# The story of Bhai Kanhaiya and Guru Gobind Singh

Bhai Kanhaiya (1648-1718) was a man whose life shows commitment to Sikh principles of caring for others, whether friends, neighbours or even enemies.

Bhai Kanhaiya was the son of a wealthy trader. When young, it is said that he often carried coins to give to people who were poor and in need. And, as he grew up, it is also said that he helped poor workers by carrying their loads to give them a rest.

What we know for sure is that Bhai Kanhaiya developed a desire to know more of the ways of God. He was initiated as a Sikh and he studied under, and served, two Gurus. After some years of study and service, he established a community of teaching and serving. His particular focus was **sewa** (selfless service of humanity) regardless of a person’s nationality, status or religious tradition.

In 1705 he was on a visit to Anandpur when it was attacked and a big battle began. Whenever the fighting eased, Bhai Kanhaiya was seen moving among the fallen soldiers with a goatskin pouch of water. This caused Bhai Sahib to be criticised by other Sikhs, who complained to the Guru Gobind Singh, because Bhai Kanhaiya was giving out water to **all** and **any** fallen soldiers, including the enemy soldiers!

The Guru summoned Bhai Kanhaiya and 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 replied **"Yes, my Guru, what they say is true. But Maharaj, I saw no Mughal or Sikh on the battlefield. I only saw human beings. And, ... Guru Ji, .. they all have the same God’s Spirit? – Guru Ji, have you not taught us to treat all God's people as the same?"**

The Guru was very pleased with the reply, **"Bhai Kanhaiya, you are right, you have understood the true message of** [**Gurbani**](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Gurbani)**"**. **(Gurbani is a word for Sikh holy writings.)**  Guru Gobind Singh then told the Sikhs who had complained, that Bhai Kanhaiya had understood the deeper message of the Gurus' teachings correctly.

The Guru then gave Bhai Kanhaiya some medicinal ointment and said, **“From now on, You should also put this ointment on the wounds of all who need it”'**

Then the Guru said to all, **“ Bhai Kanhaiya is a God-fearing saintly soul. Let him carry on with his mission. Many more will follow in his footsteps in the years to come and keep the tradition of** [**Nishkam**](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Nishkam)[**sewa**](https://www.sikhiwiki.org/index.php/Sewa) **(selfless service) alive."**