

GURMAT STUDY

Using Technology, To Spread the message of Sikhism
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CHOTTA GHALLUGHARA – SMALL HOLOCAUST

The Mughal government had vowed to destroy the Sikhs, root and branch. A large number of Sikhs, like Bhai Taru Singh ji, Bhai Mani Singh ji and Bhai Mehtab Singh ji had been martyred. General orders had been issued that no one should give any help or shelter to any Sikh. Mughal armies went about killing every Sikh found anywhere.

Early in 1746, when Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluvalia pushed northwards and entered the Eminabad territory in Gujranwala district, they were attacked by the local jagirdar, Jaspat Rai, the diwan of Yahiya Khan, the governor of Lahore. Jaspat Rai was killed in the encounter. This led to the vengeful Lakhpat Rai's (Jaspat Rai's brother) relentless campaign against the Sikhs.

Lakhpat Rai was a minister of Yahiya Khan, governor of Lahore. When he heard the news of his brother's death, he became mad with rage. He went on to Yahiya Khan. He flung his turban at his feet and said, 'I shall tie it on my head only when I have destroyed the Sikhs, root and branch' He had a general order issued for the destruction of the Sikhs. To begin with, all the Sikhs- men, women, and children- living in Lahore were arrested. They were handed over to sweepers for execution. A deputation of Hindus waited upon Lakhpat Rai. They tried to dissuade him from spilling innocent blood. But he would not listen to them. The terrible order was carried out. All the Sikhs of Lahore were murdered in cold blood. Their only fault was that they were Sikhs. They died for their faith. They became martyrs, all of those men, women and children. None of them agreed to save his or her life by giving up his faith.

It was announced with the beat of drum that no one should read the Sikhs scriptures. It was further ordered that anyone uttering the name of the Gurus would be arrested and killed. A huge army, under the command of Yahiya Khan and Lakhpat Rai, set out to destroy Sikhs. This army consisted of the Mughal army and thousands of soldiers sent by the Hindu and Muhammadan supporters of the Mughal government. About fifteen thousands Sikhs had taken shelter in the reedy marshes of Khanuwan. The heavily clothed troops and their artillery could not pass through the marshes to reach the Sikhs. But a way was cut through the reeds for the movement of the troops. With the help of guns, the Sikhs were pushed towards the Ravi. The Sikhs crossed the river. They were closely followed by Lakhpat Rai. The only course open to the Sikhs was to go to the hills of Basohli. They hoped that the Hindu population there would give them shelter.

But their hopes proved false. The people there had already received orders from Lahore to give no shelter to the Sikhs. As the Sikhs approached, they were received with showers of stones and bullets. They had to cry a halt. They were in desperate position. In front of them was a steep mountain. On that mountain were people who were against them and were showering bullets and stones on them. To their right was a fast flowing, flooded river. Behind them was the enemy in hot pursuit. They had no food and no ammunition. Their horses were weak with hunger and fatigue. They were too weak to go up the mountain. They decided to go back to Majha. But the Ravi was in flood.

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It was impossible to cross it. It was decided, therefore, that those who had no horses, should go towards the mountains and try their luck there. Those who had horses were to cut their way through the enemy. Those who went to the mountains managed to pass about six months in Mandi and Kulu. They had to face great hardships. But they were able, at least, to reach Kirtarpur and join the Khalsa there. The main body of the Sikhs rushed through the pursuing army. They were surrounded. Hundreds of them were killed. Some were taken prisoner. The remaining Sikhs were pursued into a jungle. There they were attacked by the army as well as the people-Hindus and Muslims-collected from the neighboring villages.

About two thousand Sikhs were able to cross the Ravi. They entered the Riarki tract of Gurdaspur. It was the month of June. They were hungry, barefooted, and wounded. The burning sand added to their sufferings. But they uttered no cry of pain. They never thought of surrender. They never thought of saving themselves by giving up their faith. They were determined to live and die as Sikhs. They tore off pieces from their clothes and tied them on their naked feet. In this way they crossed the hot sandy plain and reached the river Beas. They crossed that river near Sri Hargobindpur. Then they made straight for the Satluj. That river they crossed near Aliwal and entered the Malwa. Lakhpat Rai had got tired of fighting. He returned to Lahore. In this campaign he must have killed at least 10,000 Sikhs. It was called Chhota Ghalughara or the Lesser Holocaust.

Over ten thousand Sikhs were brutally killed in this campaign. They could all have saved their lives by giving up their faith and accepting Islam. But none of them even thought of saving his or her life in that way. They chose not to live as apostates, but to suffer and die as Sikhs. They preferred suffering and death to apostates. They lived, suffered and died as true devotees of their faith. They achieved glorious martyrdom. They are all remembered with respect and admiration by students of history, as well as, of course, by all Sikhs. They died to achieve everlasting life. Let us all bow our heads to them.

“We offer our floral tribute to all Shaheed’s who sacrificed their life’s but did not deter from the path shown by Guru Sahibs. We pray to almighty Akal Purakh to give us strength & wisdom to do the same”

Requesting readers of this article to print and display the same in their Gurdwara Sahib’s to make Sadh-Sangat aware of same especially youth...

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