

## Readings from the Sikh tradition

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“No one now is my enemy, nor is anyone a stranger to me and I am a friend of all.”

*Guru Granth Sahib p1299*

### **The Story of Bhai Khanaya**

Bhai Khanaya, from the village of Sodhara in the district of Gujranwala, was proud to have an audience with Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was prouder still when he was entrusted with the sewa (service) of fetching water for the community kitchen.

In April 1687 the Sikhs were attacked in battle by the Pathans. The Guru gave Bhai Khanaya the duty of serving water to the needy in the battlefield. Hindus, Muslims, Sikhs and Pathans were given water by him. Refreshed by the water, they began fighting again.

When the Sikhs saw Bhai Khanaya serving water to their enemy they were angry and complained to the Guru, ‘if Bhai Khanaya stops serving water to the wounded soldiers of the enemy they will surely die, instead he is helping them to fight again.’ They beseeched the Guru to stop him.

The Guru called Bhai Khanaya and asked him whether it was true that he was serving water to the enemy troops.

Bhai Khanaya replied, ‘Oh True Lord, I do not see any enemy. I behold you everywhere. Who should I refuse water to and who should I serve? I serve anyone who is in need of water and comes to me. You yourself bestowed to me the service of giving water to those in need.’

The Guru was pleased to hear this answer. Giving him balm and bandages, the Guru said, ‘Bhai Khanaya, from now on, as well as serving water, you should also bandage the wounded. Take other Sikhs with you but you will be the leader of the team.’

Bhai Khanaya did as the Guru had requested. He set up a band of Sikhs to look after the needy and wounded. Bhai Khanaya’s band were known as the ‘Sewa panthi.’

*Translated by Santokh Singh Jagdev*

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