

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BHAJ SAHIB RANDHIR SINGH



Translated by
Dr. TRILOCHAN SINGH

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FREEDOM FIGHTER, REFORMER, THEOLOGIAN,
SAINT AND HERO OF LAHORE CONSPIRACY CASE,
FIRST PRISONER OF THE GURDWARA REFORM MOVEMENT

Translated with Introductory Thesis
By DR. TRILOCHAN SINGH

This Translation is dedicated to the Sacred Memory of MOTHER KARTAR KAUR whose heroic struggle to brave the sorrow and sufferings for freedom and faith were an inspiration to all who knew her, met her and saw her facing with stoic endurance and calm patience untold misery, threats, oppression for the country's freedom while her husband, the hero of this book, languished and suffered in-human treatment in British prisons for seventeen years.

CONTENTS

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTORY THESIS	4
COMMENTS.....	38
CHAPTER 1 - AWAKENING OF FAITH	40
CHAPTER 2 - DETACHMENT AND PREPARATIONS	47
CHAPTER 3 - RENUNCIATION AND BAPTISM	51
CHAPTER 4 - SEARCH FOR THE MYSTIC WORD (NAM)	59
CHAPTER 5 - ILLUMINATION OF DIVINE NAME	64
CHAPTER 6 - THE VISION OF GOD	68
CHAPTER 7 - BLESSEDNESS AND DIVINE VISION	73
CHAPTER 8 - HOLY MOTHER GULAB KAUR	76
CHAPTER 9 - IN THE KHALSA COLLEGE.....	79
CHAPTER 10 - ARREST AND DEFENCE	81
CHAPTER 11 - IN THE MULTAN PRISON	89
CHAPTER 12 - FROM MULTAN TO HAZARIBAGH PRISON.....	97
CHAPTER 13 - JAILER VADHAVA RAM'S ATROCITIES	104
CHAPTER 14 - THE ART OF MAKING GOLD	110
CHAPTER 15 - PRISONERS' ESCAPE	118
CHAPTER 16 - CLAIRVOYANCE OF KIRPA SINGH AND MORE HARASSMENT	125
CHAPTER 17 - STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS AND JUSTICE	145
CHAPTER 18 - DEATH OF KEHAR SINGH AND DEPARTURE FOR MADRAS	163
CHAPTER 19 - RAJAHMUNDARY PRISON	172
CHAPTER 20 - ON THE WAY TO NAGPUR PRISON	180
CHAPTER 21 - FASTS AND TORTURES	189
CHAPTER 22 - MORE TROUBLES IN NAGPUR JAIL.....	202
CHAPTER 23 - THE SPIRIT AND PERSONALITY OF THE Sikhs	221
CHAPTER 24 - FROM NAGPUR TO LAHORE.....	234
CHAPTER 25 - MEETING WITH BHAGAT SINGH, THE GREAT PATRIOT	241
APPENDIX I	248
APPENDIX II	250

TRANSLATOR'S INTRODUCTORY THESIS

In the first two decades of this century, when the cry of freedom was a distant dream, decadence and demoralization had corroded the foundations of religious, social and political integrity of our people, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh emerged as the most brilliant star of a new epoch, an apostle of Sikh faith, who did not lecture or sermonize but poured his thoughts and experiences through stirring divine songs; a reformer, who did not change society by precepts but by example; a revolutionary, who threw away the pride and position of an upper class family and plunged into the most daring revolt against British Imperialism at a time when even radical politicians did not dare to raise their little finger for freedom and liberty.

Parentage and Childhood:

Bhai Randhir Singh was born on Sunday, July 7, 1878. His father, Sardar Natha Singh, started his career as a young Primary School teacher and through hard work and passion for higher studies, he rose to be High Court Judge, a position held by very few Sikhs during those days. Son of *Lambardar* Basawa Singh of Narangwal (Ludhiana), Natha Singh was born in the year 1852 A.D. Well built in body, his height at the age of 25 is recorded as 5 feet 8 inches. After Matriculating he became a primary school teacher in 1870. He took diploma in teaching as a private candidate and was posted as Headmaster Middle School, Ludhiana in 1874. For a few months he was transferred to Amritsar in 1878, but he again joined as Mathematics teacher and Superintendent Boarding House of Government High School, Ludhiana on a pay of Rs. 90 per month. In 1881, he passed the highest Persian and Arabic examination known as *Munshi Fazil*. The next year, he was appointed District Inspector of Schools in the grade of Rs.100.

Sardar Natha Singh now aspired for greater position and a profession of prestige than that of a low paid staff of the education department. In June, 1881 he sought the permission of the Chief Court of Punjab to appear for Law Examination without attending the classes of the Punjab University. The permission was granted (Copy, Docket No. 1779 of June, 1881 from Registrar, Chief Court of Punjab States: "In reply to his No. 1116 of 6th ultimo the undersigned is directed to state that the Judges are pleased to permit Natha Singh at the first examination in Law of the Punjab University College without attending the classes") and S. Natha Singh passed the successive Law Examinations securing position in merit list.

After becoming a full-fledged lawyer, he resigned from his post of District Inspector of Schools. He even sought the permission of Bench Court of Nahan to practise in the Sirmur State, which was immediately granted, but as far as we know, he did not go to Nahan. He might have gone there to fight some cases.

In 1888, he was offered the post of Tehsildar by the Agent of the Governor General in Baluchistan but he accepted a similar offer from Maharaja Hira Singh of Nabha. He was soon promoted and made Canal *Nazim* and then a *Nazim*. The Patiala State then offered him the post of Translator of Law books which he accepted and his first commendable work was his Punjabi translation of the *Indian Penal Code* under the title "*Hind Dandavali*". Reviewing the book Mr. Bishan Das Puri wrote: "Sardar Natha Singh Grewal, Law Translator of Patiala State, has made a valuable addition to Punjabi literature. The task accomplished by him is by no means easy. The Punjabi equivalent of legal terms are felicitous and the style is marked by perspicuity. The book will be particularly useful to those who know only Punjabi as they will find in it such legal knowledge as bears upon their daily conduct in an easily accessible form". Mr. A. Chatterjee of the Punjab Chiefs Court

wrote, "I hope it will prove useful to the Government and promote the progress of Punjabi language which I have so much to heart". Sardar Sujan Singh, Foreign Minister, Patiala State calls it "an excellent production" and says, "It was a very difficult task to render a standard Law Book into a language which is not very rich in its vocabulary and which has for its most part been neglected by the educated class of the Province. The success which has been achieved by Sardar Natha Singh will, I believe, remove many of the misgivings of the people and encourage the study and cultivation of mother tongue. The translation is in idiomatic Punjabi and I consider it more intelligible than the one which is said to be in standard Urdu. The author deserves the hearty thanks of the Punjabi speaking people and the State is to be congratulated on securing the services of such a learned man for such an important and difficult task. It is hoped that the labours of this highly talented Translator will be duly appreciated both by the Patiala State and Public." (Sardar Dasaunda Singh wrote: "The language employed is clear, simple and equivalents of legal terms are chosen with extreme care and in every respect it is a very faithful rendering of the original. Hind Dandavali is a convincing proof of the fact that Punjabi is capable of discharging all the functions of a Court language and it is bound to serve as an eye-opener for those who looked upon Punjabi as a mere jargon of ignorant people.")

Sardar Gurdit Singh of Patiala wrote: "The author has tried his best to render into good idiomatic Punjabi. To achieve such a success in a first attempt in quite a new field is not an ordinary thing and deserves appreciation at the hands of all who have the cause of Punjabi at heart." Sardar Uttam Singh First grade Lawyer of Jullundur wrote: "It is a faithful rendering of the original. The author employed words and phrases of everyday use of Punjabi people. He took great pains in finding out most appropriate words and terms conveying the sense and idea of the original and rendered a great service to the Punjabis." Another eminent lawyer, Sardar Bachan Singh wrote: The book is the best of its kind and is an object lesson to the opponents of Punjabi who openly declare that the Punjabi language is not expressive and that its vocabulary is not rich enough to express the full sense of the language. Each and every word of the original has been quite correctly translated and in many places the words chosen are most expressive and simpler than the Arabic words used in Urdu translation.")

Sardar Natha Singh acquired fame for seasoning justice with mercy. He distinguished himself as a well versed scholar of Punjabi, Persian and English literature.

Bhai Randhir Singh's mother, Punjab Kaur was the descendant of a very eminent saint, Bhai Bhagtu, a disciple of Guru Arjan and Guru Hargobind. Family tradition says that Bhai Bhagtu had predicted that for seven generations there would always be a saint in the family, and the daughters of the direct descendants would be pious, truthful, sharp-tongued and whatever they utter with an inspired conviction would come to pass. Punjab Kaur was from the seventh generation and whenever she blessed or cursed anyone, it was taken for granted that the thing would happen. (Bibi Bachiter Kaur daughter of Bhai Randhir Singh's maternal uncle is the living saint in the family. At the young age of 17, she came under the influence of Sant Attar Singh and she had opportunity to meet her saintly cousin, Bhai Randhir Singh, when he came out of the prison. She spent her whole life in meditations and prayers and shuns public appearance. Quiet, shy, spiritually illumined Bachiter Kaur is the one dedicated soul I have seen who has spent her whole life in the purity and perfection of divinely inspired ideals. She avoids meeting people and for her the only life is the life of contemplation and communion with God.)

While his father S. Natha Singh was a stern, judicious, liberal and profound scholar, his mother Punjab Kaur was extremely sensitive, strong-willed, pious and abstemious. Randhir Singh inherited

his learning and scholarship from his father but he imbibed the piety and abstemious habits of his mother. He inherited the qualities of the head from his father and the qualities of the heart from his mother. He was a very healthy lad, bubbling with energy and playful spirit. At the age of seven or eight he fell from the roof of a two storey building face downwards. He was taken in a critical condition to the Civil Hospital, Ludhiana. For three days he struggled for survival and regained consciousness on the fourth day. "He will be a terrible fighter and a man of great will power", said the Civil Surgeon attending him, to his father. It is during this fall that his sharp and aquiline nose became slightly flattened like the nose of Buddha in his far-eastern images.

Sensitive School Boy:

Randhir Singh had most of his school education at Nabha. He showed exceptional intelligence and a quick grasp over his studies. A lover of beautiful things, compassionate to the poor and helpless, he was an extremely sensitive lad of strong likes and dislikes.

Once, on the way to school, he saw a beautiful flower in the garden of Maharaja Hira Singh. He was so enchanted by its colours and beauty that every day on the way to and back from school, he stood there admiring and feasting on the beauty and colours of the flower. He asked the gardener to take the utmost care of that particular lovely flower and not allow anyone to pluck it.

Early one morning on his way to school, Randhir Singh found the flower missing from the garden. The gardener pathetically told him that one of his schoolmates, a son of an important State official had plucked it, probably to tease him. Sighing for the lost flower Randhir Singh fainted. He could not bear the thought that the most enchanting thing that he had seen in life had disappeared for ever. He was taken home in an unconscious state. When Maharaja Hira Singh, the ruler of Nabha came to know about it, he rushed to Sardar Natha Singh's house to assure the boy that he would get planted a whole garden of these flowers for him. The boy regained consciousness for a time and then sighing for the lost flower he fainted again. This sensitiveness to things beautiful and sublime remained an ingrained trait of his character all his life.

He had a compassionate and forgiving heart and throughout his life he went out of the way to persuade wrong doers and sinners to give up the path of evil. A servant stole gold ornaments from his father's house. He was arrested and imprisoned. Feeling compassion for the servant, he urged his father to get his release after which he was employed again to accompany Randhir Singh to Lahore where he was to join College. But on Ludhiana station this ungrateful servant robbed Randhir Singh of all his money while he was asleep and disappeared never to be found again. When I once asked him why he gave such a long rope to evil-doers he said, "*It is God alone who can judge who is really virtuous and who is really sinner. The greatest sinner can become the noblest saint. Our attitude towards evil-doers should be one of compassion and not of hatred. Only those who are wilfully cruel should be severely dealt with or avoided*".

Poet and Sportsman in College:

In his college days Randhir Singh was energy personified. His athletic form, square shoulders, broad chest, stout and well built body with muscular arms were trained to all kinds of sports. He was student of Government College, Lahore from the year 1896 to 1898 and of Mission College from the year 1898 to 1900.

He took keen interest in literature and sports. Playing hockey was a passion with him. For a year or two he was the Captain of the college team. Having a prodigious memory, he had memorized many passages from Persian and Punjabi poetry. Once when I was questioning him about his

interests in college life, he surprised me by quoting freely Hafiz, Rumi and Punjabi Sufi poets. He was twenty then. In College he wrote poetry in Urdu and Punjabi about little events that took place in his life (about 75 such Urdu poems written by Bhai Randhir Singh during college life have been preserved by his classmate Ranjit Singh of Gujjarwal. Love and friendship, devotion and the spirit of sacrifice are the major themes of these poems). He wrote a poem on the departure of his Principal (an Englishman) to U.K. on leave. He wrote other poems on small incidents which moved his deeply emotional soul. Although he took some interest in studying the Bible, for the teaching of which there was special arrangement in the college, he took practically no interest in religion or God, and he knew nothing about Sikhism beyond the traditional knowledge which Sikh boys get by their upbringing. Later on the revolutionary and cataclysmic events of his life smothered the poet and sportsman in him. The poet became the singer and bard of God and the sportsman became relentless fighter for freedom.

The Arya Samaj movement had set in motion intellectual pugilism loaded with an arsenal of abuse. The superiority of Hinduism was shown by condemning and making fun of the prophets and scriptures of other religions particularly Christianity, Islam and Sikhism ('I have read the Satyarth Prakash, the Arya Samaj Bible. I have not read a more disappointing book. The Arya Samajist is never so happy as when he is abusing other religions. A portion of the Punjab Press is simply scurrilous. It is at times even filthy. I have gone through the torture of reading many extracts. These sheets are conducted by the Arya Samajists.' Mahatma Gandhi: Young India, June 1924).

As Romain Rolland puts it, "Swami Dayananda thundered against all forms of thoughts other than his own, the only true one". Lahore had thus become by this time a hot-bed of pseudo-religious monstrosities devoured by morbid passion to proclaim the superiority of one's own religion. Idlers, buffoons, fishers in troubled waters and religious charlatans played havoc with the sentiments of illiterate and sentimental Punjabis. In such a pungent atmosphere Bhai Randhir Singh found nothing that could attract his soul. Like other young men of his generation getting western education, he naturally turned his back to religion presented by such an atmosphere. Every student who was harassed by bullies found protection under the fraternal care of Randhir Singh. He stood all alone against students who frightened and oppressed weaker students and twice he fought a pitched battle against them of the type he had to fight against prison wardens years later when they came to force-feed beef-soup after his fast even without water for 40 days.

The Call of the Spirit:

His father, Natha Singh, knew that out of all his sons Randhir Singh was the most promising lad. He was conscious of his special gifts and talents. From time to time he wrote letters, tendering affectionate advice to his sensitive son. One such letter changed the whole direction, temper, and purpose of his life.

"If you want to pass both the B.A. and B.L. examinations this year", wrote his father in January 1900 A.D., "you must read Guru Nanak's *Japji* every morning". The son took the advice literally and like a dutiful son, not only recited *Japji* every morning but gave more time to reading the hymns of the Guru than to his studies. Whether the *Japji* helped him to pass the examination or not, it certainly brought about a sudden, inner conversion which Pratte describes as "change of taste, the most momentous one that ever occurs in human experience" (J.B. Pratt: "The Religious Consciousness" Chapt XIII).

Bhai Randhir Singh has described this "opening of the soul's eye", in the first chapter of this autobiography. He felt that some veil over his heart was torn away, so abruptly, that it left a

wound behind. For the first time he felt that an unknown Power had set him perfectly loose from the world and kindled in him a passionate thirst to know God. His soul became a furnace whose leaping flames were eager to burn everything dross around him in his eager search for truth and the light of wisdom. In this inner agony, he met a Yogi whose miraculous occult powers attracted him like a magnet, but whose obnoxious habit of smoking repelled him and gave him a stunning shock.

Marriage:

Randhir Singh was married at quite an early age to Kartar Kaur, daughter of S. Bachan Singh and Daya Kaur, the Sidhus of Gumti Kalan in Nabha State. The marriage party went on horses and decorated chariots, while the bridegroom rode an elephant acquired from some princely family. Maharaja Hira Singh, the ruler of Nabha, sent a cash gift for the bride. Indian marriages during those days were psychologically so arranged that it was actually an organized and staged romance between two immature minds culminating in a lasting conjugal happiness. In spite of all the pomp and show of marriage, Randhir Singh and Kartar Kaur did not see each other for a year or more even after the marriage. After a year or two they were allowed to meet each other for about three or four days. This shy union was a bond which was further strengthened by a separation of another year. With the maturity of the mind and body, their affection as husband and wife also matured faster and more intensely.

Kartar Kaur was fortunate in having as her playmate a niece Bibi Shamsheer Kaur (before being baptised, her name was Jagat Prakash Kaur. She was daughter of S. Bakhtawar Singh a prominent land-lord of Dhamot (Patiala). She died a few years after her marriage with Sardar Mangal Singh Mann of Kotshera. Sardar Mangal Singh's daughter from his second wife is married to son of Bhai Randhir Singh's sister, Bibi Basant Kaur, wife of Session Judge S. Sher Singh of Sangrur). Bhai Randhir Singh describes her as a young saint deeply learned in religious lore. She was married to Sardar Mangal Singh Mann of Kot-shera, one time President of Chief Khalsa Diwan. She died young. It was she who taught Punjabi to Kartar Kaur and disciplined her to recite her prayers regularly. Little did Kartar Kaur know at this period that her young husband would one day renounce the luxurious life of Sikh aristocrats and become a zealous missionary of the Gurus and an outstanding freedom fighter.

In the joy and comforts of her father-in-law's rich mansions, little did she dream that the best years of her youth would change into the most terrible years of loneliness, suffering and distress and for nearly two decades her days and nights would pass in untold anguish and sorrow. In these terrible years of storm and stress, she struggled bravely against the terrors of British rule and conquered suffering with the calm will power of a martyr. Although neither police terror nor coercion frightened this heroic soul, her suffering left a permanent stamp of sorrow on her serene face and frail body.

The Golden Sparrow:

Only half a century earlier the Sikhs had lost an empire the sudden collapse of which left the whole Sikh community tottering in moral and cultural ruins. Throughout the Sikh rule the ideal of the Sikh aristocracy was to breed, to lead and to bleed. After the collapse of the Sikh empire, a number of dedicated souls rose to revive and restore the true spirit of Sikhism. Most of them emerged from obscure families; some of them were of very humble origin. Prominent amongst them who have now become great names in Sikh history are Baba Ram Singh, Gyani Ditt Singh, Sant Attar Singh, followed by Bhai Vir Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh. The young mind of Randhir Singh was restlessly

anxious to dedicate his whole life to moral and spiritual regeneration of the people. But he was not baptised. He wanted to devote a year or two to the Sikh discipline as a novice.

Famine in South India had caused frightful suffering. The earthquake and the bubonic plague further intensified the hardships of the people. This plague was supposed to be imported from China first to Bombay. In 1896, it spread as epidemic first in Dacca and then in Punjab. The British Government introduced drastic sanitary measures to cope with it. On October 2nd 1902 Bhai Randhir Singh was appointed Naib Tehsildar and posted on duty to help a medical unit under Dr. Fisher to fight the plague. Bhai Randhir Singh has described his experiences on this job in Chapter 3.

Corruption was rampant in this department and when he found that charity funds were misused and misappropriated, he tried to put an end to it. After two years effort when he failed to do so, he resigned. The officers who were impressed by his talent, judicious administration, nobility and frankness persuaded him not to do so. When they failed to convince him that by serving the British Government, he was serving his country, they sorrowfully said, "The British Government has lost a golden sparrow".

The 'golden sparrow' felt a deep sense of injury when its wings fluttering for the freedom of the firmament struck against the glittering bars of the golden cage of British Imperialism. His restless soul was struggling to break through the bars or else break the cage. Little did anyone expect that Guru Gobind Singh's baptism of the double-edged sword will change this attractive sparrow into a relentless fighter against the hawks of oppression and tyranny.

Baptism:

For Randhir Singh baptism into the Khalsa Holy Order was not just a formal ceremony, but a spiritual rebirth. So he spent full-five years in preparatory self-discipline and study of Sikh Scriptures and doctrines. After studying Sikh theology and history, he moulded his mind and soul according to the Sikh code of conduct.

In May, 1903 a Muslim divine, Maulvi Karim Bakhsh declared his intention of becoming a baptised Sikh. A large religious gathering was held at his village Bakapur about three miles from Phillaur on G. T. Road in the Jullundur District on June 14, 1903. Bhai Randhir Singh was baptized along with Karim Bakhsh. Karim Bakhsh was given the name Lakhbir Singh (Lakhbir Singh took up missionary work in close association with the eminent Sikh theologian Bhai Vir Singh and was revered as a saint throughout his life) after his spiritual rebirth, while Basant Singh was given his present name Randhir Singh. What happened after the baptism and how was the confusion in the mind of Bhai Randhir Singh about the Divine Name created has been vividly described by him in Chapter II of this book.

At Abbottabad:

Bhai Randhir Singh's father and friends once more persuaded him to accept the post of Head Clerk at Abbottabad. The place was ideal for contemplative life. Within his pay he could afford every comfort and luxury but still he lived with the simplicity of medieval monks and gave all his savings in charity. His life at Abbottabad was marked by two events of note: his friendly association with Baba Sawan Singh, the Radhaswami leader, who was an S.D.O. at Abbottabad and his own mystic experiences during this period. There was an occasional repartee between Baba Sawan Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh who were also kith and kin, as they both belonged to Grewal families and hailed from villages only a mile and half apart. While Bhai Randhir Singh remained silent about his

mystic experiences, Baba Sawan Singh openly preached his theoretical mysticism borrowed partly from Hindu occultism and partly on the erroneously interpreted hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Once Baba Sawan Singh's house caught fire, the lower storey was ablaze and Baba Sawan Singh was in the upper storey. While arrangements were being made to put out the fire and fix up a ladder to bring him safely down, Bhai Randhir Singh did not miss a friendly joke: "Brother Sawan Singh Ji, you daily preach, 'I am Brahma, the fire cannot burn me, the sword cannot slay me, the water of the sea cannot drown me;' let us see today whether fire burns you Brother Brahma. This is the best opportunity to test". "For heavens sake save me Bhai Randhir Singh" said Baba Sawan Singh, This is not the time to joke".

Mystic Experiences and Visions:

Bhai Randhir Singh's intuitive search for higher realization, his intellectual doubts and delusions about the divine Word (*Shabad*), his passionate thirst to escape the bonds of self-hood and push wide the door which leads to Truth and illumination have been faithfully recorded by him in this autobiography without comments and interpretation. He has however, given a theological interpretation of all the stages of mystic experiences and illumination in the light of Sikh Scriptures in his books *Charan Kamal Ki Mauj* (The sublime Joy of Access to His Lotus Feet) and *Anhad Shabad* (Unstruck Music). He clearly states that there is no mystery or exclusiveness about Sikh mysticism.

During his life time, Bhai Randhir Singh very rarely talked about his mystic experiences. When he did so it was to enlighten a sincere and true seeker only. When specifically asked about his mystic experiences he would remain silent, the way Buddha remained silent over the question. Only twice in my many years of association did he describe some rare experiences to me. He did so when he felt impelled to reveal them and he described them in words characteristically his own. His speech at such moments was music and poetry and an expression of Light and Beauty, and like music it faded into silence. Then he would not speak for hours.

I once expressed the opinion that everyone could not be a mountaineer and every mountaineer could not touch the Himalayan peaks of spiritual exaltation. He replied, This Himalayan peak can be reached through humility, compassion, purity and intense contemplation of His Word by every one who makes an effort and these things can be practised by every human being". When I once asked him the cause of oscillations of mind between light and darkness, odd disturbances from the lower senses from within or from the social and political upheavals outside, abrupt invasions from the subliminal regions and disconcerting glimpses of transcendental powers, he replied, The cause is the disturbing mental dirt of our *sanskaras* and the cure is a total self-dedication to His love, drastic self-discipline and continuous meditations till the seeker acquires beatitude and wisdom. In order to attain divine union with God, the soul has to pass through the obscure night of mortification of the desires and self denial in all things. The spiritual life allows no room for compromise. In practice, we stumble and fall, but the choice one makes must be unconditional. When a vessel is full of liquid, the slightest crack, unless it is repaired, is enough to empty it to the last drop". It is for theological historians and mystics to judge after careful analyses and study, whether the mystic experiences of Bhai Randhir Singh present a clear testimony of divine revelation or not.

Teacher with a Difference:

Sardar Natha Singh thought that the best job for his sensitive son would be that of a teacher. He got him an appointment letter from the Principal of a well established Christian School. Bhai Randhir Singh met the Principal and frankly told him that he would be a misfit in the Christian

Mission School. But the Principal thought that it would be easy to convert a religious minded teacher like him to Christianity. He introduced him to the School students when they congregated for morning prayer. He asked Bhai Randhir Singh to address the students. The new Sikh teacher sang in simple Punjabi a song of Guru Nanak in a melodious voice and the boys instinctively repeated every line of the hymn in a chorus after him. The next day before the Christian prayers began, the boys again asked him to sing a *shabad*. On the third day the Principal politely told him that he was too advanced for the school which was meant for children of backward families.

At the Khalsa College:

Sardar Harbans Singh Attari, the grandson of Sardar Sham Singh Attari (the hero of Second Anglo-Sikh War) was deeply impressed by the idealistic fervour of Bhai Randhir Singh and he got him appointed as the Superintendent of the Hostel in Khalsa College, Amritsar. He told Bhai Randhir Singh frankly that the Sikhs lost the Sovereign State because of illiteracy in leaderships and fall of moral character. While outwardly the professed purpose of Khalsa College was to bring out "loyal educated young men to serve British Imperialism," the real inner purpose was to awaken in the younger generation a love for their heroic past and to inspire them with the lost glory. The group led by Sardar Harbans Singh Attari was anti-British and the great Sardar whose grandfather fell 'fighting the last battle with the British' did not accept any position or title from the British. The British Government came to know about it and they started planning the ouster of this group from the Chief Khalsa Diwan and Khalsa College Management.

Although Bhai Randhir Singh belonged to an aristocratic family, he preferred living with Tolstoyan simplicity. He gave the students a good deal of freedom but he demanded from them strict religious discipline. Whatever he saved from his pay was spent by him on the welfare of students. The aristocratic snobbery of the Chief Khalsa Diwan Sardars tried to overwhelm him by their authoritarian displeasure against his radical methods of placing students on spartan ethical discipline. They tried to smother his activities but he went on doing his duty as his conscience dictated him. His moral and spiritual hold on the students sharpened the jealousy of certain representatives of the management, who saw themselves put into the shade. While they wanted to train the students in timidity, treachery, and betrayal of national causes in the name of loyalty to the benevolent British *Sarkar*, Bhai Randhir Singh inspired them with most revolutionary ideas of freedom, nobility and justice as enunciated by Guru Gobind Singh. Yet they could not do much because Sardar Harbans Singh Attari was his strongest supporter. Mr. Cole, the Principal of Khalsa College, was so great an admirer of his that he appeared as Bhai Randhir Singh's defence witness in the Lahore conspiracy case, an act which was very courageous for an Englishman to do during those days.

The students loved and admired him. Dr. Dharam Anant Singh (Dr. Dharam Anant Singh was sent along with Sant Teja Singh by the eminent Saint Attar Singh for higher studies to U.K. and U.S. Dharam Anant Singh studied Greek and wrote a book "Plato and the True Enlightener of the soul." Luazc, 1912 comparing the Philosophy of Guru Nanak and Plato) the eminent Greek and Sanskrit Scholar and Platonist, who was a student of Khalsa College at that time, records an incident and his impression of Bhai Randhir Singh's noble influence in a long article entitled "Divine Influence of a Perfectly Virtuous Sikh". Dharam Anant Singh says, "This incident is about the great hero, a living martyr and saint Bhai Randhir Singh. While a student of Khalsa College, I had the privilege to win his special attention and regard. Almost every day, he would hear and enjoy my recitation of Guru Gobind Singh's *Jap* and 33 *swaiyas* and now and then expressed deep appreciation for my love of the Guru's hymns. It was in the year 1905 when it had rained heavily and the students of the college expressed their desire to eat milk-pudding (milk and rice boiled together). He asked some

cooks to get sufficient milk from the villages close by and prepare the dish. About an hour after they had taken this pudding, nearly all of them started vomiting and suffered from acute internal trouble. It was cholera that had suddenly overtaken all who had taken the dish. I came from the Golden Temple quite late. To my amazement, I saw a whole group of students vomiting and writhing with pain and Bhai Randhir Singh having already sent for the doctor, questioned the three cooks sternly. He asked them the reason of such serious contamination of the milk and threatened to take dire action. There was no anger on his face, but with calm forceful voice he thrice asked them how and why had the milk been contaminated and thrice they said they did not know. He then asked them to spread out their hands and said to them, "You must tell the truth. God can still save you from the sin of great crime you have committed. I will go on striking on the palms of your hands with this wooden ruler till you confess" ("*Puran Satoguni de Ishwari Prabhav*" - By Dharam Anant Singh published in Khalsa Advocate May 4 and 11, 1964).

Seven times he struck hard saying "Remember God and confess" and then they suddenly confessed that they had bought less quantity of milk than they were paid for and had added some dirty water to it from a muddy pond. Bhai Randhir Singh threw away the wooden ruler and stood for five minutes in prayer with folded hands invoking the mercy of Almighty God to save the lives of the innocent boys and forgive those servants who had confessed and repented. The doctors arrived and declared the condition of all students as very serious. "What would you like to have, my children", Bhai Randhir Singh asked the boys, "I have prayed for you and I am sure God the only Healer will cure. Have faith in His saving grace". The boys asked for ice. Bhai Randhir Singh procured plenty of ice. No medicine had been given. Somehow ice alone saved the life of all the boys. By nightfall they were out of danger. Dr. Dharam Anant Singh was an eye witness to this incident and what surprised him, he says, was the calm and divine face of Bhai Randhir Singh who was very serious, but there was not a trace of bitterness, anger and despair on his face. The incident gave the management some reason to run down Bhai Randhir Singh. He resigned.

There were some keen admirers of Bhai Randhir Singh in the management committee of Khalsa College, notably Sardar Ajit Singh, Chief Judge of Patiala and Sardar Harbans Singh Attari, who were impressed by his literary talent and wanted him to edit a Punjabi Journal ostensibly to fight the bureaucratic leadership of Chief Khalsa Diwan (Sardar Ajit Singh, Chief Judge, Patiala was Defence witness No. 53 for Bhai, Randhir Singh in the Lahore Conspiracy Case and he made a statement to this effect in the court). But Bhai Randhir Singh was too independent and noble a spirit to get involved in any such party conflict.

Educational Activities and Reforms:

Bhai Randhir Singh's experiences with the Chief Khalsa Diwan Management convinced him that this organization which had at that time considerable hold on urban *Singh Sabhas* could never lead the Sikh masses in any positive direction, nor could the aristocrats leading the Sikh community ever come out of their ivory towers of luxurious mansions and the mental prisons of unstinted loyalty to British Imperialism, to lead the masses at any critical juncture. Nor could they carry out any reforms in the historical Sikh temples, which the *Mahants* (priests) started treating as their hereditary property. The *Mahants* under British protection and even encouragement had started converting the Sikh shrines into Hindu temples. They placed in them idols and images of Hindu gods and goddesses which could fetch the maximum amount of money from all sects of Hindus. To please the High caste Hindus, the *Mahants* went a step further and did not permit Sikhs born in low caste family to either make any offering or to join the congregation in worship. Even the most eminent theologian and Sanskrit Scholar, Gyani Dit Singh, who defeated Swami Dayanand Founder of Arya Samaj twice in Philosophical debate on Vedas, and was revered by the Sikh community as

an outstanding leader of the *Singh Sabha* movement was not allowed by these priests to offer *Karah prasad* (Sacramental offering) at the *Akal Takhat*.

Bhai Randhir Singh was perhaps the first outstanding leader of the times who not only baptised Hindus born in low caste families but once they became disciplined Khalsa, he treated them as his *gur-bhais* and kith and kin in the fraternity of Guru Gobind Singh. On the other hand, he would not eat from the hands of those high caste and high class Sikhs who drank wine and led an un-Sikh life. This was one article of his faith which he maintained even in prison life at great risks to his health and life. The result was that he began to be treated as an outcaste who in the eyes of Sikhs inspired by Hindu caste prejudices had degraded himself socially by mingling with low caste people. In his own village, many orthodox people would not allow him and his companions to take any water out of their wells.

When Bhai Randhir Singh went to Amritsar to offer *Kirtan* and *Karah parasad* at *Akal Takhat*, the priests did not permit him to do so, but *Brahm-Gyani* Baba Sham Singh who performed *Kirtan* in the *Harimandir* (Golden Temple) for nearly 75 years intervened on his behalf and he was permitted to perform *kirtan* in the *sanctum-sanctorum* of *Akal Takhat*. People were so thrilled by his melodious voice and enchanting *kirtan* that they showered hundreds of rupees on him. Without taking a single penny out of heaps of silver coins lying around him, he quietly left the place and went to Nankana Sahib. Whenever he went to Amritsar again the greedy and calculating priests were only too eager to invite him to perform *kirtan*.

By exerting such compulsive moral influence entirely free from ambition for power or possessive control, he conducted reforms in innumerable historical shrines. He compelled the priests and managements of Anandpur Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib and other historical shrines to open their doors to all devotees, irrespective of caste, colour or creed and to restore traditional respect and sanctity of these shrines.

In consultation with the eminent Sikh divine Saint Attar Singh and a number of other religious personalities, Bhai Randhir Singh organized a Panthic Conference at the historical shrine of Damdama Sahib and foundation was laid here of a predominantly rural organization named the Panch Khalsa Diwan. Bhai Randhir Singh was the first General Secretary. Unfortunately for this organization a shrewd retired S.D.O., Babu Teja Singh, got into this organization and started mishandling affairs through local adherents, mostly illiterate men or people less educated than him. For his own convenience, he shifted the Panch Khalsa Diwan office from Damdama Sahib to his own village Bhasaur and indulged in such activities which in the eyes of Bhai Randhir Singh and Saint Attar Singh were harmful to Sikh traditions and ideals. Bhai Randhir Singh first quietly disassociated himself from Babu Teja Singh and then the difference between them became acuter. Twice he made a friendly appeal to Babu Teja Singh to desist from the path he was following but the fanatic and self-centred Babu Teja Singh went on causing a stir 'by his social, religious and political behaviour'.

Rikabganj Affair 1913-14:

When Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded by Aurangzeb in Chandni Chowk, Delhi and his body was carried away under cover of a dust-storm by Lakhi Rai, his disciple, to his residence at Rikabganj, he put the whole of his house to flames to cremate the body and later placing the remains in a metal vessel buried it at the exact place of cremation hoping to build a shrine to commemorate the Guru's martyrdom. When Guru Gobind Singh came to Delhi the shrines were built at Sis Ganj and Rikabganj, but during the time of Banda or perhaps after the death of Mata Sahib Devi and

Mata Sundari, all the Sikh shrines including Majnu Tilla, the oldest one, were pulled down and mosques built in their places.

For the first time the Sikhs invaded Delhi on Dussehra day October 1st 1778. "In this predatory expedition into Delhi, the Sikhs went to the Guru's bungalow near Rikabganj and there demolished a mosque and ravaged the cultivated field close by. The Sikhs stayed in the Capital for about a month" (G.R.C. Williams. The Sikhs in the Upper Doab, Calcutta Review 1876, Vol. DC, 35. Imperial Records, Secret Proceedings)

"On March 8th 1783 the Sikh armies again attacked Malika Ganj and Sabzi Mandi and created a tumult in Delhi by entering through Ajmeri Gate. They ravaged the city and made their way to the fort. Expecting an Afghan attack the Misl Sardars went to Punjab leaving Sardar Beghel Singh to build the Gurdwaras of Rikabganj, Sis Gary, Bangla Sahib, and the *Samadhis* of Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Devi" (*Dilliyethil Raj Karnen* (Marathi record) Vol. I, P. 84). Ever since then the sanctity of these shrines had been maintained by the Mughal Governments.

"With the transfer of the Capital from Calcutta to Delhi in 1911, preparations began to be made to build the Viceregal Lodge opposite the place where Rikabganj Gurdwara is situated. The Government considered that the old six cornered enclosure wall of the Gurdwara was too ugly to stand in front of the Viceroy's palace and proposed that it should be demolished. In 1912 under the Land Acquisition Act the Government acquired from an accommodating *Mahant* the whole land lying between the Gurdwara and the outer wall" (Gurdwara Reform Movement by Prof. Teja Singh P. 51- Unfortunately the dates given by Prof. Teja Singh in the book, are not correct and the events are not placed in proper sequence. Facts and dates have therefore, to be accepted with caution).

The Chief Khalsa Diwan, whom the British Government accepted as the only representative body of the Sikhs seemed inclined to accept the Government position in view of the fact that the Government did not want to do so to injure the feelings of the Sikhs but simply to improve the outlook of the Gurdwara.

"On January 14th 1914, the British Indian Government razed the wall of the Gurdwara to the ground on the pretence of making the road straight. The wall was 400 ft. long 2 ft thick and 11 ft. high. The bricks of this wall were hammered into pieces that were used for the construction of the road. Fifty *bighas* of the land belonging to the Gurdwara was also taken for the purpose of constructing a road and a sum of Rs. 8,000 was deposited to take possession of the Garden within the wall. This wall too was razed to the ground" (Ruchi Ram Sahni-Struggle for Reforms in Sikh Shrines: P. 58).

The Sikh community was shocked and had justified fears that the whole historical shrine might be demolished in due course. The Chief Khalsa Diwan came under fire and was angrily blamed for permitting the British Government to commit this act of sacrilege. While ultra loyalists like Arur Singh, Raja Sir Daljit Singh and Gajjan Singh of Narangwal supported and even encouraged the Government to go ahead with its plan, Sir Sunder Singh Majithia and his Chief Khalsa Diwan executive soon realized that they had committed a blunder (The Chief Khalsa Diwan Executive at that time consisted of Sardar Shivdev Singh, S. Sadhu Singh, S. Harnam Singh, S. Mangal Singh, S. Trilochan Singh, S. Narain Singh, Master Tara Singh (Not Akali leader), Bhai Amar Singh and S. Sunder Singh Majithia. Prominent members like S. Harbans Singh Attari and S. Harchand Singh did not get an opportunity to express themselves).

So they sent Sardar Sewaram Singh an eminent lawyer to know the details of the land acquired and the constructions desired to be demolished. Through its resolutions Nos. 371 and 372 dated February 1st and March 22nd 1914 respectively, the Chief Khalsa Diwan appealed that further demolition should not take place till the Chief Khalsa Diwan had acquired the consent of the Sikh Panth in its general gathering.

People actually did not know what was happening between the Chief Khalsa Diwan and the British Indian Government. Things exploded in the annual Sikh Educational Conference which was being held under the Chairmanship of Raja Sir Daljit Singh an extreme loyalist at Jullundur in January 1912. Sardar Harchand Singh and Sardar Harbans Singh Attari raised the issue of the demolition of Rikabganj wall in the strongest terms. Raja Daljit Singh an extreme loyalist did not even permit the consideration and discussion of the Rikabganj affair and audaciously said that whatever the British Government was doing was in the interest of the Sikhs. Sardar Harchand Singh and Sardar Harbans Singh Attari walked out of the Educational Conference after lodging a strong protest and after saying that the Chief Khalsa Diwan by its abject submission to the wishes of British Government was treacherously betraying the Sikhs. A separate meeting was held by these members the same night and the demolition of the Rikabganj wall was condemned.

The first thing S. Harchand Singh did was to meet Bhai Randhir Singh and explain to him the inside story of how some of the extreme loyalist Sardars had abjectly agreed to sell out as much of the Rikabganj shrine as the British Government desired. As he was a landlord (*Rais*) all he could do was to awaken the conscience of upper class Sardars. Only Bhai Randhir Singh could awaken the masses. Bhai Randhir Singh took up the cause seriously and brought about an awakening of the type Baba Ram Singh brought some decades earlier. The first telegram of strong protest against demolition of the wall was sent by him on behalf of his Jatha which he called *Tat Khalsa Sangat*, Narangwal to the Viceroy (*Khalsa Sangat*, Narangwal passed a resolution protesting against the demolition of a portion of the wall surrounding the Rikabganj. Home Political Proceedings: May 18, 1914 Deposit). Similar telegram was sent by Sardar Harchand Singh on behalf of Lyallpur Sangat about a month later. Chief Khalsa Diwan Amritsar and Khalsa Diwan Shanghai loyally expressed thanks for all the British Government had done and all they intended to do to build a new Gurdwara wherever they wished (Home Pol: July 28, Dept).

The stir that was brought about by the statements of Bhai Randhir Singh awakened the Sikh masses to the grim reality of the situation. "Revolutions" said Aristotle "are not trifle but begin from trifle" On the eve of World War I, a startling revolutionary spirit was created. For the first time, the Chief Khalsa Diwan gave an impression to the Sikh masses that it was an organization of servile Sikh aristocrats who had become politically a mass of unspun cotton.

On April 13, Baisakhi 1914 festival, Bhai Randhir Singh organized a large Panthic Conference with the help of Baba Jawand Singh Nihang at Patti. Thousands of people marched from Ludhiana, Jullundur on foot to attend this meeting and it was attended by Sikh divines, rural leaders. It was said that after the British occupation such a representative and large gathering had never been held before. A resolution was passed that a strong agitation would be launched, to prevent desecration of the historical temple. If the Government rebuilt the wall already demolished, the agitation would be withdrawn, but if the Government persisted in its sacrilegious designs, Bhai Randhir Singh announced, he along with a *Shahidi* Jatha of 500 would sacrifice his life to prevent the desecration and demolition of the historical shrine (Details of this conference were given to me by Gyani Harbhajan Singh Printer and Publisher of Bhai Randhir Singh's writings, who was present in the Patti Conference).

Knowing Bhai Randhir Singh always meant what he said; the Chief Khalsa Diwan was unnerved. To retrace its step, the Chief Khalsa Diwan held a conference of its *Singh Sabhas*. About 245 people attended this meeting held in Town Hall Amritsar on May 3rd 1914 and amidst uproar and protests of dissenting voices, passed six resolutions allowing the Government to acquire some land but urging them not to touch the building of the historical shrine (The resolution of this representative gathering of the Chief Khalsa Diwan ran thus: That the Government be humbly requested to restore the land and enclosure wall of the Gurdwara garden to their original condition, but if for reason of State it is considered essential to change their form, then in the opinion of this committee it will be acceptable, if without reducing the total area of the land, the whole place is given a rectangular shape and the Gurdwara comes in the middle of it with roads running on both sides. The entire work, however, should be entrusted to a Managing Committee of Sikhs who should be helped by the Government financially for the purpose. In another resolution, they requested that Sikhs should be allowed complete liberty to visit or reside in the Gurdwara at all the time of the day or night." Vide: Chief Khalsa Diwan Resolutions. (Also see Gurdwara Rikabganj (Statement of Chief Khalsa Diwan) concerning proposed demolition of Rikabganj) Wazir Hind Press P2.).

As the Chief Khalsa Diwan left all things in its resolution to the sweet will of the British Indian Government, Bhai Randhir Singh and the leaders who supported him organized another conference at Langa Mandi, Lahore on May 30th, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev. The representatives of Chief Khalsa Diwan were also invited to this conference. All the leaders spoke vehemently condemning the action of the Government. When resolutions were put forward for discussion, Sardar Man Singh, a lawyer strongly supported the Chief Khalsa Diwan stand and pleaded the case so enthusiastically that for a long time he would not allow anyone else to speak. Bhai Randhir Singh stood up, went near Sardar Man Singh and rebuking him for his disruptive behaviour said, "Will you now sit down. We have had enough of this nonsense". Sardar Man Singh folded his hands, saying he was sorry and sat down (This incident was humorously related to me in 1946 by Sardar Man Singh at Faridkot where he was the Chief Judge. S. Man Singh was a close associate of Bhai Vir Singh and admirer and friend of Bhai Randhir Singh).

There was a strong reaction to the Chief Khalsa Diwan stand and all the resolutions condemning British action were passed unanimously. Not a single amendment was proposed to any resolution. The Chief Khalsa Diwan for the first time felt that it had lost hold on the minds and hearts of the Sikh masses both in the urban and rural areas. They now thought of sending a deputation consisting of the much hated Arur Singh, Manager of Golden Temple, Amritsar to win some concessions for its stand and persuade the Government not to take any action which might cause permanent injury to the feelings of the Sikhs and scandalize Chief Khalsa Diwan. They already felt the Sikh community was angry with them and many *Singh Sabhas* from Abbottabad to Ludhiana had passed resolutions condemning Chief Khalsa Diwan and published pamphlets condemning their stand (Pamphlets were published in support of Bhai Randhir Singh's stand by Sikh Societies in Rawalpindi, Lahore and Delhi).

Bhai Randhir Singh then met Babu Teja Singh to hold a meeting at Bhasaur and pass a resolution against the demolition of the wall, but Babu Teja Singh refused to utter a word against the British Government ("Teja Singh of Bhasaur refused to pass a resolution condemning the demolition of Rikabganj Gurdwara wall." (Statement of Approver Sunder Singh Asa Majra who claimed to be Secretary of Bhasaur organization). Lahore conspiracy case witness 26. P. 545).

Achhra Singh of Lohatbadi, a clever intriguer, then organized a conference at his village apparently to pass resolutions and give support to Rikabganj Gurdwara movement, but actually to exploit the name and popularity of Bhai Randhir Singh and setup a school-cum-socio-religious organization of the type Babu Teja Singh had set up at Bhasaur. Sunder Singh Asa Majra joined him. Both of these persons became approvers against Bhai Randhir Singh in the *Lahore Conspiracy case*. The statement of Sunder Singh Asa Majra in the case suggesting that Rikabganj affair was a seditious movement and Bhai Randhir Singh's comments on it in the court is a historically interesting and a vital statement.

Sunder Singh Asa Mijra who claimed to be close associate and Secretary of Bhasaur Panch Khalsa Diwan said, "Resolutions were passed at Lohatbadi where 500 men were present. Resolutions were passed regarding Rikabganj and excommunicating Sardar Sunder Singh Majithia and condemning S. Arur Singh for opposing the Panthic decisions on Rikabganj. At Chamkaur gathering Randhir Singh told that a secret committee has been formed in some village in Ludhiana District at which it was decided that if the Government pulled down the Gurdwara at Rikabganj, they would sacrifice themselves (Lahore Conspiracy Case, Statement of Approver Sunder Singh Asa Majra P. 546. Approver Bhagat Singh of Ballawal added "when the Rikabganj affair happened, Randhir Singh asked me to preach sedition. He described the affair as a great *zulum* and asked him to preach against the British Raj. After Komagata Maru incident took place Randhir Singh told me, our countrymen had been shot and killed and oppression was daily on the increase. When war broke out Randhir Singh told me, Indian troops were kept in front while British were in the rear" (Second Lahore Conspiracy case P. 446).

Bhai Randhir Singh in his statement in the court stated, "I did attend the meeting at Lohatbadi but I had no followers. I was not invited there but went myself to protest against the removal of some girls and teaching staff from Bhasaur, which somehow by misrepresentation, Achhara Singh and Sunder Singh had done. They had also falsely circulated that I was to be the patron of Girls School they wished to start at Lohatbadi. I was asked not to speak against the proposal and appeal, but I made myself heard in strong terms repudiating false reports that I was to be the patron of the School. These proceedings were disappointing to them, as there was no response to their appeal for funds after my protest. Rikabganj matter was brought forward. I pointed out to the audience, the utter futility of the matter after a large representative Diwan at Lahore had submitted a memorandum to the Government. On this the assembly confirmed the resolution of the Lahore Diwan of May 30, 1914. No names were mentioned for ex-communication." Bhai Randhir Singh farther stated: "I put forward an amendment that the Government should be requested not to treat the opinions of the *Chief Khalsa Diwan* Committee as the voice of the *Sikh Panth*." (Second Lahore Conspiracy Case, P. 486).

While the approvers in the case tried to prove that all the meetings and announcements in connection with the Rikabganj case were seditious, the judges remarked, "This meeting was not seditious, but it does show how the men there were labouring under a very grievous misapprehension as to what had happened in regard to the Rikabganj Gurdwara and we have no doubt that they were led to think that it was a part of the Government policy to interfere with the religious feelings of its subject. The seed was thus sown for discontent." (Ibid P. 480).

It was at this critical juncture that the Gadharites arrived from Canada to fight for freedom by giving a call to the people for an armed revolt and the World War I flared up in Europe in August 1914. Wilfrid Blund once said, "Today their motto is Reform, let it not drive them to make it a revolution tomorrow." This Reformer, who was a born revolutionary, did not like many things

which the Gadharites did. But finding that they were extremely sincere and dedicated souls and also finding that politicians who were loudly demanding freedom for India were timidly withdrawing even moral support for them, Bhai Randhir Singh considered it his moral duty to give them an all-out support for their fight for freedom. He gave unstinted support to this Revolutionary movement without getting involved in their loot and plunder campaigns.

Ghadar Movement in U.S.A. and Canada:

The Sikhs are irresistible emigrants with a passionate love for their native land. This side of hell, they would go to any place on earth, sea or sky to eke out an honourable existence. Their confidence in their ability and inherent capacity to do twice the amount of work any other farm hand or artisan in the world can do, is the mainspring of their adventurous spirit. They naively consider every alien country to be "promised land" and the social liberation of their religion gives them freedom to adjust in every culture.

When in 1907, the Canadian Government passed the Immigration Act to put a stop to the ingress of all Indians, the Sikhs residing there felt that they had every moral and legal right to settle down in any British Dominion, and they were strong enough to fight racial discrimination. They had built Gurdwaras in Vancouver, Victoria and Stockholm. An organization was set up called the "Hindustan Workers of Pacific Coast". In a meeting of Indians held at Vancouver on 22nd February, 1913 three delegates were deputed to visit England and India to appeal to British Government to help them in their difficulties. These delegates were Dr. Nand Singh Seehra (Dr. Nand Singh Sechra hailing from Phillaur studied for Ph.D. on Guru Gobind Singh Scholarship at the University of California Berkley. The Scholarship was given by one Jawala Singh of Moorland, California), S. Balwant Singh and S. Narain Singh.

On arrival in India these delegates were welcomed by the Tribune which published an interview with Dr. Nand Singh. A meeting was held on 18th August, 1914 in Bradlough Hall over which S. Baghel Singh Rais presided. The first resolution protesting against the attitude of the Canadian Government was moved by Mr. P.C. Chatterjee Judge, Chief Court Lahore. Similar meetings were held at Amritsar, Jullundur, and Ambala and even Bhai Vir Singh in his *Khalsa Samachar* (*Khalsa Samachar*, Amritsar 1913) published all the resolutions and wrote a strong editorial against the British attitude. But soon the movement of protest against British Government became a fiery movement for political freedom.

Hardyal (He came to believe that the English were undermining Hindu character, that their educational policy and methods had been designed to destroy Hinduism and to perpetuate the political bondage of the Hindus. Lajpat Rai "Young India". 1916. There is nothing to suggest in the writings of Hardyal that he was interested only in Hindu character and bondage of the Hindus only. His writings during this period inspired a truly Indian Spirit), one of the very few educated Indians in U.S.A., felt that the British were undermining Hindu culture and character and he must do something for it.

The Sikh emigrants urged him to take up the cause of the racial discrimination against Indians. In May 1913, it was decided to start a Weekly paper to forge unity and fight for political rights. Hardyal toured the States to collect subscriptions. The response was very enthusiastic and a substantial amount of money was collected. But when Hardyal calculated the legal and political risks of starting a revolutionary paper in a foreign country, he shrank from the grim and dangerous responsibility. For five months he kept silent while letters poured in asking him why the plans were shelved even though there was no dearth of money. Hardyal wrote to every one that his

health did not permit him to take up such a heavy responsibility. It was his inherent timidity and fear of being arrested and imprisoned that impelled Lala Hardyal to take up this attitude.

Kartar Singh Sarabha, an 18 years old young science student of Berkely University, a restless and fiery spirit with superhuman energy and courage, came personally to enquire the reason of delay in starting the paper. He offered to Hardyal all the money he had received for his studies. He offered even to give up his studies and take all risks of the legal responsibility of the paper by becoming its publisher. He offered to give physical protection to Hardyal by always accompanying him with a loaded revolver. The quailing spirit of Hardyal now found sufficient moral support, physical protection and fundamental security to run the paper.

The first issue of the Weekly paper "*Ghadar*" (Rebellion) appeared in November, 1913 with Hardyal as editor and Kartar Singh Sarabha as printer and publisher from their party headquarter called *Yugantar Asharam*, in Wood Street, Stockton. From the first week of January, 1914 the paper appeared in Punjabi (*Gurmukhi* script) for which Hardyal's Urdu articles were translated into Punjabi by Kartar Singh Sarabha and popular revolutionary poems were written by Harnam Singh *Tundi Lat* (meaning the Viceroy with one arm). The workers had common kitchen and each worker got two dollars per month for personal expenditure while Hardyal was given 25 dollars. Whenever Hardyal went out from office to his residence or to any other place, Kartar Singh Sarabha and S. Harnam Singh *Tundi Lat* accompanied him armed with loaded revolvers.

The paper founded as a forum to fight racial discrimination became the hub of the most active revolutionary movement against British Imperialism. In an article published in an Egyptian revolutionary paper *Al Kasas*, Hardyal wrote, "The movement is entirely of the people. The members of the party are peasants and working men. There are only half a dozen educated men to edit the paper, carrying on correspondence, delivering lectures and thinking out plans. This party publishes a Weekly 8 pages paper, the *Ghadar* (Rebellion) in three languages. This paper has already been proscribed in India, but it is smuggled in large quantities. The paper reaches the masses, men, poor in wealth but rich in courage. It does not appeal merely to the so-called educated men and aristocrats whose heart is in their bank accounts, while their lips prate for liberty and sacrifices. When the common people understood something, they want to risk life in order to realize the idea. They have no property to make them cowards. The big press runs all day, printing three newspapers, pamphlets and circulars. Men come from far and near to see it and offer offerings as in a temple. Spies also come frequently. The ideal of the people comprises both political and social changes. They desire economic as well as political freedom. They hate princes, landlords and capitalists. They want a democratic re-arrangement of conditions in India. This is the revenge of the exiles against the powers of darkness that drive men away from their homes. In California is being prepared the power that will reduce the Empire to dust and ashes. Beware of the exile, ye tyrants for he bears in his heart an unquenchable flame (Home Political, Secret Proceedings 1914).

Exit Hardyal:

Hardyal was a powerful writer, a brilliant orator, a shrewd, quiet and unpredictable thinker, but he was a timid, vacillating man who shrank into escapist seclusion at the first sight of danger and suffering ahead.

Four months after he had started work as the Editor of *Gadhar*, the U.S.A. Government issued warrants of his arrest accusing him of un-American and anarchist activities. On March 16, 1914 while he was about to enter a lecture hall to deliver a speech, two policemen brought a warrant of his arrest. Kartar Singh Sarabha and Harnam Singh *Tundi Lot* who were with him were about to

shoot the policemen down, but sensing danger the American police officer did not arrest him but got his written commitment to appear in the court next day. Hardyal was released on a security of 5,000 dollars paid by one Bhai Gurmukh Singh. Hardyal, the President of the party and Editor of *Gadhar* who was day in and day out exhorting his countrymen 'to become soldiers of mutiny, to unsheathe their swords and hasten to the battlefield and sacrifice their lives for driving away the British', jumped bail, escaped to Switzerland and then moved to Paris and Algeria to keep at a safe distance from the Ghadarites and the ordeals of armed revolution for which he had fired the first shot. While his friends and companions cheerfully fell on the gallows or rotted for life in dingy dungeons of British prisons, he slinked away and found escape in the blissful studies of Buddhism (Bhai Parmanand in his book "My life story" writes Hardyal was a fickle minded man. After the end of World War I he wrote a book "Forty four months in Germany and Turkey" in which he has praised the British and condemned Germany. He has expressed the hope that the British should rule India for two or three decades at least before it is fit for freedom'). He wrote one or two impressive books.

Komagata Maru:

The bitterness against racial discrimination came to ahead when Baba Gurdit Singh, a Sikh businessman of Singapore, chartered a Japanese ship *Komagata Maru* and dropped anchor in Vancouver harbour with 346 Sikhs and 130 Punjabi Hindus and Muslims aboard. The Canadian journalists and the Socialist leaders were impressed by the "handsome demeanour and clean habits of the Sikhs aboard *Komagata Maru*". The *Times* of London (May 23, 1914) described it "as the second oriental invasion of Canada". Socialist leaders, Mr. Edward Bird and Mr. Fitzgerald attacked the racial policy of their countrymen and exhorted the Indians to "get up, arm yourself and fight to regain your liberty. Inspire your countrymen to sweep all the whites from India". The racialists also sarcastically said: "Hindus go home and fight your revolution". Earlier a delegation by Dr. Nand Singh Sehra had met the Viceroy of India to help the Indians in their difficulties but their pleas were ignored and rejected.

The national pride and the patriotic fervour of the Sikhs in Canada was inflamed. Hopkinson the police chief employed spies to suppress and persecute the patriots. The spies killed the patriots and the patriots killed the spies who helped the Government to suppress and persecute the patriots. This was a game mischievously enacted by Hopkinson, till Mewa Singh who befriended Hopkinson to know the truth shot him in the corridors of the court (in a confessional statement Mewa Singh wrote: "My religion does not teach me to bear enmity to anybody, no matter what class, creed or order he belongs to, nor had I enmity with Hopkinson. I heard that he was opposing and oppressing my people very much. I made friendship with him through his best Hindu friends to find out the truth of what I heard. On finding out the facts, I being a staunch Sikh could no longer bear to see the wrong done both to my innocent countrymen and the Dominion of Canada. This is what led me to take Hopkinson's life and sacrifice my own in order to lay bare the oppression exercised upon innocent people. And I, performing the duty of a true Sikh of remembering the Name of God, will proceed towards the scaffold with the same amount of pleasure as the hungry babe does towards his mother. I shall gladly have a rope put around my neck, thinking it to be a rosary of God's Name.").

When *Komagata Maru* arrived at the mouth of Hooghly and docked at Budge-Budge harbour on September 25th 1914 the ship was searched but nothing incriminating was found. When the Sikhs were ordered to leave the ship, they came out in a procession carrying a copy of (*Bid*) *Guru Granth Sahib* and the Sikh flag. Without any rhyme or reason the police opened fire killing 18 and wounding 25. Baba Gurdit Singh and some of his companions jumped into the river and swam into

deeper waters to safety. Sudhindra Bose, President of the Hindustan Association wrote: "The entire America was shocked yesterday to know that three hundred Indian immigrants who were unjustly denied admission into Canada last summer were recently shot down in cold blood. The Indian papers to hand make no mention of the fact. If the slaughter of these defenceless and unnamed innocent people be true then it certainly put the alleged Belgian atrocities to shade." (Home Pol: Jan 1915, 278; 282. Page 36).

The Commission of Enquiry consisted of two notoriously unpatriotic Indians, Maharaja of Burdwan and Raja Daljit Singh who blamed the innocent passengers of *Komagata Maru* of everything. Raja Daljit Singh was awarded knighthood for this act of loyalty to British Imperialism.

Lajpat Rai and the Spies:

Lala Lajpat Rai who was touring U.S.A. when the *Ghadar* leaders were planning revolutionary activities opposed the movement and gave conflicting and disturbing statements. On September 12th 1914 when he was delivering a lecture at New York, the eminent scientist Sir J.C. Bose felt so perturbed by his lecture that he and his wife left the hall in the middle of the Lecture (Home Dept. Pol. January 1916, No. 278-282, P. 37).

He called the *Ghadar* revolutionaries fanatics and dangerous to the national cause in a number of statements and articles which virtually warned the British Government and provided them with the material which even the spies had not given so far. The *Ghadar* leaders strongly resented Lala Lajpat Rai's remarks saying, "Lala Lajpat Rai has described them as a set of fanatics in *Modern Review*. Lala Lajpat Rai appears to have stated that he gave advice to the *Ghadar* party in America, reproached them and tried to discourage them. It is absolutely false that Lajpat Rai has given us any sort of advice. Lalaji has made such remarks in his publications simply to tell the British Government that he had no sympathy with *Ghadar* party. Lalaji has been in America for the past one year but he has never been in the shrine of liberty, that is *Yugantar Asharam*, the office of the Hindustan Ghadar Party." (Home Political Dept. B. Proceeding No. 218-222). Bengali revolutionaries were the special targets of Lajpat Rai's malicious wrath (Most of the Bengali revolutionaries, I found absolutely unprincipled. Their patriotism was tainted by considerations of gain or profit. They spent a lot of money on luxuries. They were always ready to receive kindness, hospitality and help but rarely reciprocated. They fought among themselves but against non-Bengalis they always made common cause.' Lajpat Rai, Autobiographical Writings P. 203-27).

While the lectures and articles of Lajpat Rai sounded loud alarm against the *Ghadar* leaders and alerted the British Government against them much sooner than all their spies and intelligence reports could do, the *Ghadar* leaders came to India with the beat of the drum. The British Government intercepted 140 letters written by *Ghadar* leaders to their relatives. These letters gave every detail of their revolutionary activity. Some revolutionaries travelling in *Komagata Maru* as spies handed over to the British Council in Yokohama packets containing seditious literature (Home Dept. Political B. Weekly Report of Criminal Intelligence Feb. 1915. P. 7). The British Government had plans ready to arrest all returned emigrants who were under suspicion.

Conflagration:

"Revolutions", said Aristotle, "are not trifles but begin with trifles." (Aristotle: Politics I). The demolition of the boundary wall of the historic Rikabganj Gurdwara had brought a wide awakening and a shocking realization in the mind of Bhai Randhir Singh that the political and material subjection of his country was inevitably leading to the moral and spiritual enslavement of his

countrymen. The successive attacks on Sikh religious institutions would demoralize and dehumanize Sikh people and their culture. The agitation in Bengal a few years earlier had been described by Lord Curzon as petty volcanoes which screamed and scratched and threw their torrents of mud into the air." (Letter from Curzon to Birdrech).

Bhai Randhir Singh awakened the Sikh masses to their collective responsibility and grand heritage and wrested once for all the religious, political and cultural leadership of the Sikh people from the hands of a handful of aristocrats and priests (*Mahants*). The former declared themselves to be unashamed champions of the divine right of British Imperialism and went to the extent of telling the people that whoever opposed the British rulers was not a Sikh (Gajjan Singh Grewal delivered a lecture circulating these ideas at Ludhiana in October 1914. Addressing a meeting he said that all those who opposed the British Government and helped the Ghadarites were not Sikhs. They were enemies of the Panth. The Sikh community resented Gajjan Singh's lectures, but no one dared to condemn him and his statements except leaders like Bhai Randhir Singh. Both Gajjan Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh belonged to village Narangwal).

The *Mahants* believed in their hereditary rights over Sikh temples of which their ancestors were appointed the priests. Both these sections became the inveterate enemies of freedom fighters. While Rikabganj affair was only a timid prologue to much far-reaching encroachments, searches, arbitrary arrests, expulsions from home and country and all imaginable forms of humiliation became an almost matter-of-course occurrences.

In the feverish heart of this youngman of destiny Bhai Randhir Singh, there burst forth irresistibly the humiliation and degradation of the enslaved people, the pitiable condition of the moral and cultural collapse, the agony of the betrayal by those who flattered British Imperialism blindly over the acts of sacrilege and cruelty, and the anguish and despair of the helpless teeming masses. He inwardly felt it to be his mission and ordained destiny to choose the lonely path of self-consecration, to wake up his country from her ataraxia and organize the people for an all-round struggle for religious and political freedom. After Baba Ram Singh, he was the first leader to live and move only among the masses and to work tirelessly for their moral and spiritual regeneration, a pre-requisite for all revolutions and progress. From preaching the gospel of truth, he turned to espousing the gospel of freedom. Two voices troubled his soul, "Love God or Die for the freedom of the country".

In his mind and soul now the two paths became one just as they were in the heart of his beloved Master, Guru Gobind Singh. Like Gargantua he felt that he was destined to rend asunder the swathing bands that were throttling the country. His religious and educational reforms from 1901-1913 had awakened in the Sikh masses a sense of pride in their glorious past and a spiritual consciousness of the grandeur and distinctive features of Sikh culture. The shooting of the passengers of *Komagata Maru* and indiscriminate arrests of returned emigrants embittered him greatly.

Out of about seven to eight thousand revolutionaries who entered India a large majority were arrested. Those who came by devious routes and remained underground escaped arrests. Kartar Singh Sarabha, Baba Nidhan Singh and a few other prominent Ghadarites were the first to arrive in the second week of September, 1914. The major batch coming by S.S. Tosa Maru came to know at Penang about the shooting of *Komagata Maru* incident. They imagined that the whole of India must now be fighting against the British and they sent a telegram to the Editor *Amrita Bazar Patrika* asking him whether revolution had already taken place.

The Ghadarites had a very childish notion of a revolution. Even after reaching India they failed to assess the political climate of the country. The rebellious spirit of these immature, inexperienced and untrained revolutionaries had firm faith that if they could do nothing else they could stir up their countrymen to throw off their age-old docility and to cease being cowards and fight like men. They believed in the fantastic illusion that if they could set fire to one British regimental centre the whole country will be ablaze with revolutionary passion. Out of thousands that entered India hardly fifty to hundred could get together in Amritsar on October 13th 1914. While these inspired revolutionaries were preparing for a mass uprising and military revolt, the Congress party was trading in loyalty. In 1914 the Indian National Congress pledged its wholehearted support to England in war. Lord Pentland, Governor of Madras attended the Congress session when the resolution of unswerving allegiance to England was passed. Mahatma Gandhi's argument for supporting British war efforts were: "Was it not the duty of the slave seeking to be free, to make the master's need his opportunity? If we would improve our status through help and cooperation of the British it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their need" (Gandhi: The story of My Experiment with Truth P. 41-54).

Gandhi disregarded his theories and doctrines of slave's opportunity and of winning freedom through cooperation with British Government in the Second World War. In 1914 the revolutionaries of Punjab, Bengal and Maharashtra resented this attitude of Mahatma Gandhi very much. Criticising this attitude of slave- morality a Punjabi paper wrote earlier, "If the Congress persists in its present infamous policy of disgraceful inaction and contemptible talk, heedless of the demand made on them for action, the country will come to regard them as a body of ambitious imbeciles or a society of self-seekers who are sacrificing the real interests of their country on the altar of vanity." (P.N.N.P. Jan. 10, 1914. (National Archives - India)).

When the Ghadarites arrived they found to their dismay that the metaphysical rebellion of their imagination had no reality. In order to get a mass base for their revolution they openly exhorted the people to revolt against British power and authority at Amritsar, Nankana Sahib, and Tarn Taran but they could not convince the masses with what strategy and weapons they would succeed in doing so suddenly and rashly. Out of all prominent political leaders no one expressed any sympathy for their wild plans. In the Amritsar district Baba Jawand Singh of Patti helped them secretly to some extent. But the only prominent leader who was prepared to render all out help was Bhai Randhir Singh. "In the Malwa Tract" records the Isemonger Report, "the efforts of the revolutionaries to enlist the help of the people received valuable help from a local religious leader, Randhir Singh of Narangwal, Ludhiana. This man has had a University education and is the son of Natha Singh an important official in the Nabha State. He had locally a great reputation for sanctity and constantly toured about the Malwa Tract officiating at religious meetings for which he was in great demand. He appears to have been an ordinary loyal citizen until the beginning of 1914, when the agitation over the Rikabganj Gurdwara worked on him to such an extent that he became an active seditionist. On 27th February, 1915, there was a meeting of the leading Sikh gentry of the districts to which the emigrants belonged, at Government House, Lahore. The Lt. Governor presided. The Sardars present advocated that all emigrants should be interned in jail, but it was pointed out by Lt. Governor that it would be impossible to intern thousands. Sardar Gajjan Singh, a member of Provincial Legislative council and lawyer advocated that as delays in dealing with crime committed by revolutionaries had a very bad effect, the usual procedure should be modified and speedy and summary trials substituted. This was before the passing of Defence Act of India." [(i) Isemonger and Slattery: *An account of Ghadar Conspiracy* P. 150. (ii) Sir Michael O Dwyer represented to the Govt, of India after this meeting, that "it is most undesirable at the present

time to allow trials of these revolutionaries, or of other sedition mongers to be protracted by the ingenuity of counsel and drawn out to inordinate lengths by the committal and appeal procedure which the Criminal Law Provides." Sir Michael O Dwyer, *India as I knew it p. 199.* (iii) It is fortunate that the Governor disregarded Gajjan Singh's advice to arrest all the returned emigrants, irrespective of the fact that they were suspects or not. Gajjan Singh's reactionary outbursts and notorious suggestions to give speedy and maximum punishment to all suspected Ghadarites, made him the most unpopular Sikh of his times. Gajjan Singh used all his influence to repeatedly harass Bhai Randhir Singh's young wife and little children when the Saint was in prison, and all his attempts to annoy them and cause one trouble after another failed, and have become household tales in Narangwal. Scores of eye-witnesses are still living. This man and his family became the most cursed family in Narangwal]

All writers on Ghadar movement admit that Bhai Randhir Singh was the only local leader (the only one who was not a returned emigrant) who offered to participate in the battle for freedom without any reservations. He was the only Sikh leader of the masses who was won over by the revolutionaries. The rest were returned emigrants (Jagjit Singh, *Ghadar Party da Ithas*, 386).

Two Paths of Revolution

Sometime in September and October 1914 when the cause of preventing the British Government from acquiring Rikabganj Gurdwara had been virtually won, five eminent Ghadarites namely Baba Nidhan Singh of Village Chugha, Bhai Uttam Singh of Hans, Bhai Ishar Singh of Dhudike, Kartar Singh Sarabha, Bhai Gandha Singh and Bhai Arjan Singh met Bhai Randhir Singh and won him for the cause. The Ghadarites made desperate effort to contact the masses. They visited Nankana Sahib, Tarn Taran on religious festivals and openly exhorted the people to revolt against the British in such violent language which frightened the peasants in the face of mass arrests of returned emigrants and the shooting of the passengers of *Komagata Maru*. They did not get much response and as their resources became hopelessly meagre, they resorted to the Robinhood cult of plundering the rich and paying the revolutionaries. They were shocked to find that the political climate in the country was not at all conducive to revolution, but that did not deter them from carrying out their plans.

Even after resorting to dacoities and committing gruesome murders the Ghadarites did not get much money. While the revolutionary philosophy of the Ghadarites was of anarchist revolutionaries, that of Bhai Randhir Singh was a passion for freedom inspired by Sikh history and ideals of Sikhism. The Ghadarites were revolutionists of a different order. Without ever reading Voltaire, Rousseau or Marx, they believed with Mikhail A. Bakunin. The Revolutionist is a doomed man. He has no personal interest, no affairs, sentiments, attachments and property. The revolutionist despises every sort of doctrinarism and has renounced the peaceful, scientific pursuits, leaving them to future generations. He knows only one science, the science of destruction" (Mikhail A. Bakunin: Catechism of the Revolution Article I and 5).

Bhai Randhir Singh felt that peaceful methods would never succeed with the British Imperialism. They were now even interfering in religious and cultural matters and undermining all fundamental freedoms. He believed in the revolutionary ideal of Guru Gobind Singh who in his letter to Aurangzeb said, "When all other means fail, it is lawful to resort to the sword". He believed in making adequate preparation to carry out an armed revolt against British Power. He was strongly against dacoities, loot and plunder for the sake of money. He not only resented it but also did not allow any of his companions to have anything to do with such activities. That is why he kept his group, called the *Tat Khalsa Jatha*, quite apart, independent of central command and completely

under his control. That is why he did not accept the overall leadership of the Ghadar movement. He assured the key Ghadar leaders, Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha, Kartar Singh Sarabha and others that he and his companions would participate only in armed revolt against the British army. He expressed his resentment against killing of civilians for money. Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha, a returned emigrant from Canada, was one of his strongest supporters of this line of approach. Nidhan Singh even told his companions that he had contacted some princely families of Hill States like Mandi and some rich Sardars who for some reason or the other were disgusted with British rule. They had promised to render every financial help. But the Lahore Revolutionary group was caught up in a vicious circle of creating a revolutionary situation through terrorism and raising money through loot and plunder. They considered it simpler, easier and exciting, but it proved very dangerous and harmful to their cause and an utter failure in achieving the high purpose. Bhai Randhir Singh's Jatha not only strongly resented and disapproved of these tactics, he kept himself aloof and apart from this revolutionary group which had its centre at Lahore, but extended full support of his Jatha in an armed uprising against the British forces (Giani Harbhajan Singh and Giani Dalip Singh, life-long companions of Bhai Randhir Singh, inform me that both Bhai Nidhan Singh and Bhai Randhir Singh strongly resented these dacoities and attacks on innocent villagers to grab money. Nearly 20 dacoities and murders were committed between October 16th 1914 and August 3rd 1915 in the name of Revolution). That is why he did not care to meet leaders like Rash Bihari Bose and other bomb-cult revolutionaries, even though he went to Amritsar during this period once. Bhai Nidhan Singh Chugha, Kartar Singh Sarabha and Gandha Singh met him almost every week.

Bhai Randhir Singh's Jatha held its first closed door meeting in September, 1914 at Khanna and the second most important meeting was held on January 19, 1915 at Chamkaur (*Second Lahore Conspiracy Case* P. 276). To give a call to the younger generation to join the revolution, he asked one of his companions to put up the following poster on the gates of Khalsa High School, Ludhiana.

The *Feringhis* have looted the country and laid it waste
The people are harassed greatly, O people;
They have taken all riches of India,
And have sent them to England, O people;
These dacoits are looting us day and night
The poor cultivators are starving, O people;
Good pay is paid to the Whiteman
To eat, drink and be merry, O people.
All the rest, soldiers, Sikhs, or Muslims
Have only grams to eat, O people.
The white man shrank back on the battle field,
Standing at safe distance they issue Orders, O people;
To fight and get killed we are pushed to the front,
In Egypt, Africa, Persia, O people;
The English are not a great power,
Fight and defeat them, O people;
When will ye, Khalsa draw the sword?
And slay the Whiteman, O people;
Make preparation for mutiny soon
To destroy the rule of the tyrants, O people.
(Home Political Deptt. January 1915, No. 278-282.)

Even though the revolutionary zeal of the Ghadarites received a shock from the extraordinary loyalty some Indian leaders openly professed for British rule, there was one heroic woman, Mrs. Annie Beasant, who after coming from Ireland became more Indian than any Indian. In a desperate attempt to move the conscience of the rulers she wrote, "O, English Nation, great and fine and proud, cannot you see, cannot you understand, cannot you realize what your Indian brothers feel now as you would feel if a foreigner ruled in your Land? That to be a stranger in your own country, an alien in your land, with no rights save those given by grace of Government, not your own, your inferiority taken for granted, your capacities weighted in alien scales and measured by the world of another nation. What does India want? She wants everything that any other nation may claim for itself. To be free in India as an Englishman is free in England. To be governed by her own men freely elected by herself" (K. Dwarka Das: *India Fights for Freedom*).

Countess Mary Minto wrote later on, "Those who blame the extremists for having inspired the cause by promoting Government repression do not realize that under foreign rule peace unalloyed by repression would be fatal. The political consciousness created by the extremists in a decade could not have been created by the moderates in half a century. For a subject nation nothing is more fatal than power. Liberty cannot be won without sacrifice" (Countess Mary Minto. *India Minto & Morley* P. 251).

Sir John Strachey had said some years earlier, that "there was no such country as India and there were no Indians in the sense of united people. The Ghadarites gave a lie to this theory about India and Indians". Dr. Annie Beasant refuted Mahatma Gandhi's theory that it was the duty of the Indian slaves to make the need of the British Masters an opportunity to seek more freedom saying "India is no longer a child in the nursery of the empire". She ridiculed all talk of reward for serving the British loyally, saying, "India does not chaffer with the blood of her sons and the proud tears of her daughters in exchange for so much liberty, so much right. India claims the right, as a Nation to justice among the peoples of the Empire."

Unhappy reaction of the Masses:

Without any central leadership, organization, preparations and plans, the returned emigrants plunged into revolutionary activity and for money they indulged in loot, plunder and even meaningless murders, which proved highly detrimental to their cause. The peasantry saw nothing justifiable in these acts, from whatever patriotic motive they might have been committed. To many of them the revolutionaries became murderers and plunderers.

Khushwant Singh and Satindra Singh in their monograph, *Ghadar 1915*, suggest that the Sikh masses showed great enthusiasm for recruitment. They do so probably on the basis of Michael O Dwyer's statement which says, "In four years of war the Sikhs from the total population of less than 1% of British India furnished no less than one-eighth of India's total" (Michael O' Dwyer, *India as I knew it*, P. 207).

But Montague in his Diary wrote during the war, "O Dwyer is determined to maintain his position as the idol of reactionary forces and to try and govern by iron hand" (Montague, *Diary*, January. 1918, P. 114).

And Dr. Annie Beasant who toured the Punjab during these years wrote that "the most atrocious, tyrannical, barbaric and inhuman methods were employed by Sir Michael O Dwyer and his agents to obtain recruits. Other events have made Punjab miserable and unhappy and the whole of Punjab was like a volcano seething with discontent." (Ibid, P. 114.)

Lord Pentland, governor of Madras on reading this strong article of Annie Beasant demanded a security of Rs. 2,000 from her journal early in 1916. Fearing that the Sikh troops may revolt against the British, Nepalese troops were brought into the Punjab State.

The revolutionaries came like a bolt from the blue. They were neither organized nor fully prepared for any armed revolt. People did not know what it was all about, and they had the commonsense to believe that a handful of badly organized adventurers could not topple the British Government. Dacoities, loot and plunder made them more unpopular. The revolutionaries, with all the remarkable patriotic qualities and spirit of self-sacrifice, felt that their movement was becoming aimless and what they required was an astute leader who could organize a planned armed revolt.

Rash Bihari Bose, Bengali Anarchist Organizes Revolt:

Kartar Singh Sarbha made a desperate effort to contact the Bengal revolutionaries for ammunition and guidance. For the Bengal revolutionaries, rebellion meant throwing bombs in crowded places and shooting officials and protected leaders. They could not believe that the armies could be won over for mutiny on national scale to topple the British Government.

When Kartar Singh Sarbha met Sachindra Nath Sanyal at Banaras, he became hopeful of establishing liaison with competent Bengal revolutionary leaders. Sachindra Nath Sanyal was the founder of *Anusilan Samiti*, a revolutionary organization which remained unnoticed and ineffectual till Rash Behari Bose joined it.

"Rash Behari Bose was a Bengali revolutionary hailing from Chandernagore. He took government service and was employed as a clerk in the Imperial Forest Institute of Dehra Dun, where he bore an exemplary character. Throughout the year 1912 he had with him at Dehra Dun, ostensibly as a servant, a young Bengali named Basant Kumar Biswas whom he was instructing in the doctrine that assassination was no crime but was in accordance with his religious duty as a Hindu. Coached thus, Basant Kumar and Rash Bihari went to Delhi for the State Entry on 23rd September and Basant Kumar threw the bomb at the Viceroy, which wounded him and killed an Indian attendant. After the outrage they remained there for a few days. Rash Bihari then went back to Dehra Dun to take part in a meeting to express horror at the crime. For a long time there was no clue to the crime and it was never possible to put the case in the court. In the following May there was another bomb outrage in which Basant Kumar was one of the principal accused in Lahore. Here too no clue could be obtained for months. In the beginning of 1914, however, the history of the Lahore outrage was discovered. Basant Kumar and others were arrested, but Rash Bihari was absent on leave in Chandernagore and managed to escape. Basant Kumar and three others were sentenced to death. Rash Bihari Bose remained in hiding in Benaras until the time came for him to take control of the Ghadar movement in the Punjab" ((i) *Isemonger and Slattery: An Account of the Ghadar Conspiracy* P. 130. (ii) *How India Struggled for Freedom I.* P. 220)

Seduction of Troops:

For an armed revolt, the seduction of troops was now the first and last programme. The Revolutionaries had established good contacts in a number of cantonments especially in the Lahore and Ferozepur cantonments. Bhai Randhir Singh had some devoted friends in the 36 Cavalry, Ambala, notably Babu Mai Singh, Subedar Piara Singh (later Col. Piara Singh) and Subedar Harbachan Singh. Bhai Randhir Singh asked Babu Mai Singh to join the armed revolt, but he helplessly refused and frankly said that he could not afford to sacrifice his duties to his family and plunge into a revolt which meant courting disaster (Babu Mai Singh son of Bhai Kahan Singh and Mai Gulabi was influenced by the devout Bhalla saints of Batala during childhood and ever since

then has led a religious life. He hails from village Sarli Kalan in Amritsar district. He was Head Clerk in 36 Cavalry, Ambala Cantt. He came into contact with Bhai Randhir Singh in 1910. Once or twice he was absent from duty while performing prayers, but his commander took a lenient view of the matter. While in France he suffered from T.B. He was sent back home in 1917 in a hopeless condition. In a dream vision the Guru comforted him saying "I will save you." He is still hale and hearty at the age of 88. When Bhai Randhir Singh was in prison he looked after his family as best as circumstances permitted him to do so. After Bhai Randhir Singh's return from the prison he conducted all the baptism ceremonies of his Jatha and has during his life administered baptism to thousands of devotees. After the death of Bhai Randhir Singh, Babu Mai Singh is revered as a very prominent friend and companion of the saint). Babu Mai Singh and his companions soon left for France to fight for the British while Bhai Randhir Singh spear-headed the revolution against the British Government in India.

Within a week after his arrival, Rash Bihari Bose studied the situation and fixed February 22nd as the day of meeting and revolt. Some units in Lahore and Ferozepur cantonment had agreed to capture ammunition depots and stage an armed revolt. The whole thing was brilliantly organized. But the organization had one inherent weakness. Anyone who came into contact with them was easily accepted in the inner circle. The Government planted a spy on them on getting some information who wormed his way into the inner group within less than a week. Bhai Randhir Singh visited Amritsar during these days but he did not contact Rash Bihari Bose. Kartar Singh Sarabha and Bhai Nidhan Singh met him every week, and he was kept informed of all the development personally by them.

Betrayal:

While investigating and examining the evidence obtained in the Chuba dacoity, Liaqat Hayat Khan D.S.P. suspected that the Ghadarites were involved in the dacoity and murder. On the 7th February Liaqat Hayat Khan asked Zaildar Bela Singh to find a man who personally knew some returned emigrants. On 9th February 1915 Beala Singh brought one Kirpal Singh, a relative of an emigrant Balwant Singh, who was planted as a spy. As this man knew Nidhan Singh Chugha (they had met earlier at Shanghai), he was able to get into the inner circle through him. He first got Mula Singh arrested and replaced Mula Singh in the inner circle. On 12th February the Revolutionary Council High Command fixed 22nd February, 1914 as the date for collective mutiny and revolt which Kirpal Singh conveyed to the police on the 13th February, but the police reached the spot when all had dispersed. Kirpal Singh had contacts only with the Amritsar police. So he was not able to get any help from the Lahore police. Nidhan Singh was the first to come to know that Kirpal Singh was a spy, but the revolutionary leaders did not think it wise to do away with him immediately. They however kept a close watch on him. The Revolutionary Council changed the D day to 19 February in an informal meeting on February 14th 1915. Upto the 17th February the change of the date was kept a closely guarded secret, among four or five top leaders.

Kartar Singh Sarabha Meets Bhai Randhir Singh on 14th February Night:

Bhai Randhir Singh's *jatha* had worked apart and was fully prepared to plunge into the revolt with about 60 men. The inner circle of the *Jatha* had already held closed door meetings in the following places: Khanna (September 1914), Chamkaur (19th January 1915), Lohatbadi (20th January 1915), Gujjarwal (12th February).

The date of revolt had been changed from 21st February to 19th February, but only top leaders knew it. The change had not been as yet passed as a resolution by the Revolutionary War Council. On 14th February night Bhai Randhir Singh was going to Dhandhari to perform *Akhand Path* (continuous recitation of *Guru Granth Sahib*) in the house of Sardar Hardit Singh, a military man.

Kartar Singh Sarabha knew about his programme. The young Revolutionary waited on the Gill-Malerkotla road to contact Bhai Randhir Singh. After some hours of waiting he saw Bhai Randhir Singh coming. The saint embraced Kartar Singh Sarabha (Gyani Harbhajan Singh was with Bhai Randhir Singh during this meeting. He has given me a written account of what transpired between them).

Kartar Singh then informed Bhai Randhir Singh that spy Kirpal Singh had leaked out the D day, February 21st. So it had been changed to February 19th. They were to meet him on the outskirts of Ferozepur cantonment. Kartar Singh then suggested that the *jatha* should wear white turbans instead of black and should not bring any weapons as the weapons would be supplied by the army mutineers. Bhai Randhir Singh told him that they will wear black turbans, and would also keep some weapons like the swords and axes in case they were necessary before other weapons come to hand. Kartar Singh Sarabha told him that cars and taxis were ready to bring the Lahore and Amritsar revolutionaries while Bhai Randhir Singh and his companions were advised to come by train in the form of wedding party and reach Ferozepur by sunset. After lengthy and enthusiastic discussions lasting for about two hours Kartar Singh disappeared into darkness (When the date had finally been fixed for the rising, Kartar Singh went on 17th February to Bhai Randhir Singh who was holding congregation at Dhandurt village, Ludhiana, a service to pray for the safety of some Indian Soldiers in France. Kartar Singh informed him of the date and directed him to come to Ferozepur on the evening of 19th with his men. The disaffected men of the 26th Punjabis would be guard for the assembly. The depot magazine would be attacked by one party and other depots and regimental lines would be attacked by another party, and British troops would be massacred and then the arsenal would be attacked. Isemonger and Slattery, *An Account of Ghadar Conspiracy*, P. 110. Kartar Singh Sarabha met Bhai Randhir Singh on February 14th, and not on 17th as Isemonger report suggests says Giani Harbhajan Singh who was with Bhai Randhir Singh on this date).

