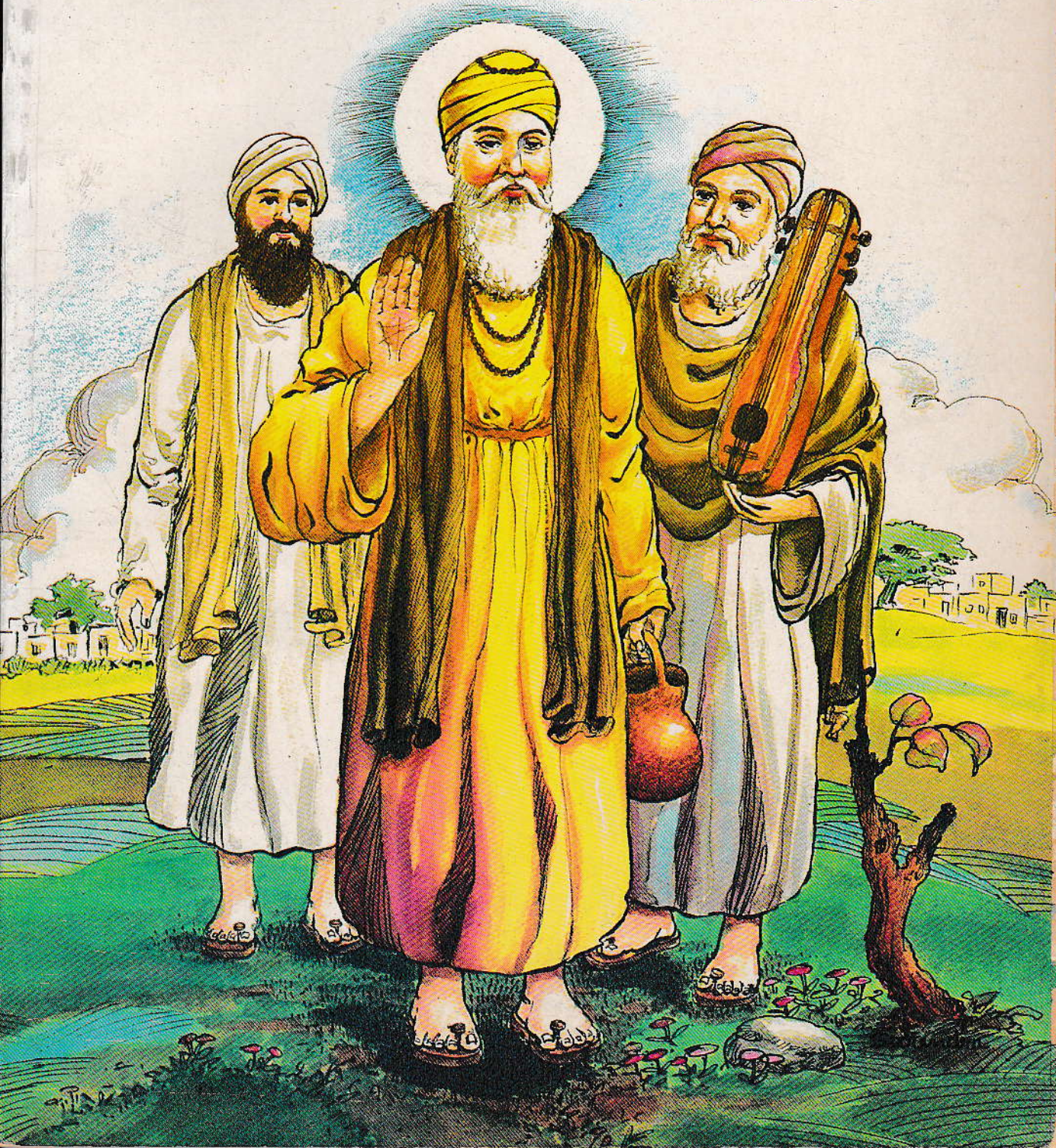


THE SIKH GURUS

LIFE AND TIMES

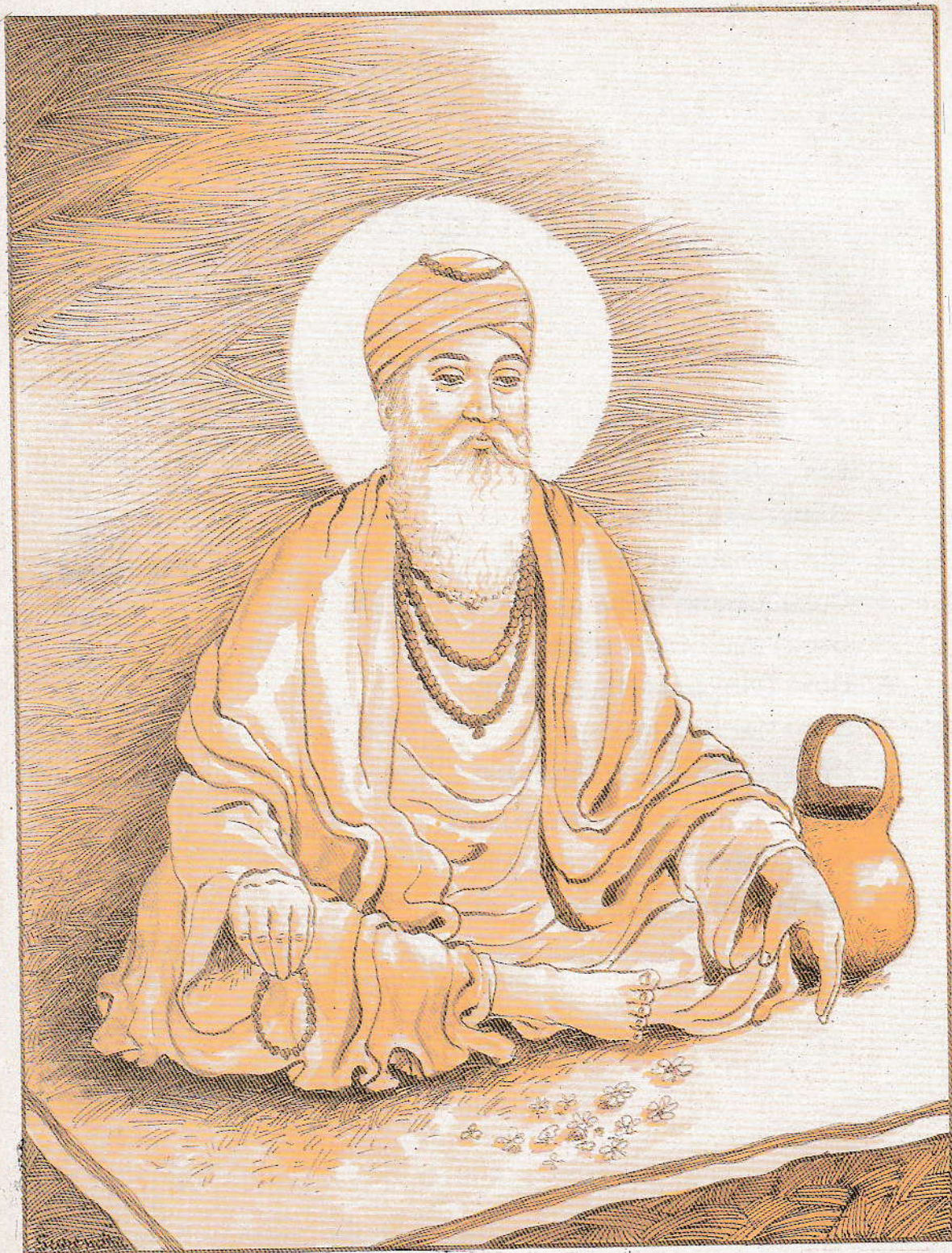


MADHUBAN
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BOOKS



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Guru Nanak

Sikhism:

A Brief History

INDIA is a vast country with a rich and varied heritage. In this unique country are followed several religions such as Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, Jainism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism.

Unlike other religions, Sikhism is comparatively a young religion. It is less than six hundred years old, for its founder Guru Nanak was born only in 1469.

When Guru Nanak appeared on the scene, India was being ruled by Muslim kings. In their enthusiasm to convert non-Muslims to Islam, these rulers oppressed their subjects in several ways. They imposed the *Jezia* — a religious tax paid by all non-Muslims. The most important posts were reserved only for the Muslims. To add to their misery, some ruthless rulers showed open disrespect to some non-Muslim places of worship.

As if the tyrannical Muslim rulers were not bad enough for the Hindus, their own 'pandits' and 'brahmins' too had begun to exploit them by forcing upon them futile and expensive ceremonies and rituals. Such acts of the religious preachers only helped to strengthen the evil caste system.

It was not only Hinduism that went downhill; even Islam witnessed deterioration. In fact both the religions were being corrupted by the high priests and religious authorities of their respective faiths.

At this juncture, when Guru Nanak offered them the simple 'Sikh' religion, teaching the 'Oneness of God', there were many willing followers.

According to Guru Nanak there is but one God, whose name is Truth. He cites this simple concept in the following three magic

words : 'EK OMKAR SATNAM'*

Guru Nanak thought of God as the supreme being: universal, all powerful and truthful. He placed TRUTH and GOD above all religious ceremonies and manifestations.

All the other Sikh Gurus who followed Guru Nanak, preached his teachings and wisdom, which they repeated in their own characteristic way.

These teachings by the Sikh Gurus are compiled in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the holy book of the Sikhs. It includes hymns by the Sikh Gurus as well as those of Hindu, Muslim and the so-called untouchable saints and sages. It is written in the spoken idiom of the people to whom the Masters delivered their message of devotion to God and service to humanity. The Sikhs regard the *Granth Sahib* as the embodiment of their Gurus, who are thought of as only one person, the light of the first Guru's soul having been transmitted to each of his successors in turn.

The Sikh religion is based on the guru-disciple relationship. The very word 'Sikh' comes from the term 'shishya', which means disciple. And in Sikhism the role of the Guru is very significant, for he is the link who connects man with man and ultimately with God. Since the Guru is the bridge between man and God, he must be perfect in all respects. The Sikh Gurus were perfect and are considered as such in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

The line of the Gurus came to an end with Guru Gobind Singh. He ordered that after him the Sikhs should regard the *Guru Granth Sahib* as the living Guru.

Even though Guru Nanak's teachings formed the basic principles of Sikhism, yet under the later Sikh Gurus the religion acquired a militant complexion. This was primarily due to the executions of Guru Arjan and Guru Tegh Bahadur at the hands of the Mughal rulers.

After Guru Nanak's death in 1539, Guru Angad became the next

* ੴ ਸਤਿਨਾਮੁ ਕਰਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਨਿਰਵੈਰ
ਅਕਾਲਿ ਮੂਰਤਿ ਅਜੂਨੀ ਸੈਭੰ ਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥

Guru. After Guru Angad's death in 1552, Guru Amardas succeeded him. Like the founder, Guru Angad and Guru Amardas had set before their disciples very high examples of personal conduct. Guru Amardas died in 1574. He was succeeded by Guru Ramdas, one of the most revered Gurus, to whom goes the credit of creating a rallying centre in Amritsar.

His successor Guru Arjan assembled the hymns of his predecessors and compiled these, alongwith his own and those of other Indian saints, into the *Granth Sahib*.

Guru Arjan's increasing popularity among Hindus and Muslims aroused suspicion in the mind of Emperor Jehangir. He ordered that Guru Arjan should be tortured and put to death.

When Guru Arjan was cruelly put to death by Jehangir, the Sikhs became livid with rage. They took up arms against their oppressors. In his book, *The Sikhs*, General Gordon states:

This became the turning point of their history and started the struggle which changed the whole character of the reformatory movement.

Thus the seeds of political leadership were sown. After his father Guru Arjan's execution, the sixth guru, Guru Hargobind inspired the Sikhs with his own spirit of revenge and hatred towards their oppressors.

Guru Hargobind was primarily a saint, a Guru, the sixth in direct spiritual inheritance from Guru Nanak. He had taken to martial ways with a view to creating among his people a will to resistance and preparing them to stand up to the tyranny and oppression of the ruling race. It was Guru Hargobind who militarized the Sikhs. Under his able guidance and stewardship, new members were added in great numbers to the band of disciples.

Guru Hargobind was succeeded by Guru Har Rai, whose assistance to the fugitive philosopher prince—Prince Dara Shikoh—excited Aurangzeb's wrath. Aurangzeb wreaked his vengeance upon Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth guru, who had stood up for the cause of the Kashmiri Brahmins, whom Aurangzeb wished to convert to Islam.

Aurangzeb ordered the beheading of Guru Tegh Bahadur. Al-

ready the hatred against their oppressors was steadily mounting and the execution of the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, father of Guru Gobind Singh, seemed the climax which helped establish "Sikhism as a religion and a military power to reckon with."

Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth and last of the Gurus, was impressed by the idea that God had been sending saviours from time to time to uphold righteousness and to destroy evil. He felt that he himself had this mission to perform in his own country which suffered under the yoke of religious and political tyranny.

