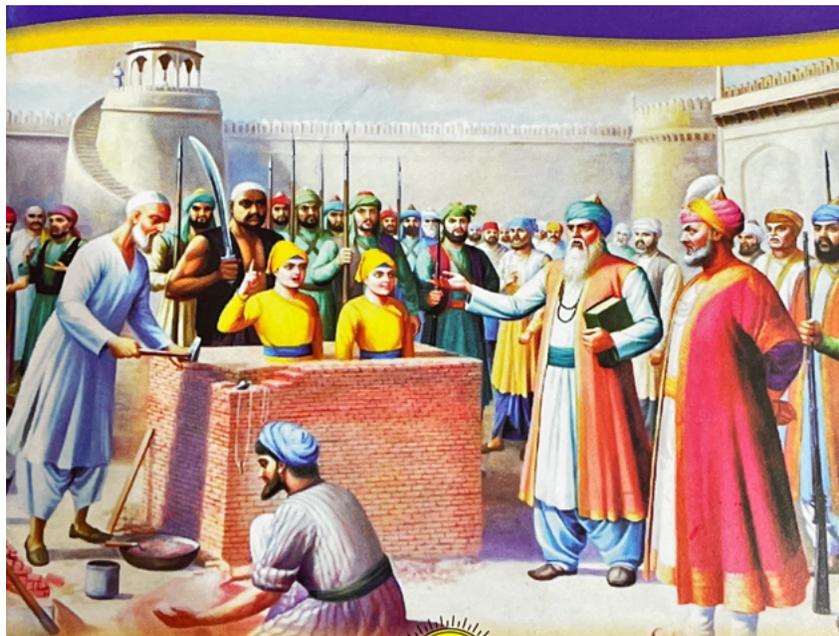


**Tender Lives Lost,
Sacred Principles Upheld!**

**The Historic Supreme Sacrifice
of
Guru Gobind Singh's
Young Sons**



In Public Interest

Produced by:

Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies

Canada

Introduction

It is sad, indeed, that countless innocent young lives are lost in natural and man-made disasters. It is very tragic when, in pursuit of false religious doctrine, the young children – seven- and nine-year-old boys, were called upon to give up their Sikh religious belief and embrace Islam.

If they unwisely, chose to disregard the directive, they were told that they would lose their lives.

As they were addressed, the young princes – Sahibzadas did not hesitate to court martyrdom, to uphold the Waheguru (God) given fundamental right of religious freedom.

The Mughal governor, ministers, and other senior officials present at the scene were amazed at the Sahibzada's immediate response and sought to prevail upon them with generous offers of riches and official titles. And when these temptations failed to influence the princes, they were faced with threats of punishment, jail, torture, and death.

However, all such threats and lucrative offers failed to break the Sahibzadas' resolve.

The Sahibzadas – Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, were mercilessly entombed alive in a brick wall built around them.

This brief publication is a humble effort to acquaint the world with the unparalleled sacrifice of the young princes of Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh guru.

Hopefully, we can learn from this tragic part of Sikh history that one can make a mark on human conscience even at the tender age of seven years.

We bow our heads before the Sahibzadas and their parents – Guru Gobind Singh ji and Mata Ajeet Kaur (Jito ji) and their grandmother Mata Gujar Kaur (Gujri ji), who fostered such respect for human religious rights and the spirit of sacrifice to uphold such principles.

Dedicated to community service

Gian Singh Sandhu
Chair
Board of Governors
Guru Nanak Institute of Global Studies
Langley, British Columbia, Canada

The Context

Guru Nanak (1469 – 1539 AD) was born in a rural family in Punjab. At the time, it was Ibrahim Lodi's tyrannical regime. People were oppressed beyond belief. There was no law and order – just cruel tyranny. Women had no respect or rights. People had no right or access to education. On one side, people faced the oppressive administration of the king, and on the other, exploitation by the clergies, who, in the name of religion, were posing as the agents of God.

Witnessing all this, Nanak embarked on a mission of reform. It was truly unprecedented and visionary for an ordinary villager to take on a despotic regime on one side and an extremely greedy and exploitative clergy on the other.

Unquestionably, his driving force was divine inspiration. Truth, Justice, and Equality became the hallmarks of his mission. Cold logic, critical thinking, powerful communication, and people's innate desire to be free - as nature intended them to be- were the fuel that propelled the movement.

