

Stories Of Brave Sikh Women



By Sikh Unit

Torture of Sikh women during Mughal Raj

This was the time when the army of Mir Mannu was going from house to house searching for Sikhs. Many of the Sikhs took shelter in jungles but some Sikhs who were living with their families in the cities and could not just leave right away or join any jathas. They were captured by the army and all were being sent to Lahore. Most of the prisoners were Sikh women and children. Many of the old women were killed on the way because they were weak and could not walk for a long time.

All of the Singhnis and their children were put in Lahore jail, for labour they were given "chakkis". They were given no food or water. This was a way to torture them so they would leave Sikhi. They were separated from their children. Everyday muslims would come and taunt them by saying "where is your Khalsa now?" They can't even come to rescue you. All of them have been killed by the army. So it is better for you to accept islam and live a rich happy life." Singhnis never ever thought of leaving Sikhi. They kept reciting:

"Waheguru Dhan Guru Waheguru Waheguru".

All children were separated from their mothers and were given no food or water. Then muslims started killing the innocent children by throwing them up in the air and landing them on sharp spears. Some children were cut into pieces and garlands were made out of their pieces. Then they put those garlands around the necks of Sikh mothers. But the faith of Sikh women was unshakable. One of the women was very beautiful and Qazi wanted to marry her. He would come every day and try to convince her to accept him but she never did. She had a son who was less than two years old. One day upon leaving, qazi gave orders to some of the army men to torture her and her son so she would give up her faith.

One night the cruel animals (men) tied her up first and then started torturing her son. They hung her son upside down, took a knife and started to cut into his flesh from the neck all the way down to stomach. Singhni kept calm and kept praying:

"Guru Ji, Jaan Jayai par Dharam Na Jaayai"

Then they slowly cut her son into pieces and he became shaheed. Then they started beating the Singhni with sticks.. They hung her upside down and left. She stayed that way all night. In the morning they took her down but she was unable to get up and walk. She lay there by the wall, did Nitnem and then did Ardas: "if my life goes it goes but may my Sikhi never go".

Hearing this some of the guards were shocked and wondered what the Sikhs were made up of? Some of the guards left their jobs by saying "These Sikhs are religious people. We cannot torture these innocent souls. Even their women and children are so strong and brave. They will rule Punjab one day." Some fanatic Muslims were enraged by this. They started to torture her again. Heavy weight was put on her body and her bones were crushed. They hit her with sticks. After so much torture she became shaheed but she never gave up her faith. The only word that came out of her mouth was ***"Waheguru Waheguru"*** When Singh's heard the news of the tortures, they attacked Lahore and freed all the prisoners and punished the criminals. At the same time Mir Mannu died a horrible death.

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

Gursikh Women Martyrs: The Battle of Anandpur Sahib

It is said that whenever any of the Rajput fort was about to be captured, all women would commit themselves to sati (burn themselves in fire), in order to protect their honour. Although, GurSikh women faced a similar situation, they did not choose sati as a way out. Why not?

They had partaken Guru's Amrit, they were Daughters of Kalgidhar Patshah. They were lionesses. Enclosing Anandpur in a Fort, **Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj** initiated the battle for freedom and sovereignty. The biting sound of his "Ranjit Nagara," a large kettle drum, shook up and instilled fear among the neighbouring Hill Rajas. They had started considering Kalgidhar Patshah as their arch enemy and deployed several strategies to get him to leave Anandpur. The Rajas of the 22 mountain ridges (BaiDhar) consolidated themselves against Guru Maharaj, blew the trumpets of war and initiated regular attacks against Anandpur Sahib.

However, the courageous GurSikhs warriors, under the command of our Tenth Guru, displayed such martial skills in the battlefield that the enemy was forced to retreat with sustained heavy losses and severe damages in every attack. Irritated by the almost daily defeats with heavy losses, the Hill Rajas approached Delhi and sought Aurangzeb's help. The rationale provided by the Hill Rajas against Guru Maharaj was that "if the rising tide of Sikh movement isn't suppressed at this stage, it will destroy the Mughal Empire." Aurangzeb's contempt for Sikhs was well known. He was independently searching for an opportune moment to destroy the Sikhs. And now the pleas of Hill Rajas provided him an excellent opportunity. Thus Aurangzeb eagerly issued orders for the Royal forces to attack Anandpur.

At this moment, Guru Gobind Singh Ji was accompanied by one thousand brave GurSikh men and some 100 GurSikh women inside the Anandpur Fort. The royal forces arrived suddenly and seized Anandpur. The invading forces not only comprised of the Royal forces from Delhi, but were joined by the forces of Wajir Khan, Suba Sirhind, and Jabardast Khan, Lahore, along the way. Upon their arrival in Anandpur, even the hill rats had come out of their hiding places to help the invading forces. Altogether, the little fort of Anandpur Sahib was facing a force of 10 lakh (a million) strong. The enemy immediately seized the surrounding area and were now ruthlessly advancing in attempts to capture the fort. On the other side, GurSikhs warriors prepared themselves at the sound of "Ranjit Nagara" and came out to defend and prevent the invading forces from reaching the fort. A fierce battle ensued and the GurSikhs fought courageously to check the enemy advanced. Many gave their lives in the fort's defense and thereby enrolled among the ranks of martyrs in defence of righteousness.

While our GurSikh brothers were fighting the fierce battle, GurSikh sisters were engrossed in nursing the wounded, managing the supply lines, and organizing the Langar...

At the time of the attack the invading forces were extremely confident of their strength. They were certain that the thousand odd GurSikhs wouldn't last beyond a day, especially in face of 10 lakh (a million) strong forces with cannons and heavy armours. However, the enemy sensed the error of their judgement, during the first day of the battle. And quickly realized that capturing Anandpur fort wouldn't be as easy as they had thought. Having suffered heavy casualties, the invading forces retreated and imposed curfew on the surrounding area. Their seize of the area was so tight that nothing could move in or out of Anandpur.

All supply lines to the fort were cut off. Now they adopted a strategy to simply wait for the GurSikhs to deplete their supplies and come out. This situation went on for nine months without any movement on either side. By now, the situation was grim on both sides. Ration and water had

virtually depleted inside the Anandpur fort. Nothing could be brought in from outside as all supply line had been severed. On the opposing side, the invading forces had become targets of various diseases because of the ensuing floods. Their soldiers were dying in large numbers, causing major havoc and desertions among the ranks. The enemy had lost all hope of ever capturing the Anandpur fort. Yet, their own strategy and the situation demanded them to stay engaged. While they wanted to abandon the seize of Anandpur, their pride wouldn't allow them to do so. Comparatively, the situation among invading forces was deteriorating more rapidly than among GurSikhs.

Finally, all military tactics of the invading forces proved ineffective against the defence of GurSikhs inside Anandpur fort. The invading forces had been totally humiliated and defeated. Now diplomatic strategies were explored to turn their defeat into a victory. Under this strategy, the Hill Rajas and Mughal forces, took sacred oath of Cow and Koran respectively, and asked Guru Sahib to leave Anandpur. They wanted Guru Maharaj to leave the Anandpur fort just once and then return anytime at will. The rationale being that this would allow the invading forces to safe face. However, Tenth Patshah was well aware of their hidden agenda and thus declined the offer. Subsequently, the request was resubmitted accompanied by an official letter of assurances signed by Aurangzeb himself. By now the situation inside the fort had further deteriorated. GurSikhs of Majha had already given their "Baedhawa," petition of disassociation with Guru Maharaj, and left the fort. The remaining GurSikhs were increasingly exhausted and wearied because of hunger. At this critical moment, under advice of **Matta Gujar Kaur Ji** and some prominent GurSikhs, decision to leave the Anandpur fort was announced. Guru Maharaj, along with 500 GurSikhs and family members left the Anandpur fort during the bitter December-January winter freeze. Since the seize of Anandpur fort was to be shortly lifted, as per the agreement, a hundred GurSikhs women and about 10 GurSikh men stayed behind.

"O Beloved Khalsa jee, I would rather die fighting than walk away from this battle. But Khalsa jee, you are my Guru and you have ordered that we accept the offer of safe passage and leave the fort. So we will leave tomorrow. But, I don't intend to leave the fort unguarded. Bibi Dalaer Kaur, you are my trusted Sikh. I want you and the rest of my daughters to stay here along with 10 Khalsa men." ~Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

"Pita Jee, your words are true, bless us so we may do this duty and bring honour to the Khalsa,"
~Bibi Dalaer Kaur ji.

...Sri Guru Gobind Singh jee tapped her shoulder with the tip of his arrow...

As soon Kalgidhar Patshah left the fort, the combined forces of mughal and Hill Rajas quickly abandoned their sacred oaths. And contrary to the agreement, they pursued Guru Sahib's party. Finally, they caught up with and attacked Guru Sahib on the banks of Sirsa River. In this battle many GurSikhs were killed and Guru Sahib's family scattered. Younger Sahibjadas (sons) and Matta Gujarji left with the deceitful Gangu to his village. While Bhai Mani Singh along with Guru Sahib's wife left for Delhi. Guru Sahib left for Chamkaur with the remaining 40 GurSikhs and elder Sahibjadas. At Chamkaur, once again Guru Sahib had to face the enemy forces in large numbers. All 40 GurSikhs, along with the elder Sahibjadas, accepted martyrdom in this battle. And Guru Sahib left for Mashiwadha while challenging the enemy forces.

As soon as Guru Sahib left the fort, the greedy soldiers of the invading forces broke their ranks and proceeded towards the fort, burning and looting everything in their way. They made their way to the fort with Guru's GurSikhs inside. ***"We too have partaken the Amrit from our Kalgidhar Pita Ji and the moment to prove it has come upon us."*** These daughters of lions picked up the guns, took up positions on the fort's pillars, and started firing on the enemy soldiers.

The enemy soldiers had presumed the fort to be empty. As such they were taken aback by this sudden rain of bullets. Soon piles of stacked dead enemy soldiers were visible outside the fort. Seeing this, the enemy soldiers left their position and ran for their lives. Now, no living enemy could be seen anymore, as everyone fled for their lives. ***The Brave Daughter of the Guru made the enemy chew iron grams, their bullets.*** Witnessing the disastrous situation of his forces, the mughal commander got irritated and issued orders for canyon fire against the fort. Intense canyon fire succeeded in breaking through a wall of the fort. Now, once again, the enemy foot soldiers moved towards the fort. They were again showered with bullets by the Guru's daughters. Hundreds of enemy soldiers again shut their eyes forever. Unfortunately, by now the ammunition had depleted inside the fort. The enemy forces were rapidly advancing but there was no more firing coming from inside, in response. Fort's capture was almost certain. By now, the enemy was advancing so rapidly that there was no time for further debate. Upon Jathedar Dalaer Kaur's signal, all GurSikh women drew their swords and moved behind the damaged wall. This was the only way for the enemy to enter the fort. Here they patiently awaited the enemy's entrance. Tears came to the GurSikh men, who still were worried about the fate of their sisters at the hands of the enemy. Jathedar Dalaer Kaur noticed the predicament of her brothers and said "Brothers do not worry about us. The enemy cannot enter the fort while we are alive." ***At this moment the enemy had reached the fort and as expected, attempted to enter the fort through the damaged wall. Inside were 10 hungry GurSikh men and a hundred GurSikh women facing thousands of well bread Mughals and Pathans. In normal situation this was no match. But this was no ordinary situation.***

Guru's Amrit that awakens the weakest filled the GurSikhs with such power and spirit that the enemy couldn't put a foot inside the fort. The enemy advance having reached the damaged wall was forcibly restrained just outside the fort. Witnessing the events from a distance, the mughal commander yelled, ***"cowards, you are afraid of the princesses inside the fort. They are gifts for you and excellent hunts. Advance inside the fort, loot all the wealth and capture them as well."*** These words were so loud that they could be heard inside the fort. ***Jathedar Dalaer Kaur*** yelled back a fitting response, ***"Hunt or get hunted? Cowards come and find out for yourself."*** Dalaer Kaur's challenging response simply cut off the commander's challenge. The enemy soldiers had no will left to advance. Seeing this the commander was extremely aggravated. He gathered some of the best horsemen from his group, picked up all the courage he could muster, and advanced inside the fort. As soon as he entered the fort with his men, GurSikh sisters attacked them from every corner.