Thus, the Sikhs found in their tenth and last guru, Guru Gobind Singh, "the combined qualities of a religious leader, king, warrior and law giver."**

** *The Sikhs* by General Gordon.

Guru Nanak

(1469 - 1539)

THE CHILD GURU

GURU Nanak Dev, the first guru of the Sikhs, was born in 1469 in a village named Talwandi, which later came to be called Nankana Sahib, now in Pakistan. His father's name was Mehta Kalu and his mother's name was Tripta. His sister, Nanki, was five years his senior.

Even as a child, Guru Nanak seemed different from the other children of his age. While the others indulged in sports, fun and frolic, Nanak spent most of his time in isolation and meditation. He exhibited some extraordinary traits. He slept only for a few hours, ate small quantities of food and spoke little, only when necessary. No 'fakir' or 'sadhu' ever left his home empty-handed. He gave them alms and shared his food and clothing with them.

Despite being a precocious child, Nanak had a large number of friends, with whom he played 'kabaddi' and hide and seek. He loved to entertain them. He used to take them home and ask his mother to serve them home-made sweets.

He often gathered his friends under a shady peepul tree, and sang in praise of God Almighty. His friends would sing after him. He was gifted with a melodious voice. Many a passer-by would stop to listen to his enchanting songs and, more often than not, start singing with him and his friends.

When Nanak was six years old, his father Mehta Kalu decided to send him to the village school. Nanak was very sharp and quickly learnt everything that the teacher could possibly teach him.

One day Nanak wrote down a hymn for the benefit of his teacher which can be loosely rendered as follows:

The one Lord who created the world is the Lord of all. Fortunate is their advent into the world, whose hearts remain attached to God's service. O foolish man, why hast thou forgotten Him? When thou adjustest thine account, my friend, thou shalt be deemed educated. The Primal Being is the Giver; He alone is True. No account shall be due by the pious man who understandeth by these means of letters, praise Him whose limit cannot be found. They who practise truth and perform service shall obtain their reward. He who knoweth divine knowledge is the learned pandit....

On reading the hymn, Guru Nanak's teacher stood awestruck. He bowed before his new student with folded hands and proclaimed him his Guru.

The child Guru then gave up going to the village school. After some time his father engaged a Muslim teacher for him. He taught Persian to Guru Nanak. Being a bright pupil, he proved to be a quick learner. He soon took leave of his teacher but before saying good-bye to him, he taught him to be good, honest, and truthful. He said to him, "Always remember God is the father of us all. We are all His children. We should love one another. We should all live together like one family."

The Muslim teacher bowed before his bright pupil and said, "Since you have taught me a good and useful lesson, you are my teacher and I am your pupil."

NANAK, THE CATTLE GRAZER

Nanak's father didn't know how to keep him engaged. So on the advice of Rai Bular, his employer, Kalu thought of asking Nanak to take the cattle out for grazing. He knew that Nanak loved to walk about in the forest and as a cattle grazer he could spend his leisure hours roaming around.

When this proposal was set before Nanak, he willingly agreed. He used to take the cattle out to lush green meadows, where it grazed to its heart's content. While the cattle grazed, Nanak would fix his

mind on God.

One day, while meditating, Nanak seemed to be in a trance. He was totally oblivious of his surroundings. The cattle meanwhile crossed over into a farmer's field.

When the farmer saw the cattle destroying his crop, he was very angry. He drove the cattle out of his field to where Nanak was sitting. He shouted at him but there was no response. Then he shook him by the shoulder. Nanak still kept quiet.

In a fit of rage; the farmer went straight to Rai Bular and complained, "Mehta Kalu's cattle has ruined my crop. His son, the cattle grazer, has been fast asleep for so long that the cattle has had a heyday feasting on my standing crop. I beseech you to order Mehta Kalu to compensate for the loss suffered by me on account of his son's carelessness."

Rai Bular sent for Mehta Kalu and Nanak. He asked Mehta Kalu to make up for the farmer's loss. Mehta Kalu felt sad and humiliated. He spoke harshly to Nanak. Nanak, however, was calm and said to Rai Bular: "Kindly send your men to assess the extent of damage done to the farmer's field."

Rai Bular sent his men to the field. These men were accompanied by the farmer. On reaching the field they were astonished to see the crops intact.

Rai Bular's men went back and reported the matter to him. They said that the farmer had cooked up a story about his damaged field. Rai Bular was very angry with the farmer for telling a lie.

The farmer said, "Sir, I promise I did not lie to you. The cattle had really devoured more than half my crop. But now when I went with your men to inspect the field, the crops seemed greener and better than they had ever been. It seems like a miracle!"

Rai Bular explained the mystery. He said, "Our Nanak loves God. He thinks of Him day and night. God loves Him. It is God's love for Nanak that has made your crop green again. I bow my head before him."

Rai Bular then turned towards Mehta Kalu and said, "Nanak is a great man. Be kind to him. If he causes you any loss, I shall make it good to you."

A COBRA AT HIS SERVICE

For some years, Guru Nanak continued working as a cattle grazer. Every morning he set out with the cattle for the forest. Until noon, the cattle grazed. Once the sun became hot and unbearable, Nanak drove the cattle to a shady patch and while the cattle lay resting under the trees, he sat on the grassy ground, lost in meditation.

One hot summer day a strange thing happened. Guru Nanak was fast asleep under a shady tree. The cattle was resting near him. After a while, hot rays of the sun began to fall on his face.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a large cobra appeared. The cobra was big, black and poisonous. It moved towards Nanak's head and spread out its large wide hood. Its hood served as a kind of umbrella, which protected Nanak's face against the scorching rays of the mid-day sun. Unaware of what was happening around him, Nanak slept peacefully under the shade of the cobra's massive hood.



At that time Rai Bular happened to pass that way. He spotted Guru Nanak lying on the grassy ground unaware of the big black

cobra beside him. It was, indeed, an alarming sight to behold. He thought perhaps the cobra had bitten and killed Nanak. He rushed in his direction. When the cobra saw a man approaching, it folded its hood and turned away.

Much to his relief, Rai Bular found Guru Nanak fast asleep. The rays of the sun were dancing upon his serene face. He was breathing rhythmically.

Rai Bular was filled with joy and wonder. He said to himself, "Nanak is very dear to God. It was God who had made the cobra shade his face from the hot sun. Praise be to God ! How wonderful !"

He alighted from his horse, went close to Guru Nanak and woke him up. He bowed his head before him and touched his feet. Then he embraced him and planted a kiss on his forehead.

"SACHCHA SAUDA"

Having worked as a cattle grazer for several years, Nanak gave up that work. His father tried him out in several vocations but none could hold his interest for long.

Nanak felt happiest in the company of sadhus and fakirs. He enjoyed having religious discourses with them. His father did not like this at all. He wanted him to earn a decent livelihood, marry and raise a family like any ordinary man. So he packed him off with a large sum of money to try out his luck in business.

Accompanied by a friend, Bhai Bala, Nanak set out towards a nearby town Chuharkana, where he spotted a group of hungry sadhus in a grove of shady trees. Despite protests from Bhai Bala, the kind-hearted Nanak spent all his money on feeding the holy men. According to him, it was the best bargain he could strike with his capital. This was the 'sachcha sauda' or 'good bargain'.

THE ENLIGHTENED ONE

Unhappy with their son's unworldly ways, Nanak's parents thought marriage might help bring about a change in their son. So Nanak was married at the age of fourteen to Sulakhani, daughter of Mula from

Batala (a district of Gurdaspur).

Marriage did little to alter the ways of Nanak. He persisted in doing no work towards his livelihood, and his father and mother reproached him for his idleness. At last it was decided to send him to Sultanpur where Nanki's husband, Diwan Jai Ram, was in the service of Nawab Daulat Khan, the Governor of Sultanpur.

Nawab Daulat Khan appointed Nanak as the storekeeper of his 'modikhana', where he discharged his duties well and won over the Nawab. Out of the provisions allowed to him, he retained a very small portion for his own maintenance while the rest he gave to the poor. He spent most of his time singing hymns in praise of the Creator.

If when weighing out provisions, he went as far as number thirteen—'tera'—*he would pause and repeat the word several times before weighing further.

It was here at Sultanpur that the minstrel, Mardana, came from Talwandi and became Nanak's constant companion. Nanak's other friends too followed. He introduced them to the Nawab and procured employment for them. They all got a living by Nanak's favour, and were happy.

At dinner time the friends would get together, and sing hymns. At dawn, Nanak used to go to the neighbouring Beni river to perform his abulations, after which he went to discharge the duties of his office.

One day after bathing, Nanak seemed to disappear. It is recorded in his *Janamsakhi* that while bathing in the river, he was lifted up by angels and taken to heaven, where he got his commission from God to preach Truth and reclaim the 'lost'.

The Guru stood up and made a prostration. He then sang the following verse to the accompaniment of heavenly music:

Were I to live for millions of years and
drink the air for my nourishment

Were I to dwell in a cave where I beheld not sun or moon,

* The word 'tera' also means 'thine', that is, "I am thine, O Lord."

and could not even dream of sleeping,
I should still not be able to express Thy worth;
How great shall I call Thy name?

THE GURU PRAYS AT THE MOSQUE

On the morning of the third day, the early bathers saw the Guru on the banks of the Beni. He remained silent for one day and the next day he uttered the words, "There is no Hindu and no Musalmaan."

When this strange spectacle was reported to the Nawab, he sent for the Guru asking him to resume work. Guru Nanak said, "I am no more the Nawab's servant. From hence forward I would serve only God." This declaration of independence annoyed the Nawab.

He again sent for the Guru and asked the Qazi to interrogate the Guru regarding his utterance. On being questioned, Guru Nanak replied, "It is true that thousands call themselves Musalmaans and thousands call themselves Hindus. All the same, there is no Hindu and there is no Musalmaan for both have forgotten their true religions. Since all Hindus and Musalmaans are sons of the same father, they are brothers and should live together. But they are not doing so. A true Hindu and a true Musalmaan must not do anything to displease God."

The Qazi was astonished at Guru's profound thoughts. The Nawab fell at the Guru's feet and said, "You are right. God has spoken through your mouth." Even the congregation at the Nawab's court bowed before the Guru.

It was now time for the 'namaaz'. The Nawab requested him to join his Muslim brothers. The Guru readily accepted the invitation and entered the mosque. Up rose the Qazi and began the service. The Guru looked towards him and smiled. When the prayer was over, the Qazi complained to the Nawab of Guru Nanak's conduct. The Nawab asked why the Guru had smiled during the solemn service. The Guru said, "I smiled because the Qazi's prayer was not accepted by God. His mind was not in the prayer. In fact, immediately before

the prayer service, he had untied a new-born filly. While he was performing divine service, his mind was filled with fear lest the filly should fall into the well in the courtyard."

The Guru even ticked off the Nawab. He said to him, "While you were pretending to pray, you were actually thinking of purchasing horses in Kabul."

Both the Nawab and the Qazi admitted the truth of the Guru's statements and prostrated at his feet. In an outburst of affection and admiration, the Nawab offered the Guru his own authority and estate which the Guru promptly refused to accept. He preferred to go back into the society of religious men. After a short stay with the holy men, the Guru, accompanied by Mardana, proceeded to Saiyidpur (the present city of Eminabad) in the Gujranwala district of the Punjab, now in Pakistan.

BREAD MADE OF MILK AND HONEY

Together they travelled to Eminabad. There lived several rich people, who often invited Guru Nanak to dine with them. He, however, nearly always declined their offer in favour of a carpenter named Bhai Lalo.

In those days carpenters were looked upon as low-caste Hindus and since Guru Nanak was a high caste Khatri, people of his caste objected to his eating in Bhai Lalo's kitchen. The Guru tried to explain to them that all men are equal. He added, "One who does good or noble deeds should be treated as a high-caste man while one who indulges in evil or low deeds is the real low caste man."

Eminabad, where Bhai Lalo lived, was ruled by a Muslim sardar called Zalim Khan and Malik Bhago was his greedy, proud and cruel manager. One day Malik Bhago invited brahmins and sadhus to a great feast. He also invited Guru Nanak who did not accept the invitation. Insulted, the Malik summoned the Guru through his servants.

The Malik asked Guru Nanak sharply, "You are a Khatri, you live and dine with a Shudra and refuse to accept my invitation to dinner. What is the reason for your refusal?"

The Guru said, "I only accept what is palatable to me and since your food doesn't agree with me, I do not wish to take your offer."

Malik Bhago demanded an explanation for this bold statement. The Guru asked him to fetch some food from his kitchen. The Malik's men brought a dish of rich food. The Guru, who had in his possession a piece of Bhai Lalo's coarse bread, held the same in his right hand. He held some of Malik's heavily garnished and seasoned bread in the left hand and squeezed both the pieces. Drops of milk trickled from Bhai Lalo's bread while drops of blood oozed from Malik Bhago's piece of bread.

The Guru explained why it was so. He said, "Bhai Lalo is a simple, God-fearing man. He earns his bread by the sweat of his brow. He shares his earnings with others. Such a person's bread is as pure as his heart and is sweet like milk and honey. Your bread, on the contrary, is earned by cruelty, greed and deceit. You deprive innumerable people of their bread to earn yours. How can I agree to partake of your food, which is smeared with the poor people's blood?"