This movement of social, spiritual, economic, and educational reform; subsequently came to be known as 'Sikhi.'

The tyrannical state and the clergy that relied on exploitation through rituals felt threatened and joined hands to resist and fight the forces of freedom unleashed by Nanak's movement.

Guru Arjan Dev ji and Guru Tegh Bahadur courted martyrdom to fuel Nanak's mission to free people from state oppression and systemic religious exploitation.

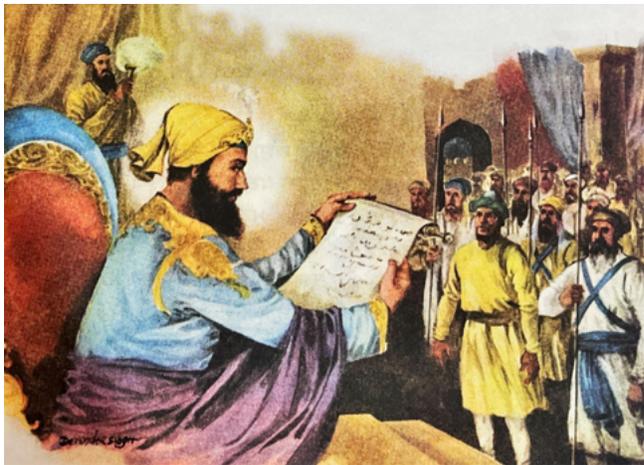
Compelled to resort to arms, to keep the mission alive, Guru Gobind Singh – the tenth Sikh Guru, assembled a large military force to combat the Mughal tyranny while at the same time awakening and energizing the dormant spirit of freedom and self-determination among fellow humans.

In the late seventeenth century, Guru Gobind Singh scored several military victories over large Mughal forces, who were, unfortunately, aided and urged on by many local rulers and rajas cowering under the Mughal authority.

Guru Gobind Singh built a large fort at Anandpur Sahib (close to the world-renowned modern city of Chandigarh). This was a large military garrison, and the Mughal state deemed it a potential threat and laid siege to it.

Episode 1

Guru Gobind Singh's fort, Anandpur, was under the Mughal emperor's siege. The fierce battle between the invading Mughal soldiers and the Sikh warriors had been going on for



several months, and the Mughal invaders had been unsuccessful in breaking through the Sikh defenses.

In desperation, the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb sent a diplomatic emissary to the Sikh Guru with a peace proposal. Aurangzeb vowed in the name of the holy Quran to provide a safe passage to all Sikhs and the Guru's family if they vacated the fort under siege.

Episode 2

Although Guru Gobind Singh was not inclined to take Aurangzeb at his word, the Mughal emperor's vows in the name of the holy Quran, persuaded him to act otherwise.



However, as the Guru's Sikh forces emerged from the fort, the Mughal troops seized the opportunity to launch a massive attack on the Sikhs.

A fierce battle ensued on the banks of river 'Sirsa.' Sikh warriors fought very gallantly and took down many Mughal soldiers, for each Sikh falling to the ground.

Episode 3

In this raging battle, Guru's entire family got separated from each other. Younger sons – Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, stuck with their grandmother, Mata Gujri ji. They trudged along through rugged terrain and thick forest.



On their way, they encountered many wild animals, including lions and snakes, but the Sahibzadas felt very safe and secure in their grandmother's

protection. They kept reciting the scriptures and moving on fearlessly. Their grandmother also narrated many inspiring anecdotes on the way.

Episode 4



Both elder Sahibzadas – Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, stayed with their dad – Guru Gobind Singh. They crossed river ‘Sirsa’ and spent the night at Ropar. Early morning, they reached their fortress at Chamkaur Sahib.

Episode 5

After a very long and arduous journey, Mata Gujri ji, along with her two Sahibzadas, approached the hut of ‘Kammo’ –



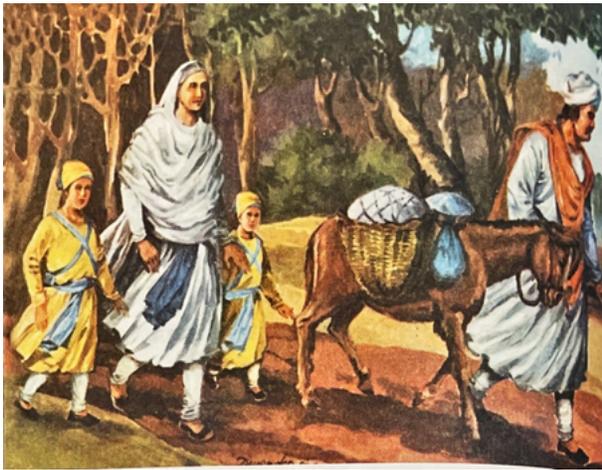
a water carrier. As soon as he saw Mataji, he came outside and respectfully, with folded hands, prayed, ‘It is my good fortune and honour that you have come to my humble hut, to take some rest.’

