



As I entered the borders of Punjab to attend the 'Hanumat Shakti Jagran', I came face to face with an incredible scene. Traffic had come to a standstill on the road. I thought that it was perhaps a border check-post. But, when the traffic refused to budge, I asked our workers to find out what the stoppage was about. They immediately replied that the halt was because of the " langar" at the pious occasion of 'Shahidi Jod Mela' and 'langars' like these are being organised all over Punjab . People were being offered 'prasaad.' Because of the trust and belief, people were waiting patiently to receive the prasaad.

This fair has a very inspiring history behind it. The whole world knows about the the 10th guru of the Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh. He was a great warrior, commander, religious preacher, Dharma Rakshak, thinker, poet and a litterateur. He was also an outstanding individual when it came to sacrifices in personal life. When he was only 10, he had inspired his father, Guru Tegh Bahadur for sacrifice to save Dharma. Subsequently, two of his sons laid down their lives for the country and religion in the battle of Chamkaur against the Mughals. His other two sons, Jorawar Singh and and Fateh Singh, too, were caught by the Mughals in Sirhind. They were offered a prosperous life under the tutelage of Islam or else being cemented alive in a brick wall. But, the valiant sons of the Guru chose death over an easy, life of prosperity. When the elder brother saw the wall reached his younger brother's nose, he could not hold back his tears. Seeing this, the younger brother asked, "Are you scared of death?" In reply to this, what the elder brother said has perhaps never been said in the history of mankind. He said, "You came into this world after me, but you are now having the privilege of dying for the country before me." The indomitable spirit of sacrifice for the country and religion cannot be seen anywhere else in the world. Despite losing his four sons and father at the altar of sacrifice for the country and religion, Guru Gobind Singh had no regret. Consoling his wife, he said, "What if the four are no more, you have a thousand sons." The whole Hindu society was for him like his son, for whom, he sacrificed everything.

In commemoration of the feats of these great warriors, fairs are being organised In Sirhind, and langars dot the landscape of Punjab. It is only in India that a fair organised to commemorate the sacrifices of its warriors takes on the hue of a festival. Not only do people of this country lay down their lives for their country and religion, but also transforms these sacrifices into a festival to keep the spirit of sacrifice alive.