Overcome by the Guru's words, Malik Bhago fell at his feet and asked him to guide him and help him to attain pardon for his past sins. The Guru advised him to make an honest living and distribute all his wealth amongst the poor and the needy. He asked Malik Bhago to be kind, to love all men as his brothers and serve the less fortunate.

About material wealth Guru Nanak said:

It is gathered, not without sins;

But it does not go with us

At the time of death.

ROBBER TURNED SAINT

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana continued their travels in short stages through the entire length and breadth of the country and as far beyond as Tibet, China, Ladakh and Ceylon, now called Sri Lanka.

Once during these sojourns, the Guru and his companion arrived at a place called Talamba, in Multan district, now in Pakistan. There lived a man called Sajjan. He was really no 'sajjan'. Outwardly, he

appeared a pious man and pretended to work for the welfare of the people, especially the travellers. He had built a mosque, a temple and a rest house. At the rest house, weary travellers were given free food and bedding. What more could a traveller ask for? His hospitality attracted a large number of travellers. But there was more to it. Once the travellers were comfortably settled and asleep, Sajjan had them killed and their bodies thrown into a nearby well. He collected all their belongings and grew rich by amassing wealth in this evil fashion.

Stories of Sajjan's hypocrisy and evil deeds had also reached Guru Nanak. He decided to visit him and reform him. Sajjan and his men welcomed the Guru and his companion. When the Guru asked him his name Sajjan replied with pride, "My name is Sajjan. The Hindus call me Sajjan Mal while the Muslims call me Sajjan Shah. But I am neither a Hindu nor a Muslim. I am a 'sajjan', or friend, and I serve all who come to me."

The Guru looked at him thoughtfully and said, "Do you really act like a 'sajjan' or a good person as your name suggests?"

Sajjan replied in the affirmative. The Guru said, "You may deceive people but you cannot deceive God. He watches and knows all your deeds. For your wicked deeds you shall surely be punished by God. Take heed! There is still time for you to mend your ways in order to win God's forgiveness and love."

The Guru's sermon went straight to Sajjan's heart. He broke down and wept. Between sobs, he assured the Guru that he would try to follow the path as shown by him. He asked him to pardon his sins. Then the Guru said "Sheikh Sajjan, at the throne of God, grace is obtained by two things—open confession and reparation for wrong."

As advised by the Guru, Sajjan gave away all his wealth to the poor and turned his house into a 'dharmshala'. He became an ardent follower of the Guru after receiving 'charanpahul' 'charnamrit'. This was a form of initiation by drinking the water in which the Guru's feet had been washed. The preamble of the *Japji Sahib* was read at the same time and the ceremony was inaugurated by Guru Nanak.

AT HARDWAR

Once during his travels, Guru Nanak reached Hardwar where a religious fair was being held. Thousands of Hindus had congregated to take a holy dip in the sacred river, Ganges. They were facing East and making offerings of water to their dead forefathers.

The Guru, who did not believe in these rituals, stepped into the Ganges. He stood facing West, and made offering of water. The people around mistook him for a fool and mocked and jeered at him.



The Guru said to the people, "Why and to whom are you making this offering of the sacred water?" They promptly replied in a chorus, "This water is supposed to reach our thirsty dead forefathers up there in heaven."

Guru Nanak smiled and said, "I too am trying to water my thirsty crops miles away just as you are quenching the thirst of your dear departed souls."

The ignorant and superstitious people understood the futility of this ritual and begged forgiveness of Guru Nanak. He told them how to live and act as good, honest, truthful and God-fearing men.

KAUDA, THE CANNIBAL

During the course of his travels, Guru Nanak headed towards the Deccan in order to visit Sri Lanka. This time he was accompanied by two Jat Sikhs named Saido and Siho.

While they were wandering through a dense forest, they heard a terrible shriek. They were curious to find out about this strange happening. When they enquired of the people living around that jungle, they were told that at the edge of the forest lived a tribe which devoured human flesh and spared neither women nor young children.

Guru Nanak was greatly pained when he heard this story. He resolved to meet these cannibals and make them give up their cruel way of life.

The people tried to stop him. They said, "Don't go, holy sir. These man-eaters will kill you too and eat your flesh."

The Guru assured them, "Do not stop me from doing my duty. I have no fear, for God is always by my side. He alone will help me accomplish my mission. I have great faith in Him. He will rescue me from these cannibals. Do not fear for me, only pray to God for my success."

Accompanied by his two companions, Guru Nanak marched boldly upto the chief of the man-eaters. His name was Kauda. The Guru knew that if he succeeded in reforming Kauda, the chief would influence his tribesmen to follow suit. This way the Guru's task would become simpler and expedient.

At the sight of three men approaching, Kauda was thrilled. His "meal" was coming on a platter. His mouth started watering and his heart fluttered at the prospect of a mighty feast. Immediately he set about preparing for his dinner. He lit a fire and placed a massive frying pan full of oil in order to roast the human flesh. When the three men came close to him, he touched the oil. It was absolutely cold. It is believed that the fire had lost the power to heat the oil!

Kauda, however, was not one to give up so easily. He decided to roast atleast one of them on the open fire and preserve the other two. Since the Guru was in front, Kauda caught him with his muscular arms.

Guru Nanak seemed most unruffled. He smiled and said, "Sat Kartar !" For a moment Kauda was puzzled at the boldness of the Guru but the very next minute he flung the Guru into the fire. To his utter astonishment, Kauda found him still smiling, while Saido and Siho were saying aloud, "Sat Kartar ! Sat Kartar !"

It was indeed a miracle ! Kauda began to shake and tremble when he saw Guru Nanak step out of the fire. Kauda stood motionless. He did not even attempt to push him back into the fire. Guru Nanak sat on the ground near the fire and started singing a hymn. Kauda stood listening with rapt attention. His head was bowed and hands folded in deep reverence.

After a while, the Guru looked at Kauda with a kind smile. As Kauda fell at his feet, the Guru picked him up gently and said, "Rise, brother Kauda ! Turn over a new leaf. Give up your cruel way of life. Take a vow not to harm anyone. Be kind and merciful. Help and serve the needy. Always remember God and lead an honest life. And once you do all these yourself, go and teach your tribesmen to do the same."

Kauda took a vow to live by the advice of Guru Nanak. Thus from a killer and eater of human flesh, he turned into a servant and teacher of men.

GURU NANAK AND BABAR

Towards the end of their travels, Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana happened to visit Eminabad a second time. As was their practice, they went to Bhai Lalo's house and stayed with him.

Around that time Emperor Babar had defeated and imprisoned the people of Eminabad. Many of them had been killed. Their houses were looted and the poor unhappy people were made to carry their own looted property to Babar's camp.

Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana were also taken prisoners and given a heavy load to carry. Guru Nanak's heart ached with sorrow at the misery of the people around him. He began to sing sweet, holy songs in praise of God, which brought great solace to the sufferers.

Babar's men reported this incident to him. Babar decided to visit the prison and see things for himself. When he reached the prison, he

found Guru Nanak sitting peacefully with his eyes closed. He was singing in a melodious voice while all the prisoners sat with folded hands. Even though he could not follow the words, Babar too joined the crowd. He seemed to be under a magic spell.

When Guru Nanak stopped singing, Babar asked him the meaning of the hymn. Guru Nanak boldly explained to him that he was singing about the Emperor's cruelty and the plight of the victims:

Babar ruled over Khurasan and hath terrified Hindustan
The Creator taketh no blame to Himself; it was death disguised
as a Mughal who made war on us
When there was such slaughter and lamentation, didst not Thou,
O God, feel pain?
Creator, Thou belongest to all....

Babar was impressed by Guru Nanak's courage and truthfulness. He said to him, "What can I do for you?" Guru Nanak at once said, "Set the prisoners free and return their property and wealth which your men have so mercilessly plundered." Babar readily agreed to his request.

AT THE HOUSE OF GOD

In his twenty-first year of travels, Guru Nanak decided to go towards the West to visit the Muslim countries. He chose to go to Mecca for it is considered by the Muslims to be 'Kaaba' or 'the House of God'.

After a long and tiring journey, Guru Nanak reached Mecca with sore and swollen feet. As he needed to rest, he lay down with his feet towards the Kaaba, knowing fully well that it is a serious offence in Islam. Actually, he wanted to draw the attention of the pilgrims or 'hajis' in order to impart wisdom to them.

The hajis who saw him lying thus, began to hurl abuses at him. One of them, named Jiwan, went to the extent of kicking the Guru. He also demanded an explanation for this misconduct.

The Guru smiled and said, "I am a weary traveller and respect the House of God as much as any of you. If I have offended you in any way, kindly turn my feet in the direction where God or His house does not exist."

Jiwan dragged the Guru's feet in every possible direction, but never did the Kaaba disappear from his vision. He at once realized his folly and let go the Guru's feet. The Guru got up and asked him, "Don't you see that God's house is in every direction? He dwells in every place, in every heart. He is in your heart as well as mine."

AT KARTARPUR

By now Guru Nanak had travelled long and far and reformed many people during the course of his travels. He decided to spend the rest of his life at Kartarpur.

His daily routine started at dawn, when he woke up, bathed and recited the sacred hymns. At daybreak, he addressed a large congregation of Sikhs. After this he worked in his fields and earned his livelihood like any ordinary householder.

He also worked in his 'langar' or free kitchen for all. It was open to all irrespective of caste, creed, religion or status. But all who lived there had to do some useful work.

At the langar people worked and dined together as one big family. Consisting of both Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor, high castes and low castes, men, women and children. Here everyone enjoyed equal status.

Guru Nanak continued to follow this routine till the end. On September 22, 1539, he laid himself on a bed and asked his followers to sing 'sohila', the praise of God. He closed his eyes and went into a 'samadhi' and soon his spirit left the body. He was at that time seventy years, five months and seven days old.

Guru Angad

(1504-1552)

A DURGA WORSHIPPER TURNS SIKH

LEHNAJI, who later came to be known as Guru Angad, was born at Harike, a small village in Ferozepur district, on March 31, 1504. His father, Pheru, was a small businessman and when Babar invaded India, the family shifted to Khadur in Amritsar district.

Lehnaji worshipped Goddess Durga. Every year he led a group of worshippers to the Jwalamukhi temple situated in the Himalayas. During one of his visits to the Durga temple, he happened to hear the recitation of one of Guru Nanak's hymns by Bhai Jodha, a devotee of Guru Nanak.*

His recitation cast upon him a similar magic spell as the melodious flute of the Pied Piper upon the children of Hamelin. The hymn stirred his very soul and he decided to proceed to Kartarpur to have a glimpse of Guru Nanak.

On his way to Kartarpur, he met a tall, strong and cheerful old man. Lehnaji greeted him and asked him the way to Guru Nanak's place. The old man said gently, "Follow me, dear brother, as I am going that way myself."

* Bhai Jodha was singing a hymn a the following lines:

Ever remember that Lord by worshipping whom thou shalt find happiness
 Why hast thou done such evil deeds as thou shalt suffer for?
 Do absolutely nothing evil; Look well before thee, So throw the dice that thou
 mayest not lose with the Lord,
 Nay, that thou mayest gain some profit.

Led by the kind old man, Lehnaji followed him on horseback. When they reached the town, he pointed towards a gate and said to Lehnaji, "Guru Nanak lives there. You may enter the gate and you will find him inside the house."

Lehnaji entered the house. To his great surprise, he discovered the same old man who had directed him to that house. Lehnaji was filled with shame and remorse. He said to himself, "How foolish of me that I rode while the Guru walked ahead of me!"

Guru Nanak could read his troubled mind. He pacified him by saying, "Don't feel upset. You did nothing wrong and I did my duty as a host to serve you, my honoured guest."

Lehnaji was so much in awe of Guru Nanak that he decided to become a Sikh, a follower of the Guru:

"In the Guru's words, there is great joy and comfort,
In his hands, all boons."

Lehnaji's devotion to his Guru was unmatched and unquestionable. The Guru, too, was aware of his constantly increasing devotion yet he put his loyalty and integrity to test from time to time, until he was thoroughly convinced that in Guru Angad he had found his true successor.

DEVOTION AND HUMILITY

Once Guru Nanak had collected three bundles of grass for his cows and buffaloes; and he desired to have them taken home. The grass was wet and muddy. Since no one was willing for the task, the Guru asked his sons Sri Chand and Lakshmi Das to carry the bundles. They too evaded the duty, saying that labourer could do the job. Lehna, who had just arrived there, bowed before the Guru and said most humbly, "Consider me as your labourer and give me this job to do."

The Guru said he might take as many as his strength permitted. Lehna, gathering strength from his enthusiasm and devotion, picked up all the bundles and walked towards Guru Nanak's house.

On reaching home, the Guru's wife asked him: "Is it proper for you to impose such menial labour on a guest and soil his new clothes? See, from head to toe, he is dripping with muddy water!"