The grandmother and the Sahibzadas were relieved and pleased to

see Kammo’s devotion. It was also getting dark, and Mata ji deemed it appropriate to spend the night in Kammo’s hut. A lady – ‘Lachhmi,’ very quickly put together some food and respectfully presented it to Mata ji and the Sahibzadas. They all imbibed the food with God’s blessings.

Episode 6

The next day, Gangoo Brahmin, who had previously worked in the Guru's Langar (community kitchen), heard of the



Guru's family and came to meet them. With folded hands, he respectfully pleaded before Mata ji and urged them to accompany him to his village 'Kherhi.' He reassured them that they would be well looked after and not face any

difficulty. He, very reassuringly, added, 'nobody will know about your presence there.'

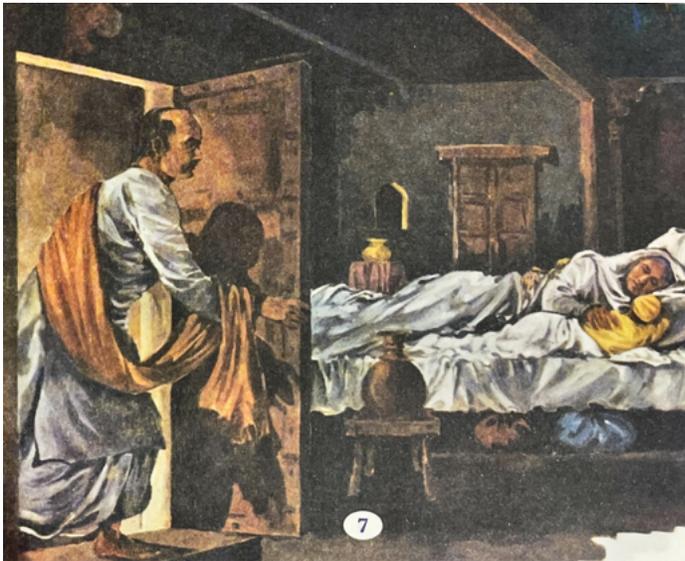
Mata ji was very quiet in contemplation, when Gangoo urged her to 'have faith in me' and started loading their meagre belongings on a mule. Soon, they were on their way to Gangoo's village.

Both Sahibzadas were walking beside their grandmother. Occasionally, they will inquire about their father – Guru Gobind Singh, and their elder brothers – Sahibzada Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh.

It was evening by the time they reached their destination. They settled down at Gangoo's house in village Kherhi and Mata ji, put aside the belongings they had carried with them.

Episode 7

Mata ji had the Sahibzadas change their clothes and prepared a bed for them. All three said their evening prayers. Mata ji took both Sahibzadas in a tight embrace,



blessed them, and took them to bed. The Sahibzadas fell asleep with their heads on their grandmother's chest.

At night, Gangoo, very softly tiptoeing, entered the room where the Guru's family was resting. When he noticed

that Mata ji was asleep, he, very quietly and carefully, started groping through their belongings under the bed. Finally, he found a bag full of gold coins. He grabbed this bag and quickly but quietly, left the room.

Mata ji, had sensed someone entering the premises, fumbling through the contents under the bed, and then quietly leaving the room; but she did not raise any alarm.

Episode 8

In the morning, When Mata ji woke up and saw their belongings spread over the floor, she confronted Gangoo. ‘All



our belongings are spread on the floor. The outside main door was also closed. What happened to the bag of gold coins?’ Gangoo pretended to be surprised and looked here and there.

Without saying anything, Gangoo rushed outside and started shouting, “there has been a theft.

Mata ji’s things have been stolen.”

Mata Gujri ji, called Gangoo inside and advised him, ‘raising public alarm like this is not proper. You can keep the gold coins, and no one has asked you to return them.