D. Day February 19th 1915:

Bhai Randhir Singh held one of his closed door meetings at Dhandari on 17th February and the second at his residence on the morning of February 19th. The question was thoroughly discussed. One of his companions suggested that Bhai Randhir Singh as a saintly person should keep himself above politics. He should not covet any power. To this Bhai Randhir Singh replied that he was not fighting for power but as a Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh it was his unflinching duty to fight for freedom. A Sikh should not tolerate slavery of any kind. He also was not prepared to discuss the question of failure or success. "When we fight for freedom", he said, "Our duty is to be prepared to fight till you succeed. A soldier does not concentrate on speculations of what might happen. He fights for victory". A resolution was then unanimously passed.

On the 19th February evening Bhai Randhir Singh along with 60 companions boarded a train from Mullanpur at 6 P.M. for Ferozepur. With him were prominent revolutionaries like Bhai Nidhan Singh, Gandha Singh, Ishar Singh and others. They got down at Ferozepur Cantt Railway Station, and waited at the place where they were supposed to meet Kartar Singh Sarabha. The Government had come to know about this date also. Kartar Singh fearlessly entered the well guarded cantonment and came to know that 8 of the sepoys on whom he counted had been discharged. Five of them were actually marched to the railway station on the morning of 19th February and entrained for their homes. Some of them had come back at night and told him the whole story. One man sent by Kartar Singh Sarabha into the cantonment was taken into custody. Kartar Singh Sarabha then met Bhai Randhir Singh and his men among the reeds outside the cantonment and asked them to disperse. From Ferozepur Cantt., they walked to Khai railway

station from where they boarded a train for Mullanpur early next morning and came back to Narangwal.

On the 18th or 19th morning spy Kirpal Singh came to know about the changed date from a man who did not know that Kirpal Singh was a spy. Kirpal Singh immediately told a C.I.D. Officer in plain clothes about the changed date. Finding Kirpal Singh nervous and in the know of the date, the Ghadarites thought of killing him. At 4.30 P.M. Kirpal Singh went up on the roof of the building and shouted to the Police to save him. The Police had by now surrounded the building. They arrested all those who were there and also took away the papers and documents from the Ghadar Office. Kartar Singh Sarabha and his companions were arrested after some days.

Fateful Slip of Paper

In the first Lahore conspiracy case Kartar Singh Sarabha was the main accused. This case opened on October 29th 1915. The Government up to this time did not know that Bhai Randhir Singh and his jatha were in any way involved in the case. Bhai Randhir Singh went to Nabha where his father Sardar Natha Singh was the High Court Judge. A fateful slip of paper with three names on it written though unsigned by Rash Bihari Bose came up for explanation in the first Lahore Conspiracy Case. The text of this slip of paper was Nidh to Ichh: Randhir, Uttam, Jagar, *send these-join.*" (*Lahore Conspiracy Case: Home Pol. 1915 Oct; P. 98 A*). Approver Achhra Singh of Ambala explained that 'Nidh' meant Nidhan Singh, 'ichh' meant Achhra Singh, Randhir stood for Randhir Singh, Uttam, Jagar, send these to join. When Achhra Singh Approver revealed for the first time that Randhir Singh was a leading revolutionary, the Viceroy at once sent a telegram to Maharaja Nabha to keep Bhai Randhir Singh in custody till further investigation.

Maharaja Ripduman Singh could have avoided arrest and helped Bhai Randhir Singh to escape, but to prove to the victory that he was not so anti-British as he was supposed to be and he was in no way involved in any Ghadar movement, he took Bhai Randhir Singh into custody, assuring him that he will be well looked after. Bhai Randhir Singh sent a reply to the Maharaja saying that when it is Maharaja's turn to be interned, he will know what prison is, and he will know how one feels when he is well looked after in prison (Maharaja Ripduman Singh later on confessed that he had made the greatest mistake in his life. He died in British Prison).

Arrest and Trial:

On February 4th 1916, Bhai Randhir Singh in his defence Statement declared, "On Sunday 27th Baisakh (May 9th 1915) the police arrested me and kept me (at Nabha) there for fifteen days. From there I was transferred to Lohatbadi police station, where I was kept for about a month. From there I was sent to Ludhiana under the custody of police and a sergeant on June 19th (June 17th given by Giani Nahar Singh in the appendix to the Punjabi edition of the Autobiography is incorrect. This date given by Bhai Randhir Singh in his statement in the records of Lahore Conspiracy Case is obviously correct), I was kept in the lock up attached to Ludhiana police station for a week. On 20th June I was sent to Ludhiana jail. I have been in jail since that time. Ever since my arrest no body has made any enquiry from me, taken down my statement, nor yet have I been told for what fault I was arrested" (*Lahore Conspiracy Case, Feb. 4, 1916, P. 956*).

Dr. Mohammed Alam appeared for Bhai Randhir Singh while Mr. Pitman was the Prosecuting Officer. Bhai Randhir Singh and his companions were tried by A. A. Irvine, T.P. Eillis and Pundit Sheo Narain. He was, alphabetically, accused number 69 in the First Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case. Once again Bhai Randhir Singh met Kartar Singh Sarabha in prison. The first Lahore Conspiracy case against Kartar Singh and his companions started on April 26th 1915 in

Lahore Central Jail and judgement was delivered on September 13th 1915. Out of 81 revolutionaries arrested 24 were sentenced to death. The ibid Lahore Conspiracy case involving Bhai Randhir Singh and his companions started on October 29th 1915, and judgement was delivered on March 30th 1916.

There were four approvers against Bhai Randhir Singh namely Sunder Singh Asa Majra, Bhagat Singh, Udham Singh Hans and Anokh Singh. There were five prosecuting witnesses. Achhra Singh (Approver of first case), Inder Singh and his wife Nihal Kaur, two pointsmen of Khai Railway Station named Ahmad Khan and Isa Khan.

When Achhra Singh was asked to identify Bhai Randhir Singh, he, out of shame, did not dare to do so but said eye sight was too bad for identification. So he could not say which man was Randhir Singh (Achhra Singh whose name in the case appears as Ichhra Singh had a shop at Raikot. With Sunder Singh as President and himself as Treasurer, he started a school at Lohatbadi. When he quarrelled with Sunder Singh, he became an all in all Manager. He was given charge of bombs and ammunition and revolutionary literature. He forwarded the literature to the Viceroy and Governor of Punjab and became Approver in the *First Lahore Conspiracy Case*. It was he who for the first time revealed that Bhai Randhir Singh and his Jatha were actively involved in the case).

When Inder Singh of Khanna was asked to identify him, he said he knew Bhai Randhir Singh very well but on that day his *aqal* (mind) told him not to do so. So he was incapable of identifying him. Achhra Singh seems to have genuinely repented after all the damage had been done. He offered to help if he could. It was suggested to him by the revolutionaries that on a certain day when a sword of the Ghadarities was to be shown to him for identification he should take the sword and kill the prosecuting officer and then they will pounce on the judges. Kartar Singh Sarabha and Gandha Singh had even procured revolvers and knives from outside and everyone carried something. But the sword was shown to Achhra Singh from a distance and the tragedy was averted.

One day inadvertently the Police Officer Incharge of Prisons marched the prisoners to the court. Each Prisoner was surrounded by two armed policemen. As they were marching, Bhai Lai Singh (Hindu outcaste who had become Sikh), a member of Bhai Randhir Singh's *jatha*, suddenly appeared on the road and started marching along with them. He suggested to Bhai Randhir Singh that he had come to free them. All he had with him was a battle axe. The armed policemen were unnerved. They knew that the Ghadarites were desperate men. They begged Bhai Randhir Singh not to put them to trouble. Bhai Lai Singh was too eager to attack and lay down his life to liberate his companions. Bhai Randhir Singh knew that with double the number of policemen having loaded rifles the risks were great. So he asked Bhai Lai Singh to go away before he was arrested. Lai Singh went away saying "I will wait for you on your way back" (This incident was related to me by co-prisoners Giani Harbhajan Singh and Giani Dalip Singh). Even the judges in the court were surprised to see the prisoners in the court. The order was to try them in the prison.

Perverted judgement:

Judgement was first passed on Kartar Singh Sarabha, which reads "There is no defence witness, there was no cross examination, throughout the trial, and the accused did not wish to argue his own case, nor to allow the counsel appointed for him to argue. It only remains to be said that the guilt of the accused has been proved to the hilt. He is a youngman (18.5 years old) no doubt, but he is certainly one of the worst of these conspirators and is a thorough callous scoundrel, proud of his exploits to whom no mercy whatever can or should be shown." (When Bhai Parmanand asked

Kartar Singh Sarabha in prison, why did you sacrifice the comfortable life in Canada for the sake of dying on the gallows, Kartar Singh Sarabha replied "Tell me which death is better. To die like a cursed slave in a foreign country and bear insults and humiliation from every Whiteman or to die like a hero in your own country fighting for freedom." It is unfortunate that the Biography of Kartar Singh published by the Punjabi University Patiala, though excellently printed neither gives any essential details of this remarkable hero's life, nor even the easily available facts about his struggle for freedom. The whole life of Kartar Singh Sarabha is almost legendary inspiring saga of the youngest and the bravest fighter for freedom in Indian history (Trilochan Singh)).

But even in the case of Bhai Randhir Singh, where 100 defence witnesses including Prime Minister of a Sikh State, Judges of High Courts, and Englishman Mr. Cole Principal of Khalsa College appeared on his side and the evidence of approvers and prosecuting witnesses was patently false and erroneously tutored, the judgement was perverted. The wording of the judgement against him was almost the same as that against Kartar Singh Sarabha. St. Augustine has said, "Justice being taken away, then what are kingdoms, but great robberies. For what are robberies themselves but little kingdoms" (Augustine, *The City of God*, IV).

Behind the whole drama of proving the charges, there was even in the cold pretence of dispassionateness of the judges, an iron determination to send the accused to doom. The Prosecuting Officer many times became irritable, nervous, aggressive and wrathful. This was how irrelevant facts against Bhai Randhir Singh were presented and answered when questioned.

The prosecution story was that the change of date of uprising was decided at Lahore at 10 A.M. on February 17th and conveyed to Bhai Randhir Singh the same evening. During those days, there was no bus service. No train or telegram could convey the news so soon either to Narangwal or Dhandari, to enable Bhai Randhir Singh to hold a meeting on the same day. Mr. Pitman when questioned by the Defence Counsel angrily said, "We do not know how, but the news was sent on the same day and reached the accused on the same day. Actually Kartar Singh Sarabha had personally informed Bhai Randhir Singh on 14th February, three days earlier.

Pointsmen Ahmad Bakhsh and Isa Khan of Khai Railway Station had been tutored to say that they saw Bhai Randhir Singh and his companions buying tickets on the morning of 20 February at Khai Railway Station. When they were asked what was the colour of their turbans and clothes both of them said that the revolutionaries were wearing khaki turbans and clothes although they were actually wearing black turbans (The original complaint filed by Mr. Henry Vernon Bars tow Hare-Scott Superintendent of Police C.I.D. against the accused on October 28, 1915 mentions that they were wearing black turbans and clothes. Scott calls Bhai Randhir Singh a very prominent conspirator who conspired to send educated youth to America to learn the manufacture of arms. (Lahore Conspiracy Case)).

Nihal Kaur another prosecuting witness who had incidentally met them near Khai Station said that they were wearing white clothes. One approver who said that he was a preacher did not even know how to read and write Punjabi yet one other approver was a renegade from Sikhism (*Patit*), the type of people Bhai Randhir Singh never allowed to come near him. On the basis of these utterly false statements, the judgement against Bhai Randhir Singh runs: This accused (Randhir Singh) who pleaded, 'Not guilty to the charges framed against him, is not a returned emigrant and he is one of the most important accused in the present case and has the biggest dossier against him. Though the counsel told us in arguments that the accused's father has been undergoing an operation, no defence witnesses were produced to show why he was not produced as a witness to

most important facts in connection with his son with whom he is apparently on good terms. Of his guilt there can be no possible doubt whatever, and we cannot lose sight of the fact that it was his influence that brought several of the co-accused including mere youth, and old men into the dock. We are satisfied on the evidence that the accused from an early period conspired to wage war on several occasions as above indicated and that he committed an act of war in going to Ferozepur in a war like array to attack the arsenal there and we accordingly convict him under Section 121 A, 121, Indian Penal Code and sentence him to transportation for life and direct that his property liable to forfeiture be forfeited to the Government" (First-supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case P. 301).

Prison and Ordeals:

The whole of this autobiography tells the terrible tale of his sufferings in prison. His elder daughter Bhagwant Kaur died when he was brought to Ludhiana prison after his arrest. She could not bear the shock or the thought of living without him. His other children Balbir Singh and Daler Kaur were too young to know what had happened. His father Sardar Natha Singh also languished to death, but before dying he wrote to the Governor Punjab, that his son Randhir Singh had no property of his own and that his property which was meant for supporting his wife, his daughter-in-law and grand children, may please not be confiscated after his death. But contrary to the Governor's assurance the property was confiscated under pressure from Gajjan Singh Advocate of Narangwal and member of Legislative Council.

When Gajjan Singh brought the police to get the house confiscated, after the land had been confiscated, Kartar Kaur wife of Bhai Randhir Singh refused to leave the house. "Either you shoot me or take me and my children to the prison." The villagers then put Gajjan Singh to shame and asked him to withdraw the police. Gajjan Singh died on June 10th 1929 and soon after him his only son died on February 12th 1936. As long as this notorious loyalist, Gajjan Singh, who was considered enemy number one by the Freedom Fighters was alive, he resisted all proposals to release Bhai Randhir Singh. After his death the Christian Missionary who met Bhai Randhir Singh in Nagpur Prison (see chapter 23) strongly recommended his release and even personally met the Governor of Punjab to persuade him to take the matter up seriously. The Governor referred the matter to Sikh Sardars like Sir Jogindra Singh who strongly recommended his release. The sufferings of Kartar Kaur, wife of Bhai Randhir Singh, for seventeen years is a long tale of woe and agony and yet she managed to bring up her son Balbir Singh, and daughter Daler Kaur as disciplined children. This autobiography relates not only the terrible suffering he had to undergo in prison but also vividly portrays the conditions in prisons under the British rule. These conditions improved greatly during Gandhi-Nehru era.

Twice Bhai Randhir Singh was given up as dead even by the members of his family. When the Sikh Community came to know about his forty days fast and other tortures which he suffered, the whole Sikh Panth prayed and performed *ardas* for his safety and welfare on February 1st 1923. Bhai Jodh Singh who was then editing *Khalsa Advocate* in English and Punjabi criticised this unanimous decision of the Sikh Panth in his paper, because like typical loyalist Sikhs of those days he refused to believe that the British Government could accord such an inhuman treatment to anyone. His was the only dissenting voice (Bhai Jodh Singh was later made the Principal of Khalsa College, Amritsar and was given the title of Sardar Bahadur by the British Government. *Khalsa Advocate* which he was editing was actually started to oppose the revolutionary and extremely popular daily "*Akali*" the national paper of the Sikhs which covered all the news of the Akali movement. Bhai Jodh Singh's paper closed down after suffering a loss of over seventy thousand rupees. The members of the Chief Khalsa Diwan bought it, and says a member who was then a

subscriber, that the people never took this paper seriously. The Sikh masses refused to touch it even with a pair of tongs. At present a paper running under the same name in Punjabi is giving correct political and cultural lead to the Sikhs).

Creative and Missionary Work:

After facing terrible suffering in prison life (from May 1915 to October 1930), Bhai Randhir Singh was fortunate to live for nearly thirty and a half years. Soon after his release the four *Takhats* of the Sikhs honoured him with *Hukamnamas* blessing him and praising his sacrifices. He is the only Sikh who in the last hundred years of Sikh history had been given *Hukamnamas* and robes of honour by all the four *Takhats* (Pontific Seats). He was among the *Panj Pyaras* who initiated the *kar-seva* (Mass-service) of Tarn Taran shrine. He laid the foundation stone of the new building in Panja Sahib and of *Shahidganj* Nankana Sahib, both in Pakistan. The Delhi Gurdwara Committee gave his *jatha* buses to visit Sikh Shrines in Delhi. At Patna Sahib he laid the foundation stone of *Akal Bunga*, and at Paonta Sahib he laid the foundation stone of *Kavi Durbar Asthan*. When he visited Calcutta his admirer Sardar Pal Singh offered him a new car. He used the car only during his stay at Calcutta but did not accept it for permanent use.

During these years he wrote twenty books on theology, philosophy and mysticism. Some subjects like '*Unstruck Music*', '*Karma Philosophy*' and *Sikh ethics* have been seriously studied by him alone (*Anhad Shabad, Charan Kamal di Mauj, Sach Khand Darshan, Gurmat Vivek, Gurmat Karam Philosophy, Gurmat Lekh, Sant Pad Nirnai*).

We do not find such brilliant exposition of these mystical and theological doctrines presented in the form of such comprehensive books in the whole religious literatures of early period. He has also written a volume of the *Applied Grammar of Guru Granth Sahib (Gurbani lag-Matra di Vilakhanta)* which differs considerably from theoretical grammars written by other writers. He has taken up all controversial interpretations and brought out rules of grammar which apply throughout the scriptures. Bad printing of *Guru Granth Sahib*, he points out, has caused a good deal of confusion.

In the Nagpur Jail he felt inspired to write a Dantanian epic which he called *Jyot Vigas*, "the Revelation of Light" (*Jyot Vigas* and *Darahan Jhalkan* are his two poetical contributions). Having no paper and pen he wrote the whole book of over 3,000 lines on the marginal and other space of a book with a copying pencil. The original manuscript has been preserved. All his books were sold at cost price and he did not allow anyone to make any profit out of them. He never kept any money with him. He never knew what it was to have a bank account. His land remained confiscated even after India gained freedom.

When Congress rulers got the reigns of power in their hands in 1947, their scramble for power went to the limit of becoming completely blind to the sacrifices of freedom fighters who suffered all their life. Only when some one brought it to the notice of Dr. Bhargava, the then Chief Minister, his lands were released in 1950. No pension was given to him and no benefit has ever been given up to this day to his son and family for all the sufferings they had to face during British period either by the Congress or Akali Government of our day (Bhai Randhir Singh's only son Sardar Balbir Singh has been deprived of promotion due to him since April 1968 and heartlessly retired in December 1969 without being given even a year's extension or his normal pension by the Punjab Government).

The callousness of the Congress Government of recent past in Punjab and Akali regime of today towards such families of freedom fighters will be condemned by posterity in the same language in which the excesses of British Imperialism are condemned by Chroniclers today. Historians may find some justification for the action of the British attitude towards the revolutionaries but they will find no explanation about the attitude of Congress and Akali rulers towards patriots and their families except their selfish short-sightedness and callous disregard of recent history.

Last Illness and Death:

During the last years Bhai Randhir Singh suffered from partial paralysis of legs because he had to spend many years in dark prison cells where he could not even lie down with legs stretched. He was fond of performing *Kirtan* for 36 hours at a stretch or to sit for days in meditation. His legs became weak. An attack of bacilli dysentery further aggravated his illness during the last nine months of his life but from his glowing red face, it was difficult to guess whether he was at all ill.

On the *Baisakhi* of 1961, he met innumerable visitors. Two days later on the 16th April he sent for me, his son and a few friends very early in the morning. His face was tense and we had a feeling that he felt slightly unwell. When I asked him "Shall we get a doctor", he held my hand indicating that I should not go and the doctor was not necessary. The very next minute he uttered the Name of God, *Vah-Guru*, thrice and plunged into eternal silence.

The next day his body was taken to a lonely place midway between Narangwal and Gujarwal and cremated there where many years earlier he used to sit in meditation for long in the calm hours of dawn. From Ludhiana to Narangwal the villagers lined on the road to pay a respectful homage to him. All along the route flowers were showered and people wished to touch his feet. All over India and abroad over 200 *Akhand Paths* were performed and condolence meetings held to pay homage to him. With his death ended an epoch of the history of freedom fighters.

Personality and Character:

Bhai Randhir Singh was one of those rare men whose life and teachings and whose work and writings are so fused, that each in its own way bears authentic witness to the other. Everything he has done has enriched the political, religious and cultural thought of this state. Though rarely possessed of overt power, he has wielded an influence as much by the wholeness and integrity of his being as by the practical example of his extremely disciplined and spiritually enlightened life.

No one who met Bhai Randhir Singh could ever forget his dynamic personality. He had a red glowing face with apostolic beard, a vast forehead, deep set burning eyes which reminded one of the eyes of Buddha in trance. Nothing escaped the magic of his glance, which at times sparkled with irony or compassion, and at other times lost itself in ecstasy plunging imperiously to the very depth of consciousness. It embraced everything in its irresistible chain. There was something majestic about his personality in which there was a blend of a Prince and a Yogi. Whenever he appeared in *Panthic* and national gatherings people forgot all politicians, ministers and other leaders in the face of the imposing and grand *Charisma* of his commanding presence. The grace and dignity of his wisdom, the fire of his meditative eyes, the splendid music of his voice enthralled everyone.

The matchless classical charm of his dress, his glittering sword, a quoit on his turban, gave him the historical appearance of the Knights of Guru Gobind Singh who lived and died for him. Whether in the palaces of the Maharajas which he visited only twice or thrice in life, or in *Panthic* gatherings, it was impossible to imagine him in the second place.

The most impressive thing in him was his inexhaustible fertility and brilliance of mind which could be seen in his repartee, sparkling with humour, wisdom and strong convictions. In his writings we find the glow of his mystic experiences, his intellectual certainty and the metaphysical clarity of his theology. Penetrating and passionate, emotional and imaginative, he was always profound and clear in his thinking and determined and powerful in his actions.

He was God-intoxicated man, consumed with religious enthusiasm in the literal sense of the world, and "holding a God within" as one would say, yet was a practical leader capable of dedicated service to humanity and his country. His faith and virtues were near-allied and mutually indispensable. He was impetuous and courageous, dogmatic and decisive, domineering and humble, inspiring and creative, proud before princes and politicians, but humble before the noble and godly men. With astounding fortitude and stoicism he suffered all his life for the ideals which formed the corner-stone of Sikhism such as Freedom, Justice, Equality and Truth.

His memory will not only be cherished among the saints and theologians of the Sikh community but his name will become one of the most glorious legends of Freedom Movement, when the history of Freedom Movement in Punjab comes to be written, honestly, correctly and dispassionately. This will happen when historical truth based on proper research will throw into oblivion the artificially created heroes of propaganda-works of officials and semi-official histories now presented to the public. These books, knowingly or unknowingly, condense the supreme sacrifices of the real heroes of Freedom Movement into a para or a page devoting chapters to undeserved tributes to Lala Hardyal and Lala Lajpat Rai, whose role was fundamentally counter-revolutionary, and who did more harm than good to this movement. The patriots and heroes of this movement sacrificed everything, their very life and property for shaking British rule in India from its very roots. In this they succeeded.

On retrospective reflection on the life of Bhai Randhir Singh one feels that God demands from the noblest sons of mother-earth sacrifices at every grade of perfection. The great self-denial of this revolutionary Saint and patriot for freedom and faith are exemplary. His books on theology and mysticism, his relentless battle for justice and liberty, his courage to fight the world's greatest power with the fury and zeal of a handful of youngmen gave to the forty million dead souls of this country a new vision, a new passion for freedom, a new courage and fearlessness, a new understanding of their faith and culture. They prove that the blood and martyrdom of the freedom fighters ultimately succeeded in awakening the conscience of those leaders who thought they could win freedom through loyalty and abject submission to British imperialism. It is only when Bhai Randhir Singh's companions went to the gallows and others suffered life-imprisonment in the hellish pit of British prisons that national leaders of the country took up seriously the organization of freedom movement on more practical lines.

History will bear witness to the fact that the bones and bloods of these early freedom fighters fertilized the arid soil of their country's political field. It is pity that those who have reaped the fruits of their labours and those who wear crown of gold, unearthed from the valley of death by these heroes, have deliberately, consciously and callously forgotten those who carried the cross of freedom to the peak of liberty. But history the greatest and ultimate judge will not forget them. I thank the Director of National Archives, New Delhi, the Director of Punjab Archives, Patiala, Librarians of Khalsa College, Amritsar, Central Public Library, Patiala, and National Library Calcutta for the generous facilities they gave in research work on Freedom Movement. I also thank Sardar Sant Singh Secretary Chief Khalsa Diwan for showing me the carefully preserved resolutions and record of Chief Khalsa Diwan. I gratefully acknowledge all the help rendered in the publication of

this work to Babu Mai Singh and to Sardar Balbir Singh, son of Bhai Randhir Singh, for giving important documents concerning the life of his revered father and grand father. I also thank Giani Harbhajan Singh and Bhai Dalip Singh, life long companions of Bhai Randhir Singh for providing many hitherto unknown details of the history of this period.

TRILOCHAN SINGH

Nehru Nagar
Ludhiana.

2.11.1971.

COMMENTS

Prof. K.R. Srinivasa Iyengar

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's Autobiography is an eye opener to me. I must admit that before I read your book, he was but a name to me. There is thus much that I have learnt from this about our Heroic Age of Freedom Struggle (which of course began not in 1920, but the first decade of our century): Your Introductory Thesis has a wide sweep of comprehension and sets the remarkable career of Bhai Sahib in the right historical perspective.

You have rightly described Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh as a blend of a Prince and a Yogi, as a God-intoxicated man who was also a scourge of the Divine in difficult situation. If his prison tribulations make painful reading, his giant equanimity, his singular capacity for transcendence of man's pettiness and cruelty, and his total rapport with the divine make the Autobiography a saga of endurance and triumph. The confrontation with the alchemist and later with Bhagat Singh are shining episodes in the narrative. After the hell and the purgatory, the reunion with Mrs. Kartar Kaur who had been waiting for 16 years, and other kith and kin is entry into a new heaven. It is a truly memorable story, and yet real and of our time.

Dr. Anil Chandra Banerjee

I had heard of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh in connection with the history of the revolutionary movement, but I never knew that he was a God-intoxicated man. The book cast a spell on me. I read it continuously for two days and shall read it again. It shows Sikhism remains a living and active religious force even in the 20th century. A community which can produce such a man can give our country and the world new values and ideals.

Dr. Surindar Singh Kohli

This Book, in lucid and exquisite style, translated by the masterly hand of Dr. Trilochan Singh, contains the autobiographical letters of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh, the renowned Sikh Saint. In his commendable Introductory Thesis, the translator has enabled the reader to get a glimpse of the life, personality and times of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. The autobiographical letters of the saint enable him to peep into the multi-faceted life of this great freedom fighter, a reformer and a theologian.

This autobiography has a great historical value because it traces the life of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh mostly as a prisoner in the jails of British India. The atrocities perpetrated by the Imperialists on their subjects have been recorded in detail. Because of its historical value, this book has a religious importance for the Sikhs, because it brings forth their spirit and personality. Bhai Sahib's presence among the prisoners was a great solace for them. A Seeker of truth will always feel inspired by the experiences of Bhai Sahib narrated in the epistles of the book. With the magic touch of his personality, a great political martyr like Bhagat Singh could utter such words: "Your exalted life has imparted to me the elixir of spirituality and I feel its ennobling influence."



CHAPTER 1 - AWAKENING OF FAITH

(Prison Letter No. 5 written to Gyani Nahar Singh dated 4th May, 1922 from Rajahmundry prison (Andhra). It relates the events of the year 1900, when Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was only 22.)

YOU ASK ME, how did the love of Sikhism awaken in my mind. The important thing is that it came as a special inspiration from the Divine Being, otherwise there was nothing in me to merit it. There was a natural yearning for true love in my heart from childhood. I had searched long and hard for a true and beloved friend, whose love could last unto death, but I did not find any. With all this disappointment, the spark of love, present within my heart, convinced me that it was the only life-giving flame, which had emerged from a mysterious fountain within, and was now flickering dimly in my inner being.

The sights of nature's beauty had fascinating effect on me. In my own innocent way, I considered the whole sublime creation a miraculous phenomenon, but I did not in the least know or feel that behind all this cosmos there was the supreme Creator. The colourful beauty of the manifold and wonderful creation inspired me with rapturous feelings of love. The outward beauty of nature enchanted me, but when the colours faded there was disappointment and sadness. The deep-seated love for beauty was always there. The presence of this abiding spark of love indicated that there must be some eternal Spirit of life, resembling this undying flame within man, so that, one could live in love without any disappointment and disillusionment. I had such experiences and intimations of immortality from childhood. Beyond this dim intimation of inner life, I knew nothing of religion and religious life.

My early life thus passed in secular education. There were a number of encounters with evil and sin but my moral nature and character remained unaffected by them. I somehow escaped the onslaught of four cardinal sins which a Sikh is expected to avoid (A Sikh must not smoke, He must not commit adultery, He must not cut his hair and beard and He must not eat meat [Translator]). I can now say that God protected me from these evils. I could never have escaped them by my own will-power.

Prayer for a Purpose

There were three strong influences which prevailed at Lahore during those days. Firstly, there was an intellectual atmosphere of serious studies. Secondly, there was a vicious atmosphere of glamorous enchantments of sinful life. Thirdly, the religious atmosphere was made turbulent and spiritless by caustic debates and discussions between various faiths and sects. I got into the habit of attending most of these discussions but on finding nothing but cold criticism and dry debates, I did not feel attracted towards any religion. The deep-seated spark of love within me, did not find anchorage in any of these faiths. The religious atmosphere of the time can best be described in Bhai Gurdas' words: *sach kinare reh gaya khaih khaih marde bahmin maulane*: Truth is left aside, while Brahmins and Mullahs fight a deadly war of words.

B.A. final examination was drawing near. I had also to appear for first year Law examination. I received a letter from father in which he wrote: "You have to appear in two examinations. If you want to pass, you must recite the *Japji* (*Japji* a composition of Guru Nanak is the morning prayer of the Sikhs) prayer in the morning and *Rehras* in the evening" (Rehras is the evening prayer of the Sikhs having the compositions of Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Amar Das compiled into one well-knit composition). He also sent a prayer book. I knew

Punjabi language quite well, but had never read the Guru's hymns (*Gurbani*). I had never read any book on Sikhism up to this time:

For selfish ends, I made God my friend,
Even then, God fulfilled my desires,
And blessed me, with the highest state of liberation.
Guru Arjan: *Gaudi*, P. 195.

This was the miracle, which the Lord worked on me, when I started reciting prayers for selfish ends. My swan-like soul, which was passionately thirsting for the pearl drops of love, got its real food and forgot everything else. The mystic significance and the sublimity of the Guru's hymns became so clear to me within a few days that I became a restless seeker for the unseen Beloved. I lost almost all my body consciousness in this spiritual search for the love of the Beloved. I recited the *Rehras* in such a poignant and soul-stirring strain that the listeners were deeply moved. At last, one day, the following lines from *Rehras* pierced my soul like an arrow and gave me definite spiritual purpose of life.

Thou hast acquired this human frame;
This is the opportunity to be one with God.
All other labour is unprofitable.
Seek the company of the holy and glorify His Name;
Strenuously prepare to cross this terrible ocean,
Thy life is being wasted, in worldly attachments,
Guru Arjan: *Rehras*

The meaning and the spiritual fervour of these lines pierced my heart so deeply that there arose a perpetual yearning in my soul for a union with the Lord. I lost all interest in studies. Even in the class room I kept a textbook on the desk while I secretly read various selections from the *Guru Granth Sahib* like: *Bai Varan*, *Bhagat Bani*. Tears rolled down my eyes as I read them.

Only in the Bible period, I applied my mind to religious studies and discussions (Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was student of Christian Missionary College, Lahore where the study of Bible was compulsory). Whenever there was a debate on comparative study of religions, I succeeded in showing the importance of the Sikh ideals and thoughts. In all other periods, my mind was completely absorbed in thoughts about God and I did not think of anything else. Even when I came to the Nabha Hostel, my residence, my mind was actively yearning and praying for God and I neglected my studies. Some fellow-students wrote to my father that I had suddenly developed a religious madness and was neglecting studies; so someone should come and take care of me.

Father was seriously upset and worried by the news. He came in hot haste and on his arrival he saw me, reading a book of hymns and tears flowing from my eyes as I read it. Father gave a long homily, persuading me not to neglect my studies, but I said in all humility that it was he who urged me to recite the prayers every day. Before that, I was utterly devoid of religious thoughts. He however gave a long discourse and explained many things in his own way. With my head lowered, I listened to him in silence. After saying and suggesting many good things he went away, but the condition of my mind remained the same. From then onwards I tried to conceal my inner yearning and sadness (*vairagya*) from the people. I did not express my feelings and sentiments to anyone and continued studying and reciting the Sacred hymns secretly, fearing that someone might report it to my father and upset him again. While I was answering B.A. examination papers, I was at times

so overwhelmed by rapturous religious emotions that I could not write a word, but at times my pen moved so fast that I scarcely knew what I was writing.

Meeting a Miracle Working Yogi

A strange incident took place before I sat for examination. One day, I was returning from college thinking that I should meet and seek guidance from some saint who had achieved a high spiritual state. Suddenly I saw a *Yogi* dressed in woollen robes. As he walked in a carefree manner he appeared to be deeply absorbed in spiritual self-intoxication. When he came close to me, he cast such a piercing look at me that I felt intensely drawn towards him. I threw away my books and followed him in a heedless craze. Bhakta Kabir's following *Sloka* was ringing in my mind:

Sayeth Kabir: leave not the company of the saint,
Follow his footsteps on the Path.
On seeing him the mind becomes pure.
On meeting him you remember the Name of God.
Kabir Sloka: p. 1371

I followed him immediately. One of my companions picked up my books and followed me. I persuaded him not to accompany me but he would not turn back until I also went back with him. Another *Sloka* of Kabir reminded me that I should meet the saint alone:

Sayeth Kabir: when you go to meet a saint,
Do not take anyone with you;
Turn not your back but go ahead, come what may,
Kabir Sloka: p. 1371

Such thoughts, from my readings of scriptures, came to my mind repeatedly and I somehow succeeded in sending my companion back. I followed the *Yogi* and felt impelled by some unknown power to follow him. I lost all sense of shame, hesitation or discrimination and followed him in hypnotic fascination. I even forgot where I was and in which city and on which road I was moving. I did not take my eyes off his personality, even to have a look sideways. My eyes were fixed on the carefree gait of the *Yogi*. Like a shadow I followed him at a distance but I was afraid to get too close to him. Many sweet-meat vendors offered him sweets, fruit sellers gave him fruit but he did not care to accept anything. He did not even look at them. Although he was walking with his back towards me, his magical eyes appeared to be fixed on me and reflected from his back. It was the sight of these fascinating eyes that was continuously dragging me on.

At last, we reached a small fountain in the courtyard of the High Court (then known as the Chief Court). Water was perpetually flowing out of the fountain and the water basin around it was always full. There was complete solitude in the place and the atmosphere was very peaceful. The *Yogi* took off his woollen robes and stood there almost naked with his matted hair flowing at his back. He looked at me sternly, probably to frighten me but I did not fear from him in the least. From a distance I watched his strange actions. He then drank some water from the fountain basin with cupped hands, and then with closed eyes and folded hands, he lay prostrate on the ground in profound salutation.

I felt that the *Yogi* was a man with a deep spiritual vision, capable of seeing the past, present and future. It appeared that with this vision, he saw the all pervading Presence of the perfect Lord in front of him and he was offering devout salutation to the infinite Spirit. A sensational thrill passed

through my body at that moment. The recitation of *Japji* resounded within my whole being in a sweet musical tone. I felt a little giddiness and then all the earthly sights disappeared from my sight. Then I suddenly felt elevated to a sublimer state which I had never experienced before. I could see only an endless space of sublime realm. My ears heard the recitation of *Japji* resounding from within, I could neither see the Yogi nor the fountain nor the garden in front of me. Then there was another wave of giddiness and I fell prostrate on the ground. Even in this fall I did not feel hurt but felt a peculiar joy.

After some time, I do not know how I regained consciousness. When I was on my feet again, I saw the same garden and the same fountain and water basin and the Yogi was still lying prostrate on the ground in devout salutation to the Infinite. I squatted on the ground near the Yogi. After some time he got up and picking up his blanket, wrapped it around his body. He looked at me and hinted by a sign that I should go back, but I could not leave him. He walked on the Mall in a carefree and leisurely sporting gait and I followed him.

After some time, we were about two miles outside the town near Lawrence garden. On both sides of the road there were large bungalows. Sometimes the Yogi walked into these bungalows and well guarded houses. No one checked him. I also followed him and no one stopped me. It appeared that we saw everyone but no one saw us. In this way we went beyond Lawrence garden. I had never visited this area of the city before. He then took me to such strange places which I had never seen. He took me all over Lahore. Sometimes we went up and down a number of two or three storied buildings. No one questioned or stopped us. He then took me through various classrooms of Chiefs' College where professors were moving about and classes were in progress. No one questioned or stopped us. Having taken me all round the city he came at sunset to Shah Alami gate square and sat near a shop. Here there were many sects of Sadhus sitting in groups, but he did not join any group. He sat in a secluded corner.

People placed before him many things as offerings but did not even seem to know what was lying before him. His eyes were fixed in some distant vision and would not even wink. It appeared he saw the whole panorama of the universe in a vision of deep ecstasy. I stood at a distance admiring him. I was not aware that some one might be looking at me. It was getting dark and I suddenly remembered that I must say my evening prayers (*Rehras*).

When I finished the evening prayer, I could not find the Yogi anywhere in that place. I anxiously searched him all round but could not find him. In utter disappointment I came back to Nabha House, my hostel. Without spreading the bedding I lay on the cot in order to get some sleep. I did not eat or drink anything. The night passed in a restless mood, anxiously brooding over the desire to meet the Yogi again.

Early in the morning my college mates compelled me to accompany them to college. When we reached Old Anarkali one of my friends expressed his desire to buy a watch. We all went to a watch seller's shop. I was anxiously looking out lest I might by chance see the Yogi. I was just thinking of him when the Yogi suddenly appeared before the shop. He stood there and smiled at me. I felt so helplessly drawn towards him that I followed him. I even left my books there. I completely forgot that I was to go to the College. In a fit of hypnotic attraction I followed him again.

As on the previous day, he first went to the garden foundation. There he appeared to stand in meditation. I could not resist going near him. I went forward and bowed to touch his feet but he

held me up with his hands. I stood there dumbfounded like a statue while he walked away. He had gone only a short distance when I regained my consciousness and I followed him. Without describing the details, it is sufficient to say that I followed him all the day, remaining about five steps behind him. He sometimes attracted me and sometimes repelled me but I kept on following him. He did not speak a word. He had been observing silence since many years. I had firm faith in the following words of Kabir:

Sayeth Kabir: Leave not the footsteps of a saint,
Follow the path he shows.
Thou shalt become pure on seeing him
And will remember God on meeting him.
Kabir Sloka: p. 1371.

So I followed him and went on the path shown by him. At that time I took these lines of Kabir literally and understood them in their plain meaning. As on the previous day, I saw wonderful buildings and palatial mansions and many other sights which I had never seen even in a dream.

Turning Away from the Yogi

Like the previous day the wanderings in wonderland ended in the same place at sunset. My faith in him had increased and my mind was about to drift away into strange paths when suddenly something unexpected happened. The Yogi appeared to have renounced everything and was observing silence for many years. Worldly goods did not attract him at all. I also believed that he did not eat anything and was probably *pavanahari*: one who sustains himself on air. People offered him fruit and delicious foods but he did not even look at them.

Suddenly, I saw a shocking sight. A man brought an Indian pipe (*chillam*) for him and without any hesitation he began to smoke. On seeing this I was disillusioned. My tender faith in his saintliness was shattered and I felt the very earth slipping under my feet. I fainted. There was a great commotion.

I do not know how I regained consciousness. As soon as I got up I turned away from him. The Yogi who did not care for anyone and who had maintained silence for many years spoke to me saying: "Well, is that all you can tolerate? You have been tested in such a short time. Your faith is shaken and you are turning away from me?" I replied: "I cannot have any more faith in you even if you become the very image of God now" and I uttered this couplet;

I considered him a saint having swan-like purity,
That is why I sought his association.
If I knew he was hypocrite like crane,
I would have kept away from him all my life.
Shaikh Farid Sloka: p. 1384.

(Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was shocked to find that a Yogi who had renounced so much had not been able to renounce smoking tobacco which even an ordinary Sikh gives up.)

After saying these words I left the place. A man came running behind me and after overtaking me said: "Listen friend, the Yogi who has never talked to anyone for many years and has never cared for anyone, has called you back. Why are you turning away from him? It is indeed your great misfortune that you are leaving a saint and recluse who has attained such high spiritual state. He is

a Kashmiri Brahmin of high caste and he has been observing silence for many years. As a recluse he wanders about deeply absorbed in supreme spiritual state. For the first time after many years he has spoken to you. What has made you turn away from him?"

To this I replied: "No matter how great a saint he is, I must judge him by the ethical standards of Sikhism. His birth in high Hindu caste and family is not what really matters to me."

The humblest among those of humble birth,
The lowliest among the low caste,
Are my friends and brothers.
What have I to do with the rich and proud.
Guru Nanak: *Sri Rag*, p. 15

"What evil have you seen in him"? The man asked. I said, "I am not concerned with the evils in any man. He does not appeal to me. My faith in him is shaken. I find him hollow and weak. The image of his saintliness has been demolished from my mind. What is the necessity of discussing it beyond this? You may go your way leave me to my fate." The man had to depart.

I went to Golbagh and sat there for my evening prayers which I recited in a deeply meditative mood. After that, I prayed to God thus: "O True Lord, today Thou hast saved this bewildered child wandering in search of Thee, from the wrong path through Thy infinite mercy. It is Thou who awakened in me this deep thirst and yearning. It is Thou who hast made me a passionate seeker of your presence. Thou alone can test and accept the deserving. Thou alone can help in fulfilling the aspirations of my love. Bless me with a poised faith in the Guru's wisdom. May I achieve association with Thy true saints and mystics and be thoroughly grounded in Guru's supreme ethical code of conduct."

This prayer restored my peace of mind. I came back to my residence and went to sleep. I got up early in the morning and after taking my bath, I left my hostel with the idea of visiting a Sikh temple where I could join some holy congregation. I suddenly made up my mind to go to the Gurdwara *Shahid Ganj* built in memory of Bhai Taru Singh, the martyr.

Meeting A Mysterious Sage

When I reached the gates of Bhai Taru Singh's Gurdwara, I met a very saintly old Sikh with a white beard. I greeted him with folded hands. He gave a pat on my back and blessing me said: "Now, go into the temple; the Guru's blessing is with Thee. It is good that you were not attracted by the smoker Yogi. Go inside the temple and you will see the holy Guru Granth Sahib, the Divine Word of the Guru, which is the source of true illumination in this Dark Age. Follow it and you shall be liberated. Seek its sacred presence every morning and read the hymns every day." After saying these words the mysterious saintly sage with the white beard disappeared.

Overwhelmed with renewed inspiration of love, I entered the shrine, bowed before the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* and read a few hymns. I do not remember which were they, but they inspired me with the high spiritual ideals of Guru's wisdom. From that day, reading at least one passage from the *Guru Granth Sahib* and reflecting on it became a part of my daily worship. I got frequent opportunity to meet and serve the Sikh *Sangats* (congregations). The secret treasures of divine knowledge and the Guru's wisdom began to be intuitively revealed to me and as all other knowledge appeared to be false knowledge, I could not apply my mind to secular studies. B.A. examination started.

Those were the days when spiritual aspiration and thirst for the knowledge of the Guru's philosophy was deep and profound. Every moment of my life was occupied by religious thoughts and emotions. Even while answering the examination papers, a wave of spiritual emotion would overwhelm me and my pen stopped writing. I lost all consciousness of the fact that I was answering a question paper. I could not answer the paper any further. The pen would not move on. Who could move it? He who holdeth the pen was absorbed in something else. My mind was so deeply absorbed in divine love that no one dared to disturb me. In this condition of passionate thirst I somehow passed the time. Father received all the news about me. So he came and took me away. He tried to divert my mind to something else. He procured an appointment of *Naib Tehsildar* for me without consulting me. I will relate in some other letter, how I had to pass this time.

CHAPTER 2 - DETACHMENT AND PREPARATIONS

(Prison letter No. 6)

I HAVE ALREADY related my experiences with the Yogi in the previous letter. Now according to your wishes I will give a brief account of my early life-story in a sequence. After my meeting with the Yogi, the main incidents are as follows:

My father was thinking of yoking me to a government service, when the deputy commissioner of Ludhiana sent me an appointment letter posting me as personal assistant of Inoculation Officer in Samrala *Tehsil*. My elder brother, Sardar Harbans Singh, also received a similar appointment letter posting him in Jagraon *Tehsil*.

My father, friends, and relatives persuaded me to accept this job as a matter of duty. My father explained to me that to serve humanity was to serve God, and this was the best opportunity to please God. I at once departed to take up the appointment. Although I had not been baptized as the Khalsa, I started following the code of conduct necessary for a Khalsa much earlier, and took meals prepared by a non-smoker. So I took with me a Sikh cook.

I reported to the Medical Officer who was camping in the village Khedi. He was one of those Medical Officers who had just come from England and were posted as supervisors in every *Tehsil*. They did not know any other language except English. So only those who knew and could speak English fluently were appointed as their personal assistants. I had just come out of the college, so I could speak English fairly well. I took charge from the *Naib Tehsildar* who did not know English.

The Medical Officer posted as plague Inoculation Officer had quite a large staff with him. The first difficulty I encountered was the corrupt practice of drawing money for rations of the staff from charity-fund against fictitious receipts. As the staff had camped there for many days, this corrupt practice had been going on all the time and the charity-funds had been misappropriated in all the villages.

Ending Corruption

I had come with the idea of serving humanity, so I could not tolerate such corrupt practices. I sent for the whole staff including the Assistant Surgeon, Head Clerk, Compounder and others. I also sent for the village Headman and the shopkeepers. I asked everyone to pay his own bills. I was the first to pay for a day's ration which I had bought and took receipt for it. I was persuaded to accept the rations free and not to worry about payment and receipt, but I strongly reprimanded them for making such evil suggestion and explained to them that the charity fund was for the poor, the cripple, the destitute and diseased people. Why should they commit the shameful crime of misappropriating such money? On being put to shame for such practices, everyone had to pay for his rations and was given a receipt, but everyone turned against me. To them this came as a shock. Persons whose pay was only Rs. 10 per month had to pay about eight annas per day. Senior staff members had to pay much more.

The Inoculation Officer knew nothing about these corrupt practices. His cook took money from him for his rations but acquired the rations free from charity funds. He was now in serious trouble. He incited the staff against me and they all reported to the Inoculating Officer that I, the new *Naib Tehsildar* was unnecessarily harassing them. He sent for me and asked me to explain the situation.

I asked the Inoculation Officer to tell me how much he had paid to the cook so far for his rations. He at once took out his Indent Book, and showed me the amount spent by him. I sent for the shopkeepers and on checking the actual amount paid to them, for which receipts were acquired, it was found that the cook had spent only one-third of what he had taken from the Inoculation Officer. The cook had misappropriated the rest. On being exposed, the cook had now to pay the amount. The Inoculation Officer was cut to the quick. He at once ordered the dismissal of the servant and wanted to take legal action against him. The bearer begged forgiveness and fell at my feet, pathetically pleading for being saved from severe punishment. I felt pity and requested the Inoculation Officer not to take any legal action against him, but to be cautious in future. I also suggested that he may be retained till he gets a new servant; otherwise he might encounter some difficulties during the tour. He could be dismissed as soon as another cook was available. He agreed to my request. He was deeply impressed and remarked, "I generally heard that Sikhs are very honest and truthful. I have found it to be quite true". I told him that I was only a candidate for Sikhism, and not a Sikh. I had not yet attained even an iota of the remarkable character which enlightened Sikhs reveal through their actions. From that day onward he became an intimate friend and even handed over to me his personal accounts. He now had to spend only three or four rupees where he formerly spent ten rupees daily. I also did not allow anyone to use a single penny out of the charitable funds. For about a month I kept his account and when his normal expenditure was correctly set, I handed it over to him, because I could not perform my other duties well, as it took a lot of my time. Thus passed some months.

Gift as Bribery

After some time, today officials put him into the habit of accepting gifts, which amounted to bribery. When I came to know about it I sent for the *zaildar* and other subordinates and ordered them not to take any gifts to the Inoculation Officer without my permission. On hearing this, the Inoculation Officer was extremely annoyed. He sent for me and told me that this order was an insult to him, more so, because I did not even refer the matter to him. I told him that the deputy commissioner had given special instructions in this direction, by telling me, that I should not let any untoward thing happen which might harm his reputation and that I would be held responsible for such a thing as he was new to this country. These people were today flatterers and they brought those gifts with some selfish ulterior motive, and continued to annoy him with improper requests. So I stopped them from offering such gifts to him.

Inoculation Officer: What is improper in this?

I: They bring them as tempting gifts.

Inoculation Officer: What is wrong in accepting gifts?

I: I consider it to be a type of bribery. I do not want that by offering such things they may tempt you to accept bribery.

Inoculation Officer: Did the deputy commissioner give you these instructions? Is not accepting gifts and presents a custom in this country? If it is not the custom, why do these people bring these gifts? If it is the custom, then why do you object to it?

I: I do not have specific instructions. I consider giving and accepting bribe an evil thing. According to my religious principles it is a sin, and according to the law of our country it is a crime. If an evil act is widely practiced in a country, it does not become a customary law. I do not know whether it

is a normal custom in your country. I know of no custom in this country which sanctions this practice, but the dictates of my conscience tell me that this is immoral. Such a custom which takes the shape of immoral and illegal activities should not be sanctioned in any God-fearing society. I stopped this practice here lest you may get into the habit of accepting this form of bribe.

After such a lengthy discussion the Inoculation Officer felt a little ashamed about it. After two days, he went to the deputy commissioner and discussed the matter of accepting gifts. When he came back, he told me that he had discussed the matter with the deputy commissioner in whose opinion to accept gifts and to spend money from charity funds for personal needs was an ordinary thing and a normal practice. All officers including the commissioner accepted gifts and everyone used some money for personal expenditure out of charity funds. I asked him to tell the deputy commissioner that all those who used these funds meant for people suffering from leprosy and other diseases will themselves become victims of such terrible diseases if they continue to use this money. Those who misuse these funds should be considered mentally corrupt. They will certainly be punished by God for misappropriating these funds. I also asked him to tell the deputy commissioner that in my opinion accepting gifts was as bad as accepting bribery, and I could prove it to him if he so wished. The Inoculation officer reported my views to the deputy commissioner verbatim. I was called for an explanation. I fearlessly gave arguments and proved from the moral, legal, and social point of view that it was a crime and sin to use money from charity funds for personal purposes, and that accepting gifts from the people amounted to bribery. The deputy commissioner was greatly impressed and when he started praising me, I slipped out of his office because I did not like to hear my own praise.

However, on that day I was convinced that the whole staff of this government department was thoroughly corrupt, and by joining this staff a man only ruined his moral and spiritual future. As a matter of duty, I continued to do the work assigned to me. I was seriously upset. On seeing corruption rampant from top to bottom, it was difficult to believe that the government service could ever be the service of humanity. Far from appearing to be a service of humanity, it now appeared to be a cursed slavery of imperialism. 'To sell your soul and damn your faith, was its only reward. There was always a danger of the mind and spirit getting misdirected. My soul aspired to lead a purely spiritual life. My spiritual aspirations were at times seriously disturbed. Every time I faltered I sought moral and spiritual support from *Gurbani* (hymns of Guru Granth Sahib).

Traveller on the path of life,
The road is rough and stony.
Beware, lest you have a fall
And the injury leaves a scar.
Guru Arjan: *Maru*, p. 1095

This fear was always there lest amidst such corrupt surroundings, I might suffer a fall I got up early in the morning and after taking my bath I recited my prayers and thus spiritually strengthened my mind. As soon as I rode my horse to resume my duty, and the subordinates saluted me, vanity began to over power my mind. In its finer form some egoism was always aroused. But by the grace of the Guru I became aware of it immediately and I sought the help of *Gurbani* to strengthen my mind. Almost the whole day this inner struggle against the temptations of vanity was always there. In the evening after the *Rehras* prayers I felt relieved of this poison

Hunting and Discussion on Eating Meat

Early one morning some British Officers got ready for a hunting expedition and desired that I should accompany them. I was sitting in my tent absorbed in prayers. They ordered me to accompany them, but I went on with my prayers. They tried to disturb me, but I continued prayers undisturbed. During the day they asked for an explanation. I told them plainly that, if in future they tried to disturb me when I was praying; I would immediately submit my resignation. It was not my duty to take my officers out on hunting expeditions. I had my duty towards God also, and all worldly duties must follow my religious duty to God. On hearing my explanation they relented and extended a formal apology.

Dr. Fisher was very fond of religious discussion and one day the discussion somehow turned on the question whether meat is a human diet or not. I wanted to avoid discussion and said that I will give my views on some proper occasion. It so happened that one day, our tour was lengthened. Our staff including Dr. Fisher's personal attendants and the cook were left far behind. We were far ahead on our horses trying to find a place for pitching our camps. Dr. Fisher felt very hungry and hunger was one thing that he could not endure. We were to camp at Jodhan Mansuran. As Dr. Fisher wanted something to eat immediately, I suggested that we could take some berries from a tree nearby. I plucked some berries and gave them to him. His hunger sharpened still more. He climbed the tree and shook its branches to fell the berries. I picked them up, and when he came down from the tree, we shared half and half. He was eating the berries at a very slow speed.

During the same time, I finished eating a handful of them. Just then a farmer brought about a dozen sugar canes. I peeled the sugar canes with my teeth, while he had to use his knife. He had taken only one sugar cane during which period I was able to finish five full sugar-canes. He was surprised, and asked me, why were my teeth so strong. I told him "It is because I do not take meat, nor did my forefathers ever take meat. But your teeth are bad because you people take meat. Meat eating animals naturally have such teeth which are not spoiled by eating meat and they never become weak. Meat is not the natural diet of man, that is why when a human being takes meat; his teeth get spoiled in young age. In families in which meat is eaten generation after generation children inherit weak teeth. Carnivorous animals eat even raw meat and yet their teeth remain strong as ever. Nature has given them special type of teeth which are suitable for eating flesh." The Doctor was pleased to hear the argument and said, "You have at last answered the question I raised the other day."

There were similar discussions with Dr. Fisher on many subjects and one such lengthy discussion was on the subject: "Is the worship of *Guru Granth Sahib* idolatry" which later took the form of a book. After about a year the inoculation department was wound up and Dr. Fisher had to go. Before he went, he strongly recommended me for the post of a Tehsildar to the Chief Secretary and the Governor of Punjab. They promised to give me the post as soon as my application reached them through proper channel, i.e. through the deputy commissioner. Dr. Fisher was given assurance that I would be given the first post. He told me about his recommendations before he left.

CHAPTER 3 - RENUNCIATION AND BAPTISM

(Prison letter No. 6 Contd...)

MY MIND AND spirit were becoming more and more detached. I was fed up of serving British Imperialism. Many attempts were made and various methods were employed to persuade me to take up government service, but they failed to entangle me again. One day, father somehow brought me in the presence of the deputy commissioner and Dr. Fisher and both started persuading me to accept some government post. At first I kept silent. Then they pointedly asked me, why I hesitated to accept government service. I replied, "I at first joined government service with sole aim of serving humanity. I believed that to serve humanity is to serve God. I also believed that it was not possible to serve humanity individually. I innocently joined this special welfare organisation of the government which was set up for the main purpose of serving the poor and the diseased. I became a staff member of this welfare organisation to serve humanity through the government. I thought this social service would be the most spiritually rewarding. But I have had a bitter experience, which has convinced me that the whole government is corrupt. Even the highest officials who claim to be the servants of the government and the people, actually do not serve anyone. One is a greater swindler than the other. So I have given up the idea of taking up such misleading service. Secondly, I could continue to serve as *Tehsildar* and acquit myself well in it only if I could do justice. While one is in the government service one cannot respect truth and do justice in the true sense of the word. It is possible to do moral justice only if everyone connected with dispensing justice is virtuous and righteous in the religious sense. Thirdly, as long as the law of evidence (which was based generally on false evidence) is in practice, there could be no justice. I do not know when, and under what circumstances was this law of evidence introduced, but I have no doubt that when it was first introduced, people must be in the habit of telling the truth on oath and the character of the people must be generally high. But nowadays falsehood alone prevails and very few people tell the truth. There are some people who have made giving false evidence a profession and the judgements are based on the basis of these false evidences in most of the civil and criminal cases. Every village has such professional witnesses who give false evidence on payment. You can study the records of all the cases for the last twelve years and you will find that the same false witnesses appear in many cases from each village and on the basis of such false evidence judgements have been passed. I have with me a list of such professional witnesses. The same men appear as witnesses in the courts of E.A.C., third grade, second grade and first grade magistrates. The same men give evidence in the courts of District and Sessions Judges. If you doubt you can check it up from the files of various cases. What is on record requires no other proof. Giving false evidence is the profession of these people and they do so for a few annas or for a few rupees. For such paltry sums they tell white lies. Their conscience is dead. How can they have any respect for telling the truth? It is on the basis of such witnesses that the Judges pass judgements. Do you think that they do justice? Can they under these circumstances really do any justice? If any God-fearing Judge wishes to know the truth, he may go for an on-the-spot investigation.

"Supposing a murder has taken place in a village and I go to the place for an on-the-spot investigation, as a result of which I come to know who is the real murderer. But to convict the murderer we require at least two witnesses. If we do not get two witnesses and judgement is given on the basis of personal investigation, the higher court will set aside the judgement. On the other hand, sometimes two witnesses are procured against an innocent man and he is sentenced to death by the lower court. Such a judgement is considered sound and valid and is upheld even by

the High Courts. This means that on-the-spot investigation is of no use. All judgements passed on the basis of on-the-spot investigation but without witnesses will be set aside by the Higher Court. Not only that, the judges of the High Court may consider me to be incompetent and may even downgrade me. For fear of being downgraded, I will have to give up the path of righteousness to keep up my position. I will have to give up real justice and base my judgement on false witnesses. This means I will not be able to do justice and I will join those corrupt officers of the government who swindle the people. Thus I will lose all my character and spiritual future. What will I get except ultimately repent over my deeds. The Guru says:

Never do such deeds,
Over which you have to repent ultimately.
Guru Amar Das: *Ramkali*, p. 918

"So I do not want to take up such a service over which I have to repent. Your police officers of the secret service (C.I.D.) indulge in falsehood and lies. They give threats and use underhand means to get false confessions. The same is the case with a pleader and lawyer who accepts cases only for the sake of money. Even when they know that a man is criminal and the case is false, they try to prove it otherwise through false witnesses. Thus an innocent person sometimes gets death sentence while the real criminal escapes. All that a man has to do is to spend money on bribes. Real justice can be done only by those who have some respect for moral and religious principles. Except men of high integrity and virtuous and spiritual life, no one else can boast of doing real justice. But in our government offices and courts all the officers from top to bottom are corrupt. Where the whole machinery is like that, what can a lone religious man, having respect for moral and spiritual principles do. For a person like me it is not at all possible to work in such an atmosphere. I have yet to begin my journey on the spiritual path and I should not begin in a manner in which I may lose all the precious things which God has given me. So you cannot expect me to continue a work in which I am the loser."

The Golden Sparrow

On hearing this reply the deputy commissioner and Dr. Fisher said to my father, "Sardar Sahib, we are sorry that your son is neither of any use to you nor to us. Not only are we losing him but even you will lose him. *It is a very sad thing that a golden sparrow is slipping out of the hands of the British Government.* It is also very sad that your wishes have not been fulfilled and we also have been very much disappointed, because neither can the law of evidence be done away with nor will he accept a Government service". This is the brief story of how I renounced the Government service and decided never to go for it again.

Although father was greatly disappointed, he was never angry with me, nor did he ever express his displeasure to me, because he knew about my mental and spiritual condition and he knew I was becoming detached from worldly interest for the sake of a higher spiritual life. Secondly, I was always obedient and tried to serve him as a dutiful son. Because of my filial piety he always tenderly loved me. He was however sometimes seriously disappointed when he found that his son would not be able to achieve a very high position in the government. For this purpose he had spent thousands of rupees on my education and training. Many times he would call me close to him and try to affectionately persuade me to accept some government service but it was all in vain. He had great respect for my religious life. This I came to know after an interesting incident which is given below.

Healing through Prayer

Even before I was baptized I had deep faith in the principles of Sikhism and the holy Word. One of my beliefs was that the divine Name is the panacea of all ills. Prayers and contemplation of the divine Name can heal mental and physical ailments, and this is the best medicine for all types of maladies. There was frequent discussion with father on this topic. Father did not want me to avoid medicines when I fell ill. He did not believe that there is any such thing as healing of physical ailment through prayer or contemplation of the divine Name. He however believed that mental diseases can be cured through prayer. As for physical ailment, he considered ordinary medicines to be absolutely essential. He did not understand the mystery or the power of divine Name nor did he believe in it.

Once it so happened that he fell ill. He was so seriously ill that he had to be taken to Ludhiana hospital. I was attending him in the hospital. There were one or two servants and some relatives and friends to help us. We had acquired a special room in the hospital and the treatment started. I was not in favour of bringing him to the hospital, but my relatives and other friends almost compelled me to bring him here. Any way, I wanted to nurse father and serve him with my own hands, so I also accompanied him. Father was also very anxious that I should accompany him. The treatment went for about a week but he still continued to have fever and there was not the slightest change in his condition. Malaria was raging in the town those days and I had to go to the city a number of times. One after another all the relatives suffered from an attack of malaria and had to go home. Within a week I was the only person left to attend father. Some more servants were sent to help me but whoever came suffered from a severe attack of malaria and had to leave the place. Then I acquired an old servant Khadkoo from my relative Sardar Uttam Singh pleader who was staying at Jullundur. He also fell ill with an attack of Malaria and had to go back. I was felt all alone to look after father. My father's condition was taking a serious turn.

One difficulty I faced was that I could not decide whether to stay near father or to bring things for him from the city. During the day time I had to go many times to the house of Dr. Fateh Chand, Civil Surgeon, who was residing in the city because he came to the hospital for a round only once or twice. Father was under the special treatment of this doctor. No doubt, there was the Assistant Surgeon and other junior doctors incharge of the hospital and there was also the hospital assistant who gave him medicines regularly and kept him under constant vigilance. The Civil Surgeon had asked me to report father's condition every three hours, so I had to run about all alone in the burning heat of the noon day sun during the month of August. Ultimately I also got fever. For about two or three days I did not care much about it. I was moving about when I had only slight temperature. On the fifth day, my body began to shiver and my temperature rose very high. So I had to confine myself to bed.

The Assistant Surgeon offered me some medicines telling me, in so many words, that my life was in danger and persuaded me to take these regularly. The Civil Surgeon and other prominent doctors of the city also told me that the condition of my father was very serious and he may hardly survive for twenty-four hours. His condition had deteriorated and there was no cure for him. All medicines had failed to bring down his fever. So they asked me to take some medicines and get cured so that I may not miss the opportunity to look after my father during his last moments. I was the only person left near him. All others had fallen ill and gone back. Now that I was down with fever I must take medicines and get cured. This would give me an opportunity to serve my father during his last moments, otherwise I might have to repent all my life for missing this opportunity. I had come there with the sole purpose of nursing him, and I had looked after him with great devotion and care but if I failed to nurse him during his last moments all my service would go in

vain. Persuading me by these strong words they asked me to take medicines. I told them that their medicines had not been able to cure my father even after a treatment of many weeks. Their medicine had not cured any one of those servants and relatives who became victim of malaria fever and had to go home. How could this medicine cure me? I asked them not to worry about me as I had my own medicines. "Do not annoy me any more," I said, "as I am not going to take any of your medicines". On hearing this plain reply the Assistant Surgeon became very angry. He left two powders on a small table near my bed He ordered me, in very strong words, to take them immediately. He said he would come back after an hour again. "It would be better", he said, "if you take these powders before I come, otherwise we will throw you and your dying father out of the hospital." His threats did not have the slightest effect on me.

I gathered strength and went near father who was on the other side of the room at a distance of ten yards. He was lying unconscious. His pulse was very slow and about to fail. His hands and feet were very cold. His nose was slightly twisted. There was a rattling sound in his throat. He could neither hear nor see for the last two days. For about three days he was unable to pass urine although the catheter was passed and some injections were given. The previous evening the Civil Surgeon and other doctors had declared his condition very serious. His urine had now become poisoned and infected the whole body. There was no hope of his survival. The doctor had advised that early next morning I should send a telegram to my village home, but as I was seriously ill and confined to bed. I could neither send a telegram nor any message.

A voice said within me that the divine Name is the panacea of all ills. This gave me a little hope. My faith was awakened. When I was now disappointed from every side, I concentrated deeply on this inner voice which was my only hope. I wrapped myself in a blanket and in a state of mental concentration I silently said my invocation prayer (*ardasa*) and then recited the *Japji* (to me at that time when I was unbaptised, the *Japji* was the only Divine Name). The spiritual mystery of the divine Name had not been revealed to me. I silently recited the *Japji*. By now I was an adept in silent meditation and recitation. I recited the *Japji* five times. Then my mind was concentrated on the verses of Spiritual Communion *manai* (Verse No. 12 to 15). I continued to repeat these verses and could not go beyond them. My body was sweating. My fever had come down to normal and I was feeling light and healthy. I wiped off the sweat and went near father to see his condition. I thought he must be dead by now. When I went near him I was delighted to see that he had passed urine and his pulse was better. He was also breathing clearly. His body was also sweating, although he did not have even a cotton sheet over his body. I was extremely happy to see him recovering. When I called him, he opened his eyes and spoke as if he had come out of his *samadhi* (deep concentration). He said (in Urdu) "Son somebody is reciting the communion verses *manai ki pauri of Japji*. I feel deeply elevated in spiritual bliss." After saying these words he became silent again. I was astonished to hear this. I thanked God from the depth of my heart for saving father.

As I was sitting near my father the Assistant Surgeon came and finding me normal again said: "Well done, you are a good boy. So at last you took the medicine. That is why your fever is gone". I told him that his powders were lying where he left them and he could take them back. He was surprised and annoyed to find that the powders were still there. He felt my pulse and asked me in astonishment, "How did your fever go"? I asked him to see the condition of my father also. When he looked at father and found him quite well, he was dumbfounded. He stood there like a statue and asked my father, "What is this miracle that has suddenly cured you". My father said, "It is the miracle of the communion verses of *Japji (mania ki pauri)*." He then closed his eyes and remained silent. The doctor again questioned him but my father said, "Do not disturb my mind which is

deeply absorbed in the music of the communion verses. The music of the communion verses *manai ki pauri* is still ringing in my ears.

I then said to the doctor, "The divine Name is the panacea of all ills. This is a miracle and a great wonder of wonders. You all gave up father as dead and his disease as incurable. Contrary to it the great God has worked a wonderful miracle." The doctor went out from the hospital and riding a bicycle he immediately went to the Civil Surgeon and told him boastfully that by some special treatment he had cured my father. The Civil Surgeon was also surprised as to how a patient who could not pass urine for three or four days and had a temperature of about 106 degree could be cured. The Assistant Surgeon boasted that he had cured him. They came there discussing the case, while my father was still deeply absorbed in the music of the communion verses and I stood in a thanks giving prayer before my God. Within another two or three days my father was absolutely normal and he was brought home. From that day onward, I had a "profound and deep faith in the spiritual healing through prayer and divine Name. My faith in the high principles of Sikhism became deeper and sublimer after this incident. No one now prevented me from taking religious life seriously. I had already renounced the government service and felt relieved. I was now prepared for baptism. Before the auspicious day came a blissful incident took place.

A Sublime Spiritual Experience

It was the annual function of Gujjarwal Singh Sabha. A large *sangat* (congregation) had gathered together. Musicians from Amritsar were singing *Asa di Var*. Suddenly I passed into a deep *Samadhi* and blissful state. For the first time in my life the *Sadh Sangat* now appeared to be a heaven on earth. All round, I felt a rain of nectar- laved joy which was sweet and thrilling. The whole sky was filled with waves of ambrosia. I felt that I merged and bathed in a sea of nectar. Inside and outside my body I felt heavenly bliss. This experience gave me an unusual spiritual joy in which my mind and soul were diving as if in a sea of joy. For a moment I felt that I was not sitting in this world. There were the *Panj Pyaras* (the Five beloved Knights) who baptized. One of the *Panj Pyaras* came towards me from behind. It appeared he was descending from the heavenly realm of Truth only to take me along with him. As I sat deeply absorbed in *Samadhi*, *kirtan* was going on in front of me, while the same Beloved One out of *Panj Pyaras* was coming towards me in a love-lorn mood from behind. The music of the highest spiritual realm was ringing all around and he moved in tune with this music. It appeared that I had two eyes even at my back, because without turning back, I could see that was happening behind me. All these things appeared to be happening in the astral sphere. The heavenly messenger (one out of the *Panj Pyaras*) was now seen coming close to me.

He silently came and stood behind me and touched me with his magnetic astral finger. With a strange power he held me by my hand and took me in the direction from which he came. He did not utter a word, nor could I speak. Although I did not like to leave the *kirtan* which was going on there, yet I followed him irresistibly in great joy and expectation. I thought he will take me to the heavenly realms from where he came. In deep contemplative silence, I followed the beloved figure who appeared to be an embodiment of love. I did not even feel the movement of my feet. In an instant I was taken to a strange spiritual realm where there was untold peace and bliss. The holy *Guru Granth* was placed there and over it was a canopy. Some one was waving the *chowri* reverently.

The *Panj Pyaras* (the five Beloved ones) of the Guru stood there with humility and reverence before Guru Granth Sahib and this celestial figure, who took me there, bowed before the *Guru Granth Sahib* with such deep reverence as I had never witnessed before. I also bowed with the same reverence and humility. I was so deeply absorbed in the humble salutation that the celestial

figure bestowed benediction on me and asked me to rise up. What I now saw was that a Sikh was waving the *chowri* and five Sikhs stood there ready to perform the baptism ceremony. I was not able to speak but it appeared I was silently trying to tell them these words. "Sir, if you find that I am fit for baptism, may I please be baptized now. I am yearning for baptism. There cannot be a better occasion than this. I would feel greatly blessed." Then, one of them said "If you wish to be baptized bring your wife also with you." When these words came to my ears I suddenly came out of the spiritual mood of ecstasy. The whole celestial atmosphere disappeared as if a screen had suddenly dropped over it. I found myself again in the Singh Sabha Gurdwara Gujjarwal. Five Sikhs were standing in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib* and amongst them was the same mysterious figure who had taken me to a higher spiritual realm. Now when I looked at him closely I found him to be a friend and brother disciple. I now realized that I had seen all the *Panj Pyaras* in their astral body but now I could see them in their physical body also. I said to them, it was better if they could baptize me all alone. They smiled and uttered this couplet:

By Thy grace O Merciful Lord
The whole family has boarded the ship
And been baptized
Adi Guru Granth: Kabir: Gaudi p. 337

Thus they instructed me to bring my wife and have her baptized along with me and not to leave her behind, on this spiritual path. They said many other things which I do not remember. I humbly promised and asked them if I could again get such a wonderful opportunity for being baptized.

They said in words full of blessing "You will get a far better opportunity". This blessing encouraged me and I started waiting patiently for the day. For many years I had been preparing as a novice for baptism with a deep devotion and longing. Now I felt that I was a suitable candidate for baptism. In the beginning I was of the opinion that the *Panj Pyaras* should be of my choice but this was an error and a mistake. Such a doubt had already been dispelled. The *Sadh Sangat* or the Khalsa Panth alone had the right to select the *Panj Pyaras* and not those who seek baptism. Those who seek baptism are only novices. It is not possible for them to make a judgement or to test the *Panj Pyaras*. If at all they make a judgement or apply some test it would be of a low order. But the spiritual experience which I had on this day convinced me that if a seeker after baptism is sincere and pure he will get the *Panj Pyaras* of the spiritual order he deserves. It so happens that the seeker's own virtues and qualities bear proper fruit. Nothing is achieved by shrewdness and ingenuity. So I left every thing in the hands of the Almighty God and was waiting for the great day according to His sweet Will.

I had completely neglected my wife in this direction. Of course I had found out that she would agree to everything I suggested and she was undoubtedly very loyal, devoted and faithful. I did not have to take much trouble in persuading her to follow me on the spiritual path. On seeing my religious trend of mind she tried to mould herself accordingly. I did not have to compel her to accept everything I did. She agreed to follow the same strict code of conduct which I followed. She had been deeply influenced by spiritual association of a young lady, Bibi Jagat Parkash Kaur (wife of S. Mangal Singh Mann of Kotshera). She was related to my wife and was her playmate during childhood. She spent most of her time with her. I have never seen so deeply religious a young lady before. She was profoundly enlightened and was thoroughly grounded in the noble Sikh ideals. She had such a good religious education that I had not seen so far any one with so profound knowledge of Sikhism.

There is so much to be written about her that one can write a whole book, but unfortunately I did not get an opportunity to write her life story. This saintly lady departed from this world at quite an early age. But even in her young age, the few years of life she lived, revealed a wonderful passion for Sikh ideals and devotion to the Guru. The Guru had sent her and Guru took her back. My wife was deeply influenced by the spiritual association of this noble and angelic soul. She imbibed many spiritual virtues at a very early age. So when my wife met me she readily agreed to lead exactly the same kind of orthodox life which I was leading and she also prepared herself for the baptism just as I wanted her to do. She was sincerely anxious to be baptised along with me but I was so deeply absorbed in my inner life and devotion to God that I had hardly thought of her.

Receiving Baptism

At last the day of my baptism came nearer. For me it was to be a new spiritual birth and a new life. I was to die to this world and was to be born again in the spirit of the Guru. Unexpectedly, the day was made known to me, for which I had been waiting impatiently like a honey-bee thirsting for the beauty of the flower. I expected that day to be known at any time suddenly, when I would get the heavenly nectar as a gift of God. At last, one day, I felt the divine "all when I came to know that at Bakapur in Tehsil Phillaur, District Jullundur, a unique religious gathering was being organised and an impressive baptism ceremony was to be held. (This was specially organized to baptize a Muslim divine, Maulvi Karim Bakhsh along with his family, into the Khalsa faith. After the baptism he came to be known as Sant Lakhbir Singh). Whenever I came to know of any religious gathering I eagerly went there to enjoy the spiritual bliss of the holy congregation. Now when I came to know that there would be an *amrit parchar* (baptism ceremony) I at once went there.

Many other friends from our village joined me. On the way other *jathas* joined us. When we got down at Phillaur station we started *kirtan* and went on foot to Bakapur singing divine songs all along the way distance of three miles. It was a large gathering of the Sikh community in which all prominent leaders, saints and devotees had gathered together. It was in every way a grand Khalsa Diwan (community gathering) which I had witnessed for the first time in my life. It is not necessary to write much more about this gathering. I was full of hope and joy and was eagerly waiting for the baptism ceremony. When there was a call for those who wished to be baptized some power moved me and I stood up with folded hands and begged the holy congregation to bless me with the ambrosial baptism (*Amrita*) if they found me suitable and deserving. I would feel blessed, if along with others, I was also baptized. By the grace of God my request was accepted. Some more persons from our village got ready for the *Amrita*. Then a good many more came forward. Out of them only those who deserved and were prepared in every way for the *Amrita* (baptism) were selected. They were asked to take a bath and wash their hair. Then they were brought before the holy *Guru Granth Sahib* for the baptism ceremony.

Before the ceremony started, a man came from outside and started telling us about the divine Name. Because of this unceremonious method of imparting the divine Name, its spiritual significance failed to be revealed to us. We did not experience the magnetism of the divine Name. Thus the divine Name failed to spiritually inspire me. Its contemplation also was difficult without the proper inspiration from the *Panj Pyaras*. But there was no doubt, I experienced a distinct change and spiritual rebirth in my inner being and truly felt a new life, a new youth and a new spiritual vision of life. The *Panj Pyaras* then instructed us with the essential code of conduct, which they commanded us to practise even at the cost of life. To me these ethical commands and the principles of Sikh idealism appeared to be personal commands of Guru Gobind Singh, which have been imparted from heart to heart and soul to soul as perennial inspiration by the Khalsa for centuries. To live and practise these ethical commands, to the letter, became the sole aim of my

religious and spiritual life. To me, to strictly adopt these principles of the Khalsa code of conduct was the only path of liberation. After acquiring this spiritual birth in the Holy Order of the Khalsa, I vowed to maintain the purity and sublimity of this miraculous spiritual birth. When I came home after baptism, every body felt that there was a distinct change in me, and every one was surprised at the change. The rest of my family had not yet entered the spiritual life of the Khalsa Holy Order.

I made up my mind not to take any food from the hands of those who had not been baptized. My wife had gone to her paternal home. So she failed to join me in baptism. Arrangements for her baptism had to be made only when she came. I could not ask my father and mother to go in for baptism. So I started cooking my own food. All my life I had never cooked any food. When every one saw me taking such keen interest and having such orthodox attitude towards spiritual life my parents and other members of the family felt naturally inclined to be baptised partly through personal attachment and partly through the new inspiration. So within a month all the members of the family including my wife who had come back from her parent's home were baptised. Earlier our marriage ceremony had been performed according to Vedic rites. Now we were remarried according to Sikh rites after her baptism.

In Holy Association

The whole family had now been reformed according to Sikh ideals and every one started leading a religious life. It was a spiritually detached householder's life in which we all enjoyed both the bliss of divine union and the joys of earthly life. We spent most of the time in association with holy people. We had our own *Kirtan Jatha* (Hymn singer group). Many families now accepted baptism but very few adopted the orthodox way of *viveka* (Bibek) ideal (puritan ideal). We went from village to village performing *kirtan* and preaching faith and we also went to large religious gatherings. Every where we tried to enjoy the divine kirtan. Wherever food in the Guru's kitchen (*langar*) was prepared by unbaptised people there, our *Jatha* cooked our own food and spent most of the time listening to the divine *kirtan*. Many religious gatherings were held in our village home at Narangwal. Many people were baptized, though few lived an ideal life. Wherever there was religious gathering we received an invitation. As far as I know we did not miss any of the holy gatherings during these days. Sometimes we walked from twenty to thirty miles to reach such holy gatherings. It is a very long story. If you want some details of this period you can ask a number of other friends. In a few words I may say that this period passed in blissful association with religious people till the time came when I had to go to Abbottabad.

CHAPTER 4 - SEARCH FOR THE MYSTIC WORD (NAM)

THERE WAS AN intense and passionate longing in my mind to be initiated into the Holy Order of the Khalsa, even before I was actually blessed with the baptismal nectar (*Amrit*). I had, after a close study, developed a deep understanding and reverence for the religious principles of Sikh philosophy. I did not consider the baptism of Guru Gobind Singh to be merely a religious rite or ceremony without any spiritual significance. I really thought that it would open the portals of my soul and introduce me to the highest state of spiritual life and even give me a glimpse of the light of God. I firmly believed that if *the Panj Pyaras* (the Five Elect of the Khalsa Holy Order), who prepare the *Amrit* are ideal Sikhs, and if the novice who receives the *Amrit* (the baptism) is mentally, and spiritually prepared for it, the baptism works the miracle of atonce introducing the initiate to higher spiritual life.

Even before taking the *Amrit* (baptism) I had been blessed three times with such spiritual experiences which had indeed deepened my faith. So like an Indian maid, eagerly waiting for her wedding day, I was anxiously waiting for the sacred moment. O how I longed for the sacred moment when I would be His Bride. It was possible that the wedding day would also be the day of spiritual union with the Lord.

On the long waited auspicious day of baptism ceremony I was happy to see that every thing was conducted well. But even before the *Amrit* (baptismal water prepared with double-edged sword by reciting five compositions of the Gurus on it) was duly administered, an outsider who was neither one of the *Panj Pyaras* (the Five Elect) nor the *Granthi* (the priest), uttered into our ears a (*mantram*) divine name. This act of the intruder disturbed my mind and soul considerably and I believed that this method of imparting the divine Name (*Gurmantra*) by a man, who then did not represent the Guru, was against the established spiritual tradition and Law. The result was that my mind and soul could not imbibe the real inspiration of the Divine Name.

However, when the *Panj Pyaras* administered the *Amrit* (the baptism), there was a dramatic change in my inner life. I felt the spiritual rebirth. The past seemed to be dead and forgotten. At the moment of initiation I did not have any higher mystic experiences, nor did I have the much desired glimpse of His Light. Nevertheless whole code of religious and social conduct fixed by Guru Gobind Singh for an ideal Khalsa became deeply rooted in my mind and soul and was permanently engraved on the tablet of my heart.

Gurbani (Sacred Hymns) and Divine Name

After the baptism I experienced a unique joy and better understanding of the daily prayers: *Japji*, *Anand Sahib* and *Sukhmani* which I had memorised before the initiation. Day and night the recitation of these prayers became my sole preoccupation and sustenance. I had already given up government service which I considered harmful to spiritual freedom. I believed *Gurbani* (the sacred hymns) to be different from divine Name. As a matter of fact I believed that the *Guru's Vani* (hymns) were symbolic of the divine Name.

The recitation of *Gurbani* (the sacred hymns) and the continuous meditative repetition of *Sukhmani* brought exaltation in my thoughts and spiritual understanding. I now began to feel that the divine Name was some mystic Word, quite apart from *Gurbani* and it was possible to repeat it with every breath. I also felt that God could be attained only through the divine Name, and to attain Him was the main object of my life, as a Sikh. I was also convinced, that in Sikhism, there

was only one distinct mystic Name. But in the sacred hymns of the *Guru Granth* I found many Names of God: (*Ram, Hari, Govind, Allah* etc.). Yet I could not make out which name was the mystic Word, essential for the contemplative life of the Khalsa. I began to search it. In my mind was an innocent faith that the *Guru Granth Sahib* will reveal it to me. Who besides the Lord could reveal it and inspire me with it? Seeking the aid of the Lord, I turned all my thoughts to it. My thirst for the knowledge of divine Name became deep and poignant. I recited the prayers, sang the sacred songs, sought holy company and lived in an unbroken communion with the eternal Spirit. *Gurbani* (Hymns of *Guru Granth Sahib*) was my spiritual food and the sole sustenance of my life. To join the congregational singing (*Kirtan mandal*) and seek the holy gatherings (*sat sang*) become a dominant passion. I did not feel inclined to be separated from this spiritual communion even for a moment. The eagerness to know the mystic Name and have a real vision of the divine Light increased day by day.

During these days preparations were afoot at home to send me to Abbottabad (now in Pakistan) on a Government post. I was not willing to go. But my friends like Bhai Inder Singh Lambardar of Mehman Singh Wala addressed me in the presence of *Guru Granth Sahib*, and persuaded me to accept it as the command of the congregation (*sangat*). I requested them to pray for me and get the blessings. After a congregational prayer, the Holy *Granth Sahib* was opened and the first hymn on the left, page was accepted as the Guru's command (this custom of seeking guidance from the scriptures prevails amongst Christians and Muslims also). This was the hymn:

The dead has been revived through spiritual breath,
The separated soul has been united with Him.
A mind, foolish, dumb, beastly and satanic is awakened
My lips vibrate with the song of His Name.
Lo, such is the glory of the perfect Guru,
He can never be evaluated (Refrain).
Sorrow and sickness of the soul is uprooted.
It abides now in bliss and glorification.
Unawares, I have got all I desired.
All my wishes have been fulfilled.
Here in the world there is happiness for thee
In the next world your face will shine in pristine glory.
The cycle of birth and death has ended.
With His Name, in the heart, the mind has become fearless.
The True Guru is pleased with thee,
Sitting or standing thou singest His Name,
Thy sorrow, suffering and doubts are dispelled.
Says Nanak: They whose mind is attached to His feet, are men of perfect deeds.
Guru Arjan: *Rag Sorath*, p. 624

On hearing this divine command (*hukam*) a mysterious hope that wherever I go the Guru and the *sangat* will be there to guide and inspire me, filled my heart. As the Guru says "Wherever Thou seatest me, there will I sit O Lord, wherever Thou sendest me, there will I go". So was my mind attuned to the wishes of the *Sadh Sangat* (congregation). I accepted it as the will of God.

Bhai Rur Singh, a youngman, was sent with me as my cook. The separation from divine companions was very painful. By their command I was leaving. Throughout the journey I sat in

speechless pensive mood and did not eat or drink anything. I do not know within how many hours we reached our destination.

I got down at the Hasan Abdal station from where the historic *Panja Sahib* (the place where Guru Nanak calmed the destructive egoism of the Muslim *Pir Wali Kandhari*) could be seen. I took my bath in the pond of purity. Then I paid homage to the sacred place. I bowed to the *Guru Granth Sahib* and sought the blessings of the living spirit of the Guru. I do not remember the hymn which was read as the voice of the Guru but it was very inspiring and encouraging. After seeking the blessings of the Guru, I went to Abbottabad on a tonga. On reaching the place the sight of the beautiful scenery thrilled me. Abbottabad was wonderfully encircled by imposing hills. All round there were lovely hills, whose cooling influence had a very elevating influence on my mind. As a matter of fact, I had seen a hill station for the first time. By the grace of God I got a small residence just opposite two Sikh temples which were known as *Dharmshalas* (Abodes of Faith). I was grateful to the Guru for keeping me at His feet even in that distant land. Every now and then I recited *Gurbani* and let my mind and soul delve deep into it.