The Guru replied, "This is not mud but 'saffron of God's court which marketh the elect.'" On looking again, the Guru's wife observed that the mud on Lehna's clothes had really changed to saffron!

On another occasion, Guru Nanak sent for his sons at the dead of night and asked them to wash his soiled clothes. His sons protested in a chorus, "There is no water around. Even if we manage to wash your clothes, how are they ever going to dry at this unearthly hour?"

Guru Nanak repeated his request. His sons replied indifferently, "At the break of day, we shall have your clothes delivered to the washerman to wash. Why don't you wear a new set of clothes until then?"

The Guru made the same request to Lehnaji. He at once set about doing the assigned task with all sincerity. Early next morning he presented his master with clean, washed and dried clothes....

One winter night it poured so heavily that a part of the wall of the Guru's house collapsed. Around midnight he asked his sons to repair it. They said, "It is dark and bitterly cold. Besides, it is not our job to build or repair walls. Tomorrow morning we shall summon masons and labourers to do the work."

The Guru said to his sons, "Since it is the Guru's work, it must only be done by his Sikhs; and it must be done immediately, without any further delay."

Lehnaji, who happened to be standing next to the Guru, offered his services. He started building the wall. When he was nearly half way through, the Guru said that the wall was not straight. He asked him to demolish the half built wall and build it again. Lehnaji obeyed his master and started re-building the wall with utmost care. But the Guru was still not satisfied. He had to pull it down once more. This carried on several times.

The Guru's own sons tried to discourage Lehnaji against this task assigned to him. They said, "You can never please him. Give up the work."

But Lehnaji said, "A servant must do his master's work. It is for the master to decide what work he should assign to his servant...."

Guru Nanak used to get up early every morning to bathe in the river *Ravi*. Lehnaji would go along with him and sit near the Guru's clothes while he bathed. By now Guru Nanak had become so fond of him that he had come to be known as Baba Lehna. Some of the Guru's disciples had become jealous of Baba Lehna. One day three of these jealous Sikhs decided to do what Baba Lehna was doing for the Guru. They thought this would please their master.

It was a cold dark morning. The sky was overcast and soon it began to hail. The three Sikhs could not bear the chill and returned home. But Baba Lehna waited for the Guru to step out of the river.

When Guru Nanak reached the bank of the river where Baba Lehna was sitting by himself, he said to him, "The other Sikhs deserted me on this chilly morning. Why didn't you follow suit?"

Baba Lehna bowed humbly to his Guru and said, "A servant must never desert his master. How could I do that?"

GURU ANGAD

All these trials fully convinced Guru Nanak that in Baba Lehnaji he had found a true successor. He addressed Baba Lehnaji, "You have become so dear to me that you seem a part of me. You are my Angad, a part of my 'ang' or body."

Thus, his name was changed to Guru Angad and he became the second Sikh guru in preference to Guru Nanak's own sons. Guru Nanak told his unhappy sons that Angad alone had proved himself worthy of the guruship.

He said, "Guruship is a position which depends on self-sacrifice and Angad has exhibited this virtue in the highest degree. His sincere devotion and extreme humility have won him this honour."

The other Sikhs saw in Guru Angad the image of Guru Nanak. Thousands flocked to him to seek his blessings. Yogis and saints of different sects sought his advice. The Guru told one and all to lead a simple and pure life and shun supernatural powers.

It was Guru Angad's daily practice to rise three hours before the break of day, bathe in cold water and meditate. After his morning prayer, the Guru used to heal the sick, particularly the lepers.

Then it was time for preaching and explaining Guru Nanak's hymns to a gathering of Sikhs. Thereafter, all visitors, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and status, used to sit in a row and receive the sacred food from the langar.

Guru Angad took a keen interest in the physical fitness programme for children. He instructed them personally and organized wrestling matches for them during afternoons.

In the evening Balwanda and Satta, two famous minstrels of the time, used to entertain the 'sangat' or company with vocal and instrumental music. The evening langar was followed by further singing of sacred hymns, and then the Guru and his disciples would retire for the night.

AT KHADUR SAHIB

After attaining guruship, Guru Angad lived at Khadur Sahib, near Taran Taaran. He lived there with his family like any householder and also discharged his duties as the Guru.

Very close to his village, there lived a Jogi named Shiv Nath. People referred to him as Tapa. He was a hypocrite. He pretended to be very pious, but was very jealous of Guru Angad's growing popularity. He wanted the people of Khadur Sahib to acknowledge him as their Guru.

One year there was no rain and the fields could not be ploughed. A drought-like condition was created. Even the cattle started dying of hunger and thirst. The people of Khadur, who were simple and superstitious Jats, sought Tapa's advice. He said, "The Rain God is angry with you as you have stopped worshipping me, a holy ascetic. Instead, you now worship a householder. This is strictly against your religion. Now go and ask him to cause rain and if he refuses to do so, have him turned out of this village. And then I promise to make it rain within the next twenty-four hours."

On the advice of Tapa, the Jats approached Guru Angad. The Guru explained to them, "God alone can cause rain to fall. Nothing can happen against his will."

The Guru, however, left Khadur on his own. The Jats prayed to the Rain God but all in vain. The infuriated Jats began to shout and scream at Tapa.

About the same time Sri Amardas, the future and third Sikh Guru, arrived at Khadur. He was very unhappy with whatever had taken place. He told the Jats sharply, "Tapa has tricked you. Now I will tell you how to cause rain. Take Tapa into your fields. Wherever you take him before sunset, rain will fall in plenty there." The eager Jats dragged Tapa from field to field. They dragged him so much that he fell dead out of sheer exhaustion.

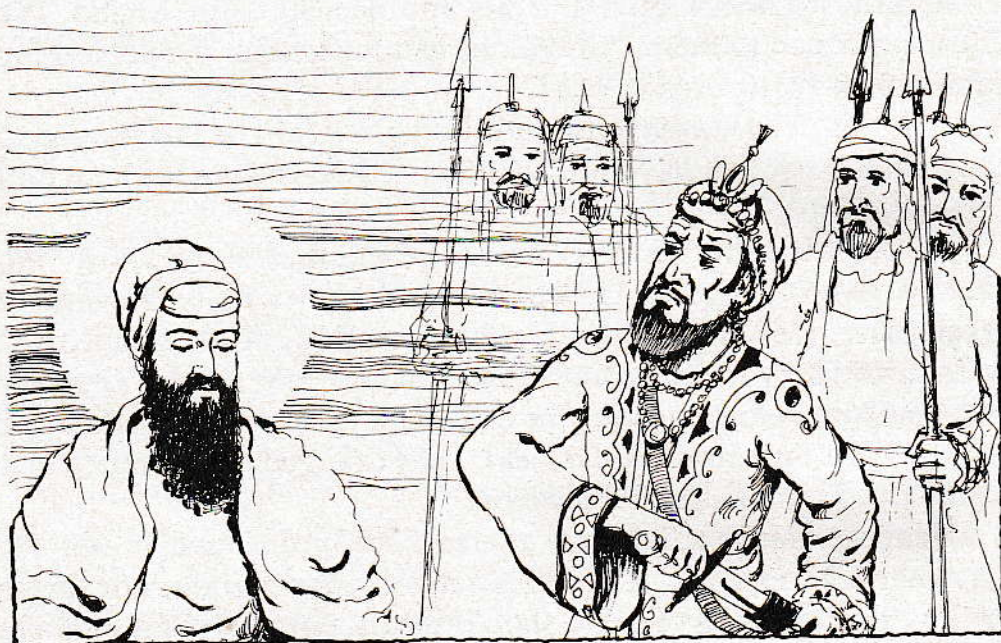
When the news of Tapa's death reached Guru Angad, he sent for Sri Amardas and said, "A good Sikh must never harbour any anger or ill-will against anyone. He should return only good for evil. He should be generous and forgiving, and willingly accept God's will." On hearing this, Amardas threw himself at Guru Angad's feet and humbly sought his pardon. He vowed to abide by the Guru's instructions.

HUMAYUN AND GURU ANGAD

During Guru Angad's time, Humayun came to the throne of India. He had to fight two consecutive battles against Sher Shah Suri and was defeated in the second battle. Near Kanauj, he suffered yet another defeat and was obliged to flee from India. He made his way to Lahore. At Lahore he enquired for some priest who could perform

miracles and help him regain his throne. He was informed of the greatness of the late Guru Nanak and his successor Guru Angad, and advised to seek the latter's assistance.

Humayun then proceeded to Khadur to meet the Guru. At that time the Guru was in deep meditation while his minstrels were playing and singing the Guru's hymns. The Emperor was kept standing. He was offended and, in a fit of rage, put his hand on the hilt of the sword and drew it out of the scabbard. He wanted to cut off the Guru's head with the sword.



The Guru opened his eyes and looked at Humayun. Then he smiled and said, "When you should have used your sword against Sher Shah, you failed to do so. Now when you come amongst the men of God, instead of saluting them respectfully, you desire to draw your sword on them. You fled from the battlefield in a cowardly manner and now you are posing as a hero who wishes to attack religious men."

Humayun hung his head in shame and craved the Guru's spiritual assistance. The Guru said, "I shall pray for you. You will get back your kingdom after sometime. But do not forget God even then. Be a just and kind ruler."

THE THIRD TEMPLE

Besides enlightening Emperor Humayun on the one hand and Sri Amardas on the other, Guru Angad also simplified his master's principles into a single formula for the benefit of the common followers—Oneness of God and Brotherhood to Man.

To Guru Angad also goes the credit of simplifying the old Punjabi characters into a new alphabet, which is now known as 'Gurmukhi'. And it was in this script that the hymns of Guru Nanak were compiled by Guru Angad.

Guru Angad thus gave to the people a gift of literature. He took great interest in the education of children and opened several schools for them. Thus in addition to the temple of bread (langar) and the temple of song (sangat) propounded by Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Angad gave them the third temple—the temple of learning.

One fine day, in the year 1609, Guru Angad gave a great feast to the Sikhs and reminded them of the principles of the Sikh religion. On the following day, he rose before dawn, bathed and wore new clothes to prepare for his final departure. He repeated the *Japji Sahib* and summoned all his dear and near ones. In his final hour he told them to accept God's will with a smile. And thus with "Wahe Guru" on his lips, he left this world after a twelve and a half year tenure of guruship.

Guru Amardas

(1479 -1574)

IN SEARCH OF A GURU

GURU Amardas, the third master, was born at Basarke in Amritsar district on May 5, 1479. His father Tej Bhan, and mother Bakht Kaur, were orthodox Hindus. Before coming in contact with Guru Angad, he was a strong believer in the Vaishnav faith. He used to fast, go on pilgrimages and observe several ceremonies. Despite all this, his mind remained restless, as if in search of something. Perhaps his mind was looking for a Guru. The following lines express his quest for a spiritual master:

How can a lotus bloom,
Without the sight of the Sun,
And how can man obtain salvation
Without a Guru.*

One fine morning he was lying on his bed on the roof of his house when he heard the hymns of Guru Nanak being sung by Bibi Amro, daughter of Guru Angad, who had recently been married to his brother's son. He sprang from his bed as if under a powerful spell and headed straight for his brother's house next door.

He hastened to Bibi Amro and asked, "Whose hymns were you reciting and who taught you these beautiful hymns?" She replied,

ਸਲੋਕ ਮ: ੩॥

ਗੁਰ ਬਿਨੁ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਨ ਹੋਵਈ ਨਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਵਸੈ ਮਨਿ ਆਇ॥
ਨਾਨਕ ਨਾਮ ਵਿਹੁਣੇ ਮਲਮੁਖੀ ਜਾਸਨਿ ਜਨਮੁ ਗਵਾਇ॥

"These hymns are composed by Guru Nanak and my father Guru Angad has instructed me to recite them daily after my morning bath."

After hearing these hymns, Amardas had a great desire to meet Guru Angad in person. At last, a visit was arranged and Bibi Amro accompanied him to her father's house. Guru Angad stood up to receive him respectfully as he was his daughter's uncle-in-law and also twenty years his senior. But Sri Amardas fell at Guru Angad's feet and said humbly, "I have not come here as a relative of yours. I have come here to be your servant. Accept me as your Sikh and grant me the honour of serving you."

From that day onwards, Amardas started living in Khadur Sahib. Daily he listened to the hymns of the Guru and took food in the 'Guru ka langar'. He used to rise early in the morning and fetch water from the river for the Guru's bath. He always discharged his duties with great joy and satisfaction.

HUMILITY AND DEVOTION

Once a wealthy Sikh presented a very costly dress made of fine material to Guru Angad. A drop of blood fell on it from a sore on the Guru's foot. It left a stain on the cloth. The Guru asked Sri Amardas to take it to the washerman to be washed. When the washerman examined the deep stain, he said, "I am afraid the stain is so stubborn that it might damage the fabric while washing it." On hearing this, Sri Amardas sucked the blood from the dress in an extreme act of humility and devotion.

When the garment was cleaned and washed, he presented it to his master and said, "Holy Master, the stain has disappeared and so also the impurity from my mind."