At this, Gangoo angrily screamed, ‘this is outrageous. I offered you refuge, and you are accusing me of theft?’ Mata ji tried very hard to calm him down, but Gangoo stormed out of the house, shouting his outrage.



Episode 9

Gangoo headed straight towards the Kotwal's (the commissioner's) office. Stepping inside, he paid his respects



and softly whispered, your honour, I have come to convey some very secret information to you.

The Kotwal queried, "Yes, tell me, what information you have brought?"

"Your honour, Guru Gobind Singh's mother and his two younger sons, are hiding in my house."

Kotwal was thrilled to hear this. He called his senior police official and directed him to take his force and go with Gangoo to take the Guru's family in custody.

Episode 10

When the police officers reached Gangoo's courtyard, the neighbours and onlookers were very curious. Policemen



rushed to the back and were surprised to see Mata ji and the princes comfortably sitting on the bed in a very carefree manner.

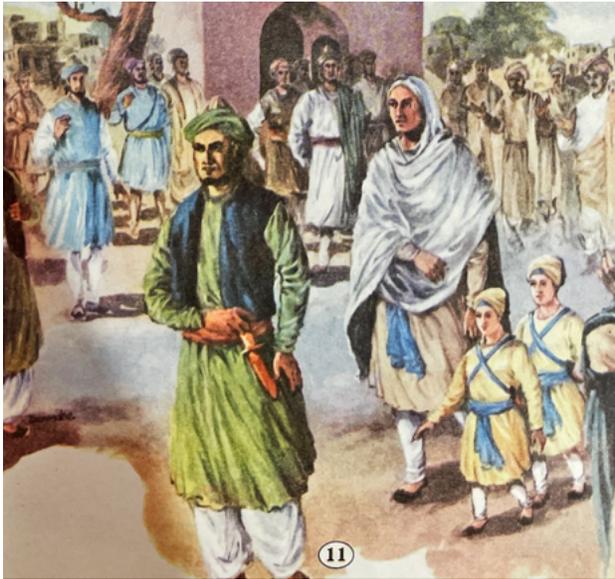
The police official conveyed Kotwal's orders and asked the Guru's family to come with them.

Mata ji, tightly hugged the two Sahibzadas and said, "get up my children, let's go."

Sahibzada Zorawar Singh and Sahibzada Fateh Singh were ready in no time and, along with Mata Gujri, walked out with the police officials.

Episode 11

Meanwhile, a large crowd had assembled outside. Gangoo



was standing on one side, and people were pointing fingers at him. He was guiltily looking down and standing apart. One lady spoke out, “did you see what this ungrateful scoundrel has done? He brought them to his house and turned around to go and inform the authorities

on them.” Another one added, “what harm have these innocent souls caused to the state?” They were all speaking in one voice, saying, “see the magnificent glow and grace on their grandmother’s face.”

People were stunned - bit their tongues and watched helplessly as the policemen took the grandmother and the two Sahibzadas with them.

Episode 12

Mata ji and the two Sahibzadas spent the night in detention at Morinda.

Apostle of peace, Mata Gujri, very lovingly and affectionately



held the two Sahibzadas close and narrated several anecdotes of matchless bravery and gallantry of the Sikh followers of Guru Nanak. She inspired them with accounts of the unprecedented martyrdoms of Guru Arjan Dev ji and

Guru Tegh Bahadur ji.

Later, all three of them said the evening and night prayers and fell asleep on the rough floor of the jail.

Episode 13

The next day, early morning, Mata ji and the two Sahibzadas were taken to ‘Bassi’ police station on a bullock cart. Crowds