Very quickly the enemy became target of GurSikh women's swords and fell to the ground. The commander of the mughal forces was killed in this attack. While some GurSikh brothers and sisters also lost their lives.. The cries of the wounded echoed in the fort. Soon the enemy forces outside figured out what had transpired with their companions inside the fort. Now no one had the courage to advance towards the fort. The previous information that the enemy had, about only a few women inside the fort, seemed inaccurate at best. The enemy was increasingly frightened by now.

Now the deputy commander of the mughal forces gave orders to retreat. Simultaneously, he asked for intense canyon fire. The enemy canyons opened fire and continuously pounded on the fort. Already a wall had been damaged and weakened by previous pounding and with this recent canyon pounding it fell inside. Through the fallen wall, the inner compound was clearly visible. No living humans could be seen inside. The enemy by now was convinced that no one was left on this side of the fort. They advanced in huge numbers and reached inside the fort. Afraid for their lives they cautiously proceeded to look around. But there was nothing to be afraid of. They searched every inch of the fort but did not find anyone. Where did the remaining GurSikhs disappear? Where were they? No one knew. The enemy couldn't understand. The soldiers were still afraid, expecting sudden attacks at any moment from any direction. After intense search, when no one could be found inside the fort, the enemy concluded that the remaining GurSikhs must have escaped through some secret passage. Orders were given to abandon the search and initiate looting. The very soldiers, who were afraid for their lives until now, anxiously started searching for wealth inside the fort. In the process they moved the fallen wall of the fort. ***What they found was no wealth but the bodies of our martyrs. The faces of Kalgidhar's daughter were still radiant yet peaceful as they slept in their permanent sleep. It seemed as if they were resting after having successfully fulfilled their obligations. Rightly so, they had stood***

by their Jathedar and taken the stance that while living they shall not allow the enemy to enter the fort. They had fulfilled their promise. Alongside them were the bodies of their martyr GurSikh brothers. Their faces were peaceful too. It seemed that they were convinced, prior to their death, that their GurSikh sisters would not be mistreated. And yes, they knew that no power of this world could dishonour them. The invading forces were shocked to witness this scene - such small numbers could face the immense mughal force and engaged them in such a fierce battle? They were astonished beyond belief. Spontaneously these words came out of a mughal governor's mouth,

"Where such a fighting spirit is instilled among women, no force of this world could ever succeed challenging that Tribe."

Bibi Ranjeet Kaur - Khalsa Spy

The wild animals were howling in the nearby jungle, the wind was biting Ranjeet Kaur's face, she wrapped her midnight-blue shawl around a little tighter. Nothing to be afraid of, she quietly carried on repeating 'Vaahi-guroo, Vaahi-guroo' in time to her steps and Guru Gobind Singh jee's glove of spiritual love completely protected her. She looked through the trees at the magnificent setting sun, for a moment she forgot all about the war and was lost in the magic and mystery of the Creative Being - Karta Purakh. She felt as beautiful as a blossoming flower radiating love and life in all directions.

-"Vaahi-Guroo Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaahi-Guroo Jee Kee Fateh! Ranjeet Kaur Bhain Jee (sister)",

Ranjit Kaur quickly turned around and saw a young Khalsa warrior dressed in blue-battle dress, wearing a long curved sword down his left side, chain-mail armour across his chest and three metal discs around his blue pointed turban.

-"Vaahi-Guroo Jee Ka Khalsa, Vaahi-Guroo Jee Kee Fateh! GurMukh Singh Jee. Why are you out so late?",

-"Well I was about to ask you the same thing Bhain jee (sister), you know how dangerous it is for a woman to be out here alone while there are Turkish Soldiers patrolling the area. So Bhain Jee you better have a damn good excuse, otherwise you're going back with me."

- "Veer jee (brother), our Jathedar (leader) has asked me to fetch some important news from the SarPanch (village chief) and anyway you're only 11 so you better run back to the Khalsa camp."

-"Bhain jee, I can't believe he sent you alone. You know the War for our Independence is at its peak and there's trouble around every corner. Look, I've got an idea - it's safer for you to go back to the lake and rejoin the Khalsa Army and I will go in your place." -

"Why do you think it's any safer for you to go, GurMukh Singh?"

-"Bhain jee, it will be dark soon and I don't think it's right for a woman to go anywhere alone. I am a Khalsa Warrior, I carry 5 weapons and I am prepared to die fighting. I want people to tell stories about me and how brave Bhai GurMukh Singh was."

Just then a bat came flying out of the dark trees directly towards Bhai GurMukh Singh, he didn't know what was attacking him and screaming loudly he covered his face with his hands!

Ranjit Kaur burst out laughing and said:

“Veer jee, I too have been blessed with Guru’s immortal "khande-batte-da-amrit" (amrit = nectar of immortality) . I too carry a long sword over my blue battle-dress and wear a warrior’s turban. Guru Gobind Singh Jee is always with me. But you my younger brother have much to learn about ego and you are probably at more risk than me! Besides, the SarPanch (village headman) will not give anyone except me the strategic papers. Furthermore, the Jathedar stressed that I go. So my dear little brother, you better ran all the way home otherwise I’m going to grab you by the ear, drag you home and after the Khalsa has finished their evening prayers, I’m going to tell them the story of the great Bhai GurMukh Singh and the black bat!”

“Okay, you win , but be careful.” Saying this Gurmukh Singh ran down the path towards the lake while Ranjit Kaur went on with her journey towards the village.

Gurmukh Singh’s fears were not unfounded. Small bands of Turkish soldiers were wandering around the lake seeking information on Sikhs. Every Sikh was aware of this. However, it did not deter Ranjit Kaur. She fearlessly went on her way to the village. She had absolute faith in the strength of her Guru’s amrit and blessed sword. Ranjit Kaur reached the SarPanch’s house. The women came out and hugged her; they hadn’t seen her for some time. It was getting late and the women insisted that she spent the night with them. Remembering what GurMukh Singh had said she agreed, it would be safer to travel during the day and Jathedar had given her permission to spend the night. The SarPanch took her to a private room and handed over the Strategic Papers, what she read spelled disaster for the Khalsa. She got up at once and covering herself with her shawl she headed back to the Kahnuwaan lake, the women tried to make her stay saying save yourself. But Ranjit Kaur’s life was not worth anything without her Khalsa family.

A large number of Ahmed Shah Abdalee’s troops were on their way from Lahore to seize Kahnuwaan and these strategic papers contained orders to SarPanch to help the troops. Thousands of Khalsa lives were at stake and getting the information back to her Jathedar was foremost on her mind. By now it was midnight. The skies were clear and the moonlight lit up the earth. In this calm and still atmosphere, Ranjit Kaur reached the outskirts of the quiet village and walked as fast as possible towards the lake. She had about 3 miles to cover; she increased her pace and marched with determination through the sounds of howling animals. She quietly carried on repeating **‘Vaahi-guroo, Vaahi-guroo’** in time to her footsteps as she always did and felt Guru Gobind Singh jee’s spiritual glove encase her.

Two Turkish soldiers with swords in their waist-bands rode past her left side. She fearlessly looked at the soldiers and underneath her shawl she grabbed the handle of her sword, just in case. The heavenly moonlight glowed from Ranjit Kaur’s angelic face and intensified her beauty. The soldiers suddenly pulled their horses across her path and quickly dismounting they tried to grab her hands. She darted away with lightening speed and threateningly said **“They’ll be trouble if you touch me!”** she continued aggressively, **“Who are you and what do you want?”**

-“We are commanders of the royal forces” said the first soldier.

-“Then what business do you have with me?” said Ranjit Kaur.

Without answering, the second soldier loudly demanded **“Who are you? And where are you wandering to at this time of night?”**

-**"Whoever I may be, you have no right to question me."** Saying this Ranjit Kaur tried to walk past them at a fast pace.

The first soldier quickly moved to block her way once again and said, **"We have orders to find out where the Sikhs are hiding. You look like a Sikh so until you explain what you are doing we aren't going to let you go anywhere."**

-**"That's right, I am a Sikh, what are you going to do about it?"**

"Then consider yourself under arrest," said the first soldier, then he looked at the other one and said , **"Khan Sahib, I think you better grab her and put her on your horse, because I don't know what I'll do if I get to close to her."**

Both looked at Ranjit Kaur's face and then looked at each other and started laughing. Such overtures angered Ranjit Kaur. She started looking at them like a hunter at it's' prey. Her eyes were red with might (bi-ras).

There was a brief silence before Khan Sahib calmly said, **"Beautiful lady, we have been sent to find the whereabouts of Sikhs. However, we are not animals. We are human. We too have pumping hearts in our chest. What kind of heart would it be that does not worship a beautiful angel like you?"**

Both men were intoxicated with Ranjit Kaur's beauty. A mere glimpse of her face had injected lustful insanity into them. Ranjit Kaur stared at their faces but remained silent. Upon completion of his sentence, the other soldier continued, **"Beloved, what are you going to get from the wild Sikhs? Come with us. In Allah's oath we shall make you our Begum (wife). You can wear silk and eat whatever you like. You can even choose which one of us you want to marry!"**

Ranjit Kaur still continued to silently stare at the soldiers. She had made her decision to continue or to die fighting. But her silence and non-responsiveness was misinterpreted by the men. Khan Sahib tried to grab her wrist, saying, **"Come, sit on my horse. It is getting late my love."**

Ranjit Kaur moved swiftly, taking two steps backward she drew her sword from under her shawl and reflecting the moonlight it flashed like lightening. She shouted **"If you come any closer I won't be responsible for what happens!"**

The soldiers burst out laughing. Khan Sahib said, **"Angel drawing a sword! That's a first!"**

The other soldier spoke **"Isn't she beautiful when she's angry?"**

This was the first time Khan Sahib had seen a woman protect her honour like a lioness, but to him she was still only a weak woman so he tried to grab her with his outstretched arms. A flashing sword dazzled him and he screamed in agony as his left hand dropped to the ground. Having been bitten by the lioness the soldiers drew their swords and charged towards her. Ranjit Kaur wasn't sitting idle wearing bangles, she lunged forward at Khan Sahib again and cut off his sword hand. He retreated squirming in pain.