THE WEAVER'S WIFE GOES MAD

Guru Angad had already tested Sri Amardas many times and on each occasion he came out victorious. Every time he displayed all the virtues required to make him the next Guru.

The last and final trial came on a dark and rainy night. A couple of hours before dawn, the Guru demanded some water. None of his

sons heard him. He called a second time which again fell on deaf ears. The third time he physically shook his sons. They still showed no signs of moving or responding. Sri Amardas immediately came forward and said most humbly, "Great Master, thy slave will fetch the water." The Guru said, "You have grown too old to run such errands for me." Sri Amardas replied, "On the contrary, I have grown young on hearing my Guru's order."

And then without wasting a moment, he placed a pitcher on his head and rushed towards the nearby river. He filled his pitcher,



began to repeat the *Japji* and hastened back in the direction of the Guru's house. With the pitcher of water balanced delicately on his head, he waded through knee-deep water. Because of the rain and storm, he lost his way. While groping through the dark, he happened to go past a weaver's house. There his foot hit against a peg and he fell into the hole of the weaver's loom. Yet he held fast on to the pitcher.

On hearing the crashing sound outside their house, the weaver woke up to see who it was. His wife was quick to recognize Sri Amardas. She grumbled and said to her husband, "None other than Amru could have stirred out on some vague errand for his Guru on

a dark and stormy night like this." She went on to curse his Guru for exploiting him.

Sri Amardas could not stand a word against his Guru. He said sharply to the weaver's wife, "You have gone out of your mind or you wouldn't say such things about my Guru." Saying thus he went away with the pitcher of water for the Guru's bath.

It is believed that after this incident, the weaver's wife actually went insane until such time that her husband sought forgiveness of Guru Angad.

Guru Angad nominated Sri Amardas as his successor. He bathed him, dressed him in new clothes and seated him on the Guru's 'gaddi' or throne. He placed five copper coins and a coconut before him. He ordered Bhai Buddha, a senior Sikh, to apply 'tilak' on his forehead. Then the Guru bowed before Sri Amardas. He said before everyone present, "Sri Amardas is Guru Amardas now. He will be the Guru after me."

THE GURU HIBERNATES

Guru Amardas established his headquarters at Goindwal. His growing popularity made Guru Angad's son, Sri Datu, very jealous and angry. He publicly declared, "Amru (Guru Amardas) was my father's servant. He is my servant now. My father's throne is mine and I am the Guru." Saying this, Datu gave the Guru a hard kick. The Guru fell from his seat and Datu planted himself on the Guru's throne.

Despite the insult and physical hurt caused to him by Datu, the Guru said, "Please pardon me if my old hard bones hurt your tender foot." After saying so, Guru Amardas left Goindwal and went into hibernation in his home-village, Basarke. He refused to meet anyone or see any of his Sikhs.

None of the Sikhs acknowledged Datu as their Guru. Datu forced himself on the Guru's throne at Goindwal, but still could neither command their respect nor love. In a huff, he gathered all the wealth that he could lay his hands on, loaded it on a camel and set off for Khadur Sahib. On the way he was robbed. One of the robbers struck Datu on the same foot with which he had kicked Guru Amardas. His

foot swelled up causing him great pain. It is said that he lived with the pain for the rest of his life.

With the help of Bhai Budda, Guru Amardas' followers persuaded him to come out of hiding and return to Goindwal.

GANGU SHAH

Ganga Das or Gangu, as he was popularly known, was a rich merchant of Lahore. When he fell on evil days, he lost not only his wealth but also his friends. He had heard a lot about Guru Amardas. He decided to meet him and seek solace in his company. So he set off for Goindwal. At Goindwal he was told, "Anyone who desires to meet the Guru, must first eat at the langar."

When Gangu went to the langar he saw people of all castes sitting side by side having their meals. Being a high caste Khatri himself, Gangu was hesitant to join them but then he thought, "If I have to see the Guru then I must shed my obsession with caste and follow the Guru's rule at the langar."

After the meal the Guru gave him audience. Gangu fell at the Guru's feet and said, "I am a victim of misfortune who has lost everything. I have come to seek your protection."

The Guru said to him, "Go to Delhi and start your business afresh. Luck will favour you and your wealth and lost prestige shall be restored." The Guru, however, warned him against pride and conceit. He advised him to always remember God and serve the needy.

As advised by the Guru, Gangu went to Delhi and established his business. He also kept in mind the precious advice given to him by the Guru. And sure enough, he was once again happy and prosperous.

After some time, a poor needy brahmin of Delhi came to the Guru. He bowed before him and said, "I am a poor man with a daughter of marriageable age. I cannot meet the expenses of her marriage. Kindly help me."

The Guru gave the brahmin a letter addressed to Gangu. In the letter the Guru had asked Gangu to give the brahmin financial assistance.

But success had made Gangu conceited. He refused to help the needy brahmin. Disappointed and dejected, the brahmin returned to the Guru and narrated to him his meeting and dialogue with Gangu.

The Guru gave him the required money. The brahmin felt extremely grateful. He returned home and performed his daughter's marriage.

After some time misfortune again knocked at Gangu's door. All his wealth slowly dwindled and he was back to the streets. It didn't take him long to realize the reason for this ill-luck. He said to himself, "I disobeyed the Guru. I must go and apologize to him."

So he went to Goindwal. But he did not have the courage to face the Guru. He began to serve at the langar. While he worked, he kept reciting the Guru's hymns.

Soon the Guru sent for him. Gangu fell at his feet and begged forgiveness, which the Guru readily granted. Then he presented Gangu with a white dress and said, "Gangu Shah, you are now a true Sikh. Go and live according to the rules of the Sikh faith."

AKBAR AT THE 'LANGAR'

At Goindwal, Guru Amardas preached and expected his visitors to partake of food in Guru-ka-langar before seeing him. Even Emperor Akbar, who visited him once, sat in the langar. He was highly impressed by the practice followed in the Guru's kitchen. No distinction was made in the langar between Hindus and Muslims or between high or low castes.

Akbar wished to contribute towards the langar by granting good fertile land for growing crops. The Guru politely declined the offer saying that God had given him everything in plenty and that his Sikhs supplied whatever was necessary.

The Emperor then said, "I see that you desire nothing for yourself. Still I wish to do something for you. I need your blessings. I wished to give you a grant of some villages, you refused to accept it. I shall grant them to your daughter, Bibi Bhani. She is like a daughter to me."

Akbar signed a grant of the villages in Bibi Bhani's name. The Guru gave the Emperor a 'saropa' or dress of honour. Baba Buddha was appointed caretaker and the produce from the villages was used

for the welfare of the people.



GURU AMARDAS AND SOCIAL REFORMS

Through his preachings, Guru Amardas introduced several social reforms. He condemned the practice of 'purdah' and seclusion of women. He advocated monogamy and encouraged inter-caste alliances and remarriage of widows. He forbade the evil practice of 'sati'.

Guru Amardas, after a spiritual reign of twenty-two years, departed from this world at forenoon of the day of the full moon in the month of Bhado, *sambat* 1631 (AD 1574). There is a yearly fair held on that date at Goindwal to commemorate the Guru's merging with his Maker.

At the request of Guru Arjan, some years later, Guru Amardas' great grandson Sundardas wrote the following account of his death. The composition is called the '*Saad*' or the 'calling', and is now sung by the Sikhs on all occasions of mourning:

"By the favour of Nanak and Guru Angad, Amardas obtained the supreme position. When the message came to him to depart, he was absorbed in God's name. In this world he obtained the eternal, immovable, and unequalled God by service."



Guru Ramdas

Guru Ramdas

(1534 - 1581)

SRI JETHA AND BIBI BHANI

GURU Ramdas, whose original name was Jetha, was born at Lahore on September 24, 1534. He was a pious soul. Once he went to pay his respects to Guru Amardas and was so impressed by his teachings that he became his disciple.

Guru Amardas had two daughters. The elder, Bibi Dani, was married to Sri Ram while his younger daughter, Bibi Bhani was not yet married. By virtue of his piety, Jetha had won the heart of Guru Amardas, who married his daughter Bibi Bhani to him.

Even after his marriage to the Guru's daughter, Ramdas continued to work in the langar with all humility and sincerity. Not for a moment did he consider himself a son-in-law. His relationship with him was strictly one of Guru and his Sikh.

When the Guru began to construct a 'bawli' (a well with steps leading to the level of the water), Ramdas began to work there as a labourer. He carried basket loads of mud on his head. He did not mind soiling his fine clothes. Some people even laughed and jeered at him saying that he worked as a coolie in his own father-in-law's house.

SRI RAM OR SRI RAMDAS ?

Before his death, Guru Amardas appointed Jetha as his successor and gave him the name, Guru Ramdas. He did this after putting both his sons-in-law through a trial. Since both were pious, people wondered

who would make the next Guru out of the two.

One day Guru Amardas came to the place where the bawli was being constructed. He asked Sri Ram and Sri Ramdas to erect a platform each. When the platforms were ready, the Guru rejected them and ordered new ones to be made. Sri Ram demolished his reluctantly while Sri Ramdas brought his down without a word. This process of rejection and reconstruction carried on several times. Sri Ram ran out of patience and questioned the Guru irritably as to what was wrong with the platform while Sri Ramdas fell at the Guru's feet and confessed that he had failed to understand his Guru's orders. He added that he would try once again in the hope of succeeding in carrying out the assignment.



Guru Amardas embraced him and declared him the successful candidate for guruship. He called his sons and his principal Sikhs and addressed them thus: "Guru Nanak made the rule that guruship should go to the best person. I have found Sri Ramdas to be the most worthy upon whom I bestow guruship."

HUMILITY WINS OVER AN ENEMY

It was Guru Ramdas' devotion, patience and humility which won

him the guruship. Even Guru Nanak's elder son, Baba Sri Chand, who bore a grudge against his father for not nominating him as his successor, succumbed to his sweet humility.

Baba Sri Chand was an 'Udasi', one who has given up worldly life. He wore long hair and wandered about as a naked hermit. He refused to meet Guru Angad or Guru Amardas, but now that a long time had elapsed since his father's death, and he had partially forgotten his imaginary grievances, he decided to visit Guru Ramdas.

When he arrived in the suburbs of Goindwal, Guru Ramdas went out to receive and welcome the holy visitor. He made him an offering of a beautiful horse and five hundred rupees in cash. Sri Chand found in Guru Ramdas the very image of his father Guru Nanak. During their conversation, Sri Chand remarked that he had grown a very long beard and asked the purpose for doing so. Guru Ramdas replied in a humble voice, "O Holy Sir, I have grown this long beard in order to wipe with it the feet of holy men like you." Saying this the Guru actually started wiping Baba Sri Chand's feet with his long black beard. Baba Sri Chand was overwhelmed. He drew back his feet and said, "You are in my father's place. I should show respect to you. Because of your sweetness and humility you have taken my father's place. I have none of these virtues. I now understand and appreciate my father's gesture in not nominating me as his successor."

A WISH FULFILLED

In a certain village there lived a good man called Adam. He had no child. He and his wife prayed to God, and worshipped several sadhus and fakirs for the gift of a child.

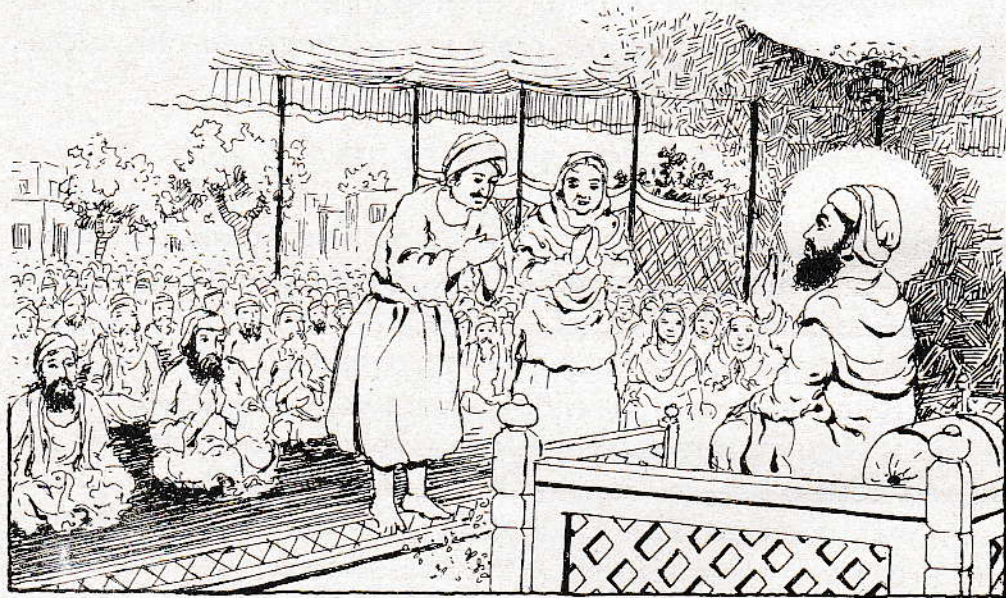
Just as they were losing hope, they met a Sikh who directed them to Guru Ramdas. He told the childless couple, "Guru Ramdas occupies Guru Nanak's throne. He will pray for you and his prayers are always accepted by God. Your wish will be fulfilled."

