

Guru Gobind Singh and the Khalsa

Every year all the Sikh people met together to hear their great leader. So here they all were in a vast field and at the front was a large tent opening onto a platform. People jostled and joked with each other. They were looking forward to hearing their leader, Guru Gobind Singh, speak to them and share his wisdom.

At last out stepped the great man and the crowd gave a gasp. He was waving a large sword above his head.

‘I want a brave Sikh to step forward. Who is willing to give up his life for God and for his faith?’ The crowd fell still and silent. Again the leader called, ‘I want a brave Sikh to step forward. Who would be willing to give up his life for his God?’ There was a slight movement among the people, and slowly a man walked up to Guru Gobind Singh. Into the tent they went and the crowd heard a terrifying swish of the sword and a thud. The crowd held its breath.

Out of the tent swept Guru Gobind Singh, once more. Again he was waving his sword, which was now dripping with blood. Again he made his terrifying demand and again a brave man stepped out of the crowd and followed their great leader into the tent. ‘What is happening?’ the people murmured. ‘Has our leader gone mad?’

Five times it happened, and five brave men stepped forward and went into the tent with Guru Gobind Singh. Each time the crowd heard the sound of the swishing sword. They were really alarmed and some began to turn to leave. Was the Guru going to kill all his people? But then something amazing happened. Out of the tent walked the five brave men. They were all dressed alike and all wearing turbans on their heads. The Guru pulled back the tent flap and inside were five beheaded goats. ‘Today we will start a new brotherhood and call it the Khalsa,’ explained Guru Gobind Singh. ‘I want Sikhs to be brave like these five brave men who are the Beloved Five. To show that we are Sikhs we will not cut our hair. We will keep our hair tidy with a special comb and we will wear turbans over our hair. We will wear a steel bangle and wear a sword to show that we are brave and that we will protect the weak and defend our freedom.’

A special ceremony then took place. A bowl was filled with sweetened water which was stirred with the sword. Men drank from the blessed water and as they did so, they became new members of the Khalsa, the special brotherhood of Sikhism.