The other soldier was a skilled swordsman. His continuous attacks inflicted several wounds to Ranjit Kaur. Blood covered her whole face. Exhaustion was setting in by now. Suddenly, the strength of Guru's amrit injected so much courage into her that she forgot all about her wounds and pains. Yelling the

battle cry Jaekara, **“JO BOLAY SO NIHAL, SAT SREE AKAL,”** her sword moved with such force that the soldier’s head dropped to the ground and bounced like a ball. His body fell in a heap next to it.

Ranjit Kaur quickly looked around for Khan Sahib, but he had escaped without trace. Totally exhausted she still managed to search the heaped body and found several papers in the dead soldier’s pockets. Seizing them, she mounted his horse and rode to the Kahnuwaan lake. As she approached the camp she mustered up every last ounce of energy and yelled **‘JATHEDAR JEE! JATHEDAR JEE!’**. The Jathedar, several Khalsa Warriors and little GurMukh Singh came running out to meet her, seeing her blood red face and exhausted condition they carried her inside while little GurMukh Singh started crying. Her sisters wiped her face and cleaned her wounds while she searched around her clothing and handed the papers over to the Jathedar. He was amazed to find full details of the Turk’s battle-plans. Ranjit Kaur was honoured greatly by the Khalsa. Guru Gobind Singh Jee’s infinite and unparalleled grace had given her the courage to fight her attackers and save her Khalsa family from a bloody massacre.

News of Ranjit Kaur’s courage spread throughout the Khalsa Panth. She is known as the “Brave Daughter of the Guru”.

A SAGA FROM THE LIFE OF BIBI DEEP KAUR Ji

A contingent of Turkish soldiers is on active patrol. The area rulers have specifically assigned this contingent to keep a watch over the Sikh jatha that had gathered in Majha and would surely proceed to Anandpur Sahib for participating in Dashmesh father's (Guru Gobind Singh) Dharam Yudh. Additional responsibilities assigned to this contingent included, instilling fear among people who either express sympathy with the Sikh jatha or welcome it or serve it any way. For this reason, the Turkish contingent always moved ahead of the Sikh Jatha. Three miles from the road leading to Anandpur Sahib in Hoshiarpur District, is a village, named Talban. Bibi Deep Kaur, the subject of our story, was resident of this village. There was only one Sikh house in this village -- Bibi Deep Kaur's residence. Today her husband wasn't home. He had already left for participating in Dashmesh father's Dharam Yudh.

When Bibi ji heard of Jatha's arrival. She was filled with emotions of self-service. She explained her emotions and desire to other women in her neighbourhood. But the Turkish soldiers had successfully frightened the residence of this village. Thus no one was willing to accompany her. **"Let them not proceed, if someone doesn't want to" Deep Kaur told herself**". For how could one stay behind if they have even the slightest love for the Guru in their heart. Holding onto the quest of love and a glimpse of the Sikh Jatha, Deep Kaur proceeded alone and awaited the arrival of Sant-Sipahis. Suddenly dust arose from afar. Her face brightened with joy. Her quest for Jatha's sight grew stronger. Now she started walking on the road toward the rising dust storm. Soon she realised that this was not the Jatha of Sant- Sipahis. Rather it was the contingent of evil Turkish soldiers. Surprised, she quickly moved off the road and tried to hide herself by sitting next to a tree.

As the Turkish contingent got closer, its commander caught sight of Deep Kaur. Seeing the youthful beauty, he lost all self-control.

He commandingly asked. **"Who are you?"**

"Whoever I am. Why does it matter to you?" She answered fearlessly.

Commander's attraction grew stronger with her challenge.

He remarked softly, "**By Shehansha's (ruler's) orders, I have been deputed to keep a watch on Sikhs in this area. Since the Sikh Jatha is heading this way, I need to ascertain whether you are a Sikh.**"

"**If I were to be a Sikh, then?**"

"**Then we will have to arrest and sent you to Lahore.**" Deep Kaur heard his response.

Fearlessly, she announced, "**I am Sikh.**"

The Turk Commander was astonished by her fearlessness. But as captive of her beauty, by now, he was aroused beyond any self-control. He spoke softly and said, "**Beautiful, I am responsible for capturing Sikhs. You are a Sikh. I should arrest you, but I cannot do that. I cannot fulfil my responsibilities. For I have a heart that worships beauty and it is yours now. I am your captive.**"

Deep Kaur's face reddened with anger. She lashed out saying, "**You should be ashamed of yourself talking to me like this.**"

"**What is there to be ashamed of where hearts have met? I am yours. Accept me and I shall keep you as my Begum (wife).**" He said.

"**I am a Sikh and married. If you ever uttered anything like this again I will snatch your tongue.**"

Deep Kaur responded. By now she was shaking with anger.

"**What kind of a beauty it would be that doesn't exhibit enticing or alluring behaviour? I am impressed by your behaviour. Now don't delay anymore and let's go. What are you going to get from these wild Sikhs?**" Saying this, the commander dismounted from his horse and moved towards Deep Kaur while his contingent waited on the opposite side of the road.

As he dismounted, Deep Kaur stood up. Seeing him approach her, she challengingly said "**Beware, if you touch my body I will not spare you.**"

Insane under arousal, the commander ignored her warning and instead proceeded to hug her. Deep Kaur pulled back with lightening speed. By now she had her small kirpan in her hand. As the commander approached, she struck him in his stomach with the kirpan. A blood spring burst opened. With painful cries, he simply dropped to the ground.

By now Deshmesh's daughter had jumped into the war. As the wounded Commander sat on the ground, she viciously attacked him once again, sending his evil soul to burn in hell. Before, the Turkish soldiers could advance; she moved swiftly to take control of the commander's sword and was well-prepared for self-defence. Seeing their dying commander, the soldiers advanced shaking in anger and simultaneously attacked her. However, Deshmesh's daughter wasn't scared being out-numbered. Like a lioness, she stood fast for the challenge. She used the sword courageously (with guru ji's kirpa) and soon the two soldiers fell to the ground while several others were severely wounded. Deep Kaur too sustained deep wounds on her face and neck. Although her wounds were profusely bleeding, she kept her courage and continued fighting like a lioness. Turkish soldiers were shown resistance by the warrior princess. Far on the road, the sound of horses could be heard once again. This time the Sant-Sipahi's Jatha was approaching. As the Turkish soldiers saw the Sikh Jatha, they got scared, immediately

mounted their horses and ran for their lives. The bodies of the Commander and five of his associates were left behind, lying cold on the ground. The sight of approaching Sikh brothers filled Deep Kaur with joy. She quickly tried to move towards the road but couldn't. She had lost too much blood and thus was unable to walk. She simply fell unconscious to the ground. The Sikh Jatha saw unconscious Deep Kaur and 6 dead bodies of Turkish soldier, upon reaching the location. It did not take them long to comprehend the situation. Immediately, they spread a bed for Dashmesh's daughter, dressed her wounds and gave her medication. Then carrying her along, the Jatha proceeded to Anandpur Sahib for participating in the Dashmesh father's Dharam Yudh. Fully aware of the situation, our Dashmesh father Guru Gobind Singh Ji was strolling outside his court awaiting the arrival of this Jatha. Seeing them arrive, he joyfully advanced to receive them and asked

"Where is my daughter?"

Jatha members were confused. They did not understand the meaning of this question, since there were many Sikh women among the Jatha. Who did Guru Sahib honour with daughter's address? They could not understand.

In the meantime, Guru Sahib quickly moved towards the palki (palanquin) carrying the wounded Deep Kaur. Raising the palki curtain, he said "This is my daughter Deep Kaur. Because of such daughters my Panth shall remain in Chardi Kala

Bibi Baghel Kaur

A newlywed Hindu girl was returning along with her groom and the marriage party to the village of her in-laws when some Mughal soldiers abducted her and looted her dowry. Her groom and the members of the marriage party who were unarmed were beaten and made to flee. They complained to the Muslim chief of the area, but he did not care and said, "What does it matter if our soldiers enjoy her for a few days? I shall see that she is returned to you as soon as I find a clue of her." Her husband was disappointed and turned to the forest to meet the Sikhs and appeal to them.

In those days, Ahmad Shah Abdali invaded India again and again and the Mughal Empire at Delhi and the governor of Lahore had become very weak. Abdali looted Indian cities, forcibly took beautiful Hindu ladies with him, but the Sikhs attacked his army when he was going back to Afghanistan.

The Sikh Warriors recovered the property he was taking with him, and got the ladies, that he was forcibly taking, released. They fought a guerrilla war and slipped back into the forest before they could be caught.

The groom met some Sikhs in the forest. They consoled him and baptized him. Now he was named **Teja Singh**. One night, a party of Sikhs along with Teja Singh, attacked the same party of plunderers and taught them a lesson. Teja Singh's wife, who was in a miserable condition, was also rescued from them. She wanted to commit suicide, but was dissuaded from doing so. She was encouraged to live and was baptized. Now she was named Baghel Kaur, who wore a turban and not a scarf on her head. She always had a long sword with her. Many ladies like her lived in the wilderness near the pond of Kahnuwan in the company of the Sikhs. In the wilderness, **Baghel Kaur** and her party met a few more Sikhs known to Teja Singh. They planned to attack a patrolling party of the Muslim soldiers and snatch

their horses and arms for the newcomers. When they reached the village, they found that the soldiers were armed, but asleep. Baghel Kaur and her companions took some guns and two horses from the soldiers and left the village before the soldiers were awake. They killed only those soldiers who resisted them. Baghel Kaur and the party reached back safely and met their companions who were anxiously awaiting them. All left the pool of Kahnuwan (District Gurdaspur). They had to cross a dense forest and thorny bushes grown on the bank of the river Bias. In fact, these dense, thorny bushes served them as a fort as the Mughal soldiers were afraid of crossing them. Inside this dense forest, the Sikhs had cleared some area and lived in tents there. They lived on the ration they could bring from outside, meat of the animals they hunted, and whatever edible they could find in the forest. After a long journey, they met their companions who were there with their leader Nawab Kapur Singh. He exhorted the gathering to be ready to fight against aggression for the sake of justice. Mir Mannu was the governor of Lahore.

His minister Kaura Mal was sympathetic towards the Sikhs, but after the death of Kaura Mal, Mir Mannu turned his attention to finish the Sikhs. He was a tyrant and bent upon converting Sikhs to Islam.

He used every possible punishment to subordinate the Sikhs, who had left villages and started living in thick forests. In those days, Sikhs used to say, “Mir Mannu is our sickle and we are his grass blades. As he cuts, more than two hundred times we grow.” Abdali consulted Mir Mannu and sent a challenge to the Sikhs to come out of the forest and fight face to face. Nawab Kapur Singh accepted the challenge.