Although most of the people in Abbottabad were *Sahajdharis* (unbaptised Sikhs), yet their devotion was exemplary and impressed me deeply. Before they began their day's work they always visited the temple, paid homage to the Lord and listened to the Sacred Word. From the early hours of the morning up to nine o'clock, one could see them pouring in, like a stream of devotion, reading turn by turn a passage from the *Guru Granth Sahib*. The same thing happened in the evening after 3 p.m.

I felt a little alien to the ways and manners of the people of this area and was shy to mix with them and be free with them. Although there was hardly anyone who had the Sikh form or followed the code of the Khalsa, yet they were extremely lovable and impressed me greatly by their genuine devotion. On Sundays, there were special services in the morning and lectures and sermons were delivered in the evening.

Yet I felt a little aloof and torn from my intimate friends and companions. The lovely scenery all around intensified my aloofness and loneliness caused by separation of friends and inspired me with inner solitude. The search for inner light became a tender passion, and ecstatic restlessness at times became uncontrollable. Then tears would flow down my eyes and I burst into a song. I went to the office and worked there as if compelled by duty.

After office hours, I attended the evening services at the temple. To avoid being noticed, I wrapped myself in a blanket and sat far behind everyone in deep contemplation, till the closing prayers were ended. Sometimes, I sat there all alone till Bhai Rur Singh came and compelled me to have some supper.

In the office, I worked for about four hours continuously and then the haunting beauty of the hills attracted me so much that I restlessly wandered all over the hills where the solitude of the cool valleys thrilled me to the depths of my soul. My searching thoughts, my aspiring feelings soared like a restless bird into the unknown, forgetting everything else and seeking answer to one and only one question: "What is the divine Name, the mystic Word that must be contemplated by a Sikh?" I could eat very little and had very little sleep. I generally got up at about one o'clock in that cold season, took my bath with cold water. I kept a bucket of water inside, as it was very difficult to get it in the morning when hands became numb with cold. After the bath, which I enjoyed very much, I sat for prayer and meditation till day-break. Until dawn I recited all prayers with a

passionate devotion but the ignorance of the divine Name created a void in my heart. As Guru Nanak's birthday drew nearer this thirst to know the divine Name became acuter.

All the savings from my pay were spent on some or the other charitable work. After keeping money necessary for our food everything was given away. I had sufficient clothes. I did not require any furniture, not even the cot. Both the servant and I slept on the floor and we did not have to spend on anything except simple food and the rent of the house. A few days later I received a weekly magazine and two religious tracts. All these contained inspiring religious articles which deepened my thirst and search for the divine Name because these articles emphasised the need of divine Name and charity. I invoked the Guru for these gifts, through prayer. After evening services, I started praying to God for the gift of divine Name. Prayer became a fountain of faith for me. In prayer I felt an unknown power guiding me and elevating me. Tears flowed down my eyes as I recited these prayers. They were the tears of love and tears of passionate thirst for the knowledge and experience of the divine Name. The call to the Guru to reveal the divine Name became a passionate cry of the soul. One day some one whispered these words in my ears: "Rise my child, your true Guru, the *Guru Granth Sahib* will reveal to you, the Light of the Mystic Word, which you seek." I did not know who it was that uttered these words in my ears. Whether it was the voice of the Unknown from within or from without, I could hardly guess. Something shook me. I was conscious of my normal surroundings again. In a waking state I was absorbed in prayer. A moment later I burst into this song of Guru Arjan Dev Ji:

I am set apart from Thee,
As a result of my own past deeds;
Through Thy unbounded mercy
Lord, unite me, again with Thee.
Weary of wandering endlessly,
North, South, West and East
I have come to Thy sanctuary;
A cow that gives no milk is of no use;
Without water the plant shrivels and bears no fruit,
If I meet not my Friend and Beloved
How can I find peace and rest?
A burning furnace is the hamlet
Where the Lord comes not.
Transient is all ornamentation,
Like the smearing of the lips with betel leaves,
Short-lived is even the body,
Unless the Beloved friend dwells in us,
Our companions and dear ones are like demons,
Nanak thus prayeth;
Through Thy mercy grant me Thy Holy Name,
Unite me with the Beloved Lord Whose abode is eternal.
Guru Arjan: "*Baramaha*" p. 133.

For the first time I understood the real meaning of this important hymn and felt the poignant pain of separation as well as spiritual bliss in my heart. My aching sorrow (*vairagya*) was at its pitch. On hearing me singing such a plaintive song, Bhai Rur Singh also came into the room. Bhai Rur Singh knew a good deal about *Ragas* (musical modes) and for hours we sang the hymn in moving strains. The last lines, "*Nanak prayeth, through Thy mercy grant me Thy Name*" was the burthen of our

Song. It was the inner voice of my search and my mind and soul became deeply absorbed in its deeper meaning. My whole being became a living symbol of this prayerful song and I felt that these two lines were particularly written by the great Guru to describe and explain the inner condition of my soul at that moment. "Through Thy grace grant me Thy holy Name, and unite me with the Beloved" were two passionate appeals which the Lord appeared to have written only for me. Like the ever-thirsty *Chatrik* bird I was repeating the last lines again and again: "Through Thy mercy grant me Thy holy Name". This cry poured forth in pathetic strains from my whole being. I just could not give up its sweet and soul stirring repetition. The hope given by the unknown Voice had already made a deep impression on my soul grounded in faith. The more I prayed, the more I felt that the great moment was coming.

Bhai Rur Singh took me to the bath room. After the bath I felt strange peace and poise. I recited the morning prayers. By the time I was reciting the *Sukhmani*, my mind was in a state of undisturbed bliss. There was boundless peace, faith and love in my heart. The ineffable joy and faith was beyond expression. My whole being was thrilled with the joy of great expectation. Ten minutes before the opening of the temple I got ready to leave for the temple. I put on the wooden slippers and moved on towards the Gurdwara.

While going to the Gurdwara I made a prayerful vow to accept that holy Word as mystic Name, which was indicated by the first hymn read from the *Guru Granth Sahib* in the temple on that day. I would accept it as the Guru's Word, and adopt it for spiritual practice and contemplation. A number of Names are used in the *Holy Guru Granth Sahib*. Out of them I decided to accept the one which was indicated by the first hymn which I happen to hear or read when I went to the temple. All other Names mentioned in the *Guru Granth Sahib* would be accepted as the attributive Names (*Kritam Nam*). If however there was any indication of the popularly known Divine Name "*Vah-Guru*," through such words as: "*Guru or Vah Vah*" would accept this Holy Word as the Mystic Name of the Lord. Even if there was such a hint in the verse: Repeat "*Guru Guru*" then it would mean "*Vah Guru*". With such a resolve I moved on swiftly towards the temple (In the first edition of the Punjabi Text this was published as prison letter No 1. It was written by Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh on March 24, 1922 from Rajahmundry Prison Andhra State (then Madras Presidency))

CHAPTER 5 - ILLUMINATION OF DIVINE NAME

(Letter No. 2—March 30, 1922)

AS I REACHED the precincts of the temple, my steps became steady and slow. I heard a musical voice reciting the hymns, which thrilled me but the words were not clear. I was surprised that the recitation from the *Guru Granth Sahib* had begun much earlier. I wondered who was in the temple so early reciting the hymns in such melodious and moving strains. As soon as I entered the temple and bowed before the *Guru Granth Sahib* in reverential homage, these words were being recited.

vemuhtaja veparvah

Nanak Das kaho Gurvah

Carefree and unconcerned is the Lord

Sayeth Nanak, repeat *Vah-Guru*.

The last word *Vah-Guru* had a magnetic effect, on my mind. Every nerve, every pore of my body was imbued with the thrilling music of the mystic word *Vah-Guru*. It appeared some Unstruck Music had keyed up my soul to the melody of this Word. Every hair on my body was now a tongue which repeated this Name. I was then at the door of the temple hall. Some unknown power pushed me in an instant and I was lying prostrate before the *Guru Granth Sahib* the next moment. The voice which was reciting the hymns was heard no more. I stood up and with folded hands greeted the Holy Presence. To my great surprise I saw some unseen hand waving the *chowri* over the *Guru Granth Sahib* and just below the canopy there flashed forth a gleam of Light forming itself into the divine Word *Vah-Guru* and moving in space throughout the temple.

My tender devotion and faith were now transmuted into love and my love was now a living faith. There was no one in the temple except the *Guru Granth Sahib* and myself. I could neither see the man nor the hand that waved the *chowri*. This strange vision raised my spirit and faith to the heights of sublimity. With my hands folded and head lowered I stood there in utter humility. I performed circumambulations of *Guru Granth Sahib* in utter reverence. The priest (*Granthi*) of the temple came in at this moment. I covered my head with the blanket and out of shyness, veiled my face also, as I sat before the *Guru Granth Sahib*. "Who has performed the opening service of the *Guru Granth Sahib*, did you?" he asked. I gazed at him but could not give a reply. But now the waving of the *chowri* by an Unseen Hand could not be seen. Those words of light that shimmered in space also could not be seen. The *Granthi's* younger brother, who was a very devout soul, came in. The *Granthi* asked him if he had performed the opening service of the *Guru Granth Sahib*. He said "No". I do not know what they thought or guessed.

Then the *Granthi* opened the *Holy Granth* to read a verse. I stood behind him to see the hymn he was reading. I was amazed to find the same hymn which had entered my ears when I came to the temple. I again prostrated myself in humble thanks-giving homage before the "Word of God". The *Granthi's* brother was surprised to see me in such ecstatic condition. He came to me and asked me in a pathetic tone, "Why are you in such a state of mind". "Pray for me and then open the *Holy Granth* to seek the divine Command," I said. "I will offer the prayer", he replied, "and you can seek the divine command." I asked him to reveal the divine command by reopening the *Holy Granth*, and I would stand behind him and read it. To this he agreed. He first performed the *ardasa* (Invocation prayer) with great fervour and then opened the *Holy Granth*. "The first passage on the left hand page was to be accepted as the divine command." This was the verse.

Uttering Vah (Guru) Vah (Guru)
The tongue is sweetened with the Word.
Through this Perfect Word God meets man.
The Blessed One's are inspired to utter
Vah (Guru), Vah (Guru)
Beauteous are they who say Vah! Vah!
(Wonderous! Wonderous! art thou) People come to worship them Through His grace
Is the Mystic Word Vah (Guru) attained,
Sayeth Nanak, Blessed are they At the door of the True One.
Guru Amar Das: *Var Gujri*: p. 514.

After reading this passage the mystic Word was sealed on my tongue. I had no doubt that God in His mercy will reveal Himself to me sooner or later. Thus the *Guru Granth Sahib*, my eternal Teacher, revealed to me the most precious secret of the Divine Name. The Guru thus placed the precious pearl of Divine Name on the palm of my hand.

I read rest of the hymn and learnt much more about the spiritual significance and mystery of the Divine Name which can be summed briefly thus: "God glorifies Himself through the mystic Word *Vah-Guru* and through this word He reveals Himself." I further realised that this was the true praise of the Lord about which I read in the *Japji*. Through the mystic Word, *Vah-Guru*, the true One can be attained.

Deeper Experience of divine Name

I was now convinced that this glorification or praise of the Lord would lead one to true spiritual union. I was tempted to read the *Guru Granth Sahib* further on. The hymns that followed revealed the greatness of glorifying God through His Name. "This was indeed the path of eternal bliss and spiritual communion with the Lord". This was the discipline, which would inspire the mind with the Will of God.

Further on it was clear that the mystic Name was the symbol of Truth, which the Enlightened sages, *gurmukhs*, can attain. It was also clear that this mystic Name could be contemplated in many ways:

1. With the tongue.
2. With the breath and mind.
3. With inner consciousness by keeping the *pranasakti* (vital breath) controlled in the naval.

By every method one could attain the highest spiritual state. This hymn explained the importance and spiritual import of the divine Name.

Praise the One God
Uttering Vah-Guru: the divine Word
Which the Guru has revealed.

The sublime spiritual state of those who contemplate His Name, is then described. And yet the hymn made it clear that only those people can contemplate the divine Name to whom its spiritual significance is revealed by the Lord, and by contemplating the Name all the dirt of egoism is removed from the soul. The mystic power of the Word, the greatness, purity and spiritual beauty of those who meditate on His Name, the solace of their company, were all made clear by this

hymn. To contemplate the name through speech, breath and consciousness and dedicate the body, mind and soul to the divine Teacher were all explained in this verse. Then in the next verse it was made clear that the divine Name and the Lord who is Named are one. It's immortalising effect and its rich reward, particularly that of the realization of God is stated in the closing verse of this hymn. Now it was clear, that a Sikh, to please the Guru, must sing the glory of God with a single-minded devotion. The fear of death will then depart and all that a virtuous mind desires is achieved.

All my doubts about the mystic name were dispelled. I was convinced about real divine Name to be contemplated in Sikh Faith. The last line of the hymn suggested that this meditation of the presence of God through His Name was to be practised day and night. I had attained the experience of the mystic Name. I was now anxious to attain the Named One, that is God Himself. I was now determined to tread the path of realization. The will to see His Light and presence was now stronger than ever. I felt that courage, fortitude and the will to achieve His Presence had become a part of myself. At the time of my leaving the temple the following verse was being read;

Lead thou, a life of spiritual effort,
Earn thy living and be happy;
Through contemplation meet, the Lord,
Thus, O Nanak, will all doubt and despair depart.
Guru Arjan: Var Gujri p. 522.

All my doubts had vanished. All the wavering of mind had ended. I cannot actually express the revelation of the inner meaning of the sacred hymn which I experienced. It is still deeply impressed on my mind and soul. I was happy that the Divine Name was revealed to me. I was happy that God had blessed me with the greater gift. I now sought solitude in which I could contemplate the Name and practice the presence of God. In my heart there was continuously going on an effortless repetition of the Mystic Name, I had just attained. With every breath, the drum beat of the Divine Name was ringing in my soul. Wherever I went this miraculous phenomenon continued. It appeared my heart and soul were keyed up to this sempiternal singing of the Divine Name.

Yet there was unbounded thirst to know the mystery of the Infinite. I went to the office for some time and completed my day's work as a matter of formal duty. I came home at noon. I had not taken any food or drink till then nor was inclined to eat anything. Without taking meals I went into my room. I asked Rur Singh to take his food and not wait for me as I was not feeling like eating anything. Bhai Rur Singh followed me. He was looking at me helplessly and urging me to eat something. I could see his sad and pitiable look and disappointment. So I politely told him that I did not feel hungry and went out again. I asked him to take his food and not to follow me. The green hills and valleys which presented beautiful natural landscape, the enchanting and soul-stirring sights of nature and the infinite beauty of the Creator thrilled my whole inner self and the effortless repetition of the divine Name which was going on in an undisturbed state of mind went on with a deeper concentration and absorption of mind.

I did not know the different methods of contemplating the divine Name. I had not learnt the various techniques of this spiritual practice from anyone. All I was eager to know was to have a glimpse of the Beloved. It was this burning passion to have a vision of His Light that impelled and aroused my wavering thoughts and feelings to sublime spiritual heights and the straight path.

I had come to the place at about 3 p.m. Now the sun was about to set, Rur Singh found me out when darkness was about to fall. It was just the time for *Rehras* (Evening prayer). Rur Singh was reciting this prayer when he came and stood before me. He was reciting these lines.

Thou separatetest
Thou unitest.
Guru Ram Das: *Rehras*

These lines sounded in my ears as the sweetest, the loveliest and the best. His presence also reminded me that it was time for evening prayer. I asked Bhai Rur Singh to recite the evening prayer all over again. As he recited it, I felt a great joy and peace. New inspiration and joy seemed to pour in to carry on the spiritual practice of repeating the Name that was ceaselessly going on. After the prayer Bhai Rur Singh persuaded me to go home. As soon as I had climbed the stairs of my house I hurriedly went in and shut myself up in a room and started the repetition of the mystic Name. The divine Name was, strung to my very breath. All the doubts and delusions and all the anxieties had disappeared. There was but one deep longing.

I thirst for Thy vision alone
I like not anything else.
Guru Arjan: *Asa* p. 407.

This poignant thirst became deeper and deeper and my concentration on the mystic contemplation of the Name increased. My mind was now free from critical reflections and doubts. I continued the repetition of the divine Name. I was not disturbed by fatigue or any wavering thoughts. Many ways of performing the spiritual practice of the Name spontaneously occurred to me. I went on with the practice in number of ways. With every upward and downward breath a new method and a new mode of spiritual practice appeared intuitively in my consciousness. Whenever a little physical fatigue was felt I used the iron beads for the spiritual practice. This determined repetition of the Name with the iron rosary was of great help to me. My mind was strung into deep concentration by it. All fatigue and lassitude disappeared. The iron rosary transmitted a lightning power to my inner self and inspired unbroken repetition of the divine Name. It went on for some time and then there was a sudden illumination. Peace and silence reigned within my whole being.

I See My own Real Self

My soul (*atman*) appeared now to be quite distinct and apart from my body. Then I lost consciousness of the body completely. The music of the mystic Name rang through my whole self. If I do not have ears, how do I hear, I thought. The next moment I saw in the full blaze of high consciousness my own real Self. With it came the visual realization of the fact, "I am" and I am the *Atman* (Soul).

I felt, sublime wonderment and spiritual exaltation on seeing my real Self, my *Atman*. But this joy of seeing my Self did not last long. It was overtaken by me deeper and more passionate thirst to see God. The mere realization of my own Self did not satisfy me for long. My unquenchable thirst to see the light of God, my yearning to have a vision of the Infinite Lord once more became my prime thought.

CHAPTER 6 - THE VISION OF GOD

(Letter No. 3, March 30, 1922)

MY HOPE OF having a vision of God began to recede. I did not feel quite worthy of it. This made me despondent and sad but even in this passionate state, the continuous repetition of the divine Name went on. The firm determination to see the Light of God that very night was shattered. With these shattered hopes also broke down my *samadhi* and *asana* (sitting posture). I lay flat on my bed, yet my hands passed the beads and my tongue moved in continuous repetition of His Name. The mind remained in perpetual contemplation. My hopes of seeing divine Light were dimmed. Only a short period elapsed in this pessimistic mood. Suddenly and unexpectedly there was an illumination of dazzling Light within my whole being. I could now experience that splendid cooling light face to face and yet I could not endure its dazzling splendour. I cried out like a person overwhelmed by an overpowering experience. I became as light as a flower. A strange and unbearable sweet blazing light began to shimmer with all its splendour within me and outside me. The next moment, I saw the Light pervading the whole atmosphere. My eyes were closed. My hands were clasped. By the force of some unseen Power I was lifted up till I touched the roof. I prayed to God, "Lord, help me to endure this unbearable experience". Within a twinkling of an eye I was lying on the floor. I touched the floor as lightly as a balloon and did not feel hurt; I had just been lifted up as a man goes up in a swing and had then come down in a back-swing.

It now appeared to me that my body was like a spiritual couch in which my soul (*atman*) was meeting the Beloved Lord which was all divine Light. This union gave such joy and bliss, that I could neither bear it nor leave it. Although my eyes were closed, I could see the splendid Light of His Presence within me and outside me. I now acquired a wonderful inner spiritual vision and strange inner eyes. This wonderful experience was almost unbearable. I tried to stop the repetition of the divine Name hoping that by doing so I may be relieved a little of this overwhelming experience. Even the repetition of the Name had now become a spontaneous spiritual contemplation. It did not stop even when I made an effort to do so. With every breath this miraculous repetition went on giving peculiar joy and inner exaltation. It took many forms and many spiritual ways of expression. The more I gave my mind to it the more absorbing became the experience. My heart was aglow with radiance and bathed in Light. I felt as light as a thing that could fly. It was with difficulty I acquired a control of this spiritual state.

God was now resplendently revealed within my inner self. I tried to return my love for His boundless grace and beneficence through prayer, songs, and supplication to the Beloved who was now manifest as Knowledge and Light in perfect revelation. I gave Him the most sanctified seat in my heart. I expected that He would come to my room from the Unknown and reveal Himself outside myself. I did not in the least expect that my strange Beloved, my Lord God with His unfathomable powers, would miraculously appear within my own self, and reveal Himself on the altar of my heart.

Ah, blessed was all my search on the night. I could see a sea of divine Light flooding within me and outside me in shimmering resplendence. I was able to endure this unendurable Light only by prayerful utterances from *Gurbani* (sacred Hymns) which strengthened my mind and soul by seeking grace and strength. The more I was absorbed in it, the more wonderful and sublimely dazzling spiritual phenomenon were seen by my inner eyes (*div dristi*) which cannot be expressed in the language of our physical and earthly world.

I would not now see the roof and the walls of the room in which I was sitting. Right through the sky I could see space beyond space, all crystal clear and bathed in purity. The whole of the universe was filled with Incomprehensible Light which was penetrating me and enfolding me. The music of His divine Presence filled my heart with blissful joy. I could see all this clearly and visibly in a wide awake condition, but there lurked a faint doubt whether I saw and experienced all this in my physical existence. Two thoughts vaguely lingered in my mind. One possibility was that I had abandoned my body and was now experiencing and seeing the spiritual realms through an astral body. The other possibility was that I was seeing all this in a dream-conscious state.

I actually felt that the whole vision was a personal experience in awakened state, but I wondered how a man like me could be blessed with such wonderful experience. How could such a great gift be bestowed on me? Such boundless grace on a sinner like me was unthinkable. I did not possess any such moral or spiritual quality with which I could please the Lord. The sense of my own insignificance as a devotee made me feel that all the vision of His Light was not the fruit of spiritual effort in this life but was probably a dream vision of some previous life in some other realm.

Nevertheless, whatever I saw was an ineffable experience which gave me the highest bliss. I abandoned myself to it, and for a moment, gave up all faintly disturbing thoughts. At this time Bhai Rur Singh knocked at the door and I heard him saying that it was 2 A.M. and time for me to take bath and say prayers. On hearing his voice I was convinced that I was not dead and my body was unchanged. The next moment there lingered a doubt that I may be hearing the voice of Bhai Rur Singh in a dream only. The doubt about death was dispelled but the thought that I may be in a dream conscious state still lingered on in my mind.

I opened the door and when I came out Bhai Rur Singh greeted me. I discerned his presence clearly but still I thought that I was talking to him in a dream. I asked, Bhai Rur Singh: "Are we talking in a dream. Are you also seeing a dream?" Considerably surprised at my question he replied, "No Bhai Sahib, what strange things are you uttering today? It is time for your bath."

When I went to the bathroom, I saw the usual things there. My steps faltered but somehow I controlled myself with effort. The whole of my inner being was inwardly drawn and imbued with the indescribable experiences of blissful love. When I started taking bath the automatic repetition of the divine Name was strung to my very breath and with every breath the divine Name was uttered with such magnetic power that it is difficult to describe it.

After the bath I changed my underwear and with a turban on, I sat in a dry place in the bathroom and started reciting the *Japji*. Although it was very cold I did not feel the cold at all. This was because very little consciousness of the body was left. It was almost a bodiless state within the body. Deeply intoxicated in this sublime state of divine illumination, I started reciting the Proem of *Japji* which we know as the *mul mantra* (the Basic Mystic Revelation). The more I repeated it the more I was lost in it. I could not recite the *Japji* beyond the *Mulmantra* (Proem). The divine Name which was now manifest in me in the form of Light flashed through my inner being in waves after waves of revealed Light which thrilled every pore of my body. My soul was in a wedlock embrace with the Beloved which gave me the highest aesthetic joy. The steady recitation of the great mystic composition *the Japji* put me into the contemplative poise of *Sahaj Samadhi*: Effortless absorption in the Divine. I was passing into ecstatic experience. I was so deeply absorbed in the blissful mood, that the recitation of *Japji* became a continuous deep meditation. Every line of *Japji* revealed such a spiritual joy of divine knowledge and inner light as I had never heard or

experienced before. I tried my utmost to complete the recitation at the usual speed, but at every line my mind stopped and was lost in reflection over its intuitively revealed meaning. It is difficult to describe this blissful mental condition. I have no words to express it.

There are no words for its praise
Only a vision of His Light reveals the Truth
Adi Granth: Kabir: Sloka p. 1370.

At every moment, I silently prayed that I should be able to complete the recitation of *Japji*. If I had not been so thoroughly disciplined in the knowledge and deeper meaning of the *Gurbani* and also if I had not known the strength of silent prayers, it would have been impossible to endure the rapturous emotions of that moment. I might even have become unconscious in the intoxication of this blissful joy and would thus have remained far behind and utterly devoid of the highest spiritual state. It appeared I would not be able to complete the *Japji* that day. I was stuck up in the blissful joy of its inner meaning and was so absorbed in spiritual intoxication that I could not complete even half the verses of *Japji*. Only through prayers and supplications I gathered the spiritual strength and consciousness to complete the recitation. By the time of dawn I could complete only one recitation. Thank God, it was completed. Normally I completed five recitations of *Japji* along with other daily prayers by this time. But even at this time I had a vague feeling that I may be in a dream state. Just then Bhai Rur Singh came and asked me to dress up and get ready. I now realised that I had not put on my dress as yet. Dressing up quickly I moved on towards the Sikh temple (Gurdwara).

There still lingered a doubt that I was in a dream state, but on seeing broad daylight I felt assured that I was not walking in a dream, because one dreams only at night and the night never changes into day in a dream. Secondly, the spiritual vision of divine light which I saw within and outside myself was unique. This supernatural light was shining all around in different form than the ordinary daylight. I stepped out with a little effort and came to the veranda. I saw the whole sky bathed in the radiance of this divine light. Wrapping a blanket around myself I moved towards the Sikh temple. My feet faltered as I walked and it appeared my feet did not touch the earth. I moved on sauntering and tumbling and yet was surprisingly on my feet again. Again came the thought, have I really attained a vision of the divine or was it just a dream? I was now going to the temple, where I expected that the ever present Guru (the Holy *Guru Granth Sahib*) would reveal to me my true state. The voice of the Guru would dispel all doubts and I would know whether I was really enjoying bliss of spiritual union with the Lord in conscious state. When I entered the temple I heard this hymn being sung.

Friend, I have attained the Bestower of eternal happiness;
I have espoused the Bridegroom of my choice.
It is a moment of great felicity.
The mystic union has given me great happiness;
The Compassionate Beloved is ever young and romantic,
In holy company, I met Him by the grace of the Guru;
All hopes and wishes have been fulfilled.
The Beloved has embraced me in perfect union,
Sayeth Nanak: I have attained the Bestower of happiness;
Through the grace of the Guru.
Guru Arjan: *Jaitsiri* p. 704

This hymn of felicitation dispelled all my doubts. I was sure now that it was not a dream state. I circumambulated the *Guru Granth Sahib* and bowing low opened it and found the *Anand Sahib* (Song of Bliss) at the first reading on the left page. I read it in a musical and moving tone. It was so enchanting a recitation that it cast a spell on the hearers. That day, I understood the deeper meaning of this great hymn. I now realized the spiritual import of such lines as;

Everyone speaks of joy and bliss
But real bliss can be known only from the Guru.
Guru Amar Das: *Anand*: 917

My joy knew no bounds. I was dumb with rapturous joy. My eyes were fixed in a trance. My heart was drinking ambrosial nectar without being completely satiated. At this moment a man said in my ear, "Let us go to the other Gurdwara (Temple). The complete continuous recitation of the *Guru Granth Sahib Akhand Path* is to begin just now in commemoration of Guru Nanak's birthday, and there you can enjoy greater bliss." I was very happy to hear this. With a refreshing zeal I went to the other Gurdwara where a large

Holy congregation was gathered. I bowed to the Holy *Guru Granth Sahib* from a distance and quietly sat in a corner in the back row from where I could see the whole congregation but no one could see me. I was also facing the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Wrapped in my blanket I sat there in blissful contemplation. Divine songs were being sung. I felt impelled to join the *Kirtan* (divine singing) but I did not feel like getting out of my blissful state of spiritual absorption. The *Kirtan* ended and prayer for starting the *Akhand Path* (non-stop reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*) was said. This was the first time in my life that I got an opportunity to see an *Akhand Path* being performed. After the reading of *Japji* (which is the opening composition of *Guru Granth Sahib*), the *Karah parsad* (sacramental pudding) was distributed. Most of the people went away after this. Very few of them were left and after sometime they also started moving out, and one of them shook me, indicating that it was time to go. I bowed before the *Guru Granth Sahib* with the idea of going away when an inner voice said "keep sitting; where do you wish to go". This almost came as a command which I could not but obey. To me it was the command of the Guru. There were five reciters reading one after the other and a few devotee attendants and I was the lone listener at that time. People came for sometime and went, while I sat there bound in the bondage of love, and nothing could disturb me now. The spiritual illumination broke all barriers of inner consciousness and there was a gradual increase in the spiritual powers and revelations. I sat there during the whole reading, unshaken, undisturbed and unmoved. By the grace of God I sat there in an unbroken concentration and listened to the whole *Akhand path* (non-stop reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*) for forty eight hours and it was through His unknown power that I listened to the complete reading and it was by His grace that I listened to the whole reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in a wide awake consciousness and never for a moment felt sleepy or tired.

This was thy gift, O Lord. The Unstruck Music (*Anhad Shabad*) began to ring in all its melodious measures within my inner consciousness. The tenth door of consciousness *turiya* leading to the realization of the transcendental Light, opened revealing wonders of the spiritual life.

Mother, I am wonder-struck at this vision
The Unstruck Music has enchanted me with its melody.
Wonderful is its ineffable sweetness.
Guru Arjan: *Sarang*: 1126

The continuous and complete reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib (Akhand Path)* ended. The *Arti*, the Song with the lamps, was sung. In my heart a wonderful and colourful worship with the lamps was revealed. The spiritual meaning of the *Arti* hymn was revealed in all its significance. The music of the musical instruments ceased. Within me I could hear the Unstruck Music of the celestial worlds which rang through the whole universe with enchanting divine melody. Ah, who could open his eyes to see the outside world? Shimmering Light with all its resplendent glory could be seen thrilling my whole being and spreading throughout the vast space in the universe. Even on the *Holy Guru Granth Sahib* there was radiant Light, which had a soothing effect but was difficult to endure. Rays of Light were spreading towards the whole congregation, gathered in large number and everyone was looking at me.

CHAPTER 7 - BLESSEDNESS AND DIVINE VISION

(Letter No. 4, April 4, 1922)

IT APPEARED everyone wanted me to join hymn singing. I was already feeling like pouring out my heart in *kirtan* (divine singing). Spontaneously I sang a psalm (*Shabad*). I do not remember which was it, but I sang it in a very thrilling and melodious musical mode. There was a magnetic effect on all and after the psalm ended there was a rapturous silence. My mind also merged into ecstatic silence. The congregation resumed the *Kirtan*.

I felt like a newly wedded bride and everyone appeared to be singing in jubilation of my wedded life. To me it appeared that those who were already far advanced in their life of spiritual marriage with the Lord were looking at me with great exultation and elation. I sat there for quite sometime wrapt up in the joy of spiritual revelation.

Suddenly I saw a man turning over the pages of the *Guru Granth Sahib* this way and that way disrespectfully. I could not bear the sight of this irreverence. *Kirtan* (divine singing) had stopped. The spiritual peace and blissful atmosphere was disturbed. Controlling my feelings with some difficulty I sat there. The man who was irreverently searching the *Guru Granth Sahib* found out a passage and started sermonising (*katha*) over it. His interpretation was hopeless. I bowed in salutation and stood up to leave the place. Something impelled me to move on and when my steps faltered, some unknown power saved me from falling. I quietly slipped from there and went to the other Sikh temple.

As I walked I seemed to touch the earth very lightly. My body became lighter than a flower. My body was so light that I felt it could be blown like a balloon. My love-bewitched eyes that were filled with languid intoxication, shed a strange blissful enchantment and I myself was filled with inexpressible joy. When I bowed low to the Guru and sat in the other temple, an old lady who was distributing the sweet pudding said, "Blessed saint of God, you have not taken anything for many days. Here take some *karah prashad*". I accepted the *prashad*, but on being called a Saint I felt terribly ashamed. I wondered how the lady came to know that I had not taken anything for some days. I slipped away from there too, and distributed the *karah prashad* to small boys. I had hardly stepped out of the temple when the *Granthi's* brother and Bhai Jawahar Singh a devoted friend, fell on my feet and said with tears in their eyes "Give us a little bit of it." I told them that I had distributed all the *karah prashad*. "We do not ask for *karah prashad*, but a bit of the spiritual gift which you have received from the Lord". I replied, "You too must get it from the Lord. Why beg it from a beggar like me?" So saying I tried to get away and escape from such admirers. They followed me but I moved faster. I moved through the streets trying to avoid them and at last succeeded in hiding myself in the solitude of the hills and valleys. They even followed me to the hills but could not find me. All the surrounding hills appeared to be bathed in a golden splendour. Within my heart there was a strange revelation. In whichever direction I looked, I espied only His shimmering Light.

After some time, I again heard the sound of musical instruments and *kirtan* (congregational singing). Attracted as if by a magnet, I moved in that direction very fast. It appeared I had winged feet. In a moment I reached a wide crossing and saw the *Sangat* (congregation) coming towards me. The refrain of their song was:

The sangat has come for a glimpse of Thee
Reveal Thyself O Lord to us.

It appeared that these devotees of the Lord were singing a prayerful song for a novice lover of the Lord like me. It also appeared that everyone was illumined with the Light of God. Each was more enlightened than the other. In humble adoration, I prostrated before the holy *Sangat*, but someone lifted me up and put me back on my feet. Folding my hands, I greeted the whole *sangat*. Anointing my forehead with the dust of the *sangat's* feet, I circumambulated the congregation as it moved on, in reverence, five times. Then I joined the *sangat* in *kirtan* (hymn singing). Many groups, one following the other were singing. Most of the people gathered around the place where I was singing. They stopped singing and just listened to my voice. After completing the singing of one hymn, I moved into the crowd.

I tried to conceal myself with my blanket but I could not. I could not even properly keep the blanket around me. On seeing my carefree gait and self-intoxication, people were talking about me in whispers. When I asked them to sing a hymn they started the *kirtan*. Whoever came near me started peeping into my eyes in great wonder. It became so annoying that I asked them why they were gazing at my eyes like that. Two or three of them who were very much fascinated by my eyes said: "There is a strange light and attraction in those eyes. There is a magnetic charm in them which fascinates us". I felt very shy on hearing these words and I tried to keep away from them somehow.

As the *sangat* moved on performing *kirtan*, I went along with it. After some time we reached the same Sikh temple (*Gurdwara*) where *Akhand path* (continuous reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*) had been performed. As soon as the *sangat* reached the door of the temple and started entering it, I turned back. Bhai Jawahar Singh and the temple priest's brother followed me. I ran away and hid myself in the hills. After some time I heard the sound of the musical instruments again. Another *kirtan* party was coming from a different direction. I followed it till this group also reached the same temple. The third time I again came with another *kirtan* party. Now I found that a very large *kirtan* procession was about to be taken out. The *palki* in which the *Guru Granth Sahib* was to be carried was being decorated. The man who was waving the *chowri* over the *Guru Granth Sahib* said "It appears God has blessed you today with the sacred duty of welcoming the *jathas* (congregational groups)."

A very grand procession was taken out with drum beats, waving flags and thrilling *kirtan*. I also followed it, somehow near the *Guru Granth Sahib* and sometimes performing *kirtan* with some group. People would bend low and peep into my eyes. I kept on singing the sacred hymns and did not talk to anyone. Bhai Jawahar Singh and the temple priest's brother kept close to me. I remained absorbed in *kirtan* and did not give them a chance to talk to me. When they insisted on talking to me I kept quiet and tried to lose myself in the congregation. It was a very long procession. Pundit Waryam Singh and Sant Gurbakhsh Singh of Patiala also met me. They also looked at my eyes and remarked. "What has happened to your eyes? Why are they like this? We hear that you listened to the whole of continuous reading of *Guru Granth Sahib*". I tried to explain away the condition of my eyes by telling them that they are like that probably because I have not slept for three days.

The *kirtan* procession ended in the evening. What is the need of multiplying stories? By sunset I came back to my residence, avoiding at every turn, from being followed. Bhai Rur Singh who was waiting for me impatiently said in a pathetic tone, "You have not taken any food for the last three

days. Yesterday I took a vow that I would not take any food till you also take it. At the moment, I am feeling hungry but I will not take a morsel of food till you also eat something."

I was deeply moved by his touching appeal. I asked him to prepare fresh food which he did in a very short period. I was not feeling hungry. As a matter of fact lack of hunger and sleep put me in a strange condition for a number of days. If I took food, sleep would atonce come. So, as soon as I took a little food my eyes became heavy and I soon fell fast asleep. After a few hours of deep sleep I woke up again. My spiritual condition became excellent as soon as I sat meditating and repeating divine Name with every breath till daybreak.

Absence from the office

The next day, Bhai Rur Singh told me that I had not attended the office for many days. I also realized that I had neither attended the office nor taken any leave of absence. What explanation should I give to my officers and what will they say? Anyway I gathered courage and went to the office. But to my great surprise no one questioned me about my absence. Neither any superior officer nor any subordinate asked me why I had been absent for so many days. So I also kept quiet. Why should I raise the question? When I saw the attendance register not a single absence was marked. It indicated that I had been present on all days. Even the work I had left undone was complete. I realized that it was nothing but a miracle of God who somehow saved me from the awkward situation through His Grace. I kept quiet about it did not let anyone know about it. But now I could not apply my mind to work. I just sat there in spiritual intoxication. I just could not lift my pen and write. The hand faltered as I wrote. A poignant pain of love arose in my heart and disturbed my work seriously. I feared that I might not write something wrong. As I moved my pen I hardly knew what I was writing. Yet on reading I found that it was correct. Sometimes I left work and went out into the hills, and came back after an hour or half. But no one questioned me. Thus about two months passed in this blissful state.

Now came Guru Gobind Singh's birthday, to celebrate which *akhand path* (continuous reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib*), was to be performed. I again made up my mind to hear the whole reading of the *Guru Granth Sahib* which generally lasts about forty eight hours for the second time. I also prayed that as a blessing for this meditative hearing of the holy scripture I may be able to see in a vision, the same resplendent form of Guru Gobind Singh in which he appeared on the earth, and which in its astral form could be seen in a transcendent state even now.

By the grace of God I was able to hear in one continuous sitting the recitation of the whole of *Guru Granth Sahib*. When the reading was complete there was such a spiritual revelation which I find difficult to describe. I just cannot describe it. It is a mystic experience which is not to be talked about. God alone knows where you will spread these things which I am writing to you, very confidentially. Even now I am falling into an ecstasy as I write and my pen falters. It is neither the proper time nor. It appears, God wills me to continue the story. What can I do? I am losing my consciousness and the will to write. My mind is now undergoing a change. I do not have the patience to read what I have written for the second time. Please correct the spellings etc., if they are amiss (This letter No. 4 was written from prison on the night of April 4th 1922 when Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was undergoing the sixth year of his sentence of life imprisonment in Rajahmundry Prison).

Vah-Guru ji ka Khalsa Vah-Guru ji ki Fateh

CHAPTER 8 - HOLY MOTHER GULAB KAUR

(Connected part of letter No. 6)

NOW CAME THE TIME to leave Abottabad. I have already described the spiritual experiences of this period. Many other similar mystical experiences have so far remained a close secret with intimate friends. They should be kept strictly confidential and not discussed with every type of person.

The spiritual experiences with which I was blessed on Guru Gobind Singh's birthday should never be penned. They should, as far as possible, be related only to those enlightened persons who have a profound understanding of the illumination of transcendent experience. After this spiritual experience I was impelled to resign from government service. There was a prayerful longing in my heart to live only in such a spiritual atmosphere of *Akhand Path* gatherings and divine fervour. A voice from the Unknown appeared to say to me "You will now enjoy many more *Akhand Paths* (continuous readings of *Guru Granth Sahib*). Go, drink deep from this fountain of life and enjoy the rich treasures left to us by our spiritual fore-fathers (the Divine Gurus)."

I felt, I had a distinct call to go back home. Who could stop me? People did try to prevent me from leaving the place, but in the face of this mysterious call from within, I could not but leave the place at once. I hardly knew who was pulling me from within my heart. It was an irresistible call. It became difficult for me to stay at Abbottabad any longer. People began to praise and bestow undue reverence on me by calling me "*Bhakt Babu*" and tried to touch my feet as I passed by them. I feared that this praise might create vanity which might destroy all the spirituality with which I had been blessed. The best way was to escape from such an atmosphere. Over and above it there was the inward call. The *sangat* of Abbottabad did not wish that I should go, but the divine call was irresistible. After saying my last prayers I left the place. Many people accompanied me up to Haripur out of deep love and respect. I went to Haripur to see a very enlightened woman Saint, who had achieved the highest state of illumination. The Sikhs of Haripur who knew me also came to meet me. But I was anxious to see this woman Saint whom people called Mother Gulab Kaur, and the tales of whose supreme renunciation and saintliness impressed me deeply. It would be proper to write here briefly about the early life of this woman Saint who had achieved the highest spiritual state. She was the first real Saint I met in life. Her story as told to me by a Sikh from Haripur is as follows:

Gulab Kaur's husband was a very religious person. The spiritually enlightened husband had a devoted and very pious wife in Gulab Kaur. The love and service of her husband was to her, the love and service of God. Like the inseparable Sheldrake and the moon, she could not live apart from her husband even for a moment. According to the wishes of her husband she had memorised the *Sukhmani* and *Bavan Akhari* and she recited these prayers every day. She was however not leading much of a contemplative life. She was too absorbed in the love of her husband. She did not as yet know the spiritual significance of the divine Name, when her husband died at quite a young age. The death of her husband came as such a blow to her, that she turned her mind away from the world and like a true *Sati* (she who sacrifices herself along with her dead husband); she died to the physical world around her, only to live in spiritual ecstasy of divine contemplation. The light of God began to shine in her pure soul. The love for her husband gradually changed into an intense love for God in which she became deeply imbued.

She was beautiful and quite young. The spiritual grace on her face revealed her radiant soul. It was difficult to look straight into the red, dazzling glow of her face. She renounced the world and left her home. In this fearless state this young Child of Light wandered away, detached and free like a bird. Her mind was always fixed on God and she spent her days in deep meditative mood. She appeared to have lost all her body consciousness. Deeply absorbed in the divine Name, Mother Gulab Kaur moved about with a radiant charm on her face. There are innumerable stories about her saintliness and spiritual powers, which for want of space cannot be related here. Wherever she went, her meditative silence and spiritual beauty attracted people. The streets, the villages or even the forests bloomed with life and with the spirit of reverence, when she was there. She became very well known in Haripur, Hazara and the surrounding areas. She was so deeply absorbed in her meditative moods that she rarely spoke to anyone.

In ecstasy he laughs

In ecstasy he weeps.

At times he becomes silent.

Guru Nanak: *Var Asa*, p. 473.

Such was the spiritual condition of this saintly lady. She became careless about her clothes. All she had was an underwear (*kach*) and a blanket wrapped around her body. When I expressed my desire to meet her, people said: "She does not allow anyone to come near her. She drives away everyone by throwing stones at them. Out of fear no one goes near her. No one has seen her talking to anyone. Sometimes she is seen mumbling some words in a soliloquy. It is not easy to go near her. If you want to see her from a distance we can show her to you. If you wish to go near her, you may go at your own risk. Otherwise we do not dare to go near her."

After saying a short prayer, I set out to meet Mother Gulab Kaur. I came to know that she was sitting in front of a shop which was closed. People showed her to me from the corner of a street. She was sitting with a blanket around her body and her back was towards us. While other people turned back, I moved on towards her. Even her face was covered with the blanket. As I moved on with reverence and devotion close to her, the Holy Mother through her inner vision, having divined my presence, stood up with electric suddenness, and turning towards me with folded hands, she greeted me with the Khalsa greeting:

Vah-Guru ji ka Khalsa Vah-Guru ji ki Fateh

The Khalsa is of God Victory unto the Wonderful Lord.

I was deeply moved and the people who looked on were quite surprised. One or two dared now to come nearer. Mother Gulab Kaur still standing with folded hands. In humble adoration, I moved forward to touch her feet, but with her lotus like pure hands she prevented me from doing so. She was about to spread her blanket asking me to sit on it, but I begged her not to do so, as a humble person like me could not bear to see such a divine soul like her bestow so unusual a respect and reverence on me, which I did not deserve. "I seek a humble place in the dust of thy feet Holy Mother", said I. I sat near her on the ground leaving the blanket with her. She sat there in a calm meditative mood, and I can still visualise her saintly figure sitting in silent contemplation. The profound impression of her divine personality is deeply engraved in my heart. It is difficult to describe the spiritual influence of the great personality and its cool and thrilling effect on my heart and soul. I felt purified and exalted and my heart began to beat louder with the rhythm of divine Name. There was a spiritual union of our souls and in this mystic silence we conversed with each other. The thought waves emanating from one were understood by the other. What need was

there to speak. After sometime the Holy Mother spoke in a melodious voice saying: "I am only a lone traveller. How shall I entertain you? I am just a lone traveller."

In a very sweet and musical voice she repeated these words. Then she suddenly got up, asking me to keep sitting there for a while. She took her blanket and in an intoxicated mood moved towards a fruit shop. She picked up some fruits from the shop, brought them there and offering them to me said: "Accept this humble offering of one who is dedicated to the Lord". I accepted the great Saint's offering of love and felt greatly blessed. Then she said: "May you ever be blessed. All blessings on you, noble Sikh of the Guru. The Guru has indeed lighted a wonderful lamp". In a sublime state of mind she showered blessings and love on me. I begged the Holy Mother to bestow benediction me and pray that this lamp which had been lighted by the Guru may ever keep on burning. She said: "It will keep on burning with ever increasing light." We were both standing and she now wished me to depart. I asked the Holy Mother, "When may I get a chance to have a glimpse of her divine personality again". To this she replied: "Spiritually united souls never feel any separation. On the physical plane there may not be any meeting but we will meet again in the Presence of the Lord," and then in a tone of blessing she said, "you have now received the divine call to perform *Akhand Paths*. Go, be blessed, and enjoy spiritual enlightenment. On the way pay homage to the *Panja Sahib* Gurdwara."

These were the few words she spoke in the short meeting between us. I bowed low to touch her feet. There were tears in her eyes. I too was over-whelmed with tears. Patting me on my back she blessed me again and helped me to rise to my feet. After completing the pilgrimage to *Panja Sahib* and Amritsar, I came back to the village and met the divine friends from whom I had been long separated. By the grace of the Guru there was one *Akhand Path* after another and my spiritual condition became more and more exalted. I do not know for how many years and months this undisturbed peace and bliss lasted until suddenly the hawks of fate pounced on a carefree bird and then started the saga of long prison life.

CHAPTER 9 - IN THE KHALSA COLLEGE

(Remaining part of letter No. 6.)

SARDAR HARBANS SINGH ATTARI met me and persuaded me to join the Khalsa College and serve the premier Sikh institution. My father was already very anxious to find such a post for me. I was told that by serving this institution I would be serving the Sikh *Panth* (community). I did not know that even this *Panthic* service would lead to many troubles. After fixing me up on the staff of Khalsa college, Sardar Harbans Singh Attari kept away from the College affairs, while I had a good many bitter experiences and saw many ups and downs. I did not wish to narrate those tragic experiences and pollute my mind again by penning them down. If you want to know the details you can have them from Bhai Atma Singh of Moga. Mentally and spiritually my mind suffered considerably. My peace of mind was seriously disturbed by the unpleasant atmosphere, but the Lord (through His Grace) saved me from getting involved any further. When I came back to *Sadh Sangat* and performed *kirtan* and *Akhand paths* I regained my normal spiritual poise again.

At Damdama Sahib

After sometime some friends took me to Damdama Sahib, I was made the secretary of Khalsa Diwan Damdama Sahib. I served the institution for considerable period which passed in peace and tranquillity. I joined the *Ragi Jatha* (the musicians) in performing *kirtan* every day. We went from village to village performing *kirtan*. During this period a lot of money poured in which was used for building a Khalsa High School. After that I remained at Damdama Sahib for a short period and started enjoying the pilgrimage and *sewa of Takhat Sahib* and Darbar Sahib. My mind was restless. I did not wish to stick to one place. The school was now founded. I do not know what is the condition of that school now.

Babu Teja Singh then persuaded me to accompany him to Bhasaur where he had founded the Panch Khalsa Diwan. There, as you know very well, days passed very happily. Although I got a good opportunity to perform the *kirtan* there, somehow I could not stick to the place. It is not necessary to mention here why I left Panch Khand in disgust. Off and on when I received an invitation, I continued to visit that place (After Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh went to the prison Babu Teja Singh of Bhasaur introduced such things into Sikh ceremonies and practices which caused great resentment. The climax of his folly was reached when he removed the hymns of Bhaktas like Kabir and Farid from the Guru Granth. His acts were denounced from the Akal Takht and he was excommunicated. When Bhai Randhir Singh came out of the prison, Babu Teja Singh tried to meet him but he refused to see him until he atoned for his sacrilegious acts). Bhai Joginder Singh knows much better the story of all that happened there. If you want to know the details you can ask him.

Bhai Atma Singh of Moga also knows quite a good deal. It is at Panch Khand I first met Bhai Joginder Singh and developed a deep friendship with him. For his sake I visited Patiala many times. An affection developed for him which surpassed love for real brothers. Although my stay at Khalsa College ended in some bitter experiences but the meeting with Bhai Atma Singh here developed into a lasting spiritual friendship. During my stay at Panch Khand I acquired a noble friend like Bhai Joginder Singh. Both these friends were staying at Patiala and to meet them I had to go there quite often. During one congregational gathering I met here Bhai Mai Singh and the strange meeting developed into a lifelong and loving friendship. It would be worthwhile to get the whole story of our meeting from his own mouth. You also knew how the Khalsa Youngmen League was formed which later developed into Khalsa High School Ludhiana. As you were associated with it you can

describe them better. It is not proper that I should keep on writing about all the things I did, and if you publish the story as related by me it may not be interesting. To fulfil your wishes and the command of friends, I have briefly told you the story of my life, but frankly speaking, I am writing all these autobiographical accounts against my own wishes. Whatever you like me to write beyond what I have expressed, you may ask in your next letter. Here in the prison, I neither have the time, nor the freedom, nor even the material to write my life story with a concentrated mind, least of all in such details as you desire. I am now spending more time on completing my book Gurmat Bibek (this book later on was published with Translator's Forward. It gives Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh's exposition of the Khalsa code of conduct (Rehat) in the manner in which a life of prayer, meditation and obedience to religious laws should be lived).

You are now compelling me to write my own life story when I am not at all in a mood to do so. I now hear that we may shortly be transferred to some prison near Punjab. We have to abide by the Will of God.

The nose string of life is in the hands of the Lord,
Our deeds drive us, and the truth is, Nanak,
That man must pasture where the Lord provides.
Guru Angad: *Var Sorath*: p. 663

CHAPTER 10 - ARREST AND DEFENCE

(Letter No. 7)

I WILL NOW RECOUNT and record as far as I can remember my answers to the police questions for investigation, first by Sardar Gurdial Singh Superintendent Police Nabha State, and then by Deputy Superintendent Mr. Atta Muhammed at the latter's residence sometime between 19th and 25th June 1915 (Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was taken into custody by Nabha State Police on 9th May 1915 and brought to Ludhiana police custody on 17th June 1915):

Superintendent, Police, Nabha: Singh Sahibji, you are a true Sikh, so I hope you will tell the truth in reply to all the questions which I ask.

I: Are you a false Sikh, who considers me to be Sikh and yet suspect that I may not tell the truth. A Sikh who is himself truthful sincerely believes other Sikhs to be truthful.

S.P.: I am not a true Sikh; you can take me to be a false Sikh. Just as I have frankly and sincerely told you that I am not a true Sikh in the same way I have sincerely told you that I consider you to be a true Sikh.

I: If you really consider me to be a true Sikh then I will tell you the truth about whatever you ask me in your capacity as a police officer. But from your statement it appears that you still suspect that I may not tell you the truth. A false person, as you assert yourself to be, has no right to suspect a person whom he considers to be a true Sikh.

S.P.: I am not trying to investigate whether you are a true Sikh, or not, but knowing that you are a true Sikh I expect to know through you the truth about certain incidents.

I: It is a strange thing that you want to know the truth about certain happenings through a man whom you have arrested as a criminal and whom you are keeping in chains.

S.P.: At the very outset I offered to take off your chains and asked you to sit on a chair, but you did not comply with the request.

I: I know that even your offer of the chair is a trap. You are trying to mislead me. It is through your clever design that I am now under arrest and in chains. Now by making a sham offer of chair and freedom you only wish to ensnare me in your trap.

S.P.: I am not responsible for what has been done to you. As a Government Officer my duty has compelled me to do so. Personally, I would be the last person to see you in chains. It is only to take you out of this trouble I am trying to probe into facts.

I: I have left every thing to the Will of God. I will face joy and sorrow according to His Will and endure every thing as His Sweet Will: "O Lord if Thou givest me happiness I will remember Thee, if Thou givest me sorrow even then I will worship Thee". I am not trying to complain to you about my present sorrow and grief. Nor am I complaining why I have been thrown into prison. You are actually trying to double-cross me and it is your double-dealings that pain me. Whatever you are

doing or investigating is a part of your routine official duty. You do not have any real sympathy with me. It is better if you go ahead with your investigations instead of beating about the bush.

S.P.: Believe me Sir; I have genuine sympathy with you.

I: It is good for you to express your sympathy for me, but it is difficult for me to believe what you are saying nor it is quite necessary for me to believe that you have a genuine sympathy. You have asserted that you indulge in falsehood. If you are sincere and truthful then only can you have any sympathy with me. I do not know whether I should believe your first statement that you are a false Sikh indulging in falsehood or the second statement that you have sympathy with me. My Guru has taught me never to have any faith in false people.

S.P.: All right you can take me to be a false Sikh but at least you are a true Sikh of the Guru. It is your duty to tell the truth. If I know the truth about certain happenings I may be able to take you out of this trouble and I may get some clue to save you.

I: The Guru has taught me never to seek freedom and safety from false men or sympathy of false officers. My duty as a true Sikh is to seek justice and fairness in the eyes of God and in the eyes of His lovers of truth. How can a false person discriminate between the true and false, nor is it necessary for me to get your verdict on this matter. How can truth appeal to a person who acts on falsehood? What right have false persons and liars to question a truth loving person?

S.P.: If on the basis of the statement of false person the Government accuses you of a crime which you have not committed and if on the basis of the statement of that false person a lover of truth like you is innocently involved in a serious case, is it not necessary for you to tell the truth to make things clear? I am trying to save you from false accusation.

I: So long as I am truthful and innocent in the eyes of the true Lord and so long as I abide by truth I am not in the least worried if some false persons or even the whole world makes false accusation on the basis of which the Government puts me into chains. The Government which has arrested me on the mere suspicion and false statement of professional liars cannot be expected to believe my statement of truth, and I do not think that such a Government will suddenly begin to believe that I am innocent merely on the basis of my true statement. All this is sham sympathy.

S.P.: I can give you a concrete example. Achhra Singh the approver has told the truth and the Government has assured him his freedom and safety.

I: I am really ashamed of your hypocritical conversation. Do you put me in the same category as Achhra Singh and wish to make me another approver? Strange is your sympathy. It is better if you do not make any such suggestions to me. I am not prepared to talk to you in this connection.

S.P.: Forgive me, my suggestion has annoyed you. I do not intend to put you in the same category as Achhra Singh. I give you a higher place and I consider you a true Sikh. It is only out of this genuine sympathy I will now tell you, some of our official secrets. It is Achhra Singh who has made some statements against you on the basis of which you have been arrested, but we are not getting any solid evidence in favour of those statements. That is why you have been kept in the lock up for all these days. But now they have arrested another man who has revealed some more facts about a conspiracy in the presence of Mr. Donald, S.P. Ludhiana. He has told him that there are about fifty more persons with you out of which he remembers the names of six or seven. The names of

the rest are known to you. This man has also revealed many other important facts which Mr. Donald believes to be true. His statement has been recorded in the presence of a Magistrate, but I took permission from the S.P. to question you on this matter as you know the truth, and being a saintly person you are expected to tell the truth. Mr. Donald, S.P. has gladly agreed to the proposal, that if like Achhra Singh, you also tell the whole truth he will at once accept you as an approver and assure you your freedom and safety.

I: I did not expect you to have come here only with the intention of making me an approver. Only a man who has committed a crime may seek forgiveness. Do you believe that I have committed any crime?

S.P.: No, I do not believe that you have committed any crime, but the Government believes that you have.

I: Then go and tell your Government to punish the criminal. I have not committed any crime. If your Government wishes to accuse innocent persons of the crimes which they have not committed then it is a Government that would be committing a crime and will have to face greater punishment before God. I consider myself to be absolutely innocent. If you want me to beg forgiveness only under threat I am not prepared to do so. I consider it a humiliating suggestion. "He alone fears who has committed a sin. The righteous persons are ever happy and carefree". So *dare jo pap kamanvda, dharmi vigset*. Those who commit sins live in fear and out of fear they beg forgiveness and thus commit more sins. But the righteous and sinless persons who have not committed any crime are not afraid of either any threat or torture, but they live in peace and joy.

S.P.: Bhai Sahib ji, in this case it is not merely question of torture, they may even sentence you to death. Mr. Donald S.P. told me frankly that if you do not seek forgiveness, you may be hanged.

I: This is far better than suffering torture. After all this earthly body is like an earthen vessel which must break. Shame on Achhra Singh for having become an approver. To save his own body he has put into trouble many other innocent people and thus committed a heinous crime. After all, how long will he live. At last he will die and he will face a miserable death. It is a pity that the Government officials should do justice on the basis of evidence of such approvers whose only aim is to save their own skin. These people have neither any love for truth nor fear of God. This man is now prepared to tell lies and makes statements which the police wants him to make. Now you have arrested a new man who must have committed a very serious crime. To save his life he is now trying to involve more innocent people into trouble through his false statements. Do you think such a man can ever tell the truth and do you consider such a man to be a true man?

S.P.: (With tears in his eyes). Forgive me, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh ji, for persuading you to become an approver and thus annoying your pure soul. I did not know that there still are such noble Sikhs like you. You have behaved like a true Sikh and I now feel that Sikhism is secure. Achhra Singh is a curse to the Sikhs and he has brought shame and blot on the community, which your noble character has washed away. I am convinced more than ever that you are absolutely innocent and truthful. In future there will never be the slightest suspicion in my mind against you. I am going back to Nabha and I am going back with great joy and sorrow. There is joy in mind that you have upheld the high ideal of Sikhism and the seed of the faith is safe. I am going with sorrow in my heart that such an innocent person like you will now undergo torture and punishment for the crime you have not committed. This conversation may be considered a private one. I may inform you now that there is more trouble in store for you. They will try to torture you and force

you to admit false things. You are a man with pure heart. Please see that you are not involved or trapped in any false case or crime. Please hold your own like a rock. If some other officer succeeds in persuading you then it will be a very great shock to me. This is my last request and my last appeal which I request you to keep secret. Now I seek forgiveness from you and bid you good bye. (*Tears rolled down his eyes as he spoke the last words*).

Discussion with D.S.P., Ludhiana

The next day Atta Mohd., Deputy Superintendent of Police, Ludhiana, came to me and the following questions and answers ensued.

D.S.P.: (*in Urdu*) The Government is doing an extraordinary favour to you by giving you a golden opportunity to save yourself. It is better if you make good use of this opportunity.

I: What opportunity? Better talk to me in Punjabi.

D.S.P.: (*in Punjabi*) The Government is giving you the opportunity to become an approver.

I: I spit on this offer and I do not know what words to use for those who make this offer.

D.S.P.: Then you will have to undergo great torture and in the end you may be hanged.

I: As long as my soul (*Atman*) is fearless and sinless no pain and suffering will come to it. It lives in peace and it will continue to survive in a fearless peace. The more physical torture I undergo, the greater may be the blissful exaltation of the soul.

D.S.P.: But if you make a statement according to the wishes of the Government you will be forgiven and set free. Besides this, you will be given many other rewards for your worldly luxury and happiness. I can just now bring you a written statement of the Superintendent of Police giving assurance of your freedom and security if you become an approver. My superior officers also promise to immediately appoint you as an Honorary Magistrate. Besides this, whenever you attend the Viceroy's *Durbar* or the Emperor's *Durbar* you will be entitled to a seat in the front row. What greater peace and happiness can your soul have than this and what is the use of dying a miserable death.

I: My Guru's teachings have already convinced me that all the worldly pleasures are transient and insignificant. All these high offices and positions which you are offering are nothing more than dust to me. You are offering me magistrateship as a reward to feed my greed. I may tell you that even if you offer me the wealth and pleasures of all the world I will not become an approver. I will not give up my faith in Truth and *Dharma*. I do not care a straw for all these honours and wealth. I recited the following lines from the *Guru Granth Sahib*:

Those who have faith in the Name of God.
They do not give their mind to any thing else.
Even if earth made of gold
Is given to them as their Kingdom,
They will not give their mind
To anything except His Name.
Guru Ram Das, *Asa*, p. 444

D.S.P.: How will you lose your religion and faith by becoming an approver? I also have a religion and faith. As a Muslim, I consider your religion to be as good as mine. Just as I do not like to lose my religion and faith at any cost so also I do not wish you to give up your faith.

I: (Interrupting him) Religion is not a mere formal faith or creed. Religion is to abide by and live according to the principles of spiritual faith. You Policemen have actually no religion or faith in your heart. I, as a disciple of the Guru consider such service of British Imperialism as a curse and it is a shameful chain that you are carrying around your neck. As far as I know, your religion, Islam, also does not allow a Muslim to accept such slavery of British Imperialism. Now tell me, how much of true Islam is there in your heart. Reflect seriously on the slavish and faithless deeds which you do in the service of the rulers and then talk to me about religion and faith.

D.S.P.: Now I understand your real meaning. You question me why I am serving the British Government. I tell you on oath of the Supreme *Allah* and Lord Mohammed that if I were convinced that the British Raj would soon end I would immediately give up this service. You people are in haste and you started your revolutionary activities much too soon. You did not wait for the proper time. I am also at heart against the British Government but I consider it foolish and short-sightedness to rise in a revolt on flimsy and baseless grounds. I swear *by Allah*, the Pure One, that at heart my sympathy is with you. I am not against fighting for freedom but I am bound as a Government servant by the command of the rulers and I have to obey them. I am waiting for such period when some rulers like Amir Kamal from the Islamic world would give us command, to fight for our freedom. Then we will come into the open and will fight fearlessly.

I: All your ideas are of a man, who lacks true religion and faith. A Muslim who has a sincere love and fear of God would never swear either *by Allah* or by the Prophet, even though the oath is true or false. A man who swears by God is neither religious nor faithful to his creed in my eyes. There is a world of difference between your outlook and mine and there can be no compromise or understanding between person like you and me.

D.S.P.: (Interrupting me) Why can't there be an understanding? We are also as much against the British Raj as you are. The only difference is that you want a revolt in hot haste while we are a little more far-sighted and cautious. We are serving the same purpose. Our object is to win freedom and independence and thus we are equally patriotic and we also seek political power.

I: The object of my struggle is not to rule my country. To covet for kingdom and rulership is against the spiritual ideal of my faith, as is said in *Guru Granth Sahib*:

I seek not kingdom
I seek not liberation
My mind yearns for the love of His lotus feet.
Guru Arjan: *Deu Gandhari*, p. 534

Now tell me how can there be a compromise or understanding between you and me.

D.S.P.: All the revolutionary activities and your fight against the British Raj was for no other purpose except to capture political freedom from the foreign rulers.

I: It is against my faith and creed to have a craze for political power. All your explanation of our struggle for political freedom is nonsensical.

D.S.P.: Well, leave aside this religious discussion. We are not concerned with it. Come to the real point. Now, tell me for the last time whether you will avail yourself of the golden opportunity which is being offered to you of becoming an approver?

I: Never, never, never. Please do not bother me any more with such futile suggestions.

D.S.P.: Well then, you will be receiving your food from outside according to your wishes for the last time today. Then, I will see how long you abide by your religious beliefs. Better reflect on this offer. You are given a day more to think about it.

I: My Guru is ever with me. It is he who will help me to live according to the principles of my faith. You can send me to the prison just now. Your need not give me a day's time more.

On June 25th 1915, I was sent to Ludhiana Jail. Twice or thrice the C.I.D. Inspectors came for further questioning. I do not remember all the discussions that took place with them but I remember one or two things which I am recording here.

C.I.D. Inspector: Now the whole conspiracy has come to light and every thing has been proved. It is still time that you should confess everything otherwise there are some other people who are ready to become approvers and expose your activities.

I: What is the use of questioning me when every thing has been proved? If you have been able to get some approver go ahead and build the case and serve your evil purpose. What is the delay about?

Inspector: If you alone become approver we will dismiss all other approvers. In the feet of the elephant can be included all small feet. The importance of your evidence will be much greater than the collective evidence of all those approvers. Besides every one believes that you will speak only the truth. Your statement will strike like an arrow. If you agree to become an approver we will throw all those people into the prison who are trying to involve you in the conspiracy case.

I: How sad and what a pity that your case is still so shaky. It is better if you give these promises to those approvers. They must be very foolish and mean people who are so easily misled by you and are prepared to say any thing and to repeat all falsehood which you dictate to them.

Inspector: (Interrupting me) I think it is proper for you to punish such people who have brought so serious allegations against a noble and virtuous person like you. You must take a determined revenge against them.

I: I do not believe, nor do I feel necessary to take the revenge. "Sin is powerful enough to destroy the sinner". "False people will not find a place in His Presence. Their faces will be blackened and they will be driven to hell. Those who are absorbed in Thy Name, victory will be theirs. Those who try to cheat will face a defeat."

Inspector: Well if you hate becoming an approver so much we will not compel you. Will you please tell us the names of the people who were with you when you passed the first resolution (*Gurmata*)?

I: You just now told me that all the facts have been proved and those who wish to be approvers have told you every thing. Why do you ask me now? The truth is that a liar does not remember what he has said earlier.

Inspector: We know practically every thing. The only thing we do not know is the secret resolution of your Executive Committee. No one knows better than you about those resolutions.

I: (Interrupting him) Oh now you want to lay a trap for me and foolishly drive me in to the trap. I am really surprised at your understanding. Do you think that a man who has spurned your offers and refuses to become an approver can be moved by your persuasive tricks and talks? Supposing, what you think was secretly decided by us is in my mind, do you think that I will tell a person like you? There were no religious gatherings or *Akhand Path* where we did not make some secret and confidential decisions. Such closed door decisions have been taken by the Sikh leaders for the last three centuries. They cannot be revealed to any outsider. If any Sikh does so he will have to face punishment. There are even such resolutions which can be discussed only in the Executive and cannot be discussed even in the general body. So whatever was decided in the meeting can never be told to any one, even if I lose my head for it.

Inspector: Tell us only the names of the persons who were with you. At least tell us the names of those who have turned against you because their names are really no more secret to us.

I: Now you want me to spin lies by coaching the approvers. You have already blackened their faces. I consider it a sin to talk to persons like you.

Inspector: (Disappointed) It is our duty to come here and it is our duty to question you.

I: You have no right to ask me any question because you are neither a Judge nor Jury.

Inspector: It is on their behalf we are investigating.

I: Be it so. Then your courts and your magistrates and judges also must be as false as you are. I want to make one thing clear. I have full control over my own self and no body can compel me to tell a lie. After this discussion they went away.

Now you ask me, why did I put up a defence at all? I must tell you plainly and frankly that I did not put up my defence either to save my life or for personal ends. I am not worried about what people think. I was never afraid to die and by the grace of the Guru, the thought of saving my life never came to my mind even for a moment. At that time I did just what I felt was proper to do. I would like to make it very clear that if innumerable other friends were not involved in the case and if I alone had been arrested I would not have put up any defence. In that case I would either have remained silent or fearlessly given out the plan.

My mind these days rarely goes to old happenings. You have however compelled me to record all these incidents much against my wishes. What is there in an autobiography of a person like me? The sooner you give up this craze the better. I have also developed a weakness to fulfil your wishes. Nowadays I do not reflect about the past, that is why I request you to write whatever you like about my life and work after my death. But you keep on insisting on it so much that I am also drifting in the channel of your desires.

Even though you were imprisoned for a short time, you were all along with us during the prosecution period and the court proceedings. It is strange, that of all the people you ask me now, as if you were an outsider then, as to what was the cause of putting up defence. Do you not know that whatever was said and done by me was done after consulting all freedom fighters who were imprisoned along with me? If you have any apprehension even now or any information that I joined the idea of putting up defence just to save my life, then who is more competent as eye witness than you and other co-prisoners who are still in prison to clearly state all facts. What is the necessity of asking me? You can fearlessly state the truth and express your views on the subject. It is quite possible that if I made a mistake at any stage, I have remained ignorant of such facts so far. Possibly I do not know my own personal weaknesses, because I am an ordinary human being with all human frailties. God and the Guru alone are perfect. Everyone is liable to error. Beyond this I cannot say anything on the subject.

I do not remember what the immediate cause of putting up defence was but I do remember and this is deeply engraved on the tablet of my heart that I did not put up the defence either out of fear of death or out of fear of any physical suffering. What ever happened was done according to the collective wishes of the *Sangat*.

CHAPTER 11 - IN THE MULTAN PRISON

(letter No. 8 from Rajahmundry Prison to Giani Nahar Singh.)

I DID NOT wish to write anything more about my life story, but since you insist so much I feel it difficult to disappoint you. I am now writing to you a brief account of the prison life after I was sentenced to life imprisonment (Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was given life imprisonment transportation for life and his property was forfeited to the Government on 30th March 1916, after which he was immediately taken to Multan Prison in the first week of April 1916). I was not in the least disturbed when life sentence was pronounced. But in the prison cell when about seven or eight people, forcibly deprived me of my turban, the *kach* (trouser), the comb and the iron bangle, there suddenly fell a terrible darkness before my eyes. Similarly the aged Baba Ram Singh who was in the prison cell opposite mine was forcibly deprived of the Sikh symbols.

When I further came to know that the prisoners in the eastern Block were beaten and maltreated, I was so seriously upset that for the first time in my life my usual fortitude to abide by the Will of God was shaken and I felt extremely grieved and disillusioned. Fortunately Bhai Attar Singh was in the third cell adjacent to mine. I begged him to recite the *Gurbani* (sacred hymns). He was already thinking of doing so. He at once started pouring the ambrosial showers of the soothing hymns. The spiritual power of the inspiring hymns restored the poise of my mind and gave it strength and moral support. Once more the spirit soared high and tears of love and sorrow rolled down my eyes, and the inscrutable will of God appeared to be sweeter than ever.

The fruits which I was given from outside were stopped. I was not allowed to cook my food nor could I have it prepared by any brother Sikh. So I had to go on fast. On the second night after the evening prayer Head Warder Pohnu Ram brought a basket of fruit which was secretly sent by Jailer Nawab Beg. He had sent it especially for me and spent money from his own pocket. He instructed the Head Warder to give them to me only. I asked the Head Warder how could a heartless and callous person like him be so generous. He informed me that in the evening the Jailer, the Superintendent and their staff came to see me. He was also with them. I was sitting in deep meditation. For fifteen minutes the whole staff stood there watching me but I was not conscious of their presence. I was sitting in deep meditation and in undisturbed *samadhi*. The staff could not even hear my breathing. On seeing me in such a condition there was a strange influence on them and no one even dared to call me. Silently they all went back. On seeing me in this condition even the stone hearted jailer was deeply moved and it is under this spiritual influence he sent a basket of fruit.

The Head Warder expressed the hope that I would accept it. He opened the basket in my presence. I told him that I will have to share it with my brother prisoners some of whom did not get any food, so I asked him to distribute the fruit to the prisoners and take back what was left. I also asked him to thank Jailer Nawab Beg. Unhesitatingly he quietly accepted my suggestion and distributed the fruit to the prisoners and showed me the peeled off skins of the fruit to convince me that he had given the fruit to them. Only then, I accepted my share of the fruit. He carried away all the peeled off skins from my cell. I asked him not to do such menial service, as he was a Brahmin. He replied that he was not a Brahmin in deeds but a great sinner and a sinner deserved to do such a job. Besides, he took pleasure in doing what I requested him to do. He did not wish to leave any sign of the fruits in the prison cells. This was all I was given to eat during my stay in the Lahore prison.

On the second or third day we were taken out to start our journey to Multan prison. It was at this time I met some brother prisoners. I met Bhai Dalip Singh for the last time here. Along with you (Gyani Nahar Singh) we set out for Multan by train. You know very well how we all got together in great joy and love and how we met Bhai Ram Singh of Gujjarwal, Bhai Arjan Singh of Jagraon and Mai Har Kaur on our arrival at the station. Mai Har Kaur gave me two rupees. I gave one rupee to my companion and the other one rupee was spent on getting some fruit which all the prisoners shared at Multan Railway Station. You were separated from us at Montgomery station. I remember that painful moment of separation when Baba Ram Singh, Bhai Harbhajan Singh, Bhai Mohinder Singh and others parted from us, in tears and sorrow. It was our last meeting and I have not been able to meet you all till now.

I distinctly felt at that moment that it was a long separation like the stream parting from the river, but I am convinced that the spiritual union is the real union and we are spiritually never separated. This feeling inspired me with greater bliss and deep feelings of love. Other brother prisoners also felt sad at the moment of our separation. When we reached the Multan station a generous Inspector of Police brought fruits worth twelve annas and sugar worth four annas. Thus, a rupee we saved out of the two rupees given by Mai Har Kaur, was used for acquiring simple food. We had taken this little food after many days of starvation. Such was perhaps the sweet will of God. Any way we got this food just before facing more hardships, trials and tribulations. Thus we reached Multan jail.

Tortures by Jailer Sada Nand

On seeing our bare heads, the Daroga Sada Nand of Multan prison became enraged (Turbans were forcibly taken from all Sikh prisoners and prison-caps offered, which they vehemently refused to wear). He immediately gave order that we should wear caps. I angrily retorted, "Do not dare to force us to wear caps. It is against our faith and we will not tolerate any such insulting thing. You should not even mention the name of caps to us. There is no power in the world which can compel us to put on caps on our head. We will sacrifice our life but we will never allow you to put a cap on our head".

On hearing this strong roaring resentment, that rascal kept quiet and slipped away but he was boiling with bitter rage. He atonce wrote orders that we should be immediately put to hard labour. We appealed to his sense of humanity and requested him to give us at least a little rest after such a long tiresome journey in chains and to permit us to take some food. We had taken our bath on the railway station. But Sada Nand did not care a straw for any of our appeals and he immediately issued written orders for the hardest labour.

In the meanwhile the Medical Officer of the prison Mr. Narain Das came there. He was a very gentle and noble person. I told him of the strange order given by Jailer Sada Nand for hard labour even without getting our medical inspection. The Jailer was not authorized to do so. The Medical Officer immediately started the medical inspection of the prisoners and even against his recommendation; the Jailer gave orders for hard labour. He himself wrote the order on our tickets which can still be examined. My weight had fallen from 134 lbs to 108 lbs. Over and above this I went without food for many days. The journey from Lahore to Multan was tiresome and added to physical exhaustion. There was no arrangement for providing food. Under these conditions I was given fifteen seers of wheat to be ground into flour, although the Medical Officer had ordered that I should be given rest and food. Other prisoners were also given fifteen to eighteen seers of wheat. Some of us were given the work of pumping water. All the prisoners were thrown into separate dark cells. After this we did not see each other. I was very weak. I could not even lift a grinding

stone. I silently lay there in my cell. Even within the cell we had to sleep on the floor. For a number of days no one opened the door and I was not even permitted to go to the lavatory or to take bath. Jailer Sada Nand was an extremely ruthless person. He was a fanatic Arya Samajist and he considered it part of his creed to insult and cause injury to my faith and creed. Thirdly, I spoke very strongly to him as soon as I arrived. Fourthly, on the very first day he ordered each prisoner to come to him when he gave his order for hard labour. When my turn came he said to me "I hear that you are son of a very rich man. Your father is a High Court Judge and you also were a Tehsildar for some time. You will be able to pass your days in peace if you do some thing to please me. You can understand what I mean". I atonce understood what he meant. I fearlessly told him that it was against the Khalsa *dharma* to either take bribe or to give bribe. Both were equally sinful. Secondly, I was not a rich man. I was only a recluse, who had renounced every thing. Persons like me cannot be forced to do such a thing. I asked him also to seriously consider that we were the political prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy case. To us joy and suffering were alike. I was already greatly indebted to my dear father for having spent thousands of rupees on my education up to B.A. out of which he did not get anything in return. I had been able to do nothing for him. Then again he spent thousands of rupees on our defence. I would not like to be a burden on him any more. I would not cause him any more unnecessary trouble. I would endure my troubles and face my difficulties myself. I asked the Jailer never to mention such a thing either to me or to any of my co-prisoners. On hearing this reply he lost his temper and said to me, "All right I will see how deep your faith in Sikhism is". These were the reasons why Sada Nand made me a special target of physical tortures. For a number of days I was kept locked up in a dark and murky prison cell. After many days a man came and after opening the door shook me saying "Come, you have to appear before the Superintendent jail." I was taken before the Superintendent.

Superintendent: Why did you not do the work given to you for all these days?

I: May I know why did you not make any arrangement for giving me some food or water or permit me even to take bath but insisted only on hard labour? Did I get this hard labour with the permission of the Medical Officer or by your own orders? You can see my physical condition. Can I grind fifteen seers of wheat in this physical condition? Is such a severe punishment of hard labour entered in my warrants of sentence? Can those political prisoners who are given life sentence or transportation be ever given such hard labour which has been ordered by you? Are you really authorized to do such a thing?

For some minutes, the Superintendent kept silent. Then he asked Jailer Sada Nand: "Why has he not been given any food for all these days?"

Jailer Sada Nand: Sir, he refused to eat the food which we offer him.

Superintendent: (Addressing me) Why do you want a special arrangement for your self? This is not your house. This is a prison.

I: I am not worried about any special arrangement I must be given my food however simple it is in accordance with my religious sentiments, otherwise I will not accept it.

Superintendent: No religion can be practised in the prison. You will have to eat what you get, otherwise you will be punished.

I: My faith and principles are dearer to me than life itself. I will not break my religious principles to save my life. You can do what you like.

Superintendent: (Addressing his assistant) Go and throw him into the same prison cell and keep a good watch on him.

Forty Days Fast in Multan Prison

I was locked up in the cell and none other than the Medical Officer and the Jailer were permitted to come. The Medical Officer was a very gentle and God-fearing man whose heart was full of the milk of humanity. He talked to me with sympathy and kindness. I would like to describe my conversation with him in detail but I will do so at some other time separately. He discussed this issue with me from the religious point of view and he was convinced that my objections were correct.

After this he did not persuade me to take the food which was offered to me, but started recommending my food according to my needs and wishes. A number of times he told the Superintendent that I wanted only simple food cooked by a Sikh who lived according to the principles of the faith, and I did not seek any special food. This was my vow and I was determined to keep it. The prison officers did not listen to the advice of the Medical Officer but went so far as to say that they did not care if I died of hunger.

After that no one came either to annoy me or to look after me for some days. Only the Medical Officer came twice a day and after seeing my pulse he went away. Whenever he found me in my normal consciousness he expressed a few words of sympathy also. But when he found me absorbed in deep meditation he went away silently without disturbing me. When he saw me in my normal consciousness he asked me various questions about religious practices. He was deeply influenced by these discussions and spiritual feelings were awakened in him. One or two special guards were always posted at the door of my cell. So no one could express his sympathy to me. Every day the Medical Officer gave me the assurance that he would not interfere with my avowed principles, but would help me in my own wishes. One day he got a little sago prepared by a so-called Sikh. I was touched by his sympathy and told him the Sikh who had prepared it did not live according to any of the principles of Sikhism. When he made inquiry he found out that the Sikh had committed all the *patit karmas* (fallen deeds) which a Sikh is not supposed to commit. A Sikh ceases to be a Sikh if he does so. The Medical Officer went away but his assistant left the boiled sago in my room. The Brahmin who cleaned the room ate it. The Brahmin then reported to the Assistant Medical Officer that I had taken the food. Both the Medical Officer and his assistant came running to me to express their joy.

I was sitting in meditation when he came but he sat there till my meditation was over. The doctor asked me whether I had taken the food offered to me. I told him that I had not taken anything and I do not know anything about the plate of sago which had been eaten away by some one. The Medical Assistant left it there when the Brahmin was there and the Brahmin had reported that I had taken it. When the Brahmin was strongly questioned he said that I tried to take it but could not eat it. Then I asked the Brahmin to give it to the sweeper. When the sweeper was questioned he also denied that he had taken it. The guard who was posted said that no one except the Brahmin came to my cell. The Brahmin was trapped in his own lies. I begged the Medical Officer not to punish him. From that day even the Brahmin who cleaned my cell was not permitted to come to my room.

Forced Feeding

Twice the Medical Officer came to examine me and after seeing my pulse went away. My inner spiritual condition was full of peace and bliss. Day after day, I attained sublimer states through meditation. Thus, for forty days the fast continued, during which period I did not take even a drop of water. Somehow the news leaked out that the Superintendent had kept me without food for many days which had resulted in my death.

For the first time the Superintendent was seriously worried about my condition and ordered the Medical Officer to give forced feeding. When the Medical Officer got these orders he was seriously upset and came to me with his staff. He told me that he was now duty bound to send some food inside my body through forced feeding. He sought forgiveness for being compelled to do so and not to blame him for any untoward consequences. Every thing was ready for this forced feeding. I told the Medical Officer that I would sacrifice my life for my principles but I would not allow a drop of liquid food to go in my body.

Medical Officer: How can you prevent us from force feeding when the authorities have given me so many strong men to use force and compel you to eat? I do not wish to practice any cruel method nor will I use much force. I will send some milk through force feeding into your stomach and for this I beg your forgiveness.

I: I have no bodily strength for any physical struggle with your men, but I will certainly use my spiritual powers to prevent it.

Medical Officer: How can you do that?

I: When you try to pump milk into my body I will take my *parana shakti* (vital breath) to the Tenth Seat of Consciousness (*dasam duar*) as a result of which my breathing will stop and not a drop of liquid will go into my body. It is only with the help of the breathing process that liquid can go in. When that is suspended nothing will go inside. Even if a drop or two are pushed in, it will not matter much. I am not worried about the risks involved.

Medical Officer: Is there any risk or danger in that?

I: I would not like to explain any further but because you have been very sympathetic and kind and your generosity has deeply impressed me I consider it a sin not to tell you the whole truth and to reveal the secret of this spiritual action. When you try to use physical force I will withdraw my vital breath and carry it to the Transcendent State. As my body is very weak and my brain which is the seat of super-consciousness has also become very sensitive, it is quite possible that in this spiritual struggle against forced feeding my *parana shakti* (vital breath) may break through the skull and leave the body. I am not worried about the body, nor do I consider such a death to be suicide. My main purpose is to keep my vital breath in super-conscious state till you are tired of forced feeding but it is quite possible that it may lead to my death. What I am really worried about is that you may be blamed for killing me. You who have been so kind and sympathetic to me should not be blamed for unwittingly killing your own country man. This is the only thought that worries me. For me there is no other way left to protect my principles except this one. I will certainly use these spiritual powers. Now I leave the whole matter to you and I bid you good bye.

On hearing this, the Medical Officer was seriously upset. He atonce ordered his men to take away the instruments of forced feeding. He said that he will never use forced feeding on me, even if he

was removed from his post immediately. He was so deeply moved that he fearlessly gave orders that I should be given fruits. But no one complied with this order. He brought one musk melon for me which I joyfully took. After this the Medical Officer kept me under his own special supervision, and regularly brought fruits for me.

He wrote three pages on my history sheet about my forty day's fast and explained the conditions and religious principles on which I undertook that fast. He also wrote that after testing me forty days he gave orders that fruits should be given to me. He also wrote many other good things about me for which are still on my history sheet. He wrote that he had never seen any man survive without taking food or water for forty days. I had defied the law of nature and performed almost an impossible feat. It is only through some supernatural powers that I survived without any food and water for forty days. Thus he made some sincerely frank and factually truthful statements about my fast. This noble Medical Officer struggled very hard to procure my rights for me. Other prison officers did every thing to put obstacles in his way. The first thing they did was to refuse to sanction any money for fruits. The Medical Officer gave the orders for providing fruits on medical grounds but the Jailer got the orders cancelled by the Superintendent. Now and then one or two musk melons were brought which I took with a little salt. Then the Medical Officer persuaded the Superintendent to procure milk for me through a good Sikh. It was not possible to live on musk melon alone. My weight had failed to 96 lbs. He made arrangement to procure the milk in the following way. He went to the Multan Gurdwara and enquired whether there was a Sikh who lived according to the tenets of Sikhism and who could procure milk and carry it in a clean iron vessel daily to the prison. He also told them my whole story. At last he was able to get a Sikh who lived according to the Sikh code of conduct though he confessed that he could not claim to be as orthodox as I was. He lived according to the major tenets of Sikhism but in matters of discrimination in food he could not follow such strict rules as adopted by me. But he generally said his prayers before he prepared his food. On the whole he led a fairly well disciplined Sikh-like life.

The Medical Officer came to me and told me all the things about that Sikh. I readily accepted anything brought by him. I knew the Medical Officer had investigated properly and he was telling the truth. Jailer Sada Nand who had great influence on Superintendent once more interfered in the matter and said that no one could enter the prison. The Medical Officer suggested that I should go to the prison gate and get the milk from the man who brings the milk from outside. The gate-keeper could prevent me from talking to him. The Jailer suggested to the Superintendent that some servant of the prison will have to carry the milk from the gate to my cell. The Medical Officer told them and I will not accept such a thing. The Medical Officer then asked me whether I would have any objection if he brought the milk vessel in a basket through a Sikh inmate of the prison. Seeing the affection and the good wishes of the Medical Officer I agreed. The Medical Officer was extremely pleased, but the Jailer Sada Nand again stood in the way and did not allow him to bring milk. I just boiled some sago in water and took it. Then some roasted gram seeds were also brought. Thus I spent nearly a year and a half in Multan prison on such poor diet. I have no words to express my gratitude to Bhai Iqbal Singh, Bhai Sunder Singh and Bhai Bakhshish Singh who took extraordinary care of my health.