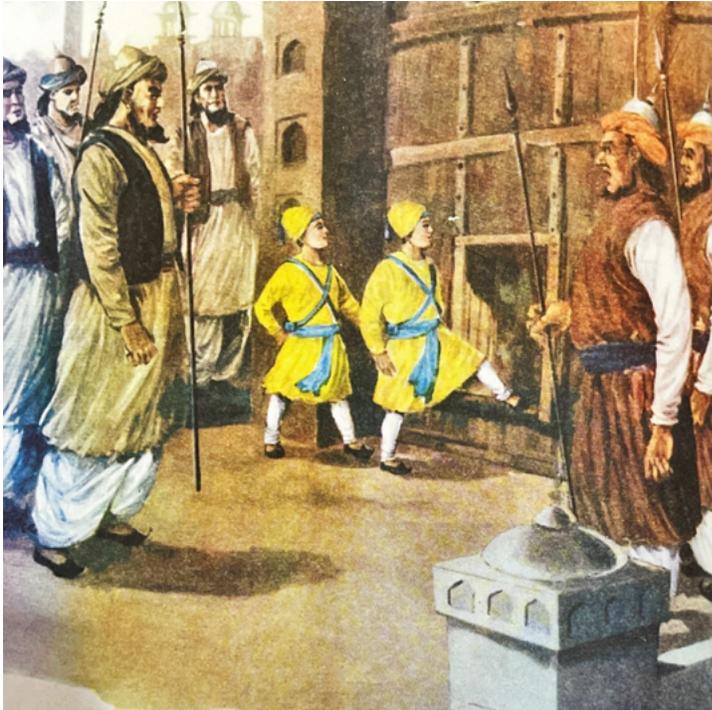
of people were also moving along the cart. People, in total amazement, were asking each other why an elderly lady, and innocent tender age children had been taken prisoners. Wherever the cart carrying Mata ji and the two Sahibzadas passed, people came out of their

houses and paid respect. As people saw the faces of the brave and fearless Sahibzadas, they could not help but say, “Here are the brave sons of their brave father.”

Hearing such words and sentiments from men and women watching them go by, policemen escorting the Guru’s captive family felt a sense of fear and hastened their pace. The bullock cart owner was prodding the animals to move faster to reach Sirhind as quickly as possible.

Episode 14

Both Sahibzadas, escorted by policemen, were taken to Nawab Wazir Khan's courthouse, on foot. When the



Sahibzadas approached the courthouse, they noticed that the main gate was closed and only a small, window-like access was open. To go inside, one needed to bow one's head.

Very astute Sahibzadas quickly saw the Nawab's game plan, and very cleverly, they put their feet in first, without having to bow their head before the authority of the state.

Episode 15

Nawab Wazir Khan's court was in session. As the Sahibzadas entered the courtroom, they stated the Guru's Greetings confidently and fearlessly.



confidently and fearlessly.

Wahe Guru Ji Ka Khalsa,

Wahe Guru ji ki Fateh!

Sahibzadas' resounding greetings attracted everyone's attention to these brave and fearless young souls.

Episode 16

Fair-complexioned boys, attired in saffron robes, with swords worn with bright sashes, looked very handsome and attractive. All courtiers were watching them with awe.



Nawab Wazir Khan looked at them and very affectionately said, “Kids, you are looking very nice and attractive. The Islamic nation will be very proud of you if you were to embrace Islam and become Muslim. All your wishes will be fulfilled.”

Both Sahibzadas spoke out firmly and in unison, “we are proud of our religion, and material goods mean nothing to us.”

The Nawab felt very angry at their firm and resolute response but kept his emotions to himself.

Episode 17

Nawab Wazir Khan offered immense wealth, fancy titles, high positions, and all royal privileges to the two Sahibzadas, if they embraced Islam.

Both Sahibzadas, in their inimitable manner and style, stated firmly and in unison, “we are prepared to sacrifice our lives to uphold truth and our faith.” The Nawab was very angry and stunned to hear the Sahibzadas’ response. He called upon

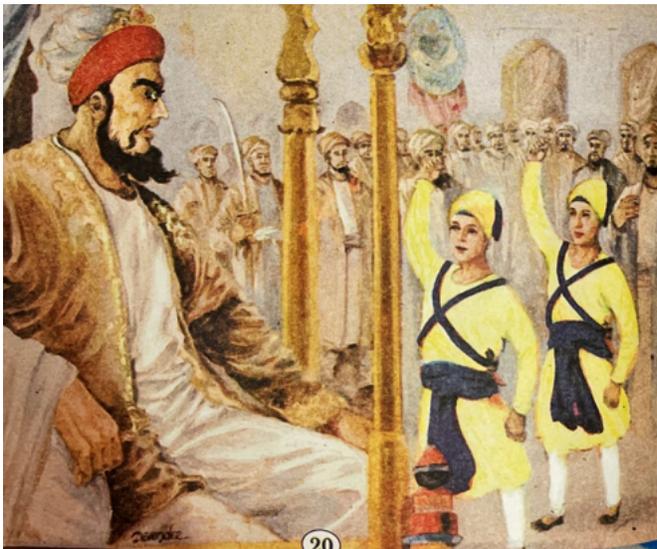


the ‘Qazi’ or the religious authority on the court’s bench, to pronounce his religious sanction against the Sahibzadas.

