

SAJJAN THUG
from
GURU NANAK CHAMATKAR
by
BHAJ SAHIB BHAJ VIR SINGH JI

Translated by Bimal Inderjit Singh, of Bombay

Guru Nanak Dev ji and Bhai Mardana had been traveling for many days when they came to the outskirts of a large town. Guru ji asked Mardana, "Are you feeling hungry and tired?"

Mardana : "Yes, Master. If it is your will then let us stay here for a few days."

Guru ji : "It is our Lord's will that we stay. We shall be able to get some food and rest, but it will prove expensive. The Lord's ways are strange but ultimately, good prevails and evil is destroyed."

Mardana : "I do not understand so many things that happen and I am always grumbling and complaining. Forgive me and teach me how to accept things cheerfully."

Guru ji smiled and patted him on the head.

Soon they came upon an imposing bungalow. Its large door stood invitingly open. Inside was a big courtyard with a number of rooms leading off it. In

one corner stood a mosque and in the opposite corner was an imposing temple with idols of various gods and goddesses. Smoke from the incense curled fragrantly up into the air.

As soon as Guru ji and Mardana stepped inside the main door, two men came up with folded hands and greeted them respectfully, "Welcome!" one of them said. "Please come right in. It is our great good fortune that you have come. We are here to look after your needs so that you may refresh yourselves after your travels."

Guru ji followed but Mardana hesitated looking uneasily around.

Guru ji beckoned him saying softly, "Come, Mardana, don't be afraid. There is much here that is to be dreaded but Waheguru ji is with us and will keep us safe. Come!"

They were led into a comfortably furnished room. The floor was covered with thick rugs and two beds were placed against the walls. These had deep mattresses on them covered with rich tapestry, which seemed to invite the weary travelers to lie down and rest.

Guru ji sat down, cross-legged on the floor and Mardana followed. The whole atmosphere was hushed and very quiet. Nothing seemed to move. Suddenly the silence was broken by a rustling sound. Mardana looked up startled. In the doorway, stood a tall, well-built man. He had an imposing figure and a large face with glittering eyes.

He was dressed in a clean white 'dhoty' and 'kurta' and on his head he wore a white turban.

He carried a rosary in his right hand, the beads falling regularly without pause, as if his prayers went on even when he was talking. He padded into the room and greeted Guru ji and Mardana by politely bowing his head.

"I am honoured to see you in this humble abode," he said. "The Lord has entrusted me with the task of serving tired and hungry travelers. You appear to be well-to-do noblemen and I welcome you. Please, consider this your own home and make yourselves comfortable. I am but a humble servant and spend my days in prayer. My left hand does the 'puja' while my right hand the 'namaz'. Both are the same in the eyes of the Lord." He spoke in a soft, husky voice, the words rolling off his tongue

easily and smoothly as if he had said them many times.

As he finished talking, two servants came in with a pitcher of hot water, a basin and towels.

“Honorable sirs, allow us to wash the dirt and grime from your feet,” said one of them.

Guru ji replied, “Do not trouble yourselves; we are fine and don’t need anything.” Then He turned to the owner and inquired, “Friend, what is your name?”

“I am called Sajjan, friend of all, enemy of none!” he replied. “Both Hindus and Muslims love me, thus I have two names – Sajjan Shah and Sheikh Sajjan.”

Mardana was very uneasy; he felt stifled and had a strong urge to rush out into the fresh air. “Some evil smell comes from these people,” he thought. “But I must be patient. Guru ji had warned me earlier.”

With a deep bow Sajjan and his attendants left the room. In the evening, the two men came in bearing dishes of steaming hot food. They laid a table and urged Guru ji and Mardana to eat.

Guru ji smiled but declined the invitation, “We are not hungry and we do not need anything else. We are staying only for the night and shall be on our way in the morning.”

Sajjan had quietly entered the room and said in a cajoling voice, “How can I eat if my honoured guests go hungry! Won’t God punish me?”

Guru ji smiled kindly and said, “It is possible that He might punish you if you force us to eat!”

Sajjan looked startled at Guru ji’s remark, then he shrugged and said, “Everything is cooked with great care and cleanliness. Why do you then refuse?”
Guru ji asked Mardana, “Are you hungry?”

Mardana shook his head vigorously and said, “It is very strange Master, but I seem to have lost my appetite suddenly.”

“Well, if that’s the way you feel, I shall have all these dishes taken away. May I send some warm milk instead? It will help you to get sound sleep,” said Sajjan with a beseeching look.

