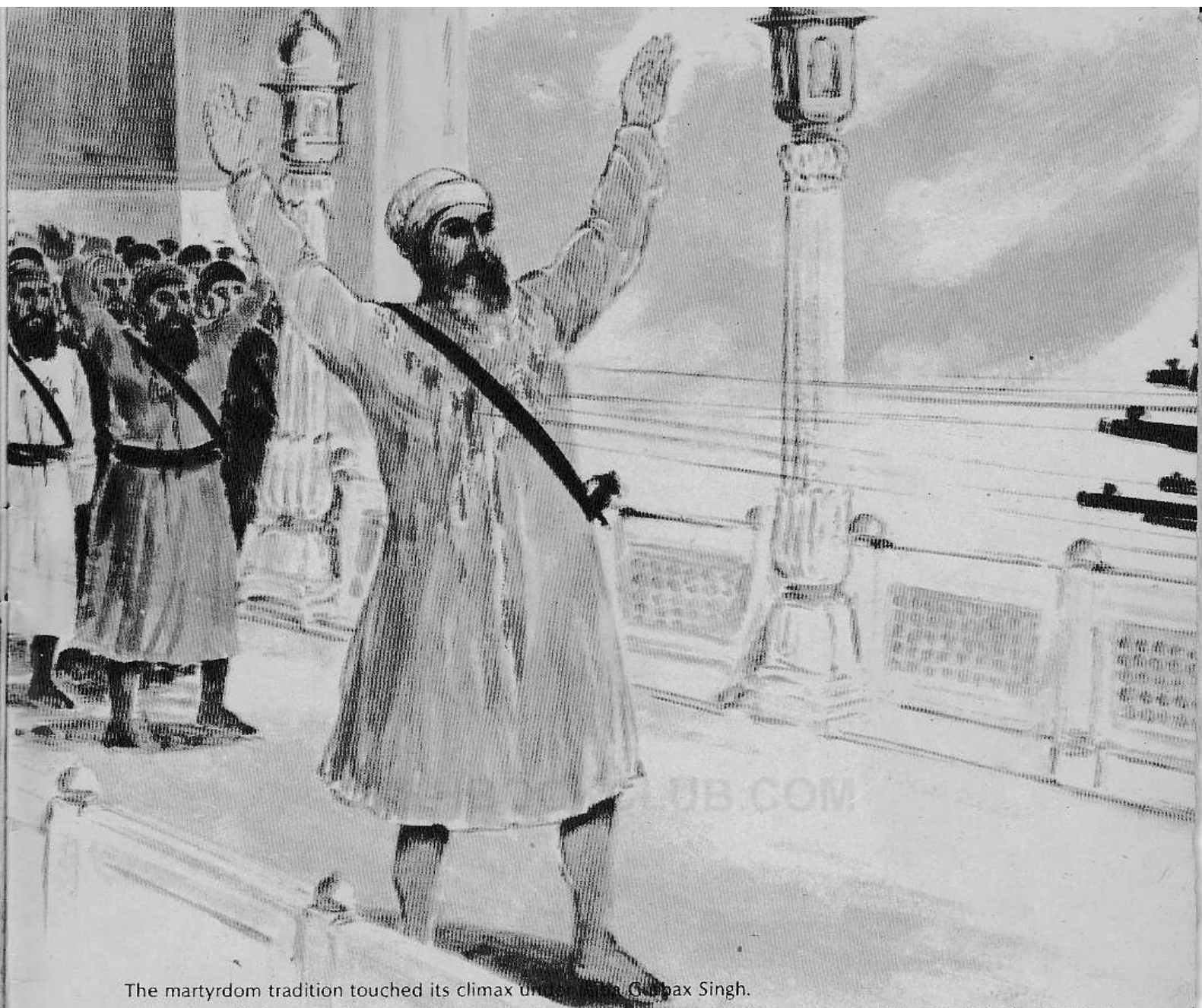


Even in the face of increasing number of martyrdoms, the Khalsa was making its presence felt everywhere. En-route Kabul, when Abdali was camping on the bank of river Jhelum the Sikhs stormed into his very camp, at which he exclaimed :

**They, for sure, have something Divine.—
To frustrate every effort of mine.**

They are certainly blessed by God and, as such, no body could ever defeat them.





The martyrdom tradition touched its climax with Baba Gurbax Singh.

At the time of his martyrdom, he attired himself in saffron robes, recited five stanzas of Sri Anand Sahib, disarmed himself of all defensive weapons like armour and shield. After hearing the holy hymns from Sri Guru Granth Sahib, he personally offered the prayer to the following effect :

"May I be a true Sikh till my last breath.

May the hair be on my head till my last breath."