The Qazi was quite perplexed to hear the Nawab’s directive.

Episode 18

Once again, Nawab Wazir Khan, tried to advise the Sahibzadas in a very conciliatory manner. He told the



Sahibzadas, ‘you are at a very tender age, and you have a full life ahead that you can enjoy. Heed our advice, and we will give you substantial land grants (jageer) - you will live a life of plentiful luxury in opulence, here and in heavens beyond.

Very courageously and fearlessly, Sahibzada Zorawar Singh said, ‘our struggle is against tyranny and injustice. We are sons of Guru Gobind Singh, grandsons of Guru Tegh Bahadur, and our ancestry goes back to Guru Arjan Dev ji. We will walk in their footsteps and not shy away from offering any sacrifice to defend our faith.

The Nawab whispered softly, ‘Wow! So much pride in their faith!’

Episode 19

Diwan Sucha Nand, who was present, got up and went to the Sahibzadas. He asked them, ‘if you are set free, where will you go?’ Sahibzada Zorawar Singh said, ‘we will head over to the



jungles, gather together our Sikhs, get some horses, and come back to fight against you.’

Diwan Sucha Nand continued, “You know that your father has been killed in action - stop resisting and accept the Nawab’s advice.”

Both Sahibzadas spoke out in unison, ‘who can kill our father? He is quite capable. We don’t need your counsel. We will keep fighting until this oppressive and tyrannical regime perishes.’

Episode 20

Addressing Sucha Nand, the Sahibzadas recited a few poetic lines highlighting Sikh family traditions. They said,

It is a glorious tradition in our family;

We sacrifice our lives, but not our faith!

Diwan Sucha Nand was very angry and astonished at the



same time. Murmuring some words, he approached Nawab Wazir Khan and said, “Nawab Sahib, it is not wise to kill a snake and nurture their baby offsprings. A hyena’s offspring is also a hyena. These kids will grow up and rebel - they

must be punished.”

Nawab listened to Diwan Sucha Nand’s advice carefully. When the Nawab, the Qazi and Diwan Sucha Nand were deliberating,

Episode 21

The two princes were talking freely to each other in a playful and jovial mood, without any signs of fear or worry. Courtiers and observers at the scene were astonished to see the carefree look on Sahibzadas' faces even as their fate was being decided.



The Nawab again implored the Qazi to 'heed the arrogant replies to Diwan's questions. It will not be wise to set them free. Like their father, these boys will also take the path of rebellion.'

Episode 22

The Qazi had also noted the verbal interaction between Sucha Nand and the Sahibzadas. He thought for a moment,



He thought for a moment, rose from his seat, and pronounced his decree, “these kids are determined to rebel - they should be entombed alive.”

Hearing the Qazi’s decree, everyone present was astonished. But the fearless Sahibzadas were standing tall, totally unfazed. The Qazi counselled the Nawab

to ‘handover these kids to the Nawab of Maler-Kotla, who can avenge his brother’s death at the hands of these kids’ father.’

Episode 23

The Nawab sent for Sher Muhammed Khan, and when he came, the Nawab told him, ‘Sher Muhammed Khan, Guru



Gobind Singh’s Sikhs had killed your brother; now is an opportunity to avenge your brother’s death. Two of the Guru’s sons have been apprehended and are in custody. The Qazi has decreed that they be entombed alive. They are

being handed over to you, and you must carry out the sentence pronounced by the Qazi.’

Sher Muhammed Khan was shocked to hear this. He was left speechless. He collected himself, took a deep breath, and said, ‘Nawab Sahib, this is an atrocity. My brother was killed in battle. What crime have these tiny souls committed?’

With a cry of anguish, he left the court.

Episode 24

While on one hand the Nawab ordered the two Sahibzadas to return to confinement in the Burj, on the other hand, he directed his administrators to find an executioner to carry out the sentence quickly.