At that time Guru Ramdas lived at Guru-Ka-Chak, which later came to be known as Amritsar. On the Sikh's advice, the couple went to Guru-Ka-Chak. Adam prayed, meditated and listened to the hymns sung by the Sikhs. During the day he went to the nearby forest

and brought two loads of firewood. One of them he kept in his house while the other one he took to the Guru's langar.

Once Guru Ramdas had gone to a nearby place for some time. When he returned, a large number of Sikhs accompanied him. Those were cold winter months. The Sikh visitors shivered with cold. The kind-hearted Adam could not see them uncomfortable so he brought along a huge stock of dry firewood from his house with which they warmed themselves. When the Guru discovered the crackling firewood with the Sikhs comfortably squatting around it, he asked, "Who has done this service? Who has supplied firewood to all the camps?"

The Guru's cook said, "O True King, it is none other than Adam. Everyday he has been giving a load of firewood to the langar. He is a pious soul and has forever God's name on his lips. He does not take food from the langar. He lives on the money earned by the sale of some of the firewood. Today he saw the Sikhs shivering with cold so he brought firewood from his house giving some of it to each camp." The Guru was greatly pleased with Adam. He asked him to ask for a boon. Despite his earnest desire for a son, Adam lowered his eyes and said nothing.



When Adam went home, he narrated the incident to his wife. She said that he had made a grave mistake by not asking for a son. The next day, they both went to the Guru's court. The Guru coaxed them to speak out what was in their hearts. Adam was still silent. His wife mustered enough courage and said with folded hands, "O True King, grant us the boon of a son."

The Guru said, "God is great and merciful. He answers His servants prayers. I shall pray for you. You should also pray to Him. You will have a son, whom you will name Bhagtu for he will be a great 'bhagat' or worshipper of God. He will earn a name for himself and do you proud."

In due course, they were blessed with a son. They were overjoyed, but even in their enthusiasm they did not forget to thank God and the Guru.

THE POOL OF NECTAR

One day the Guru was meditating on Guru Amardas. Suddenly, he remembered that he had received from him a parting injunction to preach the True Name everywhere and make a supreme place of pilgrimage at Amritsar. So he went personally and spent several months there excavating the tank ordered by his Guru.

Amritsar (the 'sar' of 'amrit' or the pool of immortal life) was the name originally given to the tank excavated in 1577 by Guru Ramdas, the fourth Sikh Guru, who had founded the city three years earlier. The place and its surrounding lands were then known as Chak Guru Ramdas or Ramdaspora. Guru Ramdas' successor, Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru added to the fame and glory of the town.

Guru Ramdas stressed upon his disciples to serve their fellow human beings. He held the view:

For all those that are of God
and knoweth God loveth
he that loveth not,
knoweth not God, for God is love.

Like his predecessors, the Guru composed several hymns. His hymns are incorporated in the *Adi Granth* and reveal great sincerity of emotion and super beauty of rhythm.

SRI ARJAN NOMINATED

When the time came for him to depart from this world, he had to decide on the successor. After carrying out several tests, he found his youngest son, Sri Arjan, fit for the guruship. He made his decision known to the Sikhs, who readily accepted him as their next Guru.

So far succession to the 'gaddi' had been conferred purely on merit, having no concern for relationship; but from now on it became both hereditary and meritorious. Guru Ramdas, instead of choosing a person from outside his family, appointed his younger son, Arjan, to succeed him.

This changed the whole character of guruship and contributed to the growth of Sikh power, for henceforward the Guru was looked upon by his disciples not only as a spiritual guide but also as a political ruler.


Guru Ramdas breathed his last on September 1, 1581, propagating the mission of Guru Nanak:

Listen, O Seekers!
Harken unto me, O brother !
Boldly and with complete confidence
The Guru declares:
If you seek eternal bliss
For your soul,
Take refuge with the Satguru.

Guru Arjan

(1563 -1606)

The Young Guru

 URU Arjan was born on April 15, 1563 in Goindwal. He was the youngest of the three sons of Guru Ramdas. He was hardly 18 when he succeeded his father. He was a great organizer, a poet, a zealous preacher, a seer and a martyr.

Prithia, the eldest son of Guru Ramdas, fretted and fumed when his father gave the guruship to his younger brother, Sri Arjan. Guru Ramdas advised him that it was improper for a son to question or quarrel with his father. He was, however, adamant and refused to accept his father's decision, which he thought was unjust.

After making the announcement Guru Ramdas, accompanied by Guru Arjan, set out for Goindwal where he breathed his last. After his death, Guru Arjan returned to Amritsar and took up his duties as the fifth Guru of the Sikhs.

The jealous Prithia declared himself to be his father's successor. Many Sikhs believed Prithia's men, who told them that he alone was the rightful Guru.

When the Sikhs came to visit Amritsar with their offerings, they forcibly grabbed and carried them away to Prithia. Guru Arjan was deprived of the offerings or income which he was using for running the Guru's langar. Despite Prithia's evil deeds, the Guru remained calm.

Prithia not only took away the offerings but also sent the visiting Sikhs to the Guru's langar for food. The Guru welcomed them. But

with little or no income and swelling members at the langar, the quality and quantity of the food declined. The Guru and his wife often lived on parched grams and sometimes had to manage without even a morsel of food.

This went on for some time until Bhai Gurdas, Guru Arjan Dev's maternal uncle, came from Agra. He was pained to see the poor quality of food served in the Guru's langar and still more hurt to see what the Guru and his wife ate for their meals.

He decided to set things right. He summoned some principal Sikhs like Baba Buddha and had a dialogue with him. Baba Buddha stationed himself at a place called Pipli Sahib, where he met the visiting Sikhs. He revealed to them the wicked deeds of Prithia. He also received their offerings for the Guru's langar. And once again the langar started producing the best of food.

By now Guru Arjan was over thirty years. So far no child had been born to him and his wife, Mata Ganga. His brother Prithia had a son named Meherban, whom the Guru treated as his own son. Prithia and his wife were convinced that since the Guru had no heir, after his death the guruship would go to their son, Meherban. They often taunted Mata Ganga for being childless.

A LESSON IN HUMILITY

One day Mata Ganga approached Guru Arjan and said, "My Lord ! you grant people all their wishes. Grant one wish of mine. Give me a son."

With the idea of giving his Sikhs a lesson in humility, the Guru asked Mata Ganga to go and pray to Bhai Buddha for the desired boon.

The very next day, Mata Ganga set out in great style. She was accompanied by the wives of the headmen of Amritsar. They rode in splendid carriages, 'palkis' and sedans. Her servants carried rich and delicious dishes as offerings to the saint.

When Bhai Buddha saw the large and noisy procession he wondered, "Is there a stampede in Amritsar that the inhabitants have left the city to seek shelter here?"

The procession reached Bhai Buddha's place in the forest around

afternoon when he was hungry and thirsty. After placing the food before him, the Guru's wife said, "The Guru hath sent me to thee that by thy blessing I may obtain the boon of a son."

Bhai Budda smiled and replied very politely, "Revered lady, I am but the grasscutter and servant of thy house. If I possessed the power thou supposest, why then should I cut grass and sweep the Guru's stables? It is the Guru himself who fulfillleth everyone's desire."

Disappointed, Mata Ganga returned to Amritsar and narrated the whole story to the Guru. He explained to her that holy saints should be served with humility. He went on to quote to her the following hymn of Guru Amardas:

O Man, be not proud of thy knowledge,
become pious and humble.*

He advised her what to do to please the holy man. He said, "With devotion in your heart, grind corn, knead the flour and bake the bread with thine own hands; dress it with onions. Then take it with some thick buttermilk on thy head to Bhai Budda. Dress thyself as a farmer's wife and walk on foot and alone so shalt thou obtain the saint's blessing."

The Guru's wife did exactly as she was told. Bhai Budda stood up to greet and welcome her. He saluted her with folded hands and a deep bow. He joyfully accepted the meal cooked by her. While eating the food he said, "As thou hast given me food to my heart's content, so shalt thou have a son to thy heart's content. He shall be very handsome, brave, and spiritual. He will be a mighty hunter, riding on

* ਜੋ ਜਾਨੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ॥ ਆਪਿ ਮਿਲਾਇ ਲਏ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ ਸੋਇ॥
ਓਹੁ ਧਨਵੰਤੁ ਕੁਲਵੰਤੁ ਪਤਿਵੰਤੁ॥ ਜੀਵਨ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਜਿਸੁ ਰਿਦੈ ਭਗਵੰਤੁ॥
ਧੰਨੁ ਧੰਨੁ ਜਨੁ ਆਇਆ॥ ਜਿਸੁ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ ਸਭੁ ਜਗਤੁ ਤਰਾਇਆ॥
ਜਨ ਆਵਨ ਕੀਂ ਇਹੈ ਸੁਆਉ॥ ਜਨ ਕੈ ਸੰਗਿ ਚਿਤਿ ਆਵੈ ਨਾਉ॥
ਆਪਿ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਮੁਕਤੁ ਕਰੈ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ॥ ਨਾਨਕ ਤਿਸੁਜਨ ਕਉ ਸਦਾ ਨਮਸਕਾਰੁ॥

royal steeds with two swords. He will crush the Mughals just as I crush these onions."



Mata Ganga returned home with a joyful heart. And sure enough, Baba Buddha's promise was fulfilled. Within a year she bore a son named Sri Hargobind, who became the next guru after Guru Arjan's death.

TOTAL SURRENDER

Guru Arjan preached humility, devotion and complete surrender to the will of God. During one of his prayer meetings he sang the following lines of a hymn:

Thy will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !

The wealth of Name is all that Nanak begs for from thee.

Present at the congregation was a Sikh named Bhai Gurmukh. He could not understand how both joys and sorrows could be termed sweet gifts of God. He expressed his doubts and therefore the Guru said to him, "I suggest you go and see Bhai Bhikari, a true Sikh. Your question will be answered."

Bhai Gurmukh went to Bhai Bhikari's house. Inside the house, ladies and children were dancing and singing 'ghorian'. When he

asked the people the reason for all the merry-making, they said that Bhai Bhikari's son was to be married the following day.

Bhai Gurmukh expressed his desire to see Bhai Bhikhari. He found him sitting in a room at the back of the house. His face was absolutely calm. It expressed neither joy nor sorrow. He was busy stitching a white sheet of cloth.

Bhai Gurmukh was puzzled. He could not hold back his curiosity so he asked him, "On a happy occasion such as this, why are you sitting here in complete isolation? Why don't you join the crowd of revellers? And why are you sewing this white sheet?"

Bhai Bhikhari replied, "Pain and sorrow do not make me sad just as pleasure and joy do not make me glad. I surrender to the sweet will of God, for who knows what is in store for me tomorrow? Today my son is going with his marriage party, tomorrow he may have to go with his funeral procession. I am preparing this shroud for him."

Bhai Gurmukh's eyes widened with surprise at what he had just heard. He, however, saw off the marriage party which moved towards the bride's place with much pomp and show.

The next day the groom returned with his lovely young bride. But soon after their arrival, the groom was taken seriously ill and he died. The relatives started crying and beating their chests. But Bhai Bhikhari neither shed tears nor cried. He brought out the white sheet and wrapped it round his son's dead body. While doing so he kept on reciting the Guru's hymns.

Bhai Gurmukh now understood the true meaning of the hymn recited by the Guru and all true Sikhs. He bowed to Bhai Bhikhari, touched his feet and returned a wiser man.

THE TEMPLE OF GOD

Guru Arjan continued preaching the mission of Guru Nanak in spite of Prithia's intrigues. He toured extensively the territory between *Ravi* and *Beas*. He founded the town of Taran Taaran and built a shrine and excavated a tank there. He also laid the foundation of the town of Kartarpur, near Jullundur.

The great task accomplished by Guru Arjan was the completion of the tank at Amritsar. A Hari Mandir was built in the midst of the

tank. At the invitation of the Guru, Sant Mian Mir, a Muslim divine, laid the foundation of Hari Mandir, the temple of God.

The shrine was purposely built on a level lower than the surrounding land, so that the devotees had to step down to enter it. Besides, unlike most temples it was open on all sides. These special features thus symbolized the new faith which required even the lowest to go still lower and its doors were open to one and all and at all times.

Guru Arjan required money for the construction of the temple. All devotees were asked to contribute one tenth of their income in the name of the Guru. Hundreds of Sikhs helped with the digging and construction work, which they called, 'Kar Seva' or labour of love.

When the temple was completed, the Guru thanked God Almighty without whose grace the work could not have been accomplished. And in joy and gratitude, he said:

God Himself came, and stood up to do the work of saints,
Into the beautiful land and the beautiful tank,
He poured nectareous water, completed the work,
And all our desires are fulfilled.

However, the greatest work done by Guru Arjan was the compilation of the *Adi Granth*. He collected the hymns of the first four gurus and added his own along with the hymns of Farid, Kabir, Raidas, Jaidev and Bhikham. The moment it was completed, it began to be respected by a large number of Sikhs as their holy book.