The Superintendent was then suddenly transferred. He came to me and told me that I had given a bad name to him and was the cause of his transfer because he had become very unpopular. He had been transferred to a place where he did not wish to go. I asked him how was I responsible for scandalising him. He said, "Some body gave out the news that I had starved you to death. On hearing this, your relatives came here but I did not permit them to meet you, because I was seriously annoyed by you, so they had to go back".

I replied, "So you have got what you deserved. How do you blame me for it? I have not scandalized you, but your crimes and sins have scandalized you. You tried your best to kill me by letting me starve. You almost gave me up for dead. By the grace of God I have survived. The way you have treated my relatives who came to meet me to this far-flung place shows your heartlessness and folly. Even if they had some doubts about my death through tortures, your action must have convinced them, that you have killed me. If you had allowed them to see me they would at least have known that I am living. But you did not allow the meeting for fear that they may come to know how cruelly I was treated."

The next day he left the prison on transfer. I do not know how far he was telling the truth. It is from him that I came to know that the news about my ill-treatment had leaked out to the press. I also did not believe that the newspapers could find courage to print such news. During those days horrible tortures were perpetrated and the newspapers did not dare to print a word about them.

The tortures and the cruel treatment which I and my companions had to undergo were so terrible that compared to them the difficulties which political prisoners of the non-cooperation movement (of Gandhi period) are encountering, are quite insignificant. At present the press has a little more freedom and there is considerable political awakening. Even the slightest oppression and cruelty of the prison official becomes known to the world at large. All the political prisoners of the non-cooperation movement who have come here are surprised to read on my history ticket the record of the tortures I have undergone. The real story of the prison life can be known by copying this history sheet word by word, but it appears that it is not possible.

When the new Superintendent came he easily became a victim of the evil influence of Jailer Sada Nand. My only sympathizer, the generous and kind Medical Officer Dr. Narian Das was also transferred earlier. Jailer Sada Nand once more started putting me to hard labour and torture. Physically I was so weak that I could not perform any hard labour, but it was forced on me. It became impossible for me to work beyond my physical strength. As a result of this, I had to undergo one punishment after another. At times a number of punishments were given simultaneously. In the burning heat of Multan where temperature went up to 120°F, I was tied to the trees with cross bar on my feet and hands fettered above. Over and above it a canvas strait-jacket was also put on. Our iron chains and handcuffs became so hot that my arms began to bleed. Blood started dripping from the body and even from the nose. We were left all alone in this condition in the open sun. Not a drop of water was given either to drink or to clean the bleeding nose. As the Sikhs stood, tied to different trees, they sang loudly the hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* and in peace and silence suffered the tortures accepting it as the Will of God. Our only sustenance was the spiritual hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib* which gave us unbounded moral and spiritual courage to endure those terrible tortures. These tortures were given continuously for days and months. When nights were cold we were made to stand with hands up all nights in the open throughout the bitter cold season.

At last the Superintendent gave us a new punishment. He ordered that we should be flogged but the New Medical Officer wrote on my history ticket, "health very weak, unfit for flogging". But my companions Bhai Harnam Singh of Gujjarwal was given fifteen whips and Bhai Hari Singh of Amritsar district was given thirty whips. The authorities were annoyed when the Medical Officer refused to allow me to be flogged. They however got him transferred. Then a new Medical Officer a Muslim came there. Both the Superintendent and Jailer Sada Nand approached him to sanction flogging for me. They asked him to allow at least five whippings with a cane. All the prisoners in Multan prison were seriously upset when they came to know about it.

The new Medical Officer asked me to meet him in the hospital. When I went there he said to me "the Superintendent has asked me to recommend flogging on your body".

I: It is good news. They have been waiting for a long time for some Medical Officer to recommend flogging. They are determined to satisfy this ruthless craving. They are your superior officers. If you do not obey them they will put you into trouble. As for me you need not worry I will accept it as the Will of God. It appears my body was made to endure such torture.

Medical Officer: I will certainly never do that. I am not going to favour any body. I will only do justice. He then started examining my body very closely. After thorough examination for half an hour he wrote on my history ticket "Heart very weak, unfit for flogging, fit for light work only".

At that time my heart was beating loudly with the rhythm of divine Name and its music. The Medical Officer thought that my heart beat was abnormal. When the Medical Officer wrote these words on the history ticket, the Superintendent and Jailer Sada Nand felt terribly crushed. Out of anger they made me stand in the open sun all day and some times all night for another week. The body was now so weak and frail that I was reduced to a skeleton. By the grace of Guru and by the constant meditation and singing of *Gurbani* (Guru's hymns), my spiritual strength and powers were at their highest pitch. Then came winter. Just as it is extremely hot in the hot season, Multan is extremely cold in the cold season. Day and night biting cold wind was continuously blowing. Now they took away our canvas strait jackets and also our blankets. During the three extremely cold months of November, December and January we were made to stand all night with chains on our hands and feet and with no clothes except a small underwear, and a little head cover.

Sometimes we were made to sit all night on the cold floor. The inner warmth of divine Songs and the divine Name was the only thing in which we merged our mind and soul and spent the most bitterly cold months of the year. Our bodies became numb and lost all physical consciousness, but by the grace of the God we continuously recited and contemplated the *Sukhmani* and the meditation of the divine Name continued with unbroken concentration. Thus in that terrible agony we did not feel the pain. In sorrow we knew no sorrow. Otherwise the freezing cold might have ended our life in a few days. This is the brief account of our life in Multan jail, but the real story can be fully studied if my history sheet is copied word for word. I have briefly narrated the few things I remember. From Multan we went to Hazaribagh. You can know the accounts of our Hazaribagh prison life from Bhai Attar Singh. It is not necessary for me to write them. Whatever happened after he left Hazaribagh, I will write in some other letter. Now I feel tired and exhausted and all the papers which I had are also exhausted.

This is the story of my plight
Over it has fallen the night

It is so hot here that I am sweating as I am writing and do not know what more to write now. The condition in these prisons is far better than the hellish life I had to lead in the Punjab prison. There is no difficulty here and there is not much work here. The water in this place is healthier but the climate of Hazaribagh and its beautiful scenery all around which was good for spiritual concentration is missing here. There is however much more freedom here. The officers are gentle and generous; that is why we do not feel heat of the climate. We can move about freely and I am perfectly happy and in blissful condition. It is however, very hot here though there has been some rain recently and heat is less. Convey my humble greetings to all the friends.

CHAPTER 12 - FROM MULTAN TO HAZARIBAGH PRISON

BEFORE WRITING ABOUT our experiences in Hazaribagh prison, I must describe an important incident about which I forgot to write in my account of Multan prison life. After forty days' fast, without even a drop of water, Medical Officer was sent to my cell for forced feeding, but on his own responsibility the Medical Officer gave orders that I should be given fruits. His orders were not obeyed. I prayed to God to save this kind-hearted doctor from any further trouble. After some time the deputy commissioner and some other officers suddenly came to my cell and gave me a turban and religious symbols, such as iron bangle and comb. They informed me that the provincial Government had strongly recommended the demand that all Sikh prisoners (political or otherwise) be given turbans instead of caps and they should be given the right to keep religious symbols also. The matter was now with the Viceroy's Council, where a bill legalising the rights of the Sikh prisoners to wear turban and other symbols was expected to be passed shortly. Soon all Sikh prisoners in India would get turbans and religious symbols. But the deputy commissioner had given secret instructions to allow me to wear turban and religious symbols on his own responsibility. Now that one of my major demands had been acceded to, I was asked to give up fast and express my gratefulness to the Government for it. In deep inward thankfulness to my Guru and God, I passed into *Samadhi* uttering, Glory, Glory unto God. The deputy commissioner asked me what I was doing in silence:

I: I am expressing my gratefulness to God.

D.C.: Why do you not thank the British *Sarkar* (Government)?

I: I am grateful to my true Sovereign (*Sarkar*).

My mind was then overwhelmed by the blessedness of God, and in this mood I quietly lay down on my mattress and brooded over His grace. The D.C. and other officers left me in this condition. In the evening my noble benefactor, the Medical Officer, brought a water melon for me. I thanked him for all he had done, because it was his report and correspondence with the higher authorities that had secured me the right to wear Sikh symbols and the food I required. Dr. Narian Das humbly said: "It is your deep Faith in God that has been rewarded. You are giving me the credit for it for nothing. Any way we should be grateful to God for the gracious help He has rendered." I was deeply moved by these noble words which reminded me that I should be grateful to God alone, and not flatter any human being: "Forget Thyself and live in utter dedication to the Guru." Any way, I had not expressed my gratefulness to the Medical Officer to flatter him or to win his favour. His nobility had touched me deeply and I had genuine admiration for his character. I thanked him, and praised him. I prayed that God may in future save me from any tendency to flatter any human being for any benefit that I may receive. Hardly fifteen minutes had passed when the Jail *Daroga Sada Nand* came and deprived me of my turban. I felt my vanity had been punished:

Well it was, that reverence was restored,
I utterly forgot myself.

After that day I would get from some source or the other turbans and underwears. Many times we were deprived of them by the Jail authorities. Thus passed the terrible days in Multan Prison. The winter and summer were both tortuous. The summer season was particularly unbearable. Either we were made to stand in the open sun, chained in burning fetters when the temperature rose to

nearly boiling point or we were generally locked in cells which were as hot as an oven. The sight was unbearable and the agony and suffering might have ended our life within three or four years. I took it as a penance enforced by the Will of God:

What matters if my body is frail and weak?
I would be seriously upset if Thy love departs.
Adi Granth: Ravi Das: Asa: p. 486

This was my feeling and I was not afraid of death:
I am not afraid to die,
I aspire not to survive.
Guru Nanak: *Sri Rag: p. 20*

This detachment of the spirit had infused in me the deeper mood of abiding by the Will of God. Those who love the Guru sincerely are under his eternal protection. The merciless Prison authorities had left no stone unturned in their cruel attempts to kill me. But God willed it otherwise. We suddenly received orders to be transferred from Multan Jail. But we were not told where we were to be taken. Sada Nand gave us only this much information that all political prisoners sentenced to seven or more years would not be kept in Punjab Jails. Nor would they be taken to Andaman Islands. Some new concentration camps and prisons in India had been allotted to us.

Six of us were taken under strong guard to the Multan Cantonment Railway station, within two hours after the transfer order arrived. On the Railway station we met five more companions from the Multan District Jail. Although we were heavily chained we embraced each other at this happy meeting. We were extremely delighted at this chance meeting. We now saw that the Prison authorities were making arrangements for a very long journey. Special carriages closed from both sides by iron bars were reserved for us. Large earthen vessels full of water were kept inside. I also kept one, especially for myself. I did not get any time to prepare my food. At Sahiwal railway station two more companions joined us. It is at Sahiwal we got some information that we were being taken to HaZaribagh Prison. As the train moved on, a Sikh Daroga and a Sikh Doctor were attached to our train to look after us. A large contingent of police under the command of Mr. Beatty was sent as vigilance force along with these prisoners. (The names of the five companions of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh from Multan District jail were Bhai Gujjar Singh Bhakna, Amritsar District, Bhai Ganda Singh Nihang, Vill: Sur Singh, Lahore, Bhai Karam Singh Tat Khalsa, Kotla Ajner, District Ludhiana, Bhai Mastan Singh Narangwal, Ludhiana, Bhai Sunder Singh Dolunangal, Amritsar. Two who joined from Sahiwal were Bhai Kirpal Singh Langmajari, Bhai Hamam Singh of Kala Singha. The names of his Central jail Multan, five companions were Jinder Singh Vill. Choudhry, Amritsar, Bhai Ganda Singh Nihang II, Bhai Pakhar Singh of Dhudike, Bhai Hari Singh of Kakar, Amritsar, Bhai Sucha Singh, Cholha, Amritsar.)

This Mr. Beatty, was the same man who was the police officer on duty during the trial of the Conspiracy cases before the Special Tribunal at Lahore. He was now promoted for his service during that period and made the Superintendent of police. Later on we came to know that he was the man posted on duty during the Guru- ka-Bagh tragedy where he posed as a tiger before the non-violent agitators. But in our presence he started behaving as timidly as a lamb. We wondered how such a chicken-hearted person became such a terror during the later period of freedom movement. He tried to terrorise us but when we snubbed him he avoided a clash. Up to Delhi Railway station he did not give us anything to eat although he was supposed to give us food worth

Rs. 2 daily. All my companions became mutinous as soon as they reached Delhi station. One of them loudly proclaimed: "If we are to die of hunger, let us beat this rascal Beatty to death before we die." Everyone was in a mood to revolt and prepared to fight for food.

Mr. Beatty understood Punjabi to some extent. He atonce relented and addressing me in English urged me to calm down my companions and he would procure them whatever they asked for. He gave me assurance of excellent treatment of prisoners and begged me in the name of God to save him from further trouble and calm down my companions. He promised to provide everything we required. "Save my honour," he said, "otherwise I may not only lose my chance of further promotion but also may be punished for fomenting trouble." I assured him that if his treatment continued to be humane during the train journey, he need not fear anything. No one would cause him any trouble. He was extremely delighted on getting this assurance and immediately started reprimanding his Indian subordinates for neglecting the prisoners. He atonce procured, sweetmeats, fruits, ice, milk, and *halwa puris*. He would telegraphically order delicious food on every major station, so that the prisoners could get it as soon as the train reached that station. He would again and again come to me and ask: "Sardar Sahib, do you require anything else. Just order and I will make arrangement for it," and then he would whisper in my ears: "Please save my honour. I should not be blamed for annoying the prisoners." He trembled from head to foot whenever the idea came to him that if the prisoners revolted they would be out of his control. He knew that these political prisoners did not believe in any sheepish nonviolence. Throughout the journey he showed deep concern for the requirements of the prisoners. I had to depend on some fruits which were not easily available. As there was no arrangement for cooking, I went without food. A few bags of jaggery were there which the prisoners consumed. The prisoners used it for making cold drinks. I also got my share of it. The water vessels were generally refilled on big stations.

Thus the prisoners moved on in the train happily enjoying food and singing divine songs to the tune of their clanking chains. *Kirtan* (Singing of the Guru's hymns) continued throughout the journey. Whenever the train stopped on a station we looked out of the window for some Sikh brother or patriot whom we could greet. But those were days when the people were completely petrified and utterly demoralized by the terrors of British Raj. No one dared to come near the train. Our very faces frightened those whom we greeted. We were thirsting for a glimpse of a brother Sikh but the general attitude of the people was very disappointing. Even at the Amritsar Railway station where there were crowds of Sikhs no one dared to greet us. As soon as we greeted them they ran away without answering us. Such was the terror created by British Imperialism during those days. Jullundur passed. Then came our home-town Ludhiana. Exiled, imprisoned, cruelly separated from everyone, I yet thought, Ludhiana to be my own home-town. Though all ties were broken the attachment for Ludhiana still lingered. And yet the thought was painful that it was at Ludhiana I was interned. The people and friends of this place had betrayed me and were the cause of all the sorrow of prison life. Most of the friends had proved treacherous. Still some personal attachment for Ludhiana lingered in my mind. It was false vanity.

When the mind is exiled,
The whole country is alien;
To whom may I show,
My deep wounds of sorrow.
Guru Nanak: *Rag Suhj*, p. 767.

Yet I was anxious to meet some brother Sikh. I hoped to recognise someone and get some news about my wife and children. But God willed it otherwise. He perhaps wanted to remove the last traces of human attachment. Not a soul was to be seen on the platform. No one dared to come near us. We could see groups of Sikhs at a distance. I greeted them at the top of my voice but from their frightened looks it appeared that they did not dare to answer my greetings. It was a crime to greet a political prisoner. They feared that they might be arrested and punished. My mind withdrew itself into patient detachment. The train moved on from Ludhiana as we sang sacred hymns. Passing through Sanehwal, Chawa Pail, Gobind Garh, Sirhind (where we bowed in reverence to the holy shrine of Fatehgarh Sahib, the place of martyrdom of Guru Gobind Singh's mother and children.) At Ambala Hira Singh Chard and other political prisoners joined us. At Delhi our train was full and we bade goodbye to Punjab. We gave up the thought of meeting our brother Sikhs of the Punjab.

The sun rose and set. We crossed lands and rivers. At Mughalsarai we took our meals and the next day we reached Hazari Bagh Road station. A large military unit stood there under the command of Inspector General Prisons and Inspector General Police to receive us. "Hail Guru ji", "Victory to the Guru" we shouted as we got down from the train. We were taken to an open ground and hundreds of soldiers stood guard with bayonets and guns. Delicious food was served to everyone: milk, fruit, soda water *halwa* and *puris* etc. were given. I washed my hands and feet and took some cold water mixed with sugar. Here Mr. Beatty handed us over to the Bihar police and after thanking me departed from the place. He extended his arm for a hand shake but I was taking my meals, and so greeted him folded hands. "Goodbye", he said, and then went away.

Then we met the prisoners from other prisons and told one another the tales of our sorrows and sufferings in various prisons. Hazari Bagh was forty miles from the railway station. We then hurriedly passed a few resolutions of our determination to get our fundamental rights that were denied to us. We decided to have our own Punjabi kitchen and we also decided not to do any hard labour. We were in all thirty two political prisoners. Each lorry carried about five prisoners and ten military officers. Before we got into the buses the Congregational prayer (*ardasa*) was performed. The prisoners sang the hymns of Guru Nanak which impressed the Bihari passers-by very much. As we were all bare-headed with tress knots and beards, they considered us to be *Sadhus*. After singing five *Shabads* we talked to each other about Jail experiences in different jails. The lorries speeded through the forests. The scenery was very impressive. The forests were full of wild life.

The lorries stopped near a stream where we were given cold water, but were not allowed to get down for urinating. We were told that only the Chief (*Bara Sahib*) could give such permission. This Chief happened to be a Punjabi wearing a hat and looked like a European. He was Inspector-General of Prisons, Bawa Jiwan Singh, an apostate Sikh who had taken the responsibility of controlling our batch of political prisoners. Even Andaman Island Prison had refused to accept us, because the prisoners of the First Lahore Conspiracy case had already harassed them a lot, and found it difficult to control them. No State Government would lodge us. At last Bawa Jiwan Singh took the sole responsibility of keeping up in Hazaribagh Prison, on the condition that the Punjab Government gave him all the money and authority to handle the political prisoners. The Punjab Government agreed to all his conditions including full payment of the daily allowances to which the political prisoners were entitled.

The Punjab Government accepted all the conditions of Bawa Jiwan Singh and sent us to Hazaribagh. Although there were many senior officers with the convoy, everything was referred to Inspector-General Bawa Jiwan Singh. I took him to be a European. In English I told him that the

prisoners wanted to urinate. He said that the prisoners would be given permission to do so only after reaching the prison. I happened to say in Punjabi: "This is cruelty". He replied: "It is not cruelty but administration." I again retorted: "This is not administration but revenge and also first rate cowardice on your part." He asked me: "Why do you call it cowardice?" I replied: "We prisoners are chained hand and foot while you have so many police officers that they are about four times the number of prisoners. The whole route is lined by armed military men. Yet you are afraid that the prisoners might escape. If this is not cowardice what else is it?" He remained silent but the Inspector-General of Police suggested that we may urinate while standing in the lorries, which of course we refused. I told them this may be a Western practice to which we were not accustomed. We tolerated even this cruelty. "*Kaihre darwesh bar jane daresh*: The Curse of Saint falls back on him." We remained silent. As soon as we reached the Hazaribagh prison, Bawa Jiwan Singh came to me and said: "Now there will be no cruelty. Of this you may rest assured." He felt a little ashamed of his previous order. We also had some consideration for him when we came to know, he was a Punjabi and not a European.

In every prison cell we found buckets of water, two new uniforms and a towel. There were iron utensils for all prisoners. There were three blocks of sixteen prison cells each. The climate in this place was quite a contrast to that of Punjab. From scorching heat of the Punjab we now felt transported to a pleasant hill station. The prison was an ancient fort cut out and built on the ridge of a hill. Even the Prison Cells were neat, clean, attractive, and airy. There were huge walls around the cells but the air could freely move in and out. Had they been built on the pattern of Punjab or Madras prisons they might have been extremely suffocating. The place was very good for meditation and prayer.

As soon as we reached the prison it began to rain, and it continued to rain for months. It was drizzling all the time. The people of Bihar said that it had never rained before like that. It appeared that the clouds madly danced welcoming us to the place. After enduring the scorching heat of Multan, the climatic change revived our spirit and we experienced the joys of winter season in the middle of summer at Hazaribagh. The high walls around the prison shielded the beautiful scenery of nature all round, but even the sight of the cool and cloudy sky inspired us with deep emotions and meditative reflections. Day and night the mind was absorbed in the Living Presence of God. Even for a moment I could not take my mind away from the remembrance of God (*Simrin*). "Wonderful are Thy Ways O Lord. Strange indeed was the way in which he converted the prison cell into the Meditation Cell".

God Himself protects His servant,
He Himself makes him contemplate His Name;
Wherever the servant needs His help,
There, God helps him in his work.
Guru Arjan, *Asa* p. 403

*GLORY UNTO THEE O LORD.
GLORY UNTO THEE O CREATOR SUPREME*

Wherever I go I see Thee,
Thou art everywhere O True Creator,
Thou art Dispeller of Sorrow, Lord;
Whatever Thou wilt taketh place.
Millions of sins of man,

Are erased by Thee in a few hours;
Thou canst peep into every heart,
And distinguish between the Saint and the hypocrite,
Thou art everywhere True, Lord,
Wherever I go I see Thee alone.
Guru Nanak: *Asa*, p. 438

Strange indeed was the Lord's way of giving us the experience of joy in sorrow, and of his abiding love. Even in the most difficult situations, God makes his servant abide by His Will, otherwise for ordinary human beings it is very difficult to understand the agony and suffering of life.

On whomever Thou bestoweth mercy,
He abideth by Thy Will,
That worship is true devotion,
Which pleaseth Thee O Lord,
Thou art the Sustainer of all.
My Beloved, the Saints depend on Thee.
Whatever Thou wiliest I accept,
Thou art the Sustainer of my mind and body,
O Bountiful One, Thou art Merciful and Gracious.
Thou art the fulfiller of all wishes.
All the Bhaktas are dear to Thee,
Thou art the Beloved of Bhaktas.
Thou art Boundless, Infinite and Supreme,
There is none like Thee.
This is my only prayer, Lord:
Day and night may I sing Thy praises
Through Thy favour.
Nanak seeks peace of His Name,
Through His grace I will achieve it.
Guru Arjan: *Rag Suhi*, p. 747.

"Glorious art Thou O True Guru, who guided me safely through hellish fires and now gave soothing peace and rest. He has bestowed cooling bliss in the burning heat; sorrow is dispelled and joy rains." In the all consuming flames of sorrow, He saved me. Wherever a man remembers and contemplates Him, he is saved.

Lord, Thy saving Hand
Has protected me from burning flames;
I take refuge in Thee;
My heart leans on Thee for strength and honour;
I now depend on no other.
Lord, he who remembers Thee is saved.
Thou art my hope and support;
Those who contemplate Thy Name are saved.
Thou hast been merciful,
And hast taken me out of the dark pit;
Taking me under Thy protective care,
Thou hast given me all joy and happiness.

When God is gracious,
He breaks the fetters and liberates man.
He Himself sows the seed of devotion
And He Himself inspires man with true service.
All attachment is eliminated and doubts are dispelled,
All sorrow and gloom has disappeared.
Nanak: the Lord has blessed me mercifully
And now I have met the Perfect Guru.
Guru Arjan: *Suhi*, p. 744

One divine song after another gushed out in unceasing flow from my heart in uncontrollable spontaneous inspiration. Ah, who could check this inflow of inspiration? The forest of loneliness became a garden of joy. The dark prison cell became a sacred cell of meditation. My heart burst forth into this song and continued singing it for a long time.

Lord God, the True Enlightener,
O Creator Supreme:
Thy servant seeks Thy dust,
I am a sacrifice unto Thy Presence,
Lord, I will live as Thou keepest me;
When Thou so wiliest, I remember Thee; Happiness is Thy gift O Lord.
By Thy grace one serveth Thee And attains liberation and the art of perfect life.
That place is heaven where Thy praise is sung: Thou alone sowest the seeds of faith.

CHAPTER 13 - JAILER VADHAV RAM'S ATROCITIES

THESE HAPPY DAYS of undisturbed prayer and meditation lasted only for about two months. The wheel of *karma* now began to move in an unhappy direction. We were enjoying all this liberty because of a Bengali Jailer who was very kind and considerate. The Superintendent of the Jail was a short-tempered peevish Englishman named Mr. Husband. He did not dare to interfere in the arrangement and supervision of the Jailer because Bawa Jiwan Singh Inspector General had great faith in him. Both Bawa Jiwan Singh and this angelic Bengali Jailer kept the prisoners very happy and yet showed tremendous lot of savings to the Government. The Bihar Government had great faith in their integrity and ability. The Jailer received the title of Rai Bahadur as a reward for his excellent services. He treated the prisoners with great compassion. We also had great respect for him. Whenever he came, we stood up out of respect for him, except at times when we were sitting in prayers. But whenever Mr. Husband came, he compelled us to stand even when we were sitting in prayer, but we never obeyed his orders and never cared for his threats. At first we showed him some respect by standing up whenever he came, but when his attitude became threatening and overbearing we stopped standing up even when we were not praying. It happened many times that when the angelic Bengali Jailer came we stood up as a mark of respect for him, but when immediately after that Mr. Husband came there we sat down to show that we did not care a fig for him. This annoyed Mr. Husband very much but he was helpless. He reported the matter to I.G. Prisons and when he refused to take notice of it he sent the report to the Governor through the D.C. The angelic Jailer came to know about these mischievous reports of the Superintendent against him. He at once requested the I.G. Prisons to transfer him to some other place. At first I.G. Prisons did not agree but when he insisted, he was transferred to some other place. Here ended our happy days in this prison and fate brought us face to face with another Punjabi Jailer who exercised authority with a vengeance. He was a Brahmin and his name was Vadhava Ram. The I.G. Prisons considered him his own man and he sent a Punjabi Jailer in the hope that he would be kind and considerate to the Punjabi prisoners. For this very purpose he had just been promoted and made Senior Jailer. He joined hands with Mr. Husband and both started treating us with the utmost brutality. They thus created a lot of trouble for Bawa Jiwan Singh, I.G. Prisons. Contrary to the specific instructions of the I.G., he started treating us in a very cruel manner.

He was revengeful under one more misapprehension. In 1915 some political revolutionaries had looted the village Chaba Chak and killed one of his relatives named Beli Ram. A Canadian revolutionary named Sajjan Singh of Khakhrana, Ferozepore was arrested and tried in the Lahore Conspiracy case and sentenced to death. This Jailer took one of our companions, named Sajjan Singh to be the murderer of his relation, Beli Ram. Although we explained to him that Sajjan Singh of Lahore Conspiracy case had been sentenced to death and was not alive, he still believed that our companion Sajjan Singh Narangwal, District Ludhiana of Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case was the murderer of Beli Ram. Thus he let loose atrocities on us with a vengeance, and he made up his mind to inflict as much punishment on the whole of our group as his authority permitted.

Mr. Husband was already annoyed with us. So as soon as Vadhava Ram took over charge as Jailer, he fixed up grinding wheels in every cell and after getting us medically examined, he secured the Superintendent's order for hard labour for everyone of us. He examined our history tickets and enforced on us all the old brutal methods of exacting hard labour. The Superintendent and the Jailer would come with the whole staff and compel us to stand up and salute them. They did so

particularly when we sat for prayers early in the morning. But we ignored their orders and presence and did not move. We neither stood up nor responded to their orders. After making some futile attempts to make us stand with the help of the staff, they went away.

Then Vadhava Ram took a mischievous step. He took away by force our prayer-books (*gutkas*), and increased our hard labour duties. "Wrath was aroused, when the arrow struck". They did not know that most of the prisoners had memorised the major prayers. We recited the prayers and Sacred hymns all the more loudly. We completely ignored the orders for hard labour and loudly recited *Gurbani* (the Guru's hymns) all day. We might have agreed to a reasonable amount of labour if it had been enforced in a normal way, but we refused to submit to these atrocities inflicted in the spirit of vengeance. I was getting some fruits which he stopped providing after putting some derogatory remarks on my history sheet as his plea. His main charge against me was that all the prisoners were reciting prayers under my orders and they had struck work because I asked them to do so. So I was to be taken to task first. The Medical Officer was sent to examine and certify that I was fit enough to do hard labour. The Medical Officer was a Bengali gentleman. He was annoyed to see on my history ticket that the Jailer had stopped giving me fruits without referring the matter to him. He then examined all the notings of the medical officers of previous prisons. He then examined my body thoroughly and wrote on my history ticket: "Only to be given light work if necessary". I told him that I could do even this amount of work only if I was given proper food; otherwise I would not do any work. The Medical Officer considered this objection legitimate. He told me that there was no reason why I should not get my necessary diet. But no one paid any attention to the orders of the Medical Officer. The result was that I was compelled to go on hunger-strike and work-strike. All other prisoners except perhaps one or two struck work. Had I been given my normal diet I would not have gone on hunger strike. For about four or five days I was kept in solitary confinement during which period my very existence was ignored. After five days they asked the Medical Officer to put me on penal diet. The Medical Officer was standing nearby. He burst into laughter and told the Jailer ironically: "He is already undergoing penal diet."

This did not put them to shame, but they impudently wrote on my history ticket: "Solitary punishment for a week." A heap of pulses and grains was kept in the room to be cleaned. The week passed without a morsel of food. I was then given the punishment of keeping standing in fetters. On hearing this, the prisoners who were doing light work also struck work. With the sole exception of one man everyone struck work. All the prisoners were tied with chains to pillars and kept standing. Even in this condition everyone recited *Gurbani*. For us this moment of trial and sufferings became a moment of prayer and penance. The Superintendent and Jailer tried to stop us from reciting *Gurbani* but we recited it all the more loudly, the sweet Psalms of *Sukhmani*. They shouted at us but we cared not a bit for them. They got exasperated and gave orders that we should be made to stand in the sun. But the heat of the sun did not silence us. To torture us still more they ordered that strait-jackets made of canvas should be put on our bodies and we should be made to stand in the hot sun. I was ordered to be taken to a place far off where I could not hear the recitations of *Gurbani* by my companions. They thought that if I was completely isolated from them they might stop reciting *Gurbani*. The Sikh prisoners then started shouting the victory cries of *Sat Sri Akal*. All the prisoners stood in revolt. The situation was almost out of control.

The Superintendent and the Jailer were unnerved. They came to me, unchained me and offered to relent. They immediately agreed that no one would be given hard labour. No one would be compelled to do any work. I was asked to give up hunger strike. They promised to give us back our prayer books (*gutkas*) and we could recite *Gurbani* as long as we liked. I told them that they should first show in practice, decent behaviour and good treatment, and then only could we agree to

reasonable terms. Everyone was unchained. The Prayer Books (*gutkas*) were returned. All the orders of hard labour were withdrawn. But my companions would not agree to any condition until I was taken near them. They insisted that I should be kept in the same block with them and they would do as I bid them to do. Otherwise they refused to obey any order. The Jail authorities had to agree even to this. I was taken close to them. I requested every one to give up resistance. Everyone was quiet.

The Superintendent and Jailer however were stung by this humiliation. They felt degraded to find that the prisoners turned down their request but at once accepted my suggestion to give up resistance. They immediately reported to I.G. Prisons that Randhir Singh was the ring leader and was causing a good deal of trouble. After sending this report they started the same old brutal way of treating me. No food was given to me to enable me to break the fast. I was compelled to continue fasting for many more days. My companions asked me every day whether I had broken the fast. I avoided giving the answer in the hope that the Jail authorities might fulfil their promise. Early one morning the Superintendent brought a whole gang for force-feeding. At first he threatened but finding me unshaken in my determination to resist, he ordered that I should be immediately taken to the hospital. The Medical Officer was given stern orders to carry out force feeding immediately. While I was being taken through the wards, I told my companions every thing. As I had fasted for many days I was very weak and I did not hope to survive any physical tortures of forced feedings. I told my friends as I was moving on, that it may be the last meeting with them and as separated streams never meet, we may never meet again. All the prisoners burst into tears and cried helplessly. Within a matter of minutes I was taken to a secluded room attached to the hospital where no one could see what was happening.

The room however was very clean, airy, with large windows and excellent ventilation. Through the iron bars of the windows I could see the whole sky. The cemented floor and the lovely walls and the sweet-scented surroundings made me feel that I was for a moment lodged in a palace hall. Brooding over the thoughts of Beloved God, I sat down on the floor in silent meditation. Opposite the window lovely rose flowers could be seen in flower pots, fragrant and in full bloom. Light showers of rain bathed the whole atmosphere in pristine glory.

My brooding spirit soared through the *six-chakras* (lower seats of consciousness in the spinal chord) to the highest seat of consciousness (in the brain) and was poised in the melody of inner Celestial music and contemplation of His Presence. Deep and poignant love tilted my soul and my mind was absorbed in the spontaneous utterance of the following hymn:

With Thy lotus feet,
Is my mind attached,
Ocean of peace, liberate me,
Let me hold the hem of Thy garment.
My mind is intoxicated with love.
By singing Thy glory Thy love is awakened,
The snare of maya is destroyed.
Everywhere I see the Perfect Lord.
I care not to see anything else.
Sayeth Nanak, He has united His servant with Him;
My love for Him will never decline.
Guru Arjan, *Nat*, p. 979.

The members of the hospital staff crowded around the room. The office staff of the prison, though far away, heard the song and rushed to the room. Mr. Husband also stood there seriously disturbed. By the time he had come I was deeply absorbed in the Psalms and as I sat in *samadhi*, I was not quite conscious of my surroundings. A whole crowd stood listening in dumb astonishment. No one dared to touch me or to disturb me. After about forty-five minutes the Chief Head Warder, who was a Sikh, was ordered to open the door and make me talk. Bound by the orders of the superiors he came near me and placing one hand on my shoulders another on my feet said: "The Superintendent is standing outside the room and wishes to talk to you". "I am not in a mood to talk to him," said I.

At this moment Mr. Husband came in and shouted: "Why did you not stand up when I came in?" "Such was the Will of my Husband." I said. "Which Husband?" he asked. "The True Husband." I said. "Your name is a misnomer and you do not deserve this name. My True Husband is ever with me. Who cares for the false Husband?" "You said you were busy and not in a mood to talk to me. Tell me what keeps you busy?" he asked. "You cannot understand it," I said. "Why did you sing so loudly?" he asked. "I could not help it," I said, "It was not pre-planned."

Mr. Husband: Now what do you want? What type of treatment do you expect from us?

I: You can accord me any type of treatment you like, but at this moment please do not disturb my peace.

Mr. Husband: (addressing the Chief Head Warder): Force him to stand up.

Ch. Head Warder: Sir I cannot do it, please do not compel me to use any force on him. When I touched his body a little while ago, my arm became numb. I feel helpless.

Mr. Husband: Will you not obey my orders?

Ch. Head Warder: I would rather resign.

Mr. Husband: I will suspend you.

Ch. Head Warder: Why don't you yourself try to move him or ask some other officer to do so?

Mr. Husband moved towards me and then stopped short. Then he turned back and ordered the door of my room to be locked from outside and kept well guarded. I thought he may now give orders for whipping. But something strange happened. He did not punish the Chief Head Warder for disobeying him. He did not issue any new order but kept the order for forced feeding still in force. The Bengali Medical Officer and his Assistant, a Maratha gentleman, then came to me and addressed me very politely. They took off their hats and said to me with the utmost reverence: "Any service for us, Sir? Can we do anything to help you?" I said humorously: "Ask your Husband, the boss here." Both of them burst into laughter and said: "We also believe in the True Husband and will obey the orders of the True Husband like you. We do not care much for the orders of this man. We will see that this imposter Husband does not torture you any more. We will issue orders immediately and you can have as much fruit as you like. You will get fruits by our orders today. We will treat you as our personal guest and now you will see what we do for you."

After a short, while the Maratha Doctor brought a basket full of fruits. He had the specific orders of the Medical Officer recorded in my history ticket that I should be given fruit regularly. Thus I broke my fast after three weeks. The Maratha Doctor (whose name I have unfortunately forgotten) told me that the Bengali Doctor had now reported to the I.G. Prisons that Randhir Singh was on hunger strike on the question of religious sentiments. He has neither disobeyed any one's orders nor has he been obstinate in any matter. He generally lived on fruit or food cooked by himself. He has now been given fruits but the diet of fruits alone is insufficient to bring him back to normal health. He has been compelled to go on fast for the last three weeks because the Jailer secured an order from the Superintendent to stop the daily supply of fruits to him. He has now been admitted to the hospital and given fruits. He is taking them without any resistance or objection. But as this diet is insufficient to maintain proper health he should be allowed to cook his own food and take it."

The Maratha Doctor assured me that my case had been strongly recommended and he and the Medical Officer would not obey the Superintendent's order for force feeding. This Maratha had genuine sympathy for me for one more reason. His brother Mr. Pinglay had been sentenced to death along with Kartar Singh Sarabha in the Lahore Conspiracy Case. He disclosed it to me at this juncture. The I.G. Hospitals on reading the report, strongly recommended my case to the Governor Bihar and Orissa. The Governor immediately sent the sanction to the I.G. Prisons and the order reached the prison authorities within three days. My companions now threatened to create havoc in prison if I was kept in isolation even for a day longer. Mr. Husband was seriously upset. On receiving the orders of the I.G. Prisons to allow me to cook my food as I liked, he came running to me and gave out that he had decided to take me to my companions, where I would be able to cook my food as I liked. He thus wanted to take credit for the better treatment that was to be given to me. "Why are you concealing the truth from me Mr. Husband?" I asked: "It is the Governor who had ordered you to give me freedom to cook my food, while you want to take credit for it unnecessarily."

Mr. Husband: (Surprised) Tell me who told you about the Governor's order. It appears that you mysteriously come to know about everything that is happening.

I: If you are sure that I mysteriously come to know everything then why do you ask me?

The order was recorded on my history ticket. But Vadhava Ram would not give me the iron utensils for cooking and the fast continued. With red ink he wrote on my history ticket: "He is very obstinate." After three days, confirming from my companions that I had taken a vow of *Sarab-loh Viveka*" (to take food in iron utensils prepared by only those persons who lived by the code of conduct of Guru Gobind Singh), I was given iron utensils and I started cooking my own food. In the courtyard facing my cell I was given a fireplace, where I cooked my food under the vigilance of a Jemadar and a Sepoy. The battle for *Sarabloh Viveka* was thus won.

During this very short period many sepoy of the prison were strongly influenced by the life and deeds of the Sikh prisoners, and showed great sympathy for them. Some of them listened to the recitation of *Gurbani* (Sacred Hymns) for hours. Some kept hair and beard and became baptized Sikhs (the Khalsa). Many others gave up smoking. No one ever delivered any sermons to them, nor did any one get chance to preach anything. The saintly living and heroic deeds of the Sikhs brought them under the spiritual influence of Sikh faith and some of them became very keen devotees of the Guru. Prominent amongst them was sepoy named Radha Singh who was by nature a very devout soul. While on duty he would keep listening to the sweet strains of *Sukhmani* (the Song of

Peace), which had a magnetic influence on his tender soul. For three hours he would continuously listen to the recitation of *Gurbani*, which dispelled all dross from his heart and made his whole life pure and luminous as gold. His little devotional acts are so many that a book can be written about them. He felt that God had sent us to that prison only for his redemption. For hours he would come and stand near my cell and talk to me with deep love and devotion. Every one called him Sadhu (Saint) Radha Singh, and so he was. He was a *Kshatriya* by caste and now after taking the baptism he became a true *Kshatriya*. His family and his brothers and other near relatives became Sikhs and he memorized many hymns of the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Thus some time passed in peace and Holy Communion. Many sepoys memorized the hymns of the Guru. But we were confined to our prison cells. Hardly six months had passed, when 12 prisoners of the second supplementary Lahore Conspiracy cases were brought to our prison. But they were taken to a block which was just behind our own block. It was easy to talk to one another across the wall. The newcomers were strictly ordered not to talk to us. They were given assurance that they would be given preferential treatment if they did not talk to us. But who could prevent us, the old-timers from talking to them. We sang a song of welcome:

Beloved friends have come to our house.

After the song was over, we greeted them with the Khalsa Salutation: "*Vah-Guru ji ka Khalsa, Vah Guru ji ki Fateh.*" But there was no answer from the other side. We called a number of prisoners by name but they were still silent. At last one Bhai Budh Singh hinted that they had been ordered not to talk on the assurance that they would soon be given permission to move about into the courtyard. Anyway we succeeded in conveying to them the facts of the situation in Jail. Bhai Hira Singh Charad and I were considered to be the main trouble makers. We were taken to another block reserved for Bengali prisoners. Up to the year 1920 we were confined to the cells only. We were not allowed to take even five minutes walk in the courtyard. With handcuffs and manacles chained, we spent all the time within our cells. The handcuffs and the fetters on the feet had become the ornaments of our body. And who cares to take off ornaments.

CHAPTER 14 - THE ART OF MAKING GOLD

WE FELT HAPPIER in our spacious isolated prison ward. There were about thirty prison cells, with a big courtyard, and a cooking place near our cells. Only two of us, Bhai Hira Singh Charad and I, were lodged in this large barrack. (Bhai Hira Singh Charad was sentenced to death in the Supplementary Lahore Conspiracy case, but the sentence was later changed to life-imprisonment. He died in Madras Civil Hospital on February 3rd 1929 and his last rites were performed by the Sikh Military Officers posted there.)

Bhai Hira Singh was a noble and distinguished patriot, who faced untold suffering for the sake of his country's freedom. The tortures of prison life had reduced his body to a skeleton. He had spent lakhs of rupees for the freedom struggle, and still he had property worth lakhs. His health had deteriorated so much that he had given up hope of surviving long. He wanted to meet me separately and discuss some problems of inner life. He now got this opportunity when we were kept apart from all other prisoners. One night, when he saw me sitting absorbed in deep meditation, he came close to me and told me that although he had meditated long on some *mantram* (which he called *bhajan*) he had not attained anything spiritually, and now with his end so near, he was anxious to acquire spiritual peace.

I was deeply moved by the helplessness of his spirit, and frankly told him, that what he called spiritual practise (*bhajan*) would lead him no where. As long as he meditated on the *mantram: Soham* (A Vedantic mystic word meaning I AM HE), he was not likely to achieve much, because under such mental condition as his, and in the present *Kali* age of ignorance, this *mantram* only increased egoism, which was a hindrance to all spiritual progress. It was against the principles of Sikhism to contemplate in this manner. Thus, in the past, this *mantram* had only strengthened his egoism.

Hira Singh was taken aback. He said that, ever since he started meditating on this *mantram*, he had never told about it to anyone, nor had he ever repeated it loudly. He kept it strictly a secret practise. "How did you come to know, Bhai Sahib, that I meditate on the *mantram Soham (I AM HE)?*" he asked.

"For a man who contemplates the Divine Name of the Guru", said I, "this is not difficult. It is easy for him to know the spiritual condition of the people near him. One can clearly know the mental and spiritual condition of other people by contemplating the Guru's Word. But the mystic Word is acquired after baptism from *Panj Pyaras* (The Five Elects). It is only by receiving collective inspiration from them, who act as the Guru, that the meditation of the Divine Name becomes fruitful. Your condition is indeed pitiable. You have made such strenuous spiritual efforts, yet the practise has not yielded any fruitful result."

Bhai Hira Singh was now anxious to acquire the inspiration of the Divine Name. He felt sad that it was neither possible for the *Panj Pyaras* (The Five Elects) to get together in the presence of the *Guru Granth Sahib* in prison, nor did he expect to live long. In a pathetic tone he said: "Such an initiation ceremony can be arranged only when I am released. But I do not hope to live that long. But are not great Sikhs like you empowered to offer special prayers for a man in my helpless position? Will I end this life without the grace of this spiritual gift? Can you not do something for me?"

I felt an inner urge to offer silent prayer for him. Immediately, I requested Hira Singh to sit in silent contemplation in his cell, thinking of the indwelling Spirit of the Guru, while I started praying silently for him in my cell. I do not know when my silent prayer ended, and what happened after that. At about 2 A. M., Sadhu Radha Singh, the prison guard, came near my cell and stood near me in a strange condition. He was practising the Divine Name in a manner known only to the initiate. I was surprised how he came to know about the secret of this spiritual practise. When I asked him about it he said: "Bhai Hira Singh is deeply absorbed in this kind of spiritual practise. I am just imitating him. I do not know anything about it." I got ready to take my bath. I asked Bhai Radha Singh to try to bring Bhai Hira Singh to normal consciousness. He should take his bath and recite the *Sukhmani*.

After some time, a melodious recitation of *Sukhmani* by Bhai Hira Singh was heard. Although his recitation was not very correct, yet it was full of devotion and fervour. Bhai Radha Singh sat there listening in deep absorption, and thus he performed the duty of a sentry in a fine way. As soon as the prison doors were opened, Bhai Hira Singh rushed to my cell and fell at my feet saying: "Glorious is the Guru, blessed are his Sikhs whose silent prayers can work such wonders." I was happy that he had achieved what he was longing to acquire. But the matter did not end there. I warned him that he shall have to face many temptations when the spiritual practises give power and power begins to corrupt. He should be cautious against such winds of misguided passions. The next night, in a mood of thanksgiving, Bhai Hira Singh said: "Because of your silent prayers, I have been enlightened by the Divine Name and not only has my spiritual hunger been completely satisfied, but I feel the inspiration of His Divine presence in every pore of my being. There is nothing so precious in the world which I can give you in return for this blessing: But there is a little gill, which I would like to offer to you, as a mark of gratitude." I replied, "Who am I to give any spiritual inspiration to any one? I am a humble creature of the One eternal Guru. All I did was to offer silent prayers for you. The seed of your virtuous deeds was already there to sprout in full bloom of spirituality. It was the Will of God, that you should have received the Divine Name in this way. What can a man like me do? It was my duty as a Sikh to pray for you."

I was not at all eager to receive any gift in return for this from him, but he insisted on listening to him. He gave me the secret of making gold out of copper, saying: "Today, Bhai Sahib, I will reveal to you the greatest secret of my life, which I have not given out to anyone. I do not wish to carry it with me to the grave. I was looking for one who really deserved to know, and who could preserve and use the gift for the service of humanity. I have tested you and found you to be the only one who deserved to preserve this great secret. A chemist of China revealed to me the scientific art of making gold out of copper. It is from the knowledge of this alchemy I became rich. I can easily make gold out of a metal. I know about three or four formulas with which you can convert baser metals into gold. The alchemy never fails. Gold thus made has been tried and tested many times as the purest one."

Within two or three days Hira Singh procured from outside a piece of copper and some chemicals, through some inmate. He gave me the formula according to which I experimented with the chemicals, and the copper was completely changed into gold. Through an extremely reliable person we sent it to the assayer in the bullion market, and the purity of the gold so formed was established. Hira Singh had written down the chemical formulas for me, and now he urged me to memorize them as it was not safe to keep a record of such precious formulas within the prison. Impressed by his love and devotion for me I agreed to memorize the formulas of making gold.

The feat of memorizing the chemical formulas was an ordeal for me. I felt that my mind, which had attained purity and peace, once more started accumulating poison. My mind drifted to all the vagaries possible out of the lust for gold. Like a man building castles in the air, I felt I had already become a millionaire, and subconsciously even planned to use most of the money for charitable purposes. A few days earlier my mind was absorbed in the contemplation of Divine Name, repeated with every breath, and I enjoyed the highest blessings of spiritual enlightenment. The light and love of God had become a part of my inner being. But now the concentration and peaceful poise of my mind was terribly shaken, and I thought of nothing else but the untold capacity to make gold and infinite material power I could accumulate. The love and devotion to God receded to the background. I could not even contemplate the Name of God nor recite *Gurbani*, with the same zeal and regularity. My inner condition can well be described by the following lines from the scriptures:

*He who forgets the Word of God,
Cries in agony like a sufferer from chronic malady.*
Guru Nanak: *Rag Dhanasri* p. 661

For the first time in my life, the peace of my mind and my contemplative life was seriously upset. For the first time my mind fell to such a low level, and was thrown into a state of confusion. Ever since I entered the life of divine illumination this was the first time my mind was unbalanced, and the first time my mind was polluted by the thought of wealth. The whole night passed in brooding over all the things I could possibly do with the art of making gold. The formula of making gold inflamed my earthly ambitions and made my pure as gold heart and soul as coarse and lifeless as a stone. Early in the morning I found myself in this pitiable condition. Just then, the servant brought a lighted stove for me to cook my meals. Bhai Hira Singh also came there and asked me: "Have you memorized all the formulas, Bhai Sahib?" I took out the piece of paper containing the formulas of making gold and threw them into the fire. I then stood in silent prayer before God, with folded hands and sought the Lord's forgiveness for letting my mind drift into greed and lust for gold, and I also prayed that I might completely forget all that I had learnt about it. I did not like to think of the gold-formula even in a dream.

Bhai Hira Singh was stunned and shocked at what I did and said: "What a terrible thing you have done? People were prepared to pay me lakhs of rupees for the knowledge of but one formula. I gave you all that I knew. Kings, jewellers and millionaires were prepared to stake all their fortune for the knowledge of this formula. You have destroyed it in a minute. You have thrown away the world's greatest treasure. I may not live long. I may not even get an opportunity to explain it to you again. There is very little hope of my life being prolonged. It is not possible for us to meet in seclusion again. I doubt whether you have memorized a single chemical formula for changing copper into gold. I doubt if you would care to remember whatever you have already memorized. Your face tells me that it has upset you very much. Why should persons like you who are dedicated to the welfare of humanity, be ever depressed by the knowledge of this art? You are not one of those who would use it for your personal benefit or to satisfy your greed. Give up this mood of dejection. I will write the formulas for you again. You can easily memorize them within a week. I will put you to test when you have memorized them."

"I am grateful to you, my friend?" replied I, "for revealing to me the secret of making gold which you withheld from your dearest and nearest, but I am not the right customer for it." "If one sells a precious thing to an undeserving customer it will go cheap; but if one finds willing customer one's

precious gift will sell for lakhs.' You want me to do good to the world through gold, under compulsion of materialistic ideal in which I have no faith:

Service done under compulsion
Is neither a virtue nor charity;

"I feel I will have to pay a great price for this business of gold, which I cannot afford to pay. I had just started only memorizing the gold formula, and not making gold, when my mind, heart, and soul have been thrown into a terrible state of confusion. God knows, how low I might have fallen, if I had actually started making gold. The true Guru has saved me from the pit and turned my mind away from it."

Blessed I am that He saved me from drowning

But Bhai Hira Singh would not listen to me. He made up his mind to once more persuade me to learn the art of making gold. But God willed it otherwise. The same night we were put in prison cells far apart from each other. We could not talk to each other nor hear each other's voice. I felt that the Guru saved me from falling into the pit again.

The next day we came to know that our companions had launched a *morcha* (agitation) as a protest against keeping us isolated from other political prisoners. They all struck work and went on fast. The prison authorities were unnerved, and they approached them for compromise. They accepted two important conditions for lifting the protest *morcha*. They agreed to take us back among other prisoners. They also agreed not to put the new political prisoners to hard labour and force them to work, and to give them the same diet that was given to us.

More Tortures Begin

Some days passed peacefully. But the Jailer would not rest until he inflicted some injury on the prisoners. Cruelty was ingrained in his nature, and he gave vent to it by imposing many kinds of punishments on the prisoners, and keeping them far apart from one another in different blocks. One of our companions, Brother Dal Singh, was severely flogged. I somehow managed to inform the Inspector General of prisons about the grave situation in the prison, and warned him to take timely action to put things right, otherwise the situation might take such a serious turn that he might have to repent later. The Inspector General was at Ranchi, sixty miles away, from where he rushed to Hazaribagh as soon as he received this information. He came straight to my cell. He was accompanied by prison staff, including Mr. Husband and the Jailer. A hot discussion began immediately.

I: Did you, Mr Inspector General, send this man, Vadhava Ram to this prison to look after our comforts or to torture us?

Inspector General: He being a Punjabi, I thought, he will be helpful to the Punjabi prisoners, and he will understand you better. Thus, I too would be saved from unnecessary trouble and worry about you all. I believed that he will look into your grievances and eradicate them immediately. Because he owes the present post and position to me, I thought he will do those things which would enhance my prestige here. I invited you, the prisoners of Lahore Conspiracy case from Punjab, because I felt that, being a Punjabi myself, I could take good care of you. My confirmed opinion was that a Punjabi Jailer and Head Warder alone could look to the personal comforts of the

Punjabi political prisoners. That is why I got this man Vadhava Ram and Kirpa Singh Head Warder, specially transferred to this place.

I: But Vadhava Ram started tormenting and torturing us as soon as he came here. He is obsessed by the wrong impression that we are the political prisoners who murdered one of his Brahmin relative in the Chabewal dacoity incident. We have tried hard to convince him that we have nothing to do with that incident, but his bitterness continues to be inflamed by this wrong notion. Secondly, this man is extremely haughty, vain and despotic. Mr Husband is a tool in his hands. Because you trust him much, he thinks he is all in all. Because you have reposed so much confidence in him, he thinks he can act with your authority, and he has nothing to fear. He poses as the sole master and controller of the prison. That is why he dared to inflict the punishment of flogging on one of our companions.

Inspector General: (expressing surprise and shock): What, he ordered flogging?

I: Yes, please examine the history ticket of Dal Singh, and see for yourself, for what fault of his, he has been flogged.

Inspector General: (addressing the Superintendent): Did you order flogging of Dal Singh, if so for what fault of his?

Mr. Husband: He refused to work.

Inspector General: Political prisoners cannot be flogged if they refuse to work.

Mr. Husband: Besides this, he offended a prison staff-member. We had to do something to maintain discipline.

I: Will you please ask this gentleman, who offended and who was insulted? Did Dal Singh insult him or some other man?

Inspector General: (addressing the Superintendent): Who was offended and by whom?

Mr Husband: He insulted Kirpa Singh, Head warder, in charge of Jail

Inspector General: (addressing Kirpa Singh). Well, Kirpa Singh did he insult you?

Kirpa Singh: No Sir, no one insulted me. I was not in charge of the Punjabi prisoners even for a single day.

Inspector General: (in a threatening tone) Why did you post a Bihari Warder over the Punjabi prisoners, when I especially ordered that Head Warder Kirpa Singh should be in charge of all the cells where Punjabi prisoners are lodged? I particularly sent Kirpa Singh to this prison because these Bihari people do not understand their language.

I: You are quite right. This Bihari Brahmin who has been appointed Warder over our cells does not understand even simple words of Punjabi, least of all the pure Punjabi. It is due to his inability to understand Punjabi that one of our innocent companions was flogged.

Inspector General: (addressing the Bihari Brahmin): Do you understand Punjabi?

Bihari Brahmin: Yes Sir, I understand Punjabi quite well.

I: (addressing the Bihari Brahmin) Almost all Bihari people are in the habit of telling lies. (For 'all' I used the word *sare* in Punjabi, which the Bihari Brahmin once more understood to be a word of abuse. In Bihari the word *sare* is equivalent to Punjabi *sale*, which is a word of abuse whose literal meaning is, your brother-in-law or it means "your sister is my wife.")

Bihari Brahmin: (addressing the Inspector General). Look here Sir; he is abusing me in your presence. The other day Dal Singh also called me "*sare*".

Inspector General: (burst into laughter and then angrily) What did he say? What word did he use?

Bihari Brahmin: Sir, he abused me saying "you *sare* Bihari people are annoying and harassing us." This is how, Sir, Dal Singh called me *sare* (in Bihari, wife's brother), a word of abuse.

Inspector General: (addressing the Jailer) If you flogged Dal Singh for this offence, you have done a great wrong. People like you, bring a bad name to the Government. And now you will bring a bad name to me and the Superintendent, (addressing the Superintendent) you people flogged an innocent man. You are guilty of gross misconduct and cruelty. You did not care to understand what Dal Singh meant by *sare*. The word *sare* in Punjabi means 'all'. It means the same things as Bihari *sagre*. You have treated an innocent man in a very cruel manner. Supposing the prisoner did use one or two abusive words, where was the justification to inflict such cruel punishment? In this particular case, how were you insulted?

Mr Husband: (put out of countenance) I wanted to give him light punishment. As a matter of fact, I at first ordered that he should be handcuffed at night. But Dal Singh shouted: "Why not give some more punishment?" So I ordered that he should be put in a strait-jacket. On hearing this punishment Dal Singh said "This may not satisfy your lust for cruelty, why not give severe punishment?" I was annoyed and ordered that he should be chained hand and foot. Dal Singh again said tauntingly: "Is that all? Why don't you do your utmost?" I ordered that for seven days he should be kept standing with his hands tied above. Dal Singh was still very haughty and said: "Is there any punishment left, the severest you can inflict? Why not give that also?" For this insulting behaviour I cancelled all the punishment and ordered flogging.

Vadhava Ram: (interrupting) I asked this man to apologize for his behaviour but he said in Punjabi: "Why should I? Have I touched the ass?" (A Punjabi idiom meaning, have I annoyed you. Some low caste people for whom an ass is a very precious animal easily get irritated if some one touches an ass belonging to them).

Mr. Husband: (who did not understand the Punjabi saying) Thus he made me an ass. What can be more insulting than this?

Inspector General: Both of you are asses as far as your intelligence goes, (addressing the Jailer Vadhava Ram). It is all your mischief. I will take severe action against you (addressing me). Please pacify all the prisoners, and ask them to break their hunger strike and start eating food. Also ask them to do some work. I will see that they get justice and you are treated in the proper manner.

I: I am not prepared to take any responsibility for the behaviour of the prisoners, because when I did pacify them and prevented them from causing trouble on three previous occasions, the only reward I got was that the Jailer and the Superintendent dubbed me as "the ring leader" of all the trouble makers. I consider such accusations an insult to me. I am not associated with them as a ring leader. I deem them to be my Sikh brothers who participate in the daily recitation of prayers and meditations. The fact is that most of these prisoners who had never recited prayers, now regularly recited prayers, but your prison officials, particularly the Jailer and the Superintendent, caused trouble by repeatedly snatching away our prayer books (*gutkas*). You even assured us that some day, you would give us a big hall in the prison where we can keep our Holy *Granth*, the *Guru Granth Sahib*, and convert the hall into a prison temple. But seeing the attitude of these officials towards our prayer books we thought they might repeatedly commit acts of sacrilege by profanely handling the *Guru Granth Sahib*. To avoid this possible disrespect to the *Guru Granth Sahib* we gave up the idea of a temple in the prison. It might have led to painful sacrilegious acts of disrespect to the Holy *Granth*. We cannot even tolerate the disrespect these people are showing to our prayer books. You assured us that you will allow us strapped cases, made of cloth for our prayer books, so that we can carry them with us. But these people have not even hesitated to handle our prayer books with unclean hands. Every now and then they take away our prayer books expecting us to stop reciting our prayers. Now the prisoners have memorized all the prayers, and they cannot stop us from reciting them by snatching away our prayer books. We have now returned all the prayer books; because we cannot tolerate the repeated disrespect they show to the prayer books by mishandling them with unclean hands. If you want us to keep the prayer books please instruct these people that they will not handle them disrespectfully.

The inescapable fact is that as long as this man, Mr. Vadhava Ram, is here, he will never leave us in peace, nor will he let you rest in peace. Malice and bitter determination to ill-treat us are ingrained in this man. When he has dared to flout your orders, how do you expect him to be humane to us? Mr. Husband is a tool in his hands. You may give him as many helpful orders as you like, we are sure he will not carry out any one of them. He does not care a fig for your orders. I can give you one concrete example: You perhaps remember that your noble wife, Mrs. Bawa Jiwan Singh (whom the prisoners addressed as *Mai Doi*) paid us a visit and after meeting me she at once persuaded me to agree to her keen desire to get my confiscated property restored to my wife and children. She procured your consent to appeal to the Punjab Government on behalf of the prison authorities to restore my property to my family, as Mrs Bawa Jiwan Singh felt that they must be destitute and in great distress. You gave orders to Mr. Husband to prepare my case, fill up the particulars in some application forms, yet they have not carried out that order. I have always felt that the Guru and the Sikh *Panth* will take care of my children, and I still wish to abide by the sweet Will of God, but I would like to point out that these prison officials did not care a straw for your orders. I reminded Vadhva Ram a number of times and told him that it was very ungrateful on his part to flout the orders of the Inspector General to whom he owed his present position. He not only did not carry out your orders but had the audacity to tell me that he was powerful enough to cancel the orders of the Inspector General. He told me that when a prison police officer secured leave from the Inspector General without referring it to him, he cancelled the leave of the man and tore the Inspector General's order in his presence. Giving me this example he said: "What do I care for a political prisoner like you." So, such is the haughtiness and vanity of this Jailer, Vadhava Ram. That is the police officer, standing near you, whose leave order sanctioned by you was torn to pieces by this man. Please ask him. This is the most glaring example of his insubordination. He has not allowed the poor man to go on leave up to this time.

On hearing this, the Inspector General was enraged and he angrily shouted at Vadhava Ram: "You will have to answer for all this and pay dearly for your disobedience. Then addressing me he said: "I assure you that from today onwards no one will treat any prisoner harshly and I will punish this Jailer for all the mischief he has done." I replied, "If you do not take any action against this man the prisoners will take matters into their own hands. That will be unfortunate. I know, this man will beg and cringe before you, to forgive him, and he is clever enough to do that. He will fall at your feet and stick to this prison. But I must tell you very frankly that if he sticks to this prison, he will bring you a bad name soon enough. What harm can he do to us, beyond what he has already tried?"

The Inspector General went away seriously upset over all that had happened. The Jailer, it is learnt fell at the feet of the Inspector General who either pitied him or was misled by the flattery and false assurances of this man.

CHAPTER 15 - PRISONERS' ESCAPE

DURING HIS LAST VISIT, the Inspector General of prisons, Bawa Jiwan Singh gave written orders that political prisoners, whose behaviour was good, should be sent to special cells, and they should be free to move about in the prison compound during the day time. He even wrote down the names of some prisoners who were to be sent to the special cells immediately. My name was in the list. We were to be completely unchained. He ordered chains around my feet and hands to be taken off immediately in his presence. I was the first to be chained by the prison authorities and I was also the first to be unchained. But Jailer Vadhava Ram did not send me or those whose names were suggested by the Inspector General to the special prison cells. On the other hand he selected notorious prisoners like Natha Singh to be taken to the special cells. When bad days are ahead, a man starts digging a pit for himself. He selected nineteen prisoners to be transferred to the special cells, and unchained others taking his own time to do so. Many were kept in fetters. But he did not send the majority of the political prisoners to the special cells. He did not send a single person to the special cells out of those whose names were specially recommended by the Inspector General.

He considered me his sworn enemy. So he started torturing me all the more. Those who were taken to the special cells were also not treated well. He started cutting down my rations, and misappropriated our ration funds. Then he started mixing sand or mud in flour. The water of Hazaribagh was already bad. Contaminated water and adulterated food began to damage every one's health. When the situation became unbearable all the political prisoners made up their mind to teach Vadhava Ram a lesson. At first we verbally warned the Jailer and the superintendent to desist from actions over which they have to repent and wrote a serious complaint to the Inspector General through the prison authorities, but after weeks of waiting we learnt that it was never sent to the Inspector General. We had warned the Inspector General that if Jailer Vadhava Ram was not immediately transferred something serious might happen as the ill-treatment accorded by this man to the prisoners had made them quite desperate. When no reply was received from the Inspector General, eighteen prisoners of the special block made up their mind to break loose their chains and attempt an escape from the prison.

It was February 1918. I was in the hospital. These prisoners sought my consent, through a letter sent to me secretly. I strongly advised them not to attempt an escape at that moment. I told them that the Great War (World War I) was about to end. Whatever be the end of the war, many political prisoners were likely to be released. Only one or two might be detained for a longer period. But most of the prisoners would certainly be released. It was better to fight for release from within the prison than to lead the unhappy life of runaway convicts all their life. I also received a message from Bengali political prisoners that I should request these eighteen Punjabi prisoners not to plan an escape then. They should wait at least up to Holi festival (spring festival which falls in March). After that they would contact some people outside and plan an escape. I conveyed the message of the Bengali prisoners to my comrades. I was sure that they would not attempt an escape without a unanimous decision. But a Rajput prisoner, named Kesari Singh happened to taunt the Sikhs saying it was easy to talk about escaping but it was not possible to do so. Reacting sharply to the reproach, the Sikh prisoners of that block atonce decided to show Kesari Singh that they could escape that very night.

The same evening I was discharged from the hospital and came to Punjabi cell number 3.1 was almost sure that the prisoners had given up the idea of breaking through the prison and escaping,

for the time being. I could not imagine that they would decide to attempt the escape so suddenly. In the evening, just after supper and prayers I received a message that the national greeting: "*Sat Sri Akal*" (God is Truth), should be uttered immediately after the *ardasa* (congregational prayer) as loudly as possible. Only a few minutes earlier, the Superintendent and the Jailer had come to me and told me that if we stopped shouting this, *jaikara* (victory cry) loudly then all the prisoners would be lodged in the special block. I immediately sent a message appealing to all the prisoners not to shout the victory cry that evening loudly, so that we could all get together the next day. I do not know whether they received this message or not, because at the time of sending message, the lock up for the night was about to take place. If they received the message they disregarded it. How could they listen to such advice now when during the day time they had made all preparations to escape? We were completely ignorant of the plans.

As usual I got up at 2 a.m., took my bath and Bhai Attar Singh Ji who was in a prison cell close by, started reciting the *Bawan Akhari* (Guru Arjan's Acrostic). My mind soared high in the upper planes of consciousness and I began to hear the recitation of *Bawan Akhari* in that state. As soon as the recitation of *Bawan Akhari* was complete, I saw a strange vision, which at that moment appeared to be a real incident and not a vision. I saw that the door of my cell was open and four people, Bhai Hira Singh, Bhai Sucha Singh and two others standing outside my prison cell, were trying to come into my cell but were unable to do so. As they were not able to come inside, I made up my mind to go out and meet them. As I rushed out of the prison door, the bars of the prison cell struck hard against my forehead and caused an injury. I then realized that it was only a vision and the prison door was locked. In another minute Bhai Hira Singh and Bhai Sucha Singh came there and tried to unlock my cell but they could not find the right key. I asked them whether, what I saw was a dream vision or reality, because a minute ago they were not there. They asked me to get ready to escape. "The prisoners of the special blocks have all come out of their prison cells and are waiting for you to escape with us", they said.

One of these comrades carried a lamp and the other had a bunch of keys, and were trying hard to open the lock of my prison cell but could not do so. When we examined the keys we found them to be the keys of the inner and outer doors of Block number two. I asked them not to waste their time but make good their escape. Two of them ran to the special block to get the right keys. At that very moment, the prison alarm alerted all the prison officials and armed guards. They then asked me what to do. My first suggestion was that they should go back to their cells and stay there. God perhaps did not will that they should attempt an escape at that moment. But it was now difficult for them even to go back to their cells. Armed guards were rushing towards our block. I told them, "You have already become absconders. If you are not able to go back to your prison cells, make good your escape by jumping over the nearest boundary wall. But be careful, when you jump. Go down the wall cautiously and avoid causing any injury to yourself when you jump down on the other side of the wall." They all rushed to the boundary wall which was not far from my prison cell.

The wall was very high. Three people had to stand on one another's shoulders to enable the fourth one to reach the top of the wall and jump down on the other side. Led by the *Tilakdhari* Brahmin Warder, armed sentries came to the spot. A Sikh who had reached the top of the wall shouted to his comrades: "Why are you wasting your time. Now is the time to throw hand grenades and destroy them. Why do you hesitate?" Any weapon at a critical moment is more useful than the bomb. They had no bombs of course. Bhai Gujjar Singh lighted a match-stick and immediately threw a heavy rock at the armed guards. It was aimed at the Brahmin Warder and it hit him on the face. He took to his heels. Another match-stick was lighted, and the very spark of fire frightened

the Bihari policemen so much that they ran for their life, leaving the patriots free to make their escape.

Excited with their courage and heroism the prisoners jumped down from the top of the wall in hot haste, and all the five or six who did so received very severe injuries on their feet. Some of them received such severe injuries that it was impossible for them to run. Others came down the wall a little cautiously. Bhai Inder Singh was the first to land safely on the ground. He had just landed when four armed guards surrounded him and caught him. The wounded Sikhs could not bear the sight of arrest and beating of Inder Singh. One of them Bhai Lall Singh of Narangwal, finding his comrade in trouble, stood up on his wounded and bleeding feet, and snatching a *lathi* from a police guard hit everyone right and left. Many of them were hit so hard that they all ran for their life, and even prevented the armed guards sent to reinforce them, from coming near the Sikh prisoners, saying "They are Punjabi Sikhs. Do not go near them. They will kill you with the *lathi*. Run away for your life." The whole military force sent to arrest these unarmed wounded prisoners ran for their life. Now the way was clear for them to escape.

All the eighteen prisoners jumped over the wall. There was a terrible uproar in the prison. As it was the middle of night no one dared to come near a Sikh prisoner. They even did not dare to touch the Sikh prisoners who were freely moving within the prison walls. Like cowards, all the armed guards hid themselves from 12 P.M. to 3 A.M. The story of their successful break through the double locked cells is also heroic.

In the middle of the night Bhai Natha Singh and Bhai Sucha Singh made an opening in the roof and went out of it on the top of the roof. Bhai Arjan Singh and Bhai Ganda Singh Nihang started singing the *Chandi di Var* and *Sabads* in tune with the musical sound made by striking two metal plates against each other like cymbals. They had procured iron chisels from outside, a few days earlier. (Unfortunately the chisels were not strong enough). They made an aperture which was not large enough to enable a person to get through it. Natha Singh however got through it but Sucha Singh got stuck up. Natha Singh somehow managed to pull him through it. Stealthily they moved forward and pounced on the Bihari sentry. They gave him a few blows when he tried to shout and tied his mouth, hands and feet. At this moment the following lines of *Chandi di Var* were sung:

Brothers attacked brothers
Taking them to be Durga.

As soon as the police guard was given the first blow, he shouted "why do you beat me, I am your Indian brother? He was beaten because he was the guard on duty; otherwise he was generally very sympathetic. He was tried hand and foot, and Sucha Singh put on his uniform and belt and stood on guard. He answered the call of other policemen on duty by saying "everything is alright here." Soon the Jemadar came there. He carried all the keys of the prison in a bag. He was caught and tied to a pillar and was gagged. His uniform was put on by Natha Singh. While he was struggling, the Jemadar Incharge threw the keys of the prison away on the grass close by. The first bunch of keys which Sucha Singh was able to get was that of the special block, which he took and immediately opened all the prison cells. All the eighteen prisoners came out. The nineteenth prisoner Vasakha Singh Junior, was afraid to join the prison breakers.

Overjoyed with the success of their bid to win freedom, they bypassed the sentry watching on the tower and came to my cell. In a hurry they were not able to get the keys of my cell. They had plans to tie up the sentry on the prison tower, and to give a good thrashing to the *Tilakdhari* Brahmin

Warder and also to punish Vadhava Ram for all his misdeeds, but there was no time at their disposal. It was already 3. A.M. If they had time they would certainly have trounced and chastised Vadhava Ram. While coming to the Punjabi block they gagged the sentry of block No. 1 and then of No. 3. Two of our comrades came to open the lock of my cell while the other two held the sentry of block Number 2, who almost fainted when they caught him and gagged him. From midnight to 3. A.M. the prison was completely under the control of the Sikh political prisoners. When a new batch of guards came from outside at 3. A.M. the alarm was sounded.

Almost all the prisoners planning to escape were as yet within the prison when the alarm was heard. Those who had jumped down from the wall in hot haste were unable to move on. Thirteen others who were able to walk were prepared to carry them but they refused to put their comrades into such difficulty which might prevent their escape. They advised them to make good their escape and not to worry about them. They would face the worst. Two out of these thirteen prisoners could walk but had wounded feet. These two, Bhai Hira Singh and Sadhu Rajinder Singh accompanied the run away prisoners but found it difficult to go beyond two miles. Their companions carried them by turn for another six or seven miles. When they reached a forest, they refused to be carried further and thus prevent the escape of the other eleven companions also.

They compelled their eleven companions to run away from the danger zone as fast as possible. Five wounded comrades, Bhai Pakhar Singh of Dhudike, Bhai Lall Singh of Narangwal, Bhai Sunder Singh of Daulu-Nangal, Bhai Harnam Singh of Kala Sangha, and Bhai Kesar Singh of Sursingh quietly moved to some nearby barley fields and hid themselves in a pit in the fields. There was an intensive search by the military police far and near but not a single prisoner was caught. At about 10 A.M. the search was almost given up. Soon after that a group of villagers were passing by that field. Their dog began to bark. They turned back and found the dog barking at a Sikh prisoner hiding in a pit. They informed the prison authorities that some people in uniform were hiding in the pit. Armed police men came there and started beating Bhai Harnam Singh, who was the first to be found. Bhai Sunder Singh of Daulu Nangal could not bear to see his wounded companion being beaten in this way. It appeared that a pack of Jackals had pounced on a wounded tiger.

Although Sunder Singh's feet were wounded, he came out like lightning and wresting a *lathi*, with a spear end, from one of the policemen, he hit them right and left, and brought to the ground six of them. Others ran for their life. They then begged Sunder Singh to surrender peacefully on the condition that he and his companions would not be beaten or maltreated. As soon as he surrendered he was beaten to pulp. Yet Sunder Singh did not take the beating without retaliating with his hands and wounded feet. Everyone was stunned by his courage and unconquerable spirit. Then they searched the field and found the other runaway prisoners who were hiding close by. The cowards pounced on these helpless wounded lions, and tortured them with vengeance. Although all the five freedom fighters were half dead and made unconscious by beating, not one of them begged for mercy and not one of them uttered a cry of pain. No one dared to come near them as long as Sunder Singh had the *lathi* in his hands.

Every one was astounded at the heroism and courage of the Sikhs. They wondered what they were really made of, and what made them so fearless. There is some special quality in this land of five rivers, which makes the sons of this soil so fearless that they mock at death in the face of greatest suffering and pain. They would never behave like cowards. When they were beaten so much that they became half dead, they were taken to the prison and locked in dark cells. For days together, they were neither given a drop of water, nor any medicine, nor were their wounds bandaged. Even

unwanted dogs are never treated that way. It was the cold season and those merciless tyrants neither gave them a cot nor even a blanket to cover their body.

When we came to know of this inhuman cruelty, our blood began to boil in anger and resentment but we were utterly helpless. We had nothing to offer them except silent prayer and the hope that God would help them to face the terrible ordeal, they were facing. Everyone had turned against them; the doctors and compounders were strictly ordered not to go near them. Everyone was after their life. They struggled for survival with great will power. Without a morsel of food, and without a drop of water, they were left to starve and die of thirst. It appears that the tyrants were determined to let them die of thirst and starvation. But:

Who can kill him?

Whom God wishes to save;

Who can bring death to him?

Who is protected by God.

The hunter may try hard to kill a deer,

But it will not be injured if God wishes to save it.

The story of suffering of these freedom fighters is long and bitter. It is sufficient to tell it in as few words as possible. The other two who had fled to the forest were also caught and were beaten still more mercilessly. They were also thrown into separate cells almost half dead. Now I will tell you my story. The day the political prisoners escaped we were kept locked up in our cells for the whole day and night. We were not given any food or water. We were not even allowed to go to the latrine or to urinate outside our cells. No one removed the filth and pots ... out of our prison cells. I was extremely worried about the misery and sorrowful plight of my companions. We helplessly groaned and moaned the terrible lot of our comrades. No one came near us. Strong guards were posted on all sides. The prison authorities feared that the prisoners who had escaped might try to help us to escape. Armed guards were posted on all prison towers and key points.

The news spread like wild fire and the newspapers gave a fairly good account of the escape. The Statesman, Calcutta, published a story under the headline "A daring deed". The very next evening the Inspector General Prisons, Bawa Jiwan Singh came there boiling with rage. The first thing he did in hot haste was to take very stringent measures to control the prisoners with an iron hand. Chains and cross bars were clamped around our hands and feet. Provision of good food was stopped. The most rotten dry bread was provided. We were deprived of all clothes except the *kachh* (underwear). All our gospel-books (*gutkas*), and religious literature was taken away from us. After taking the most severe steps, he came for a round in our barracks. After inspecting other cells, he came and stood before my prison cell, red with uncontrolled wrath. He was shaking from head to foot with rage. Eying me with angry looks, he ordered: "He will no more be permitted to cook his own food from today onwards."

I quietly replied: "So I have to suffer for the misdeeds of some one else. The cow and the sheep are now classed by you in the same category. What sort of justice is this?"

Inspector General: Yes, Bhaiji, one buffalo has spoiled the whole pond. You are the cause of all the troubles. All have escaped under your command and plan.

I: If I helped them to escape, then why did I not escape?

Inspector General: You could not get out of your cell, and join the prison breakers. They tried to open your lock but could not do so. They had the wrong bunch of keys with them. Had they succeeded in opening your lock, you too would have escaped.

A Sentry: No Sir. He refused to accompany them. They were ready to break the lock, but this Saint advised them to go back to their cells.

Inspector General: The alarm was sounded; otherwise he would have made good his escape. I have got definite proof of the fact that he planned and abetted the escape.

I: You have absolutely no proof, but Vadhava Ram has certainly misguided you. You are now beside yourself with anger. When your mind is a little composed, and you investigate facts, the truth will be revealed. I am not worried about myself. You can stop giving me my food. I have patience enough to face the bitterest ordeal as the sweet Will of God. God will take care of me in the way He thinks best. But I am shocked at the inhumanity and injustice heaped on our wounded companions. Well, they tried to escape. They have committed a crime. Punish them for it according to the law of the country. May I know according to which law have they been treated in such inhuman way that, they were beaten to pulp although they were already badly injured? When they were half dead and unconscious they were thrown into the dungeon. They have not been given a drop of water nor any medical treatment for the injuries they have suffered from barbaric beating. What law has authorized you to treat these political prisoners in this way? After seeing them treated in such an inhuman manner I was myself going on hunger strike. Your orders are meaningless to me. As long as you do not look after my wounded companions and as long as they are not humanely treated I will not take a morsel of food. While they are suffering such inhuman treatment, even to drink water would be like drinking blood.

Inspector General: (angrily) You people, and particularly those companions of yours who have escaped have brought me a very bad name. The harsher the treatment accorded to them the better.

I: It is your maladministration that has brought you a bad name. Neither I nor my runaway companions are to be blamed. When you came for a visit to this prison I told you frankly that you should transfer Vadhava Ram from here, otherwise his treatment of the prisoners would give a bad turn to the affairs of the prison here. You promised that he would be transferred, but God alone knows how he influenced you again in the wrong direction, and you retained him here. He started heaping more insults and injury upon the prisoners and it is his ill treatment that made the prisoners much more desperate than before. He disobeyed all your orders. He mixed sand with *atta* (flour) and adulterated our food in various ways. We served him a number of notices to desist from this barbaric treatment but he did not care a fig for our repeated warning. We then wrote down all our complaints against him and sent them to you through the Superintendent, but he suppressed them and did not allow our letters to reach you. And when the prisoners became desperate, they took the extreme step. They tried to escape from this hellish treatment. What else could they do?

After listening to this strong protest, the Inspector General went away quietly and my hunger strike began. No ration was supplied to me and nothing was cooked. God alone knew when I would get my next meal. For me, my life was in the hands of the Almighty. If He wanted my body to survive, He, as the Giver of sustenance, would also help me to survive without food as long as

He willed it. The main sustenance of my Spirit, the divine Name, was with me. No earthly power could take it away from me. He who is blessed with His Name, cares not for any other food. My clash with the Inspector General had one good effect on him. The wounded prisoners were given medical aid and some food and the hunger strike of other prisoners ended. The treatment of other prisoners was better than what it was expected to be. But I went without food for days together. After stopping the supply of daily rations to me everyone forgot my very existence. Such torture had its natural reactions, but the Guru has by his grace given infinite tolerance and powers of endurance to his Sikhs.

If Thou givest me happiness I shall worship Thee,
If Thou givest sorrow, even then I will adore Thee;
If Thou givest hunger, I will remain contented,
In sorrow I will sing the songs of joy.
Guru Ram Das: *Suhi*, p. 757

It appeared to me that God was putting me to test, whether as a devout Sikh, I could live in tranquil peace under such tribulations and sufferings. He was giving me an object in considering joy and sorrow alike. By giving me the great spiritual gift of his Name all hunger had been dispelled. A fortnight passed in peace and contentment. Getting no food, I passed my days and nights in the contemplation of divine Name. In the joy of its spiritual experience and illumination of its light, I felt no hunger or thirst. I retained this mental poise by the grace of the true Guru. I had gone through such trials before. So the experience was nothing new.

Live O Brother as God Wiliest thee to live
Namdev: *Bhairon*: p. 1164

God had already seasoned me with the determined faith in high spiritual ideal. About seventeen days now passed without a morsel of food or a drop of water. All these days I survived on the sole spiritual sustenance of contemplating the Divine. Then I saw some strange visions of a better future which passed first through my mind and then were also visualised by Bhai Kirpa Singh, whose sudden turn to spiritual practise gave him some clairvoyant powers.

CHAPTER 16 - CLAIRVOYANCE OF KIRPA SINGH AND MORE HARASSMENT

ONE OF OUR COMPANIONS, Brother Kirpa Singh, was suffering from a very serious disease, which could neither be properly diagnosed nor treated. He became so weak and frail that his body was nothing but a shaky and tumble-down skeleton. His body became so thin and bloodless that all one could see in his fragile body was a breathing skeleton. The doctors gave a number of medicines but none was helpful in curing him. In this utter physical helplessness, he asked me if there was any remedy. I said: The greatest of all remedies is to acquire divine Name." He asked: "How can that be attained?" I unconsciously said: "Reflect on the divine presence of Guru Nanak," and went away from there. Kirpa Singh was not afraid of death and he had absolutely no hope of living long. He started contemplating the divine presence of Guru Nanak and soon acquired deep concentration. He had already lost all physical strength and energy, and now his mental concentration became so deep that he acquired an unbroken stream of consciousness. He acquired clairvoyance and deeper powers of insight over which he did not exercise proper control. It was the seventeenth day of my fast. I spent my days in prayer expecting to break my fast when God willed it. I was neither worried nor impatient about it. I did not expect the fast to be broken soon enough. But on the night of seventeenth day of my fast, I was surprised to see a dream vision at 2 A.M. After I had said my morning prayer and bathed my soul and mind in the nectar of divine Name, and after enjoying the bliss and peace of mystic union with the Beloved in a transcendent state, during which my mind was satiated with the joy of inner exaltation, I saw around me a heavenly place full of fruits. Just before the door of my cell I saw a wish- fulfilling tree, which was loaded with the most delicious fruits like water-melon, ripe and juicy mangoes and cantaloupes which I had not seen before. They broke from the tree and rolled on the ground towards me. Sweet and ripe melons were now piled up on the ground. When I took up and tasted one of these fruits, its sweetness had the flavour of four different fruits, like mangoes and three different types of melons. My mind now drifted towards the unique taste of these fruits and my *samadhi* was disturbed.

Suddenly there was some noise of the clanging of the prison bars and my door opened. A sentry had just unlocked my door and he was standing there in broad day light with his keys and *burcha*. I went to the water-pump to take my bath, when Bhai Kirpa Singh, whose cell was close by, said: "Please come for a while near me. I have to say something very important." We were not allowed to meet each other or even to talk to each other. So when the prison guard moved away from the place I went to Bhai Kirpa Singh's cell. He had seen a vision of the future and started prophesying a chain of events that were to happen.

Bhai Kirpa Singh said: Well Bhai Sahibji, from today onwards you will get five *papayas* daily. In a vision last night I saw your room full of *papayas*. ""What are *papayas*?" I asked him. "They are a type of melons," he said. I had heard of this fruit but had never seen or tasted it. His description of it tallied with the fruit which I had seen in my vision. I advised him not to fritter away the little spiritual gift he had received, in forecasting events. He should learn to resist the temptation of misusing these powers, and displaying his powers to foresee events. I did not expect that the events he foretold would come true so soon.

After about an hour and half, the Inspector General prisons, the Medical Officer, and the Superintendent came to my cell, and after exchanging a few words between themselves, they took my history ticket. About half an hour afterwards, my history ticket was returned to me. The man

who brought it, handed over to me three *papayas* also. On my history ticket the Medical Officer had written: "Five *papayas* on medical grounds for both morning and evening."

After reading the Medical Officer's order, I asked the man who had brought the *papayas* why he had brought only three, when on the history ticket there was order for five *papayas*. He said that I would get two more in the evening. So I started getting fruit, and the dream vision became a reality. Kirpa Singh's forecast also proved to be quite correct. Thus I broke my fast. When I tasted the *papaya* it was indeed very delicious and tasted like four different fruits. For about a month or two I lived only on fruit, mostly *papayas*, and, it appears, during this period I must have taken heaps of them just as I saw them in my vision.

Then I saw another strange vision. I saw a marble palace. To the outer wall of this white palace were attached rubber taps. I tried to take some water out of the taps. As soon as I touched them, the taps became udders of a cow, and out of them came out milk. I forgot all about this vision as I took it to be a dream vision. Early the next morning, our cell doors had just been opened when Kirpa Singh came running to my cell and said: "Bhai Sahib, You will get a cow which you can milk yourself. It will be a white cow. It will be of good height and its horns will be bent low. It will have a fine white calf with it. I have seen in my vision that you will get milk of this cow measured in seers and you may get milk from one to four seers every day. Just as my forecast about *papayas* was correct my forecast about the cow will also turn out to be quite correct".

