

BHAI KANHAIYA Jee

BHAI KANHAIYA Jee (1648-1718), was a Sikh of Guru Teg Bahadur ji and was the founder of the Sevapanthi or Addanshahi sect of the Sikhs. Bhai Sahib was born in a Dhamman Khatri family of Sodhara near Wazirabad in Sialkot district (now in Pakistan). His father was a wealthy trader, but he himself being of a religious bent of mind left home when still very young and roamed about with saddhus and ascetics in search of spiritual peace. His quest ended as he met Guru Teg Bahadur ji (1621-75) and accepted initiation at his hands. Kanhaiya established a dharamshaal at Kavha village in the present Attock district of Pakistan which he turned into a preaching centre. His special mission was selfless service of humanity with no distinction of nationality, caste or creed. In 1704/5, he was on a visit to Anandpur Sahib when the city was invaded by a combination of hill troops and the imperial Mughal army.

During the frequent sallies and skirmishes between the Sikhs and the enemy, Bhai Kanhaiya was often seen carrying a mashak (a sort of pouch made of goat's skin that was used to carry water from one place to another), to serve water to anyone who was thirsty. He took upon the task of quenching the thirst of the wounded soldiers in the battle of Anandpur Sahib in 1704. He did this sewa with love and affection without any discrimination between the Guru's Sikh soldiers and the Mughal army's soldiers. His act of compassion stirred up stern criticism amongst his fellow Sikhs, who went ahead and complained to Guru Gobind Singh Ji, pointing out that Bhai Kanhaiya Ji was serving water to the wounded soldier's from the enemy camp. They were especially annoyed because the Mughal had surrounded the city and stopped all their food supplies, and here was Bhai Kanhaiya sharing with them what little water they had. They had tried to stop him many a time, but he would not pay any heed. This great deed of Bhai Kanhaiya to roam around serving water to the wounded and the dying without distinction of friend and foe eventually led to a summon by Guru Ji. This benevolent action of this special Sikh had upset some sikhs who went directly and complained to Guru Gobind Singh ji that Bhai Kanhaiya had been resuscitating the fallen enemy soldiers.

Guru Gobind Singh summoned Bhai Kanhaiya and explained that he had received a complaint about his actions on the battlefield. Guruji

said, "These brave Sikhs are saying that you go and feed water to the enemy and they recover to fight them again - Is this true?" Bhai Kanhaiya Ji replied "Yes, my Guru, what they say is true. But Saché Patshah, I saw no Mughal or Sikh on the battlefield. I only saw You. Guru Sahib Ji, you have taught us to treat all God's people as the same?" Guru Gobind Singh jee was very pleased with the reply and saw that Bhai Kanhaiya Ji had understood the deep message of Gurbani correctly. Guru ji smiled and blessed Bhai Kanhaiya. Guru Ji said, "Bhai Kanhaiya Ji, You are right. You have understood the true message of Gurbani". He then continued and told the Sikhs that Bhai Kanhaiya had understood the deeper message of the Gurus' teachings correctly and that they all have to strive to learn lessons from the priceless words of Gurbani. Guru also gave Bhai Kanhaiya Ji medical ointment and said "From now on, you should also put this ointment on the wounds of all who need it" then turning to the sangat Guru Ji said, Saadh sangat ji, Bhai Kanhaiya is a God-fearing saintly soul. His impartial and non-biased behavior towards others has led him to achieve Sehaj-avastha. Let him carry on with his mission. Many more will follow in his footsteps in the years to come and keep the tradition of Nishkaam sewa alive."

ਏ ਨੇੜ੍ਹੁ ਮੇਰਿਹੋ ਹਰਿ ਤੁਮ ਮਹਿ ਜੋਤਿ ਧਰੀ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਦੇਖਹੁ ਕੋਈ ॥