Guru Arjan encouraged trade and industry among the Sikhs. He also favoured widow-remarriage, condemned the use of intoxicants, and opened a leprosy centre at Taran Taaran.

JEHANGIR AND THE GURU

Even though the Guru was humble and had simple habits, yet his 'darbar' had all the splendour and pomp that are usual in a kingdom. He started keeping high breed horses and wore expensive and fine garments.

By now the Guru had come to be regarded as a spiritual as well as a political leader and had a large following. His influence and importance increased so much that his enemies started plotting

against him.

Unfortunately for the Guru, the tolerant Emperor Akbar died soon after and was succeeded by his son, Jehangir. Jehangir, unlike his father and grandfather, was a fanatic Muslim. He was totally intolerant towards other religions. Even the Qazis and Mullahs provoked him against the Guru and urged him to put an end to Guru Arjan's life.

About the same time, Jehangir's son, Khusro rebelled against him. He fought against his father but lost the battle and sped to Lahore. Jehangir followed him. He declared that whoever helped the rebel prince would be punished.

On his way to Lahore, Jehangir passed through Goindwal and Taran Taaran. He tried to enquire from the people if there was anybody who had helped Khusro. The Guru's enemies found a chance of their lives and promptly made up a story against the Guru. They said to Jehangir, "Khusro met Guru Arjan at Goindwal and asked for his help. The Guru prayed for his success against Your Majesty and also gave him a large sum of money."

Jehangir was livid with rage. Already, the Guru's growing popularity among the Muslims and Hindus alike had aroused suspicion in the mind of Jehangir; and now more than ever, he remembered the promise he had made to the Qazis to put an end to the Guru's life and activities.

There is a venomous account of Guru Arjan as viewed by his enemy, Jehangir, in his autobiography, *The Tuzuk-I-Jehangir*:

A Hindu, Arjan by name, lived... in the garb of a 'pir' and sheikh and had captivated the hearts of many simple-minded Hindus and foolish and stupid Muslims by his ways and means... For three or four generations they had kept this shop warm. For years I have been thinking of either putting an end to this false traffic or that he (Guru Arjan) should be brought into the fold of Islam.

In his autobiography, Jehangir also referred to the allegations against the Guru for having blessed his rebellious son Khusro.

The Emperor Jehangir ordered the Guru to be brought before him and put to death. Chandu, an enemy of Guru Arjan said, "I shall

carry out the Emperor's orders. I have made my plans. Give the Guru into my hands and I shall kill him with tortures."

THE MARTYR

For five days the Guru was tortured in various ways. The Emperor's officers poured burning sand on him, seated him in a red-hot cauldron and bathed him in boiling water. The Guru bore all these tortures without a sigh or groan.* Several jogis and religious men appealed for the release of the Guru. Mian Mir, the Muslim saint, whom even Jehangir respected went to see his friend Guru Arjan and said to him, "May I appeal to the Emperor for your release? May I ask him to punish these people who are torturing you?"



The Guru replied, "No, brother. All is happening according to God's will. Men who stand for truth have to suffer often. Their

*He kept repeating the following also during the period of his torture :

When very great troubles befall, and nobody receiveth one;

When enemies pursue, and relations flee away;

When all from whom man looked for assistance have fled, and all succours are at an end;

If he then remembers God, no hot wind shall strike him.

suffering gives strength to the cause of truth. Go, brother, pray for me. Pray for the success of my cause. Pray for victory to Truth."

On the fifth day, the Guru was taken to the river *Ravi*. With its ice cold water he bathed his feet and hands. Then he went into the river and bathed his whole body. All along, he was reciting the *Japji Sahib*. Before leaving his mortal coil, he declared his son Sri Hargobind as his successor.

At the site where the above incidents took place stands a beautiful gurdwara, called Dera Sahib. Every year a large congregation called 'Jor mel' is held on the day when the Guru left for his eternal home.

It is said that the death of Guru Arjan angered the Sikhs so much that they changed from a peaceful religious sect into a community of warriors who were ready to defend their religious faith with the sword if needed.

Guru Hargobind

(1595 - 1644)

A WARRIOR-SAINT

BORN on June 14, 1595 at Wadali in Amritsar district, Sri Hargobind was only eleven years old when he succeeded Guru Arjan Dev in 1606. Guru Arjan was the first Sikh martyr. When the news of his martyrdom reached Amritsar, Guru Hargobind was sad but he did not grieve, for his father had forbidden it. He kept perfectly calm and told Baba Budda to read the *Guru Granth Sahib*. He also asked the 'ragis' to sing the Guru's hymns.

After ten days, Guru Hargobind was seated on the throne of the Guru. As part of the ceremony, Baba Budda placed a 'seli' before him. A 'seli' is a woollen cord or string worn round the neck as a mark of guruship.

Guru Hargobind refused to wear it. He said to Baba Budda, "The 'seli' suits saints or holy men who worship God in times of peace. These are times of war. Our enemy is out to rout us and we have to defend our faith at all costs. From now on the Sikhs should be saint-soldiers and their Guru shall wear the sword instead of the 'seli' as the mark of guruship."

He also added, "I shall wear two swords, Piri and Miri. The one on the right side will be the sword of Piri—the mark of my being your leader and guide in religious matters. The one on the left will be the sword of Miri—the mark of my being your leader and guide in worldly matters."

AN ARMY OF SAINT SOLDIERS

During his guruship, Guru Hargobind militarized the Sikhs. He was a military as well as a spiritual leader. He stressed upon the need for training programmes in the art of fighting, hunting, fencing, archery, riding and wrestling.

Thus began the preparation for a full-fledged army of Sikhs. Hundreds of eager Sikh youths enrolled themselves. They said to the Guru, "We offer you our lives. We require no wage but only your favour and the gift of God's name." The Guru gave each a horse and a sword.

The number of recruits continued to swell. People began to wonder how Guru Hargobind could maintain such a massive army. To put their minds at rest, the Guru quoted the following lines of Guru Arjan:

God putteth their food even before the insects
Which He created in rocks and stones.
He provideth everyone with his daily food;
Why, O man, art thou afraid ?

WITH JEHANGIR

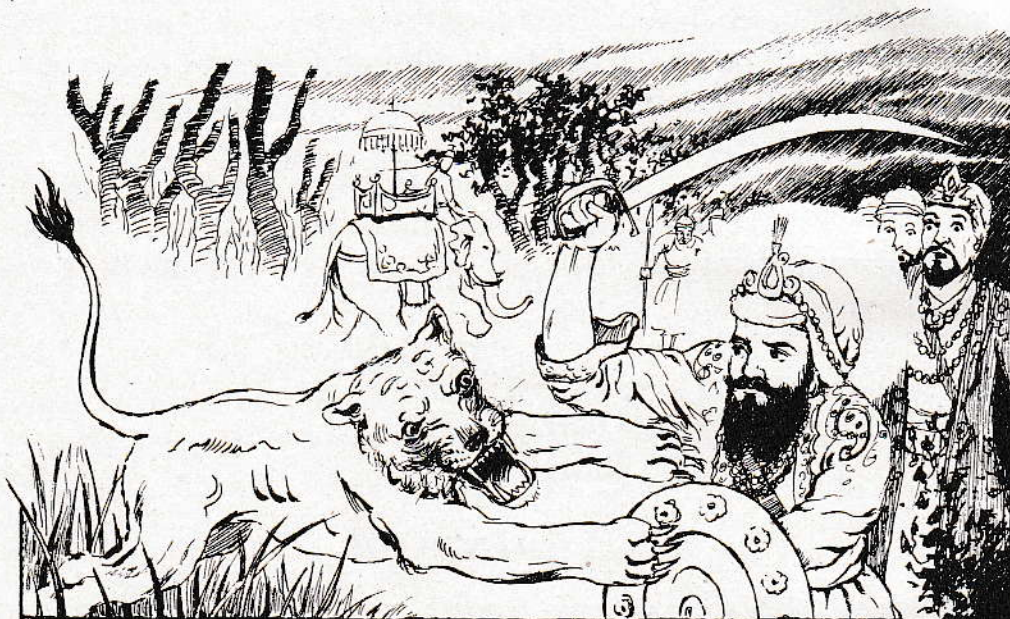
Chandu and other enemies of the Guru sensed danger from these war-like preparations. They thought the Guru might become so powerful that he might punish them for their evil deeds, which had resulted in the brutal execution of his father, Guru Arjan.

They ganged up against the Guru and told Emperor Jehangir that Guru Hargobind was twice as dangerous as his father, Guru Arjan. First, he was converting Muslims to his faith and secondly, he was raising an army to avenge his father's death.

Jehangir decided to meet Guru Hargobind and invited him to Delhi. When the Guru arrived, Jehangir received him cordially. He discussed religious matters with him and was totally satisfied by the Guru's rules and principles. He found there was no threat to him or his kingdom.

The Emperor learnt that the Guru loved hunting. So he invited him to a hunting expedition. While hunting in a dense forest, sud-

denly a tiger appeared and leapt at Jehangir. Elephants and horses were frightened, while the drum beaters shouted in distress. Bullets and arrows missed the tiger and the Emperor turned deathly pale. He called upon the Guru to save him. The Guru got off his horse and taking his sword and shield ran between the tiger and the Emperor. Just as the tiger was about to pounce upon the Emperor, the Guru dealt him a fatal blow with his sword.



THE TRUE KING

After this incident, Jehangir often invited the Guru on hunting expeditions. Once in a friendly manner the Emperor said to him, "O Guru, my ministers and staff tell me that even though you have no connection with worldly affairs yet you call yourself the True King of the world, and call me a false king. Is all this true?"

The Guru tried to tell him that he hadn't asked anyone to call him a True King, that in Guru Nanak's views God is the only emperor:

He is emperor, King of kings,
Nanak, all must remain subject to His will.

But the Emperor was not convinced. The same afternoon a young grass-cutter desired to see the Guru. He mistook the Emperor for the Guru. He took out a coin and laid it before him as his humble offering

and said, "O True King, all earthly kings are false. I am a poor Sikh of thine; thy sovereignty is real and potent. Protect me at my last hour and extricate me from hell."

The Emperor said to his courtiers, "I cannot protect myself, how can I save this man in the way he desireth?" He then addressed the grass-cutter, "I am a false king." And pointing to the Guru, he said, "He is the True King." The grass-cutter took his coin and ran with it to the Guru. He was instructed to obey the Guru's commandments so that he could be happy in this world and the next one too.

JEHANGIR TURNS JEALOUS

Emperor Jehangir and the Guru spent a lot of time together. During this period the Emperor found the Guru to be very strong in body and mind. He was an excellent rider, a great swordsman and an extraordinary archer. He was out and out a leader with a large following of well-trained and fearless soldiers.

Jehangir grew jealous of his power and popularity. He expressed his fears to his ministers, who had already been briefed by Chandu to speak against the Guru.

Chandu, who had killed Guru Arjan Dev with inhuman cruelty, feared that Guru Hargobind would take revenge on him at the slightest opportunity. He thought he could save his skin by having the Guru imprisoned.

The Emperor was taken severely ill in Agra, and wondered what would be an auspicious time for him to sit on the throne after his recovery. For this he consulted a Hindu astrologer (though a Mohammedan, his mother had been a Hindu princess). Chandu gave a large bribe to the astrologer to contrive some plot by which Guru Hargobind could be sent away on a pretext and rendered powerless.

The astrologer thus appeared before the Emperor and said, "It behoves thy Majesty to send some holy man into the fort at Gwalior to do penance there, and pray for thy good health so that thou mayest escape from the evil influences of the planets. If this is not done, thy life shall be in serious danger."

The Emperor's ministers at once suggested that Guru Hargobind should be sent into the fort in accordance with the astrologer's

warning and advice.

When the Emperor mentioned his decision to the Guru, the latter accepted it without hesitation. The next morning he set out to obey the Emperor's order. He was accompanied only by five Sikhs. As he departed, his troops said that he was leaving the wicked Chandu to revel in his villainies. The Guru replied, "The time hath not yet come. God will accomplish everything when he pleaseth. Best is the fruit that slowly ripeth."

THE DELIVERER

There was jubilation in the Fort when it was known that the Guru was coming. In the Fort were detained several Rajas who had been stripped of their kingdoms and thrones by Jehangir and were being ill-treated. They neither had sufficient food nor clean clothes to wear. This made the Guru very sad. He hardly ate any food himself. In fact, he distributed his rations among the needy prisoners. He brought solace to them by telling them about the life and teachings of Guru Nanak. They were so impressed that they became Sikhs. The Rajas prayed that the Guru might ever remain with them, and that the Emperor might order his men to treat him well and never impose any hardship on him.

Meanwhile, the Guru's mother became anxious when the Guru did not return in due time. She sent Bhai Buddha to bring him home. When he entered the Guru's chamber, he cried out in surprise, "What a fine confinement have you won for an award for killing the tiger and saving the Emperor's life! Your mother and the Sikhs are eagerly awaiting your return. If you so desire, you may escape from this prison."