I reprimanded Kirpa Singh for wasting his spiritual powers in forecasting and warned him: "You think you have become an *auliya*, a gifted saint; you are not able to maintain a control even over these petty powers. You are frittering them away. You have absolutely no self-control. Be careful. Do not use these powers so freely. If you get involved in them, you will make no spiritual progress. These powers are nothing to those who walk on the path of Sikhism. They are acquired very easily. Those who seek spiritual enlightenment are never interested in these things. If they do so, they are likely to get stuck up in occult achievements (*ridhis and sidhis*).

Occult powers are all low desires and attachments,
Those who give themselves up to them remain devoid of divine Name

"Compared to the highest spiritual joy, the joy derived from occult powers is a low type of pleasure. It is an unspiritual joy". I further advised Kirpa Singh not to take these things seriously. He had not even acquired the gift of divine Name. He had acquired these occult powers merely by contemplating the presence of Guru Nanak. I warned him, "If you keep these powers to yourself, you can march ahead and you will acquire greater spiritual illumination. If you fritter away this little bit of spiritual energy in displaying your occult powers, you will not be able to move a step forward. Go to your cell and spend your time in silent meditation. Go away now."

Kirpa Singh quietly went back to his cell. I started cleaning my bucket and utensils for getting the milk, because I knew that this forecast was bound to come true, as did the earlier one. Even a day earlier I did not have the slightest intimation of the possibility of getting milk. After a few hours this forecast became a fact. The Deputy Commissioner, the Inspector General, the Medical Officer and the Superintendent came to my cell. I expected something new to happen. It was the Medical Officer who spoke first. It appeared that God wished to make him the instrument of His Will. Medical Officer: Randhir Singh's health is going down. Fruit diet is not sufficient to bring him back to normal health. He must be given some solid food.

Inspector General: I can't allow him to cook his own food. We can give him milk if you recommend it.

Superintendent: But he will not accept the milk which we may offer him from the hospital.

Deputy Commissioner: Is there a dairy farm within the prison?

Medical Officer: Yes, quite a good one. If the Inspector General permits, I can offer him a cow because I am in charge of the dairy farm.

Inspector General: How can he take the whole milk given by a cow? Nor can I offer him the whole milk output of a cow.

Medical Officer: I have some cows which give only two or three seers of milk.

Inspector General: You can give him the cow which gives two seers of milk. You can appoint a Jemadar to supervise the milking of the cow. He can take him to the dairy farm.

This order was recorded on my history ticket. Soon after this decision was reached, I was taken to the dairy farm. A cow was brought out and I was asked to milk it. It was actually a white cow with its horns bent downwards. It had a white calf also. Everything was exactly as Kirpa Singh had described it. His clairvoyant vision turned out to be true to the minutest detail, but these powers which he possessed did not last long. For some days he kept himself under restraint under the influence of my repeated reproval. But then he started frittering away his energy and telling everyone about his occult powers. He lost all the acquired powers within a few days and became an empty shell repenting over the loss ever after that (On April 13, 1919, the Baisakhi day, Kirpa Singh reported to the Officers and inmates of the prison all that happened on that day at the Jallianwala Bagh. He gave a vivid picture of the Jallianwala Tragedy, in which innocent patriots were killed by the indiscriminate firing by the order of General Dyer. The prison authorities were astounded when they checked these facts from newspaper reports later on 16 April).

Without deserving one gets nothing,
No matter how much a man hankers after it.

Those who live in the contemplation of the divine Name realize that the occult powers are "the well controlled servants of those who are absorbed in His Presence: *"ridhi sidhi namai ki dasi."* Occult powers follow a spiritually enlightened man like a shadow. To follow it is to follow the shadow of true spirituality. To move away from it is to move towards true enlightenment. This is realized by those enlightened Sikhs who are devoted to contemplation of His Presence. A Sikh may use these powers unconsciously for human welfare, but he never uses them for displaying his spiritual achievements. This is a subject quite apart. I will continue my story.

After this long fast, I was able to get a cow which gave about four to five seers of milk daily. After leaving the milk of one udder for the calf, I sometime got six seers of milk daily. I was also given some sago and sugar. I generally prepared some milk pudding and shared it with other brother prisoners. "Live as God willeth thee to live." This attitude to the sorrows of prison life ultimately yielded the divine fruit of grace and contentment.

Plight of the Runaway prisoners

As a result of the ill treatment accorded to runaway prisoners, Vadhava Ram and the Superintendent were both degraded and shunted out of the place. Although the runaway prisoners were further punished by two years increase in their prisons term, they taught these two cruel officers a good lesson. Three of them have not been arrested so far: Sucha Singh, Teja Singh and Budha Singh. Seven others had already been brought to the prison, wounded, and badly injured. Eight others surrendered after a month and half, after showing the courage of dare devils. For days they wandered in the forest without a morsel of food. Two of them reached Benaras. They split themselves into three small groups which added to their difficulties. Had they moved together, no one would have dared to face them. The police announced by the beat of the drum that they were dacoits and thousands of people were sent after them to capture them. Armed with lathis, daggers, swords, spears, thousands of people surrounded these three unarmed, naked, starving Sikhs, Ganda Singh Nihang of Khapad khedi, Inder Singh of Sheikh Daulat, and Arjan Singh of Jagraon. And yet they did not surrender without giving a tough fight to the police and the crowd. The other group of three, namely Bhai Dal Singh of Dhudike, Bhai Gujjar Singh Bhakna, and Bhai Sajjan Singh Narangwal were similarly surrounded by a large armed police force and an angry crowd who was told that they were dacoits. They snatched the arms and the *lathis* from the policemen and fought for hours beating everyone who came near them to pulp. The whole of Bihar and U.P. resounded with the stories of courage of these six Sikhs. At last an armed crowd of thousands closed upon them and over-powered these brave patriots, who had not taken a morsel of food for weeks, by sheer force of number. (The adventures of these run-away prisoners form a thrilling tale. Bareheaded and without even a shirt, the only thing they had were two staffs picked up from the cremation ground. They crossed the Son river even though half of them did not know how to swim. Even the inquiry commission was surprised at this feat. When once surrounded by hundreds of villagers, they broke their way through them with only two large sticks and made good their escape into the forests. When they were extremely thirsty they prayed for water. Immediately after the prayer they heard frogs croaking at a distance and found some water at the place. When others slept one of them kept guard at night. A wild bear once came near them and finding one Sikh, he came with a companion bear to fight him. When the bear returned two Sikhs were awake. The bear went away and now four of them came. Finding four Sikhs awake then eight of them came. Finding eight Sikhs were ready to fight them they went away and never came back.)

They fought with fiery determination. After receiving many sword cuts, wounds from indiscriminate *lathi* charges, bleeding from head to foot, they fell unconscious on the ground. The valour and courage Bhai Gujjar Singh showed at this moment cannot be expressed in words. Daggers and sword had caused deep injuries on the whole of his body and yet he fought till he became unconscious. Even while these Sikhs were lying unconscious and half dead on the ground, no one came near them for fear that they might get up suddenly and kill the first man they got hold of. They were brought in this precarious condition to the prison and to everyone's surprise their wounds healed soon enough. Bhai Natha Singh Dhun and Hari Singh of Kakad were arrested at Benaras and brought to the, prison.

A judicial inquiry was held and all the runaway prisoners were convicted of breaking the Jail. Although all the runaway prisoners were punished by the extension of their term of imprisonment by two years, Vadhava Ram's treatment of the prisoners was condemned by the Judges and he was downgraded and severely censured. The Inspector General Bawa Jiwan Singh was also censured. The Government took a serious note of his inability to handle the prisoners properly, by which he felt extremely humiliated. He avenged this humiliation by not giving either freedom or reduction of prison terms which was sanctioned by the Government for all political prisoners.

Almost all political prisoners were released but the Inspector General did not recommend the release of runaway prisoners. He even did not recommend my release and he still accused me of having incited the prisoners to escape. I learnt later that he repented over this hasty action, which harmed me considerably, when his temper cooled down.

He expressed his regret later on that he had unjustly harmed an innocent and saintly person, but what was done was done. I had to suffer imprisonment for another ten or eleven years. None of the eighteen runaway prisoners was released. Out of the rest, nineteen were released. I accepted this as the Will of God. The Deputy Commissioner and the Inspector General admitted that it was this report of Bawa Jiwan Singh which prevented my release at that time.

Whatever is Thy Will,
It taketh place.
Wherever Thou keepest me,
There I shall stand and wait.
Guru Arjan *Var Gujri* p. 523

What is the use of blaming anyone? The will of God could not be altered. My faith and outlook was: "Wherever Thou keepest me, Lord, that place is heaven." I had no craving whatsoever to seek or beg liberty. Even in the face of untold sufferings I had undergone, my mind and soul remained poised in perfect peace and ineffable joy. In the communion of the Holy Spirit, my soul fed on the Light of His presence like a bird able to get fare in all climes and all lands. Thus my mind and soul were always absorbed in illuminating optimism (*charhdi kala*). I was so deeply absorbed in this perennial joy that my thought scarcely went to anything else. As long as these nineteen political prisoners, who were now released, were with us, there was a spiritual atmosphere of the holy *Sat Sang*. Bhai Attar Singh who could recite over fifty compositions of *Guru Granth Sahib* and *Dasam Granth* kept the divine songs ringing in the ears of the prisoners all the day round.

Everyone was eager to recite some or the other compositions, and we felt ambrosia raining all day in the prison. The following is the list of the political prisoners who joined the recitation of the major compositions of Sikh Scriptures like *Guru Granth Sahib*, *Dasam Granth*, *Vars* of Bhai Gurdas and Works of Bhai Nand Lai. Besides the number of major compositions which they had memorized (given below in bracket against each name), they had memorized hundreds of *Slokas*.

Bhai Attar Singh (30)
Bhai Udham Singh (4)
Bhai Arjan Singh (8)
Bhai Inder Singh (5)
Bhai Sucha Singh (2)
Bhai Sajjan Singh (18)
Bhai Suja Singh (2)
Bhai Sunder Singh (2)
Bhai Harnam Singh (Giyjarwal) (18)
Bhai Harnam Singh Rasulpur (13)
Bhai Harnam Singh Kalasanghia
Bhai Hari Singh Kakad (4)
Bhai Hari Singh Chotia (13)
Bhai Hira Singh (5)
Bhai Kesar Singh (3)

Bhai Kehar Singh (1)
Bhai Kahla Singh (3)
Bhai Kartar Singh (9)
Bhai Kirpa Singh (3)
Bhai Karam Singh (7)
Bhai Gujjar Singh (9)
Bhai Ganda Singh Khapad Khedi (5)
Bhai Ganda Singh of Sursingh (3)
Bhai Jinder Singh (12)
Bhai Teja Singh (1)
Bhai Dal Singh (16)
Bhai Natha Singh (1)
Bhai Narain Singh (11)
Bhai Pakhar Singh (5)
Pundit Pyare Lai (1)
Bhai Bogh Singh (18)
Bhai Baghel Singh (3)
Bhai Budha Singh (1)
Bhai Battan Singh (11)
Bhai Balwant Singh (3)
Bhai Bud Singh (7)
Bhai Mastan Singh (3)
Bhai Maharaj Singh (14)
Bhai Mangal Singh (2)
Bhai Munsha Singh Dukhi (10)
Bhai Labha Singh (3)
Bhai Lal Singh (11)
Bhai Lal Chand (Nil)
Bhai Vasakha Singh (6)

Bhai Attar Singh could recite the following prayers: *Japji with Sabad Hazare; Jap with Sabad Hazare patsahi das; 20 Sweyas: 33 Sweyas Pat 10; Asa-di-Var; Anand Sahib, Sukhmani, Bawan Akhari, Siddh Gosht: Onkar, Baramaha Majh; Baramaha Tukhari, Jaitsiri di Var, Var Maru dhakhne; Din Rain, Gunwanti, Birhae, Karhale, Sweye Bhattan de, Sukhmana Sahib, Akal Ustat, Sri Kal ji ki Ustat, Rehras, Kirtan Sohila, Slokas, and Phunhe, 3 Vars of Bhai Gurdas and many Kabit Sweyas.* (Bhai Attar Singh is still living, leading a quiet life of meditation and prayer at Jodhpur - Translator.)

Those who could not recite the prayers from memory read them from small prayer books (*Gutkas*). Not a minute was wasted. Everyone took his turn. The minds and memories of our companions were overflowing with single-minded devotion to worship and prayers. Each recited with a distinct passionate devotion and melodious tune. One surpassed the other in musical intonation of recitations. As soon as one completed a composition, another took up the next. Whomever I asked to memorize a particular composition, he did so in a matter of days. Some of them had such sharp powers of memorizing that they memorized quite long and difficult prayers like *Sukhmani* and *Akal Ustat* within a few days. The moment they memorized any composition, they were eager to recite it to me.

Soon after the World War I was over, the following prisoners were released in March 1920: Bhai Attar Singh, Bhai Udham Singh, Bhai Suja Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh Rasulpuri, Bhai Hari Singh

Chotian, Bhai Ganda Singh, Bhai Narain Singh, Pundit Pyare Lai, Bhai Bogh Singh, Bhai Battan Singh, Bhai Bud Singh, Bhai Mastan Singh, Bhai Mangal Singh, Bhai Munsha Singh Dukhi, Bhai Labh Singh, Lalla Lai Chand and Bhai Vasakha Singh. Bhai Kehar Singh died just before being released. Those set free also included three run-away prisoners. Twenty-three of us were left behind, out of which all except the following eight were absconders that had been either captured or had surrendered: Bhai Kirpa Singh, Bhai Karam Singh, Bhai Harnam Singh (Gujjarwal), Bhai Kartar Singh, Bhai Bhagel Singh, Bhai Balwant Singh and Bhai Maharaj Singh. I was not released because I was incorrectly dubbed as ring leader of the run-away prisoners. Others had been sentenced to death first, and then this sentence was changed to life imprisonment. They were all considered dangerous revolutionaries. So they were not released. Some of them were considered dangerous political dacoits.

Most of my friends like Bhai Attar Singh who recited *Gurbani* all day long were released. A few devoted and divine souls like Bhai Kartar Singh Canadian were left behind. Bhai Kartar Singh was with me wherever I was sent up to the time of my release. It was so ordained by God that we were never separated from each other. We were both transferred from one prison to another, together. Association with him was instrumental in forming small groups of *sat sang* (holy congregation).

Real friends are those,
Who even accompany a parting soul;
And stand as friends and saviours,
Even when one renders account for his deeds.
Guru Nanak: *Suhi* p. 729

Slates Cause Trouble

So many things happened during the Hazaribagh prison life that it is difficult to pen them all. I will briefly narrate a few important events. Towards the end of the year 1919, before our companions were released, I was once more a victim of serious injustice. When Vadhava Ram was down-graded and went away from there, he was replaced by a Whiteman, a British Officer from the army, who was as fat and stout as he was a dolt and a blockhead. He was extremely suspicious and credulous. One day I had just come to my cell after milking the cow, when I found a slate with some message from Bhai Dal Singh in my cell. When I read the message I found that he had asked some serious theological questions. He had also asked some interpretation of a few *Slokas* of Kabir. I wrote answers to all the queries and sent them to Dal Singh. The man who carried these slates, duly permitted by the authorities, from one prisoner to another, had hardly gone a few steps from my cell, when a newly appointed Warder, who was also an Englishman came on his usual round and took the slate. This Englishman was a very mischievous and obstinate person. He took the slate to the Jailer, who was also a White man, and reported to him that immediately after coming from the dairy farm I was sending a message written on the slate to my co prisoners. Without making an inquiry as to what was written on the slate he recorded the report and sent it to the Superintendent to take immediate action against me. I could not in the least imagine that such an ugly turn could be given to a simple thing like that, and a completely false story constructed about it. He recorded it on the history ticket that I procured some messages from outsiders to my co-prisoners inside, when I went to milk the cow in the dairy farm. On reading this report the Superintendent started burning with rage. He at once wrote a severe punishment, of keeping me standing fettered hand and foot, on my history ticket and then came to me within about five minutes and addressed me thus in English:

Superintendent: What is the matter Randhir Singh?

I: And what may I ask is the use of asking this question when you have already written an undue punishment on my history ticket?

Superintendent: Who says so?

I: My history ticket speaks for itself.

Superintendent: The history ticket is not with you, nor has it been shown to you.

I: Even while the history ticket is with you I can come to know about its contents. This is the gift of the *Satguru* to us, his Sikhs.

Superintendent (Addressing the Cell-Incharge Clerk). It appears you showed him the contents of the history ticket; do you think he is a seer who can have a premonition of all these things?

Jailer Mr. Meak: No Sir, ever since you wrote the order on his history ticket it has been in my custody. My assistant has not even seen it.

Superintendent: Then you are to be blamed. You must have shown it to him.

Jailer Mr. Meak: Well Sir, as soon as you wrote the order I came here following you. On the way to this place I brought my assistant with me. The history ticket has been in my hand ever since then. My clerk also has been with me since then. We did not meet Randhir Singh at all.

Superintendent: Then Randhir Singh, you came to know these things in some supernatural way.

I: I do not know what you mean by supernatural powers but it is clear from your discussion that you have ordered punishment without making any inquiry.

Superintendent: (angrily) Who says I have not made any inquiry? The order was written after full investigation.

I: What type of investigation it was which was completed within five minutes?

Superintendent: (getting all the more angry) How dare you to raise objection against my inquiry and investigation?

I: Well then, go ahead and execute the order of punishment. Why do you ask me what the matter is? Go ahead with your tyrannical orders.

Superintendent: Well I do not believe in tyrannizing any one. I am not a tyrant. If I want to tyrannize over any one, why should I ask what has happened? I am asking you because I want to do justice.

I: If you wish to ask me what has happened you must first cancel the punishment. If you have not made even preliminary inquiry, then wherefore the punishment? If you insist on giving punishment, and have already recorded it, then wherefore the inquiry?

Superintendent: (put out of countenance) Well, if you are innocent I will cancel the punishment; otherwise it will remain as it is.

I: But I have never heard of such a thing that an inquiry should be made after recording the punishment.

Superintendent: Well, such a thing will not happen. You will get justice.

I: Well then, tell me what are the allegations against me? What is the report of charges against me?

Superintendent: It has been reported against you that you carry on illegal correspondence with your co-prisoners.

I: What proof have you to that effect?

Superintendent: This slate is an irrevocable evidence of this charge against you.

I: Everyone has been given slates for reading and writing. They were given by you.

Superintendent: But they were not given for illegal correspondence.

I: Have you read what is written on it?

Superintendent: The Jailer has reported that you go to the dairy farm and after getting some news from outsiders, you report them on these slates to your companions.

I: When I go to the dairy farm, a sepoy and a Jemadar accompany me. They never leave me alone for a moment. Their only duty is to watch my movements. Have you asked them how I was able to get news from outside? In the dairy farm I meet no other person except one cow-boy. This cow-boy is a completely ignorant person. He is illiterate and is not allowed to go outside the prison. Your prison guards are always close to me. May I know which is the secret news agency in the dairy-farm which brings me this news? Do I receive the news from outside through some wireless set in the dairy-farm?

The Superintendent looked at the Jailer in questioning silence. He had no answer to what I said and expected one from the Jailer.

Jailer: Sir, it is quite possible that this Jemadar and the sepoy who are on guard get him some news from outside.

I: Ah, what a fine answer? If this sepoy and Jemadar bring some news from outside, can they not give it to me in my cell? Why should they give me reports from outside when I go to the dairy farm? They are here day and night, as prison guards. They can get a better opportunity here than in any other place. Well, if you do not trust your own staff, why do you censure my going to the dairy-farm? You are not able to prove any of your charges. You cannot even tell what is written on the slate.

Superintendent: Do you think the Jailer has reported without knowing what is written on the slate.

I: Does the Jailer know Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script? Has he got it read by some one? If he has done so, bring the man who has read it here before me and the truth will be revealed.

Superintendent: You are talking as if you have acted as a Magistrate.

Jailer: Quite so, Sir, he was a *Tehsildar* in a State. Then he turned a revolutionary and became a traitor to the British Government

I: It is no use bringing in irrelevant things. It is no use talking about happenings which are unrelated to the case. The Jailer should tell who read the slate for him. I can say with considerable certainty that no one has so far got this slate read. If an attempt was made, the man who tried to decipher it has not been able to read it. If some one has read it, then this false allegation has been brought against me with some evil intentions. In the whole staff only two people know Punjabi Language: the Inspector General and Kirpa Singh Head Warder. The Inspector General is far away at present, so will you please ask the Head Warder Kirpa Singh whether he was asked to read it.

Superintendent: (addressing the Chief Head Warder) Have you read what is written on the slate?

Chief Head Warder: No Sir, no one asked me to read it

I: If this man has not read it, did the Jailer come to know about the contents of the writing through supernatural powers? (Everyone burst into laughter).

Superintendent: (addressing Chief Head Warder) Kirpa Singh! Read and explain what is written on the slate.

Kirpa Singh read it and explained that there was some theological interpretation of *Gurbani*. Some *Slokas* of Kabir had been explained and religious doctrines had been discussed. The Jailer said something in whispers to the Superintendent, which I at once understood and said, "It is no use talking in whispers. Say what you have to say plainly. First, you brought a false allegation against me, and now you are suspecting the Head Warder and accusing him of giving you wrong information because he is a Sikh. Being my coreligionist he cannot say anything harmful about me. If you do not trust the Chief Head Warder, send the slate to the Inspector General Prisons. Then you must accept what he decides on the whole matter." Both the Superintendent and the Jailer felt ashamed of what had been done. So they tried to sidetrack the issue.

Jailer: (addressing me) Can you tell me which sepoy brought this slate to you?

I: The question is quite irrelevant. You have given these slates to us, so that those who wish to learn anything may do so with the help of these slates. Those who do not understand *Gurbani* (hymns of the Guru) ask others to explain them on these slates. Whichever sepoy is on duty, he carries these slates from one cell to another. This freedom to exchange ideas through the slates has been given by a special order of the prison authorities.

Superintendent: I am going to take away all the slates.

I: What a big fief you are going to confiscate. I am not sorry to lose the slate. I am sorry that you have completely lost your sense of justice. In the name of law and order you are taking away the slates and going against the orders of your superiors. The stigma of your injustice will definitely come on record some day. Your sham and shallow justice will be exposed.

On hearing such strong words from me, the Superintendent and the Jailer felt a little ashamed. With his head lowered, the Superintendent looked at the history ticket which was in his hands and cancelled the punishment which he had ordered. He did not write any other punishment on it. All the slates were taken away. He handed over the history ticket to the Jailer and went away. The Jailer ranted and raved and made a frantic effort to give me some other punishment and he did not rest till he had glutted his evil passion by doing so. I do not know whether he took permission of the Superintendent or not, but under his own signature he wrote an order on my history ticket stating: "Randhir Singh cannot in future go to the dairy farm and milk the cow. As the cow cannot be brought into the prison compound, he would be given milk from the hospital." In the evening a man brought some milk from the hospital, some sugar, and a little sago. I kept the sugar and the sago and sent the milk away. I was given a lighted stove. I boiled the sago in water and mixed some sugar in it. After taking this preparation I rested contented and happy in my cell. Early next morning the Superintendent again came there with his whole staff and started fretting and fuming about my refusal to take the milk. A hot discussion took place as follows:

Superintendent: Well Randhir Singh, there are two more reports against you today. Firstly, you have disobeyed the orders and returned the food sent to you. Secondly, you are trying to commit suicide by going on hunger strike.

I: Both the reports are not only incorrect but utterly false and are baseless allegations. I have not disobeyed any orders nor have I tried to commit suicide. We Sikhs consider committing suicide a great sin "One who commits suicide is the greatest sinner", says our Guru. So how can you expect me to commit suicide?

Superintendent: Then why did you send the milk back?

I: Ask the Jailer, Mr. Meak. He knows fully well and so do all the high officials including I.G. Prisons, D.C., and the Medical Officer that I have taken a religious vow to take food by discrimination or that prepared by a Sikh who leads a Sikh-like life. I was therefore specially allowed to milk a cow and prepare my own food. The subject has been discussed over and over again and the prison authorities have taken final decisions on it. You have now started the old story again only to tyrannize over me. What more baseless charges can there be than to dub my simple effort to maintain a religious vow as an attempt to commit suicide?

Superintendent: You should not have refused the milk and sent it back. It amounts to disobedience of the orders of the Jail authorities and also creates a suspicion in our mind that you are trying to commit suicide.

I: My refusal to accept milk neither amounts to disobedience nor does it create any suspicion of my desire to commit suicide. If I wanted to commit suicide or to completely disobey the orders then why did I accept other things like sugar and sago? I would have returned those things also. As the use of dry ration did not interfere with my religious sentiments, I accepted them and made a preparation out of them and ate it. I returned the milk because my religious sentiments based on my personal vow of *Viveka* (taking food on discrimination) did not allow me to take the food. So when I was not going to drink that milk what was the use of keeping it. I returned it. Had I kept it, it might have been spoiled and wasted by now.

Superintendent: (in a milder tone) So you did not return all the things. You took the sago and the sugar, (addressing the Jailer) Why did you, Mr. Meak, report that he has disobeyed you and was trying to commit suicide?

(With his head downcast, the Jailer remained silent.)

I: Thank God that the Jailer wrote only the report and refrained from writing the punishment without referring the matter to you.

Superintendent: How is this possible? The Jailer is not authorised to give or to record punishment.

I: Then who has recorded the punishment that I should not be allowed to bring milk from the dairy farm?

Superintendent: This is not punishment? The Jailer is authorised to take some action in matters of Jail administration.

I: The Jailer can only give his suggestions in administrative matters but he must take written orders from you to take any action. He cannot write any orders without consulting you. He cannot record any such orders on the history tickets under his own signature. No one has the right to alter the orders given about my food requirements by the Inspector General, without consulting the I.G. Please examine the whole of my history ticket. Right from the days of Multan prison, to the present day, orders about my food have always been recorded either by the Superintendent or the Medical Officers. All these orders were written mostly in my presence. All orders about the permission of allowing me milk or to cook my own food or even the withdrawal of such permission has always been recorded and signed either by the Superintendent or the Medical Officer. They generally did so in my presence. Yesterday you cancelled the punishment which you had recorded with your own hands. You did not record any new punishment nor did you give any oral order to this effect. The only verbal order was in connection with the seizure of the slates allowed to us. You did not give any verbal order about the cancellation of the facilities about food given to me. All these orders about my food were added later by the Jailer without your knowledge and without your permission. Instead of complying with your orders to withdraw the slates, he himself went against the orders of his superiors and stopped the milk that I acquired from the dairy farm. So it is the Jailer who should be charged with disobedience and insubordination. But you are bringing that charge against me without any grounds whatsoever.

Superintendent: What surprises me is how do you come to know what has happened? How did you come to know that it is the Jailer who wrote the orders?

I: Why worry as to how I come to know. Tell me frankly, is it not correct?

Superintendent: It is no doubt correct, but it is not a punishment. You took it as a punishment and as a protest you gave up taking food.

I: Certainly not, I have done nothing of the sort. I am keeping my religious vow.

Superintendent: (addressing the Jailer): Can you arrange to bring the cow to the cell block?

Jailer: It is difficult. It is possible for a day or two, but it cannot be done every day.

I: He can certainly do everything if he sincerely desires to do. His real intentions are to put me into trouble. What harm has come from my visits to the dairy-farm? No evidence has been given in support of the suspicion that I get news from outside. He has given no arguments and no reasons for disallowing me to go to the dairy-farm.

Superintendent: Well Mr. Meak, what harm is there if he is allowed to go to the dairy-farm?

Jailer: I do not take any responsibility for it.

This attitude of the Jailer made the Superintendent helpless. "What can I do now?" said he and went away, followed by his staff. This was the justice done. What justice can an officer do when he is led by the nose by his subordinates? So the mischievous element that led the Superintendent by the nose set the ball of trouble and turmoil rolling, and I took refuge in the moral and spiritual strength of the Lord. The only diet I received for a whole month was a little sago boiled in water and mixed with some sugar, twice daily. I lost weight considerably. The Superintendent and his staff would come on their daily round every day and finding me absorbed in the silence of meditation and prayer went away without a word. They did not seem to be in the least worried about me nor did I care a fig for them. I lived without any desire or expectations from them while they were devoid of any humane feeling for my fast declining health.

My suffering and sorrow is great O Lord,
Who except Thee can know my agony?
Guru Granth Sahib: Ravidas: Suhi p. 793

Who else could know the deeper agony of the soul except the true Lord? The divine Guru, the Supreme Sustainer and Healer gave me all the more ambrosial spiritual sustenance. "Keep me absorbed in Thy Love, O Lord", was my only prayer. And then what did I care for anyone else? I did not even require the sago soup but for people to make believe that I was surviving on this earthly sustenance it was quite sufficient. It was God's mysterious way of helping to restrain my diet and concentrate on the contemplation of His Light. I wished nothing but to abide by His will. I was happy that God kept my whole being satiated with His divine Name. Wherefore any other fear or hope? By the grace of the Guru I spent a whole month in beatitude of transcendent state. He never allowed my spirit to come to the lower planes. After a month I suddenly found the door unlocked but the *samadhi* in the supreme state remained undisturbed.

I was still absorbed in the bliss of spiritual exaltation. I was not conscious of the people who came there and went away. As I did not take any solid food there was no question of easing nature. I spent days in *samadhi* and no one disturbed me. One day, after a whole month, the Superintendent came to my cell. I did not know how long he stood there and what he did. I was told later on that when he came close to me, no one dared to touch me or even to call me loudly and disturb my *samadhi*. I also was sitting in such state of absorption, tranquillity and grace that I was completely unconscious of my physical surroundings. On seeing the blazing light of His grace on my face, they did not dare to disturb me in my *samadhi*. After waiting for a long time they went away.

Those who were present there told me later on that there was a stunning effect on their minds which prevented them even from touching my body. When he came on another round in the evening, I was in my normal consciousness. As soon as he came near me, he took my history ticket in his hands, and talked to me in a conciliatory but questioning tone thus:

Superintendent: Well Randhir Singh, would you like to take some good food? If you want milk, we have the same cow ready for you. If you want to cook your own food, we will give you the rations.

I: I do not seek or beg anything from you. I am your political prisoner and not a beggar that would appeal to you for anything. All desires have ceased to exist for me.

So detached and unconcerned was I, that seeking nothing, I had gained all in His love. In the radiance of supreme joy and absolute freedom of the Spirit, I burst into the following Songs:

The best Light in one's courtyard,
Is the divine Light that shines in the heart;
The best of all meditations,
Is the contemplation of the Name of God;
The best of all renunciations
Is to renounce lust and wrath;
The best thing to beg of the Guru,
Is to beg the gift of divine knowledge;
The best vigil is to keep awake,
In the music of the Songs of God;
The best of all human attachments,
Is to be attached to His lotus feet;
Blessed is the soul who has achieved all this.
Sayeth Nanak: He who hath taken refuge in Him
Finds everything good and delightful.
Guru Arjan *Maru* p. 1018

Happy and prosperous is the life of man,
Who ever lives in contemplation of God.
He drinketh the Elixir of divine Name which quenches all desires and thirsts.
Such a one eateth the bread of contentment and lives in complete satiation and peace.
He weareth the garment of honour which covers the shame of his sins.
Thereafter he never goes naked.
He enjoys the pleasures of spiritual life.
Within his own mind and Self
He is ever in communion with Truth.
Without any needle or thread,
The mind is thus sewn in the love of God.
He who is inebriated with the joy of His Light,
Is henceforth free from all troubles and sorrows.
He gets all life's treasures
Who is blessed by the Compassionate Lord.
Truth, O Nanak is attained at His Feet.
One should wash the feet of a Saint
And drink the nectar of humility.
Guru Arjan *Maru* p. 1018

Some of the important lines from both hymns became the burden of the divine song. What other reply could I give to the Superintendent of Jail? The chief warder hinted to me that the

superintendent was highly pleased and was ready to offer anything. I burst into another divine Song.

My Gracious Lord is immensely pleased.
Merciful and Compassionate is my Lord,
Who gives all gifts to His creatures.
Why are you vexed and worried O man,
The Creator shall ever protect Thee.
He who has given you life,
Shall also give you sustenance.
He who has created the earth,
Taketh care of His creation.
The True Sustainer and Protector Abideth in everyone and knoweth all.
Great is the Supreme Lord His powers cannot be evaluated.
As long as you have breath O man Live ever in devotional worship.
My being and Spirit are Thine O Perfect, Ineffable, Unseen Lord.
There is joy and happiness in Thy Mercy.
Nanak ever prayeth for Thy Grace
Guru Arjan; *Tilang* p. 724

The last two lines became the burden of the song. The Superintendent felt flattered when he foolishly thought the word Lord (*Sahib*) used in the divine song was applied to him. The ignomus officer did not know that my song was addressed to the One supreme Lord over all, who is the true bestower of gifts and sustenance. He takes care of all His creatures. But this ignorant fool felt so flattered that he said boastfully, "Tell me Randhir Singh, do you want the same cow?"

I: You want to trap me again in some new plan. I am happy where I am. If I go to the dairy-farm your suspicious mind will again bring in some new allegation. You are easily misled by your mischievous subordinates. After a few days you will again bring some baseless story to cause me trouble.

Superintendent: All right, then you can at least cook your own food here. Prepare anything you like.

I kept silent. He accepted my silence as acquiescence. Then he ordered the Jailer to issue all the rations I was getting earlier. But the Medical Officer intervened:

Medical Officer: We should not give him solid food as yet. He cannot digest it at once.

Thus they started giving me rations in small quantities. They increased it every week and only after a month I started getting the amount of ration which I was getting before. The ration included rice, flour, sugar, potatoes, ghee and pulses. Iron utensils and stove were also provided. Thus I started cooking my own food and enjoying normal diet. But it was a bit too much for me. I prayed that I might have some one to share it. God was merciful and I did get some companions to share it. The P.W.D. had started constructing something within the prison. They employed extremely poor labourers. A number of half starved boys were employed on two paise a day wages. With the whole day's wages they could not get half a meal. Their bodies were reduced to skeleton. Poverty and hunger could be visibly seen from their famished bodies. I took one meal a day and fed all these children with my own hands with the second meal. Even sepoy on duty helped me to invite

all the boys who were working in the prison. I shared all the food I prepared with these innocent boys and took only my bit of the share.

These hungry boys ate to their fill. Sadhu Radha Singh and his friends were generally the sepoy on duty. Sadhu Radha Singh taught *Gurbani* to these boys and they sang the *sabads* in melodious tunes. A happy atmosphere was created within the prison. Many boys showed keen inclination to study *Gurbani*, I still remember one boy whose name was Lukna. Although he was only ten years old, he was extremely intelligent and his wit baffled many old heads. He was the first to take up the study of Sikhism seriously. He even kept long hair and wore turban. Once he fell ill and while he was lying unconscious with high fever, his hair were removed. When he recovered consciousness, he wept bitterly over the way his hair had been removed. He hesitated to join work in the Jail and did not come till he had grown some hair and was able to wear turban.

This young Lukna was so intelligent that as he flit past the prison cells he would carry messages from one to another prisoner in a matter of minutes without letting any one become suspicious about his movements. No one suspected his movements. The prisoners loved him because he knew everyone by name and ran errands for all. The prisoners also loved one another very much.

Bhai Sajjan Singh's Operation

One day Bhai Sajjan Singh, who was lodged in the adjacent cell started reciting prayer after taking his morning bath. Sadhu Radha Singh who was on duty as sentry came and informed me that Bhai Sajjan Singh's finger had been cut and while he was reciting the prayer the finger was bleeding. Sadhu Radha Singh was wonder-struck at what he saw. Bhai Sajjan Singh was quite unconscious of his bleeding finger and his mind was concentrated in the blissful thoughts of the prayer.

"Wonderful is the spiritual poise and achievement of the Sikhs," cried Sadhu Radha Singh. I interrupted Bhai Sajjan Singh's recitation at a point where he had just completed one hymn and asked him "Well Brother, what is the matter? How did it happen?" "O it is nothing," he replied and continued the recitation. Sadhu Radha Singh brought to me the finger tip that had been cut away from his hand to show me how serious the matter was. I asked him to attach the finger piece to his hand. When he tried to do so, Sajjan Singh refused saying: "Such is the will of God. You need not worry about it anymore. It has remained cut off for a long time." Thus he disobeyed what I asked him to do. Over and above this he applied oil to the cut end of the finger instead of keeping it clean with water till some medicine was applied. First his hand and then his arm became septic. The swelling spread all over his arm and the whole arm became an inflated balloon. The matter was at once reported to the hospital.

A new Superintendent had just joined the office. He was an expert Surgeon from the Indian Medical Service. His name was Dr. Fredrick. He also performed the duties of a Medical Officer. He was known to be a very efficient physician and surgeon. As soon as he examined Bhai Sajjan Singh, he ordered that he should be taken to the hospital. I particularly requested him to make a special effort to treat Bhai Sajjan Singh. Some of us even agreed to accompany Sajjan Singh to nurse him but Dr. Fredrick assured us that he would take good care of Bhai Sajjan Singh. He did not even wait to inquire how the finger was cut because he thought that the inquiry might obstruct or delay immediate treatment that was necessary.

In the evening the assistant surgeon came and informed me that the condition of Bhai Sajjan Singh's arm had worsened. There was a danger of the infection spreading to the rest of his body. Another Surgeon had been invited from the Civil Hospital for consultation. The whole Medical

Board of expert surgeons had decided that the arm should be amputated. As there was no other way out, the amputation of the arm was likely to take place the next morning.

I sent this sad news to all the comrades. It was decided that early the next morning everyone would recite *Japji* five times and pray for Bhai Sajjan Singh which every one did. After I completed the recitation of *Japji* five times next morning, I felt an inner urge to say the congregational prayer (*ardasa*). It was a silent *ardasa* which was performed without informing anyone. I prayed in the *ardasa* that Bhai Sajjan Singh's arm may not be amputated and if he was cured he would offer *kadah prasad* at the Golden Temple as soon as he was released. This was the first time in my life that I performed such an *ardasa*. I did it unconsciously. I did not have it in mind even a few minutes earlier. And this is what happened on the other side in the hospital.

The Physicians, the saints of God,
Have gathered together,
The treatment is hopeful and effective,
Because God Himself is a witness to the healing;
Lo, the patient is rid of all sins, maladies and sorrows.
Guru Arjan: *Phunhe*

The doctors were now around Sajjan Singh who lay absorbed in silent prayer ready for amputating his arm. Dr. Fredrick examined the arm and thinking that Bhai Sajjan Singh was asleep, he woke him up saying: "Wake up, we have to administer chloroform to you". "Why?" asked Sajjan Singh. "Because your arm has to be amputated," replied the surgeon. "It is not necessary to keep me under chloroform. You can amputate the arm without it. You will find that I will not move nor complain, in the least, of pain. Go ahead," said Sajjan Singh.

The Surgeon was taken aback at the courage and endurance powers of this twenty year old young man. He wondered what these Sikhs were made of. Even at such a young age they could look at suffering and pain with such stoic indifference. For a moment he hesitated to amputate the arm. An idea flashed across his mind. He now decided to try some minor operation by which he could take out the pus out of the abscesses. Some unknown power impelled him to save his arm. It did not strike him before. But now he made an effort to save the arm. As soon as the abscesses were cleared of the pus, the swelling subsided and the laceration began to heal. The joy of the surgeon, Dr. Fredrick, knew no bounds. He had given up hope of saving Sajjan Singh's arm, but now he felt a miracle had worked. He personally came to dress the wounds. He ordered his assistants to take extraordinary care in nursing his wounds. Happy at the success of his operation, he came to me and said, "Well, Randhir Singh, your companion is perfectly alright now. Do not worry about him. His arm has not been amputated. It is completely healed up.

I: You have been very kind and generous and your labours have borne fruit.

Superintendent: No no, I did nothing. It was a miracle. I was ready with my instruments to amputate the arm and just as I was about to do so, something checked me. In a flash came the idea to me that I should try to save his arm and what struck me suddenly had not occurred to me before. My mind suddenly changed when the youngman asked me to perform the operation without the chloroform. The minor operation was performed without the chloroform and he did not stir in pain, even once. He did not even know on which arm the operation was being performed. Even if I had amputated his arm, he would not have felt the pain. It appears he was under the trance of some spiritual inspiration. After giving expression to his feelings in English he

went away. I sat in thanksgiving prayer (Later on Bhai Surjan Singh came to meet me along with my wife, I asked him to offer *kadah prasad* at the Golden Temple on behalf of Bhai Sajjan Singh. (Both Bhai Sajjan Singh and Bhai Surjan Singh are living at the moment of translation - *Translator.*)

Dr. Fredrick performed his duties very conscientiously and inspired confidence and efficiency in his staff. I have never seen so conscientious a British Officer. He himself bandaged the arm of Sajjan Singh everyday. He ordered one or the other Assistant Surgeon to be always present to watch Sajjan Singh. They had to remain with him for two hours by turn. Even at night his assistants had to be present near the patient. He worked even on Sundays and every night he came to see Sajjan Singh at least once. We expressed our grateful thanks to him for his sympathies in so many words. His relations with the political prisoners were very cordial but soon Mr. Meak started instigating him against us.

Meeting with Bhai Nirbhai Singh

Bhai Nirbhai Singh, an old friend, came to meet me in 1920 on his way back from Calcutta where he had gone to attend the Congress session. Unfortunately we did not get time to talk to each other. Bhai Nirbhai Singh was so over-whelmed with sad emotions that for the fifteen minutes of interview permitted, tears rolled down his eyes, uttering a few words now and then with a sorrow laden heart. God alone knows why he felt like that. In love-lorn sadness he wept like a child as he talked a few words. It however turned out to be the last meeting between us. Shortly after meeting me for fifteen minutes, he died in an accident and left for his heavenly abode for ever.

Early in the morning when he was coming on foot to meet me, he heard someone reciting *Gurbani* in a sweet and melodious tone. He wondered who could be reciting *Gurbani* so devotedly in those forests where there was no trace of Sikhism. There was no one residing there except Bihari forest-dwellers. There was no Sikh in that region but someone was reciting the *Slokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur in a very melodious tune. The singing of the *Slokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur became clearer as the singer came nearer him. He saw that a sepoy from the prison was coming close to him. From his appearance and gait he appeared to be a Bihari. He was young, clean-shaven, with a fringe of moustache. He had small curly hair on his head and it appeared that he had not trimmed his hair for some time. Over his untrimmed curly hair he wore a loose turban. The careless tying of the turban showed that the self-intoxicated wearer was indifferent towards his dress. He was singing the *slokas* of Guru Tegh Bahadur in a plaintive mood. His eyes were glistening with tears of separation from the Beloved. He walked like a moody poet-singer lost in the deep thoughts of the *Slokas*. His half-closed eyes seemed to concentrate on nothing except the love of the One Beloved. His love-lorn eyes, were *shining* with the tears of overwhelming sadness (*vairagya*) that prepares the mind for serene contemplation. In this *vairagya*, his eyes were fixed in the deeper concentration of waiting for Him'.

Fixed are his eyes in intoxication of love,
Like those of a cat waiting for a rat.
Guru Ram Das: *Bilawal* p. 845

Bhai Nirbhai Singh did not like to disturb the self-absorbed mystic mood of the sepoy, but he was deeply moved by the plaintive and mystic mood of the sepoy. He bowed down to touch his feet but the sepoy prevented him from touching his feet. He stopped reciting the *Slokas* and after they had greeted each other with folded hands, Bhai Nirbhai Singh asked, "To which state do you belong Sir?"

Sepoy: Well Sir, I belong to this state of Bihar. I hail from Kaser village in Ara district.

Nirbhai Singh: How did you imbibe the spirit of Sikhism? From where did you learn these *Slokas*?

Sepoy: Here in Hazaribagh prison some saintly Sikh freedom fighters and patriots have come from Punjab. It is their spiritual influence which has brought this change in me. Actually God sent these patriots to sow the seeds of Guru Nanak's faith and we were most fortunate to be blessed with its fruit

Nirbhai Singh: Can you tell me the name of one person out of these saintly prisoners whose association has given you the precious gifts of this spiritual-life.

When the sepoy mentioned my name, Brother Nirbhai Singh was overwhelmed and deeply moved. Controlling his emotions he said, "I have come to meet him. May I know your name please?"

Sepoy: My name is Kalpu Singh (Kalpu Singh was nephew of Sadhu Radha Singh. Nirbhai Singh was baptised some years earlier. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was among the Panj Pyaras. At the time of baptism, he had felt a great spiritual transformation. He died in a fatal accident in 1925, - Translator). I am a Kshatriya but we are good for nothing Kshatriyas. The Sikhs of Guru Gobind Singh are the real Kshatriyas. They are very brave saint-soldiers. We have been eye-witnesses to their heroic deeds for the past few years and we have been wonderstruck by their heroic deeds. Their holy living, heroic deeds and love for truth in word, speech and deeds had a magnetic influence on us. Blessed art thou that you have come to meet the saint here.

So saying he tried to touch the feet of Bhai Nirbhai Singh who embraced him. Kalpu Singh then asked him if he could be of any service to him. "You are our guest from a distant place. Your host is in the prison. It is my duty to look after your comforts and serve you as a host."

Nirbhai Singh: Your sweet words have given me great joy and comfort. What else is necessary? (Taking out money from his purse) Please give these twenty rupees to Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. This would be a great service rendered to me. You can verbally carry my message to him. Also please accept this humble gift of five rupees for the great service you are already rendering.

Kalpu Singh: God forbid such a thing, Sir. The true Guru has given us everything. Please do not put me to shame by making such an offering. I am a bond-slave of the true Lord. Even the saint (Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh) does not need anything. By the grace of the Guru he gets everything these days. When he needs anything then we are ready to offer all we earn and all we have. So please do not worry about sending him any money. As long as we are here, the saint cannot have any difficulties. There is no cause for anyone to put him into difficulties. I will go back to the prison and break the news of your arrival here to the Saint. By the way, may I know your name?

Nirbhai Singh: My name is Nirbhai Singh. Please inform the saint that I will meet him soon. I am just now going to put up an application for meeting him. If it is accepted, I will meet him immediately.

After greeting each other they parted. After about an hour Nirbhai Singh met me. The meeting with Kalpu Singh reminded him of the days when he was first baptized at Ludhiana.

I did not get any news of the outside world in this short meeting of fifteen minutes duration. Bhai Nirbhai Singh was melting in tears and sorrow of long separation. As the Superintendent was present at the meeting he hesitated to tell me much about what happened outside. It was hardly a meeting. It was just the last glimpse of a friend who was never to meet me again.

Ever since we had come to Hazaribagh prison, this was our first meeting with an outsider. No relative or friend had been allowed to meet us. In this meeting the sorrow of separation from friends was once more revived. After the meeting when I came back to my cell, my brother prisoners shouted from their cells: "What is the latest news from the 'world of men' (matloka)? What is happening there?" All that I had come to know from Bhai Nirbhai Singh was that a resolution of starting non-co-operation movements against the Government had been passed at the Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress. After waiting for years for some news from the outside world, this was the only news we got. Even to get this news was a great thing.

CHAPTER 17 - STRUGGLE FOR RIGHTS AND JUSTICE

ON HEARING THAT political leaders had declared their intention of non-co-operation with the government, many political prisoners were anxious to break their chains and make good their escape. They were eager to see what was happening in the outside world. They were fed up of the dreary life in the dark and dingy cells, and they wanted to breathe the air of freedom. All the political prisoners were kept locked up in the cells. They were not even allowed to take a few minutes walk.

Soon orders were issued by the Government to allow at least an hour for a walk in the open air. The Jail authorities of the Hazaribagh prison were specially asked why they did not allow the prisoners to take a walk in the open air. The cause of this special inquiry was that, when eighteen of our companions were released, some of them died on the way. They suffered from serious ailments like pneumonia and while some died on the way, a few others died as soon as they reached home. The Punjabi newspapers took a serious note of it and started an agitation against this ill-treatment of the prisoners.

Members of an inquiry committee set up especially to investigate into this matter, reported after a deep probe that the prisoners who were released were not given sufficient clothes. They could not stand the sharp winter wind outside, because they had been kept confined to their dark and dingy cells, and were not even given an opportunity to take a walk in the courtyard. After continuous confinement in the dark cells, when they were released, the cold and sharp wind of the fast moving buses and trains had an adverse effect on their health. Even during their bus journey from the prison to the Hazaribagh railway station, the open air wind had such a pernicious effect on their health that most of them fell ill before boarding the train. Others fell seriously ill during the train journey.

After the report of this inquiry committee, the Government severely censured the Hazaribagh prison authorities and asked for an explanation. They ordered that the prisoners should daily be taken out in the open air for a walk. I came to know about this order from some secret sources.

The prison authorities took us out for a walk in small groups for about fifteen minutes. We were never taken out for an hour. Even this, they told us, was an extraordinary favour done to us. After permitting us to walk for about fifteen minutes or at the most half an hour we were locked up again. Instead of taking us out in to open air we were made to walk in the small courtyards of the special cell blocks. Prisoners were taken out for a walk in groups of four or five. The whole day was wasted in taking the prisoners out and bringing them in. All other work given to the prisoners was done within the cells.

A group of foreign observers, mostly retired Inspector Generals of prisons, came to study the conditions of Indian prisoners. As they were visiting all the prisons, they came to Hazaribagh also. As they came unexpectedly, they found us locked in the cells. The prison authorities were informed about their arrival only a few minutes earlier. The Inspector General of prisons was also with them. Incidentally they came to the block cell in which I was locked up and started questioning me. I lodged all the complaints we had against the prison authorities and explained to them the inhuman treatment we had undergone. They listened to us patiently. As a result of this problem, hard labour, of compelling prisoners to work on the grinding wheels, was abolished. The grinding wheels fixed in every prison cell were demolished. They ordered the abolition of whipping

for political prisoners. We were to be kept in open barracks instead of being kept in dingy cells. The prison authorities were annoyed with me for telling the truth.

Hard labour on grinding wheels was no doubt abolished. Whipping of the political prisoners became less. But we were not taken out of the dark and dingy cells. Even the period of open air walks was not increased.

The freedom fighters were enraged. They could not endure these intolerable conditions any more. They were anxious to enjoy freedom at any cost and as soon as possible. They quietly prepared escape tunnels. I did not know anything about them. One day they complained to me that the Jail authorities had made their life extremely miserable. Reports and orders from above had no influence on them. All attempts to change their attitude had failed. They sought my permission to teach the prison authorities a lesson saying, "Last time we tried to escape without your permission; now please give us your blessings and we will show them what we can do. There is no other way out. We have dug out escape tunnels without your permission but we do not dare to escape without your knowledge and permission. Last time we suffered because we disobeyed you and made good an escape against your wishes. You urged us to change our plans but we did not listen to you. Now please give us permission and your blessings and then we know, nothing will stand in our way."

"I am grateful to you," said I, "that you care to take my opinion on the matter and you value it so much. But I must tell you frankly that my inmost mind does not feel like advising you to escape now. I think you have made a mistake in digging escape tunnels in such a hurry. I know you can easily escape. I do not know what type of escape tunnels you have dug out, but I know you can do everything humanly possible. However I advise you to be a little more patient and wait. I have come to know from an important source that freedom fighters who were sent to Andaman Island are being brought here. Either this prison will be changed into a special prison for those deported for life imprisonment or there is a move to set us all free in due course. This much is certain that the prisoners from Andaman Island are being brought to this place. So please wait till they come. Do not be in hurry. You must wait for them. Let us see what God has in store for us."

But my comrades once more appealed to me to accept their proposal saying: "We have already dug out escape tunnels. What are we to do with them?"

I advised them, "If they are visible fill them up, otherwise let them remain for some time." They informed me that no one could easily know about them. I however advised them again to remove all visible signs of the escape tunnels as some weak minded person might blurt out and put them into unnecessary trouble.

One day the Superintendent and the Jailer came on a round and started boasting about the strict measures they had adopted, and their control over the prisoners which made it impossible for them to escape. Our companions Ganda Singh Nihang and Natha Singh Dhun had been taken for a stroll in the special block courtyard and were locked up in special cells on that day. When Ganda Singh Nihang overheard them boasting of their administration he laughed at them and belittled their empty boast. Addressing Ganda Singh the Superintendent said: "Now you see, how firm, rigorous, and stringent our control and administration is? Now you cannot run away, however hard you may try. We have you all now firmly under our control."

Ganda Singh: That is why you keep us locked up in the prison day and night, although the orders of the government are to keep us free within the walls of the prison. So you are indeed very loyal and dutiful servants of the government who compel us to revolt against you because you yourself disregard the orders of the government.

Jailer: Here, we are responsible for the administration, and we can do what we like to fulfil our responsibility.

Ganda Singh: It is not your curbs and control that is keeping us here, so do not brag about it.
Superintendent: If it is not our strict control and administration what else has prevented you from making good your escape. Just try to run away. You simply cannot do it.

Ganda Singh: Do not swagger about your curbs and control. We could have given you a slip on any day but...

Jailer: Well, well, go on; say what you want to say. Why have you stopped in the middle of the sentence?

Ganda Singh: We could have run down your administration and smashed it long ago but we do not get permission to do so. What are we to do?

Superintendent: Whose permission?

Ganda Singh: He who has prevented us from escaping.

Jailer: Who else but our strict administration has prevented you from running away?

Ganda Singh: Why keep on swaggering and puffing about your administration? But Bhai Sahib has made us helpless. He has prevented us from running away. Otherwise we might have given you the slip long ago.

Superintendent: (addressing the Jailer) Who is Bhai Sahib?

Jailer: They address Randhir Singh as Bhai Sahib (Revered Brother). Generally they address one another by saying. "Bhai Sahib" but they especially call Randhir Singh as "Bhai Sahib"- Randhir Singh addresses every one as 'Bhai Sahib". So they generally call Randhir Singh as "Bhai Sahib".

Superintendent: That is not the only reason why they call Randhir Singh, "Bhai Sahib". All of them have a deep and profound respect for him as he is a very religious man. I think there is considerable truth in the fact that Bhai Randhir Singh has kept them under his control otherwise they might have created havoc by now. But I do not believe that it is Randhir Singh who has prevented them from escaping. It is our strict control over them which has not allowed them to run away. How could Randhir Singh prevent them? Last time also Randhir Singh tried his best to prevent them from escaping but they did not listen to him. The fact is that they cannot run away now. Our stringent measures leave no room for them to escape.

Ganda Singh: Your administration is rotten to the core. It is trash, and useless.

Superintendent: (Striking his foot against the ground). Our administration is excellent.

Ganda Singh: It is nothing, absolutely nothing. It is just trash, I repeat.

Superintendent: Can you run away now?

Ganda Singh: Yes, whenever I like, I can escape without any difficulty.

Superintendent: Can you get out of a locked cell in our presence?

Ganda Singh: I could certainly show you how I can get out of a locked cell, but what is the use. You are not going to reward my feat by giving me milk and butter. You will put us into more trouble. You will still not believe that we could easily escape whenever we liked.

Superintendent and Jailer: (with one voice). Why not? We will then be convinced that it is not our stringent measures that have prevented you from running away but the moral control of Randhir Singh.

Ganda Singh: You must promise that you will not keep us locked in the Punjabi cells in future.

Superintendent: I promise that you will be immediately taken to the special block and you will be given quite a lot of time for open air stroll. Then after some time you will be sent to the open air barracks.

Ganda Singh: Do you give the assurance that you will not break all these solemn promises?

Both of them with one voice said: "Certainly". At heart they laughed and mocked at the possibility of any prisoner getting out of the locked cells. They thought Ganda Singh was only boasting of an impossible feat.

Ganda Singh: Take anyone of us to the Punjabi cells and he will perform the feat.

Superintendent: All right, let anyone come out. You can name any one and we will take him to the Punjabi cells.

Ganda Singh: (addressing Natha Singh Dhun). Natha Singh, you better go and show these people the miracle of *Chandi*.

Natha Singh: All right take me out, I will show you the miracle of *Chandi*.

Natha Singh was taken to the Punjabi cell. The whole Jail staff followed the Superintendent and the Jailer to see the wonder feat. He was brought to the Punjabi cells where we were locked. All alternate cells were kept vacant for Bihari prisoners. As soon as Natha Singh was brought to this block, he said: "Now in which cell do you wish to put me to test." The Jailer pointed to a cell close by. "All right, open the lock", said Natha Singh. The lock was opened and as soon as Natha Singh got into the cell he said: "Lock it up firmly."

After he was locked inside the cell, he said: "Now you can lock the outer door of the block and go as far as the sentry goes when he is on duty." They had hardly gone to the other end of the block when Natha Singh shouted from behind "Come back, the trick is done." When they came to the spot they were surprised to find that the door of the prison cell was still locked and Natha Singh

was standing outside it. Both the door and the lock were in order. Suspecting that there may be something wrong with this cell, they locked Natha Singh in another cell of their own choice. After locking him up they had hardly gone half-way to the end of the block when Natha Singh again shouted, "Come back". They found the door intact and Natha Singh standing outside the locked cell.

Superintendent: How is this possible? Is this a miracle or black magic?

Natha Singh: Well Sir, I am neither a magician nor a miracle-monger. There is something wrong with the iron bars of the cell doors.

Superintendent: What is the wrong with them? Show us the defect?

Natha Singh took them to a cell that was locked. He lifted one of the bars up by placing his foot on the cross bar. The lower end came out about nine inches above the lower band. He then pulled the bar out and there was sufficient space for him to get in. He got into the cell and then straightening it again he fixed it in its proper place. The Jailer, who was as stout as a bull and a military man, tried his best to pull the bar out again but he was not able to move it from its position. He did not know that Natha Singh and his companions had loosened the ends of one particular bar in every cell. But the Jailer and the Superintendent could not bend the bars they handled even with the help of one or two sepoys.

Then Natha Singh took them to the second block and there pulled the bar out with such a fierce jolt that the bar broke from the middle and the prison door was crippled. They then acknowledged the courage and the ability of all the Sikh prisoners to escape and praised and patted Natha Singh.

They immediately ordered that the political prisoners should come out of those dingy cells to the special Bengali prison cells. They thanked them all for not making good their escape, when they could no doubt easily do so.

They took me aside and said "Well done Randhir Singh! You have saved our honour. There is absolutely no doubt left in our minds that prisoners could have escaped whenever they liked. It is you who have saved us from a very serious situation. Had all the prisoners escaped, the government would have hanged us all. We all might have been ruined. You have saved us from great humiliation and punishment. We will never forget this act of gratitude you have done. No one will cause you any trouble now. You will be kept in great comfort. You have saved our honour from going to ruin, we will repay you all with excellent treatment. Sikhs are really very brave, courageous and generous people."

I: The Sikhs are always reasonable and generous but your rulers are always thankless and ungrateful.

Superintendent and Jailer: (patting me on the back) O do not say that. Forget the past grievances and forgive us for all the wrong things we did in the past. You will now see that our treatment is humane and generous.

I: All right, let us see. The Khalsa is clean and pure in mind and heart. You will again change for the worst.

Jailer: No, no, such a thing will never happen again. Rest assured that we will keep you very happy. You have really saved our honour. After repeating these assurances they went away gleefully.

For about two hours the prisoners met one another in the open for the first time. They embraced each other and talked freely and intimately till sunset, and then they went to their cells for the night. These new special prison cells had a common veranda and we could enjoy the free air coming from the hills, visible across the outer walls. We could see the fine mountain scenery as far as the eye could see and the cells were clean, airy and shining. We spread our beddings on the floor of the cells and started reciting *Gurbani*. My mind soared in spontaneous flights of spiritual meditations. Ah, who could now hold the soaring spirit taking flight like a singing crane into the unknown deep? I gave free rein to the winged soul in search of union with the Beloved. The whole night passed in the waking-state of illuminated contemplation. Who knows what might happen tomorrow? Take the time by the fore-lock today.

My fears were justified. Hardly a night had passed when the prison authorities were again seriously upset by the freedom they had given us. Some one whispered into their suspicious minds that the bars had been loosened by the prisoners and they were ready to escape. They suspected that I planned all this. So, as soon as it was dawn I was taken to the eastern end of the prison, where there were three prison cells for solitary punishment. I was locked in one of these cells. There were no one in the other two, and not a soul could be seen as far as the eye could see. I could see a few empty barracks and a very large open lawn, studded with green trees and lovely roses and many coloured flowers. Far away I could see, potato fields, mango and *papaya* trees. I was allowed to move about in the day time, but being under solitary punishment I was not allowed to meet or talk to anyone. A sepoy was posted and a servant given to light fire for me. All my cooking utensils were sent to this place. I could fetch water from a pump fixed on a pucca ground at some distance and I was allowed to cook in the veranda of the prison cell. I felt the separation from my comrades but I enjoyed the solitude and the beauty of the surroundings which lifted my mind and soul into the fragrance of communion with Him. My heart was welling with the unitive love for the divine Being.

As soon as I took my bath early in the dark hours of the morn, my heart and soul were ablaze with the fire of His love. Like a flash of lightning, I felt the touch of His Spirit and grace and I forgot all about my cell and surroundings. Like a honey-bee caught in the fragrance of the lotus flower, I was so overwhelmed by the light of His grace that I sat there on the grass of the open lawn in deep *samadhi*. All the agony and sorrows of poignant separation were forgotten. Absorbed in His Love and Light, my restless soul burst into the following song and my mind rested in the peace of spiritual wed-lock:

How can I describe my inward agony?
I am athirst for a glimpse of the enchanting Beloved,
My mind is restlessly yearning for Him;
I brood over the pangs of my love for Him.
O when will I meet my Beloved?
I try to exercise restraint,
But my mind is restless;
Ah, is there any divine Man of God,
Who will unite me to Him?
I would sacrifice all meditations,
I would give up penances and oblations

I would renounce all happiness for a glimpse of Him.
If a saint can reveal His Light to me,
I would be a sacrifice unto him.
In utter humility and self-dedication
I would serve such a saint,
And give up all glory, pride and honour,
For him who reveals His Light to me.
The Guru has revealed His Light to me,
I am wonder-struck on seeing His splendour,
I have found the Compassionate One in my own heart.
All my thirst for His Light is appeased.
Guru Arjan: *Sarang*: p. 1206

I do not know how long I remained absorbed in the melody of this divine song. My mind was resting in the peace of its ecstasy when like a lightning flash; my mind was pierced by the thrilling sound of celestial Music again:

Just as a diamond pierces a diamond,
The divine Spirit has pervaded my mind
And has given it poise and peace;
All the souls are permeated by this shining Diamond: His Light;
He has been revealed by the Guru's Word.
God is unveiled by the symphony of Unstruck Music.
He who is pure as a swan.
Can visualise the Diamond: His Light;
Sayeth Kabir: I have seen such a Diamond
Whose Light pervadeth the whole universe.
The unseen Diamond has been revealed
The Guru's wisdom has shown it to me.
Guru Granth Sahib: Kabir: *Asa*: p. 483

The magnetic effect of the hymn was felt even by distant hearers. On the other side of the wall of my solitary cell I could hear Sadhu Radha Singh singing the above hymn in an intoxicated mood. Tears flowed down his eyes as he sang in an extremely melodious tune. He sang every line a number of times as if he was deeply absorbed in its deep meaning and experience. He timed his singing in such a way that he repeated every line that I sang in a rhythmic duet. Two souls were united in the music of the divine song.

This part of the prison was absolutely secluded. Otherwise there might have been good gathering there. The sepoy on duty stood listening in dumb silence. The old man who lighted the fire for me sat there in mute wonderment. It appeared that the leaf of every tree and every grass blade was singing the divine song.

When the song ended, I regained my normal consciousness. I cooked my meals and after taking what little I had prepared, my mind again brooded in deep contemplation. No one came and disturbed me. There was not a soul to utter a whisper. Even the Prison authorities did not come for a round here for days together. For the whole day I sat there absorbed in the thoughts of the Beloved.

In the evening I was taking a walk, when suddenly the Jailer, Mr. Meak, came there and started strolling along with me. He started talking to me in English.

Jailer: I hope you have liked this quiet place because of its fine surroundings and solitude.

I: "Wherever God willeth to keep me, that is heaven for me" I am happy here if it is His will that I should stay here, but what has tempted you to ask that question?

Jailer: I just wish to explain that you have been brought here because you love solitude which suits your meditative way of life. It is beautiful and attractive spot and is excellent for prayers and meditations. Here you can pray and sing and move about as you like. There is no one to disturb you here. I am asking you all this lest you may not misunderstand why you have been sent to this solitary corner.

I: I very well understand why I have been sent here. Nothing what you do, remains unknown to me. Why are you beating about the bush and creating an erroneous impression about your motives? I know what your evil intentions are even now and I would request you not to disturb me by trying to trap me in your evil designs. You will reap the fruit of your evil action and intention. They cannot have any effect on me. Your mind is always spinning the web of black deeds. Please do not try to involve me in them. Leave me alone in my solitude and peace and go away from here.

The Jailer, Mr. Meak, looked at me with shocking surprise. He looked at my face with a concentrated attention but did not speak. He opened his mouth to say something but remained silent. Both of us sat opposite each other on a raised platform. He kept on looking at my face.

I: Why are you looking at me like that?

Jailer: I am reading your face. I have been working in the Criminal Investigation Department and I have studied face reading. From your face I can know what is in your mind.

I: What is the necessity of reading my face at this moment?

Jailer: Forgive us, Randhir Singh. We levelled some serious charges against you. Both the Superintendent and I believed these charges to be true but now I feel that we have committed a grievous sin. Your face shows that you are absolutely innocent. Your inner innocence reveals that you are blameless.

I: But I told you both yesterday, that you are ungrateful, thankless, and untrustworthy without reading your faces. Within twenty-four hours you have thrown your promises and assurances to the wind and your whole attitude has changed.

Jailer: I am really very sorry over all that has happened.

I: What is the use of expressing regret when the damage has been done? Our Guru says: "Never do such a thing over which you may have to repent later on."

Jailer: We have not done any harm to you. You are perhaps just trying to find out what we have done.

I: *'jin man hor mukh hor ae kadhe kachian.'*

Jailer: Please explain the meaning also.

I: It means that you pretend to be friendly but at heart you still have evil intentions and designs and thereby you are false and unreliable.

Jailer: Well, we sinned against you and I have confessed. If I had any evil intentions why should I have told you about it?

I: But you have not confessed the whole thing. You have laid a serious trap for me and made utterly false reports against me.

Jailer: I have not done any such thing.

I: Then you have got it done by some one else. But remember God will protect me and your sins will rebound and strike you down like a boomerang. You cannot harm me.

Jailer: The Superintendent has given strict orders that you should be kept in seclusion. That is the only sin committed by us. We have not done anything beyond that. You feel quite happy in this solitude here.

I: Have you not reported to the Government through the Deputy Commissioner that I, Randhir Singh, am responsible for damaging the bars and inciting the prisoners to escape.

Mr. Meak was stunned and his face became pale.

I: I can read your face now, without having had any training in the Criminal Investigation Department. I can see your hidden sins speaking for themselves on your face.

Jailer: I admit that you are right, but how did you come to know about our extremely confidential report? You can never know such secret document merely by face-reading. To tell you the truth, I had no intention of concealing anything from you. I just forgot to tell you. We have really committed a great sin by making this false report against you. But I assure you that we are going to contradict this report on the basis of later findings. I am now going to my office and this is the first thing I am going to do. But I want to ask you one question; I hope you will tell us the truth.

I: Now you have come to the point. Now you will reveal the real purpose of your visit to me. What is it that you want to know?

Jailer: (feeling a little ashamed). We are now convinced that you had no hand in damaging the prison bars, but we have sufficient evidence to prove that your moral effort prevented the prisoners from escaping. We might have been completely ruined if the prisoners had made good their escape. You saved us from this calamity, and now we seek your help to know who was the author of these plans and who was responsible for loosening the bars to make way for escape? No one can help us in this matter except you.

I: (shouting at him). How dare you, Mr. Meak to suggest that I should betray my friends and be a traitor to my comrades? You still believe that I was a party to this plan?

Jailer: No, no, by God, never. I have never had any such thought. I have already told you that we are convinced that you have nothing to do with it. We just wished to know whether you know who has done it.

I: How am I to know who has done it?

Jailer: You are able to tell profound secrets. Here also you can use your spiritual powers and know it?

I: I am not a magician or a juggler. I consider it a sin in displaying occult powers. Sometimes I naturally come to know about your secret misdoings. That is not miracle-mongering or forecast.

Jailer: Well Sardar Sahib, the fact is that you know all your companions intimately and no one knows them better. You know who is expert in breaking Jails. You could easily guess.

I: For me everyone is a saint.

Jailer: Well then who has damaged these bars and loosened them from both ends?

I: So you suspect that these iron bars of prison doors were damaged by some particular person. Even if it is true it is improper for you to suspect any one without solid proof.

Jailer: I solemnly promise you, that if you can help us in any way to find out the real culprit, not only will we contradict our first report against you but we will also strongly recommend your release. We will not let anyone of your comrades know that you revealed the name of the real culprit.

I: I consider such a release an insult and a curse. Damned be the person who accepts such a release and damned be the person who offers such a release. I do not care whether you contradict your earlier report or not. I care a fig if you do not contradict it. Even if you make another thousand reports against me, I would care a fig for them. Do you come here to mislead and misguide me? Please go away; I do not wish to discuss the matter any more. If I speak more harshly you may feel insulted.

The Jailer went away without a word. Neither he nor the Superintendent came to me for many days after this incident.

Visit of the Inspector General

The Punjabi Inspector General Bawa Jiwan Singh had been transferred by now. He was replaced by a British Inspector General. Seven days after receiving the report he came to Hazaribagh prison. Accompanied by the D.C., and the Superintendent, he came straight to my cell. I was standing with my back to cell bars when the whole staff came there. As soon he came near me the Inspector General remarked: "Is this the man?" The Superintendent whispered into his ears; "He knows English". The Inspector General was silent for a moment, and I burst into laughter. The Inspector General changed his tone and the context by saying: "Is this the man whom the prisoners call the saint, and cooks his own food." Then addressing me he said: "Are you happy here, Sardar Sahib? This place is quite good for prayer and meditations? Do you have any other difficulty? I believe you like to stay in solitude. I hope you have no other complaint."

I: I have complaint against your 'justice'. I do not lodge this complaint before you. The true Judge will chastise all evil doers and will do justice to us. He alone will sift truth and do justice on the basis of truth. Your prison officials have recently given proof of their folly and injustice and have started repenting over what they did. They will repent still more. I feel quite happy here. I am free from all sentiments of joy or sorrow. I will remain contented under all conditions. But I am grieved to note that even officials of your position cannot dare to speak the truth. You know very well why I have been brought here, yet you are attributing different reasons to it. Is it not a deliberate attempt to distort the truth? You are trying to conceal the real facts and make a fool of me. Don't you think that I am quite aware of the folly of the prison authorities, and on the basis of their evil suggestion, you have sent their false report to the Government. I know everything and yet you are trying to make a fool of me by concealing facts from me. You better give up pursuing or covering up this folly and go ahead with your business. Why waste my time. Soon the bubble of falsehood will burst and the truth will be revealed.

Inspector General: No, no, Sardar Sahib. Some one has unnecessarily created a wrong impression in your mind and you seem to be sorely grieved.

I: The Khalsa is ever free from grief or pain. Those who indulge in falsehood will fall into their own trap and be victims of grief. He who causes injury to the innocent people will reap the thorns of his evils deeds. He will have to bear the suffering of his sins.

On hearing these stern answers to their quibbles the new Inspector General went away and I was left to enjoy my spiritual solitude and meditations. I passed my days in peace, spiritual joy and contentment. "Strange are Thy ways O Lord, Thou has made the prison cell a meditation cave. By the blessing of Thy grace and Name, even the lonely prison cell has become a heavenly abode". The inner illumination now revealed all surroundings bathed in Light and blooming with fragrance of fresh flowers. There was divine light all round and there was divine Light blazing in the naval-lotus of my body like the shining waters of a sea.

Sadhu Radha Singh persuaded the Chief Head Warder to put him on duty in this area. Thus whenever he was on duty he was posted in this block; I enjoyed his company very much. At night the fragrant wind came from the yonder hills to my cell, inspiring love, contemplation, and spiritual exaltation. My mind remained poised in the peace of inner enlightenment. Radha Singh would prepare garlands of many coloured flowers and place them as homage to the holy Word on *Gurbani Pothi* (Selection from Scriptures). The sweet scented flowers made the whole atmosphere fragrant with joy. Day and night passed in sweet absorption and intoxication of the divine Word, now bursting into a song and then diving deep into mystic silence. The deep shadows of the mango and *Neem* trees, the fragrance of the flowers, the fluffy carpet-like grass, made the whole atmosphere enchanting for prayer and meditation, and for hours together I would sit there wrapt in contemplation. Many a meals were unconsciously missed, and then I would use all the rations to prepare a grand meal to serve the poor labourers working in the prison and enjoy serving them with my own hands. Many kinds of food were prepared for them. Tomatoes, green pease, green beans, potatoes and all the vegetables available were prepared and distributed to the hungry and half-starved labourers.

I took very little food. The spiritual food was my major sustenance. The jail authorities had given me solitary confinement as a punishment, but by the grace of God there was an atmosphere of eternal spring in that solitary corner of the prison. The prison authorities were in a fix. The

investigation into the prison bars and doors became a very complicated matter. Many prison doors were demolished and rebuilt. Even some prison cells were thoroughly repaired.

Some senior Civil Engineers who came to check up all the prison bars came to my prison-corner also, which Radha Singh had named *Panch-bati*. They checked up the prison bars of my cell also. I asked them why were they doing so. They answered that there was suspicion that they have been loosened from both ends by the prisoners and they were making a half-hearted routine checking. They were asked to check up all the prison bars and report on the causes of the damaged and unfit prison bars. I told them that the prison was a very old one. It was built many decades ago and it appeared that many bars had become loosened from ends. If they checked the bars of the old barracks of the prison they might find the bars loose from both ends. The Engineer took the suggestion seriously, and when he checked up the bars of the old barracks he found that they were loose from both ends. When he lifted them up the bars came out of the lower clamp leaving nine inches of escape hole below it. When he pulled it aside it came out of the middle clamp. The Engineer showed them to the Jailer and the Superintendent. No Punjabi prisoner had ever been sent to those barracks. They had never even been allowed to go near those barracks. So no one could now blame the prisoners for damaging the prison bars.

The Engineer investigating the matter fearlessly wrote a long report stating that these prison cells being very old, their doors and bars had become utterly useless. Thus all doors of prison cells were defective. The report opened the eyes of the authorities and the Jailer and Superintendent began to repent over their mischief of laying the blame on Punjabi prisoners.

The Superintendent, the Jailer, and the Inspector General repented over their suspicious attitude and the wrong they had done to us. The Superintendent came to me and told me that he had really been very unjust towards me. He expressed his regret over it and assured me that I would be sent among my companions. I told him that it was better to leave me alone in that corner. If he sent me again to my companions I might again be made victim of some dangerous suspicion which might lead to trouble. It was better to stay in isolation than to be maltreated, every time I was with my companions. But he persuaded me to go to my companions.

To make amends for his past treatment he even allowed visitors to meet me. He now somehow wanted to cover up his misdeeds. So for two days he allowed me to meet my wife Smt. Kartar Kaur who had come all the way from Punjab with Bhai Surjan Singh. I was allowed to meet her for about four hours daily. This was the first time in my prison life when I was allowed to meet freely with any one. For the first time I received the news about the happenings in Punjab.

Bhai Surjan Singh told me about *Nankana Sahib* tragedy and other *Panthic* movements in Punjab. The Jailer and his wife generally sat near us at the time of interview but they did not understand Punjabi. The only thing they were particular about was that I might neither receive anything from outside nor give them anything. Bhai Sohan Singh and Bhai Hira Singh of Hazaribagh looked after my wife at Hazaribagh with great devotion and spirit of service. They were residents of Hazaribagh for a long time and they had some Motor-parts business.

The prison was far away from the city. Everyday they would bring my wife and Bhai Surjan Singh in a car for interview and provided them with everything they required. I can never forget this noble act of kindness shown by these gentlemen. This meeting once more awakened the suppressed longing to be back home in Punjab. So far I felt that I was completely cut off from my family, my home, and my people. My wife, Kartar Kaur, came and renewed my broken ties with the world

and home. My mind had become completely detached from the world and had given up all hopes of ever meeting anyone. Complete despair prevailed and I had the feeling that no one was mine and my existence was nothing to anyone. I had been completely exiled out of my homeland, Punjab, and I had given up all thought or hope of ever desiring to be back there. The world life, as I knew it before, did not exist for me any longer. Its memory had been completely wiped out of my mind. But after this meeting with my wife, I once more felt the separation from my kith and kin and from my people in Punjab. When I felt this separation acutely and brooded in the well of loneliness, I was taken by the authorities to the block where my companions were locked. We were allowed to meet freely and I once more enjoyed their company. But trouble was still chasing us.

Opium Causes Trouble

There were many Bengali prisoners in the Hazaribagh Jail, who were now released. Many of my companions were taken from time to time to Bengali cells. Many Bengali prisoners were addicted to opium. They procured quite a lot of opium from outside somehow, and hid it near the lower end of the prison bars. When they were released, they forgot to take it along with them. It remained sticking to the lower ends of the bars. When some of our companions were lodged there for a day or two they brought it with them to our block. None of the Sikh prisoners was addicted to opium. It is quite possible that some of them did not have any inhibition against it.

One of our companions, Balwant Singh kept it in his cell. He neither used it nor did he give it to anyone. Someone secretly informed the authorities and Balwant Singh was searched and the opium found in his cell. Someone also reported that people who came to meet me from the Punjab gave me money and it is with that money the opium was procured. Without making any investigation both Balwant Singh and I were sent to solitary confinement in secluded cells.

The next day when the Superintendent went on a round, Bhai Kartar Singh took the Superintendent to task. He gave sufficient evidence to prove that the opium was left by the Bengalis. Many of our companions gave evidence and some opium was still found in Bengali cells. Bhai Lai Singh took the Superintendent to the Bengali cells and showed signs of opium still sticking to the lower end of the bars. The prison authorities felt ashamed of their hasty action and we were again brought to the special cells.

After some days a Warder who was an Englishman quarrelled with some of our companions and I had to suffer for that too. I was again taken to my solitary cell. Some of my companions managed to send this news to our friends outside from where it reached Punjab. Bhai Surjan Singh again came to Hazaribagh. Our companions also had become desperate and were about to go on hunger strike, when the Superintendent again realized his mistake and begged us not to take any such action. He brought us to the special block.

I was this time kept close to Bhai Jinder Singh who for reasons of health lived only on milk. For a few days Bhai Sajjan Singh was also with us. His mind was steeped in *Vairagyai*, the poignant longing for the Beloved) and after cleaning the utensils he recited *Gurbani* for a long time. It was the rainy season. One day the dark clouds were thundering in the sky and it had just begun to drizzle. I was sitting under a tree in the courtyard of the prison, when a wave of divine inspiration welled in my soul and I burst into a song: *mohan pran man rangila*, in the musical mode, *Raga Malar*. It was the *Raga* of the rainy season and the song was most suitable for the time and occasion. My voice soared to the highest pitch and its music thrilled the whole my inner consciousness:

Friend, contemplate the Lord day and night,
Waste not a single moment;
Serve the Saint (the Guru) with devotion,
Renounce all pride and egoism,
My enchanting and cheerful Beloved is the pride of my life
He ever abides in my heart.
I am bewitched by His playful wonders;
Contemplating Him, bliss is attained,
The rust of the mind is removed.
Ineffable is the experience of meeting Him,
It is beyond expression, sayeth Nanak.
Guru Arjan: *Gujri: p.498*

The whole of the prison was vibrated with the melody of the song. The labourers left their work and came running to the place. All the passages leading to the place and the courtyard were now crowded with people. Even those who were guarding the prison gates came running to the place. The melody of the song reached even the bungalows of the Officers outside the prison. 'The Jailer was seriously upset. He ran breathlessly to the prison to see what was the cause of such loud plaintive outburst, but by the time he reached the place the song had ended. I do not remember what the Jailer said to me at that time but in the discussion that ensued, his main objection was, that it disturbed work. He asked me never to sing a song during working hours because the prisoners and labourers stopped work and the whole administration suffered. The work of the prison also suffered. According to the rules of prison Manual singing was prohibited. I told him I could not help it at certain moments of inspiration. It was better to keep me in the solitary cell which was in a secluded corner of the prison. But events were taking a different turn.

To renew all the prison bars the Bihar Government prepared a budget of two and half lakhs and asked the Punjab Government to pay it for lodging the Punjabi prisoners. The Punjab Government refused. So the Bihar and Orissa Government asked the Punjab Government to take away the Punjabi prisoners as early as possible. The Punjab Government was able to persuade the Madras Government to detain the Punjabi prisoners and preparations were afoot to send us there. It was also decided to bring the prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy Case from Andaman *Island* to Madras. Major Cook, an Englishman, was the new Superintendent posted in our prison. He was a noble, pure minded person, but he was too much of a simpleton. He did not wish to harm anyone, but Mr. Meak was clever enough to mislead him and make him do some unpleasant things. Once more the prisoners had to go on hunger strike for a number of reasons. I will relate a few incidents that I remember.

Food and Sikh Symbols

We were given good diet and rations for which the Government had sanctioned sufficient money. The Bihar and Orissa Government sent a large bill for extra expenditure incurred for treating the prisoners suffering from epidemic caused by fever (influenza). The Punjab Government found it difficult to pay. The Punjab Government also got secret reports that the Bihar and Orissa Government was not using the sum sent for the Sikh prisoners properly. A large amount was misappropriated.

The Punjab Government instructed the Bihar Government to spend as little on the food of the prisoners and give them the ration sanctioned for ordinary prisoners. So the Bihar Government

advised Jail authorities to give us food sanctioned in the Punjab Jail Manual. So we got very poor diet and the days of getting substantial rations were over.

The Bihar prison authorities came to know from the Punjab Jail Manual that Punjabi prisoners were given about 116 grams (2 *chataks*) of grams every day. In Punjab the prisoners were given roasted grams but the Biharis did not know how to roast them, so they gave us dry unroasted grams. Our English knowing companions decided to lodge a strong protest. When the Superintendent came, he asked us whether we got our share of gram. We were cleaning wheat grains and picking stones out of them. The Medical Officer was with the Superintendent. We pointed out to the Medical Officer that he had ordered that prisoners suffering from dysentery should not even be given wheat-bread. They were to be given extremely light diet, like sago or curd. We asked, "Is there any possibility of their surviving if they are compelled to eat roasted or unroasted grams?" If the Punjabi prisoners could be cured of dysentery by a diet of grams it was better not to leave this precious food grain with Biharis who might steal it and use it for curing dysentery. "We have a lot of wheat grain" we said "we could as well eat wheat grain and survive."

Then they kept the gram in water for the night and gave it to us with some salt. When they came to know that in Punjab the prisoners were given roasted gram, they tried to roast them in ordinary iron vessels without using any sand. The result was that the gram could not be properly roasted. The prisoners asked the prison authorities to take some of the badly roasted gram for their own fill and give the rest to their domesticated animals. If the animals did not groan from stomach trouble then we could take them. We explained to them that they did not know how to roast the gram.

The Jail authorities also realized that this food was harmful for most of the prisoners who were suffering from dysentery and other stomach troubles. We also realized that we would not get better food without fighting for it. It was impossible for us to survive on such coarse food as gram and barley and maize bread sanctioned by the Punjab Jail Manual. Many Bihari prisoners died because of this food given to them while they were suffering from dysentery. The doctors did not have any good allopathic medicine for treating acute cases of dysentery. Bhai Hira Singh insisted that we should be allowed to take some Indian medicines. Bhai Hira Singh knew a formula of Indian herbs out of which they procured only chebulic myrobalan (*harad*). Even this was quite helpful in treating many prisoners. The doctor, instead of providing chebulic myrobalan regularly, brought quite a large quantity now and then. Bhai Sajjan Singh ground all the surplus chebulic myrobalan into powder and made a ball of the same powder by adding some water to it.

One day the Warden, an Englishman, saw this strange ball in Bhai Sajjan Singh's cell and mistook it for a bomb. He would not come near it. He asked Sajjan Singh what it was. Sajjan Singh carried it in his plate to the office in front of all officers and explained to them that it was Indian medicine which had been provided to them. They still believed that it was a bomb. When Sajjan Singh tried to break it to pieces they all ran away from there fearing that the bomb explosion might kill them. When nothing happened there was a big laughter. It was found that it was nothing but the Indian medicine. The Jail authorities stopped providing it to the prisoners.

Many prisoners who suffered from dysentery had become very weak. They were provided with milk and other things for improving their health. Bhai Hari Singh had been ailing for long and now asked for many things to eat. Someone created a suspicion in the mind of the Jailer that he was trying to plan an escape along with many other prisoners. The Jailer quarrelled with him a number of times. One day without any report of the doctor, he was taken to the hospital on a stretcher although he was strong enough to walk. At night he was given a dose of medicine and it was the

duty of the man on guard to make him drink it. The guard on duty informed Hari Singh, that whoever was given the doze of medicine at night was found dead in the morning. He was secretly advised not to drink it.

Hari Singh took the first doze after which he felt sleepy. He vomited it out and then sat in a tub of water so that he might not fall asleep. He did not take the second doze as ordered by the Jailer. At night the British Warder repeatedly asked "How is the Punjabi prisoner? Hari Singh sent a reply "Do not worry; the Punjabi prisoner will not die now." When the doctor came in the morning he inquired from Hari Singh how did he feel. Hari Singh said he was quite fit. He asked for a cup of tea; Hari Singh used to get tea regularly. The doctor said that he could not be given tea. He would be given tea the next day.