The next day, four thousand Sikhs with a few hundred Sikh ladies, including ***Baghel Kaur***, divided themselves in two parties and, riding on their horses, entered the field, fully armed, with sword and spears. They were opposed by 10,000 Pathan forces. At the end of the day, 500 Sikhs became martyrs, but the Pathans suffered a heavy loss. Second day, Baghel Kaur with a few other ladies fought so bravely and courageously that it would be remembered for ever. In the evening the Pathan army had to retreat, but in the confusion that prevailed Baghel Kaur and four other ladies were separated from the Sikh forces. These ladies reached a small village, cooked their food and slept on the ground. Turn by turn, one of them remained awake to look after the horses and the arms. They got up before daybreak, performed their morning prayer and started. Soon they found fifty enemy soldiers of a patrolling party coming towards them. Five of them proceeded towards ***Baghel Kaur*** and her party. They did not realize that they were going to face a tough enemy. They planned to capture them and marry them.

All of a sudden, Baghel Kaur came forward and cut the sword of the first soldier with her sword. In the meantime, a companion of hers injured him with her sword when he was returning to save himself from the second attack. Another soldier attacked Baghel Kaur with his spear, but her friend checked his attack with her sword and injured him. Now the injured soldiers started returning to their party to seek help.

In the mean time ***Baghel Kaur*** and her companions rode away to the thick forest to meet their companions. All the Pathan soldiers started chasing Baghel Kaur and her friends. A Sikh watchman informed the other Sikhs in the forest about the coming Pathans. At once, the Sikhs came out and killed the Pathans in a few minutes.

Three Sikhs were also killed in this fight. Sikhs persuaded Baghel Kaur and her companions to stay in the village but the brave ladies refused, wanted to stay with them, and die fighting.

Mir Mannu was a notorious bigot. He massacred Sikhs and proclaimed a reward of twenty-five rupees per Sikh head. He killed no less than thirty thousand Sikhs. He ordered that any Sikh lady found anywhere should be caught and forced to embrace Islam. Baghel Kaur wanted to save a few ladies who were still in the village and could not leave because two of them had small children. One night ***Baghel Kaur*** disguised herself and went back to her village to save the three Sikh ladies who were hiding in the house of a Muslim girl friend. She contacted them at midnight, encouraged them to accompany her early in the morning and leave for the thick forest on the other side of the river Beas. After a short nap of two hours, she along with three Sikh ladies and two children left the village at 4am. Four soldiers who were sleeping outside the village saw them and followed them to the river bank. Baghel Kaur asked the two ladies to cross the river along with their children and herself along with the third lady faced the soldiers.

She thrust her spear in the chest of the first two soldiers who came forward before they could attack her...

One of her companions tried to attack the third soldier, but his spear injured her arm before she could attack. Baghel Kaur gave her horse to her injured friend and asked her to cross the river at once.

Baghel Kaur took the horse of the injured soldier and fought against the remaining two soldiers bravely and fearlessly.

The soldiers as well as Baghel Kaur were injured and bleeding. She took courage and in the twinkling of an eye crossed the river on her horse. Now all the four ladies with two children started on their horses and soon they were out of sight of the soldiers who were chasing them. After covering a long distance the party reached the destination and met a party of the Sikhs. Plight of the Sikh ladies detained in the camps of Mir Mannu was miserable. They were tortured and kept thirsty and hungry as they refused to be converted to Islam.

Every one of them was allotted a small millstone to grind a fixed quantity of wheat. It was ordered that the children of these ladies be snatched. One soldier threw a child up in the air and the other killed him with his spear before he could touch the ground. The dead bodies of these children were cut into pieces and the ladies were garlanded with those pieces. Pieces of flesh of the children were thrust into the mouth of their mothers. ***In spite of all that, none of the ladies cried or yielded to embrace Islam once this horrible scene stunned Mir Mannu.*** When he reached the palace after visiting the camp, he did not talk to anybody. It seemed he repented. He left for hunting with only four soldiers. While he was hunting, his horse was scared, ran very fast and jumped so high that Mir Mannu could not control it. He fell down, and his feet got entangled in strip. Mir Mannu's cries further scared the horse and it ran faster. It was dragging Mir Mannu and none could stop it. Mir Mannu was badly injured and died in the forest. Mir Mannu's tragic and sudden death had emboldened the Sikhs and they were settling in their villages. A group of Sikhs, under the command of Baghel Kaur, attacked the Lahore camp at midnight, killed 25 Muslim soldiers who were unprepared, and got the captive ladies released and escorted them to a safer place. After Mir Mannu's death, his queen invited Ahmad Shah to help her and capture the Sikhs. At this time, ***Baghel Kaur*** was living in her village along with her four-year old son and her husband.

She wanted to save the ladies who were forcibly being taken to the camp. She asked her husband to take the child and leave for the forest. She herself started to rescue the ladies being taken forcibly by the Muslim soldiers. She saw one such lady who was being taken to the camp, but Baghel Kaur did not slip away.

All of a sudden, she injured with her spear the two soldiers who were taking the lady, but she was caught by their companions. Now she herself was a captive with the other ladies in the camp. Every lady in the camp was given a piece of bread. Some injured and hungry ladies were laying half-dead on the ground and their children were crying for food. ***Baghel Kaur gave her own piece of bread to the crying children and she remained hungry...***

The ladies in the camp were whipped, insulted, and taunted by the soldiers so that they might embrace Islam to get rid of this hell. Baghel Kaur protested against ill treatment, but she was ordered to grind wheat for the whole night without rest. At midnight, the camp-in-charge sent for Baghel Kaur, but she refused to move out. The drunken soldier caught her by the wrist and dragged her. She took courage and slapped the soldier. She took his sword, which was tied to his belt, and injured him. The other ladies came to her help and the soldier had to run away. In the morning, all the ladies were assembled at one place, and the camp-in-charge told them that anyone who agreed to marry a soldier of her choice would be set free and allowed to lead a happy and prosperous life. ***Baghel Kaur stood up and said that none would agree to be converted as their own religion was dear to them and they would die rather than lead an immoral life of a coward. Her bold and frank talk made the camp commander speechless.***

She was taken to a pillar so that her hands should be tied and then whipped to death. On her way to the pillar, she took courage, pushed the soldier who was taking her to the pillar and snatched his sword. Now the whole camp was surrounded by the other soldiers and many ladies were murdered. Baghel Kaur fought bravely, but was killed by armed soldiers who were surrounding her. Next day, about 8000 Sikhs attacked the camp at midnight, killed the camp commander and freed the captive ladies.

The Final Shaheed of Chamkaur Sahib From "Adarshak Singhnia" by Karam Singh

In the battle of Chamkaur Sahib, Guru Gobind Singh jee and 40 starving Singhs fought against the Mughal army. The battle, which took place in Chamkaur Sahib's mud fort, lasted 72 hours and saw the loss of many Mughal soldiers, and also 36 of Guru Gobind Singh jee's companions along with the two elder Sahibzaadey (princes). Fighting an army of hundreds of thousands, Guru Gobind Singh jee gave an exhibition of his battle skills. Guru jee, following the orders of the Panth Khalsa (in the form of the Panj Pyaare) left the fort along with Bhai Daya Singh jee, Bhai Maan Singh jee, and one other Singh, after giving his clothes to Bhai Sangat Singh jee to wear. Only Bhai Sangat Singh jee and Bhai Sant Singh jee fought the battle to its end. They too were martyred. Seeing Guru jee's clothes on Bhai Sangat Singh jee, the Mughals were ecstatic. Taking him to be Guru Gobind Singh they cut off his head and took it to Delhi.

In every village it was announced that Guru Gobind Singh had been killed. "Look here is his chopped off head! His family is also finished. His two sons were killed in the battle and the two younger ones will also die abandoned. The revolution has been crushed. No one should go to the Chamkaur Fort. No one should cremate the dead Singhs."

A tight cordon was put around the Fort. As the soldiers were going from village to village making their announcement, the people were retreating in terror into their homes. However, in village Khroond, a daughter of Guru Gobind Singh jee, Bibi Harsharan Kaur, asked for her mother's permission to perform the final rites for the Shaheeds (martyrs). Her old mother replied, "It is total darkness outside and soldiers are everywhere around the fort, how will you even go near?"

Hearing this, Kalgeedhar's lioness daughter replied with resolve "I will avoid the soldiers and perform the cremation, and if need be, I'll fight and die."

The mother gave her courage and hugged her daughter, and then explained the maryada (tradition) to follow for the cremation. After performing Ardaas, Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee left for the Chamkaur Fort.

The battlefield, which saw iron smashing against iron, the bellows of elephants, the trotting of hooves, and calls of "Kill! Capture!" was now totally silent and enveloped in complete darkness. In such a situation, the 16 year old girl, Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee, avoided the guards and arrived at the Fort. She saw that bodies were laying everywhere and that distinguishing between Sikh and Mughal was very difficult. She still had faith and began to find arms with kaRas (iron bangles) and torsos with kachheras (Sikh undergarment) and heads with long kesh (unshorn hair). As she found a body, she would wipe the face of every shaheed (martyr). Both Sahibzaadey and about 30 shaheeds were found and then she began to collect wood. Fearing the approaching light of dawn, Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee worked very quickly and soon prepared a pyre. She then lit the fire.

Seeing the rising flames, the guards were shocked and advanced towards the pyre. Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee was seen in the light of the flames sitting beside the pyre. She was quietly reciting Keertan Sohilaa (prayer said at bedtime and funerals). The guards were shocked and confused as to how a lone woman could come into the fort on such a dark night. The guards asked in a loud voice, "Who are you?!"

Bibi jee: I am the daughter of Guru Gobind Singh jee.

Officer: What are you doing here?

Bibi jee: I am cremating my martyred brothers.

Officer: Don't you know about the order that coming here is a crime?

Bibi jee: I know it.

Officer: Then why have you disobeyed that order?

Bibi jee: The orders of a false king do not stand before the orders of the Sache Paatshaah (True King)

Officer: Meaning?

Bibi jee: Meaning that I have respect for the Singhs in my heart and with the Guru's grace I have done my duty. I don't care about your King's orders.

Hearing such stern answers from Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee, the infuriated Mughal soldiers attempted to capture her and attacked. Bibi jee grabbed her kirpaan (sword) and fought back with determination. After killing and maiming many soldiers, Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee was injured and fell to the ground. The soldiers picked Bibi Harsharan Kaur up and threw her into the pyre, burning her alive.

The next day the cordon around the Fort was lifted because it was clear that the Sahibzaadey and most of the Shaheed Singhs had been cremated. The ancestors of the Phulkiaan family, Rama and Triloka, then cremated whichever Singhs remained. The story of Bibi Harsharan Kaur jee reached Guru Gobind Singh jee Mahaaraaj in Talvande Sabo (Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib).

Upon hearing of her daughter's martyrdom, the old mother thanked Akaal Purakh. She said, "My daughter has proven herself worthy." The story of the cremation of the Chamkaur Sahib Shaheeds will forever serve as a glowing star of inspiration for all Singhs and Singhnees.

Warrior Bibi Sharanagat Kaur

Sharanagat Kaur Ji was born in a Hindu Family in the Pathan, located west of Punjab. The area was under the Sikh Raj, by General Hari Singh Nalwa. To completely understand how Sharanagat Kaur Ji became a courageous Daughter of Khalsa, we need to trace back to her wedding day. After a successful wedding ceremony, Bibi Ji and her groom, with the wedding party, travelled to their village. On the way to her in-laws home, Bibi Ji and her newly husband were attacked by dacoits. The dacoits ordered all the people to surrender their cash and valuables. The helpless party had no choice; they were not carrying any weapons, and did not have the means to fight back. They gave up everything; all the valuables and cash that they were carrying on that special day were taken away from them by the dacoits. But that was not the worse part; the dacoits demanded that beautiful bride to come with them...