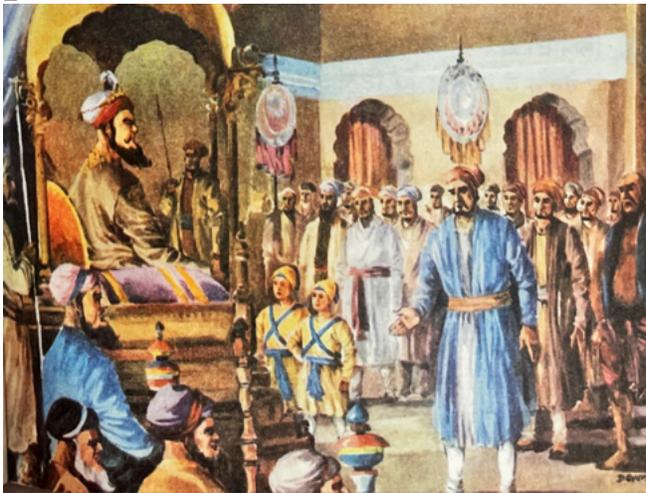


Sahibzadas reached their grandmother in the cold Burj and narrated the entire day's proceedings at the courthouse. Mata ji, applauded the conduct of both Sahibzadas and took them in a tight embrace. 'You have come through gloriously! Waheguru

(God) is forever with you.'

Episode 25

The next day morning, the two Sahibzadas were, once again, produced before the court. The Nawab again asked them,



‘Children, what have you decided? You wish to embrace Islam or be entombed alive?’ Both Sahibzadas, without any hesitation or fear, said, “We will never abandon our faith.”

The Nawab was surprised to hear this. An administrator stepped forward and said, ‘your honour, two royal executioners have come from Delhi – Shashal Beg and Bashal Beg, they are residents of ‘Samana’ and are here to appear in a court case. If you acquit them, these two executioners are ready to entomb the two kids.’

The Nawab directed that ‘these executioners’ case be dismissed. He further directed that the two Sahibzadas be handed over to them.

The executioners stepped forward, saluted, and said ‘As you please, your honour.’

Episode 26

The policemen brought both Sahibzadas out of the courtroom. A large crowd of spectators had gathered outside.



People (men and women) were astonished to learn that the two tender-aged children were sentenced to be entombed alive. People were asking:

‘What crime have these small children committed?’

‘O’ God, this is a travesty. It is a serious injustice.’

‘o’ dear, do you see yow fearless the young children are?’

‘They are, truly the brave sons of Guru Gobind Singh.’

People were aghast and biting their tongues. Policemen were rushing the kids to move on. Listening to what the people were saying, the policemen kept looking down and moving on.

Episode 27

The Sahibzadas were brought to the place, where a wall was being erected. The Qazi was also present at the scene.



The two Sahibzadas were positioned in the middle of the walls being erected. The Qazi, once again urged the Sahibzadas; “Accept Islam; why are you determined to needlessly lose your lives?”

Even the executioners tried to counsel the Sahibzadas, but their determination was rock solid. Instead, they urged the executioners to get on with their task. ‘Be quick to bring an end to the tyrannical Mughal regime. Raise this wall of their crimes even higher.’

Saying this, the Sahibzadas started reciting their morning prayers [Japji Sahi] The executioners got busy with laying more layers of bricks.

Episode 28

When the wall reached up to the Sahibzadas' chest level, the Nawab, as well as the Qazi, came closer and said, 'children,



there is still time, your lives can be spared. Recite the Quranic prayers and the wall will be demolished.'

The Sahibzadas had an unwavering resolve and spoke clearly and firmly,

'We will not abandon our faith. We are not afraid of losing our lives. Even if we

are born a million times, we will dedicate the same to serving the faith.'

The Nawab and the Qazi were stunned to see their rock-solid resolve. Hordes of spectators around could not resist tears in their eyes. People were saying in unison:

'Blessed is the mother who gave birth to such souls. Blessed is the father.'

Take Away....

The Sahibzadas are, unfortunately, not among us, physically, but the memory of their supreme sacrifice should continue to inspire us to stand on guard for the God-given rights and freedoms.

Although, these lofty golden principles are enshrined in many democratic countries' constitutions, these are trampled upon more than these are respected; regrettably, by the powers and authorities entrusted to uphold these.

The Sahibzadas did not court martyrdom because any state or society asked them to, but because their nurturing and their conscience gave them the courage and the strength to face the absolute powers of the Mughal regime.

A candle of spiritual inspiration is in all of us. It is barely flickering. It is up to us, to honour the glorious example of the Sahibzadas' self-sacrifice for the greater collective good and stand resolute in safeguarding and enjoying our God given human rights, liberties, and freedoms.