Hari Singh said: "Although I was not unwell I was brought to the hospital on a stretcher. At night you gave me a medicine to torture me to death. Now you do not even give me a cup of tea. This means that you are bent upon killing me." Enraged beyond control he picked up an earthen flask full of water and hit the doctor on the head. There was consternation and the alarm was sounded. Finding that he would soon be caught and beaten to death he took shelter in a prison cell, bolted it from inside and sat with the urine pot in his hand, threatening that whoever went near him would first be hit with the urine pot and then given a good thrashing. No one should touch the door of his cell till the Superintendent came. He would surrender as soon as the Superintendent came.

When the Superintendent came he told him the whole story. The Superintendent asked him to apologize to the doctor, but he refused to do so. Hari Singh was taken from the hospital to the prison cell and the next day he was whipped. The Superintendent said that he had ordered thirty lashes but because he had told the truth he was given fifteen lashes. I asked the Superintendent, how could he order flogging to a prisoner who was carried on a stretcher to the hospital? When we questioned him strongly he admitted that Mr. Meak had compelled him to order flogging although normally a man who was so weak and ill could not be given such severe punishment according to Jail Manual.

The second cause was the fight for the right to wear religious symbols. Because of our struggle and fight in the Punjab Jails we were allowed to wear turban, trouser (*Kach*), bangle (*Kada*), and other things. It was included as standing order in the Punjab Jail Manual. The prison authorities admitted that these orders were passed after we fought for these rights in Punjab Jails.

But even after this order was passed the prison authorities gave us only one *kach* (Sikh shorts). We objected to it and asked for two. They pointed out that the Jail Manual had mentioned only one *kach*. We again said that there was some mistake in recording the fact as it should be and the matter should be referred to the Sikh members of the Punjab Government. They agreed to it. The outcome of this inquiry was good. We were allowed two *kachas* (Sikh shorts). Necessary changes were made in the Jail Manual. We were also given a towel. We then asked for five yard long turbans made of finer cloth and not of the coarse cloth made in jail. They agreed to this demand also and gave us six yard long turbans. These turbans were sanctioned much earlier, but they were not given to the prisoners. We came to know from a secret source that they already had the type of turbans we required and although they were not issued to us, they prepared fictitious bills to show that we had been provided those turbans and swindled all the money. When I came to know about it I took them to task. To get rid of me they gave six yard long turban to me and my companion Bhai Jinder Singh. Both of us were kept apart from other comrades. We did not know

how our companions were treated. We were getting the old quota of rations which was quite adequate. We were kept apart so that others might not come to know about it.

As our companions were given reduced rations, they went on hunger strike. Major Cook was a very tender hearted person. He could not bear to see people on hunger strike. Bhai Maharaj Singh even refused to take water during hunger strike. After four or five days Major Cook became nervous because the condition of Maharaj Singh became very serious. He came to me and sought my help to end the hunger strike. So far, we did not know anything about this clash of the prisoners with the authorities. The prisoners were lodged in three or four different blocks. About four or five prisoners from one block had not gone on hunger strike. They were yet making up their mind and were about to go on hunger strike when Major Cook came to me and asked me to pacify them. I undertook to do so on the condition that all their legitimate demands would be accepted. Major Cook at once agreed to this condition and sent a British warder to these wards. I went to the first three wards and did not go to the fourth ward as the British warder accompanying me thought that the prisoners of that ward had not gone on hunger strike. After discussing all matters with the prisoners of these three blocks I came back. The prisoners agreed to give up hunger strike on the following conditions: (1) The prisoners should be given the turbans sanctioned for them; (2) all prisoners should be given rations according to the old quota system and our complaints about food should be sent to the Punjab Government; (3) the prisoners should be given permission to prepare tea.

Mr. Meak thought that his prestige was lowered. Major Cook accepted these demands without consulting him. Ganda Singh Nihang had taken Mr. Meak to task a number of times and had even censured his conduct in the presence of the Deputy Commissioner. So Mr. Meak was unhappy about the peaceful end of the agitation for better food. He went and told Major Cook, "Instead of pacifying the prisoners and urging them to give up the fast, Randhir Singh has incited the prisoners of Block 4 and they have also gone on hunger strike." The prisoners of Block 4 had actually gone on hunger strike, but Major Cook did not know that these prisoners were on hunger strike even before I went to the prisoners for settlement of the issue. Any way, Mr. Meak succeeded in his mischievous game. Inflamed with uncontrollable anger, Major Cook came to me boiling with rage and ordered that I should be kept in complete isolation and I should be deprived of the right to cook my own food. I asked him to cool down and tell me why was I to be treated in that way. What was the cause of this unexpected punishment? I expected justice from him and if there was some fresh report against me, he must investigate properly and if I could be accused of anything harmful, he could give whatever punishment he liked. But he must tell me what the matter was and he must investigate.

Major Cook: What do you expect me to tell you? Did I send you to the other blocks to calm down the prisoners who were on hunger strike or to pour oil on fire and spread the agitation?

I: How can you accuse me of pouring oil on fire? I did nothing of the kind.

Major Cook: Did you go there to end the agitation in the three blocks or to start it even in the fourth block?

I: I did not go to the fourth block at all. The British warder who accompanied me did not take me to the fourth ward. Call him and ask him. How can you blame me for inciting the prisoners of the fourth block when I did not go there at all?

Major Cook sent a sepoy to bring the British warder for on-the-spot investigation. But the Indian Chief Head Warder, who was also with us at that time said: "Sir, Bhai Randhir Singh was sent with the British Warder to the first three blocks at noon but the prisoners of the fourth went on hunger strike day-before-yesterday. I was on duty at that time. The British Warder did not take Bhai Randhir Singh to the fourth block." The Chief Head Warder had just reported this when the British Warder arrived. The first question the Superintendent asked him was: "Did you take Randhir Singh to the fourth block?"

British Warder: Certainly not?

Superintendent: And why not?

British Warder: Because, as far as I knew, the prisoners of that ward had not gone on hunger strike. So there was no point in taking Randhir Singh there, but I came to know later on that they were on hunger strike since day-before-yesterday evening.

Major Cook cooled down at once. He looked angrily at Mr. Meak and even made threatening gestures at him. Addressing me he said: "All right Randhir Singh, come along with me to the fourth block and ask them to end the agitation. The condition of Maharaj Singh is very serious. First let us go to him. He is determined to sacrifice his life." I accompanied Major Cook to all the hunger strikers.

As soon as I went there Bhai Maharaj Singh agreed to break his fast. Major Cook sent for some milk and sugar cake and when I gave some milk to Maharaj Singh he opened his eyes. Major Cook was happy and felt relieved. Thus all prisoners gave up hunger strike at my request. All the prisoners were given ample rations. They could cook their own meals. The Superintendent sent a strong recommendation for more rations and better food to the Punjab Government, but before this letter reached the Punjab Government an order for our transfer to Madras jails had been dispatched by them. We came to know about it only when we were suddenly asked to pack up.

CHAPTER 18 - DEATH OF KEHAR SINGH AND DEPARTURE FOR MADRAS

OUT OF ALL THE incidents that took place at Hazaribagh prison, the most horrifying but with significant moral for all evildoers is the death of Kehar Singh of Sahnewal (in Ludhiana district). I forgot to write it in the earlier chapters; so I will relate it here.

Bhai Kehar Singh was arrested in the second supplementary Lahore Conspiracy Case in January 1917 and sent to Lahore Central Jail. He was suffering from tuberculosis of cervical glands and in this condition of seriously bad health he was sent to Hazaribagh prison. He was physically unfit to undertake such a long journey, yet he was compelled to travel to this distant place. During the train journey the sores of T. B. glands on his neck were bandaged everyday by a man who accompanied him. In the Hazaribagh prison he was kept locked up in a cell. He was given some medicine which did not have any effect on him.

A month after the runaway prisoners were arrested, the condition of Kehar Singh became precarious. One day Kehar Singh got up from his bed and while trying to pick up something from the floor he fell down and became unconscious. The sentry at once reported the matter and sounded the alarm fearing that the prisoner was dead. When all the officers arrived Kehar Singh was taken to the hospital where his condition took a turn for the worst. Another four or five months passed in this precarious condition. He passed his days in terrible agony. He welcomed death but death would not come. He appealed to the prison officials that he be allowed to meet five Sikhs. Two Sikhs, Bhai Hari Singh Chotian, and Bhai Harnam Singh Rasulpur were already in the hospital with him. He expressed his desire to meet Bhai Kartar Singh, Bhai Munsha Singh Dukhi and me. On being sent for by the prison officials we three went to the hospital. When we went to the hospital and met Kehar Singh he told us that he was responsible for Sahnewal dacoity and murder, in which some prominent persons of the Lahore Conspiracy Case were involved. He had mercilessly murdered a rich trader (*Banya*) of the village who refused to divulge where his money was lying (Unheeding of the pitiable cries of the Banya, Kehar Singh had slowly and mercilessly cut the throat of the Banya and tortured him to death. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh told the translator that the ghost of the Banya started haunting him, while the sores of T.B. glands caused unbearable pain. The ghost would come to the room of the cell, make a terrible noise of shaking the wooden planks near the roof, which could be heard by everyone else. Whenever Kehar Singh closed his eyes or went to sleep the ghost would come and start making the noise and threatened him with dire horrors. He welcomed death but death was kept at a distance by the unbearable horrors of the ghost and the physical pain of T.B. sores in the neck. It is only when Bhai Sahib and his companions prayed for him, that the ghost stopped haunting him and he died in peace. The moral of the incident is that a crime is not forgiven by God even if it is done under the guise of political revolution —Translator).

He told us that he killed the man by stabbing him in the neck and it is in his neck he developed incurable T.B. sores and had suffered terrible pain. "I am passing through unbearable agony and pain," said Kehar Singh. His condition was extremely pitiable and grievously distressing. I appealed to all my brother disciples to recite the *Sukhmani* for him. Each of the five brother disciples should recite the *Sukhmani* at least once for him and then pray for the peace of his soul. The next day everyone recited the *Sukhmani* and prayed for the peace of his soul. All the brother disciples were allowed to meet Bhai Kehar Singh for a short while. The next day he passed away in peace. The ghost did not haunt him after the prayers were said.

The prison officials threw his body into the forest. When we came to know about it, we made enquiry from the superintendent. We asked him, why was not Kehar Singh properly cremated? He sidetracked the issue. Instead of answering our questions he started investigating as to how we came to know about it. We even reported the matter to the Inspector General of prisons. He also started worrying and inquiring as to how the prisoners came to know about it.

Departure for Madras Presidency

Major Cook gladly wrote on my history ticket that I had been given special concession to cook my own food. He also wrote that I should be treated as a Sikh saint He even permitted me to prepare a milk preparation for the long railway journey to Madras. I prepared what we call *khoya*.

Suddenly, we were asked to leave for Madras Presidency, I do not remember the exact date but it was sometime in October 1921.

Groups of four or five prisoners were transferred to different prisons in Madras but from Hazaribagh we left together. Although the prison authorities did not tell us where each of us was to go, we somehow came to know about it. We were sent to the following prisons:

Rajahmundry Jail: Bhai Kartar Singh; Bhai Ganda Singh, Chhota Nihang Bhai Harnam Singh of Kala Sangha; Bhai Arjan Singh of Jagroan and I.

Madras Jail: Bhai Karam Singh of Ajner; Bhai Bhagel Singh and Bhai Natha Singh.

Bulari Jail: Bhai Jinder Singh; Bhai Pakhar Singh; Bhai Lai Singh; Bhai Kesar Singh and Bhai Kirpa Singh.

Tiruchirappalli Jail; Bhai Gujjar Singh; Bhai Sajjan Singh; Bhai Sunder Singh; Bhai Inder Singh.

Vellore Jail: Bhai Hira Singh; Bhai Harnam Singh of Kama Gata Maru; Bhai Maharaj Singh.

Coimbatore Jail: Bhai Dal Singh; Bhai Hari Singh; Bhai Balwant Singh.

Thus twenty three of us were divided into six groups. Up to Madras Presidency we were to travel together. As soon as we entered the state we were to go to the prisons mentioned above. Seven buses were acquired to take us for Hazaribagh Road railway station, a distance of forty miles. Mr. Meak deliberately acquired these buses from a Bengali Bus Company instead of getting them from a Sikh Bus Company, the proprietors of which knew us personally. He did not wish the Sikhs of Hazaribagh to know about our departure.

Bhai Sohan Singh, the proprietor of the Sikh Transport Company, was anxious that the prisoners should be taken to the railway station in his buses. When he came to know that all the Punjabi prisoners were to be taken by some other Transport Company, he felt very sad but it so happened that his wishes were fulfilled. The Bengali Transport Company could not provide any bus on that particular day. The prison authorities had to acquire buses from Bhai Sohan Singh, who felt very happy at the turn of the events. We were fettered hand and foot, but the superintendent, Major Cook, immediately ordered that we should be unchained, as there was no order from higher authorities to treat us like that. With ordinary handcuffs we were taken to the buses.

When we came out of the prison to board the buses the whole prison staff came to see us off. Their wives and children were also there. Hundreds of sepoy soldiers stood guard. Our friend and sympathizer, Sadhu Radha Singh wept like a child. Everyone was deeply moved by the sorrow he felt at being separated from us. Just before boarding the buses, congregational prayer was performed by me. After the prayer there was a strange and touching atmosphere. Everyone stood there with his eyes wet with tears. There was dumb silence all round. Five victory cries of *Sat Sri Akal* were uttered loudly. Then as we boarded the buses we started singing the *Shabads*. All the spectators were deeply moved. Gorkha armed soldiers stood guard. They gave us a salute with their guns. There were as many Gorkha soldiers as the prisoners. A European Christian missionary, who was very tender hearted, was appointed overall in charge of the prisoners. He assured us that he would give us the best treatment possible. The first proof of his generosity which he gave us was that he returned our prayer books and asked us to carry them with us.

On that very day Shrimati Sarla Devi had come there from Punjab on a lecture tour. The citizens fixed the lecture in the open near the road leading to Hazaribagh Road railway station. The people wanted to see us and give us ovation on our way to the railway station, but the C.I.D. informed the authorities about their intentions, as a result of which our buses were taken by a different route. All the patriots were very disappointed. The public had decided to stop our buses, if we had gone by that route.

Young Bihari boys like Lukna ran after the buses, and then could be seen disappearing out of sight, as the buses speeded away. I sat in the bus in which Bhai Sohan Singh was sitting, beside the driver. We embraced each other and felt so happy that our joy could be seen from our beaming faces. It appeared as if a marriage party was moving on. People wondered why we were not worried about going to places so far off from our homes in Punjab. Everyone thought that we were going to Punjab from where we would be released. After twelve years of terrible life in prison dungeons, we now enjoyed fresh open air for the first time. We felt we were moving in a heavenly region.

Around us the evergreen forests of Hazaribagh presented a wonderful sight. At times, as we moved in the buses, we could see a range of hills covered by green trees, and thick forests as far as the eye could see. Huge trees with green branches radiated joyous freshness. The cool refreshing breeze gave us a thrilling sensation. The vast blue sky, bent over the mountains looked glorious and wonderful. This exciting vista of nature inspired us with exalted thoughts of the creation and the Creator. Bhai Sohan Singh talked with such deep affection and spiritual intimacy that his conversation added joy to the blissful effects of nature. He offered us secretly such help which we will never forget to our dying day. We can never repay the goodwill and generosity which he showed us.

When we had gone half-way, that is about twenty miles, our buses were stopped for rest. There was a small village and a few shops on the road side. The villagers gathered together in large groups. They had somehow come to know that the buses carried freedom fighters from the Punjab. They offered us purses full of money and showed great respect and admiration. Every child seemed to be inspired with patriotic fervour. All this delighted us. A Hindu patriot compelled us to accept at least hundred rupees. Bhai Sohan Singh tried to return hundred rupees from his own pocket, though he permitted us to accept his money, but this patriot would not accept it. He would not take his money back but ultimately we had to take rupees fifty from Bhai Sohan Singh and rupees fifty from this Bihari Hindu patriot. Now we were near the railway station.

On the way, Bhai Sohan Singh showed us the hill well known as Paras Nath Mountain, which was indeed very attractive. He also explained its brief history. Bhai Sohan Singh then expressed his desire that as soon as we secured release, we should come on a missionary tour in those areas, as the people were eager to know and accept Sikhism. The Paras Nath Mountain was inhabited by such people, who would easily accept the moral and spiritual influence of Sikhism. The residents of that area were mostly Jains. They had great faith in Guru Nanak. We were yet discussing these matters when our buses reached the railway station. The buses were immediately surrounded by armed military men. When the Police Superintendent came near our buses Bhai Jinder Singh loudly said: "Take salute." The Superintendent did not understand anything. He asked us to follow him and he conducted us over the crossing and ordered us to march in twos. But we were singing the *Sabads* and did not worry about the formation. Everyone was so deeply absorbed in the singing of the hymns that the Police Superintendent's repeated order to march in formation was unconsciously ignored. He considered it an insult. He stopped short and holding those immediately behind him by their shoulders forced them to file up in twos. The freedom fighters shouted at him and asked him not to touch or to compel them to do anything. Bhai Kartar Singh then explained to him, in a very firm tone, that he should not impose unpleasant orders. When he found that things were getting out of control, he asked me to calm them down. I told him that he could use his tongue to give any orders but he should not use his hands or any violence to impose his orders. I told him that Britishers claimed to be very civilized and cultured, but he had made a very poor show of British manners and behaviour. Anyway after saying these things to him, I calmed down my fellow-patriots. He thanked me for settling the matter but another serious thing cropped up.

The railway carriage reserved for us was fixed up with iron bars in the windows but had no lavatory. We refused to board the train until we were given a carriage in which there was a lavatory. We firmly told the authorities that we would not move an inch till adequate arrangement was made, no matter how hard they compelled us to do so. They were awestruck to see us so enraged. The Superintendent was terribly ashamed of the ugly situation that had been thus created for which he blamed the prison authorities. We asked the police Superintendent to take us back to the prison where we should settle the matter with the authorities.

Superintendent: I have no orders to take you back. I have orders to send you to Madras by this train.

We: How can we get into this carriage which is without a lavatory? You better seat us in some other carriage.

Superintendent: How can I seat you in any other carriage? There are no bars to the windows; moreover this particular carriage is reserved for you. It is also difficult to ask the passengers to vacate any carriage.

We: Then make arrangement for a lavatory in this carriage.

Superintendent: This is also difficult at this moment

We: It was easy for you to become police Superintendent, but it is difficult for you to shoulder any responsibility. You should seriously think about our difficulty. The train journey will take many days. How can we travel in it without any lavatory or facilities to ease nature?

An Indian Inspector of police suggested that we should urinate out of the window. We loudly protested against this foolish suggestion, saying, "Do you think we are animals or utterly shameless creatures who can be expected to urinate out of the windows? Even if this is possible, how can we ease nature out of the windows?" We reprimanded the Indian Inspector of police saying that we were discussing the matter with the Superintendent who realized our difficulty and it was none of his business to interfere by giving such foolish suggestions. If there was a way out he could give some acceptable suggestion to the Superintendent, but it was no use talking nonsense.

The matter was about to take an ugly turn when the European missionary who accompanied us intervened. In a very gentle and mild tone he said: "The demand of the Sikh brothers from Punjab is reasonable and legitimate. We ought to be blamed for it. We may blame the railway people or the prison authorities, but we cannot immediately make amends for this mistake. On my own responsibility, I am prepared to take you all in this very carriage and I will see that you have no difficulty in urinating or easing nature throughout the train journey. In the name of God I appeal to you to get into the carriage. I will also travel in it. I give you my word of honour that whenever the train stops you will be allowed to go to another carriage for the use of lavatory. You will have absolutely no difficulty in this matter. I know you all are very responsible, faithful and truth loving Sikhs of the great Gurus and you will not let me down if I give you the freedom to go to any other carriage or on the platform. When I treat you well and humanely, you will also, I hope, be very considerate to me."

We were deeply impressed by the sincere and humane offer of this British missionary. We felt confident that he would honour all his assurances, because he had already proved himself to be very generous and kind by returning the prayer books. His face reflected his noble nature. The police Superintendent was also happy that a way out of the difficult situation had been found out. He said: "It is all very well now; get into the carriage; I am sorry the railway authorities did not look into the matter. I am sure the Padri Sahib will treat you well during the journey."

We were all very happy about the solution of the problem, and taking the missionary Inspector by his word we boarded the train. The train steamed off, and as soon as it stopped at the next station, the Missionary Inspector opened the doors of the carriage and allowed us to go to another carriage for the use of lavatory. As no one felt the necessity for doing so, no one moved out of the carriage. On every station people grouped around our carriage to see the freedom fighters from the Punjab. Many people came inside our carriage and talked to us. The Missionary Inspector did not raise any objection. People offered us fruit, money which we hesitated to accept but we thanked and blessed them all. From these visitors we received a good many news about what was happening in the country. For the first time we got an opportunity to read newspapers. The genial Missionary Inspector did not prevent people giving us anything.

We were surprised to find a great change that had taken place in the country. In 1917, when we were moving from Multan to Hazaribagh, no one dared to come near us. The very sight of freedom-fighters frightened people, but now in 1921 every child was inspired and was brimming with patriotic fervour. All the cowardice and timidity was gone. Young patriots congratulated us for our courage in freedom struggle and told us that the sacrifices of the freedom fighters of 1914-15 movement had awakened the whole country and every one was freely and openly expressing his feelings for political freedom in very high spirit. On every station we found renewed and greater determination for the country's freedom and open sympathy for the freedom fighters who were still suffering great hardships in prisons.

We were deeply impressed by the liberal mind and gentle treatment of the Missionary Inspector. When the train stopped on a railway junction for a long time, he permitted us to camp in the open and prepare our food. Accompanied by two sepoy, three of our companions went to the bazar for buying rations. By the time they came back fire was lighted and cooking had begun. Some brought water, others brought fuel and in a very short time food was cooked.

At this moment an old Sikh gentleman, who was a railway contractor, came near us and greeted us. He offered his services for any help he could possibly render. We thanked him for his sympathy; but he immediately brought some utensils and rations for preparing *kadah prasad*. It is unfortunate that we have forgotten his name and address. After taking our food to our fill we boarded the train again to continue our journey. This Sikh contractor sent telegrams to other railway stations, where our train was to stop. So on every station we were received by a few Sikhs and quite a number of provincial political leaders and patriots. Some Sikhs travelled with us from one station to the next stoppage. Everywhere we found that the people were awake and full of zeal for freedom and liberation of the country.

Our train then reached Kharagpur station. Here Sikhs came in large number to meet us. There is a big railway workshop at Kharagpur in which over five to six thousand Sikh workmen were employed. All of them came with their families to see us. Incidentally there was a political meeting also at Kharagpur. The Sikhs who had received advance information about our train journey through Kharagpur informed the public in the political gathering about it. Thus a crowd of fifteen to twenty thousand Hindus and Muslims also came to meet us. There was wonderful unity among all communities at that time. The organizers of the political gathering ended their meeting soon to enable the public to reach the railway station before our train arrived. There was such a large crowd that not an inch of space was left on the platform. The Sikh people were almost in tears with joy to see their brothers who had suffered so much. We got down from the train and freely mixed with the people in the crowd.

The Missionary Inspector came to me and said: "I cannot recognise all the prisoners. I give you full freedom to meet your admirers, but please see that I am not put into an awkward situation. My honour is in your hands now. Trusting you and trusting God, I am allowing everyone to go and meet people freely. If they run away and escape I will be in great trouble". I assured him that his kindness and generosity would be repaid by a similar sense of trust and confidence in us. If he trusted them, they would all prove that they were worth of such a trust. He should not worry in the least. No one would betray his trust.

In a matter of minutes the *Sangat* of Kharagpur brought offerings of delicious food and fruit. All the prisoners sat in a line and ate to their fill. The Missionary Inspector and all the police guards were also given food and fruit who ate it lustily. Fortunately this was the first time the police guards and the officers got an opportunity to eat something. Sweetmeat, bread, milk, fruit and vegetables were freely offered to us on other railway stations but never to the police officers and their men accompanying us. For fear of leaving us unguarded the policemen never got down from the train and thus they did not take a morsel of food. They were desperately hungry. They could not leave us alone to get their food from the refreshment rooms. The political zeal of even the vendors on the platform prevented them from selling anything to the policemen guarding us. On the Kharagpur station when food was freely distributed to us, the European Inspector came near me and told me the sad plight of the police guard. They were unable to get any food and were desperately hungry. At my request they were given all the food they wanted. They thanked us and blessed us for this kindly act. The train stopped for many hours on the station and we had

opportunity to meet people freely. Congress leaders harangued long lectures on the platform to the people present there. There were a number of prominent people among them. The railway station was surrounded by thousands of people and we were moving freely among them. It was time now for evening prayers and even the civil authorities were upset. An engine was immediately attached to our train and it moved on. Every one shouted the victory cries of *Sat Sri Akal*.

When all the twenty-three prisoners were back in the carriage, I asked the Missionary Inspector to count them and make sure that everyone was present there. He was so excited that on the first count he found twenty-two and on the second count he found twenty-four prisoners. Then he burst into laughter and said: "The Khalsa cannot be counted," to which I replied, "The Khalsa is beyond numbering." I asked him to call out the names of all the prisoners at the next station and ask them to get into the carriage by turn. He would thus be able to check the names and number, according to his list. The evening prayer (*Rehras*) was recited and after the bed time prayer of *Kirtan Sohila*, we went to sleep. During the night we moved out of Bengal and entered Madras early next morning, where the train stopped at Valtaire station.

Satyagrah at Rajahmundry station

The Madras police waited for us at the Valtaire station. They were headed by a British police officer who was so haughty and arrogant that he started showing his arrogance as soon as he took charge of the prisoners from the Missionary Inspector. Earlier there was a minor clash with the Missionary Inspector also. When a Khadi clad Congress leader brought some fruit for us, he pushed him away rudely. We were seriously upset and when we strongly protested against his open insult to our political leader he was unnerved. Fortunately for him Mr. T. Prakasham, Editor of the "Swarajya", an English Weekly, intervened and settled the matter. The political leader was allowed to present fruit to us, when Mr. T. Prakasham pointed out and explained to him who the political leader was, the police officer was unnerved and felt greatly ashamed of his attitude.

Now we were handed over to the arrogant British police Inspector of the Madras police. He locked us from outside and did not allow anyone to get down even for urinating or easing nature. He got down at every station but kept us locked in. We were in great difficulty. For fear of being molested by us he started travelling by the adjoining carriage and even where the train stopped he kept at a safe distance from us. Our comrades had made up their mind to forcibly seize the keys of the compartment, but fear had already overtaken him for his misdoings and he kept away from us. From morning till late evening none of us was allowed either to urinate or to ease nature. Those who suffered from dysentery were in great difficulty. Because of this difficulty we did not eat or drink anything. After evening prayers we made up our mind to somehow punish this rascal, so that he might never treat political prisoners in this manner in future. I gave them a plan to which everyone agreed.

Now that we were to be detrained on different stations, we planned neither to reveal our identity nor to get down. When he called out the names of the prisoners who were to get down, no one should answer. He did not know anyone of us by name, nor could the Madras policemen identify us. Even the two policemen who had accompanied us from Hazaribagh were new and did not know anyone by name. We also exchanged our prison shirts carrying our number. It was 9 p.m. when we reached Rajahmundry railway station. Five of us were to get down here. As soon as the train stopped the British police inspector and the Rajahmundry prison authorities came near our carriage. They consulted one another and examined some papers. Then they called out our names and ordered that those whose names were called should get down from the train.

The arrogant British officer called out our names at the top of his voice, but there was no answer. Randhir Singh: Silence. Kartar Singh: Silence. Harnam Singh: Silence. Arjan Singh: Silence. Everyone sat silently like a statue. When the arrogant British officer was tired of calling out our names, pronouncing them with clearer voice and emphasis every time, and found everyone sitting unconcerned, a British official of the Rajahmundary prison who knew Hindustani quite well came forward, and started calling the names. Even the pronunciation of names was not correct. He sometimes pronounced my name as Randur Singh, and sometimes Raindir Singh. Everyone remained silent till he was tired of calling out names. What to say of getting down from the train we refused to listen to them or to obey them. The British Officers then asked the sepoy in charge to point out who was who, and ask those who were to go to Rajahmundary to get down. But they expressed their helplessness saying that they knew no one. They knew me but did not know my name. Everyone addressed me as the "Saint". Beyond that they did not know anyone.

Both the British Officers now found themselves in an awkward situation. They were extremely puzzled and confused. They expressed their helplessness and begged those of us who were to go to Rajahmundary to come down. The tense situation thus created attracted a large crowd including some prominent Congressites, who had come to meet us. Then through the carriage window, Bhai Kartar Singh addressed these leaders and the spectators in English and told them how cruelly and callously had the arrogant British officer treated us all the day. Everyone started condemning the British officer shouting "shame, shame" at him. He had to undergo so much humiliation that he became pale and felt terribly ashamed of what he had done. Responsible officers of Rajahmundary at once got the door of the carriage unlocked and allowed us to go to the latrines to ease nature, on their own responsibility.

Many had now got stomach trouble or headache. Within a matter of minutes we came back to our carriage. The British officers once more tried to single out the five who were to get down at Rajahmundary. But we turned a deaf ear to their entreaties. Responsible Officers of the Rajahmundary prison gave us strong assurances of good treatment in future, but we refused to trust them and were determined to teach them a lesson. Everyone admonished and cursed the British officer who had caused all this trouble. Even the arrogant British officer begged us to get down but we asked him to stick to his orders and frankly told him that we were determined to see that he was justly punished for the treatment accorded to us. They were extremely disturbed to see us so adamant. The train had to be detained for half an hour more than the normal stoppage.

The railway authorities refused to stop the train any more and the train moved on, amid cheers and victory cries from us. All the twenty three prisoners had to be taken to Madras.

The news spread like wild fire and telegrams were sent to the authorities about the *satyagrah* of the Sikh prisoners. The newspapers flashed the story of the non-cooperation of the Sikh prisoners for the ill-treatment accorded to them, and the just punishment given by these prisoners of the Lahore Conspiracy Case, to the concerned officers for their callousness. Even on Madras station no one could compel us to get down. Our carriage was detached from the train and on one of the platforms *daris* were spread out to give us courteous reception. All this was planned by some wise prison officials of Madras prison. We came out and sat on the *daris* and the Madras prison officials personally attended to our requirements. Incidentally there was no patriot nearby. Not a single Congressite was to be seen, probably because they had not received the information. On this station only richly clad ladies and gentlemen moved about unconcerned about the freedom fighters. It appeared that the patriotic fervour was almost absent in the Madras city. They pacified us and then took us to Madras prison.

In the prison we were asked to camp in an open courtyard. We were given all facilities to take our bath, and we were given all we required with the utmost courtesy. The British officer in charge of the Madras prison treated us very gently and in a very complacent manner. He informed us that the British officer who had ill-treated us had been justly punished. He had been immediately downgraded and the extra-expenditure incurred by the government in taking us to Madras and back to Rajahmundry has been imposed on him as a fine. He now begged us not to link him up with that trouble and asked us to help him out by telling our names, so that we could be sent to the prisons allotted to us. We wanted to prolong this case till it came to the notice of the higher authorities so that Mr. Meak, who was the man really responsible for all our troubles could also be punished but the civilized and courteous treatment accorded to us by Madras prison officials pacified us, and cooled our tempers.

To win us completely by their good behaviour they permitted our comrades who had just returned from Andaman Islands to meet us freely. We met and embraced each other after years of separation and then there was a grand feast for which all facilities were given to us by the prison authorities. It was all the will of God that the *satyagrah* brought us to Madras and gave us an opportunity to meet our brother freedom-fighters of the Lahore Conspiracy Case after so many years. A dream vision which I saw some years earlier also came true. In the year 1920, at Hazaribagh I had reported to my friends Bhai Kartar Singh and Bhai Attar Singh a dream-vision according to which Bhai Attar Singh was to get his release and I was to go to Ras Kumari (Madras). A few months after this, Bhai Attar Singh was released under a general clemency order. And by a strange accident I came to Ras Kumari (Madras). I had completely forgotten about the dream vision. Bhai Kartar Singh reminded me about it. Had there been no *satyagrah*, the plan for which was made spontaneously a few hours before we reached Rajahmundry, I might not have seen Madras, nor could I have met my old comrades, about whose whereabouts we knew nothing. So everything happened according to the will of God.

It was not at all pre-planned. Nor did we have any feeling of revenge against anyone. If we wished to take revenge, we gave up a golden opportunity. One night during the train journey, all the police guards and officials were so fast asleep that Bhai Gujjar Singh, whom we addressed as Shrimanji, and Bhai Ganda Singh Nihang quietly collected all the guns belonging to the sepoy and the sergeants. They brought all these guns to me and suggested that we should make good our escape. I told them that we should do nothing in the spirit of personal revenge. People were now courting arrests and going to jails all over the country and it would be a matter of shame if we tried to escape. It was against the spirit of the Khalsa. It would be sufficient humiliation for them that we wake them up and returned them their guns.

This is exactly what my comrades did. All the police guards and sergeants were stunned when they saw their guns missing and were wonder struck to see our moral courage when we returned the guns. Thus instead of taking any revenge for the ill-treatment, the Sikh prisoners gave a fine example of the courageous tolerance and heroic spirit of endurance. So we never did anything in the spirit of revenge. We therefore agreed now to tell our names to the Madras prison officials. The Officers also completely left the solution of the problem to us.

We first revealed the names of the three comrades who were to be lodged in Madras Jail. We wanted to see how they were treated. We saw that they treated them with the utmost courtesy and gave them all the rights a political prisoner deserved. They were given excellent food and all the clothes they required. This pacified us completely. We then revealed all the names and we were sent to different prisons in small groups.

CHAPTER 19 - RAJAHMUNDARY PRISON

FIVE OF US were taken to the Madras sea side to watch the tide, and then we were brought back to Rajahmundry. The Englishman in charge of the prisoners was very kind and helpful. On every stoppage he asked us whether we required anything. When we reached the Rajahmundry station we were taken to the Godawari River where we took our bath. It was early morning now. After the bath we were taken to the police Dak Bungalow where we said our morning prayers. After prayers we were given permission to prepare our food for which we were liberally given rations. All the things that were necessary were given in excess. He provided fruits, sugar, milk, vegetables and even ice. We could prepare anything, and we were made to feel at home. We were completely satisfied and we were given the necessary rest also. Then we were taken to the Rajahmundry prison on a bullock cart. The Police officer walked on foot. When the patriots of Rajahmundry came to know about our arrival they rushed to meet us. The British officer permitted each one of them to meet and talk to us as we moved on. It was difficult to keep them away. They accompanied us up to the prison gate from where they turned back when we requested them.

A strange incident took place on our way to the prison. As our bullock cart passed through a garden full of dense trees a fiery young Madrasi was seen coming towards us. When we looked back we saw that he had a dagger in his hand and he was coming at full speed to strike someone. Then he was suddenly seen raising his shining dagger ready to pounce on the Englishman and stab him near the neck. It appeared that in another minute he would kill the poor Englishman who did not know even about the assailant's presence just behind him. He was walking behind our bullock cart without knowing that death was hovering over his head. Just as I saw the young man about to strike a fatal blow, I thought of doing something to save innocent Englishman. As I was looking intently at the young assailant his eyes caught mine. I folded my hands and silently begged him not to kill, signifying my appeal by shaking my head.

I asked my companions also to beg him not to commit the crime by folding their hands and to appeal to him not to do such a thing. The youngman was influenced by our silent appeal. When he was about to strike the blow, he lowered his dagger, hid it under his armpit and disappeared in the dense forest. As he went away he greeted us all with a smile. The English officer did not know that he narrowly escaped death. Nor did the police men accompanying him know anything about it. We thanked God for His mercy and for saving an innocent man from being murdered. Soon we reached the prison gate.

When we reached prison we saw a humiliating sight. A number of prisoners who were to be taken out for work were stripped naked and stood there with their undressed black bodies in a most humiliating condition. They did not even have a *langoti* (cloth to cover their genitals). The policemen were searching them in a very shameful manner. I had seen this sight in a vision about eight years earlier. Today I saw it in the real world and I also now realized that the vision which I saw eight years earlier was actually a vision of the future happening which I actually saw now. Generally the new prisoners were also searched in the same manner. We fearlessly entered the prison. No one even dared to look straight into our eyes. The police men accompanying us were carrying our beddings and bundles of books as we walked in our Khalsa dress, the prison officials looked at us with awe and suspense.

In the centre of the jail was the Jailer's office and in the upper story was the office of the Superintendent. We were asked to wait in the corridor. We sat on the benches lying there. The

Head Warder looked at us with great suspicion but did not dare to say a word. Each of us was given a dress, utensils and beddings the sight of which shocked us. We at once judged that we will have to fight for our rights here also. It is necessary to tell here that according to Madras prison laws we were entitled to the following things: knicker, a shirt, cap, a handkerchief, two earthen utensils, one small earthen jug, one metal cup, a bedding and two blankets. All these things were against the requirement of Punjabis and Sikhs in particular. We first picked up the earthen vessels and breaking them by striking them against pucca floor, loudly shouted *Sat Sri Akal*. Thus we broke all earthen pots and then uttered victory cry of *Sat Sri Akal*.

The Head Warder was stunned but did not utter a word. The sound of our breaking of the utensils drew the attention of the Jailer who was reading our history tickets. When he came there, we asked the head Warder to give us a match stick with which we wanted to burn the rotten beddings. The Jailer spoke something to the Head Warder in Tamil. The Head Warder then said to us that the Jailer was very angry. One of us who knew English was asked to come out and talk to him, because the Jailer did not know Hindustani. So Bhai Kartar Singh went to his office.

First of all the Jailer raised the question of breaking the earthen utensils. He was told that we used an earthen vessel for eating purpose only once and then we broke it. We were prepared to accept the earthen vessels if after using them we could break them every day and get new ones for our next meal. We could not use such utensils for all times and all purposes. As for the clothes we told him that we could use the shirts and the knicker but we also required turban and underwear which the Punjab government had sanctioned for us. We expected that the Bihar and Orissa prison officers had informed them about it. We showed a copy of the order sanctioning these things. A copy of the order had been sent to him to be attached to the Madras prison manual, but the poor Jailer did not know what the Sikh symbols like *Kach*, *Kadah*, and *Kirpan* were. Bhai Kartar Singh showed them to him and explained that they were the Sikh symbols.

The prison officers generally maintained a threatening attitude towards a prisoner and tried to frighten them into submission, but none of us was afraid. The Jailer permitted us to keep our dress, utensils and books but he locked us in separate prison cells and kept a guard so that we could not talk to each other. He did not know that we were very highly qualified jail birds. In the prison-university we had acquired so to speak even a Ph.D. degree. Our history tickets showed that we had endured all possible punishments, and we had mastered all the tactics. When we reached the prison cell we saw a strange sight. Every prisoner had to carry his own urine pot which were small earthen vessels. With unclean hands the prisoner took out water from a large pitcher.

Then they came to an open place, one side of which was used as lavatory. First of all we refused to carry our urine pots. Then we carried water in another vessel. The prisoners were expected to stand in a line and ease nature in the open. We refused to do so. When the police guard reported the matter to the jailer, he ordered that we could use any corner as latrine. The sweeper would then clean it.

On the first day we were given the food which was generally given to Madrasi prisoners. They placed it before our cells in earthen vessels but we refused to take it. After three hours they carried it away and it was reported to the officer that the Punjabi prisoners had refused to take the food. The next day they brought some *chapaties* clumsily prepared by the Madrasis but we did not touch them; so they carried them away.

On the third day we were brought out for medical examination. After weighing us the doctor wrote on our history sheet that we should prepare ropes from jute. Only Bhai Kartar Singh and I knew English. When Bhai Kartar Singh's turn came he said to the Medical Officer: "It is better if you give us one match stick also so that we may burn all the jute and go back to our cells. For three days we have not taken any food. How is it that no one has brought this report to you but you remember putting us to hard labour?"

On the fourth day I was called to the office where my history sheet was being examined. They now found out that I prepared my own food. So I was given necessary rations. I told the officer that my companions were also hungry; some arrangement should first be made for them; I could take my ration later on. The officer suggested that one of them could come and take the rations for them. The Jailer wanted Bhai Ganda Singh of Khapar Kheri to cook their food but he did not know English, so I suggested Bhai Kartar Singh's name. Bhai Kartar Singh was brought to the office but he said, "First and foremost our saintly companion Bhai Randhir Singh should be brought out and arrangement made for his food." The Jailer informed him that I had suggested his name and to convince him that I had made the suggestion he brought him to me. So Bhai Kartar Singh prepared some simple food for four of our companions but I went without food. On the sixth day the Inspector General prison sent special orders that I should be given permission to cook my own food. Then only I started getting rations.

Three British Officers of this prison were very gentle and kind to me. The Jailer, the Superintendent and the Medical Officer were all Englishmen, and I must admit that they were perfect gentlemen. Their behaviour with us after this day was very generous. They knew what had happened on the way to Madras. There was a British missionary inspector who was particularly very kind and generous. We reciprocated his gentle treatment. These officers had come to know how we had been maltreated in the journey to Madras by another haughty British Inspector and how after enduring his ill treatment we had taught him a lesson. They had come to know about all these things. When they examined our history sheet they found that each of us had been given more than a hundred severe punishments. They also noted that it was the prison officers who always started the trouble to which we reacted very strongly, and that we never initiated any trouble. But when anyone annoyed us we reacted very strongly.

All the three prison officers discussed these matters between themselves and sent for us. They told us in very plain words that the prison officials would treat them in a very just and humane manner and they asked us whether we also will behave well. They frankly gave their impression that we had been maltreated by other prison officers without any grounds. They assured us that we would have no trouble in Rajahmundry prison and they expressed the hope that we will also not give them any trouble. We told them that if we were treated well and given no trouble there were no reasons why we should behave in any improper manner, or cause to them any trouble. They could put the matter on trial.

Then they asked us about our daily requirements. We told them that we would cook our own food, a proposal which was gladly accepted. This made things easier for them also as in that prison Punjabi food had never been cooked. Only rice and some Madrasi food was cooked. The Madrasi prisoners did not even know how to knead the flour and prepare *chapati*. So it became difficult for them to get Punjabi food cooked by their own arrangement. We refused to eat the poor Madrasi diet which was offered to us. So it was convenient for the prison officials to allow us to cook our own food. There was a complete agreement on this issue.

Secondly we refused to wear turbans prepared from a rough lined cloth prepared in the Jail. Those gentle officers accepted even this proposal. Thirdly we told them that we will not do any work; rather, we will not do any forced labour. Of our own sweet will and with perfect understanding with the officials, we might do some work. They felt a little upset when we put forward this condition but they said that if we do not do any work we shall have to remain in our cells. We told them that we already knew that at the suggestion of the Punjab government they had made up their mind to keep us within our cells. This was the reason why we refused to do any work. We accepted this proposal of being kept in the prison cell. It gave us a good opportunity for meditation. When these conditions were settled we were put into prison cells alongside one another.

They constructed a separate kitchen and fire place for us. They also procured all the utensils that were necessary. According to the recommendations of Major Cook recorded on my history sheet I was allowed to prepare my food in iron utensils. They procured for me all the necessary iron utensils like a plate and a frying pan. Both Bhai Ganda Singh and I started working in the kitchen. I used to prepare the *dal* and vegetables for all the five prisoners in my utensils. The *chapaties* for other prisoners were prepared by Bhai Ganda Singh. I prepared my own. The iron plate in which the flour was kneaded was small. The water was brought by me. The fire was lighted by Bhai Ganda Singh. After some time we used to get good fuel which had been already chopped up.

We also had to include three more Punjabi prisoners who were fed up of eating Madrasi diet. When we came to know about them we requested the officers to send them to our block to enable them to join our kitchen. Two of these prisoners were Bhai Khushal Singh of Padhri and Bhai Kehar Singh of Chotian. The third prisoner was Prithi Singh a Rajput who was locked up in the dark cell where only those sentenced to death were lodged, because he had tried to escape. We tried to get him in our block but did not succeed. After a few days Pt. Jagat Ram was transferred from Madras jail and brought to our prison. Thus he also joined our Punjabi mess. Each prisoner used to get twelve *Chataks of fine* flour and a good deal of fresh vegetables. We also got washed pulses of *mung* and *mash*.

By and by we got every thing we asked for. Each prisoner was given two ounces of *ghee* which was more than sufficient. Those who wanted to take tea got half a seer of tinned milk. I used to get fresh milk. Each prisoner got about a *chatak* of sugar. We got sufficient spices which included cinnamon, peppers etc. Thus we were able to enjoy good Punjabi food. We used to cook so much food that we even gave a little to the poor policemen on duty. The prison officers were very pleased. Once or twice we could even prepare sweet pudding *kadah prasad* and distributed it to every prisoner. Even the Jailer, the Deputy Jailer and the Superintendent and Medical Officer enjoyed our *kadah prasad*, tea and food. Thus we began to feel quite free at home. On *Gurpurb* days we were given special rations to prepare *Kadah prasad*.

Soon the prison was filled by prisoners of Congress Non-Cooperation movement. About two or three hundred Congress prisoners from various districts of Andhra came there amongst whom were many prominent leaders. They tried their best to get better food and better treatment but the Jail officials did not care about their complaints. They made pathetic appeals to the prison authorities but the more they begged for special arrangements the stiffer became the attitude of the officials. At home they enjoyed rich diet because some of them were Barristers and members of Legislative Councils but now they got a very poor diet, consisting of rice and ragi. We spared a little food for them. Whenever they required some sugar or pickle they sent a message through a sympathetic Medical officer named Dr. Venkataraman and we sent these things through him. He

told the Congress leaders that he was prepared to help them as best as he could but their behaviour was not good. He told them that five Sikhs were able to get everything sanctioned for themselves. It was a matter of great shame that five to six hundred educated Congressites could not get their rights. They were begging in a pitiable manner for petty things. If they could unite and fight for their rights they could get anything.

Two Muslim prisoners of the Non-Cooperation movement went on fast and within three days they were able to get whatever was given to Punjabi prisoners. So he suggested that they should gather courage and fight for their rights. The leaders of the Congress prisoners said "What are we to do? There are a few youngmen who cannot go without food even for four hours. When the Superintendent slapped a man named Murti we all went on hunger strike. We refused to eat food, but after a few hours nearly half of the Congressites secretly acquired food from the Punjabis and some of them were caught eating red-handed. The Jailer put all Congress leaders to shame for this shameful weakness.

Through Pt. Jagat Ram we even asked the Sikh prisoners to join our hunger strike, but they asked us to remain on hunger strike for at least five or six days before they could join. The Sikh prisoners also asked how many of us could go on hunger strike for four weeks and how many for more than a month. When we investigated and asked our co-prisoners very few were willing to go on hunger strike, but from the history sheet of the Sikh prisoners it appears that they fought through hunger strikes lasting over a month in various jails and gave up hunger strike only when their demands were accepted. It is good thing that we did not ask the Punjabi prisoners to join us in our hunger strike; otherwise we Congress leaders could not have shown our faces to them. The Superintendent of the prison was a generous Missionary and a very religious man. The Punjabis went to him and told him that he should not have slapped the boy Murti. If the boy had hit him back it could have led to his serious insult in the presence of all the prisoners. The Superintendent admitted his mistake and even extended his apology to Murti in the presence of two Sikh prisoners."

The matter ended there. Thus many wonderful things happened there. To describe them all may take thousands of pages; I am only describing a few incidents which are very important. There were many important leaders from Madras and Andhra. Amongst them was Sambha Murti, Sita Ram Shastri, Doctor Subramaniam, Venkatapaya Kundu, Rama Rao, etc. They were surprised and stunned to read our history sheets. Many young graduates copied down my history sheet word for word and took the copies with them. I knew the names of some of them but I have forgotten now. This was in the year 1922. During those days we used to get a good many news about the Sikh *Panth* also.

A Meeting

The S.G.P.C. sent two youngmen Jathedar Teja Singh of Churkana and Bhai Amar Singh a young graduate. The prison officer brought them straight into the prison. We embraced them and then talked to them freely for many hours. The Officers gave us permission to talk freely. They even took some of the delicious food which we had prepared. Thus we were able to entertain the guests well. From them we came to know some happy news about the Sikh *Panth* and its heroic achievements which gave us great joy. Jathedar Teja Singh was so overwhelmed by the heroic story of Sikh freedom fighters that it became difficult for him to tell every thing. Whenever we put him some question he only said that it was difficult to tell every thing. We could come out and see things for ourselves because our release was expected soon. With considerable difficulty we were able to get some important news from him. I knew that I would not be released soon. Neither was

anybody trying to get the release. These friends left some religious books with us. They offered us some money but we did not require anything as the prison authorities provided us everything. We even had our Kirpans with us. Thus we had a good free meeting with them. As they were about to leave, I requested them to appeal to the Prison Officer to give permission to Comrade Rajput Prithi Singh to stay in our block. He was isolated in a cell.

Right at that moment the three Prison officers were standing nearby. When a request was made they at once gave permission for bringing this Rajput brother to stay in our block. These officers, however, asked the visitors to suggest to us that we should do some light work which we linked to do, so that, they might give us permission to move freely all the day, otherwise they had to keep us in the cell. They wanted this light work to be done only as a pretext to give us more freedom of movement, within the prison. Actually they promised not to give us any hard work. To keep us locked in the cell appeared to be barbaric. When the Jathedar suggested this to us we readily agreed. We were taken out to a workshop and given light work, in different places. Two of us were already working in the kitchen. Two of them started learning tailoring. Two of them were sent to the hospital to nurse the sick. *Sehaj-Bhai* (Brother Arjan Singh) was asked to teach Hindi to somebody. Brother Kartar Singh took up book binding. Thus days passed in peace. A water pump was fixed up for our bath. We could take bath and wash our clothes and then lock up the pump so that other criminal prisoners with dirty habits could not use it. The latrine arrangement was very bad. People had to sit in the open in a shameful manner. Now regular screened lavatories were constructed. This arrangement was then extended to the whole prison. When the Inspector General prisons came, Pt. Jagat Ram and other friends strongly appealed to him that there should be uniform facilities throughout the jail.

In the Madras prison they used to mix up *dal* and vegetable and prepared a crude mixture of the two. They could not cook *dal* and vegetable separately, as we did. They also used a lot of *imli* (tamerind) and gave some of it to us. But we did not accept it. In its place the prison officers procured lemon pickle for us from outside. When the mango season came the Superintendent generally gave the prisoners a *dal* in which mangoes were boiled. We refused to accept this. Thrice a week we were given special mangoes of Bombay, one each. Each mango weighed about a seer. They were very sweet and delicious mangoes. We sowed the seeds of these mangoes in front of our cells and watered them regularly. These seeds grew into tree and these trees can still be found there. They bear good fruit. We also used to get a lot of *papayas*. Thus in the Rajahmundry prison we led a princely life. The prison officers were very happy and pleased with our behaviour. They never irritated us; so there was no reason for us to cause trouble. Their treatment was on the whole very good. There was only one difficulty. It was very hot there. To sleep in the cell in the hot season was a very difficult thing. In the coldest months like December and January we hardly required a blanket but the climate on the whole, and the water was good for our health. My weight increased from 120 to 160 lbs and I became very healthy and stout

Cooking food gave me a good deal of exercise. I had to bring water from some distance in a bucket to the kitchen. After twelve O' clock I was busy in the kitchen. Some other friends forcibly took the service of cleaning the utensils. The heavy utensils were cleaned by Nihang Ganda Singh and he cleaned them so well that the utensils were shining like silver. Other utensils were cleaned jointly by all. It is only by 2 O' clock that we were quite free from all the kitchen work. We cooked meal only once a day and we took a part of the same in the evening. In the Khalsa terminology, stale bread is called sweet bread. Thus we enjoyed the food prepared at noon as sweet bread at supper time. During spare time I wrote books on various theological subjects. It is from here that I wrote my early life in the form of letters to Giani Nahar Singh.

It was here that I wrote a book on *Gurmat Bibek*. We were about to prepare a fair copy of the same when we were asked to get ready for a transfer to another prison. A few days before leaving this prison I saw a vision of my past life in my *Samadhi*. The next day I narrated the whole vision to Bhai Kartar Singh. A part of the vision was about the future life that was likely to happen. Bhai Kartar Singh believed the vision was true and the incidents relating to the future were bound to happen. This vision about the past life is as follows:

Vision of the Past and Future

In my vision I saw that I was a young prince in some hill state. It was the time of the Holi Festival and I could see beautiful scenery all around. In the distant hills there were some caves in which the hermits and yogis spent their time in meditation. I was fond of going to these caves and serving milk and fruit to the hermits and yogis with the help of a few sepoy's of my state. I personally went to each cave and offered fruits to the hermits. One day while I was enjoying the Holi festival along with my companions I went to the caves. I carried with me some milk, fruits and other eatables.

On a far-off hill, I saw a hermit whose body through long penance had become almost a skeleton. He was sitting in meditation while physically he was very weak. It appeared that he was half-dead and there was very little breath left in him. I was shocked and overawed to see his condition. I felt great pity on him and was very anxious to save his life some how. I also felt that he had starved himself because he did not get any food. The cave was situated in an out of the way place where no body happened to see him and no one could feed him. I, however, was glad that I had been able to spot him out and got an opportunity to save his life. There was some life in him. There was some hope that if I could help some milk to go into his body he might recover.

As soon as this idea struck me I filled my syringe with milk and pumped it into his mouth. But his mouth was shut so tightly that milk could not be pumped in through his mouth. I asked the sepoy accompanying me to open his mouth by force. The sepoy thereby broke two of his teeth with a stone as it was not possible to open his mouth. Through those two broken teeth I pumped the milk into his body. The broken teeth and even the milk caused some pain which disturbed the concentration of his mind. As soon as he came to his consciousness he started cursing me. He said "I was performing this great penance to win the kingdom of your father. You have interfered with my penance, and now I will not be able to get the kingdom for which I was performing the penance, as it is difficult to restore the broken concentration. In great anger he not only uttered many curses but suddenly picked up a trident from a place nearby and threw it at me. Some how I escaped, though I was the target. Although the trident did not hit me, it struck the leg of a sepoy and cut it off above the knee. After this incident the vision suddenly ended; it was followed by another vision of this life.

The same hermit who was performing penance in the last vision was seen in a healthy condition but with one leg cut off. He came towards me with a number of men and stood before me. I said to him, "Well, is this all you have got for your penance? How did you lose, your leg? He said, The man whose leg was cut off by my trident caused my leg to be cut off. The difference is that I cut off his leg with a trident but he hit me with a bullet in the war, and the doctor cut off my leg, because it could not be cured. Thus I have paid for what I did and now you must get ready for the revenge I must take for hurting me in my last birth." I then said to him, "All right you can do whatever you like. I am prepared to pay the debt." He then had me tied hand and foot and forcibly tried to open my mouth and put some instruments into my mouth which went down my throat. Suddenly I

came down to my normal consciousness. When I was in my normal consciousness, I instantly felt that this incident was bound to happen.

When I related this vision to Bhai Kartar Singh, he at once said that I must be prepared for such an eventuality which was bound to occur. I was prepared to accept the will of God and pray to the Guru for grace. Bhai Kartar Singh had intuitively come to know through a dream the exact date of our departure from Rajahmundry prison. Bhai Kartar Singh's soul was as pure as a clean mirror and he foresaw that we were leaving the prison together.

The very next day we had hardly prepared our meals when the order for our transfer came, and we were asked to get ready at once. Four names were announced for transfer which included Bhai Kartar Singh, Prithi Singh, Pt. Jagat Ram, and I. After taking our meals we went to the office of the Superintendent. We were asked to pack up our bedding and baggage. Three of us were to go to the Nagpur jail and the fourth was to go to Jabalpur jail. It was the last day of November in the year of 1922. I do not remember the exact date. Mr. Brown, the Jailer, and Mr. Devis, the Superintendent, bade us farewell with great reverence and out of respect and affection gave me yellow turban and new white dresses for all. Mr. Devis, the Superintendent, wrote some excellent recommendations and remarks on my history sheet especially mentioning "he being a Sikh Saint should be given special permission to prepare his food - a facility which was given to him in all previous prisons. He has been very gentle and noble in behavior here."

CHAPTER 20 - ON THE WAY TO NAGPUR PRISON

TAKING INTO consideration the long journey I had to undertake, the Superintendent sanctioned some sugar, fine flour and other food stuff to enable me to prepare some dry food (*Panjiri*) for the journey period, which I packed up in my iron utensils and kept it wrapped in the prayer carpet. Those who were about to depart were ready. As we met those left behind, for the last time, embracing each one of them, some of them burst into tears. The painful scene of separation from friends who loved us so much, surprised the Congressite prisoners of Madras. They were wonderstruck by the genuine and deep love, which took the form of tearful separation.

The prison officers were not anxious to send us off. Mr. Davis stood before us and addressed us for the last time thus: "We have been extremely friendly and humane in our treatment of all political prisoners. As human beings it was our duty to do so. Your attitude towards the staff was very gentle, polite, and dutiful. As long as you were here in this prison, I never considered you or treated you as prisoners. So today I do not want you to leave this place as prisoners. Neither is the dress given to you for the journey that of prisoners, nor will any one of you be handcuffed like prisoners. I am confident and earnestly hope that you will honour the trust we have in you." Then Mr. Davis turned towards me said: "If you take responsibility for this Rajput Prithi Singh, he will also go without being handcuffed?" Mr. Davis considered Prithi Singh a habitual absconder, so he feared that he might put him into trouble, if he was allowed to go without handcuffs. I refused to take any responsibility for him and asked Mr. Davis and his colleagues to handle the matter in the way they thought best.

Those good people, particularly the gentle Superintendent took a word of honour from Prithi Singh that he would not betray the authorities. He was frankly told that he would be given the same facilities and freedom to travel without handcuffs as were given to Punjabi prisoners if he gave assurance on oath, that he would not try to escape or abuse any facility and freedom given to him during the journey. Unhesitatingly, Prithi Singh promised on oath, in our presence, that he would not try to escape, or abuse any freedom given to him. Impressed by his solemn promise, the Challan police officers did not hand cuff him. As a matter of fact Mr. Davis and his police party did not carry any handcuffs or chains with them. They just accompanied us as our body guards. There were two police Inspectors, one Englishman and the other Indian, along with five policemen who carried our luggage. All our luggage was carried by the policemen, while we walked along with them quite pretentiously. The brother patriots came to the gate to wish us good bye. It was the end of November when we left for Nagpur.

From the prison we were taken to the railway station on a bullock cart. A group of patriots were waiting for us near the waiting room, where we were to wait for the train. These patriots (*Desh Bhagats*) of Rajahmundary had brought for us fresh fruit and some dry fruit and sweets. They offered these things to us in such abundance that we had to carry them, with us. Such was their selfless devotion that we could not refuse their offerings of love. The tables in the waiting room were loaded with fruit and sweets, which everyone ate to his fill. I also took some fresh and dry fruits.

There was an old South Indian patriotic mother, whose son Dr. Subramanyam was still in prison for the cause of freedom. She offered many things and served the prisoners with great devotion and motherly affection. The police Officers watched in respectful silence. Then there was some conversation between the political workers and leaders. Some leaders of Andhra Pradesh also

came there amongst whom was the eminent leader Mr. Sambamurti. They started delivering lectures to the crowd that had gathered there and my name was particularly mentioned. Prithi Singh and Pandit Jagat Ram also spoke. At last the train was about to arrive and we made preparations to board the train. A number of patriots accompanied us for a long distance in the train. There was a long stoppage at Secunderabad station where we took our bath. As we sat in contemplation of His Name and the morning prayer, the train covered a long distance. On the way I wrote the following letter to Gyani Nahar Singh: "We are now on our way to Nagpur which is in C.P. (present M.P.) We are coming nearer and nearer Punjab. By the grace of the Guru, when I am transferred to Punjab, it will I hope be for release and that is what you wish. We are four political prisoners, who are now being taken without handcuffs or chains. They have also given us good clothes. In a hurry I cannot write more now. I will write on reaching my destination. Greetings to all friends." (Letter No. 11, written on 27th November, 1922)

Hazur Sahib: Nander

The train reached Nander station. I heard a porter crying: Anyone getting down here at Nander. When I came out of the meditative mood, the train was not moving and once more I heard the porter's cry: "Any one getting down here at Nander?" The very moment the name of the Holy place (where Guru Gobind Singh spent his last days) entered my ears, I almost lost my body consciousness. My astral body plunged out and lay prostrate in salutation to the holy city, while my physical body was lying listless in the train. In a spiritual vision I saw the radiant face of the Beloved Guru Gobind Singh. Within a moment, my inner eyes had a glimpse of splendid sights. The whole atmosphere was filled with light and waves of ambrosial joy which thrilled my whole being. Within this dawn lit atmosphere I could see in a vision the eternal personality of Guru Gobind Singh in full radiance, shedding light all around. I wanted to circumambulate around it in humble homage and reverence, but I could not. Someone lovingly uttered these words in my ears: "Rise and regain normal consciousness, the time has not come; you will by the will of God get an opportunity to come as a pilgrim again. Abide by His sweet will." When I regained consciousness, the train was on the move. (Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh went to Nander (Hazur Sahib) after his release from the prison with a number of his friends and admirers.)

When the British police Inspector inquired and was told about the cause of impatient and tearful condition, he was deeply moved. He said that if he had been told earlier at Sikandrabad, he could by his own authority break journey at Nander for ten hours and give us an opportunity to pay homage to the holy place. Now he did not know how he could be of any help. I thanked him for his genuine and profound sympathy. As the train moved on, my heart still yearned for the pilgrimage and every breath that came out was a passionate yearning for one glimpse of the sacred place.

In this condition, I wrote the following letter to Gyani Nahar Singh: "We have just passed Hazur Sahib (Nander). Our train reached Nander at 9 p.m. I could not control my tears. The thought that I was passing through the sacred place, without paying homage to it, was painfully unbearable. Ah! Such was the sweet will of the Lord! My pilgrimage to the sacred place will now be at some later date. The sanctity and the spiritual atmosphere of the place had its ambrosial effect on me even as we passed through it in utter darkness. I just could not control my tears. I was overwhelmed with the feeling of forced separation from the holy place through which I passed. Now we will pass through Manmad on our way to Nagpur." (Letter No. 12, written on 29th November, 1922. Bhai Sahib visited Hazur Sahib 13 years after this date.)

Prithi Singh Escapes

Meandering through places we now entered Central Province. The train had not reached Nagpur when Prithi Singh jumped out of the running train and made good his escape. It was late in the night, when the policemen having full confidence in every one of us, were sleeping heedlessly. There were four policemen at the four doors, but even they were not in the least suspicious that any one of us would run away. So even they were careless and negligent in their watch. The incident took place when the Indian police Inspector was on duty. He was also sleeping. The British police Inspector had some suspicion about Prithi Singh. He suddenly woke up and found Prithi Singh missing. He was seriously upset. He woke up everyone. Brother Kartar Singh woke me up and told me that Prithi Singh had escaped. My first reaction was that he had committed a thoroughly wicked deed. After giving his word of honour and promising on oath he should not have done such a thing. Bhai Kartar Singh also condemned it. The policeman on duty was questioned. He informed us that he had gone to the lavatory and had not come back. When the lavatory was examined, its window pane was broken. When the train had just started from Wardha station and was moving slowly, he broke the window pane and made good his escape. (Prithi Singh comes from a village Lalru near Kalka. He was first arrested in 1914. At the time of arrest he fought with the policeman and in the struggle both fainted. He was sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy case, but the sentence was commuted to life sentence. He escaped from Madras Jail. After this escape he remained underground, till along with M. Gandhi he courted arrest. At the request of M. Gandhi he was soon released.)

The policemen felt duped and confused. The poor old British Inspector of police began to sob helplessly. We had assured him that on his return he would be promoted for his excellent services but now he feared that he might even lose his job. He remembered his wife and children and wept fearing that the whole family might have to suffer. We were deeply moved by his pitiable condition and we consoled him assuring him of all our moral support. What he feared was that every Indian would give evidence in favour of the Indian Inspector and put the whole blame on him because he was a Whiteman. Bhai Kartar Singh and I assured him that we would stand for truth and justice and we would frankly report that Prithi Singh escaped when the Indian Inspector was on duty and not when the Englishman was on duty. Why should we stain our soul by telling a lie? To support an Indian Inspector for negligence of duty and to put a Whiteman into trouble was not patriotism. Our assurance for all moral support brought some solace to his troubled mind and he stopped weeping. We kept our promise to him.

When on our arrival at Nagpur, an Inquiry officer came and questioned us, during the course of investigation, we pointedly said that the Englishman was not to be blamed, as the incident did not take place when he was on duty. The Inquiry officer was impressed by the truth of our statement and he admitted that Sikhs were free from colour prejudice. He thanked us for saving the career of the old British Inspector, who along with his family might have faced terrible disaster, if we had not told the truth. All Indian policemen had given false evidence against him and favoured the Indian Inspector of police. We do not know what was the evidence given by Pandit Jagat Ram, who was taken to Jubbalpur prison. Only two of us were brought by the White Inspector to Nagpur prison; all other prisoners and policemen went to Jabalpur. Only one policeman was sent back to report the escape of one prisoner at Rajahmundry.

In the Nagpur Prison

Both of us were taken in a tonga to Nagpur prison by the White officer. When we reached the prison gate, the British Jailer had just come out of his residence and met us at the gate. We were there early in the morning. The first question he asked was: "Where is the third man?" In a

frightened voice the Inspector said: "He ran away." The Jailer angrily said, "Damn fool! You are done for; you may not only be dismissed but may even have to go to prison." The poor man began to tremble pitiably. He was already very depressed. I then whispered into the ears of the Jailer: "Please do not frighten him so much. He is already feeling very miserable and terribly shaken and with a little more shock his heart may fail. Actually he is not to be blamed," The Jailer was a little impressed, so he consoled him. This encouraged him a little otherwise he might have collapsed there and then. The Jailer took us into the prison. The Inspector followed us, carrying our luggage. The Jailer took us to his office and the Inspector also followed us. Our dress impressed everyone so much that no one dared to search us. No one treated us as prisoners. After entering the office, the Jailer gave a receipt of our takeover to the Inspector who had brought us and asked him to go from where he had come.

I was deeply moved by the poor man's condition, so I requested the Jailer to offer him some tea and breakfast, as he was so depressed that he had not taken anything so far. The Jailer sent a prisoner to his house and procured some tea and biscuits for him after taking which he gave a salute and went away leaving us behind in the room.

Trouble Begins in Nagpur Prison

After examining our Challan papers of Rajahmundary prison and after some conversation with Brother Kartar Singh in English the Jailer atonce gave orders that we should be taken to the civil wards. He asked a Jail Warder to carry our luggage and then accompanied us to the civil ward and showed us the kitchen. There were nine seats in this prison barrack, and in this small barrack he placed two cane chairs and tables for us to do our work. We were happy that we were given a quiet corner and we did not have to fight for any of our rights. We were to be kept apart from other prisoners. After taking permission from the temporarily posted Superintendent, an Englishman, the Jailer allowed us to cook our own food. We were given the same rations which we got in Rajahmudary prison. This Superintendent was posted there only for a month or so. The real Superintendent was on leave. Both the Jailer and the officiating Superintendent gave us all the rights and facilities that we got in other prisons. We were allowed to retain our books and some new utensils were also procured for us. Our rations were fixed. We were given all the things we required and we happily cooked our food. There was not much work to be done. I cooked the meal, while Bhai Kartar Singh did some binding work for about two hours and then we were free.

There was a large courtyard, with a hand-pump and a well in it. We were permitted to do some gardening in the corner of the courtyard. Some seeds were procured. It was an ideal place for solitude and prayer. Bhai Kartar Singh was very happy about it. But I warned him that these unusual conditions may not last long. It may be that their policy might suddenly change. The Jailer visited us a number of times daily and talked to us in a very pleasant manner. I was given permission to write religious books, but these joyous days did not last long. As soon as the officiating British Superintendent went away, our happy days came to an end.

Three Letters

(These three letters were written to friends describing the conditions at Nagpur prison between 6th December and 26th December, 1922. This is the first letter. It is addressed to Bhai Ganda Singh, Bhai Arjan Singh Jagraon, Bhai Khushal Singh, Bhai Kehar Singh Amritsar. Letter No. 13 dated 6th December 1922.)

Both of us, after being separated from friends are now lodged in Nagpur Jail. Prithi Singh escaped while we were on the way to this place. We are daily waiting for you here but they may or they

may not bring you here. Both of us have been given a small airy and secluded barrack which has nine rooms. We have occupied two and the other seven are waiting for you. So if five of you come here along with two more friends, the rooms will be full. We have been separated from all other prisoners. No one is allowed to come near us, but within our area we can freely move about. We do not have any work. We cook our own food both the times. We get about two *chatak* ghee for cooking food. Bhai Kartar Singh gets fresh milk and tea also. There is a big dairy farm within the prison. I am not allowed to milk a cow for myself as yet. They are afraid to take me to the dairy farm, while the cow cannot be brought to our courtyard. Anyway be it so. If I succeed in getting milk so much the better, otherwise it is all the same.

The newly appointed Superintendent, here, is a notorious Indian who dresses like Anglo-Indians while the Jailer is a Whiteman. The Jailer appears to be a good man. We have not been given new dresses. We are still wearing and keeping with us the uniforms of Rajahmundary prison. We want exactly the same type of dress which we were given in Rajahmundary prison, but these people hesitate to do so. Let us see how things take shape. We have four blankets each. It is very cold here, though not so cold as it was at Hazari Bagh. When we left Rajahmundary Brother Sehaj was ill. Please write to me about his condition. Convey my humble greetings to him. Has he memorized *Asa di Var* or not? I learn that Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee is now prepared to reach an agreement with the Government and the Government has also stopped irritating the Sikhs. The Khalsa is taking over the control of the Gurdwaras one after another, and is now in very high spirits

(The second and third letters (No. 14 and 15) following it were written to Gyani Nahar Singh on 16th and 21st December. The fourth letter was of a few lines reporting that the Inspector General Prisons was expected on the 27th December and after that events may take a definite turn. No one was allowed to meet Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh.)

I reached this place (Nagpur) on 1st December. According to the will of God all, our friends have been sent to different prisons. Only Bhai Kartar Singh Canadian is with me. I do not know where others have been sent. We have been given a small prison barrack in which there are nine seats, but no one besides the two of us has been lodged in it. It is a calm and quiet place good for solitary meditation. We have our own kitchen attached to it. By the will of God the arrangement for the preparation of my food is good. No one has caused any trouble. We do not have any good arrangements for getting *dal* (pulses) and vegetables. We are just silent. Sometimes we get carrot and we cook it, otherwise we take *Chapaties* with salt. We do not get good salt. The *atta* (flour) which we get is not good. It is mixed up with maize flour which may spoil our health. I am now having some piles trouble also. If the diet continues to be as bad as it is, it may increase. We are quiet and submissive so far, but if the officers do not mend their ways I may have to undertake a fast.

The new Superintendent is a lame and notoriously corrupt Hindu Brahmin, whose conduct appears to be wicked, unprincipled and depraved. The Jailer is a White man but a very well behaved person who appears to be quite noble. He does not wish to cause trouble to any prisoner. Let us see what happens. No one is allowed to come near us. We are also not given any work. The only work we have is to cook our meals. We get an opportunity to take our bath early in the morning. There is hand pump in our courtyard and half of a well also opens into our courtyard. We are allowed to write only one letter a month and to have one meeting a month with the relatives. The Jailer had agreed to provide us a daily newspaper also, as is given to the political prisoners, but the Superintendent has not agreed. He has allowed a periodical (weekly or monthly) which we should

get at our own expense. I told him that the government has confiscated my property also; how is it possible to get a newspaper at my own expense. There is already a great burden on the Sikh *Panthic* Organisations. We pleaded that when other political prisoners were getting why should we not get the newspapers. To this his answer is that the rules have now been changed. He is just trying to ignore our demand. We are told that if some pressure is put from outside, then they will change. They have the impression that no one is prepared to fight for us from outside, because we are from another province. Had we been prisoners of this province, everything would have been accepted. If the Sikh Review, or some other monthly magazine is being published, please get it issued to us (Sikh Review was then edited by Sardar Sardul Singh Caveesher. It is no way connected with the Sikh Review presently published from Calcutta). Officially we will get the letters also quickly, because there are many Sikhs in the provincial service here. They will get these letters read by them and pass them to us. There is one Sikh Executive Engineer also here. They can get the letters read by him. He is also a friend of the Jailer. He asked the same Sikh about the conditions I lay down about preparing my food myself. He told him that there are some *Viveki* Sikhs, (those who take food prepared by an *Amritdhari* Sikh alone) in the Sikh panth who observe these rules. I do not know the name of this Sikh, but from the Superintendent, I learn it is Sant Singh. There are innumerable Sikhs here and there is a whole locality of Sikhs. There are also one or two Sikh temples.

(The third letter 21st December 1922)

Upto this day I cook my own food. The lame officer is not well disposed towards us. He is upto some mischief. This lame Brahmin has been appointed as the Jail Superintendent. He is also I.M.S. medical officer. He was formally an army doctor. He lost one leg in the war. People call him Captain Jattar. He wears a European hat. Although he calls himself a Hindu, he appears to be without any faith or creed. When we arrived at this place he was on leave. During his absence the gentle Englishman who was officiating here, on his own responsibility started treating us in a very humane way. After examining my history ticket he immediately removed all hindrances and permitted me to prepare my own food. But the day this Superintendent arrived, he stopped providing me *dal* and vegetables. I did not mind. I was content to take my *chapaties* with salt. Now he has asked the Inspector General Prisons in writing, as to why had I been given permission to prepare my own food? He has asked for the revision of this order. I do not know what is the exact reply he has received from the Inspector General, Prisons. But his intentions are mischievous and we do not know what other harmful remarks he has passed in his appeal to the I.G. Prisons. Most of the I.G. Prisons follow what the Superintendent prisons suggest to them.

It now appears from his vexatious ways and methods that he is thinking of subjecting me to some severe physical tortures. I am fully prepared for the worst. He has already started threatening me with force-feeding. He is bent upon insulting my faith and forcing me to abjure my religious principles. To me, my religious principles are dearer than life. But this man does not care for religious principles and sentiments of anyone. May the Guru help me to uphold all the sacred principles which I have maintained for the last seven years of imprisonment.

But this one-legged tyrant is bent upon using force to attain his malevolent end. There are only two of us. Had there been more, the voice of protest could carry some weight. Finding that we are only two in number he is determined to use violence. If he stoops to violence God alone knows what may happen. He will try his best to prevent the news about our suffering from leaking out. We have been completely cut off from other prisoners and not a soul knows about our existence here. So I am giving you this information in advance. When we are fighting his tyranny this man will take strict measures to prevent the news leaking out. At Rajahmundary the news leaked out

immediately because there were many patriots in the prison. The news generally went to the newspapers. Here we do not know whether there are any patriots in the prison and the patriots do not know that we are here. If you do not receive any news within a week then you may safely conclude that I have started the fast.

We hear that there are many Sikhs in the Railway Workshop, but we have not been able to send any news to them so far. I learn that even the City Superintendent of police is a Sikh. Anyway we have no other way but to abide by the will of God and the suffering that is ordained will have to be faced. Why should we seek mere human help?

Of course the news will upset you. I did not wish to send this unhappy news to you, but Brother Kartar Singh has compelled me to write about it to you and inform everyone through you. If possible you can now send information, through a private letter even to the I.G. prisons and Superintendent prison and tell them that they are honour bound to treat us as humanely as we were treated recently. Otherwise we should be sent to our State. You may ask them, whether we were sent to Central Province (now Madhya Pradesh) only to be tortured and put on the rack. We are kept in solitary confinement and nefarious plans are being made to cause injury to our religious principles. If they do not take reasonable steps to prevent it, then you can report the matter to the newspapers and bring it to the notice of the public. The Superintendent said today, that he does not know anything about our public importance. Ordinary people cannot be given any special treatment. I told him that there is no question of importance in public. "The Sikh *Panth* knows about our position in the Sikh community. We are fighting for our religious rights which we have been getting so far in the prisons. If you do not leave us in peace we shall have to fight for even those rights which should be given to political prisoners."

This is what is happening here. The Lord's will shall prevail. Convey my request to all the friends and devotees of the *Panth* to pray for me, so that I may stand firmly by my faith and ideals. If life and body ends in this struggle I do not mind, but I may never be shaken in the noble principles of my faith.

Sarkar Salam

(The fourth letter (No. 16) written on 26th December 1922 reports that up to this date everything was alright. The I.G. Prisons was expected the next day.)

As soon as this lame Superintendent, Dr. Jattar took charge, he went on a round and first came to our barrack. A Head Warder who accompanied him shouted: "*Sarkar Salam*" (I humbly salute thee, my ruler). I saw an Indian officer wearing a European hat coming towards us along with his staff. He was limping on his way towards us. When he came near us, I smiled. Bhai Kartar Singh guessing the meaning of my smile whispered into my ears: "Is he not the same hermit, with the trident which you saw in your vision just a month before leaving the Rajahmundary prison". "Yes, he is the same man," said I, "he has now come to wreak vengeance upon me." Whatever is ordained by the sweet will of God will happen. I had just finished kneading flour in the kitchen. Bhai Kartar Singh was sitting in the chair and doing his work. The new Superintendent shouted at Bhai Kartar Singh and said in English: "Why did you not stand up?"

Bhai Kartar Singh: In the last prison we had orders not to stand up while we were working, when the Superintendent came on a round. As a matter of fact we were not expected to stand up even when the I.G. prisons came. We were expected to be busy with our work. Thinking that this was the practice here I continued my work.

Superintendent: No, this is not the practise in this jail. The order here is that whenever the Superintendent comes on a round, all prisoners must stand up.

Bhai Kartar Singh: All right, in future it will be so. We will give up work and stand.

Superintendent: (In English) You will have to obey all the rules of this prison.

Bhai Kartar Singh: We will obey only the legitimate rules.

On that day the Superintendent went away after talking to us in this haughty manner. In the evening the Jailer came to us on his bike in a puzzled state of mind and told us that he had brought a special order from the Superintendent Capt: Nilkanth Surya Jattar. The order was that whenever he came on a round we must all stand up with our hands spread out like beggars. He showed us how it was to be done. We told the Jailer to go and inform the Superintendent that we will never stand with our hands spread out like that before any human being. We will never and never stand in that position. The Jailer whisked away as soon as he heard our refusal to obey such humiliating order. Early next morning the Superintendent came with all his staff, burning with rage and as soon as he came he started spitting fire: "Look here," he said, "You will have to obey all my orders in this prison. Why did you not say *Sahib Salam*' and why did you not stand up with your hands spread out the way the Jailer explained to you yesterday."

I: We will obey only legitimate orders. We will not obey illegitimate orders. To stand with our hands spread out like beggars before such a petty creature like you is most humiliating for a Sikh and it is the greatest insult to Sikh pride and self respect. No self- respecting Sikh is prepared to stand like that before anyone except his Guru and God. So do not even in a dream expect us to stand before you with our hands spread out. Is it not sufficient that we have agreed to stand up when you came here? And may I make it clear that even this will be done only so long as you behave like a decent officer and treat us with respect. If your treatment is bad and if you carry out any of your illegal threats, we will not even stand up when you come.

Superintendent: What, will you not obey Jail orders?

Bhai Kartar Singh: We will never obey any illegal and humiliating order.

Superintendent: "Is it an illegal order?"

Bhai Kartar Singh: If it is legal then show us in which prison manual is it written that political prisoners should be made to stand in such a humiliating position. We have been lodged in the prisons of many states, no one asked us to stand like that. It is also not given in any prison manual that the Superintendent is authorized to treat the prisoners in the manner you are treating us.

Superintendent: Look here, even eminent disciples of Mahatma Gandhi like Lalla Jamna Das and Mahatma Bhagwan Din and many other prominent Congressites have stood before me like that, with their hands spread out, as long as they were in my prison.

We: It is not necessary for us to do what the disciples of Mahatma have been doing. We are not the disciples of Mahatma Gandhi, nor would we like to be one. We are the disciples of Guru Gobind Singh and so we will remain. We will not tolerate any injury to our pride and self-respect as the *Singhs* (Lions) of Guru Gobind Singh.

Superintendent: Remember that both of you will have to suffer for disobeying this order.

After giving out his threat, the one-legged fellow went away. The next day the Superintendent showed us typed copy of an order which he said was sent by the I.G. prisons. But it was not signed by the I.G. prisons. Only a Head Clerk had signed it. We were taken to the office and this order was read out to us which stated that we were deprived of all the privileges given to the political prisoners. We shall in future be given ordinary food which was served to all the prisoners. We will get the clothes which were given to ordinary prisoners and we shall have to obey all the orders of prison officers. After reading out this forged order, he asked us whether we had to say anything about it. He further asked us to sign and give written consent of obedience of the order.

With one voice we both replied: we will never obey such forged orders. Never and never.

Superintendent: How do you say that this is a forged order?

We: The first thing is that the order has not been sent to us and it was not opened in our presence. If it really were the orders of the I.G. prisons, where is the necessity of getting our signature? The order has been addressed to the Superintendent and he has to carry out the order on his own responsibility, if it is a true order. We will protest against this order. How can we give in writing that we will gladly obey this order, when we are not going to obey? If it is not a forged order, please show us the envelop, so that we may examine the stamps on it.

On hearing this, both of them became enraged and in the heat of their anger they wrote on our history tickets: "Their clothes should be taken away by force and they should be given food from ordinary kitchen and be compelled to eat it. They should be deprived of all privileges given to political prisoners." After writing these orders we were asked to go back to our prison cells. Bhai Kartar Singh asked the Superintendent to reconsider this order and avoid trouble to us and to themselves.

Superintendent: Trouble? Who can put us to trouble?

I: Your own evil deeds.

Superintendent: My order stands. I do not want to hear any other thing.

We urged him to wait till we had consulted the higher authorities, particularly the Punjab Government about it. Till then he could keep his orders reserved. After receiving the opinion of the higher authorities, he could do whatever he liked. We asked for some time. We did not, till then, ask for any special privileges given to political prisoners. All we asked was some *atta* (flour) to prepare our *chapatties*, which we could take with salt, once in twenty-four hours. Shortly we would receive a definite reply from the higher authorities and the Punjab Government. But the Superintendent did not listen to any reasonable suggestion. He was determined to carry out his threat. Then the only way left was to go on fast and resist tyranny. There is a Persian saying we: "When tyranny befalls a *dervesh*, he must be prepared to face it with his life". Thus I was compelled to undertake fast.

CHAPTER 21 - FASTS AND TORTURES

THE FAST BEGAN. Then for sometime they felt a little disturbed and came every now and then with proposals and threats. They brought some typed copies of applications written on our behalf to the Punjab Government and asked us to sign them. Thus they tried to give us the false assurance that something was being done for us. But we were not so soft and ignorant as to be easily fooled by their hypocritical assurances. But it is quite possible that they forged our signatures and sent those applications to the higher authorities.

My fast began. We were immediately separated from each other. What happened to him after this, I do not know. The I.G. prisons came. Like one who is bewildered, he did not listen to anything I had to say, but kept on harping that the political privileges have been eliminated and now there were only two classes: special and ordinary. If I wanted special class, I should put up an application otherwise I would be treated as an ordinary prisoner. I told him that I was not prepared to put up the type of application he wanted, nor did I ask for any special class. All I asked for was that I should be given the facilities and treatment which my history ticket showed was given in the last prison. The terms recorded on my history ticket had become the rules for us. He then went away.

He came again when the Superintendent was treating us with savage brutality by using force, for all his malignant ends. So when he came near me I told him sternly: This Superintendent of yours has now stooped to the most tyrannous methods of using force and insulting and humiliating me. I consider it my duty to tell you frankly and firmly that I am a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh and not of Mahatma Gandhi, who would stick to non-violence even under extreme humiliation. We have been taught by the Guru to give up non-violence when a person's faith and religious ideals are subjected to insult and humiliation through force and violence. For the protection of the sacred principles of our faith, when non-violence fails, we would not die like cowards. It is not violence to prevent, with all the power at your disposal, the tyrants from carrying out their evil designs or to prevent the godless and brutal people from causing injury to the faith and freedom of man. So if any Whiteman or Indian of your department uses force against me to insult and cause injury to my religious sentiments and principles, I will fight back. Do not think that I will not be able to defend myself, because I have been fasting since many days. A hungry lion becomes very desperate, when someone annoys it, even if the lion is in a cage."

On hearing this, the I.G. prison gave me assurance that no force would be used against me. But the prison officials were bent upon doing the worst. Who could prevent them? After a day or two they started the mischief.

Force Feeding of Beef Soup

After this many terrible things happened. In many ways they came again and again to use force, and cause all types of physical injury. Many times the Jail authorities came with a number of their warders and servants, but as soon as they tried to hold me by force I pushed them back. No one dared to come close or to grapple with me alone. The heroic fire of the Khalsa, even though starving, created a terror in the minds of all. One day the Jailer Mr. Whig (an Englishman) came with all his staff and started shouting at me and threatened to give enema by force. I told him he had no right to do such a thing and I would not let him do such a thing. I had not taken anything for many weeks and had no constipation; where was the necessity for me to have enema? I had not even taken a drop of water for many days. What was the purpose of giving me enema? If I suffered from constipation I could accept the advice of a doctor. Enema is given when the

medicine of doctor fails to work. "Why are you forcibly giving me enema? You are not a physician," I said.

Jailer (Whiteman): We have been ordered by the Superintendent to give you enema by force.

I: Try then to use force. I am prepared to fight back and I will not submit like a coward.

Jailer: I have so many men while you are all alone; what can you do?

I: Just try to use force and see what I do. You will have a taste of it in a minute.