Guru ji looked gravely at him and said, "You are needlessly going to all this trouble. Please, don't worry about us. It is very late and you must be tired." Then very softly, as if speaking to himself, Guru ji murmured, "A fisherman casts his net to catch fish but sometimes, a crocodile gets caught instead."

Sajjan almost dropped the dish he had picked up. Turning towards Guru ji, he gave Him a burning look and in a sharp voice asked, "What did you say?" Then he cleared his throat and reverting to his soft tone said, "It seems you are displeased with me."

Guru ji replied in a very serious voice, "We are never displeasd with man, only his misdeeds. You have given us shelter; we shall pray for you."

Sajjan shook his head as if to clear away some confusion then said in a resigned tone," So be it. This is your home and I want you to be comfortable in it."

Guru ji gave a twinkling smile and remarked," This is the second time you have said that this is our home. Be careful for it just might become ours!"

Sajjan bowed to his guests and departed. He went to a room where sat two men and an ugly old woman. Sajjan looked at his cronies and questioned, "Well, what do you think? Are they poor 'sadhus' or rich merchants, dressed in shabby garments to hide their wealth?"

One of the thugs commented, "There is only one way to find out. All of you go to sleep. I shall keep watch on them through the peep-hole. As soon as they are asleep, I shall search their bundles and steal the valuables hidden there."

The old hag gave a horrible cackle revealing blackened teeth. She spoke in a hoarse, harsh voice, "You are merely wasting time. They are two against the four of us."

Let us tie them up and take them down to the cellar. If they have money, we shall take it and then kill them and throw their bodies into the well. We have killed so many earlier that another two won't make any difference."

She had just finished speaking, when the sweet notes of a musical instrument came echoing down the passage. The four of them became very still. After a while Sajjan got up and as if in a trance

walked back to Guru ji's room. Mardana was playing a stringed instrument and Guru ji was sitting with His eyes closed. A beautiful glow radiated from Him and seemed to fill the room. Sajjan sat down in one corner and as the music and the serenity of the atmosphere worked their magic on his troubled mind, he slept.

Soon, however, he saw shadowy figures moving threateningly towards him. He was horrified to see the faces of the people he had looted and murdered in the past.

They glared at him with burning eyes, raised their fists and screamed, "Kill him! Kill him! Don't let him escape! He is a sinner, a murderer, a thief! Kill him!" And they came at him again and again, biting, scratching, tearing at his hair and clothes. One of them put his hands around Sajjan's throat and began to strangle him.

With a gasp, Sajjan awoke. He was sweating and trembling. He looked about him in terror, but there were no screams and shouts of vengeful people. He saw only Guru ji and Mardana. He heaved a sigh of relief; it had only been a ghastly nightmare!

Just then Guru ji began to sing a 'shabad' about a person whose life is so full of black deeds, that nothing can make it clean and pure again.

Ujjal Kaiha Chilkana Ghotim Kalrhi Muss

Dhoteyan Jootth Na Utraiy Jay Sau Dhova Tiss

(Soohi Mahala 1 Ghar 6)

As Guru ji sang, Sajjan felt as if this was a picture of his evil life. Slowly, it began to dawn on him that the person in front of him was not an ordinary mortal but a man of God, who knew all about the real Sajjan. A deep feeling of shame and regret grew in his heart, till he felt that it would burst. He rushed forward and threw himself at Guru ji's feet, crying, "Save me! Oh, save me! I have done such terrible things, robbing and killing helpless people when they came to me for shelter! Hundreds of them I have murdered and thrown into a deep well. I will burn in hell! Forgive me, O holy one, only you can save me."

Guru ji looked with pity at Sajjan as he wept and groveled at His feet, confessing his terrible crimes.

He insisted on showing Guru ji, his chamber of horrors – a room full of poisons, sharp daggers, thick ropes and other wicked tools of his evil trade.

Mardana shuddered at the sight and said to himself,” Dhan Guru Nanak! Dhan Guru Nanak! You are the true Saviour! Without fear you go into the homes of men who are capable of such fearsome deeds. You make them face the results of their wrong-doings and bring them to the path of truthful and honest living. Glory be to you!”

Guru ji spoke to Sajjan at great length, making him realize the depths to which he had sunk. But He also reassured him and showed him the way to save his soul.

“Return all that you have stolen to the families of the victims and distribute the rest to the poor and needy.

Destroy this place and with your own hands build a ‘dharamsala’ where the weary travelers can get rest and food. Work hard with your own hands and use the money to run this place. Above all, remember your Creator -Waheguru - and ask His forgiveness. He is our loving father and will grant you peace.

But you have to work hard and with discipline to receive this divine gift.”

Setting Sajjan on the right path, Guru ji left with Mardana to start the next stage of His journey.