On her wedding day, Bibi Ji was kidnapped by dacoits, while others stood there and watched, with no strength at all to fight back. Her husband was upset, and did not know what to do. Right after the incident, he went straight to General Nalwa, the governor of the Pathan province. Bibi Ji's husband told the General exactly what had happened that awful day. The General listened closely, however he was distracted while sitting in his court. He was listening to what Bibi Ji's husband was saying, but while he was listening he observed two individuals behaving suspiciously near the door. The General suspected the individuals to be friends of the dacoits. What happened next was surprising. After the husband finished his story, General ordered out loud, for the two individuals who he suspected were dacoits to hear, "Put this man in Prison. He did not care to protect a helpless woman, who was his own wife." The Husband was shocked"

It turned out that the two individuals that the General did suspect were associates of the dacoits. When they heard that the General order this man to be imprisoned they were quite pleased. They could not hide their excitement; for them they were pleased, they did not have to go search the hide-outs of the dacoits.

Once the two suspects left, the General secretly ordered ten Sikh horsemen to take Bibi Ji's husband with them, and follow the two suspected individuals.

The General was accurate when he suspected the two individuals of the dacoits. Soon after the individuals received the orders from the General that Bibi Ji's husband would be imprisoned they went straight to dacoit's hide-out. The men reported that the General was angry with the cowardly behaviour of the groom; the associates of the dacoits assumed the whole ordeal would be forgotten. As they discussed more about the General reaction to the situation, they became happier. But the joyful atmosphere did not last for long. Soon, the ten Sikh soldiers that General ordered to follow the two suspected individuals surrounded the dacoits and ordered them to put their hands up. The dacoits were shocked, dumbfounded, and upset.

Bibi Ji (the beautiful bride) was rescued, and brought before the General. Once he got a glimpse of Bibi Ji, he asked her *"What is your name?"* She replied, *"I am nobody. I would have been dead had you not saved my life. Now I am under your 'sharan' (protection)"*. The word 'sharan' voluntarily coming out of the mouth of a helpless, scared woman gave her the popular name Sharanagat Kaur. The General was pleased with Bibi Ji's response.

When the husband received notice that his bride was saved he came running to the General's court. Once he reunited with his wife, the General returned everything, including the valuables and cash. The General with great gratitude asked that, the newly couple should go home. However, Bibi Ji, and her husband, begged the General to allow them to stay with him.

They begged to become part of the Khalsa Panth. Both expressed how they wanted to enjoy the honour of living as Sikhs, and dying as Sikhs. They were quite firm about becoming Guru Ji's Sikhs, the Children of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji, and Warriors of the Khalsa Panth. The General was excited, and agreed. He could not refuse two individuals who wanted to become Guru Ji's Sikhs. Bibi Ji and Husband in the mean time, shaaked Amrit, and were allowed to stay with the General.

While his visit to Jamrod Fort, Hari Singh Nalwa fell seriously ill. The area was surrounded with the Pathan population unfriendly towards him. Knowing that the General was sick and was not in any physical condition to engage in battle, they all rebelled against his rule.

To send the message that he was hale and hearty, the General, bravely, went up to the upper story of the fort from where he could be seen by all the people outside. Seeing him moving about on the fort, the rebels retreated quickly.

However, one of them aimed his gun at him and shot him. Unfortunately, the General was hit and died of the bullet wound.

The news of the General's death was shocking. The situation in the fort became very tense, and everyone was depressed when realizing the General was dead, and there was no one else to replace his bravery, his dedication, and his intelligence.

Like a true Sikh woman, Bibi Ji, kept her composure. She did not allow herself to cry over a death of the General. She knew, the General was in the Darshan of Akal Purak, and no one should be upset.

She tried to help those around her, Bibi Ji, thought for some time and said, *"This is not the time to feel worried or scared. Let us face this critical moment, with courage and confidence. I have a plan to save us from the rebels"*. Her plan was thoughtful, and dangerous. A plan, that General surely would have been proud of. Bibi Ji decided to leave the fort. To do this, she tied a rope on the back of the fort, and slid down to the ground. She disguised herself as a Pathan woman. Once she did this, she headed towards Peshawar, to inform the army there about the situation taking place in their village.

Her journey was difficult. Bibi Ji needed to be strong, and smart in order to fight against the obstacles she faced while travelling to Peshawar. She had to travel through a hilly route that covered twenty miles, swarming with Pathan rebels. There were wild animals in the forest through which she had to walk at night, and she could easily become their prey. It was a very risky journey. It looked impossible for a woman to reach Peshawar alive under those conditions and give the sad news to the army and request their help.

The brave, daring, and young Sikh Woman did reach there by walking and running through dense forest the whole night. Without losing any time, she asked the best horsemen to get ready quickly and ride their horses. The Sikh soldiers were under the guidance of Bibi Sharanagat Kaur, they travelled as fast as they could to reach Lahore.

They covered their long arduous journey quickly and reported the episode to Maharaja Ranjeet Singh. After hearing the death of a *Great General who raised the honour of the Khalsa army to the skies*, he felt very sad. Assessing the situation to be critical, he himself left for Peshawar. Knowing that the Maharaja had personally come to punish the rebels, the Pathans immediately surrendered without fighting and promised to remain friendly thereafter.

Nirbhai Kaur

Nirbhai kaur was a fearless and baptized girl of 22. Her father, Jangbahadar Singh, head of the army of Sodhi Wadbhag Singh, had taught her horse riding and use of arms. She was a true saint soldier of Guru Gobind Singh Ji Maharaj.

...She was armed whenever she left the house...

She was in the prime of her youth, about 6 feet tall having a well built body and a bright face. She was religious minded and never missed her daily prayers. She also helped her mother in household affairs. She was the only daughter of her parents who loved her a lot. Her girl friends were afraid of Afghan soldiers, but she always told them that they could not live like cowards and they would have to face these tyrant invaders. Once she was returning late at night from the house of a girl friend where she had gone to participate in a singing party held before a marriage. On her way back, she met two drunken Pathan soldiers who ordered her to stop. **Before stopping, she drew her sword and cut the right arm of the soldier who stepped towards her. Seeing this, the second soldier ran away.** Her sword was still red when she reached home. Her father praised her for her bravery and presence of mind.

Sodhi Wadbhag Singh was the chief of the territory of Kartarpur, near Jullundhar and proprietor of land worth a lot of revenue. He was also a respectable religious guide of the Sikhs and in charge of Gurdwara Tham Sahib, built by the **Fifth Master, Guru Arjan Dev Ji**. Sodhi was informed by Janhan Khan, commander-in-chief at Lahore that an Afghan soldier, who was coming from Sirhind to Lahore, was killed by somebody in the territory of Kartarpur. He compelled Sodhi to produce the culprit at once. Sodhi could not find the culprit. Jahan Khan ordered the governor of Jullunder to finish Sodhi Wadbhag Singh and loot Kartarpur after killing all those who refused to embrace Islam. In fact, Jahan Khan was under instruction from Abdli to crush the Sikhs as they always harassed him when he returned after looting Delhi. The governor of Jullunder, with a large force, attacked Kartarpur at midnight and burnt most of the city. Sodhi, who had a small army, was caught and shut in a room. Even the 250 years-old sacred Gurdwara, Tham Sahib, was not spared and burnt to ashes. In the meantime, some soldiers brought four young girls and presented to the commander as a gift.

Their clothes were torn. It seemed that they had fought with the soldiers to save themselves. The soldiers reported that one of the girls, whose hands were red with blood, had killed two soldiers and was caught after a great struggle. The lustful and sexual commander praised the beauty of the girls. He said to one of them who seemed very angry, "What is your name?" He also tried to touch her cheeks. She thundered and asked him to keep away his hand. She told him that her name was **Death of the Enemy**, who was standing in front of her.

A soldier admonished her to behave if she wanted to live. She fearlessly replied that the Death did not want to live. **...The governor was surprised to hear that these Sikh girls called themselves Daughters of Death and they could use arms and kill a person to save herself...** He ordered that all the four be taken to his camp as he would like to enjoy their company at night.

The girls were helpless as they had been unarmed. The governor started towards the city to inspect the destruction, massacre of the citizens, and the property looted. There were a number of dead bodies. Some persons were being thrown in the fire. At the same time, a soldier came on a horse and informed the governor that Sodhi, along with his head of the army, had escaped on horseback. The governor and some soldiers chased Sodhi, but they failed to catch him. When they were coming back, they saw one young girl, taking another young girl on her horse, leaving the camp. Her horse was running so fast that the soldiers sent to chase her failed to trace her. The governor saw that one of the soldiers deputed to watch the girls was laying dead at the door of the camp and the other was bleeding profusely.

The bleeding soldier said to the commander, ***“One of the girls who told that her name was Death jumped over the soldier, snatched his sword, and killed him in the twinkling of an eye. When I went to catch her, I was also injured. The other soldiers were away at a distance. When they came to our rescue, the girl had put another newlywed girl on one of our horses and had disappeared.”***

It was Nirbhai Kaur who after killing a soldier and injuring another had taken with her one of her girl friends. On her way, Nirbhai Kaur met her fiancé, Harnam Singh, a young baptized Sikh of twenty-four. She told him the whole story and asked for help to rescue her remaining two friends from the chief. He told her that her father had left with Sodhi Wadbhag Singh and her mother was burnt alive when her house was set on fire by the invading soldiers.

She was red with rage on hearing all this and made up her mind to take revenge for all the atrocities. At midnight, she and her fiancé turned their horses towards the camp. Reaching there, they found that all the watchmen were enjoying a sound sleep. They had eaten to their fill and drank a lot to celebrate their victory. She and her fiancé left the horses and her girlfriend at a distance from the camp and walked towards the camp. As they reached near the camp, they heard the cries of a girl. Harnam Singh tore the cotton wall of the camp with his sword and they entered the camp from the back. They saw that the chief was throwing the girl on his bed and she was struggling to save herself.

At once, Nirbhai Kaur cut the arm of the chief with her sword and, before he could come to his senses, she cut his head and separated it from his body. Another girl was lying unconscious. Harnam Singh carried her and Nirbhai Kaur put the whole camp on fire with the help of the camp lamp. Now all the soldiers were awake and there was confusion everywhere. Fire was spreading to the other camps and everyone was trying to save himself. Now all the five rode on horses and disappeared in the thick forest before they could be chased.

They took rest for a few hours under a tree. At daybreak, they cooked whatever vegetables they could find in the fields and saved themselves from hunger.

Nirbhai Kaur's girl friends wanted to accompany them, as they were afraid that their families would not accept them because they had spent some time with the chief. They started towards the hills, as they were sure that other Sikhs would be there. At Anandpur, they met Sodhi Wadbhag Singh and Jang Bahadur Singh. Here the girl friends of **Nirbhai Kaur** were baptized to fulfill their desire. Adina Beg, ex-chief of Jullunder, had revolted against Jahan Khan, the present chief, and was passing his time in those hills. He told Sodhi Wadbhag Singh that he was ready to attack Jullunder if the Sikhs agreed to help him. Sodhi Wadbhag Singh approached the Sikh chief, Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, who agreed to the proposal. Now a huge force of Adina Beg, with the help of the Sikh forces, attacked Jullunder. The Jullunder chief gathered a large force and ammunition, but was defeated. Jullunder was destroyed and Nirbhai Kaur's desire of taking revenge was fulfilled. It all happened in December 1757.