On hearing this challenge from me, they all moved forward to overpower me. When five or six men tried to pounce on me, I threw them back. Frightened and yet forced to beat me down they came forward again. All alone I hit them right and left. In this struggle some got a blow on the jaws. Some were hit on the chest or stomach. Some had a bruised shoulder. Their caps and hats rolled on the ground. Some were thrown against the wall or on the pucca floor. They soon lost their breath and attempted again and again to pounce on me. The Hindu babus had to keep a hand on the *dhotis*, which were loosened in every struggle. The Englishmen would begin to dust their pants every time they fell back on the floor. The Jailer's face was red with rage and he was trembling with fear and fury. Everyone was exhausted and hit badly. After they found that they could never overpower me, they went away. I, the one and lone Khalsa, inspired by Guru Gobind Singh, to face even a lakh of opponents stood there unharmed.

Then they brought all the Jail warders and all the criminal prisoners. No Babu or officer joined the gang that was sent to overpower me. The prisoners were forced to jump on me and overpower me. "Why do you send these poor people to fight me?" I said, "Why don't you come forward? You first got your staff badly beaten and hit, and now you want these poor people to face me." All the prisoners, the prison lambardars lowered their heads with shame and fear. Some folded their hands from a distance, begging forgiveness for being forced to attack me. The Jailer ordered them to catch hold of me and force me to lie down flat on the floor. But every one stood silently without moving. They neither spoke nor obeyed the orders. When he scolded them and ordered them to move forward a Rajput warder said: "Sir, he is only a saintly patriot. He is here in the prison for the freedom of our country. He has done you no harm. What offence has he committed for which he is unnecessarily tortured. Do you not know that the course of harming such a man may bring ruin on you all. None of us dare to raise our finger against him."

Jailer (roaring with rage): What, will you disobey my orders? You will be deprived of your uniform and be severely punished. You will be locked up in a dark cell.

Rajput Warder (taking off his uniform and throwing it near the feet of the Jailer): Here, take your uniform and give me whatever punishment you like. You can even lock me up in a dungeon. I am not afraid of anything. To me punishment will not be greater and more painful than the curse of this saint. I cannot tolerate this saint-patriot being insulted and attacked in this manner. No other warder will help you in this matter. We are kept here for the protection of the prisoners and not to treat them in such a brutal manner.

The Jailer ordered that this man (whose name was Dugar Singh) should be immediately deprived of his uniform and position as the warder. He did so to frighten other warders and coerce them to

use force against me. But not a single man was prepared to obey his order. He then turned his rage and threats against the prison warders and immediately took steps to punish some of them.

At last, feeling himself helpless in that strange situation, he went away.

For the third time the Jailer came with a doctor, who was ordered by the Superintendent to give enema. The doctor moved a few steps towards me but when I sharply asked him to keep away from me; he stepped back and stood at a distance. He did not wish to come into grips with me. The Jailer ordered him angrily to go ahead.

Doctor: You have not been able to hold him for a minute with the help of the whole of your staff and warders, how do you expect me to handle him and do it all alone? It is my duty to give him enema but only with his consent and not against his wishes, by force. My profession does not permit me to do such a thing by force.

Jailer: Then you should explain to him that according to the requirement of his health, you, as a doctor advise him to take enema.

Doctor (addressing me): Sardar Sahib, what is the harm in taking enema?

I: I do not have any constipation. I have not taken anything for weeks. Why should I take enema?

Doctor: Our Superintendent, who is also the Chief Medical Officer, thinks that to maintain your health it is essential for you to take enema.

I: What is it that is compelling them to have it done now and now only?

Doctor: The fact is that they have ordered force feeding and it is necessary to give enema, before trying force-feeding.

I: Can you say on oath that giving enema is absolutely essential before resorting to force feeding? Do the medical rules say so?

Doctor (whispering in my ears): Actually they want to insult you and humiliate you in this way. (The Jailer was standing at some distance). Why don't you take enema with your own hands? I will explain to you how it is done (whispering and touching my feet humbly) For God's sake, save me from this trouble. Please accept my request, (loudly) You will benefit immensely after taking enema. All the disorders caused by constipation will disappear. It will even help you in your fast.

I: You have made the request in such a way that I cannot refuse it. Now please explain to me how it is done.

Doctor (after explaining): Now we leave you alone. Do anything you like. The Superintendent should get the impression that you have taken enema.

Within fifteen minutes I got rid of everything. What happened after that has already been described in letters written earlier. I quote the letters here:

Letter: January 1923 (Letter No. 17)

On arrival here our history tickets were examined and we were given all facilities about dress and food which had been sanctioned in the previous Jail. Bhai Kartar Singh and I are staying in the same barrack. The day we arrived, the superintendent was not here. He was on leave. He came after five or six days. As soon as he resumed duty he started taking extreme steps to annoy us. The first order he sent to the prisoners was that all should stand up when he came to the prison barracks and keep standing with our hands spread out like beggars. We were also ordered to keep our faces raised up while saluting him. He threatened to give us severe punishment if we did not obey this order.

We told him that we would never spread out our hands like beggars before anyone except God no matter what punishment he ordered for disobeying such humiliating orders. We asked him to show us the prison rules and laws which authorised him to give such orders. When he was exasperated by his futile attempts to cow us down, he started writing against us to the higher authorities: On December 30th 1922, he called me in his office and issued orders that all facilities given to me to prepare my own food had been withdrawn, and I would be given the same barley bread prepared in the common kitchen which was given to the ordinary prisoners. I requested him to hold on his orders for a few days and permit me to write to the higher authorities. As political prisoners, we were entitled to all such facilities and rights which were given to me on religious grounds. I told him that I had been getting these facilities all these years and there was no reason why they should be withdrawn without any rhyme or reason. I requested him to permit us to appeal to the higher authorities, and till the reply to our appeal was received we should be contented with simple food cooked by our own hands. But he refused to listen to anything and immediately issued stern orders. All our prayer books, clothes including turbans were forcibly taken away from us.

He even took away our shoes. Only underwears (*kach*) was all that we had on our bodies. The second underwear was also taken away from us. So the fast began. For about ten days I was allowed to live undisturbed in my cell. Then an Englishman named Bigg was especially posted to harass and torture me. He was given full powers to do whatever he liked. It is difficult to relate all the cruel ways he adopted to torture me. I endured everything silently with my mind fixed on God. He now started annoying and tormenting me every moment and threatened to inflict gruesome affliction.

I remained silent. I never spoke to him nor answered any of his threats. He tried to force bread into my mouth, but I pushed him away and did not allow him to come near me. He abused and cursed me in the filthiest language possible. One day he came near me and tried to hold me by my hair but I stepped back and though he used violence I did not allow him to touch my hair. He wanted to beat me, and although I was weak, I did not allow him to come near me. He pushed me against the wall and started kicking me. I shouted to the sepoy standing near him, that they should bear witness to the fact that he was trying to kill me. Call the Superintendent immediately. When I shouted these words, he shrank from going to the brutal extreme at that moment.

When the Superintendent came I reported the matter to him, but he did not listen to me and side tracked the issue. Mr. Bigg became all the more ferociously brutal. The same evening Mr. Bigg, and his assistant, who was also an Englishman came with a number of men to forcibly give me enema.

I told them that I had not taken either a morsel of food nor drunk any water for many days. I was not having any constipation or any other trouble. Why were they forcibly giving me enema? They actually wanted to insult and humiliate me. Five or six of them tried to overpower me and force me to lie down, but they could not control me. The British Jailer then sent five or six more warder sepoys. All of them caught hold of me and knocked me down. I was already exhausted after fighting so many people so long and now as soon as my bare head struck against the floor, I fainted. I was stripped naked and given enema. Even as I was being stripped naked I regained a little consciousness and was about to speak but they knocked me down again. They only wanted to mortify and humiliate me. When they went away they threatened to insult and inflict outrageous indignities on me the next day under the pretext of force-feeding through a rubber tube.

I spent the whole night in great mental agony. The next day they again started using force to knock me down. Even the Jail Superintendent was there with the whole of his staff. I asked him why was he stooping to such cruelty. The Superintendent, a Hindu, threatened to inflict such indignities as may lead to the forced breaking of my religious vows. I asked him to fear God. The Superintendent said that the British government was his God. I again said: "Has the British government allowed you to force man to abandon his religious principles? Is it not a tyranny worst than that of Aurangzeb?" The Superintendent replied, "Is committing suicide a part of religion?" I said, "I have never contemplated suicide. Committing suicide is the greatest sin according to my religion. I went on fast only to maintain my religious vows. I am prepared to take milk, fruit or any simple food like roasted grams. In other Jails my religious principles were respected by the prison authorities. You also must listen to me; I am prepared to take the simplest food within the limits of my religious vows. But you are bent upon committing outrageous acts to revile and desecrate my religious principles, but let me tell you that no one can compel me to break my religious vows. I will sacrifice my life for it. I will survive on the sustenance of His divine Name. I will not die. Do not torture me unnecessarily and do not cause any indignity to any of my religious principles."

All my protests fell on deaf ears. They manacled my hands and placing a stick in my mouth pushed a long rubber tube down my throat into the stomach. They started force feeding me with some milk. I controlled my psychic breath (*prana shakti*) and first suppressed it in the naval and then let it ascend it to the tenth seat of consciousness, the *turiya state*, the highest state. But I had become very weak and could not take psychic breath to the highest consciousness under those tortuous circumstances. But as the *prana shakti* had gone higher than the naval and my breathing had stopped, they could not pump any milk inside. Without the breath going in and coming out, not a drop of water can be forced inside the stomach. Whatever milk was pushed in came out immediately. When they were tired of doing this without any success they knocked my head against the floor, even before taking out the rubber. I became unconscious and my mouth was closed in a tight grip. The rubber broke into two. The bottle of milk also broke in this scuffle. Some more milk was brought. An iron tube was also procured. As I was unconscious the superintendent ordered that my teeth should be broken and the iron tube forced into my mouth. My teeth were broken, my jaws were torn open. Two of my teeth from the side were forcibly broken. All these tortures were inflicted by Mr. Bigg who sat on my chest and did all these inhuman deeds with his own hands. By forcing the iron tube down my throat they succeeded in sending some milk into my stomach. It took them more than an hour and half to do so. As soon as they were about to leave me alone, the milk was vomited out. My starving stomach found it difficult to retain it. I was then dragged by my beard and hair and kicked with shoes and given heavy fisted blows. When I was almost half-dead they left me there in that miserable condition.

The next day they again forced some dal soup down my throat. The third day they brought soup of kosher meat and beef, and also some tobacco to cause the maximum injury to my religious sentiments. They told me that I should start eating food they ordered, otherwise all those things would be forced down my throat. They even threatened to shave off my hair and beard and then I would be sent to a lunatic asylum. I have already written in other letters all that followed.

A member of the Prison Supervision Committee came to me and asked me all that had happened. I told him about the threat of giving me soup of kosher meat and beef and forcing tobacco down my throat. I did not give him all the details of the tortures. The Superintendent immediately denied the charge and then when the Inquiry officer went away, he begged me to save him. The Jailer also fell at my feet and begged not to implicate him because he did everything on the orders of the Superintendent (this letter was written by Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh to Bhai Surjan Singh who went all the way to Nagpur. With the help of Congress leaders of Nagpur he was able to rouse public opinion against the prison authorities as a result of which an inquiry was held).

The Sword that Appeared and Disappeared

It would not be out of place to mention an interesting incident here. When I was convinced that this wicked and depraved man, Dr. Jattar, would not hesitate doing the most heinous deed and when the efforts of my friends like Bhai Mansha Singh and Bhai Santa Singh of Nagpur failed to change the mind of this cruel man, my mind was clouded with dark despair. Bhai Mansha Singh even offered five hundred rupees to every person who could help me to get out of the prison unscathed. But all his efforts failed. The whole of Nagpur was seething with discontent of threats of agitation. The eminent patriot Mr. Abhayanker did his utmost to help me. I have never seen such a brave and fearless freedom fighter as the lovable soul Abhayanker. Patriots like him are indeed very rare. All my life I would remain greatly indebted to Bhai Mansha Singh and the brave Mr. Abhayanker. My blessings will ever be with them. It now became absolutely impossible to get any aid either from outside or from within the four walls of the prison.

The next day I was to suffer intolerable indignities and I had to do something to face it during the night. In the evening I prayed to the all-knowing *Satguru* after my evening prayers *Rehras* to make available to me a sword to defend myself. I was prepared to fight unto death for my faith and was determined not to let my religious principles suffer blasphemous insults. With the sword in my hands I would not allow anyone to come near me and if they attacked me with weapons, I was determined to use sword in self-defence and fight unto death. I was also lost in this prayer and when it was over I sat down brooding over the things to come. Suddenly an unknown man came stealthily and stood close to the prison bars. I had never seen him before. With profound sympathy he said in a whisper: "Ask for anything and it shall be provided." I was atonce tempted to ask for the sword. I felt that the Guru had answered my prayer. Unhesitatingly he went back and came back in a matter of minutes with a sword. The sword was shining brilliantly in the moonlight. I felt overjoyed and inspired by the determination to die for my faith. The man put it back into the sheath and buried it in the mud floor just outside my cell, from where it could be taken out easily. He asked me to take it out after the routine searching of my cell was over. With my worries over, I went to sleep. Some subtle pride had also overtaken me, as I felt that my prayer was atonce answered. Instead of spending the night in thanksgiving and prayer I slept peacefully and woke up only in the morning.

Instead of sitting in meditation and prayer and setting my mind in true spiritual courage, as a real and perfect Sikh should always do, I started preparing for the battle against the tyrants, and my mind was completely diverted towards the difficult situation ahead. I made up my mind to defend

my faith with the sword and fight the oppressors as soon as they made any outrageous attack on the principles of my faith.

When all other means have failed,
It is lawful to resort to the sword.
Guru Gobind Singh's "Letter to Aurangzeb".

My mind was now in very high spirit. All the depressing conditions through which I had passed disappeared. It was day break now. My cell was unlocked and searched superficially. They found nothing in my mattress and bed which they searched. As soon as they had gone I made up my mind to take the sword out of the place, where it was hidden. But the sword was not to be found there. I wondered who had taken away the sword. I covered the place with the earth. I was stunned and terribly shaken by this unexpected happening. I covered the whole hollowed place with earth and made it appear as the normal ground. What was ordained had happened and it was no use brooding over it. In a matter of minutes the prison authorities came and started force-feeding described in the letter above. Two of my teeth were broken and I was tortured and submitted to excruciating agony and insult.

At night when all was silent and cold the same unknown man came to me and said: "When you were asleep I took away the sword. This must have given you a shocking surprise."

I: After doing such a noble act as helping to get me the sword, why did you behave like a coward? Why did you show such timidity?

Unknown Man: You may curse me or even kill me, but the inevitable has taken place. Good or bad it has happened now and it is my wife who persuaded me to do it.

I: Ignorant man, is it wise to confide such secrets to women?

Unknown Man: I tried my best but could not help telling her everything. Here is the whole story. Some unknown Power compelled me to come to your aid, and I was proud of rendering the help you asked for, and felt very happy about it. When I reached home my wife had come to know that you were in serious trouble. She was very much upset and so terrified that she did not sleep at night. She was awake even on the night when I left the sword with you. Outside the prison every man, woman and child was talking about the cruelty and tortures to which you were submitted. Everyone was cursing and condemning the Jail authorities. Everyone was shedding tears in helpless sympathy. My wife was also seriously upset ever since you were in trouble. When I reached home that night she asked me: "Has anyone done anything to help that great patriot from distant land? Has anyone expressed concern for him? When I think of the tortures he is being made to undergo and unjust treatment he has yet to undergo I cannot sleep. God alone knows how he will face the terrible ordeal tomorrow?"

Unknown Man: "What else will happen? They will forcibly cause injury to his religious sentiments and he will die for his faith.

Unknown Man's Wife: Alas, alas, will they really force him to take beef soup?

Unknown Man: Something else will happen before they ever attempt to do such a thing.

Unknown Man's Wife: Can you not do something to save him from the terrible ordeal he might have to face? O please do something for him even at the cost of your life.

Unknown Man: Even you have tried your best. Have you been able to do anything to save him?

Unknown Man's Wife: I have done my utmost indeed and now I do not know what to do. I went to the British Jailer's wife and offered her all my ornaments if she could help this saintly patriot from the Punjab. But she said as he was a political prisoner, the matter was in the hands of higher officials. Her husband is afraid of his superior officers. The matter could not be hushed up. Many people had offered large amounts of money and precious things but the Jailer was helpless. The Superintendent is adamant. He refuses to listen to anyone.

Unknown Man: Excellent, so you have done much. This should be the spirit.

Unknown Man's Wife: You also should do something. In whatever way it is humanly possible you must save this great and noble patriot from the calamity. For the freedom of our country he has endured and suffered so much. Leaving his wife and children far away, he is now undergoing terrible suffering in the prison far away from his people. Even in the prison he is fighting like a hero and has staked his very life for the sake of his faith. You must help him. Do help him at all cost. Whatever is possible must be done.

Unknown Man (addressing me): When my wife talked in such a brave tone and deep sympathy for you, I unconsciously blurted out what I had done. I told her what I had done. What else was possible under those difficult circumstances? When my wife came to know about the sword which I had left with you, she fainted. I poured some water into her mouth and she regained some consciousness and said in a very sad voice: "You have committed a great blunder! That brave brother patriot will kill everyone and as a reaction not only will he be shot dead but even we all who sympathise with him and have helped him will be done to death. There will be a blood bath and ultimately he also will be ruthlessly killed. He may be immediately hanged or shot dead. Had he lived he might have served humanity in many ways. When I said that you must help, I meant that you must do your best to help him to escape. Both his life and faith could be protected that way. If he lived he could serve the country in many ways. You have done a horrible thing. I am in great agony and the very thought that there will be so much bloodshed has given me an unbearable shock. The very thought of the tragic spectacle is killing. Please go there and get the sword before it is too late, otherwise I will kill myself." These words of my wife had a stunning effect on me. I quietly came to this place and took away the sword when you were asleep. Thank God I did so. It has all been for good. By now there might have been terrible bloodshed here and God alone knows what might have been the consequences.

So this matter ended here. I will close this story of torture and tyranny here, and will now relate some other events of Nagpur prison. After all the outrageous and humiliating acts of force feeding, the prison authorities now started compelling us to wear prison uniforms meant for criminals. The Jailer was already madly abusing the use of his authority and now he had a new cause to annoy us and put us into trouble. He was determined to misuse his powers to torture us on this issue. He incited the Assistant Jailer (a British Officer) and ordered him to forcibly undress me and take away my clothes. I warned the Jailer that if Mr. Biggs attacked me again and tried to use force, I would teach him a lesson. I asked the Jailer repeatedly to stop Mr. Biggs from using force, the results of which would be serious. I was determined to fight him back. I knew that there was not the slightest sense of justice left in British administration of the Jails, and there was no alternative left

for us except to fight force with force and prevent cruelty and humiliation. So obstinate was this man that he refused to change his evil intentions, till the fury of *Chandi* (a good beating) did not bring him to his senses.

Assistant Jailer Fined

The next day the Assistant Jailer came and the first thing he did was to give a kick to my earthen pitcher. I picked up the pitcher and threw it at him. With a bang it fell near his feet and his clothes became wet with the water that splashed out of the broken pitcher. A few broken pieces of the pitcher also flew out and struck against his face. But he was not hurt and he did not receive any injury. The office of the Superintendent was close by. Dragging his lame leg he hurriedly came to the spot and asked what was the explosion about. "Have you thrown some bomb Randhir Singh?"

I: There it is. The bomb has blown up into small pieces. Pick them up and institute another case against me for throwing the bomb.

Superintendent (after seeing the broken pitcher): How is that your pitcher is broken and who has broken it?

I: Ask your *Gora* (White) Assistant. There he is standing like a jackal wet with the water of the pitcher.

Superintendent (addressing the Assistant Jailer): Well, what happened?

Assistant Jailer: You can see for yourself. He threw the earthen pitcher full of water at my chest, but I ran away and narrowly escaped.

Superintendent: How did your pant get wet?

Assistant Jailer: He threw the pitcher full of water near my feet. The water made my pant wet and the pieces of broken pitcher struck me.

Superintendent: On the one hand you say that he aimed the water pitcher at your chest, on the other hand you say that he threw it near your feet (addressing me) Well Randhir Singh, did you throw the water pitcher at him? Did he say anything annoying to you?

I: Ask him what he did. He will tell you.

Superintendent (addressing the Assistant Jailer): Did you speak to him roughly?

Assistant Jailer: Not at all. I did not say anything.

Superintendent: You must have done something to annoy him. Do you think he is mad and he threw the pitcher of water at you without any rhyme or reason?

Assistant Jailer: I did nothing to annoy him. My foot unconsciously touched the water pitcher. He picked it up and threw it at me.

The Superintendent stared at me, signifying by his looks that he demanded an explanation from me. I requested him to ask the sentry on duty. He then stared at the sentry demanding his version of the incident.

I (addressing the sentry): On oath of the Deity you worship, tell the Superintendent the truth and nothing but the truth.

Sentry: Sir, the truth is that the Jailer Sahib came straight to this place and knowingly kicked the water pitcher. Randhir Singh threw the water pitcher at him saying, that it was of no use for him. He considered it a great insult that he should touch his drinking water with his shoes. So he angrily threw the water pitcher at him.

Superintendent (angrily addressing the Assistant Jailer): That is what you deserved. Thank God he did not throw the water pitcher on your head. You knowingly did this mischief. I asked you not to cause any new trouble, yet you have disobeyed me.

The Superintendent immediately fined him rupees five but did not say anything to me. This was the first instance that something was done in the spirit of justice. The Superintendent had one significant quality, that is, he kept his subordinates firmly under his control. The Jailer, who had been downgraded from the post of Superintendent, feared him much. This sense of justice came to the mind of Superintendent at some rare moments but the Jailer succeeded in misguiding him. On seeing the Assistant Jailer reprimanded and punished, the Jailer was boiling with rage and was looking for an opportunity to avenge it. The Jailer had given undue powers to his assistant who treated his subordinates shabbily as a result of which he was disliked by all. The sepoys and the Jemadars sympathized with my lot after the attempt of this Jailer to give me beef soup during force feeding. A sentry was always posted near my cell to keep a watch on me. A new sentry was posted every three hours, sometime every six hours. Thus they all knew me personally.

Fight with Assistant Jailer

One day early in the morning a sentry informed me that the Jailer had ordered the Assistant Jailer to humiliate me by using force and violence under the pretext of taking away the clothes I was wearing and replacing them by the dress given to ordinary prisoners. He told me that the Assistant Jailer would be coming while he was on duty and he would attack me. The sentry said: "We the Indian sentries are all fed up of this man. If he comes and attacks, you can give him a good thrashing. We will not tell anyone." "You may change any moment and report or give evidence against me," replied I. "I swear by the holy *Ganges* that I will never betray you, but if possible will help you," said the sentry. At this moment the Jailer came there and said in a threatening tone in English: "We have been very lenient with you. Take off your clothes. We have been far too gentle with you," he shouted.

I: So today you have come with the determination to show your gentlemanliness, haven't you?

Assistant Jailer: Do you take off your clothes or not? Or do you want to be forcibly stripped naked and suffer humiliation?

I: No one dare humiliate or insult me as long as there is life in my body.

Assistant Jailer: Have you not suffered humiliation enough?

I: It is those who tried to insult me who suffered humiliation. Both the Superintendent and the Jailer went down on their knees and begged forgiveness. They have suffered disgrace and now it is your turn.

I was talking to the Assistant Jailer in English. He advanced towards me and lifted his hand to hold me by the throat.

I (pushing him away): Behave like a human being and learn some human decency.

Assistant Jailer: Do you think that I am a beast?

I: Beasts are much better than you. They eat oil cakes and grass and give milk.

On hearing this he flared up and tried to hold me by the beard. I gave him one blow on his jaws with my right hand, on the wrist of which I was wearing a heavy iron bangle. Holding him by the throat with the left hand I gave him another severe blow and holding his right hand with my own right hand tightened my grip on his throat. His eyes were staring out, and the stranglehold on his throat made him groan for breath. He gave me a kick below the belly, which I avoided by stepping aside. With one hand on the throat and the other in between his legs, I lifted him up and threw him flat on the floor. Seating myself on him I gave him blows right and left with my fists and knees. He lost his nerve and was breathing with difficulty. Then in a pitiable tone he cried out: "Well Sardar Sahib, you also belong to a brave community and I also belong to a brave nation. Let us be friends from today. Leave me and shake hands with me." He blurted out these words while he was getting severe blows from me.

I: You are a coward. Such a dastardly coward like you can never claim to be brave. Even to attribute the word "brave" to a person like you is to insult the word. I am not prepared to shake hands with you and I consider it an insult and below my dignity to befriend you.

He was in the habit of terrorising the prisoners and now he was helplessly crying and cringing like a jackal. "What do you say, Sardar Sahib? I have not understood," he said, "What will I gain if you do understand? If you have not understood it even now you are the greatest fool," I replied.

He then begged for mercy in the name of Christ and God. As soon as I started beating him the sentry moved away into the courtyard. He did so to avoid being an eye witness. If he was at all called as a witness he would simply say that he was outside in the courtyard. He did not know anything about the row and scuffle that took place inside the prison. The White man was still lying on the floor under my tight grip, when he nervously looked around and asked me, "Sardar Sahib, are you sure that the sentry did not see us?" "What of it if he has seen us? He will not rob me of anything?" I said. The Assistant jailer nervously said, "O he can of course do no harm to you, but I will be ruined. It is indeed a good thing if he has not seen us. It would mean a terrible humiliation for me. For God's sake leave me now and promise me that you will not tell anyone that you have trounced and spanked me so terribly. I will suffer great humiliation if you do. Please take pity on me and do at least this much for me. You are not prepared to shake hands with me and you will not befriend with me. For God's sake pity my lot. You are a religious man and spend most of your time in prayer. So I appeal to you in the name of God to spare me the humiliation I may have to suffer."

On seeing him so frustrated and disconcerted I let him go. He stood up and humbly folding his hands he again begged me to promise that I would not tell anyone of what had happened. After getting a good beating he went away. The sentry came there when he had gone. He was very happy that the Whiteman had been taught a lesson. I asked the sentry why was he so afraid of him. "Whether I fear him or not," he said, "I will never give evidence in his favour, not even if I have to lose my job." I told him that the Assistant Jailer himself feared lest the matter is not leaked out. He had taken a promise from me that I would not tell anyone. He appealed to me in the name of God to spare him further humiliation, so I advised the sentry to keep his mouth shut and not tell anyone. He was the only person who knew about it and had seen everything. The sentry was extremely happy to know this and he laughed so heartily over it, that he could not control his laughter for a long time.

Assistant Jailer Resigns

After getting the terrible beating the Assistant Jailer went straight to the Superintendent and submitted his resignation, saying: "I do not wish to work here anymore."

Superintendent: Any reason for resigning?

Assistant Jailer: What other reason can there be? I am not prepared to serve on such a tough job.

Superintendent: You better take up only office work. What is tough in it?

Assistant Jailer: You are excessively cruel to the Sikhs. You sit and command and have all cruelty perpetuated through me. All they want is their legitimate rights. In all the Jails they have been treated as political prisoners and now in this jail I have been made the instrument of the authorities to treat them in an excessively cruel manner. You do not do anything but you order me to do it. So I am going to resign. I am neither prepared to have any hand in inhuman treatment of the Sikh prisoners nor can I tolerate the very sight of it now. So please accept my resignation. In my resignation I have given fifteen days' notice after which I will leave the job, without informing anyone. But I am not prepared to see the prisoners under me treated so cruelly. Why don't you permit them the clothes (turban and *kach*) which have been sanctioned by the Punjab government by law and their religious sentiments demand it. They will not wear the cheap underwears and coarse turbans spun and prepared in the Jail. As prison officer in charge of the prisoners I strongly recommended that they should be given all facilities allowed to political prisoners. They are Imperial prisoners because they have waged war against the King Emperor under section 121. They should be treated exactly as we have been treating German war prisoners.

Thus the Assistant Jailer spoke very strongly in favour of better treatment for us. Although I did not accept his hand of friendship, but by word and deed he proved to be a real friend, and was true to his promise. Although he extended his hand of friendship under duress, but he showed it by his deed that he had become a true friend.

After this we encountered very little trouble about the permission to wear turbans and *kach* (Sikh shorts). We were allowed to colour our turbans in navy blue colour. We also got the *kach* stitched as we liked and never used the striped cloth made in prison for it Bhai Kartar Singh was once more lodged near me. He recited the *Sukhmani* from memory and once more I enjoyed the heavenly spiritual flights of meditation and prayer. Our friendship and spiritual relations deepened. They were indeed the golden days of spiritual exaltation. As soon as I remember the bliss and joy of those golden days of spiritual enlightenment, I feel very happy. Unfortunately I did not have any

note book to keep a record of the wonderful events of this period. Nor did I get any opportunity to write any letter from the Jail about the events of those days. Now I remember only some events. The memory of those days has faded a good deal. Now I have to scrape up my memory and write about a few important events. The prison letters did not contain the whole story of our life in prison. Whatever I remember now, I am recording for the benefit of friends. My friend Bhai Kartar Singh remembers a lot. His memory is very sharp. I am giving you the gist of important events. As long as this wicked Superintendent was there, there were always some protest *morchas*. He did not give us any breathing time. He was always up to some mischief or the other.

Books Seized

The physical tortures sharpened my moral powers and exalted me spiritually. Each arrow of agony deepened my feelings and helped me in my efforts to achieve the highest spiritual realisation. And once I sat absorbed in mystic meditation no one could disturb me. Even if I was skinned alive the fearless state acquired could not be shaken out of this mental and spiritual poise. This lame doctor, the Superintendent, only completed the revenge of an old score of his last birth as was graciously revealed to me in my vision by the Lord in Rajahmundry prison (see chapter 19).

Whatever excessive tortures he inflicted will fall on his head and he shall have to suffer for them for many births. It was in his nature to continue to think of some novel ways of doing mischief and causing injury. When all his plans and evil designs were defeated in their purpose, he took away our books, and manuscripts of some books I had written. We lodged many reports against this ugly step he had taken but he did not return our books and manuscripts. Whenever a non-official visitor came to see us, he would agree to return the books, but would not do so when they were gone. Six years passed in this way. Ultimately Bhai Kartar Singh threatened to take dire action when the Inspector General of Prisons came on his next visit. But he still disregarded the threat. He then told us that he had burnt all the books. We then took him to task and threatened to take legal action against him for burning our prayer books. He then took out all the books and showed us that they were safe. He did not return them to us but ordered that they should be given to us when we are either released or transferred to some other prison.

CHAPTER 22 - MORE TROUBLES IN NAGPUR JAIL

THE JAILER WAS promoted as Superintendent and sent to some other prison. He was replaced by a Jailer who was also an Englishman. The first thing he did after resuming duty was to cow us down by making us obey humiliating orders. The Superintendent encouraged him to be strict with us. The first order he gave was that we would be deprived of our right to wear the turbans and the *kach* (Sikh shorts), and we would have to accept a *patka* (small piece of cloth to wrap around our head but insufficient to form a turban) and knicker (tight and clumsy underwear) in place of the *kach*, which, as a Sikh symbol, serves the same purpose as *khakhi* shorts serve in military uniform. So knickers made of course jail-cloth and small pieces of cloth were placed before us and we were ordered to wear them. We threw them away saying that it was an insult to our religious sentiments to compel us to wear those things.

Jailer: How is it an insult to your religious sentiments?

I: You are giving us knickers instead of *kach* (special shorts) if this is not a deliberate insult to our religious sentiment, what else it is?

Jailer: One of my assistants has come from the Punjab. He says that these types of knickers are given in Punjab Jails.

I: The *kach* is special type of shorts which is also one of the five symbols.

(Soon there came the Punjabi Assistant Jailer, who though apparently a Sikh, was a renegade from Sikhism).

Assistant Jailer: Outside the prison all Sikhs wear this type of knickers these days.

Kartar Singh: Sikhs may be wearing knickers but they still do not call a knicker a *kach*. It is all a concocted story. A Sikh cannot wear a knicker in place of a *kach*. Soldiers sometimes wear official knickers over the *kach*. You might have seen them wearing knickers but not the *kach* which they wear under it. We are not prepared to replace our *kach*, we are wearing, with these clumsy knicker-bockers.

Assistant Jailer: I have seen many Akalis wearing knickers during the Akali movement. I have seen them bathing with them.

Kartar Singh: Have you seen everyone wearing knickers or *kach*.

Assistant Jailer: Some of them were wearing knickers and some others were wearing *kach* also. After all they are made of cloth. Why not call them knickers?

I: A knicker is a knicker and a *kach* is a *kach*.

Assistant Jailer: What is special about a *kach*?

I: You have to admit and face the fact that a knicker is not a *kach* and a knicker cannot be called a *kach*.

Assistant Jailer: Youngmen like me call a knicker a *kach*. What difference does it make? It is only a question of changing the name.

I: Your assertion is a false concoction which we do not accept. And you are simply showing obstinacy in your assertion. You are not stating facts.

Assistant Jailer: How is it an obstinate and false assertion?

I: You yourself call it a knicker. You know it that it is knicker. And yet you want us to assume that it is a *kach*. If this is not a false obstinate assertion, what else it is? If you had always considered it a *kach* and did not think of it as anything but the *kach* then it was a different matter. But you never really considered it a *kach*. You still call it a knicker. But you insist that we should assume it to be a *kach*. If this is not false and obstinate assertion, what else it is? A person like you may as well call a shirt by the name of a coat, and assume a pyjama to be pant, and a hat to be a turban. Merely making false and aggressive assertions will not turn a shirt into a coat, a pyjama into a pant and hat into a turban.

Jailer (addressing his assistant): He is quite correct. I would certainly not call a hat a turban, what to say of calling a turban a hat. Your arguments, Babuji, have proved wrong in this matter.

Assistant Jailer (annoyed): But Sir, there is practically no difference between a knicker and a *kach*.

I: If there is no difference why are they named differently and why are they formed differently. Your conscience admits the difference, but you are not prepared to abandon the false position.

Assistant Jailer: I consider both to be one and the same and that is why I do no differentiate between them.

I: And yet in your previous statement's you admitted that some Sikhs wore knickers and others *kach*. You still assume them to be two different things but insist that one serves the purpose of the other. Although you consider them to be one and the same and yet you deem them to be two different types of dresses.

Assistant Jailer (angrily after seeing the Jailer smiling): I mean there is not much difference between the two.

I: Please bring your so called knicker and compare it with my *kach* which I use these days.

They brought what they called knickers. Actually they were what we call *tambis* (small underwears). They were much smaller than what were generally known as knickers. Europeans wear much larger knickers than those *tambis*. Punjabi knickers are only fashionable imitation of those European knickers. The half-pants are much better than those *tambis*, which at least cover your body up to the knee. But these *tambis* were hardly of nine inches length from the waist downwards. When placed side by side with our *kach* they looked very clumsy. Our *kach* on the other hand, had a fall from the waist to about two inches above the knees. It was baggy and made out of two-and-half yard cloth with a cloth strap to tie it at the waist. Its shape and style was of the standardized *kach*. When a Sikh wears it he looks smart as a soldier. The *tambi* they were offering did not even cover the lower part of the body. It was a very tight underwear without anything to tie it with at the waist. With only *tambis* as the dress for the lower part of the body we would have

appeared like half naked clowns. As soon as a man sat after wearing it, he appeared shamelessly naked.

After explaining all this I asked them: Well now tell me whether this is a *tambi* or a *kach*? Are they one and the same thing and would you still use one and the same word for it? The Assistant Jailer was dumb and silent, but the Jailer spoke.

Jailer: Shall we give you European type of *knickers* in place of these things? I hope you would have no objection to that?

I: A European knicker would also be a knicker; it will not be a *kach*. Mr. Jailer, we have no quarrel with you, nor can we compel you to do anything. European knicker is a European dress and good for you but our dress is the *kach* and that is what we want. If you do not wish to give us the *kach* we can get them from our homes or from the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. But we will wear only the *kach*. We will not wear either the half-pants or knickers, nor these *tambis*. If you do not give us the *kach* we will continue to use the ones we are wearing now and when they are worn out and not replaced we will go on hunger strike. We do not do much work. So if there is a work-strike you will not worry about it. In all the prisons we have been given the proper *kach*. Even in this Jail a British Officer has been giving us the *kach* for the last five years. Now to annoy us and harass us you are causing this trouble. How can those *tambis* and knickers ever be considered *askach* of the Sikhs? Their size and style are as different from each other as that of the pyjama and the pant, or a shirt and coat. One cannot serve the purpose of the other. We will wear nothing other than the *kach* of the Sikh style. That is the only underwear known as *kach*. Then the Assistant Jailer opened his mouth.

Assistant Jailer: Supposing we give you knickers of large size which you tie not with the belt but with a string. This will serve your purpose.

I: The question here is not of serving the purpose. What we want is our *kach*. Why give us knickers of greater length and why not straight away give us pyjamas or salwars. If by merely tying a string a knicker becomes a *kach* why not give us *ghaghras* with strings to serve the purpose of belts? You are only extending ugly arguments to cause trouble to us. What do you get out of it?

Kartar Singh (addressing the Jailer): The S.G.P.C. has already sent to you piles of *kachas* for us which you are keeping locked up. Better give them to us and save unnecessary expenditure of the government to prepare new ones.

Jailer (angrily): Who told you that the S.G.P.C. has sent the *kachas* for you and they are lying with us? I do not know if any *kach* has been received from anywhere.

Kartar Singh: The *kachas* sent by Sikh organisations are still lying in your office. Not one or two but more than two dozen. If you want to know where they are I can accompany you and point out the cupboard in which they are locked up.

(The Jailer was nonplussed. For a few minutes he was speechless).

Jailer (faltering): Well Kartar Singh, do you have any spiritual powers to know such things or do you have some informer in the office who passes on to you the secrets of our office.

Kartar Singh: The question of having informers or any particular occult powers does not arise. The very fact that you have questioned the source of my information proves that you have the *kachas* in the office. There is no shortage of the *kachas* and we can use them for years. If what I say is wrong and if you consider it an insult to have your cupboard searched, then permit us to inquire from S.G.P.C. whether they have sent any *kachas* for us or not. If they have sent, then how many were sent? We will know the truth.

Jailer: The Superintendent has given strict orders not to give you anything sent by private organisations. Even if we have received any *kachas*, we cannot issue them to you. You will get them at the cost of the Government.

Kartar Singh: All right, then, give us at the cost of the Government You must, however, return the *kachas* which S.G.P.C. has sent to you.

Jailer: We will give you striped cloth made in jail and you can get them stitched by the prison tailor.

I: We have no objection to cloth made in the prison but it should not be striped. It should be plain cloth of the type issued to us before. It should also not be very coarse.

Jailer: If you object to the stripes we will remove them all.

I: How will you do that?

Jailer: We will colour them black. So you will get plain cloth without stripes.

I: By plain we mean that it should not be coloured, nor should it be striped or chequered. When we object to stripes and colour designs on the cloth, how can we accept coloured cloth for *kach* (Sikhs do wear coloured turbans, blue and black being favourite colours, they however, object to coloured *Kach* (under-wears)).

Assistant Jailer: All the Akalis wear black *kachas*, nowadays.

Kartar Singh: They wear black turbans but they certainly do not wear black *kachas*.

Assistant Jailer: I saw them wearing black *kachas* only a week ago.

Kartar Singh: We do not believe it nor is your assertion worth believing.

Assistant Jailer: Supposing we secure from S.G.P.C. Amritsar permission to allow you to wear black *kachas*, what then?

I: If both *Akal Takhat* Amritsar and *Takhat Hazur Sahib* Nander issue orders to us to wear black *kachas* we will wear them at once.

Kartar Singh (addressing me): Bhai Sahib, do you think *Akal Takhat* can ever ask the Sikhs to wear black *kachas*? These people are concocting misleading stories. How can we trust these people that they would ever inquire from the *Akal Takhat*? They may even forge a *Hukamnama* (edict) and show it to us.

I (addressing Kartar Singh): It is possible that they can concoct any number of stories, but I do not believe they will be able to forge the seal and signatures of the *Jathedars* of the *Takhats*.

Kartar Singh: That is right, (addressing the Jailer) Do you accept the proposal Jailer Sahib?

Jailer: We shall not only write to them but inquire from the Jathedar telegraphically about the matter.

Kartar Singh: But you must mention the name of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. You must make it clear that Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh and his companions object to wearing black *kachas*.

The Jailer accepted the proposal and within a week we were shown the new orders stating that we would be given the type of *kachas* we want. We had come to know that the decision was in our favour but we did not know who convinced them. Victory was ours in this fight for our right to wear one of the important Sikh symbols.

My Children Meet Me for the First Time

We always had troublesome disputes with the Jail authorities about letters and interviews with visitors. They were never sincere or true to their promises and assurances. They never gave us the facilities to write to our relatives to which all political prisoners were entitled. We were given letters written to us by our relatives after censoring them and after keeping them in their office for three months, what to speak of permitting meeting with the members of our family.

During seven or eight years of imprisonment in Nagpur prison. I was allowed to meet my wife and children only once. Bhai Kartar Singh was not permitted to meet his relatives even once. I was also allowed to see them once with every possible obstruction and annoyance at the time of meeting. I was given solemn promises that I would be given sufficient time to meet my wife and children but at the time of the meeting the mischievous Superintendent and the Jailer suddenly changed their attitude. My little children, who had never seen me for years, and did not recognize me as they were too young when I was imprisoned, travelled hundreds of miles with their sorrowful mother, with the hope that they would be able to meet their dear father for a few hours and feel the warmth of his embrace and love. They had been given assurance that they would be given free time to meet and talk to me. It was a sad thing that their desire to meet me freely could not be fulfilled.

The Superintendent had assured me also, that just as I was given about four hours to meet my wife in the Hazaribagh prison, I would be given ample time to talk to them. I had made it very clear to him that my wife's application to meet me should be accepted only if she was given ample time to talk to me, otherwise it was not necessary. I had not met my children for so many years and this being the first meeting, it was essential that it should be purposeful. The Superintendent gave his word of honour that he would allow us to meet freely. But he went back on his word and broke his solemn promise.

After long years of painful separation came the day when I was to see my little ones and my wife. Bhai Sunder Singh (of village Ghuman, District Ludhiana) escorted my dear wife and children, whom long separation had made a tragic picture of sorrow and suffering, extending from the banks of the Sutlej (Ludhiana) to Nagpur which for me had been the city of *Nagas* (snakes). But as soon as they came to the Nagpur prison, the *Yama* of the prison (the Superintendent) stood in their way like a hooded cobra.

In Nagpur there was a locality known as Punjabi Lines. The residents of this locality were mostly Punjabis. There was a Gurdwara in the Punjabi lines. Tourists and travellers generally stayed in the Punjabi Lines. It was in the Punjabi Lines that my wife and children had to stay after reaching Nagpur. But the mischievous Superintendent spread out thorns on their way all around the city to make their movement difficult. C.I.D. men and prison sentry were posted all the way from Punjabi Lines to the Nagpur Jail. There were police pickets to watch their movements everywhere. A special police picket was posted near the house of Bhai Mansha Singh of Punjabi Lines. Bhai Mansha Singh helped and looked after the needs of every visitor from Punjab. He entertained most of them in his own house with unusual zeal and hospitality. The whole family was disciplined in the noble ideal of selfless service (*nishkam seva*). This *Gurmukh* (divine) family was overjoyed to learn that the wife and children of the patriot who had suffered so much for twelve long years in prison had come from far of Punjab. He already had a deep love for me. Even before my family reached Nagpur, he made up his mind to lodge my wife and children in his own house. He did not care a fig for police pickets. He did not fear the Jail authorities. Determined to render the utmost held to the innocent and helpless visitors from the Punjab, he went to receive them on the station.

When my wife came to know that a police picket had been posted at the residence of Bhai Mansha Singh, and the authorities were prepared to annoy and harass everyone who helped them, they decided to stop in the house of a young Overseer from Narangwal, my home village, named Sardar Mohinder Singh. This Overseer, being a government servant was not at all suspected. He received my family with great joy and hospitable warmth. Knowing the harassment caused to Bhai Mansha Singh for helping me, the brave and heroic soul, Sardar Mohinder Singh, took all risks and not only entertained them with great respect and devotion but even took the risk of accompanying them to the prison for interview. During those days it was an unusually heroic act for a government servant to dare to meet a freedom fighter like me who was listed as the most dangerous revolutionary, arrested under Section 121. When he interviewed with me, two Punjabi C.I.D. inspectors, one Hindu and the other a Muslim, sat opposite him flanking me on both sides. Immediately after the meeting a strong police picket was posted outside Sardar Mohinder Singh's house. They even threatened to search his house. But Sardar Mohinder Singh fearlessly looked after my wife and children. The police harassed and annoyed those who had come to meet and even those who entertained them. But no one was in the least worried about police threats, and continued to look after my wife and children with unswerving devotion.

Those who saw the meeting organized between me and my family were sorely grieved and shocked. While making arrangements they appeared to give great importance to it. A huge table was placed in the reception room and chairs placed on both the sides. The Jailer sat at the head of the table in a huge chair. Those who came to meet were seated on the right side. Opposite them a chair was placed for me. Around me sat C.I.D. officers and members of the Jail staff. At first my wife and children who were accompanied by Bhai Sunder Singh and Sardar Mohinder Singh were seated on the table. As soon as I entered the room the C.I.D. officers occupied their chairs. A chair in between them was reserved for me. As soon as I entered the room they stood up. I moved up to embrace my son, Balbir Singh, who was about fourteen years old and my ten years old daughter, Daler Kaur (Balbir Singh was hardly four and Daler Kaur only one year old when Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was imprisoned. They were actually seeing their father for the first time in life).

But the cruel Jailer placed his arms and legs across the passage through which I intended to move on the other side of the table to bless my dear ones. I was shocked and asked: "Would you not allow me even to embrace my children or even to bless them? What is the meaning of all this? I

have seen them after eleven or twelve years. They were little suckling babes when I was imprisoned? How is that I cannot give a little love to them in this first meeting?"

Jailer (sternly): You cannot bestow any love on them, nor can you embrace them. You can only see and touch them from a distance. Do not go near them.

(On seeing my eyes flaming with anger). I cannot help it. Such are the orders. Do not be angry with me.

I: Whose orders are these?

Jailer: These are the orders of the Superintendent. Go to his room and if you secure his order to allow you to meet freely, I will have no objection whatsoever.

I hurriedly went straight to the Superintendent. Two sepoy's accompanied me. Without even knocking at the door, I lifted the curtain and hastily entered the room where the prison-yama was sitting. Seeing me enter his room in hot haste without his permission his face became pale. "What does all this mean?" I asked. "Can I not even embrace my little ones and so much as even touch them or at least bless them? Is it you who have issued such a heartless and cruel order" Have you arranged a meeting or do you want the matter to take a tragic turn? I am not prepared to be satisfied with such a meeting which you have arranged. You must order the Jailer to stop all this."

Superintendent: I have given him all the necessary orders. I have authorized him to give whatever concessions he wants on his own. I am not prepared to issue new orders to him now.

I: This means that you are responsible for such cruel and callous attitude. It is you who have given such strict orders.

Superintendent: I have already told you that I have given him full powers to arrange a meeting between you and your kith and kin. I am not prepared to interfere in his arrangement. I am not prepared to discuss the matter any more. Go and have your meeting with your people and do not waste time.

I (came back and addressed the Jailer): The Superintendent has given you full powers and he does not wish to interfere in your arrangement. So now tell me will you allow me to meet my wife and children as you promised or not"

Jailer (in an officious tone): All right first talk to them and then you can give your love to your children. Sit down quietly on the chair and talk to them.

C.I.D. Officers (both of them with one voice): Sardar Sahib, now you can sit down and talk to your people. The Jailer has promised you and you can now give your love and blessings to your children later on.

I (addressing the C. I. D. Inspectors): You can never trust these Jail authorities. They have dishonoured many such promises.

Inspectors: We will now support you. We are responsible for it. You better talk to your people and do not waste your precious time.

At the request of the C. I. D. Inspectors I sat down to talk to my wife and my friends who accompanied her. They also sat down. So far they had kept standing. I had hardly inquired about their welfare when after about fifteen minutes, the Jailer took out his watch and said that half an hour was over. He had included even the fifteen minutes wasted in my attempt to remind them of their solemn promises.

I: You have given us hardly fifteen minutes. You have included even the fifteen minutes wasted in dispute over the manner in which the meeting was arranged.

Jailer: I am not to be blamed for it. You wasted the time. We have been sitting in this room for half an hour. Ordinary prisoners are given only five minutes.

I: You promised that you would give me a good deal of time just as I was given in Hazaribagh prison.

Jailer: About the promise ask the Superintendent. I was ordered to give you only half an hour.

I: You were also there when you assured me that free time will be given to meet my people. Both of you gave a solemn promise and now you are going back on it.

Jailer: I am duty bound to obey the Superintendent. I have to abide by his orders. You can go to him and ask for more time.

I again went to the Superintendent's office and sternly said to him: "Shame indeed on your broken promises. If I knew it, I would never have asked my people to come from such a long distance. You urged me to invite my wife and children to meet me and assured me that I would be given ample time to talk to them. Encouraged by this assurance I sent a telegram to my wife through you. Unfortunately neither do I have your promise in writing nor a copy of the telegram, with which I could put you to shame.

Superintendent: What is the matter now? Why are you so angry?

I: Why should I not be wrathful? It is your heartless and cruel attitude that has inflamed me.

Superintendent: But what is the matter?

I: He has given me only fifteen minutes. The Jailer says that you have ordered him to allow only this much time.

Superintendent: Well Randhir Singh, I have given full powers. If he wants he can give you more time.

I: You promised to arrange this meeting and give ample time for it.

Superintendent: Well Randhir Singh, my position is very awkward. If something happens I will be finished. I am after all an Indian; what matters if I am posted as Superintendent. Surely you do not want me to lose my job. You know what happened when Master Mota Singh's relatives came to meet him. Long articles were published against us. I saved my skin with great difficulty. Even God

fears you people. Go and settle the issue with the Jailer. He is an Englishman. He will handle the matter as he likes. If he gives some more time, take it with a gentle approach.

I: I am not going to beg him for more time, nor am I going to appeal to him again. I have to fight for my rights. Remember, you people will have to suffer bitterly for all this injustice, cruelty and callousness.

So saying I came out of the room. By the time I came back the Jailer had softened a bit. On the recommendation of the C. I. D. Inspectors I was allowed to talk for fifteen minutes more. But what could I talk in so few minutes and seconds? How could a heart filled with the years of separation from my dear ones express itself within fifteen minutes? We were not allowed to discuss national matters and *Panthic* problems. We could not even talk about important family matters. We were frequently cross questioned about the people we talked about and thus we could not talk freely even about our kith and kin. As soon as fifteen minutes were over we were asked to part immediately.

We were so overwhelmed by the pangs of sudden meeting and cruel separation again that we even forgot to greet each other. All that we could do was to look into each others sorrowful eyes with poignant sorrow of this short meeting cruelly broken up. I was not allowed to embrace my son and daughter. All I could do was to stretch my hand across the table and bless them. The one desire of my children to embrace their father remained unfulfilled. I could not shake hands with my friends, Bhai Sunder Singh and Sardar Mohinder Singh. Controlling their grief at the cruel separation, and suppressing their sorrowful emotions with great difficulty, all of them moved out of the reception room. My son and daughter looked back at me with sorrowful innocent eye till they were out of sight.

Overwhelmed with the pathetic situation, and wounded deeply by poignant pain of the short meetings, I was brought back to my dark cell. This *bairagya* deepened my concentration on the divine Name, and I meditated on His presence with renewed inspiration. The intoxicating love that had been made more painful by the piercing wounds of separation of the dear ones intensified the spiritual practice of His divine presence. Wave after wave of divine inspiration helped my mind to soar far above the mundane world into the higher sphere of cosmic consciousness. The mind that was hankering for love and union now soared into the bliss of infinite love in its solitary search for His ennobling presence. I sat in the blissful poise of this *sahajya samadhi* till it was time for evening prayers. I recited the *Rehras* (evening prayer) when I came down to normal consciousness, and then performed the *ardasa* in a love-lorn joy which one rarely enjoys.

Once more I began to think of my little ones. I could see their innocent eyes piercing deep into my soul. With my inner vision of spiritual insight I saw them sad and brooding gloomily over their unfulfilled desires. They were reflecting over the mental agony of the cruel separation. As their spiritual insight was still unawakened, they felt very sad and lonely. I procured a pen and paper and started writing a letter to my wife and children. In that love-lorn condition I wrote many pages, hardly knowing how it would be possible to send the letter to them. Having written the letter I was reflecting as to how could the letter be sent to them, when suddenly God helped me and sent an angelic person to do the difficult task in a unique way.

Those were very difficult times. Great precautions and stringent steps were taken to create difficulties and obstructions for everyone who even thought of us. It was quite dark when I suddenly saw a man standing close to the bars of my cell. He was wearing grey coloured clothes to

avoid being easily spotted out I recognized him to be Dr. Mansukh our Medical Officer (Dr. Mansukh, the medical officer of the prison hailed from Amritsar). I was wonder-struck to see such a responsible officer coming to me at this time of the night and taking such serious risk. I could not believe that the purpose of his visit was anything other than expressing his deep-felt sympathy for me. Surprised greatly, I spoke to him

I: What brings you here, my dear and noble friend and well wisher at this time of the night?

Dr. Mansukh: Great and glorious indeed is your brave heart and powers of endurance. Only with such a big and courageous heart and soul you have faced terrible ordeals in the prison for your country, otherwise who else could? Your meeting with your wife and children today had a pathetic effect on all eye-witnesses. For hours I could not control my tears. Even now when I think of that pathetic moment I cannot control my tears. I am also a father. I have lovely little children who cannot bear separation from me even for a day. Whenever I go home after doing my office duties they cling to me and do not leave me as long as I do not give them my love. How brave are your little children who have not seen you or met you for eleven long years, and now when they had an opportunity to meet you they could not embrace you, feel the warmth of your arms and cling of their father's breast. Even after twelve years they did not have the satisfaction of talking to you, telling you of their plight in their sweet innocent language, feeling the cooling joy of their father's love. Great indeed is the heart and soul of these children. My heart breaks and my soul leaps out in agony at the very thought of their sorrow. Oh brave patriot and saint soldier of the heroic community, believe me, that this Superintendent and Jailer are the most inhuman butchers, who take brutal delight in the slow torture of human beings. Before they kill anyone they take sadistic delight in seeing him groan under torture. Their conscience is dead. There is not a trace of pity or compassion for the suffering of other people in their hearts. Even now my heart is full of sorrow. If you wish to convey any message to your people let me know. I will take it personally.

I: I am extremely grateful to you for your sympathy. God has sent you here at a very opportune moment, but I hesitate to put a noble sympathizer like you to trouble, or take any risk for my sake.

Dr Mansukh: Just tell me what is to be done, and I will do it even at the risk of my life.

I: My noble and compassionate friend, there are police pickets all round and every crossing on the way. How will you reach the place without being questioned or searched?

Dr. Mansukh: Please tell me where I am to go? Do you want me to go to the place where they are staying? Do not worry about me. Wherever they are I will go like lightning and find them and convey your message. I know that there are police pickets everywhere right up to their house. But I will disguise myself; go on a bicycle when it is pitch dark and pass through the police pickets like lightning. I will go at all cost even if I have to go in the middle of the night.

I was delighted to see his courage and know his plane. I handed over to him the letter which I had written, which he hid in his secret pocket. He held my hand warmly and then placed it on his head in tender affection and sought my blessings and then he quietly went away.

The letters which I sent out through him or even those sent later through the authorities would be of great interest for the devotees of truth. The cruelty and the brutality of the prison authorities is vividly painted in them. To soothe us down a bit and to calm down our wrath on not allowing us to meet our relatives, the prison authorities suddenly gave us permission to write long letters to our

homes. We could write everything in those letters provided nothing was written against the Jail authorities. We were permitted to write only two letters in three months. Even if I wrote letters of thirty pages, the Jailer did not object. After showing inhuman cruelty they now wanted to create a good impression. But they sent these long letters after getting them censured. Those who censured the letters actually could not read them. They were expected to translate the whole letter word by word, but it was an impossible task for them. Only one who was expert in reading and translating Punjabi language in Gurmukhi script could translate them. After finding the task impossible they sent brief and superficial summaries of the letters to the authorities without actually reading them. The result was that we were able to write anything we liked even against the prison authorities.

One difficulty was that the letters were detained for a long time by the censure department. Only when we sent a number of reminders, were they sent to the Deputy Commissioner to be posted to our people. Their replies were also received through the Deputy Commissioner after being censured. Thus reply to a letter was received after three months, and it is only after three months we were allowed to write another two letters. We objected to these long delays and even reported the matter to official and non-official visitors. We demanded that at least the letters written to our wives should not be censured. No one took the matter seriously. Verbal and formal promises were given but no one took up the matter. Any way, by the grace of the Guru days passed in inward peace and in high spirits. We never submitted to any coercion or threat.

Birth of an Illegal Child in the Prison

We overlooked many atrocities perpetuated by the jail authorities. But at times we had to take stern action to expose their brutalities. A woman prisoner, undergoing imprisonment for four years gave birth to an illegal child. The face and eyes of the child revealed that it was offspring of a Whiteman. The Indian members of the prison staff were terribly shocked, but they were afraid to bring the matter to the notice of the higher authorities. They grumbled and moaned the tragic incident but dare not tell anyone. At last they sought our help and told us the whole story. On hearing about this terrible affair we were greatly shocked and stunned. We were determined to fight and expose these people.

During these days Master Mota Singh also was brought to our prison, for about a year. He also endured great hardships but he lived in the prison fearlessly fighting against injustice. He was shocked to hear this story and was restless. He was about to take a very strong line but we requested him to allow us to probe the matter. With great difficulty we convinced him that we should first bring the matter to the notice of the Superintendent. When the Superintendent came on a round we warned him that horrible things were happening in his jail. We would not tolerate such bestial cruelty and ill treatment of innocent Indian female prisoners. The Superintendent side-tracked the issue by saying that the woman was suffering from abdominal tumour. There was nothing wrong.

But falsehood has no footing. We might have believed it to be a tumour case but on the third day suddenly we received another shocking news that the illegal child had been murdered at night and early next morning he was burnt to ashes. We also heard the weeping of the woman from the Female ward of the prison. Now we were convinced of what had actually happened. We were now waiting for the prison officers to take them to task when they came on a round. We were aflame with uncontrollable anger over such inhuman cruelty. We soon saw the Superintendent and his staff coming towards us and discussing some matter between themselves. We overheard a little

conversation between the Deputy Superintendent and the Jailer about the incident which was as follows:

Deputy Superintendent: When we went to the female ward on a round the child was hale and hearty. How is that he died suddenly at night?

Jailer: The matron has reported that the child was sleeping with the mother and in her sleep the mother crushed the child under her body while taking a turn on the bed.

Deputy Superintendent: This is unbelievable. Such a thing can never happen.

The Deputy Superintendent had just uttered these words when he came close to us. So we decided to take him to task:

I: So the tumour case really happened to be an illegal child and now you cruel people have murdered him at night. After committing one crime after another, you now wish to get away by saying that the mother crushed the child under her body in sleep while taking a turn on her bed. Even animals do not kill their little ones like that and you wish us to believe that an Indian mother did it. Have you ever heard that even a cow or any other animal crushing her offspring under her body? Do you think a woman can be so careless that she cannot take care of her child lying by her side? It is all a concocted story. How long will you hide your sins and crimes? We are now receiving news that the Sikh *Panth* is trying for our release and we will be released soon enough. We will not let this story be hushed up and become stale. We will charge you all with the most gruesome murder. The punishment you are bound to receive in the other world where the Justice of God will certainly fall on your crimes, is a thing apart.

Superintendent (interrupting): Only fools believe in the justice of God and punishment in the other world. You will be in our grip for the rest of your life. Give up the vain hope that your *Panth* will get you your release. The British Government is very powerful. It will keep you in prison for all your natural life (referring to me). Give up all hopes of being released. You are receiving false reports and hopes of your early release. If you behave properly with us your life in the prison will be easier, but if you spoil your relations with us, you will face untold hardships and troubles.

Master Mota Singh: It is criminals like you who will suffer humiliation and the worst punishment for your sins and crimes. We will see that you are punished for your crimes in this world only. If Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh is imprisoned for life, I will be released soon enough. It is quite possible that he may be released much earlier than me. But it is quite certain that I shall be released soon. If we are helpless about the matter here in prison we will take you people to task as soon as we go out of the jail. We will charge you with murder in the court. Can you ever escape the punishment of such a gruesome murder?

On hearing the thundering threat of Master Mota Singh the Superintendent and Jailer slinked away. They did not stop for a moment. While going away the lame Superintendent said: "Mota Singh, I will see that neither you nor your companions are released." Dragging his limping leg, he went away with his staff.

After a few days they instituted a case against Master Mota Singh for secretly sending communications outside and his imprisonment was increased by six months. But while appearing in the court for that case he exposed the crime of the prison officials and put on records of the

court the whole story of the birth of an illegal child and his murder soon after that. However, we learnt later on that no one took any serious action against them. We learnt from the Jailer that he was downgraded for another three years in connection with this case. Master Mota Singh was deported to Burma.

After some time when Dr. Nilkantha Jatar, the Superintendent was transferred and in September or October 1928 when Mr. H. L. Khan was appointed the Superintendent, I was also accused of sending a letter to my relatives outside and my life imprisonment was increased by six months. To us who were imprisoned for life this did not mean or matter anything. The evil-mongers did their worst and for us it did not make any difference. By the will of God my release had been delayed but those who took indecent delight in crime and inhuman treatment of the prisoners, were bound to suffer the worst punishment in the Court of the Just God:

Justice is meted out to everyone,
Sinners are singled out for punishment;
They find no asylum or escape,
Humiliated, they are cast into hell.
Guru Nanak: *Asa di Var*

Inhuman treatment of a Chamar (Cobbler) prisoner

(Chamars: The Oxford dictionary rightly describe the Chamars as members of the very low caste of India leather workers, tanners or shoemakers. The chamars however never do the work of sweepers).

The hobbling Superintendent Dr. Jatar indeed committed such inhuman crimes that some of them are too shocking to be described. He will certainly be punished, and with his face blackened he will certainly be cast into hell. I will relate only one more incident:

There were some prisoners of low caste tribes known as the Bhils and Gaund. They were mostly cobblers but to do the work of sweepers, cleaners of latrines, was not their profession. They were forced to carry bucket full of faeces and excretion. They considered it the worst humiliation to do such dirty work. They lodged innumerable protests pointing out that the *Bhangis* should be employed for this purpose and they should not be forced to do such filthy work, but all fell on deaf ears. One day Bhai Kartar Singh and I were locked in a barrack, through the large windows of which we could see the prison office. The Superintendent was going on his daily round and one Ramji Das a *Chamar (Cobbler)* prisoner was presented to the Superintendent. He was accused of refusing to do the work of *Bhangis*. The officer who was reporting was a *Shia* Muslim.

Superintendent (addressing the Chamar): Well, why do you refuse to do the work of a *Bhangis*?

I: Sir, it is not my profession that is why I have refused to do this work.

Superintendent: Whose work is it?

Chamar prisoner: Sir, it is the job of the *Bhangis*.

Superintendent: What do you think you are?

Chamar prisoner: Sir, I am a *Chamar* (cobbler). You can ask me to do any leather work. I will make and mend shoes. You can get any work done from me in the leather factory. I will not do the work of a *Bhangi*.

Superintendent: Will you not obey my orders?

Chamar prisoner (humbly): Sir, I find it difficult to obey this order. You can make me obey any other order.

Superintendent: I will make you obey this very order and get this very work done.

Chamar prisoner: Sir, this will be excessive cruelty on a poor man like me.

Superintendent (addressing the Warder): No one should listen to his protests. Use force to make him obey the orders and compel him to do the work of the *Bhangis*.

He was first beaten and then five or six *Bhangis* threw buckets full of faeces and filth on his body. When he still refused to do the filthy work he was ordered to be thrown into a drum of filth and faeces. But the men failed to push him down into the drum. He resisted it stoutly with his legs. When he was out of control a number of men stretched him on the ground sat on his body and poured the drum full of faeces, urine and filth on his head and even attempted to put some of it in his mouth. We could not control ourselves. We came out of our cells and threatened to punish them. We shouted at Warder Manohar Lall who was carrying out this filthy torture. "You dirty devil", we said, "do you dare to do all this in our presence. Stop it at once otherwise it will go hard with you."

On hearing our threat everyone turned pale and slinked away taking Ramji Das with them. The poor man's life was saved from further torture. We have not been able to forget this horrible sight until now. Many *Bhils* were flogged and forced to do this dirty work. There are so many awful stories of the hellish treatment accorded to helpless prisoners that it is difficult to describe them all. There was a *mazabhi* Sikh named Hardyal Singh who was also forced to do this dirty work, but we secured him the right to wear Sikh dress.

Letters from Nagpur (Most of these letters were written to Bhai Surjan Singh, Gyani Nahar Singh and other friends. Although the author has referred to many incidents in his narrative, written after release from prison, these letters have a historical value and all of them are preserved here. The Sikh Panth on knowing that Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh and Baba Kharak Singh were undergoing untold hardships fixed a day on which the whole Community, the world over prayed for the two great freedom fighters. The day fixed by S.G.P.C. was February 1, 1923.)

First Letter

A million grateful thanks to the blessed organisation, the Shromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, and the Sikh *Panth*, by whose infinite kindness, I have been given renewed inspiration, I am a sacrifice unto the great day (February 1, 1923) when the whole Sikh *Panth* prayed for me and this little creature, frail in body and spirit, was given boundless spiritual inspiration and courage. I am beholden every moment for that sacred moment when noble and enlightened Sikhs every where offered a prayer which destroyed all suffering and had such a magnetic effect on my disillusioned mind that, "the dead miraculously came to life." otherwise the oil in this frail body had very nearly been exhausted and the flame was flickering and about to be blown out.

I felt the miraculous influence of the prayer of the Sikh *Panth* in the prison particularly when I was about to say my evening prayer, when suddenly my whole inner being was ablaze with strong spiritual waves from the Unknown. Little did I know that every man, woman, and child of the Sikh *Panth* was concentrating on a fervent prayer for me and their spirit was inwardly in unison with my lonely soul, and their heart was beating for me. Like an electric current, this blessing from the Unknown stimulated my soul.

Whenever such thing happens I generally note the day and time. So I particularly noted the evening of February 1st 1923, when it was time to recite the *Rehras*. But I came to know of the actual happening from your affectionate letter and a poster through which the day was announced, sent along with your letter. I was wonder-struck and felt exalted when the date and time sent by you coincided exactly with that which was noted by me. So exalted and illumined I felt that the sublime joy is unforgettable. It has indeed brought the dead to life. With the spiritual support I have received through this national prayer, not only will my soul remain strong but this body will also safely complete the wheel of its destiny. So now all my friends, brother seekers of truth, members of my family and relatives, the leaders and enlightened seers of the Sikh *Panth* should completely cease to worry about me. Because of the prayer offered by the Sikh *Panth* for me not a hair of my body will suffer injury.

When the Sikh *Panth* has taken me under its protective grace through this prayer all my sorrow and suffering, physical and mental, have departed. I, a humble creature, really did not deserve the honour and affection bestowed on me by the Sikh *Panth*. This compassion of the Sikh *Panth* and deep sympathy for me gives me perpetual joy and courage. I am convinced that by the grace of the Guru and the *Sangat*, all my search will find fulfilment. Dear brother I agree with your noble words written in your letter that it is all the "will of God." Of this I am quite convinced. I have been hearing this voice, within me but your letter has confirmed the truth. Who are these people who could inflict suffering on their own and harm me? I did not take this inner voice very seriously before. Now I feel it within my heart and soul and am convinced of the truth.

"Cry, Lord, Lord; and remain not unconscious of Him." This is a precious message to me indeed, with which you have blessed me. I cannot boast that I can ever achieve this state of concentration. But by the grace of the Guru and the *Sangat* it is not difficult to achieve. "May the Guru give every pore of my body a hundred tongues, and each tongue repeat the Name of God a million times till I am completely lost in the One Name of the Lord. And thus my concentration on His presence may go far beyond not being unconscious of Him, but into unbroken *Samadhi* of His vision. It is for that supreme state that I seek blessings. May I go far beyond the state of a *Chatrik's* thirst and cry for a drop of rain water, to the satiation in torrents of rain of divine grace" (*Chatrik* also known in Indian languages as *Papiha* or *Babiha* is the common Hawk Cuckoo).

"Inscrutable and agonising is the will of God:" Who knows His will indeed. Those on whom He showers His mercy are able to abide by His will. Who knows what pleaseth the God? What am I? Only an insignificant creature. The Guru and *Sangat* alone can save me. It is the saving grace and affection of the Guru. What else could impel the *Sangat* to pray for me? It is I who have been deprived of the *Sangat*. I am thirsting for the presence of the *Gurudeva: Guru Granth Sahib* like a *papiha*.

Under the veil of His inscrutable Will, men like Baba Ram Singh (the Namdhari leader) have disappeared for ever, and never came back (Baba Ram Singh was the great Namdhari leader, who died in British prison in Burma under very mysterious circumstances. His followers, in spite of Baba

Ram Singh's strong protests and instructions, organised themselves as in group of Sikhism, claiming Ram Singh to be the twelfth Guru in succession to Guru Gobind Singh (Tenth Guru). Never has history been so artlessly manipulated to prove this impossible fact, as done by his followers after his death. The Sikh Panth resented it. But it is clear from Baba Ram Singh's prison Letters that he never posed or desired to be called the Guru least of all the spiritual successor of Guru Gobind Singh' - Translator).

What am I, a poor creature? Baba Ram Singh was unfortunately deprived of the loving grace of the Sikh *Panth*. I am more fortunate than him in this respect that the *Guru Panth* has a deep concern for me. Whenever the *Guru Panth* needs me it will acquire my services. With the loving grace of the Sikh *Panth* bestowed on me, I deem myself most fortunate. If I still think of myself as unlucky, it would be very ungrateful of me. But God and His created Sikh *Panth* are compassionate on ungrateful persons also. "The Mighty-armed inspires mighty faith." I have kept with me the copy of the *Shabad*, which was recited after the Panthic prayer for me. You have brought so many things for me, but it is pity, that fate does not allow me to use them. If you had come and met me at Rajahmundry prison I would have acquired everything. You could have met me as freely as you met me at Hazaribagh. The officers of Rajahmundry prison were quite generous. Although they were Europeans, they were very noble indeed. They treated me with great respect and treated me as a saint. When I left the Rajahmundry prison they gave me yellow turban, which I am now wearing, as a gift. The one year which I spent at Rajahmundry prison was a year of great freedom and joy. Rajahmundry was indeed a *Raj-mandir* (temple of freedom) for us. But God had ordained the troubles and tortures of this jail also. So be it." Sorrow and joy are by Thy will O Lord"; "If Thou givest joy and happiness, I will think of Thee; If Thou givest sorrow and suffering, I will still think of Thee." (Letter No. 18 written to Bhai Surjan Singh).

Letter 2

I am convinced that the new gentleman who has come is Master Mota Singh. He has been sent here from Layllpur Jail. The Jail authorities have started torturing him also. Just as they tried to compel us to stand up with hands stretched out and say "*Salam Sahib*," like slaves and beggars, he is also compelled to do so. This is the order from which trouble started with us. But Master Mota Singh is a brave and fearless patriot. He is not afraid of facing any physical suffering. His troubles will increase. God alone knows what may happen. Here the conditions are worse than what they ever were in Aurangzeb's *raj*. All three of us are kept far apart. If you inform some members of the local council about the inhuman treatment accorded to the prisoners, then it is quite possible that Master Mota Singh may be saved from the cruelty we had to undergo, and no injury may be caused to his faith. (Letter No. 19).

Letter 3

What is the use of taking legal action against these people? I leave everything to the Court of God. He is the one who will justify punish the bad and reward the good. What is the use of taking revenge through law courts? I had to tell you everything. The manuscript of the book which I wrote is in the possession of the Superintendent. He assured me that he would return it after getting read. He has promised to keep it safely. He cannot confiscate it. When he calms down he will return it.

Nagpur Jail has turned out to be the dwelling of *Nagas* (snakes). Although they succeeded in breaking my vow by force, but the concentration and contemplation of divine Name has deepened. My spirit soars high to the' highest bliss and aesthetic joy. The inward sorrow of being forced to break my vow has indeed upset me, and I am grieved about it, but the inner illumination

and spiritual exaltation has helped me to regain my poise. Soon when I am completely absorbed in bliss of spiritual joy, traces of this sorrow will disappear. That day will indeed be a blessed day. But it appears on that day I may also be tempted to discard my body, if God does not will it otherwise. May God bring that day closer when my light blends completely with His Light. Convey this message to all my friends, dear brother, that:

The years and the sacred day for the wedding is fixed
Comrades, pour oil at the door to welcome the bride;
Give me your blessings, O friends,
I depart for my union with God.
Guru Nanak; *Sohila*

It is with such blessings of saintly souls that I, a dweller of the lower worlds may be liberated. My strong request is that no one should come to meet me. The *Sangat* has already taken a lot of trouble for me. A friend named Bhai Raghbir Singh also came to meet me from Punjab but was not allowed to meet me. Perhaps you know that Master Mota Singh is also subjected to untold tortures but he is kept far apart. Even Bhai Kartar Singh is kept far apart. I have written and sent to you my life story, but you say that you have not received it. This has surprised me greatly. Now I end the letter here. (Letter No. 20).

Letter No. 4

I have been delighted to know that the *Panth* has undertaken to clean the pond of the Golden Temple (The cleaning of the pond of Golden Temple commenced on June 17, 1923). Blessed are the Sikhs who have an opportunity to serve there in that divine service (*karseva*). Blessed and fortunate are you all; The Guru said: "He who has served to dig the pond, are beyond praise for their noble service." We in the prison here feel ourselves to be most unfortunate for not being able to participate in the holy task and for the first time in my life I feel the burden of a misfortune which has deprived me of this service. Some evil lot of the past *karma* appears to have deprived me of this sacred opportunity to serve the Guru. One gets the opportunity to serve the *Panth* in many ways but this opportunity comes once in many years. And when the opportunity had now come after many years I am brooding gloomily over my misfortune in Jail. While I congratulate my blessed brothers who have got an opportunity to serve the Golden Temple, I am in deep agony over the thought that I am unable to do the slightest service in this divine service. Reflecting on the wheel of my *karma* I find solace only in the inner peace of His will. Even if I had been given a little opportunity to do this service, I might have spent my days in peace. But here I am quite helpless.

It appears that the Lord of my destiny has wilfully thrown me into the oven of suffering. Until now even sorrow and suffering were sweet, and I endured all the agony of separation without complaining, but today I feel actually the pang and the consequences of this separation. It is indeed a miserable life led in the burning oven of separation.

Blessed are you all, and fortunate too. Take the utmost benefit of this opportunity. Ah, why should I disturb your peace of mind with my sorrow and agony at this moment? But I could not help giving expression to it. My congratulations to you all for the opportunity you have got. I am extremely glad that the government has handed over the keys of the Golden Temple (*Durbar Sahib*) to the leaders of the *Sikh Panth* (Letter No. 21).

Letter No. 5

I have just heard unconfirmed news that in imitation of other patriots many Sikhs also shout slogans like: *Gandhi ki Jai, Lajpat Rai ki Jai*, etc. If this is correct, then it is a very shameful thing to do so. We Sikhs never glorify any human being and we seek the support and invoke the help in all our work of God only. If we glorify man and invoke his strength we will never succeed. God and God alone can help us. Our Gurus placed us under the protective grace God, and left it to the Almighty to mother the Khalsa. We praise and remember God only and we are not supported to glorify any man. Our slogan is *Sat Sri Akal*, True and Glorious is the Immortal Lord. The perfect and all powerful Sikh Gurus never asked the Sikhs to glorify their name, or shout slogans in their name. They never named the Sikh *Panth* after their name. They called it the *Panth* of the Almighty. If the disciples of such a *Panth* whose spiritual roots are in the Supreme and Immortal Being, stoop so low as to glorify ordinary human beings and shout slogans in the name of petty politicians, then these Sikhs are bringing disgrace and bad name to the high ideals of Guru Gobind Singh. It is against the teachings of the Saviour of the *Panth*.

Let everyone reflect: "Did Guru Gobind Singh ever ask his disciples to shout such slogans "*Guru Gobind Singh Ki Jai*." Throughout Sikh history, Sikh armies, Jathas, congregations never shouted such slogans as "*Guru Gobind Singh Ki Jai*". The strict command of the Guru was to glorify only God. He taught again and again, clearly and firmly that in every work we do, and for seeking inspiration for every cause we should seek the support of God alone, and it is this high and noble ideal which makes our faith pure and unique and worthy of being called "*Khalsa*". Guru Gobind Singh was all powerful and perfect being, yet he never asked his Sikhs to glorify his name, and shout slogans in his name. He did not even name the *Panth* after his own name. He gave us the greeting: *Vahe-guru ji ka khalsa*, and *Vahe-guru ji ki Fateh*. The Khalsa seeks the protection of Almighty God. Victory unto the Almighty God. This was the lesson that he taught us that we belong to God and we should glorify and shout the victory of God alone. Whatever is done by us should always be done by seeking the grace of God. We are not to follow other people and glorify petty human beings.

We are to participate with other communities for the common fight for freedom and *dharma* but we have to do it on the moral and high spiritual ideals and principles set down for us. In our history the great heroes of the Sikh *Panth* have already set many noble examples for us and we have to abide by those. Our aim is not to seek political power but eliminate slavery, and despotism. *Swarajya* for us does not mean capturing power and enjoying the luxury of high living, but to establish the rule of *dharma*, righteousness in all its aspects, we must remain free from the lust for power. This is the great lesson our Saviour Guru Gobind Singh taught us.

Even if we have our own rule, we are never going to submit to the rule based on injustice and discrimination. Any Government, native or foreign, which tries to suppress our legitimate demands, and perpetrates tyranny and oppression, and causes injury to our religious sentiments, will have to face our opposition, and by the help of God we will uproot it. On seeing humanity living in peace and happiness, the Sikh should feel happy. On seeing humanity in sorrow and suffering the Sikh should be grieved. But whatever service we do to humanity or our country, it should be done under sublime inspiration and noble principles of *Gurmat* (Sikh Philosophy). The Light we received from our true devotion to God and the Guru should be the guiding principle of our fight for righteousness. A service of humanity done under this sublime inspiration of the Guru would be the true service of humanity. The love for God can thereby be the sole guiding motive for service and love for humanity. Remember the great ideal of the Guru:

I seek not kingdom, I seek not salvation,
I seek the love of His lotus feet.
(Letter No. 22)

Letter No. 6

Physically I am better than before. At times I suffer from piles but it is automatically cured. Therefore is nothing much to worry about. You have been kind enough to perform *Akhand Path* for me. This has given me great spiritual delight. The motive with which it is being performed is bound to bear fruit.

You have informed me that all my land has been confiscated by the British Government. It is no news for me. For me it has been confiscated since a long time. Ah, what do I care for such confiscation of land? When these false rulers carry out threats and take pride in false confiscation of my land, I care not a fig for it. It has not worried me in the least but on the other hand I feel exalted spiritually for gladly sacrificing all for the sake of freedom and my country.
(Letter No. 23)

Letter No. 7

All three of us are staying in the same barrack. According to the will of God our days are passing well. Strange are the ways of God. Everyday we hear some strange news of the ordeals the Sikh *Panth* is facing. The days of separation from the *sangat* are also getting prolonged. I have been deprived of the great opportunity to do *kar-seva* (divine service) of the holy pond of the Golden Temple. Now there is no special anxiety. So if I now meet you all once for a while, then the one longing that troubles me may be realized.
(Letter No. 24)

CHAPTER 23 - THE SPIRIT AND PERSONALITY OF THE Sikhs

WE CAME TO know that the next day Dr Nilkantha Suryan Jatar was going away for good and the Inspector General of Prisons was coming there. When an officer came on a round we told him that Superintendent N.S. Jatar must see us before he leaves. He could, if he wished, call us in his office. We had to say something to him before we questioned the Inspector General of Prisons the next day. We were soon asked to meet him in the office. The villain was sitting there along with the Jailer and the new Superintendent, Mr. L.H. Khan.

Mr. Jatar: Now what have you to say?

I: We are going to report to the Inspector General Prisons that our books and manuscripts have not been returned. Will you please tell us where our books are? If you have burnt them, you must give it in writing. Secondly, you are going to Jubbulpur as Superintendent; why not take us with you?

Mr. Jatar: So far you always said that you wanted to get rid of me, now you ask me to take you along with me. What is the meaning of all this?

I: We have got used to you. You have done your worst with us and we know how to deal with you. You will now go to Jabbalpur and unnecessarily harass our comrades Bhai Nidhan Singh, Pundit Jagat Ram and Bhai Sawan Singh. They are very happy under Mr. Rajras, the Superintendent of Jabbalpur prison. They have a good library, a tennis ground for games and many other facilities. The first thing you are going to do to them is to lock them up in dark cells. Pundit Jagat Ram is writing some books there in the prison. You are going to burn all those books. You have burnt all our books. You will unnecessarily torture them. They have lived happily under Mr. L.H. Khan. So if they are brought here they will live happily.

Mr. Jatar: Why not make Pundit Jagat Ram, the political prisoner the Superintendent of the prison.

I: He is as intelligent as you are. If you can make him a Superintendent, why not do so.

Mr. Jatar (unnerved): The books have been burnt. If you wish to institute a case against me you can do so when you are released. What has happened has already happened. It cannot be undone, (tears rolled down his eyes as he said these words which he wiped with his handkerchief). I cannot take you with me. Tomorrow morning you can lodge any report against me to the Inspector General. I have instructed Major H. L. Khan how you are to be treated.

I: What other instructions could you have possibly given to Major H. L. Khan except to torture us as you have been doing? But I do not think he would be so foolish as to follow your instructions. Can he not use his brain? (After saying this we came back).

The next day the Inspector General came there. He examined my history ticket which was with me and addressing the Superintendent he said:

Inspector General: You could settle this matter of registered letter yourself.

Superintendent: The envelope was torn from one side. I did not know *Gurmukhi*, so if anything out of the registered letter had been lost I could not take any responsibility for the same.

Inspector General: You could open the letter in his presence.

Superintendent: If I had opened it in his presence he would have read it at once. So I sent it back to the post-office. They asked us to send the prisoner to the post-office but we expressed our inability to do so. So I wrote back to them that the letter should be sent back to the place from where it had come, and it should be sealed properly there and posted again to this place.

(We then brought the matter of our books to the notice of the Inspector General).

Superintendent: I have burnt those books and now they may order and get new ones. Yesterday they were trying to befriend me and even asked me to take them along with me to Jabbalpur.

I (to the Inspector General): You are now a witness of the fact that he has burnt our religious books. He has admitted this fact in your presence.

Inspector General: When you are released, you can take legal action against him.

I then told him about my ironically worded talk of befriending Mr. Jatar.

Kartar Singh: We do not know when we may be released. We should be permitted to institute a case against him from the prison.

Along with the printed books, he has destroyed manuscripts and notes for writing nearly fourteen books. It is possible that when we are released you may not be here, or one of us may not be here. It is also quite possible that this Superintendent may be dead by that time. So we want the case should be instituted against him now. Or we may be permitted to inform the S.G.P.C. They will do everything for us.

Inspector General: I am not prepared to hear anything against my Superintendent.

I: Then why did you come here assuring us that you would listen to our complaints. You need not listen to us nor to the Superintendent. We will deal with him directly in the best way possible.

On hearing this, the Inspector General went away. The next day Dr. Jatar did not come. His brother who was a Commissioner met a motor accident, and his leg had to be amputated. Like Dr. Jatar he also became lame. Dr. Jatar stayed for another month to look after his brother. Major L. H. Khan was sent back for a month to Jubbalpur. He came back after a month.

During his stay of another month, suddenly one day Dr. Jatar found our books and manuscripts locked up in a cupboard. On one of his rounds he said to the Jailer; "After all the books are found." We also came to know about it. On the day he was to leave he said: "Well Randhir Singh, check up all your books." Then addressing the new Superintendent he said. "These books should be returned to them either when they are transferred to Punjab Jail or when they are released."

Thus, after the most cruel and inhuman treatment he accorded to us, Dr. Jatar was transferred to Jubbalpur as the Superintendent of that Jail. Before he left he misguided the new Superintendent and asked him to treat us as harshly as possible. He however left strict orders that Bhai Kartar

Singh and I should never be allowed to get together. He also left written orders that the books should be given to us only when we were released.

Anyway he did his utmost to harm us even while going. He then went to U.K. for a short while and became a Major but was again sent as Jail Superintendent to a place where many hefty Pathans and habitual offenders were imprisoned.

A Pathan takes revenge

Some of these Pathan prisoners under Dr. Jatar had earlier spent some years in Nagpur Jail with us. They were eye witnesses to the tyranny and tortures this man inflicted on us. So as soon as he reached Jabalpur the Pathans made up their mind to punish him for his misdeeds. Every Pathan made up his mind to teach him a lesson which he would never forget, and thus avenge the cruelty he perpetrated in Nagpur Jail. Within a month of his arrival at Jabalpur a hefty Pathan one day caught hold of him and gave him a good beating when he came on a round alone. He was made to suffer great humiliation. The Pathan was flogged for which he did not care, but Jatar got what he deserved. When during an inquiry the Pathan was asked why did he beat and insult Dr Jatar, the Pathan said: "This cruel man insulted and tortured one of our Sikh brothers, the well known patriot and freedom fighter Bhai Randhir Singh. I have avenged his cruelty to the great patriot. But I am not satisfied with the punishment I have given him. He deserves more and if I get an opportunity I will beat and insult him again." This is what the fearless Pathan said even after being severely flogged. The next week another Pathan caught hold of him and gave him a good thrashing for flogging his Pathan comrade. After this incident he became less arrogant, but not less mischievous. We learnt all this about him from the prisoners who came from Jabalpur to Nagpur.