And, when asked as to what he would say to the Lord of Plume (Sri Guru Gobind Singh) when he attained to His Court, after his martyrdom, Baba Gurbax Singh is reported to have said that he would beseech him to take care of his Panth:

**Let, O'Lord, the Sikhs prevail,
In Punjab and its fair vales,
Plunderers from the south or west,
Why its riches do they wrest ?**

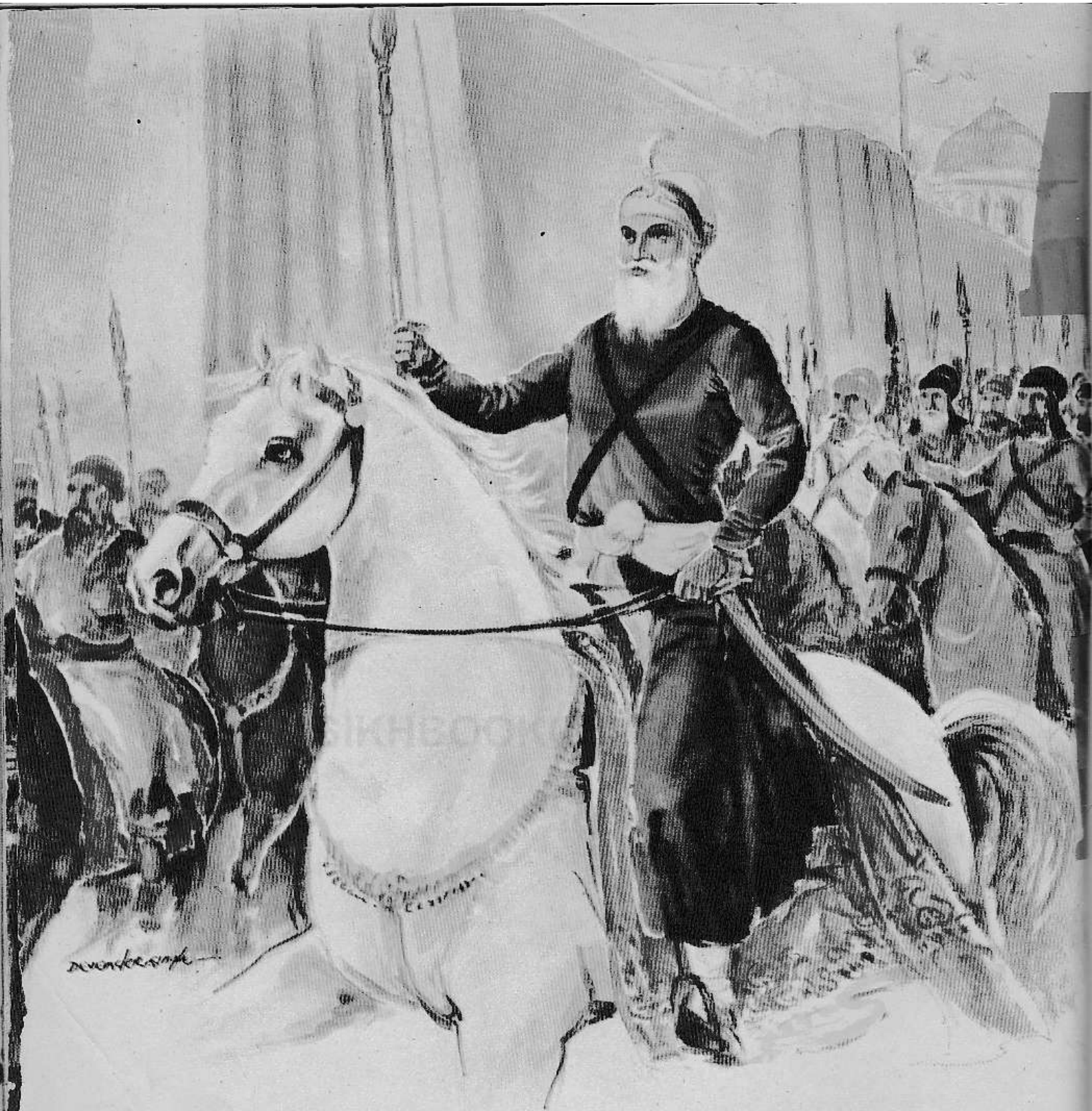
Delineating the high principles of the concept of Martyrdom he had said 'He alone is a martyrdom who never traces his steps backward or relents.'

**"A firm step forward bestows the honour,
A Single step backwards breeds dishonour;
Once the enemy is on thy head,
Face him bravely and fear shed.**

Stepping boldly forward he courted martyrdom on the bridge leading to Darbar Sahib. Never, for once, did he ever looked back for,

**"Let anyone in the world should say
Died a Sikh in a cowardly way."**

When he did breathe his last, the words 'Khalsa ! Khalsa !' were on his lips.



These martyrdoms put an end to the age of tyranny as also the tyrants. The Khalsa came out victorious and the glory of the Panth prevailed. The Khalsa captured Lahore under Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who was declared as 'Sultan-ul-Qaum'. Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia died on 22nd October 1983 and, out of high regards for him, the Panth cremated him near Baba Atal Sahib, where his sepulchre still stands.