Shaheed Bibi BalBir Kaur Ji

At the age of 22 Bibi Balbir Kaur along with her two year old son in her arms; embraced martyrdom at the hands of British troops (1924)..... Dhan Guru Dhan Guru Pyarai !!!

In this world people die every day, but none knows how to die. Whosoever dies, let them die such a death that they may not have to die again.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji -Ang 1366

The Akali movement (1892-1917) had rejuvenated a new life among GurSikhs. Since the Sikh Raj period, this was the first time GurSikhs had asserted their religious independence and initiated non-violent efforts to seek control of their Gurdwaras. The bloody incident of Nankana Sahib and Guru-Kae-Bagh added fuel to the fire and served to strengthen the movement. As a result, the Sikhs raised slogans of freedom along with slogans for the independence of their Gurdwaras. Unfortunately, the level of commitment and self-sacrifice of Sikhs deeply disturbed the British. They sensed a potential threat to their control from this small community of lions. Expectedly, the British directed their terror machinery against the Sikhs. Along with Akalis, the akali sympathizers also troubled the British Psyche. As a result, the British forces arrested and confined all Akali sympathizers in the jails.

The Maharaja of Nabha, Ripudaman Singh, was an independent minded ruler. He never considered himself disjoint from his community. When Guru Khalsa Panth observed the eve of Nankana Sahib Martyrdom, he too conducted Akhand Path of Sri Guru Granth Sahib in Nabha and wore black turban to participate in this Panthic observance. Subsequently, he visited Harimandir Sahib at Amritsar and consulted with Akali leaders who were outside the jails. Maharaja's activities deeply troubled the British. They could not tolerate such activities as they smelled some sort of a rebellion through such participation. The British action was swift. They initiated legal steps to seize control of Nabha rule and expelled Maharaja Ripudaman Singh.

The news of Maharaja Ripudaman Singh's expulsion spread through Guru Khalsa Panth like a lightening rod. It shook the very core of Sikh psyche. Such excesses by the British became unbearable for the Sikhs and the whole Sikh nation galvanized to fight against this injustice. The Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandhak Committee (SGPC), working in collaboration with the Shiromani Akali Dal, conducted Akhand Paths at various places to openly express their outrage at this injustice and demanded the reinstatement of Maharaja. Sikhs initiated an Akhand Paath of Sri Guru Granth Sahib at the Jaito Gurdwara as well to express their outrage against this injustice. Unfortunately, it was not allowed to be completed. The agents of the British Empire, operating under British instructions, dragged and arrested the Singh Sahib who was reciting the Paath. As a result, the Akhand Paath was forcibly interrupted.

This incident was equivalent of pouring salt over open Sikh wounds. The expulsion of Maharaja was a political affair that the Panth was still struggling to grapple with. It hadn't yet resolved on how to best deal with this issue when the forced interruption of Akhand Paath served a deep blow from the rulers to the Sikhs religious sentiments. This was an open challenge to Guru Khalsa Panth's freedom and honour. Akali leaders decided to accept this challenge. They immediately announced a non-violent morcha for the resumption and completion of the interrupted Akhand Paath, this happened in 1924. Thousands of GurSikh Singhs, Singhnia, children, and elders started flocking in Amritsar ready to shed their lives for this religious battle. They were all eager to reach Jaito. However, the Akali committee decided to send a Jatha of 500 GurSikhs. The remaining GurSikhs were asked to await the schedule for the next Jatha. Everyone was eager to proceed to Jaito, yet! They had to accept their Jathedar's decision. Under the echoes of Jaekara, "Jo Bolay So Nihal, Sat Sri Akal," this Jatha left Amritsar after having sought the Hukam from Sri Akal Takhat and pledged to remain non-violent. Thousands of supporters were present on this occasion.

The non-violent march of this Jatha was a unique event for the whole world. Organized in rows of four, these Saint-Soldiers preceded bare-foot from Amritsar while reciting "Satnaam WaheGuru." Soon they reached their first rest-stop. The dedication and volunteer sewa of the local Sikhs testified to the whole world that the Sikh nation not only understood non-violence

and how to die but how to honour its martyrs.

Bibi Balbir Kaur was asked by the Jathedar to return, her eyes were filled with tears. She said, "Veer! Do not stop me from serving the living martyrs of Guru Gobind Singh. Sewa is the only essence of this life. Beside we never know when death will come upon us. I plead for permission to continue for Guru's sake. Let me proceed." Jathedar could not break her heart. He reluctantly gave permission, especially when faced with her utter display of self-sacrifice.

Balbir Kaur was 22 years old, full of youth and utterly beautiful. Guru's faith and feelings of selfless service for humanity had generated such a glow on her face that she seemed like the embodiment of purity. She was not alone. She was accompanied by her two year old beautiful son. The playful happy face of this child was not only Balbir Kaur's joy but the source of amusement for the whole Jatha. He played with everyone in the Jatha along the way.

The journey was nearing completion. Jatha prepared to depart from its final rest-stop. Jathedar stood on a high spot and pleaded for the return of the accompanying congregation. British forces had dug-in with machine gun. This information had previously reached the Jatha. Jathedar did not hide this information from anyone. He said, "With Guru's blessing, a martyr's mela is being organized. However, only those GurSikhs, who have Sri Akal Takhat's Hukam, should proceed further. Others should return and await their turn."

The congregation stopped and let the Jatha proceed. However, not everyone obeyed the Jathedar's instructions. Several GurSikhs, eager to seek the martyrdom, found hidden routes parallel to the Jatha's established route. They advanced in hiding, with the view that when the whole program of martyrdom is unveiled they too will participate to seek martyrdom. However, Bibi Balbir Kaur did not seek any hidden routes. She continued marching! With her brothers while her son enjoyed the sight, simply watching people on either side.

When Jathedar learned of Balbir Kaur's continued march with the Jatha, he left his leading position and caught up with her. "Bibi, there is potential of firing ahead. You should not continue any further." Jathedar pleaded. "My Veer! Do not stop me. My quest for sewa has not been quenched yet. Allow me to enjoy this sewa. You tell me of the dangers from the potential firing ahead? Five hundred Veers are with me. Since they are continuing for sure death why shouldn't they be accompanied by a Bahan (sister)? I too have taken Gurus Amrit. I shall consider myself blessed if I too could accept martyrdom along with my brothers and reach Guru Gobind Singh's court." Balbir Kaur again pleaded with tears in her eyes. "But" Jathedar was about to say something when he was interrupted by Balbir Kaur saying, "My child, this is what you wanted to point out. He too is Guru's blessing. If he too is to serve the Panth, what greater deeds could be beyond this?" Saying this, Balbir Kaur again hugged her child who had a radiant glow on his face.

Jathedar pressured Balbir Kaur to return. Others pressured her too, but she did not budge from her decision to continue her march to death with her brothers. She insisted that the "non-inclusion of a Bahan along with 500 Veers in the pending martyrdom is an insult to the brave daughters of Tenth Guru. How could the Guru, whose amrit turned women into Singhnia, who bestowed equality to women, tolerate that not even a single daughter participate in his holy war?" This is sacrilegious that Balbir Kaur simply could not allow.

The power of her persuasive arguments forced her brothers to accept her position. Even the Jathedar had to bow against her spirit of sacrifice and courage. Who so ever talked with her was perplexed and could not raise a convincing counter argument. Jathedar having been forced to accept her decision, returned to his lead position in the march. Guru Khalsa's Kesri flag was freely fluttering in the winds. Under the guidance of their deeply held faith in Sri Guru Granth Sahib and the command of their Jathedar, the brave force of Sant-Sipahis marched towards the Jaito Gurdwara. They were chanting "Satnaam WaheGuru." Every GurSikh in the Jatha was projecting calmness.

People of all religions welcomed the Jatha all along of the way from Amritsar to Jaito, because of their participation in this religious task. They were served with abundant amounts milk, kheer (milk and rice pudding) and other things. Flowers were showered upon these living martyrs along the way. Thousands of rupees were donated.

The British troops awaited the Jatha and opened fire on them. They showered them with rain of bullets. Guru's non-violent force was prepared for such a welcome. They accepted this welcome with "Satnaam Sri WaheGuru's" Hukam and continued the sweet walk towards their goal without any interruptions. Many Veers fell to the ground but would rise immediately to continue their march. The bullets would hit their chest only to fall again. With courage they would either rise again or accept death to reach the Kalgidhar father's lap.

Martyrdom was being openly served by now. It was the same serving that Balbir Kaur had insisted to reach and accept. Let us focus our attention on her condition. She continued her march while hugging her child close. She embraced the rain of bullets that she had eagerly awaited. By now her face was glowing with some unique brightness.

Suddenly, she was hit by a bullet in her forehead. A blood spring burst open. Her whole face was covered with blood, eyes were covered with blood. However, this did not affect her march. She continued with the chanting of "Satnaam WaheGuru" with her son in her arms.

Suddenly another bullet hit Balbir Kaur's child. The bullet pierced the child through his ear and then hit Balbir Kaur's chest. The child became shaheed immediately and proceeded to the Guru's

court. Balbir Kaur kissed his forehead and placed his body with the other martyrs saying "WaheGuru look after your amanat (temporarily entrusted to me for safe custody)." However, she did not stop. Her face had turned yellow from the loss of blood. She had no strength left to continue. Her walk was wobbly by now, yet her heart's quest had not been quenched. Chanting the tune of "Satnaam WaheGuru," she kept her pace with others. The bullets had not stopped raining. They continued showering as if their thirst for blood had not yet mellowed.

Another bullet came hissing her way. It hit straight in Balbir Kaur's chest, pierced her body and left from the other side. This bullet was the message of death, the one Balbir Kaur had been eagerly awaiting. With this bullet, Bibi Balbir Kaur fell to the ground and embraced martyrdom. Her soul left to join her child in Kalgidhar Father's protection. Her deepest quest was finally fulfilled. Her blood filled face still exhibited peace and dancing valour.

WAheguru Ji ka khalsa, Waheguru Ji ki Fateh

Shaheedi-Bibi Prem Kaur Ji

The green Thaeri Hills were soaked in blood. The powerful Pathan Army defended the hill top against a small troop of fearless Akalee soldiers. The Pathan Army heavily outnumbered the bravest battalion of the Khalsa Army, but these warrior lions of Guru Gobind Singh Ji did not lose faith. United, like the waves in the ocean, by their deep blue battle-dress and turbans, they fought against all the odds and faced the rain of enemy bullets, stones, and arrows. Hacking their way through the treacherous terrain, they hammered their way up the hill. Time was running out for the Akalees, Maharaja Ranjit Singh hadn't arrived with reinforcements whereas the Pathans had won the support of thousands of local Muslims by distributing pamphlets (containing propaganda) that declared this battle as a war against Islam - Jihad.