After this we do not know what happened to him and God alone knows what punishment awaits him for his misdeeds after death. Even in Nagpur Jail five or six Sikh prisoners who had been imprisoned for the freedom to wear *Kirpan*, were anxious to beat him but I prevented them from doing so. One Sikh and Pathan however made good their escape. The Sikh was later on rearrested. I remember only two names out of these Sikhs, Bhai Inder Singh and Bhai Pyara Singh. The seeds of evil which he sowed would never dry up. Ill-treatment continued. The second Superintendent was transferred after a year.

Then came to Nagpur a Superintendent named Mr. Gupta (I do not remember his full name). He was very generous and noble. When he came, Bhai Kartar Singh and I were kept apart. The new Superintendent treated us well and did not give us any trouble. He could not cancel the harsh orders already given but he did not issue any new order which was annoying to us. He was prepared to show leniency in many matters but the Jailer, a Whiteman, would not permit him to do so. We were impressed by his generosity. He listened to our complaints with a cool mind. He was also very sympathetic towards us. I would like to mention one or two incidents of his generosity.

Personality and Hair of the Sikhs

One day the Jailer procured us a very foul smelling oil for applying to our hair. He charged for superior oil. After smelling it I returned it to the Jailer saying that we want better oil. That oil could be returned. I had washed my hair with country-soap. I could not comb my hair without applying oil. And I could not take my food till I had combed my hair. I made it quite clear to the Jailer.

Everyone knew about this principle of the Sikhs except the Superintendent, Mr. Gupta. I washed my hair early in the morning and then came noon, and then the evening but no one brought the

oil. They gave promises now and then but no one brought it. So I did not take my meals for the whole day. The next day was Sunday and the Jailer, a Whiteman did not come on a round. The Superintendent generally did not come on Sundays. On the third day the Superintendent was busy in another Octagen, and did not come to our block. No one thought of bringing oil for me. The Superintendent was completely ignorant about it. On the fourth day the Jailer reported to the Superintendent that I was on hunger strike for four days. The Superintendent came to me with the whole staff.

Mr. Gupta: Well Randhir Singh, ever since I have come here as Superintendent, this is the first time any one has tried to annoy me by hunger strike. You have not taken meals for four days. Will that not fall as curse on me?

I: Well Sir, I did not go on hunger strike consciously, nor are you to be blamed for anything. By chance things took such a turn that I had to go without food. I had washed my hair with country-soap but I did not get any oil, without which they cannot be combed. If I knew that I would not be getting oil, I would not have washed my hair with the washing soap. With this soap the hair become very dry and it is not easy to comb them without applying some oil. The oil makes the hair smooth and then while combing they do not break away or become entangled with one another. A Sikh is supposed to comb his hair twice daily, and without cleaning hair he cannot take his meals. This is the strict religious order which I had to obey. As I did not get the oil promised to me, I did not take any meals. I did not go on hunger strike as a protest.

On hearing this, the Superintendent reprimanded the whole of his staff and asked them why did they not inform him about the matter. He immediately ordered that a bottle of good oil be brought. After half an hour the Superintendent personally brought the oil. And the following dialogue followed.

Mr Gupta: I am extremely sorry that unnecessary trouble has been caused to you. All this happened in my absence. I have great respect and feeling for your religious sentiments, and we should respect your religious sentiment with due consideration but I am sorry there has been inadvertent disregard for them. As long as I am here this will not happen again.

I: I am extremely grateful to you. The fact is that in the prison and outside in all government offices honesty and sincerity has disappeared. Selfishness and profiteering is the main motive. The store-keepers of the prison procure the cheapest things and charge the government the highest prices. No one cares to investigate the corruption prevalent in the prisons. Poor prisoners will never complain, and if they do, no one listens to it. We have had bitter experiences of such things. They profiteer even in small things. In this prison there are hardly eight political Sikh prisoners. At the most they require one bottle of coconut oil per month. But these people wish to make profit even out of this. They bring the worst oil and charge the government for the best. They rob the government and exploit the prisoners.

Mr. Gupta listened to all I said and accepted what I said about the corrupt practices of the prison officials. He, however, assured that he would not let these things happen. While talking to me he atonce raised a question: "Is it very essential to keep hair on the head?"

I: Is it very essential to keep your head on your shoulders?

Mr. Gupta: The body cannot survive without the head.

I: But supposing the body survives after the head is cut off, would you cut off your head.

Mr. Gupta: The head is a part of the body and a very prominent part of it. It is only the head that completes the body. Without the head the body cannot be what it is?

I: Have you created the head on the body?

Mr Gupta: No, God has created it, and placed it on my shoulders.

I: Because God has given you this head; therefore, you feel it to be an essential part of your body. Had it been made by you and placed on your shoulders, you could conveniently take it off, whenever you wished to do so.

Mr Gupta: Yes, of course. But we cannot remove what has been given to us by God.

I: Supposing someone cuts off your God-given head, what would you call him?

Mr Gupta: Murderer, killer, and slayer.

I: If some one questions you, why have you kept your head on your shoulders, what would you say?

Mr Gupta: It would be very foolish of that person to put such a question.

I: Just as God has given us this head and made it a part of our personality, so are hair given by God and made part of our personality. As the hair is also given by God, the question you have posed, "why is it essential to keep them" is not tenable. The question is out of place. I have not created this hair myself. God gave them to me and I have kept them. Just as God has given us the head, and we keep it, so also the hair on the head has been given to us by God and we keep it. So it is the duty of every man and woman to preserve and maintain them. You call a man who cuts off a person's head, a murderer, a slayer, a killer, would you not consider a man who removes his hair equally cruel? Is not one who destroys a God-given gift an important part of our personality, a blood-thirsty oppressor? I think he is.

Mr Gupta: You cannot call him a murderer; You can call him by any other name.

I: Why not a blood-thirsty murderer?

Mr Gupta: Because when you cut hair, no blood comes out.

I: So you think that when no blood comes out, and when some one destroys a part of our body, it is not cruelty, and least of all murder. Supposing some one strangles a person, would you not call it a murder? No blood comes out and the man is killed. I do not wish to prolong any discursive discussion, but you will admit that nowadays so many methods have been devised to kill man that not a drop of his blood comes out. Would you not call these murderers killers, and blood-thirsty slayers? What else would you call them?

Mr Gupta: But Sir, excuse me, if I say, that when you cut off the head of a person, you cannot replace it, but if you cut off the hair of a person they grow again. A dead man never comes to life,

but when we destroy living hair, new ones grow in its place. There is a good deal of difference between cutting one's head and cutting one's hair. Even if both are crimes, there is vast difference between the two crimes.

I: Do you believe in the transmigration theory.

Mr Gupta: Yes, I do believe in transmigration theory.

I: Then according to that theory, you do not die even when your head is cut off. The soul (*Atman*) is born again. So those who murder, kill nothing. The soul is eternal. They relieve a person of one birth in a cycle of births. By doing so they indirectly do good. But the man does not die after being killed. He will be born again and again. This is what actually happens. Yet he who kills commits a futile act, he does not do good. So they who cut their hair again and again do no good, nor is there any virtue in it. The hair that is cut again and again just as a man who is killed, is born again and again. The only difference is that the soul may be born in different forms and may be even born as an animal. The hair of the head continues to grow when cut. Man foolishly cuts the hair and it grows again. That is how nature slaps the fool who goes against its requirement. Thus the attempt of a man to destroy his hair completely is as futile as to kill a man or animal.

The life and Spirit of the *Atman* survives as long as the Spirit and vital force of God is present in it. Similarly the living essence of the hair will continue to be there as long as the body and head survive with the Spirit of God. The hair of the body is to be preserved and kept clean just as Nature has created them. The hair of the head grows to a natural length. Beyond a certain length they do not grow.

Those who put on artificial hair to bring them to a fashionable length go against nature and do a foolish thing. Women do not grow any beard on their faces. If any woman wants, she cannot. Just as it is unnatural to try to develop beards on the faces of women, it is unnatural and wrong to destroy the natural hair that grows on men's head. Men naturally grow beards on their faces. But the fashionable people shave it every morning. Every morning nature slaps them on the face by resisting their attempt to remove the beard, but they are unconscious of it. They want to make their faces look exactly like those of women. Men have gone against nature by shaving their beard and appearing like women and gained nothing. Unfortunately women have started cutting short the hair of their head like men, in order to look like men. They too have gained nothing. I think it is utter shamelessness for men to try to imitate women and for women to imitate men.

The real question should be, "why is this God given gift, the natural hair and beard removed," but those who do so against the wishes of nature start questioning the other way round. The unfortunate thing is that the majority of the people are shaving these days and this sheep-like imitation and fashion to remove the hair and beard is deemed as the natural law. There are very few who obey the essential laws of nature in this connection. Apart from the Sikhs there are very few who keep hair and beard. Those who spoiled their manly appearance and personality given by nature, are unconscious of their own folly in distorting their appearance but they are shocked to see a man keeping hair and beard, and do not hesitate to ask him: "Is it essential to keep hair and beard?" They suddenly become unconscious of the fact that hair is a part of the whole body and grows on every pore of the body. Those who are pure in body, mind and soul, and those who know something about sciences know that to remove bodily hair from the whole of our body is crime against health. You have taken up discussion on a subject on which many articles and even a book can be written. Neither you have time to enter into such a long discussion nor am I free to do

so. Such discursive discussions and questions are generally raised by Arya Samajists. Have you at any time fallen under their evil influence?

Mr. Gupta (laughing): I am not the type of Hindu, the staunch Arya Samajists are, nor do I believe in any discursive discussion. I was attracted a bit towards Arya Samaj. I put the question out of curiosity and not with the intention of debating about it in an injurious way. I really wanted to know something about it. Although you have used some strong words in your discussion, yet your arguments have impressed me. Many of my doubts have been cleared. I hope when you are released you will write excellent book on the subject and get it translated in other languages to explain it to the world at large.

Your argument of fashionable and sheep-like imitation is correct. Our *Rishis, Munis, Avatars* and Prophets used to keep hair and beard. We have clear cut evidence up to period of Mahabharata. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Peshwas in our ancient history kept hair and beard. God alone knows when did the custom of shaving begin in India. From the Mahabharata and other Indian literature of the period we learn that removal of the hair or beard was considered worst punishment than death. When Shri Krishna on the recommendation of his espouse Rukmani, reduced the death sentence of her brother Rukman to the punishment of removing his hair and beard, Rukman in a pitiable tone appealed to his sister saying: "O Rukmani you are not my sister; you are my enemy. You have got my death sentence repealed and got for me a greater punishment of removing my hair and beard. To remove my hair and beard would be far more painful and tortuous than killing me." Your ideas are indeed very enlightened and you are indeed a true Sikh living according to the highest principles of your faith. No one has ever given so convincing reply to my question. For a seeker even one good argument is enough. Now a good deal of time has elapsed. My *namaste* to you. We will meet again.

I greeted him. "Again, we may never get a chance to discuss anything" I said. Mr. Gupta was indeed a very noble soul. We never got a chance to hold discussion again.

A Mosquito Net

One day I was standing self-absorbed in my cell leaning against the prison bars. Incidentally Mr. Gupta came there with his staff on a round and stood near me. On hearing some noise I turned to him. He looked into my eyes and asked: "Why are your eyes a little swollen and red? Did you not sleep at night"?

"So much the better", said I. "The whole life passed in sleep. By the grace of the Lord I was deprived of palatial mansions, soft cushions and beds and locked up in this Nagpur Jail, the veritable abode of *Nagas* (snakes), where the mosquitoes keep me awake in the sweet remembrance of God. But for this, my mind might have become idle and dozed away in luxury and forgotten God."

On hearing these words the tender hearted Superintendent, Mr. Gupta, quietly went away and after writing something on my history ticket carried it with him. The next day I received an excellent mosquito net. The Head warder was ordered to have it fixed to my bed every night. I felt that changes were taking place, by the grace of the Lord, for better days ahead. In deep gratitude of my God and Guru I began to pass my days in peaceful meditation. The comfortable relief given from the mosquitoes by the mosquito net gave me added opportunity to meditate without the least disturbance. The mosquitoes not only kept me awake but even disturbed the deep concentration of mind. Now I could meditate in comfortable peace. It was my duty to use these

restful nights for a better purpose. While meditating in mosquito net I could see everyone outside but no one could see me. So now in the secrecy of my rest in the mosquito net, I could meditate without being watched. I could reap the fruit of meditation in full. There is a Punjabi saying that "God has given plenty of radish and also a knife to cut and eat."

This is exactly how I felt. In the day time a man came and took off the mosquito net. The mosquitoes of Nagpur are terrible. But this mosquito net remained with me to the end of my stay at Nagpur. For six or seven years we had to endure the terrible biting of the mosquitoes to such an extent that we had almost become mosquito-proof. After experiencing and enduring the biting of the Nagpur mosquitoes I feel the Punjabi mosquitoes are comparatively quite harmless. Those few days passed in peace.

A Christian Missionary meets me

I now leave aside the story of my life in Nagpur Jail. If I remember any incident later on, it can be included in the second edition. But there is one incident worth mentioning before I close.

It was a completely dark cell in which I had to spend day and night in *ajapa jap* (sempiternal contemplation of the divine Name), in the wonderful celestial music of which I remained absorbed most of the time. I could feel and see with my inner eyes the close presence of my Guru and God. The ever refreshing bliss of His presence and revelations, spread from the fragrant naval-seat of inner consciousness to the lotus of the heart and higher still to the super-conscious states where the music of his divine Name became a light and vision of an eternal splendour. The whole of my inner being was ablaze with His Light and that Light spread and lighted the whole space of my inner and outer being. "Just as the rays of the sun pervade all, so the Light of God can be seen blended with everything." This is how I felt and experienced. The Light of God that can be visibly seen is in essence really spread like the light of the sun. My inner vision felt blessed and exalted by the bliss of the vision in which I saw the Beloved so near and in a form so clear.

One day I was standing close to the bars of my cell, when my mind soared and fell into a state of *samadhi* of a blissful state. I do not know how long I stood there, but I kept standing even when the hot sun blazed and its burning light fell on my body from the courtyard. Even then I stood there unconscious of the heat. I stood in this condition till some one shook me by my shoulder and my eyes that were closed in deep concentration of nectar-laved vision suddenly opened. I opened my eyes and for a moment saw nothing around me. I stood there in a trance looking fixedly into the unseen. Then from outside the bars I heard a voice saying: "Excuse me, I had to disturb you. For over fifteen minutes we have been standing here in the cell yard. A Christian Missionary who has just come from England has been waiting here for some time along with the prison officials. The Padre Sahib has specially come to meet you."

I saw the Christian missionary standing in the outer corridor under the shade of the wall, and addressing him said "Please come inside, why do you keep standing at such a distance?" "Are you all right?" questioned the Christian missionary. "Why not come closer and ask me how I am? Why keep standing at such a distance?" said I.

Actually the inner corridor was blazing under the hot sun, while he was standing in the shade of the walls, in the outer corridor. He did not find courage to come and stand in the burning sun. The Superintendent realized his difficulty. He opened the lock of my cell and took me out close to him in the shade. I laughed heartily and said to the missionary: "How is that you could not endure the heat of the sun which we have been enduring for so many years?" He looked at my face and then

addressing the officials and other visitors he said: "His face is radiant and resplendent. I have seen innumerable political prisoners, but his face is unique." Then addressing me he asked. "Are you happy? Are you well?" "The Lord is gracious," I said. The Superintendent told him that I understood English quite well, but I said I preferred to speak in my mother tongue, Punjabi. He sometimes spoke in English and sometimes in Hindustani, but I gave replies in Punjabi, which he understood.

Christian Missionary: For how long have you been kept in this dark cell?

I: Ever since I was brought to Nagpur Jail I have been kept mostly in this cell. I might have spent about five or six months in solitary confinement in other cells.

Christian Missionary: How many years of imprisonment have you spent in this Jail?

I: My history ticket will tell you that.

Christian Missionary (after examining the history ticket which the Superintendent gave him): So you came here towards the end of the year 1922. You have been kept here for nearly eight years. For how many hours in the day time are you kept in this dark cell?

I: I am made to spend the whole day and night in this cell.

Christian Missionary: For how many hours are you taken for a walk? For how long are you allowed to take exercise?

I: Not even for a single hour! All that I can do is to come out of the cell to the courtyard attached to it where I can cook and eat my food, or take bath or ease nature. Immediately after that I am again locked in the cell.

Christian Missionary (looking angrily at the prison officials): Why is he treated like that?

Jailer: The Punjab Government has given us strict orders not to allow him to meet his comrades or any other prisoner. We have orders to keep him apart from everyone. Even prison officials dare not meet him alone. We have no objection to taking him outside, but we have strict orders from above not to do so.

Christian Missionary (addressing me): Do you get any newspaper for reading?

I: Never, although the Inspector General of prisons has permitted it.

Christian Missionary (addressing the prison officials): When the Inspector General has given permission why do they not give the newspaper?

Superintendent: There is some confidential reason for it.

Christian Missionary (addressing me): Do they give you some books to read?

I: No, never; they have even confiscated our prayer books which belonged to us. My history ticket will show that.

Christian Missionary: Do you sleep in the corridor or in the cell at night?

I (laughing): Please ask them.

Superintendent and others (with one voice): No political or other prisoner is allowed to sleep in the corridor.

Christian Missionary: Do you stay alone in this cell?

I: No, never. I am never alone even for a single minute.

Superintendent and Jailer (excited): What he has stated is a lie. He is alone in the cell. There is no one else.

I: Both of them are telling a lie. I am never alone in the cell, nor have I ever been alone in the cell for a single day.

Christian Missionary (addressing them): Well Sirs, what is the meaning of this. Why do you insist on saying that he stays alone when he says he is never alone.

Superintendent: Sir, according to prison rules we cannot keep more than one prisoner in one cell. We have strict orders never to lodge two prisoners in one cell. We can show you the Jail regulations. We are telling the truth and he is making a false statement.

I (seriously): I am telling the truth. They are wrong. We, Sikhs of the Guru, can never tell a lie.

Christian Missionary: How can this enigma be solved? Responsible prison officers are making a statement which cannot be called false, but my conscience tells me that this Sikh is also telling the truth. A prisoner in his position who is not given any books, nor given any newspapers, nor is allowed to talk to anyone, and is lodged in this dark cell day and night, cannot survive and live with such a beaming face as his. Look at his face. How glowing and refreshing it is. There is not a trace of gloom on his face, but it is red with glowing radiance. After being locked up day and night for so many years, I cannot imagine such beaming radiance and fragrance on any human face. So I cannot believe that he is making a false statement. After all how can we solve this enigma? (After a silence of a few minutes, addressing me) I cannot dub the statement of the responsible prison officials to be false. I also cannot believe that you are making a wrong statement. Please solve this mystery. If you are not staying alone then who lives with you all the time?

On hearing this my mind soared high and in a voice filled with deep mystic fervour, and under a musical inspiration suddenly leaping from the unknown, I sang the following divine song in answer to the question: The Guru is with me ever and ever; Contemplating Him I live in His presence:

I contemplate ever, the Name of God within my heart,
All comrades and companions are thereby saved;
The Lord (the Guru) is with me ever and ever;
Contemplating Him I live in His presence, (refrain)
Thy Will is ever sweet to me, Lord,
Nanak seeks only the Word of God.
Guru Arjan: *Rag Asa*.

Everyone was thrilled by the divine song. Like statues all stood motionless and felt the magnetic influence of the divine song. The refrain became the burden of the song. For many minutes the whole atmosphere was charged with the spiritual influence of the song. Everyone stood silently with fixed attention. No one spoke, no one moved. Every one felt the bliss of the song. The Christian Missionary who understood every word of it was the first to speak and break silence.

Christian Missionary: The mystery has been well solved indeed. So your Guru is ever with you. So you were indeed telling the truth, and in a way, the prison officials were also telling the truth. But I wish to test your statement a little more. (Addressing the prison officials) Who stays in the adjoining cells? Please call them.

Jailer: Well Sir, in the day time they remain empty. At night different prisoners are lodged in these cells.

Christian Missionary: Why do you lock them up at night? Who are locked up here? Some special prisoners under orders of solitary confinement or you pick them at random and lock them up here.

Jailer: No Sir, those prisoners who have been ordered by the Magistrate to be kept in solitary confinement alone are kept locked up day and night in these cells.

Christian Missionary: What is the maximum period for which a prisoner can be kept in solitary confinement? Could you quote the regulation of penal code?

Jailer: For a month at the most.

Christian Missionary: Is there any prisoner who is kept in this cell only at night but is allowed to move about outside in the day time?

Jailer: No there is no such prisoner, Sir.

Christian Missionary: But you say two prisoners are always kept locked up at night in the adjoining cells. Why is that punishment given to them?

Jailer: Well Sir, they are not kept here because they are punished for something but according to prison rules we cannot keep these cells vacant; so we ask other prisoners to spend one night in them by turn. So one prisoner is kept by turn in each of these two cells.

Christian Missionary: Why do you change the prisoner every night? Why can you not keep the same prisoner for some nights in the cell?

Jailer: We cannot compel any prisoner to be locked up in this cell every night. For one night or so they gladly agree to be locked up in them.

I: No one is gladly willing to spend a night in these dark cells. Would it not be better to ask those who have already spent a night here, whether they would be willing to spend a night in these cells again?

The Christian Missionary then examined the logbook and found that no prisoner had stayed in those cells more than one night. He then ordered five or six of those prisoners to be brought who

had spent the night in the cells during the preceding week. He asked everyone of those prisoners how they felt during the night in that dark cell and why do they not volunteer to stay again for another night in it? Everyone with one voice said: "Sir, God save us from this dungeon. Even to pass one night has been a great torture. The terrible loneliness and gloom is unbearable."

After inquiring everything about their experience in those dark cells from the prisoners, the Christian missionary made up his mind to spend one night in one of those cells as a matter of experiment. So he expressed his strong wish to spend one night in the cell.

Superintendent and others: Sir, how can we do that without the orders of the government?

Christian Missionary: I would be getting locked up in one of these cells for a night voluntarily and gladly for the sake of experiencing how a man feels.

When the prison officials found him adamant in his determination to carry out the experiment they agreed to lock him up in the day time but not in the night, and even that for a few hours only.

The Christian missionary agreed to be locked up for at least three hours. The prison officials were, however, seriously upset. "Why do you worry?" I said to them, "the Padre Sahib will not be able to stay in the cell for more than an hour. Let him experiment. What do you lose by it? You have to spend no money on it." "Of course, Of course," said the Christian Missionary, "I just want to experience it myself, how one feels."

So the Christian Missionary was ready to be locked in the dark cell. I humorously said to him, "How fine it would have been if you put on the dress of the prisoners and then got into it. But the prison officials will not permit you to do so." So it was soon decided that the Padre Sahib would be locked in the third cell, adjoining mine, and he would be kept in at least for three hours. Just as he was about to enter the cell, I whispered into his ears: "Well Sir, there is a chain dangling in the cell. It is connected with a bell outside. If you find any difficulty in staying long, please pull that chain. The Warder Incharge would at once open the door." He thanked me for this information and entered the cell where he was locked up. I was also locked up in my cell. All the prison officials, the warders and the sentries got away and officers went and sat in the office of the Warder Incharge of the Octagon.

Within an hour the bell of Padre Sahib's cell began to ring as loudly as a fire alarm. The Octagon-Incharge warder came running. The Christian Missionary was shouting from inside: "Open the doors quickly, take me out quickly, I am dying." The door was opened. The Christian Missionary came out and after breathing open air for some time he said: "Take that Sikh of Guru Nanak out of the cell and bring him here."

I was taken out and brought before the Christian Missionary, who placed his hands on my shoulders and said repeatedly: "Well, noble Sikh, your Master, Guru Nanak is indeed ever with you, but my Master Lord Jesus does not abide with me in dark dungeon as your Guru Nanak does. I am now convinced that your Lord, Guru Nanak must be visibly living with you. Please repeat that song you sang." I sang that song under renewed inspiration, and while I sang my face flushed with the rapturous joy of its inner experience.

After hearing it the Christian Missionary said: "I now realize the true significance of the words of this song. It is quite true that your Guru resides in your heart and soul, nay in your whole inner

being, and you never feel lonely. I have seen it from experience that apart from other difficulties, the gloomy torture of loneliness is the greatest difficulty to be encountered. Oppressing loneliness was the only difficulty I encountered. Every moment I felt the desolation and dreariness gnawing at my heart. Blessed art thou O Noble Sikh of the Guru, who spent years in this dungeon all alone. Nay, I make a mistake again, not alone but with the unusual spiritual powers you have acquired from your Guru, you appear to see the blazing Light of the Guru ever burning in your heart. You must be in constant communion with your great Guru, and you must be experiencing His nearness and discoursing with him every moment. That is why you neither feel loneliness, nor are you ever upset nor is there any evil effect on your body. I was almost dying from dreary and dark loneliness. Great and glorious are you O noble Sikh and great and glorious is your Guru." After saying this he went away along with his party.

When he reached the prison gate he asked for the prison logbook and wrote three pages of his impressions of the prison. The sympathetic officers who read it reported to me that he gave a vivid portrayal of what was happening in the prison. He particularly mentioned that the cruelty perpetuated and the tortures inflicted on me were unprecedented. He wrote many things in my favour. A few sympathizers even promised to procure a copy of his report, but they did not get an opportunity to do so.

After recording his complaint in the log-book, he went straight to the Governor of Central Province and met him about this matter. I do not know what he said to the Governor but after three days I was suddenly taken to an open barrack where there was a hand-pump close by and a large open air courtyard. There was sufficient ground to take a walk and mosquito net was also given to me. The whole barrack was at my disposal. I was also informed that my friend Bhai Kartar Singh would be allowed to stay near me soon enough. But even before this happened the Punjab Government sent a telegram to send me to Punjab immediately. As soon as the telegram reached the office I began to receive congratulations and the date for my departure was fixed.

The Superintendent and the Jailer informed me that it was not mere transfer order but a step to release me soon. I was assured that I would be released as soon as I reached Punjab. They also informed me that they would be sending one or two sepoys with me and I would travel without being handcuffed. I requested them to send Bhai Kartar Singh to me so that before I left we could stay together. The Superintendent promised but the Jailer did not agree. However he said, "If you were not to leave we would have certainly brought you together". The Jailer feared that Bhai Kartar Singh might inform me of the tortures inflicted on him secretly, and the matter may go out to-the public when I was released. But the Superintendent took courage to permit us to be together at least for a day or two. So we were allowed to meet for a day. Living in the same prison we met there for the first time after three years or so. We embraced each other, told each other what we had experienced and how we had suffered. Many secret feelings and thoughts were exchanged. After meeting for the whole day we were again separated at night.

All the books that were confiscated were returned. All the things that were taken from my personal possession on the day I was arrested were returned. These things included my clothes, a rosary, a *kirpan*, a *chakar* (quoit), iron bangles. A very precious *Kirpan* which I generally wore with strap was not returned. God alone knows where it was lost. They searched for it but could not get it. They were however prepared to pay for it, when they lost all hope of finding it. I told them that the *Kirpan* was, priceless. It was not possible for them to pay the price. If I had demanded any amount they would have paid it, but I did not feel like taking any money for the *Kirpan*, which for me was a religious symbol. What could I get from some money?

CHAPTER 24 - FROM NAGPUR TO LAHORE

WITHIN A MATTER of minutes, we were ready to leave for Lahore. We did not get time even to send a message about our departure to friends outside. Bhai Mansha Singh and other friends were eagerly expecting our release from Nagpur. They had even made elaborate arrangements for special rejoicings and jubilations but unfortunately they could not even get the bare information of our sudden departure.

I was taken in a car to the railway station. On the way I eagerly looking for someone who could carry a message to the Punjabi Lines but I could not see a single Sikh on the road who could possibly do it. Even if I could find a Congressite friend nearby he would have at once delivered the message. It was perhaps the Will of God that I should leave the place in utter secrecy. People might have been tempted to follow me in a procession and made some flattering demonstrations which might have fired my vanity. I was however anxious to have a glimpse of those affectionate souls who had bestowed so much love on me. A meeting with anyone of the friends would have given me great consolation.

On reaching the railway station I was given a berth in the third class compartment by the police guards accompanying me. I was still anxiously looking out for some one to carry my parting message to friends living in the Punjabi Lines. I saw three Sikh railway policemen coming towards my compartment. They were on duty and walked this way and that way on the platform not knowing, that someone was eagerly waiting for them to come nearer so that he may unburden his overwhelming feelings. When they came near my compartment I greeted them with folded hands saying; *"Vahe Guru ji ka Khalsa, Vahe Guru ji ki Fateh"* —"Of God is the Khalsa, Victory unto the Lord."

They returned the greetings respectfully and warmly grasped my hands, as if they knew me from a long time. Although their faces were unknown, the goodwill their hearts radiated, created an unusual intimacy. Seeing some policemen with me, they guessed somehow, that I was the unfortunate prisoner whose sufferings had caused a sensation throughout the country and prayers had been offered everywhere. "Can we be of any service, Bhai Sahib?" they asked. I requested them to somehow inform my friends in the Punjabi Lines about my departure. One of them immediately ran off to the Punjabi Lines while the other two started feting me as best they could. They brought ice, fruit and other eatables for which I thanked them and accepted what little I could eat. They felt extremely happy and wished they had known about my arrival on the station earlier. Punjabi Lines were far off when after fifteen minutes the train engine gave the whistle, no one had arrived. Even up to the last moment I was hoping that someone might come. At last I left the message with the Railway Policemen in the words of the Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh:

Go tell, the Beloved Friend,
The condition of his yearning disciple;
Without Thee rich coverings are an endless agony;
To live in the comforts of our households
Is like living with snakes; Our pitchers
Have become like pikes on which men are impaled.
The cup we drink from has an edge like a dagger;
Beloved! Thy turning away from us
Is like what a beast endures from the slaughterer!

With the Beloved, a mattress of straw would please us;
Without Him, in rich houses, we are burned alive.
Guru Gobind Singh

Like a stream separated from the river, I was moving away from devoted friends, hoping that by the grace of God, I would meet them again in spiritual communion at least. The train steamed off and the next stoppage was Itarsi station.

Chance Meeting with Akali Kaur Singh

There was a long stoppage at Itarsi Junction. I got down from my compartment and was strolling on the platform when an unknown person offered me a large water melon. I had never tasted such a delicious water melon before. This sweet offering of love was more than sufficient to appease my hunger.

All of a sudden I saw a very handsome divine man with a glowing radiant face. He had lovely white beard and was dressed like medieval Akali Saints. Without recognising and without formal greetings we embraced each other. As we met in this warm affectionate embrace we were happy beyond expression. As I looked at that grand personality, trying to recognize him, he asked me: "Have you not recognized me Bhai Sahib ji?" "Are you not Akali Kaur Singh?" I asked. We had met after twenty five years and he was really happy I recognized him. I had met him in his early youth, when he was just getting a beard. He was then very handsome and had a deep spiritual glow of his love-lorn face. He had then just been baptised in to the Khalsa Holy Order and the radiance of his soul wedded to the highest religious ideals could be seen from his inspired youthful face. He had aged a little; yet on his glowing face and white beard there was a radiance which is hard to describe. Now after sixteen years of imprisonment I had met a saintly Sikh from the free world for the first time.

Akali Kaur Singh was travelling in an Inter class compartment. He took me and my little luggage to his compartment and gave me a comfortable seat there. Knowing my abstemious habits of *viveka*-ideal (discrimination in food), he looked after my comforts and requirements. He took out some *Salus* (ground barley) from his bag and mixed them with cold water. This humble fare removed all my hunger and thirst. Then we talked for many hours. He gave me the latest news of the heroic fight of the Sikhs for their rights. We discussed innumerable subjects. Akali Kaur Singh travelled with me up to Delhi. There were some more Sikhs in the compartment who fulfilled an unasked desire of informing my friends and relatives about my departure from Nagpur to Lahore. From Delhi Akali Kaur Singh sent some more telegrams to my family, Gyani Nahar Singh and other friends. I can never forget this act of kindness and love of the great soul.

At Delhi I parted with Akali Kaur Singh. Delhi reminded me of the days of Gurdwara movements, which started with the Rakabganj episode. Just then another unfortunate thing had happened at Gurdwara Sisganj which pained me very much (There was police firing at Gurdwara Sisganj on May 6. 1930, A. D.). The telegrams given to my village home did not reach my people in time, but Gyani Nahar Singh received the information before my arrival. It was getting dark when the train reached Amritsar, and on the platform stood Gyani Nahar Singh and Gyani Harbhajan Singh carrying flowers and fruits.

I had been separated from them since a long time. There was a very large crowd of many unknown admirers and well-wishers. As soon as I stepped out of the train people rushed towards me with overflowing love and affection. One after the other they came forward to greet me and I

embraced each one of them warmly. As there was very little time at our disposal such meetings with individuals had to be cut short. Gyani Nahar Singh then gave a brief introduction of all the people who were present. Some important news were also given to me. Gyani ji had much to say, so he accompanied me to Lahore. During an hour's journey to Lahore, we talked and discussed many things but the hour passed like a minute and we reached Lahore station. Gyani ji went to S. B. Mehtab Singh's residence while I was taken to my usual abode, the prison.

I was first taken to a police station near the railway station, but they refused to accept me. Then I was taken to the Anarkali Police Station. Everyone was asleep. It was almost midnight. The officer in charge of the Police lock-up came out feeling disturbed and upset and said to the policemen accompanying me "Why could you not find a place for him in the police lock-up near the Railway Station?" The Havildar Incharge of me said, "They refused to accept him or take any responsibility for him because he is a B-Class prisoner. He can be lodged only in this place. So you better give him a place here without any further question. He must be given rest for the night here and in the morning he must be taken to the Central Jail." The officer in charge got up hesitatingly and opened a special room for me. When I entered the room, I saw an English internee lying dead drunk. The room was stinking with the foul smell of wine and the whole atmosphere was intolerable. I flatly refused to get into the room. "I will not spend the night in this room", I said, "even if you give me a reward of hundred rupees to do so". The dozing officer took up his bunch of keys and opened another room. It was quite cool and clean. It was the hot season and the temperature quite high. The officer switched on the electric lamp and the electric fan. I spread my bed on a cot. There was a water tap nearby and a commode in the corner. I was left all alone to enjoy my rest in calm solitude. This was for the first time that I enjoyed an electric fan. It had not been invented before I entered the prison. I enjoyed a restful sleep. The next morning I was taken to *Lahore Central Jail*.

Inside Central Jail Lahore

Mr. Chopra was the Superintendent of the Central Jail Lahore. I was taken straight to his room. After examining my *challan* (Letter of advice) and prison history sheet, he asked me "Would you like to stay in B- Class or with your companions and friends in C- Class?" To which I replied "I am not particular about the B-Class. They offered this class to me at Nagpur but I preferred staying with my friends in C-Class. The only preference I demand is the right to wear blue or black outer turban and yellow inner turban, and to wear the Khalsa Symbols, *Kach*, *Kara* etc. I would like either to cook my food myself or get it cooked by my companions." Mr. Chopra was deeply moved by my singular request. He offered me a seat close by and sent for Bhai Chuhar Singh who was imprisoned along with us.

Mr. Chopra first talked to Bhai Chuhar Singh separately and then introduced him to me. As soon as Bhai Chuhar Singh saw me he embraced me and for a moment we both forgot the presence of the Jail Superintendent. We had never met before, because he was sentenced to life imprisonment in the Lahore Conspiracy case and had been sent to Andaman Island. We the prisoners of the Supplementary Lahore conspiracy case had been sent to Hazaribagh. When we were in Madras Presidency prison, the prisoners from Andaman Island (including Bhai Chuhar Singh) were also brought there, but we were all lodged in different jails, so we were not able to meet each other there. I had heard a good many stories of the heroic deeds of Bhai Chuhar Singh. One such story which was a recent occurrence had impressed me deeply. One prisoner Bhai Jawala Singh was ordered to be whipped, and as he was very weak, Bhai Chuhar Singh offered to be whipped in his place. Bhai Chuhar Singh had never seen me, but he had become a great devoted admirer. I had never met any one who was so eager to meet me and bestow his affection and love. So on

meeting me his joy knew no bound. He said, "Blessed am I, blessed is this moment of unexpected meeting with the hero and beloved friend whom I have been longing to meet."

Out of all the political prisoners, the Superintendent Jail had the greatest faith in Bhai Chuhar Singh. All the junior officers in charge of the Political prisoners' block respected him and served him as they would serve a Master. After seeing us meet in this warm and affectionate manner, the Superintendent advised Bhai Chuhar Singh to take me with him and lodge me in his block in his company. Arm in arm he led me to his cell. As he led me he continued his charming talk about our past. After spending nearly fifteen and half years in various prisons all over India, we were now back in Lahore Jail from where our life sentence began. As I moved on accompanied by Bhai Chuhar Singh, I came to the same block from where we were taken to a Multan Jail in fetters.

The prison cells in this block were close to each other. But the prisoners had a different look. Now all the Sikh prisoners were wearing turbans. What a contrast it was to that ugly spectacle of 1915-16 when the Sikhs were deprived of turbans as soon as they came to the prison. They were given clownish caps and with this ridiculous headdress their faces looked horrible. Now with their lovely turbans and Kach (trousers), they did not even look like prisoners. Formerly they seem to have lost all their manhood and appeared to be sub-human creatures put in the cage. Now with the symbols and uniform of Guru Gobind Singh they appeared to be handsome and saintly souls.

Within a matter of minutes news spread throughout the prison that the first prisoner of the Gurdwara Reform Movement who had undertaken a fast for forty days, and procured for all types of Sikh prisoners (political and others) the right to wear turbans and Sikh symbols, was now in their prison. In small groups they came to me and expressed unbounded gratitude for procuring them their religious rights. They warmly appreciated my determined struggle to lead a Sikh-life in the face of such oppression and fighting for right of the Sikh prisoners to wear turbans and keep the symbols.

I was taken to a cell and seated there. When some of my old companions came to know about my arrival they all came rushing to meet me. From one prison cell came Bhai Pakhar Singh of Dhudike from another appeared Bhai Harnam Singh of Kala Sanghia. From one corner came Brother Kirpa Singh, all smiles. All old friends came there from one side or the other. Everyone met me with a warm embrace. In joy and exultation the long separated friends met me and talked about the saga of separation and suffering in prisons for the past many years. Brother Kirpa Singh and Brother Pakhar Singh undertook the duty of preparing my food, with great eagerness and devotion. Everyone was now getting the dark blue turbans. The whole staff and the internees of the prison were greatly impressed by the character and work of my old companions. Bhai Chuhar Singh was given the duty of distributing milk to the sick and ailing prisoners. He would personally go to every prisoner and give him his own milk. The prisoners derived a peculiar satisfaction in taking milk from his hands.

Bhai Vasawa Singh of Germany was in charge of the political prisoners' kitchen (*langar*). Bhai Harnam Singh, Bhai Kirpa Singh used to bring rations and other things from the store. The prison officers had great confidence in the integrity of those men. Ever since the responsibility of the prisoner's food was given to these patriots, the prisoners enjoyed heavenly life in those days of darkness and delusion. They would take their food only when every one had been served to his satisfaction. Bhai Chuhar Singh was of such a contented nature that he distributed the whole of the milk to the needy. He even distributed his own milk specially fixed by the Jail Superintendent for him to the sick and needy and did not care for his own weak health. Like ideal and true Sikhs he

practised charity, and left behind him the sweet memories of his great virtues which would ever be blessed and recorded in the Presence of God.

After about a month my bosom friend Bhai Kartar Singh (of Nawan Chand) was transferred to Lahore prison. We were all very happy. The recitation of *Gurbani*, the sacred hymns again became a daily routine. According to my wishes he was given a prison cell just opposite mine. *Sukhmani* and *Sukhmana* of Guru Ram Das were recited by turn, after evening prayers, so clearly, that the prisoners in the whole block could hear them (twenty four Ashtapadis of Guru Ram Das which form Sukhmana Sahib are: Bilawal, Nat Narayan, Kanara, Kalyan (Six Ashtapadia in each Raga)).

After the congregational prayer (*ardas*), *kirtan* was performed every day. The new political prisoners from other blocks would come and join us. I met Dr. Basant Singh here for the first time. The very first meeting developed into a deep friendship of spiritual union. It was as if a loving friend of past life met me for the first time in this life after long separation. There developed a great love and affection between us within a few days and he shared with me the religious and spiritual ideals and practices, and became a companion on the spiritual path. His life now became a purely religious life of a *Bhakta*.

The political prisoners of the 1930 civil disobedience movement also came to our block and the gatherings of *satsang* (holy congregation) increased. The doors remained opened the whole day. We were at first given permission to hold prayers and religious discussion in the day time under the trees for about two hours. Bhai Vir Singh's famous works *Guru Nanak Chamatkar* (Reflective life of Guru Nanak) and *Kalgidhar Chamatkar* (Reflective life of Guru Gobind Singh) were read for about months together. After sometime we were permitted to hold even the evening prayers and *kirtan* in the open. These blissful congregational meeting continued till it was quite dark. Our block was generally the last to be locked. At the end of these congregational meetings there were loud cries of *Sat Sri Akal* which were heard throughout the prison and far away.

Young men who had been imprisoned recently felt strongly inclined towards religious life. The patriotic fighters of freedom (*the desh bhaktas*), and all other political prisoners developed a religious bent of mind. The prison officers were happy and felt relieved on seeing that the disturbing and rowdy element was now calmed.

The Daroga of the prison Khan Sahib Mohd Akbar (Village Ki Fime Ki Khai, District Ferozepur) was particularly impressed. He developed a deep respect for me. His life, as a prison official had considerably hardened him towards the prisoners; his attitude towards me was very gentlemanly.

In his heart he had developed a deep respect for the spiritual life of the Sikhs. He met me very often and did whatever I asked him to do. Whenever the political prisoners wanted him to do anything they got it done through me. Whenever the political prisoners agitated for anything, he would ask me to pacify them and ask them to do things tactfully and peacefully. The political prisoners even obeyed my old companions. All the prisoners and the officials and clerks of the prison addressed me as "Baba Ji" and they agreed to comply even with my wayward suggestions. The Daroga respected me for this reason also. Whenever anyone came to meet me, he arranged the meeting with particular interest, generally in his own room. When brother Sajjan Singh came to see me along with Bhagat Jaswant Singh, the Daroga arranged the meeting in his own room. He was deeply influenced by our conversation.

Release from Lahore Central Jail

Before this meeting Bhai Sunder Singh Ghuman, Gyani Nahar Singh and other relatives had already met me. I had already come to know that I had been transferred from Nagpur to Lahore in connection with my early release. Bhagat Jaswant Singh had already told me in the presence of the Daroga that preparations were underway and orders for early release were expected soon. After the visitors had left, the Daroga also told me that some correspondence in connection with my release was already going on with the higher authorities and my unconditional release was expected very soon. He however, asked me to keep this confidential. Bhagat Jaswant Singh had also told me that the release would be unconditional. A few days later, Sardar Bahadur Sant Singh C. I. D. Superintendent also met me in the Jail Superintendent's office. From my talks with him it was clear that the release would be unconditional. My meeting with Sardar Sant Singh was very interesting and delightful. I do not remember all that transpired between us, nor do I remember the details of our conversation. It would be sufficient to say that the replies given by me to his questions impressed him deeply and profoundly. He also did not talk to me in a round about way like police officers, but put very plain questions and talked very frankly. My plain answers appeared to have moved him deeply.

After this day both the Jail Superintendents and the Daroga started showing even greater reverence. The Daroga paid frequent honorific visits and whenever he came, he offered his services to oblige me in every way. I would generally say that when the time came I would ask him to do something important. One day he pressed me to make this special request and I agreed to tell if he promised to do what I asked.

Daroga: I will do all that is possible to fulfil your wishes, within the limits of my powers.

I: Now that you have promised I will make a request.

Daroga: Please do tell me. Whatever is possible I will certainly do. May I now know how can I serve to fulfil your wishes?

I: It is something within your powers. There is a young man named Bhagat Singh in the prison. He is very anxious to meet me. I wish to meet him before I am released: please arrange the meeting. (I had received a number of messages from Bhagat Singh through Bhai Chuhar Singh that he was anxious to meet me. I informed him in reply, that as he was a renegade from Sikh faith I would not like to see him in his clean shaven appearance, pictures of which I had seen. On hearing this he repeated the request with tears in his eyes and asked Bhai Chuhar Singh to persuade me to see him at all cost. When Bhai Chuhar Singh told me this I made up my mind to see him).

The Daroga said that it was quite a difficult thing to do, but since he had given the promise he assured me that he would definitely arrange the meeting. He also assured me that the meeting would take place before I was released and before Bhagat Singh met death sentence. The only difficulty was that it was not easy to persuade the Superintendent to arrange the meeting. Because the day I had arrived in Lahore Jail, Bhagat Singh had put up an application seeking permission to meet me and the Superintendent had categorically refused him permission saying that he could meet any prisoner except Randhir Singh.

I: So you will really have to face considerable difficulty.

Daroga: Be it so, but I will do what I have promised you.

I: But please be very careful. You should not get into trouble for it. I do not want you to do any such thing which may cause any harm to your career or which may result in any unpleasant outcome to you.

Daroga: Please do not worry. We can handle such matters in many ways. I will find out some ways and means to fulfil the promise I have given you. Blessed indeed are you, because you show such a deep concern even for prison officials like me. Let us hope for the best.

After this assurance he went away while I sent a message to Bhagat Singh the same day, that we would be meeting positively and by the grace of the Guru it may be quite soon. "Rest assured and be prepared", I said.

CHAPTER 25 - MEETING WITH BHAGAT SINGH, THE GREAT PATRIOT

AT LAST THE day came. It was 6 P.M. on 4th October, 1930. The news of my release was announced and everyone was very happy about it. I was sitting in a blissful solitude within my cell. All the patriots rushed towards my cell to break the news to me and congratulate me. The first to come and congratulate me was Bhai Gajjan Singh (Master). In a matter of minutes other patriots gathered around me and read joyfully the orders of release. I was overwhelmed not so much by the joy of release as by the separation I would have to bear from devoted friends like Bhai Kartar Singh (of Canada). I was overwhelmed by these dual emotions of joy and sorrow when friends came to bid good-bye with loving embraces. The prison officials stood there ready to carry out the order of my release but my feet were reluctant to move away from such dear companions. I embraced everyone of them and after a few affectionate words with each one of them, I left them all with tears in their eyes. The stream separated from the river at last.

When I went out of these prison-wards I met Mohammed Akbar near the central dome. He was smiling and coming towards me. On seeing me he congratulated me for my release. Inattentive to his felicitations, I told him that it was time that he should fulfil his promise. He should not miss the chance. He smiled and said that he had already made arrangement for the meeting with Bhagat Singh. You could now meet him for full two hours. I asked him if he had taken permission from the Superintendent.

Daroga: Before I found it necessary to ask him, the Superintendent was already worried and puzzled and was seeking a way out of a difficult situation. His worry is that you should be quietly released without giving any chance to outsiders to make much noise about your release. He asked me to find a way out of this difficulty. He said, there are regular pickets of people outside, who are waiting for the news of the release of political prisoners. As soon as a political prisoner is released the news spreads like fire and there is a great noise and hubbub of long processions, which are very disturbing to the Government. The Government has issued strict instructions, that the release should be secret and quiet. You see people sitting near the prison gates in regular pickets till sunset, so you must make some arrangement to send Randhir Singh out secretly and quietly so that we may not be blamed for anything later on.

At that very moment I asked the Superintendent not to worry, and suggested to him the plan, saying, "You remember sir, the day Randhir Singh came to this prison, Bhagat Singh who has been sentenced to death submitted an application for permission to meet him, but you rejected it. I believe that if we now allow him to meet Randhir Singh, the meeting may take about two hours. It will be quite dark by then and by 8 P.M. we will send Randhir Singh out. Thus strict secrecy about the release will be maintained." The Superintendent was impressed by this suggestion and gladly issued orders to allow this meeting and you can talk freely as long as you like. I will now give you a warder, who will guide you to Bhagat Singh.

So saying, he sent a prison-warder with me and ordered him to permit us to have an unrestricted meeting. Bhagat Singh was taking his daily stroll in the prison compound. He had been told about the permission granted for this meeting. On seeing me he came running towards me. I was standing outside the fence of the courtyard. He came close to the fence and greeted me with great love and affection, bowing low out of reverence. I also folded my hands and greeted him warmly. The warder moved away when we were together. Even the policemen on duty in the compound kept away from us. We were all alone facing each other.

Bhagat Singh was so overwhelmed by the joy of meeting after months of anxious moments that tears rolled down his eyes. I had hardly met anyone in life who had developed so deep affection and love even before coming into contact with me. It appeared we had known each other for long time. In a rapturous tone he said, "O I can hardly say how happy I am today on having met you at last. Day and night I was restlessly longing for just a short meeting with you. At last the blessed moment has come and my wishes have been fulfilled. After knowing all your great sacrifices and suffering in prison, I had become your keen admirer and passionate devotee. It was the heroism of the great freedom fighters of 1914-15 like you, which inspired insignificant patriot like me. All our revolutionary exploits are nothing compared to the astounding heroic deeds performed by you and your companions. Your own life and struggle for freedom and rights especially impressed me.

Munshi Manna Singh perhaps told you with what passionate longing I was thirsting to meet you and talk to you. I should say that my inner attachment and admiration for you brought you back to Lahore prison after sixteen years. When I first sent a message to you within this prison, that I was anxious to meet you I received your divine command to keep the Sikh symbols (beard and hair). I am prepared to abide by your wishes. I am really ashamed and am prepared to tell you frankly that I removed my hair and beard under pressing circumstances. It was for the service of the country that my companions compelled me to give up the Sikh appearance and disguise myself as a *sannyasin*. So it is in association with the irreligious people that I was compelled to show disrespect to my religious symbols, but now I will certainly do whatever you wish me to do.

I was glad to see Bhagat Singh repentant and humble in his present attitude towards religious symbols. I was deeply impressed by his frank statement of facts, but I could not hesitate in expressing my inner feelings and I said:

"Brother Bhagat Singh ji, I am deeply touched by your love for me. I am also impressed by your spirit of service and patriotic zeal, but I must tell you dear brother, that your companions did not give you good advice. You seem to be seeking something very petty and you became a prey to the evil and mischievous suggestions of your companions. Compared to our times the period in which you participated in the freedom struggle, is a period of great awakening. You could fearlessly take part in the freedom struggle and serve your country and humanity as you wished. But you must be knowing that in our times (1914-15) few and rare souls felt inspired to dedicate their lives to the cause of freedom. In the Punjab only a few Sikhs who could be counted on finger-tips were politically awake, felt the patriotic fervour to fight for freedom. There was a great feeling and political opposition to the heroic Ghadar Leaders and patriots who had come from Canada and America. Every child in the Punjab was opposed to them. I will give you only one example of the moral courage of the great patriot of those days. Bhai Nidhan Singh of Chugga village was a great patriot and fighter for freedom, who inspired hundreds of Indians living in foreign countries to come to India and dedicate their lives to freedom struggle. He spent thousands of rupees from his own pocket for freedom struggle. And yet he did not disguise himself. He came openly by sea but the Government atonce made elaborate arrangements to arrest him.

He reached India along with his companions without being detected. He could not be arrested. He came to the Punjab and threw himself heart and soul in the freedom struggle. His heroic deeds for the cause of freedom must be known to you. Warrants for his arrest had been issued, his photograph was widely publicised and a price was set on his head. There was an all out attempt to arrest him. He moved swiftly from one place to another organizing the freedom struggle. There was no sympathy and support for these freedom fighters in the public. The patriots depended mostly on Bhai Nidhan Singh for organization and inspiration. Of course in fearlessness there was

none so daring as Kartar Singh Sarabha. One day Kartar Singh Sarabha feared that Bhai Nidhan Singh may be arrested. He was the key figure among the freedom fighters and it was necessary that he should not be arrested soon. Keeping only the political interest in view he suggested to Bhai Nidhan Singh that he should dye his beard and thus change his publicised appearance to some extent. Bhai Nidhan Singh boldly answered that he would never do such a thing and tarnish and disgrace his heroism in the freedom fight. "You can use me as best as you like with this appearance only and do not make any suggestions which would make me a coward" he said. His companions wanted him to fall a prey to their evil suggestions but his determination remained unshaken. For organizing the freedom struggle, he travelled twenty to thirty miles a day and sometimes fearlessly passed close by police posts. He performed such heroic deeds compared to which your plans were insignificant. He did not even agree to change the colour of his beard, while you went to the extent of removing your hair and beard (Bhai Nidhan Singh of village Chugga, Ferozepur district was sentenced to death in the Lahore Conspiracy case on 13th Dec. 1915, but the death sentence was changed to life imprisonment. He was released and died on 6th December 1936 at Moga).

Bhagat Singh: Actually, I did not murder Saunders. I was of course accused of having murdered him. I considered it a great heroic deed and so took the credit for it. I confessed that I killed Saunders. Whether there was any benefit in it or not, I nevertheless got the credit for the whole deed. Even otherwise there was no escape for me.

I: The ideal of a true patriot is never to seek such petty joys of empty credits. For the joy of getting worldly praise you did not hesitate to fall from a higher spiritual ideal of becoming an apostate from Sikhism, nor did you ever repent over this fall from a much higher ideal. All that you have achieved by this wrong step is some trumpeting of your name and heroism by some papers. You gave up the Guru's personality for false glory and empty ambition. If you felt that you made a mistake you should have repented and come back to the Khalsa ideal by maintaining a Sikh-like appearance again. Why did you not do it?

Bhagat Singh: I might have kept the Sikh like appearance again, but then I would have lost the friendship and sympathy of my comrade B.K. Dutt. Secondly; I would not have got so much publicity as I am getting now. It is true that my sacrifices are insignificant compared to the sacrifices of the freedom fighters of 1914-15. But after such astounding sacrifices they did not get any publicity or praise in the papers. The Sikh papers had very limited circulation. Even they did not reveal all facts of the heroic deeds of patriots like you, because their timid policy prevented them from writing anything frankly. It is the non-Sikh papers which publicised my name widely and it is through them I have acquired all the glory associated with my name. It is a fact that if I had maintained the Sikh appearance and if I had professed myself to be an orthodox Sikh and kept hair and beard the non-Sikh papers would not have written a word about me, just as they did not write a word about you and your companions. Even out of Sikh papers "*The Khalsa Akhbar*", Lahore, an Urdu paper, dared to write something about you. I know it for certain that Hindu papers are always reluctant to write even a word in praise of Sikh patriots and freedom fighters. They do not like Sikhs being praised for anything. If I had kept hair and beard again and become a Sikh, they would have started belittling me instead of praising me. So I hesitated to keep hair and beard again.

I: On judging what you have said, my dear Bhagat Singh, your ideal of patriotism is very low and frippery. To make such a show of patriotism and service to the country for personal glory is cheap chauvinism and vain jingoism. The patriots of 1914-15 movement suffered and served the country

keeping only the selfless service of the motherland in view. They did not have the slightest thought of such cheap publicity and never even in a dream had any ambition of personal glory. It is only in the company of petty minded and evil-motivated people that your mind was misled into such vain thoughts of personal glory. The seeking of eminence through newspapers, and honour and glory through propaganda are all superficial things about which it is rightly said in the *Guru-Granth Sahib*:

Mad are those who trumpet a man's glory,
Shameless is he, who accepts such fame,
He is like a rat who has tied a winnowing basket to his waist,
He now finds it impossible even to get into his hole:

On hearing this Bhagat Singh was deeply moved and said "The ideal of Sikhism is no doubt very high. The world in general hankers after empty glory only. I also drifted in the same passion for personal glory. But today I have realized that all these things are idle exhibition of vanity, conceit and self-glorification. I would have been fortunate if I had got the opportunity of living in close association with you for at least three or four months. If I had got this opportunity to live in your company for three or four months, I would have gained much and all my shortcomings would have disappeared. Now I will do whatever you ask me to do. You now want me to become a *kesha-dhari* Sikh. I now admit that I made a great mistake. Even contrary to this healthy family tradition, I went against the Guru's instructions and showed irreverence to the Sikh symbols. But there is one more fact, and I would be committing a sin if I conceal it from you. I kept hair and beard merely because there was a long standing tradition in our family to do so. I am very proud to be called a Sikh. But the hard fact is that I was never religious at heart. You will excuse me if I tell you in quite plain terms that at heart I am an atheist. I still do not believe in God. All my companions know it. With all that I am willing to do anything you ask me to do. If you command me, I will keep hair and beard. Alas! If only I had got the opportunity to stay near you a little longer, you could have changed my atheistic views.

I: I am very happy that you have revealed the truth of your inner state of mind and have not concealed what is really in your heart. It is absolutely useless to keep religious symbols like hair and beard while you are an atheist at heart, nor would I be proud of making you do such a thing. I am no more anxious about your coming back to Sikh forms, nor am I sorry that you do not have hair and beard. My only anxiety and wish now is that you should die with faith in God. You will definitely die on the scaffold. It would have been better if your atheism had disappeared before you faced death sentence. Even though you are an atheist remember one thing that you will not die, keep it engraved in your heart that you will not die. You will be born again. Your soul is immortal and ageless- It will never be destroyed. It will be born again and again. Know this for dead certain that you will not die. You will take human birth again. Look within and see what you are? Are you a soul, a spirit (*Atma*) or just a lump of flesh and blood? Do you think that this self within you which speaks, understands, thinks, reflects on serving humanity and expires after doing great deeds, is nothing beyond bones, blood and flesh and do you think it will end with the end of the body? No, never. Your real self will not be destroyed and you will never die".

On hearing these words which were uttered in an inspired mood (by the Grace of God), Bhagat Singh stood there mute and inwardly moved. For a moment he lost his physical consciousness and his mind soared high. Speechless, he bowed low, as if some unknown power had taken possession of him. For quite sometime he remained absorbed in deep silence. I shook him with my hands and helped him to stand. On his face there was a strange glow. He came nearer me and stretching his

hands through the fence he tried to touch my feet. I held his hands in mine and said that only the Guru's feet are worth worship and not human feet.

I helped him to stand up and when he had regained control over himself he said "Your words have pierced my heart like an arrow, my disbelief and faithlessness have been terribly shaken, a magnetic influence has changed my inner being. Deep down in my heart now I believe that I will not die and this belief will remain unshaken in my mind, speech and actions. I am that Spirit that death will not destroy. I will not die. After I give up my body I will be born again. Until my new birth my *Atma* will remain in everlasting glory. When I die on the scaffold I will die with a great spiritual joy. I was brave through sheer will power and asserted that I did not care for death. Within my heart was the deep hidden sorrow of complete extinction after death. Whenever this thought came to mind there was darkness before my mind. The thought of being reduced to nothingness after death created a painful void within my heart. Your words have brought a miraculous change in me. I can now see my future clearly in the light of new consciousness you have given me. The void created by the thoughts of extinction have disappeared. All doubts and delusions have been dispelled.

"I have gained much more strength. I will now die with great moral and spiritual courage. Your exalted life has imparted to me the elixir of spirituality and I feel its ennobling influence. I knew one thing about your life that you always say what you have experienced and your words and actions are always in unison. Not only am I convinced that I will not die, and that I am immortal *Atma* but I am convinced that there is God and you have had a glimpse of Him. So now you will be extremely pleased to learn that your dear Bhagat Singh is a believer in God and he will die with complete spiritual faith in Sikhism, and according to the Sikh terminology, I will face not death but ascension. The word ascension is a beautiful word and reveals that the soul will rise above the body and go beyond death (At his death Sikh rites were performed by a Sikh patriot. He had kept the promise of keeping hair and beard. *Blitz*, Bombay published a photograph on 26th March, 1949 which was taken a few hours before his death). After leaving my body my spirit will ascend heavenwards and will never die. It will be born again and will work for the ideal service of the Motherland and the nation. How fruitful has been this meeting with you.

After this significant end of our meeting we greeted each other and parted in blissful silence. It was quite dark now. I was taken to the office from where I was given unconditional release and sent out of the prison under cover of darkness. I boarded the train from Lahore railway station and came to Amritsar. From Amritsar railway station I walked to the Golden Temple. A Government servant had been given to me to help me in my journey. He carried my bag and bedding and attended to all my needs. Near the clock tower the servant waited with my luggage while I went inside and had a dip in the holy tank. It was 1 A.M. There I sat in peaceful solitude meditating on His Name. I enjoyed this solitude very much. After meditation, I had a mind to meet some friends. But on second thought I wanted to keep this pilgrimage to the Golden Temple, a secret. I knew that if I met some friends there will be unnecessary noise of jubilation about the release and a good deal of trumpeting through processions. I was tempted many times to go and meet Gyani Nahar Singh and Gyani Harbhajan Singh in the *Malwai Bunga*, but I overcame the temptation. Until day break I enjoyed the divine *Kirtan* of the Golden Temple. Then quietly I slipped out of Amritsar and resumed my journey to Ludhiana.

Reaching Home

At Ludhiana I tried to avoid being detected by anyone but some friends recognised me and brought a car to take me to my village home Narangwal. The news spread faster than I expected.

At the village Dehlon there were people waiting to welcome me. At Kila Raipur there was a large gathering. Bhai Asa Singh of my village had seen me as soon as I got into the car at Ludhiana and he went on his bicycle a little ahead of the car and spread the news of my release in all the villages. When he reached Narangwal he saw a group of people sitting on a raised platform in the village gateway. My brother Atma Singh was amongst them. He asked them to give a loud cheer of the Khalsa greeting, and then he would give them happy news. Everyone wanted him to release the news first but when Bhai Asa Singh insisted on having loud victory cry first, they gave a loud Khalsa victory cry and Bhai Asa Singh gave the news of my arrival. On hearing this happy news, there was a wave of joy throughout the village. In the zeal of giving a welcome, people ran to the canal road and others waited on the main highway to Gujjarwal. Some people made preparations for an elaborate welcome at home. Everyone tried to express his love and affection in his own way. Bhai Atma Singh on hearing the news jumped from the top of the raised platform and ran home to give the news. The joy of my family on hearing the news knew no bounds. When we reached Kila Raipur, there was a large crowd waiting for us near the railway station close to Bhai Narain Singh's shop. The people expressed their love and affection in so many ways that it is difficult to narrate them.

From here we went to Narangwal. The car moved fast raising dust all around. As the village neared, I felt quite a different world around me. Everything in the surrounding appeared to be strange. Even the speech of the people appeared to be strange. Sixteen years is a long period. I could not even recognise the surroundings of my own village. Many people were waiting opposite village Mehma Singh Wala. At the Lohgarh well, when the car turned towards our village, I realized that Narangwal was close by. The car moved on blowing its horn. I could see the walls of the village but everything was changed. Many new houses had been built this side of our house.

When the car reached the village pond I could see the *sangat* coming nearer. Soon my brother Atma Singh stepped on the slowly moving car and held my arms in warm embrace. In front the village people came singing the hymns. I got down from the car and with folded hands stood face to face with the *sangat* and humbly greeted them. I joined the *sangat* in their divine song and we moved on towards our house. All the persons around me were new faces. I could recognise only Bhai Surjan Singh Defedar who was an old companion of our jatha. We were overjoyed to see each other. Slowly we moved on towards the house performing the *kirtan*. The whole village had gathered and all round I could see men and women eagerly coming closer. Tears of joy rolled down the eyes of many who had seen me after such a long separation. A union after a long separation brings a strange and tearful joy sometimes. It was a strange experience. On meeting after such a long time people could not control their tears. I myself could not control my tears which flowed incessantly.

At the three way open space the congregation sat for divine *kirtan*. Those playing on the musical instruments were new faces. They sang the divine songs (*shabads*) with great enthusiasm. The roofs of the houses were covered with people as far as the eye could see. During the short journey I was not feeling well and now I was feeling a little feverish. The *kirtan* ended and after the distribution of the sacrament (*prasad*) I was taken home which was close by. At home a good many ladies had gathered together. A lady remarked "Today your mother should have been living to see you back home." "She is here by me side" I replied. I saw my mother in her astral body, blessing me in love and joy. It is difficult to express all the wonderful things that happened that day.

The joy of my wife Kartar Kaur and the rest of the family knew no bounds. She had seen these happy days after years of terrible suffering and sorrow. For sixteen years she had been patiently waiting every moment for my return. There was something in her which was constantly telling her that we would meet again. A day before my arrival she had seen me back home in a dream and she knew that this dream would come true. She was telling this dream to some one when my brother Atma Singh ran home and gave the news of my arrival. If she had not seen me in a dream, she might not have believed this news and my sudden arrival might have given her an astounding surprise which might have had a strange effect on her.

Well it was that I saw him in a dream
The dream assured me he was coming.
Otherwise I would have become mad with joy
On hearing the felicitations of his arrival.

So now she received felicitations from all sides. There was the same happy atmosphere of people gathering and visitors coming, which existed sixteen years ago. Now there was greater joy and rush than ever before. There were times when she experienced smiting loneliness in the house. Now the house and courtyard were ten times more blessed than ever before. Her sufferings of many years now ended. "Sorrow and suffering are dispelled. There is joy and happiness at home by His Grace". Thus ends the briefly narrated story of my sixteen years of life in prison.

Vahe Guru ji ka Khalsa Vahe Guru ji ki Fateh.

APPENDIX I

SUPPLEMENTARY LETTERS OF BHAI SAHIB RANDHIR SINGH

The first two letters given below give formal permissions of the author to publish his letters which cover the first few chapters of his life. The third letter was written to his daughter, Bibi Daler Kaur, after the death of his mother. The fourth letter has been recently unearthed. It was written from Multan prison to friends who went there to inquire after his health. People feared that either Bhai Sahib was dying in prison or was dead. The harrowing tortures he suffered are described in Chapter 11. The letter reveals the moral courage and the spiritual exaltation of the writer under such terrible conditions.

1

The conditions which you have described outside are exactly as we anticipated. I do not want to discourage you from writing something about me, as that would break your heart, but when you wrote to me that you are writing my life-story, I felt terribly ashamed. I do not deserve to be the subject matter of a biography. You write the biography (*jivan charitra*) of great men only. I am an ordinary and insignificant human being and there is nothing in me which deserves to be preserved in a biography. You can write about a few incidents of my life but do not call it anecdotes of my life. I hesitate to compel you to desist from this venture and I am glad that you are trying to fulfil a wish in this life which has been such a strong impulse in you. Actually you should write the life of heroes and martyrs only who have served the Sikh *Panth* and made history. You could also write the life of those great souls who through their immense spiritual powers contributed something solid to the annals of the nation.

When I look within myself I find no quality within me but only human weaknesses. I have not done any significant deed which may be compared even with the doings of dogs of dogs at His Door. Even a dog has some qualities which I do not have. You were anxious to write about all the enlightened friends of our missionary group (*jatha*). In that you could include me also. I would not have objected to it." With Thee, O Lord, sayeth Nanak, I like to remain as the dust of Thy Feet." Any way I do not want to break your heart. Your deep affection for me is something that comes from the past life. Anyway, as things happen, so be it.

In my clairvoyant vision I have seen you doing some writing work, but I have not seen writing you my biography. Who knows how long this life lasts. I have had a strong wish to die either singing hymns and performing *kirtan*, or to die fighting for freedom and faith in the battle-field. But my death will be as He wills it. "As He Wills, so will it be." It is as hot here as it is in the hottest month. What will be the climatic condition in the hottest months, God alone knows. Convey my respectful greetings to all the brothers: Sat Sri Akal.

Rajahmundry: March 19, 1922

2

I find it difficult to comply to your request of writing my whole life-story from the beginning to this day. I do not remember all the things. It is quite possible that I may remember something after searching the memories of the past, but I do feel that I should write about my spiritual experiences at Abbottabad only to close and initiate friends, but I do not like these things to be published in the papers. You can pass on the manuscript copy to those who deserve to know it, and those who can benefit from it. There are some deeper mystic experiences of the Guru's Wisdom which should not be revealed to everyone but should pass on from heart to heart through oral tradition. You

know everything. In the context of this suggestion you can do what you think best. To abide by your request I have fulfilled your wishes. I hope you will keep in view the sentiments I have expressed above.

Central Jail Rajahmundry: March 24, 1922

3

The soul of the enlightened when liberated from the earthly body becomes clairvoyant. These eyes of the astral body can see through matter and space. Bodily eyes have limited vision, but the spiritual eyes of the astral body can see through thousands of miles of space. They can see inside and outside every human being. Nothing remains veiled from them. Know it that dear Mother has not left us and gone afar. She is ever so close to us. She can see us and listen to us. Our earthly eyes cannot see her, but she can see us even in the dark. There is no such thing as darkness for a liberated soul. There is darkness only for people absorbed in mundane life. This spiritual vision can be attained by enlightened Sikhs if they lead the life of contemplation and meditation of divine Name, even during their earthly sojourn. The soul can become liberated even while it is in the body. Such enlightened Sikhs can even see parted souls. My child, these are things of deeper mystic life. It is difficult for you to understand them as yet. When you make progress in your spiritual efforts my child, you will automatically understand all these things. All that you have to bear in mind now is that just as the Guru is eternally with us, and ever near us, so also all those divine souls who attain the Guru's realm of eternal Truth, are ever near us. They are not far away from us, but they show deep concern for us. So is the soul of our dear Mother.

Nagpur Central Jail: June 8, 1927

4

I have handed over one letter to a Hindu gentleman addressed to a spiritually enlightened friend. He will probably hand it over to you today. This letter will also be sent through the same gentleman. Through him I sent a message that we would shortly be transferred from this (Multan) Jail. The gentleman will definitely meet you. I am sending you one letter by post also. Do not wait here any longer. Go and inform about us to those anxiously waiting at home. We will collect the money. Do not worry about it. Keep yourself busy with noble deeds of love and service. We will keep you informed about all that happens as best as we can. Write to us as soon as you reach home, how things are there. Do not worry about us. We can easily talk to each other. Bhai Santa Singh is in the cell opposite mine at night. Bhai Saran Singh is in high spirits. He is quite cheerful. He is generally busy in recitation of Gurbani or meditations. All others are well.

By the grace of the Guru our old companions who had love and devotion for the work we undertook are still busy keeping the light burning. Keep the spirit of the dedicated group (*Jatha*) ever resplendent so that it may attract ever new seekers of truth. God will one day ordain a meeting between us, but it is our duty to abide by His sweet Will and to ever seek the pleasure of the Guru.

The eternal Guru will help us in this turmoil of life. By your love and prayers we also will be liberated. My beloved friends, my devoted companions ever-willing to burn in the flame of life like a moth, may God and the Guru reward all your spiritual efforts. May He save the *Panth* from stormy weathers. For us, the love and grace of God is everything we need. Do not think we are far away from you. We are indeed ever so close to you. There is only a thin veil of illusion separating us. This thin veil of illusion will one day fall like a wall of sand. Convey my respectful greetings to all brothers, sisters and friends. Please go back now.

Multan prison: 1917

APPENDIX II

INTRODUCTION TO PUNJABI EDITION

By Dr. Bhai Vir Singh

The same man is busy in educational activities. He studies and teaches. At times, he is busy in acts of charity, philanthropy and service to humanity. At other times, he is busy in family affairs, and at still other times, he is busy in political activities. Sometimes he is busy procuring things for his physical existence. The same personality is busy in diverse activities, but behind all his multifarious deeds there is something that remains ever the same. No matter in what conscious form this thing expresses itself, no matter through what thoughts and deeds it is manifest, the impelling power behind all activities is one and the same.

This dynamic power reveals itself to others through speech and actions, but to one's own self it is visibly manifest within his own mind. This driving force within us is what is known as 'character'¹. Whether a man works in social sphere or in religious, moral or any other field, his character reveals itself in every sphere of his work. It is the strength of his character that makes up his personality. "A man is known by his deeds and moral efforts." Character is the most intimate friend of man. It is the richest and greatest support of inner self. Its outward expression gives immense benefit through a dynamic personality to the world, and makes life worthwhile.

This book was given to me before being published. When the name of its author, whose autobiographical letters the book contains, was mentioned to me, then, even before I thought of the religious, social, educational reforms of this great man, his character stood visibly personified before me. It occurred to me, even before expressing my opinion about the book, after reading it, that I must first attempt an exposition of the moral and spiritual influence of the character of the writer of these epistles, which makes all the things written in this book convincing. There is one aspect of the writer's life which stands out prominently. That is, his description of how the divine Name was revealed to him after he had completely dedicated his mind and soul to God. When he was baptised, a disturbing intrusion by an outsider had caused confusion in his mind. He has vividly described his experiences the way he attained it after an intense search.

From 1900 A.D. he has figured as a well known personality among the luminaries of the Sikh *Panth*, and ever since then, the central trait of his character has been uniformly the same. We can sum up his character in a few words, as an embodiment of Truth. Whether some people are devoted to the personality of Saint Randhir Singh, or hold different opinions than him, everyone without exception believes that he is a passionate lover of truth. The character of a man of truth is exalted and noble, and if he has some human weaknesses they start disappearing as soon as he starts imbibing the higher ideals of Sikhism. That is why, the Saviour, our Lord, the true Guru has stated that Truth is the panacea of all ills. Whatever a man disciplined in truth, will say will be worthy of believing. Whatever he writes would be convincing and commanding belief. Whatever on hearing and reading appears to be true, will give peace and happiness to the world.

Thus, now, I have read these autobiographical epistles of a scholar who is not only a lover of truth, but whose character and personality are truthful. The book has, firstly, a historical interest; secondly, it would have immense religious importance for the Sikh world. The book is going to make the most significant impression, based on the author's experience and spiritual encounters, on the reader. It will give a convincing testimony of the fact that our faith in the contemplation and remembrance of the divine Name, which the scriptures point out to be factual truth, has now

been tested by an experiment in the crucible of his own self by a scholar educated and trained in Western lore. He now bears witness to the fact that what the scriptures say is not mere reflective statement unrelated to experience, nor is it a flight of a scholar's imagination. It is a Truth which can be experienced and lived Guru Arjan calls the divine Name, *amrita*, ambrosia. It is Truth. Now a scholar disciplined in Western education has renounced his self, practised in contemplative meditation the divine Name, and says that the Name of God is the *amrita*. What the Gurus said is therefore true. As the character of the man who has tested these doctrines through experience is well known to be exalted and of impeccable integrity, so his statement based on personal experience are no doubt convincing and command belief. So this book is the book of the times and beneficial.

At this time when intellectual revivalists are turning the mind of the people to materialism, and that too is inspired with anti-religious purpose, Saint Randhir Singh's experiences of the divine Name, recorded in this book will guide and illumine the minds of many young seekers of truth who flounder on the border of doubt and faith. It will show them how after a strenuous spiritual effort and complete dedication to the Guru, he found the Way and how from his experience he confirms and testifies the mystic experiences of the divine Name. Since then he has dedicated his life to spiritual quest and struggle for liberty. Other books and theological exposition of the writer will help the novices and seekers of truth still further. This autobiography will inspire theistic faith in God, and will reveal how those who are sustained by Truth are blessed by divine grace in their search for His illuminating Word. It is also a testimony of the fact, that whatever the Guru has written is based on experience.

This autobiography will be a beacon light convincing the seekers of truth that if we discard falsehood, enmity, evil and espouse the love of truth and live a life of complete dedication to the Will of God, we shall, then, continue to receive the light and guidance from the Unknown. We learn that in England there is an Oxford movement which has made truth, nobility of character, love and reverence for God the cardinal principles of their aims. Under the influence of this movement many atheists and evil-minded persons have realized that those who tread the path of truth continue to receive help and guidance from the Unknown. By imbibing the code of conduct of the Oxford movement many evil-minded people have been reformed and atheists have become believers in God. The experiences of Saint Randhir Singh, recorded in these autobiographical epistles, tell us how by dedicating his life to Truth and the ideals of the Guru, he attained the wisdom and light of the divine Word. Though, at the time of baptism, an outsider's interference had created doubt in his mind, but his deep and unshakable faith in the Guru inspired him to knock the door of the Eternal Master. Reality was unveiled and the Unseen Hand of God guided Him from the Unknown.

Although the first part of the book describes mainly his mystic experiences of the Divine Name, it is well known that his whole life has been a saga of suffering in which he never for a moment left his deep faith and devotion to God and His Word. The story of this autobiography leaves us in wonderment. God Himself is sublime and wonderful. By praising and glorifying Him man reaches the sublime state of wonderment. All the strange and ennobling experiences narrated in this book are candid and sincere statements of a man whose sustenance was Truth. We should study it with reverence and love for truth.

Vir Singh
Amritsar
29.5.36

FOREWORD TO THE PUNJABI EDITION

By

Sir Jogindra Singh

He alone can know about the higher mystical states of religious life who has enjoyed the aesthetic joy of spiritual experience. He alone can unravel the deeper meaning of the Word (*shabad*), who has imbibed its spirit. He alone knows true spiritual bliss, who after attaining the ineffable state has completely extinguished the flames of desires and in whose heart ever reigns tranquillity and peace. The religious and mystical experiences of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh are concrete evidence of the highest human achievement in mystical, spiritual and aesthetic life.

One who has lived such a life, and experienced the spiritual exaltation penned in this book, alone, is entitled to write about it and comment on it. What can a man of the mundane world like me say about it? Devotion and faith should be such as we find in Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. Streams of love flow in such torrential tides that they sweep away all sorrow and agony of the mind as the sun dispels all darkness. *Atma* (the self) in its resplendent form is realized in the divine state of Existence-Consciousness-Bliss (*sat-cit-ananda*).

From the little inner knowledge I have about spiritual life, I can say that the life and experiences of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh will certainly show the way to all seekers of Truth. Glorious is the great Guru. Glorious are the Guru's Sikhs.

Jogindra Singh

Simla

15.5.36

GYANI NAHAR SINGH'S PREFACE TO THE PUNJABI EDITION

Itihas is a Sanskrit word which means: 'so be it'. In other words it is the name given to the collection of events about the past or the present of a person, country or nation. History tells us about the nations; it serves as a light-house to the generations to come. It gives a true picture of the revolutionary changes in the world.

It is generally believed that Indians have never cared to record historical events in chronological sequence. It is also felt that Sikhs for various reasons have never cared to record the contemporary events of the Guru-period and subsequent times. Attempts were made much later, and the scarcity of material created many difficulties for subsequent historians.

Now-a-days the interest of the Sikhs in their history is on the increase, but still the Sikh organizations and institutions do not pay much attention to the collection and preservation of historical records. This is the reason why essential historical record of even recent Akali movement to which most of us were eye witnesses is not available.

From my earlier days I was keenly interested in history and was fond of reading and listening to the life stories of saints and sages. In the *satsang mandate* (congregational gatherings) I have been witness to the mystic exaltation of enlightened souls, which apart from their religious and spiritual significance had historical importance also. So when I came out of the prison I made up my mind to record the historical events of this period indicated above. In this collection I got published a number of articles in Urdu papers, *Khalsa Akhbar* and *Akali Akhbar* in the years 1919-21. In most of these articles the life stories of Bhai Randhir Singh were recorded.

From there I got an idea to get more information from Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh about his life story, and my friends also urged me to do so. In the year 1921, Bhai Sahib was transferred from Hazaribagh to Rajahmundry prison, where he was able to get ample time to read and write. So I wrote to him a letter making this request. For about four or five months he did not agree to this proposal, as he was extremely reluctant to write about his own life. After repeated requests and persuasion, he wrote in March 1922 an account of his stay at Abbottabad (see chapter 5). On further requests and persuasions by friends he wrote a few more autobiographical letters, which were so captivating and illuminating that one liked to read them again and again. Most of these letters were received during the year 1922-23 when I was working as a teacher in D.B. High School, Samrala in Ludhiana district. Ever after that he wrote off and on, when repeatedly pressed to write more about his life story.

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh did not allow us to publish his letters, nor was it the appropriate time to do so, due to which the letters had to be preserved for quite sometime in manuscript form. But still many of his admirers got an opportunity to read the manuscript and I believe that about a hundred people read and enjoyed these letters.

In September-October 1934 issue of the *Parliament Gazette*, a religious magazine run by the *Bhasauria* people, Gyani Lai Singh after misquoting an article from "*Asli Kaumi Dard*: Bhai Randhir Singh Number*", erroneously stated that Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh in his illumination of the divine Name was enlightened by the corrupt version of *guru-mantram*, which they accepted and were trying to popularise. (Gyani Lai Singh has recanted from his stand since then). Commenting on the misleading article of Gyani Lai Singh, Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh wrote an article, which was published in the *Weekly Khalsa Samachar* (Vol. 35, No. 49, page 6, columns 2, 3 and page 7 column

1) of 25th Oct, 1934 and sent me the following permission to publish these letters: "I wrote to Gyani Nahar Singh about some of my most intimate spiritual experiences in response to a very eager and persuasive request from a number of my friends some years ago, desiring that they should be kept secret and shown only to initiate devotees of the Guru. Under the impulse of personal affection and love, he has sought permission to publish these letters, for which further responsibility rests with him. Now to dispel the erroneous impression created by Gyani Lai Singh, he has my permission to publish my letters without altering or suppressing a single word."

So while those who had read it were eager to publish them, I was able to secure the permission of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh to publish the letters. From that very day I made preparations to get them published. After years of waiting came the day, by the grace of God, when these letters were printed and published. There are many letters, but for the present only five or six are being published. As time and opportunity permits, the rest will be published. All those who read them have keenly admired them, because there are a number of special qualities in them:

1. It is the story of personal spiritual experiences of the higher state of divine illumination, which inspires faith, devotion in Sikhism and reveals the glory of divine Name and *gurbani*.
2. There is such wonderful interpretation of the mystic depths of Sikhism, which could be given expression to by deeply absorbing the aesthetic joy of divine Name and the Word of the Guru.
3. From the historical point of view, it is a precious record. There is hardly another autobiographical account of the spiritual experiences written in such scintillating prose. Perhaps no Sikh has ever written such a remarkable work.
4. From the literary point of view, the work is high class Punjabi literature. The special feature of it is that the writer has mainly used the language of the Sikh scriptures, and has written it in very lucid, original and impressive inimitable style.

To sum up, the subject matter of these letters is precious from literary, religious and historical point of view. Bhai Sahib penned these in a very inspired mood. The reader will share the joy and inspiration as he reads it. The experiences of Bhai Sahib at Abbottabad are related in four different letters, the narrative for which is in continuous sequence. The first letter was written on March 24th 1922, the second and third on March 30th 1922, but were posted in separate envelopes. The fourth was written on April 4th 1922. All the four were sent in separate covers.

It is explained in these letters how after acquiring the divine Name, the Light of God is seen. Many other deeper experiences of Sikhism are explained. To complete the story, in these letter an interesting account of Mai Gulab Kaur is given from letter No. 6. Letter No. 5 describes how after receiving a letter from his father, Sardar Natha Singh, asking him to read *gurbani*, he was attracted towards it, while he was a student of Mission College Lahore. He then took religious life seriously for the whole of his life. The book has been compiled from the letters which are published in the same sequence in which they have been received (in the present translation, the whole material has been published chronologically. The haphazard arrangement of the original Punjabi edition is very confusing).

Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh was Head Clerk in the Sub Divisional Officer's office Abbottabad in the year 1904-5. He studied in the Mission College Lahore in the year 1899-1900. These events occurred when he was quite young (between the age of 22-25). Bhai Sahib was born on Asad 1935

B. S. i.e. July 7th 1878 A. D (while this date is given in the preface by Gyani Nahar Singh, he gives quite different date on page 666 of the latest edition of the book, which is Asad 25, 1935 B. S. corresponding to July 8, 1878 A. D. In his article published in Punjabi Ratan 14 August 1961, page 17 he gives the Christian era date as July 7th 1878 A.D. which seems to be correct).

Headings and sub-headings have been given in the book according to requirement. *Gurbani* has been printed in separate type. Important lines are underlined. Wherever necessary footnotes have been given. Important dates have been given after checking them from old calendars, and the letters have been numbered and dated. The letters have been compiled and published in the sequence in which they were received.

There is a reference to Mai Gulab Kaur in the letters. I made inquiries about her from Bhakta Duna Sing of Abbottabad who asked Bhai Narain Singh bookseller of Abbottabad to acquire the details of her life. It is learnt that Mai Gulab Kaur was born in Village Burhan in Campblpur district in the year 1920. She was the daughter of Bhai Dargha Mai, a *sehajdhari* Sikh and devotee of the Guru. She was married at the age of fifteen to one Bhai Des Raj of Haripur in 1935. The couple stayed in Sohewale Mohalla in Haripur. She had one son and two daughters. Ten years before her death, her husband died; Mai Gulab Kaur died some time in the year 1909-10. She spent the last ten years of her life in a state of spiritual intoxication. Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh says that when he met her, she wore a *kach*, and wrapped her body in a blanket. She was *amritdhari* (baptised) and lived strictly according to the Khalsa code of conduct, but it is not known when and where she was baptised. At Haripur people called her Gulato, the mad woman. The Muslims revered her as a great saint, and respected her more than the Hindus and Sikhs.

Bhai Sahib came back to his village Narangwal from Abbottabad in 1905 A.D. Twenty seven years after that he went to Punja Sahib again, where he was one of the *Panj Pyaras* who laid the foundation stone of the new building. A day after that he went to Abbottabad on the invitation of the sangat of that place. These letters have been published because they are quite important from the religious, literary and historical point of view. We were eager to publish them while Bhai Sahib was living, because there can hardly be any ground for doubtful criticism when such a thing is published during the life-time of the author. Its historicity is confirmed. When such a thing is published after the death of a person, people attribute various motives to it and consider it only a propaganda. I am glad these letters have been published during the life-time of Bhai Sahib these letters have been published during the life-time of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh. May God give us opportunity to publish the rest of the material soon. I am grateful to those people who have encouraged and helped in the publication of these letters (In 1936 only the first 80 pages of this book were published. This is the publisher's note to this incomplete edition).

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