The Akalees belonged to Akal, the Immortal God, and with Akal on their side who should they be afraid of? Being outnumbered didn't scare them, Guu Gobind Singh Jee had transformed them with his `khanda-batta da amrit' - (the initiation amrit-nectar prepared in the indestructible iron batta-bowl and stirred by the most awesome of weapons - the double-edged Khanda sword.) The words of their Guru father rang in their ears `I will make one fight against 125,000, then and only then can I be called Gobind Singh!' The Akalees belonged to Akal, they fought for their Guru's honour and their only hope in life was to die fighting courageously on the battle-field.

The future of the Sikh Empire, the Khalsa Raaj, depended on this battle. The Akalees marched forward led by the courageous warrior Akalee Phoola Singh, the sun reflected like bolts of lightning from the sharp bladed discus weapons going around his mountain peaked turban. Raising his sword his thundering voice gave power to the battle cry jaekara - `JO BAWLEH SO NIHAL.', (Whoever speaks it Will be Joyous.). Every single Akalee Lion roared the response `SAT SREE AKAL' (Akal Is True!). The Akalee's spirits rose, new life was injected into them with each jaekara. They faced the Pathans with rejuvenated spirits, just seeing the fire in the Akalee's eyes was enough to send the Pathans running in all directions.

Advancing into an almost deserted battlefield the Akalees had captured the hill top against all the odds. But then, from out of nowhere, bullets and arrows started raining down on the Akalees, the Pathans had hidden in hill-caves and now charged out. Surrounding the Akalees they bombarded them with bullets and arrows. Akalee Phoola Singh took a bullet in the chest and the mighty lion fell. The great warrior Karnail Singh Bania also fell wounded by another bullet. The Akalees wanted to die fighting, but seeing their leader's serious condition they decided it was wiser to retreat. The Pathans chased them down to the foothills.

The wounded were carried for about a mile, they marched passed their ammunition depot and reached the camp hospital. A few young Khalsa women busily nursed the wounded lions. Looking towards the hill they saw the enemy forces charging down like an avalanche. The Khalsa nurses along with the remaining Akalee Warriors, gathered their wounded and once again retreated to a safer location. The Pathans were exhilarated by the fact that victory was almost in their ruthless hands. They marched triumphantly towards the deserted Akalee Camp with the Islamic battle cry `Allah Hu Akbar' (God is Great). Reaching the undefended depot they desperately needed to find a mountain load of ammunition. Most of their army didn't have rifles and without them they knew they stood no chance against the Khalsa Army re-enforcements that were rapidly riding to the battle-scene. On finding thousands of rifles, their joy had no bounds and the skies reverberated with their war cries - `Allah Hu Akbar'.

Each soldier eagerly seized a weapon, but their hearts sunk down to the lowest depths of hell when they realised there were no bullets. Searching frantically they ripped apart every storage tent and overturned every stack of crates, like thirsty men in the desert they ran in all directions looking for even a tiny clue as to where the metal messengers of death could be, finally they located crate after crate full to the brim with the finest bullets stuffed full of gunpowder. Once again their joy had no bounds and the valleys echoed with `Allah Hu Akbar'. Surrounded by a sea of ammunition the Pathan Army danced like drunken men waving their new found guns in the air. Without warning, an incredible explosion suddenly shocked the sky and shook the mountains. Flames shot up hundreds of feet into the sky, like

an erupting volcano spewing out its insides. Bodies went flying in all directions like fragile rag dolls. Within a blink of an eye, the Pathans dancing heaven had turned them into black logs of charcoal feeding the flames of hell on earth.

By now, the `Lion Of Punjab -Sher-e- Punjab', Maharaja Ranjit Singh, had crossed the Attock river and appeared on the horizon like the light of the rising sun after a dark and stormy night, the rays of hope reached out in all directions in the form of Khalsa Warrior after Khalsa Warrior. Whether riding on horseback or marching on foot, each battalion was headed by the flag bearers waving the Khalsa flags high in the sky. They whispered `Waheguru, Waheguru' with each breath, their secret power given to them when they were blessed with `khanda-batta-da-amrit'. General Hari Singh Naluwa commanded them and they rode like the wind, attacking the remaining Pathans with so much power that they ran for their lives like headless chickens. The Khalsa Army claimed complete control of the battlefield. The skies echoed with the battle cry jaekara `JO BAWLEH SO NIHAL..', (Whoever speaks it Will be Joyous..). Every single Khalsa Lion roared the response `SAT SREE AKAL' (Akal Is True!).

Maharaja Ranjit Singh and General Hari Singh Naluwa looked around at the site of death and destruction, smoke was still emitting from burning crates and bodies. The Akalee's told Maharaja Ranjit Singh that by some miracle Guru Gobind Singh jee himself had caused the explosion. They all knew that they would have suffered a total wipe-out against a fanatical Pathan Army on a religious Jihad armed to the teeth with guns and bullets. As they wandered around what used to be the camp, Maharaja Ranjit Singh noticed something, quickly dashing to the outskirts he kneeled down. The others followed him and they congregated around the dead body of a fair, innocent, young khalsa woman. She was lying face down on the ground less than 50 feet from the depot and away from the bodies of the Pathans. In her hand she was still tightly clutching a fire-torch! It was the head nurse, Bibi Prem Kaur. This brave lioness daughter of Guru Gobind Singh Jee had given up her life to save the Khalsa Army from a humiliating defeat. While the other nurses retreated with the wounded Akalees, she had secretly gone to the depot and hidden near the bullet storage. Lighting the ammunition, the blast had blown her body away from the dead Pathans, as if to protect her innocence and honour her sacrifice. This scene deeply moved Maharaja Ranjit Singh and his eyes were flooding with tears. Addressing her as his daughter, he gently raised her head onto his lap and tenderly wiped her face with his damp handkerchief.

The Khalsa warriors witnessed these scenes with tears rolling down their cheeks, Bibi Prem Kaur had sacrificed her own life so that her brothers would be saved. At her funeral the Khalsa Army band played on and the cannons fired in continuous salute as Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Officers carried her coffin in a royal procession. Every Khalsa Warrior felt Bibi Prem Kaur's eternal love for Guru

Gobind Singh Jee , with their heads bowed low, they said great, truly great is our father Guru Gobind Singh Jee. The `khanda-batta-da-amrit' that Guru Gobind Singh jee used to transform the sparrows into hawks, jackals into lions, cowards into Khalsa, had now enabled Bibi Prem Kaur to make the ultimate selfless sacrifice. She was now a martyr that the Khalsa would never forget. By the Guru's infinite and unparalleled grace and kindness she had single-handedly overturned a sure defeat for the Khalsa into an overwhelming victory.

Warrior Princess Bibi Bhag Kaur Jee aka Mai Bhago

In her childhood, Mai Bhag Kaur was called Bhag Bhari, which means “fortunate”. On being baptized, she was named Bhag Kaur. In the Sikh history, she is known as Mai Bhago. She was born in a well known village, Jhabal, near Amritsar. She was the daughter of Malo Shah, son of Bhai Pare Shah. Her grandfather and Pare Shah’s brother, Bhai Langaha, had served under Guru Arjan Dev Ji and Guru Hargobind Ji. Bhai Langaha had helped Guru Arjan Dev Ji in the construction of Harmander Sahib Ji and was one of the five Sikhs who accompanied Guru Arjan Dev Ji when he went to Lahore for martyrdom. It shows her two generations were closely involved with the Sikh Gurus. As a young girl she had heard about the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev Ji, the wars of Guru Hargobind Ji, injustice done to the Sikhs and their harassment by the Mughal army these left a deep impression on her tender mind. Sad news of the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji and his companions —Bhai Dayala, Bhai Mati Das, and Bhai Sati Das – touched her heart. She made up her mind to stop such injustice and violence against the Sikhs. She had inherited from her family ideals of bravery and courage. Faith, truth, and fearlessness were her ornaments. She had a well built body and looked like a soldier. She, along with her family, visited Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji twice. She also visited Anandpur with her father in 1699 when Guru Gobind Singh Ji created the Khalsa and was baptized along with other members of her family.

She wanted to stay there to learn the martial arts and become a saint soldier, but her father brought her back. However, she longed to join the Sikh army and started learning the art of warfare and horse riding from her father. She made a top knot of her head hair and covered it with a small turban. She had a spear in one hand, sword in the other, a shield on her shoulders and other small arms in her belt. She had fiery eyes on her bright face. In the beginning she aimed at small bushes outside the village with her small spear. Then she started piercing trees with her spear and learnt horse riding. Soon she became a staunch saint soldier. She was married to Bhai Nidhan Singh of village Patti near Amritsar.

She came to know that some Sikhs of her area had deserted Guru Gobind Singh ji at Anandpur Sahib and renounced his guruship in writing. The Mughals had betrayed Guru Gobind Singh ji and the governor of Sirhind was planning a big attack on Guru Gobind Singh ji at village Dina where he was staying after the Battle of Chamkaur sahib. She could not hold herself, as she was zealous to serve the Guru. Boiling with rage, and moved by love for the Guru, she, the great heroine, said to her husband, “Guard up your lions and let us lay down our lives for the Guru who has sacrificed his father, mother and four sons for the Sikh faith. We must not sit idle when innocent lives are being bricked alive.” She was determined to wipe out the badge of infamy from the face of her area. She, along with her husband, went from village to village and told the people the reality of deserters to them. Ladies of the deserters did not talk to them when they came back, cursed and taunted them. These ladies dressed themselves as soldiers and wanted to proceed with Mai Bhago. She said to the deserters, “Guru Ji has sacrificed his family and comforts for our freedom. We must stand up and protect our rights and faith. We should not hide ourselves like cowards. Everybody has to die. Why not die like a brave person? If you don’t join me, I shall take a party of women and die for the Guru.” She exhorted the ladies not to allow the deserters in their houses. Her sharp and frank words pricked the conscience of the deserters and awakened their souls. She challenged their vanity and made them regret. She displayed such spirit and courage. **They, along with their leader, Mahan Singh, marched to help the Guru and seek his forgiveness. They got armed and they took the oath to die fighting and not to retreat from the battlefield. They went to make amends for the apostasy.**

On their way, they came to know that the Guru was camping at the lake of Khidrana, near Mukatsar. In those days, the whole area was a desert and the full control of the lake was very important for the fighting forces. They were also informed that the Mughal forces, under the command of the governor of Sirhand, were proceeding towards the Guru. Mai Bhago and the party decided to check the army proceeding towards the Guru. They realized that the Mughal army was huge and they were only forty. She thought of a plan and asked the Sikhs to spread their white shirts on the bushes so that they look like tents of the Sikh forces. A shrine called Gurdwara Tambu Sahib, or the Place of Holy Tents, stands on that spot even to this day. They raised slogans of Sat Sri Akal – Bole So Nihal to overawe the enemy. A bloody battle with the Mughal forces took place and Mai Bhag Kaur fought in the front lines. The mercenary soldiers could not face the devoted Sikhs. The Guru from the mound near the lake supported the Sikhs with showers of arrows. The army generals took to their heels and retreated to save their lives. They even left their wounded and dead soldiers back. It happened in 1705. After the battle, the Guru came down from the mound and found that every member of Bhag Kaur's party was either dead or wounded. He took care of them. Mai Bhag Kaur was lying badly injured. She was treated and soon she recovered fully. Bhai Mahan Singh was dying when Guru Ji reached him. Guru Ji put some water in Bhai Mahan Singh's mouth and said to him, "I am proud of you all. What is your last wish?" Mahan Singh requested the Guru to forgive all the deserters and restore the snapped relationship so that they might die in peace and obtain salvation. The Guru agreed and tore the bedava before Mahan Singh could breathe his last. The city of Mukatsar (Pool of Immortalization) was built at that place. 'Mukat' or 'Mukti' means salvation and 'sar' means a pool. These forty Muktas are remembered daily in the Sikh prayers (Ardas). Later on, a Gurdwara was built at the site of the cremation of these martyrs.

The Guru praised the bravery of Mai Bhago. She told the Guru how the forty deserters had fought bravely and laid down their lives. The Guru asked her to go back to her village as her husband and brother had also died in that battle. She expressed her desire to become an active saint-soldier and stay in the service of the Guru. Her wish was granted and she stayed with the Guru as a member of his bodyguards. She accompanied the Guru to Damdama Sahib, Agra, and Nanded, a city in the South of India, and lived there until the Guru left this world. After the Guru's departure, she left Nanded for Bidar, an important city nearby. She lived there for some time and preached Sikhism. She died at Bidar. There is a Gurdwara built in her memory near the main Gurdwara Sachkhand at Nanded. Her spear and rifle is still preserved at the Gurdwara along with the arms of Guru Gobind Singh Ji.

She was a symbol of bravery and courage. Her life story and skill in organization against odds will always be a milestone in Sikh history. Her example inspired many brave Sikh ladies to face death with honour.

Waheguru Ji ka khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh

Shaheed Bibi Ravinder Kaur Jee...

Ravinder Kaur was only nine, innocent but resolute. *"I will also become Amritdhari", "I,am going to join the Khalsa Fauj", "I want to be like my sister", such were her everyday declarations.* Her elder brother and sister were already Amritdhari and a source of constant inspiration. The children would go to the Gurdwara together and join other **Gursikhs in seva**. Baba Kartaar Singh Jee and jatha used to visit a nearby village, every year for a week long program of Gurbanee Keertan & Katha Vichaar in memory of Sahibzade's (**Guru Gobind Singh Jee's sons**) Shaheedees. They would also hold Amrit Sanchaar (Baptism Ceremony). Ravinder Kaur's parents were not Amritdharee, nor did they wish for any of their children to take Amrit before their marriages. But this did not deter her in quest for Amrit. She travelled to the village alone and made herself present at the Amrit Sanchaar. Usually an adult accompanies a young child that is taking Amrit, but she knew that none of her family would help her in this situation. **When the five beloved ones saw such a young girl on her own, they questioned her:**

Panj: *Who are you here with?*

RK: *I am on my own.*

Panj: *You are too young to take Amrit on your own. It is not an easy task to keep the responsibilities of Amrit. You are too young, come back when you are older.*

RK: *I don't understand. Guru Gobind Singh Jee's sons were also very young when they sacrificed their lives. If they can do it, then why can't I?* The **Panj Pyare** were stunned at the responses from this valiant child. There was no turning her back. She was blessed with Amrit and so began her life as a servant of the Khalsa Panth.

Ravinder Kaur was youngest of six children, three sisters and 2 brothers, who called her "Rano". On her return from the Amrit Sanchaar, she was so excited she grabbed her harmonium and started doing keertan on their lawn. When her father arrived home from his work in the fields he could see what she had done, as she was now wearing keskee. He was enraged that his daughter had disobeyed his orders and started to shout at her. "Two of my children had already disobeyed me and now you've joined them? Why did you do this despite my forbidding?" he inquired. Rano was unperturbed and shot back with a question of her own:

RK: *How many dogs roam around our village that have no owner?*

Dad: *How do I know? What kind of stupid question is that? I don't count the number of dogs in this village.*

RK: *without **Amrit** we are like those dogs with no owners. Once we take **Amrit**, we are owned by **Guru**. We become his. When a dog without an owner dies, no-one cares and no-one knows where it goes after death. I know that with **Guru Sahib's Amrit** I belong to him and when I die he will be there for me. The kirpan belt (Gatra) we wear, is like **Guru Sahib's** leash on us.*

Her father realized debating with Rano anymore was pointless. From the day she took Amrit, she had true love for Guru and Sikhi. She practiced the life of a true Gursikh, She would read Gurbani all day. People, even her own family were afraid of her. She always used to say, ***"I hope that one day I will be lucky enough to give shaheedee"***.

During those times Sikhs were suffering much oppression at the hands of the Indian government. The stories of police excesses did not scare Rano. The more injustices she heard of the more valiant she became in her fight for Sikhi.

Bhai Fauja Singh Jee and Bhai Kewal Singh Jee used to visit her village where she was fortunate enough to meet with them often. She was influenced by Bhai Fauja Singh Jee's braveness and his constant thoughts of being ready to die for the Khalsa Panth. The 1978 saka in Amritsar shook the whole community, where these Singhs gave their lives for the Panth. ***Rano didn't get upset or angry over their shaheedee. Instead she began doing Ardaas asking for her own chance to give shaheedee for the Panth.***

She used to get up very early in the morning to take shower and then do nitnem. One morning she woke up and went to the bathroom but quickly came running back into her bed. She used to sleep with her elder sister Shindo, Her sister knew something was wrong with Rano as she came back to their bedroom too quickly to have bathed, and she never used to get back into bed after a bath, she would always do her Simran and prayers. So Shindo asked Rano what the problem was and why she came back to bed. Rano told her to go back to sleep and that she will tell her later in the day. Later that day, Shindo kept asking Rano what happened, but Rano wouldn't tell her. However, under Shindo's persistent questioning Rano finally relented. She described that when she went outside towards the bathroom, she saw ***Bhai Fauja Singh Jee and Bhai Kewal Singh Jee*** sitting on their house's boundary wall. They were very happy and said to her: ***"Rano, the Panth needs Sikhs like you. Your time is close, be prepared to sacrifice this life of yours for the Khalsa Panth."*** Rano was overjoyed that finally what she had been praying for her whole life would be coming true. "Shindo, the reason I was trying to keep this a secret was that I don't want anybody in the family to make a fuss. Just make parshaad for everyone in the village and do 'Jaikaarays'. No one is to cry after my shaheedee and if anyone does I will come after them in some form." She knew how to get her point across! From that day on, she was a part of every Dharam Yudh Morcha.

She used to take a Jatha of ladies from villages to wherever they were needed. In protest of the unfair treatment of Sikhs, she with her Jatha laid down on the railway lines to stop oncoming trains. She had been sentenced to imprisonment on several occasions by the Punjab police, for helping the Sikhs in the Dharam Yudh Morcha. She was never worried about herself or her life and was a motivational speaker. Later, she became a religious studies teacher at a Punjabi girl's high school in Taran Taaran where she was now living.

During her time as a teacher, once some of her students came to her and told her that there were a few men (20-25yrs old) who would harass them on their bus ride to school. Rano told the girls not to worry. The next day, when the bus arrived at the school, Rano was waiting at the stop. All the students left the bus and the bus was about to leave, but Rano stood in the middle of the road in front of the bus. ***She told the bus driver to stop the bus. She got on the bus, and told those immoral men to step outside. Initially, the men ignored her and told her to get off and let them be on their way. She knew***

that they would react like this, but she had come prepared; she showed them her gun that she had been hiding under her clothes. At the sight of her gun the men jumped off the bus like chickens as Rano followed.

At the bus stop she hit the men with the back of her gun until they were bruised. By this time a crowd had gathered at the bus stop to see what the commotion was. She told the men that if they bothered or tried to flirt or even look in the direction of those girls again, she would kill them. She also told them, that if they had a problem with what she had said and done to them, or if they wanted to settle things at a later time, they could come to her house, and she gave them her address. Those men were so scared of her that they never even got on the same bus as the students again.

Rano was of an extremely religious temperament. She had no desire to marry as she knew she would not be on this earth for much time so she wanted to use what little time she had in Seva & Simran. However, as she was doing seva alongside many different people in dangerous places, the Sangat decided it would be best for her to marry a tyaar-bar-tyaar amritdharee singh while continuing her seva of Khalsa Panth.

So in May 1984 she had her Anand Karaj with Bhai Harbhajan Singh Jee. He was an amritdharee singh who was doing seva alongside Baba Jarnail Singh Jee, Bhindranwale, at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. Her marriage took place at Manjee Sahib, Amritsar with five other couples. This was the last marriage program that ever took place at Manjee Sahib, Amritsar. Rano's other sister, Binder, was married to a Singh in the Indian Air Force and they had two sons. Binder and her family lived far from Amritsar at the time of Rano's marriage so couldn't make it in time for the Anand Karaj. But they were coming to visit her shortly after the wedding. Binder asked Rano, what kind of suits she wanted (as she was supposed to bring some for her at the wedding as part of the tradition). She replied by saying: **"I don't want any sort of fancy suits nor will I be able to wear them. If you have to give me something, then give me one of your sons so that I can use him in the Dharam Yudh and Khalsa Panth Seva."** Binder was scared and didn't want to give one of her young sons to die. She thought Rano was out of her mind. But Rano was not into these worldly material things and always gave importance to seva for Khalsa Panth.

In June 1984, just two months after her wedding, Operation Blue Star began and Rano got her wish. A few days before the fighting started; Baba Jarnail Singh Jee told all the ladies to go back to their villages as they were needed to keep the Panth growing after this Morcha. Most left but **Rano and four other bibian refused to go saying that they were going to fight alongside the Singhs.** The fighting started with the Indian army throwing bombs with tear gas shells into the Golden Temple. Rano was given the responsibility to distribute onions to all the Singhs as the liquid from the onions stopped the tear gas from taking effect. She was carrying onions in bags and strung together around her neck. When she came to her husband, he started smiling at her. She said to him: **"Harbhajan Singh, this is no time for laughing, THE time has finally come. Make sure you die here with honor. There is no other perfect place to die for the Khalsa Panth than at Sri Harminder Sahib Jee. Don't try and be clever and find a sneaky way out. Do not be a coward and go back alive from here."** They then said **Fateh** to each other and she moved on with her duty. These were her last words with her husband. This was the last time she was seen by anyone. She was not found after this incident. **According to her husband, all the five bibian were caught and killed by**

Indian Army. But other people have said that they were caught and put into jail. To this day, only Vaheguroo knows what happened to her and the other bibian.

Later on during the fighting, her husband ran out of ammunition and they had to surrender. All of them were told to stand in a line and were about to be shot when an army officer came by and asked that a few men were needed. The requirement was of a Granthee Singh and a Ragee Jatha in order to perform keertan at Darbaar Sahib. Bhai Harbhajan Singh Jee was picked out of the line to play tabla but the Singhs alongside him were killed. He explained that his wife, Rano, knew how he might not sacrifice himself for the **Khalsa Panth** and she warned him against this. Nonetheless, the Punjab police killed him two years later.

This is how Bibi Ravinder Kaur Jee lived the true life of a Gursikh and finally died as a martyr doing seva of Khalsa Panth.