The Guru sent a letter to his mother and Sikhs saying that he was happy in the fort where he was able to repeat God's name away from worldly distraction.

Representative missions, however, were despatched to Delhi to secure the Guru's release. Troubled with fearful visions, the Emperor gave orders for his release.

The Guru refused to leave the prison until these Rajas were also set free. The Emperor replied, "I will so far meet the Guru's wishes as

not to further detain the Rajas and I will entrust them to him on condition that he be surety for their loyal behaviour."

The Guru then stood up and, accompanied by the Governor, freed the kings. The Rajas addressed him in a chorus, "O True Guru, as thou hast cut these material fetters, so cut, we pray thee, our spiritual fetters also."



They seized the hem of his garment and held it until he had promised them salvation. On his doing so they all repeated with one voice the verse of Guru Arjan:

"The Guru hath cut the fetters off the feet and freed the captives."

PAINDE KHAN, THE PATHAN

After his release from the Fort of Gwalior, the Guru returned to Kartarpur. Some Pathans from a nearby village came to meet him. They requested the Guru to enlist them as his paid soldiers. Among the Pathans was a promising lad of sixteen called Paine Khan. The Guru had him specially trained as an officer in his army.

A few years later, the Mughal army attacked the Guru at Amritsar. A bloody battle was fought at the site of the Gurdwara Pipli Sahib.

Painde Khan fought very bravely and the Mughal army was defeated. The Guru was extremely happy with Painde Khan's bravery for which he praised and rewarded him.

But soon Painde Khan's head swelled with pride. He began to boast and brag about his heroic deeds. He went to the extent of saying, "It is I who defeated the Mughal Army. Had I not been present, the Guru's Sikhs would have all fled."

The Guru was annoyed with Painde Khan for insulting his brave Sikhs. As a punishment, he decided to keep him out of any future battles.

Once a devout Sikh presented to the Guru a horse, a hawk, a robe and some weapons. The Guru gave the hawk to his son Gurditta while the rest he gifted to Painde Khan. He said to Painde Khan, "Whenever you come to my darbar, put on this dress, wear these weapons and ride this horse."

Painde Khan's son-in-law, Usman Khan, had an eye on these gifts. With the help of his wife he tricked Painde Khan out of them. He even managed to grab the hawk given to Baba Gurditta.

After some time Guru Hargobind sent for Painde Khan. He walked down to the darbar in dirty clothes. The Guru at once asked him, "Where are the clothes, the weapons and the horse that I gave you?"

Painde Khan lied to the Guru. He said, "All those things are in my possession. On receiving your order, I hastened to you without changing my dress. I was in such a hurry that I could not saddle the horse or put on the weapons."

Then the Guru asked him if any of his people possessed Baba Gurditta's hawk. Again Painde Khan swore that he had no knowledge about that.

The Guru asked his Sikh, Bhai Bidhi Chand, to bring all the presents and the hawk. Bhai Bidhi Chand went to Usman Khan's house and brought back all these things. Painde Khan was shocked at what he saw but still refused to confess the truth or seek the Guru's pardon.

The Guru ordered him to be expelled from the darbar. Painde Khan left the darbar and said, "I shall complain to the Emperor. You

will suffer the same fate as your father and then I shall have my revenge."

WARRIOR TURNS TRAITOR

Painde Khan, alongwith the Governors of Jullundur and Lahore, got the Emperor's permission to attack the Guru. The battle that followed lasted for three days. The Guru's soldiers fought valiantly killing their enemies in large numbers. The Guru killed the Governors of Lahore and Jullundur. Painde Khan attacked the Guru but he killed Khan with a single stroke of his sword. When he fell dead, the Guru's heart was filled with pity for Painde Khan, whom he had once loved as a son. He took off his shield and placed it on the face in order to shade it from the sun. He even prayed for the departed soul:

Good men are honoured for their greatness,
God also adjusteth the affairs of the evil
He saveth sinners and those who fall away from Him.

GURU AND THE MUGHAL ARMY

The news of Painde Khan's death shattered the morale of the Mughal army. While fleeing from the battlefield, the soldiers said, "The Guru is the death of Pathans. Let us return to Lahore." Some of them, however, felt that they dare not go home and endure the reproach of cowardice. They said, "We would rather sound the drum for another charge, and either conquer or die."

Thus the Mughal army made another attempt to fight back the Guru and his army of Sikhs. On seeing the enemy advance, Bidhi Chand warned the Guru, but the Guru continued to shoot arrow after arrow which caused havoc amongst the enemy.

The Commander-in-Chief of the Mughal army, Kale Khan, raised despairing cries, "O God, who has destroyed my army? Where has it gone?" When confronted with the Guru he said, "You are clever in the science of arms. You have killed thousands of my soldiers. Until I send you where you have sent them, my debt will not be repayed."

The Guru smiled and replied, "Kale Khan, the soldiers who have

gone before are now awaiting you. Do not grieve for them as I am going to dispatch you quickly to your friends."

The chiefs of both the armies fought a furious battle. At last, the Guru addressed his adversary, "As your name is Kale Khan—so 'kaal', which means death, knocks at the gate of your life." The Guru then, putting forth all his strength, dealt Kale Khan a blow with his two-edged scimitar, which severed his head from the body.

During his lifetime, Guru Hargobind saw two Mughal rulers, Jehangir and Shahjahan. With the accession of the latter, the religious policy of the Mughals became more and more intolerant. As a result of this, the Guru had to engage himself in several combats with the Mughal army until he shifted to Kartarpur in the Himalayan foothills.

SADHU AND RUPA

There was a Sikh named Sadhu. His son was named Rup Chand by the Guru on account of the boy's beauty. The Guru had predicted that he would become a great saint.

When the boy was fifteen years old, he and his father, went to the forest to chop wood. Since the weather was hot, They took with them a leather bottle filled with water to quench their thirst. They hung the bottle on a tree. Just as they reached out for the bottle to take a sip of cool water, the same thought occurred to both of them, "O true Guru, first drink this pure cool water, and then we will satisfy our thirst. You fulfill the desires of your servants. You are omni-present and hear their supplications. Drink this water. We may die, but we will never drink till you have tasted it."

The village of Tuklani, where Sadhu and Rup Chand lived, was some 30 miles away from where the Guru was at that moment. He heard their prayer and got up at once. Leaving the comforts of a perfumed apartment cooled by water sprinkled over a sandy floor, the Guru mounted his horse and set out in the appalling heat for Tuklani to see his Sikhs, Sadhu and Rup Chand.

They were almost fainting from heat and thirst. On reaching, the Guru asked them for cold water. As he drank from the leather bottle he said, "It is sweet, like nectar. I have never before drunk such a

delicious beverage."

After the Guru had his fill, Sadhu and Rupa satisfied their thirst and praised the Guru. The Guru was particularly pleased to see Rup Chand. He seated him on the couch and said, "Spread Guru Nanak's doctrines, and help the Sikhs become firm in their faith. Keep your kitchen ever open for the traveller and the stranger. People will respect you and great shall be your glory."

The Guru also laid the foundation of a village on an open plain six miles from Tuklani, and called it Bhai Rupa in honour of his Sikh protegee. Bhai Rupa is now a considerable town in the Nabha State.

BOW TO GOD'S WILL

Even though Guru Hargobind was a great warrior, yet basically he was a saint and preached Guru Nanak's ideals. Like him, he believed in complete devotion and surrender to the Lord's will.

His son, Baba Atal, who was barely nine years old, had some miraculous power, and Guru Hargobind was aware of it. Guru Hargobind, however, stopped him from using these because he thought these were against the Lord's will.

Once Baba Atal revived his dead playmate named Mohan. Naturally his parents were beside themselves with joy. And Baba Atal and Mohan went out to play again.

When Guru Hargobind learnt about this incident, he expressed great unhappiness. He said to Baba Atal, "Now whenever any boy dies, his parents will bring him to our door. How will we decide whom to revive and whom not to? We must accept God's will."

Baba Atal said, "O True King, may you live long. I feel that I should return to the eternal home." So saying, he walked towards the sacred tank, where he took a dip and then went round the Hari Mandir, repeated the *Japji* and departed from this world.

When Guru Hargobind learnt about Baba Atal's departure from this world, he asked his family and Sikhs not to weep for "such is the Almighty's will".

Since Baba Atal was nine years old at the time of his death, the Guru ordered a nine storeyed gurdwara called Baba Atal where free food was distributed to the hungry. This practice is still carried out

amidst chanting of:

"O Baba Atal
Pakkian Pakaian Ghal"*

THE FINAL DEPARTURE OF THE WARRIOR SAINT

Even though most of Guru Hargobind's life was spent fighting the two Mughal emperors, Jehangir and Shahjahan, he was primarily a saint, a guru, the sixth in direct spiritual inheritance from Guru Nanak.

The Maratha saint, Shri Samanth Ram Das met Guru Hargobind at Srinagar in about 1634. The Guru at that time was fully armed and mounted on a horse. He had just returned from a hunting expedition.

Seeing him thus, the Maratha saint could not resist from commenting, "I had heard that you occupied the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak, a *tyagi sadhu*. You, on the contrary, wear arms and maintain an army and horses. What kind of a *sadhu* are you?"

Guru Hargobind replied most humbly, "Internally a hermit and externally a prince. Arms mean protection to the poor and destruction to the tyrant. Baba Nanak had not renounced the world but had renounced 'maya', that is, self and ego."

True to his word, Guru Hargobind proved himself to be a real saint-soldier. He came to be called 'Miri Piri da Malik' or the Sikhs' guide in worldly as well as in religious affairs.

When the hour of final departure came, the Guru addressed his Sikhs and family, "When I am gone, be glad and rejoice. I am now departing to my final home."

It is said that at the Guru's death the sky appeared rose red and soft singing was heard. The Guru was borne on a beautiful bier amid the singing of hymns, particularly the following lines from the *Sukhmani Sahib*:

He who knoweth God must always be happy,
And God will blend him with Himself.

*O Baba Atal, send us well-baked cakes.

Guru Har Rai

(1630 - 1661)

A STRONG AND KIND GURU

GURU Har Rai was born on February 26, 1630. He succeeded his grandfather, Guru Hargobind, after his death in 1644. He was the son of Baba Gurditta, Guru Hargobind's elder son and was only thirteen years old when he ascended the gaddi.

Guru Har Rai was a rare combination of strength and sweetness. He possessed a strong body and a kind heart filled with compassion for the poor and the needy. He laid great emphasis on the institutions of langar and free dispensary. In fact, some very rare and expensive medicines were dispensed from his medical store.

The practice of langar had been followed ever since Guru Nanak's time. But Guru Har Rai gave special instructions for the langar. He said, "No one who comes to your door should go away disappointed. All visitors must be treated as your relations. Serve them with affection even if they come before or after the time fixed for the distribution of food." He believed strongly that causing someone pain or suffering was a sin. He often quoted Baba Farid:

All men's hearts are jewels, it is wicked to cause them grief or
pain;

If you desire to see the dear Lord, cause
 No grief or pain to anyone's heart.

Guru Har Rai was so kind-hearted that even though he was a mighty hunter, he never killed the animals he chased and caught. He brought them home and set them free in his zoo, where they were taken good

care of.

He used to spend most of his time holding court and listening to hymns sung by his choir, and then he would give divine instructions. He used to select suitable passages from the *Guru Granth Sahib* to recite to his followers.

FORGIVENESS

During Guru Har Rai's guruship, Shahjahan was the Emperor of India. He had four sons. Dara Shikoh, the eldest, was not only his favourite but also the heir apparent. But his third son, Aurangzeb, was cunning and ambitious. He wished to grab his father's throne. He tried several ways and means to kill his brother Dara. Once he added tiger's whiskers to Dara's food. This made him very sick. The best of physicians failed to cure him. However, one of them suggested some rare medicines, which were only available at the Guru's dispensary.



Although Shahjahan was hostile to the Guru, yet he wrote a very humble letter seeking his help. The Emperor's letter was delivered to him when he was holding his *darbar*. The Guru was pleased and agreed to give the medicines in spite of the fact that Shahjahan had treated

his father so cruelly. He believed: "Why should they who come with hope depart disappointed?"

When Dara recovered, Shahjahan forgot all his old enmity and stretched the hand of friendship towards the Guru. However, this friendship was short-lived. Soon Shahjahan fell ill. Aurangzeb fought with his brother and defeated him. Dara Shikoh ran towards the Punjab.

WITH AURANGZEB

In the meantime, Aurangzeb had given strict instructions against anyone helping Dara. He said that anyone doing so would be punished. Dara Shikoh kept wandering from one corner to another until he met Guru Har Rai.

The Guru received him warmly and promised him protection against Aurangzeb. He sent a powerful army of foot soldiers and horsemen to the *Beas* river to fight Aurangzeb's army. The latter's army shuddered to see the Guru's swift horsemen and refused to fight and thus Dara Shikoh managed to escape.

The Guru's kindness towards his enemies and devotees was the same, for he held the view that "the Guru embraces him who seeks his protection; for this is the function of the religious teacher."

HANDSOME IS THAT HANDSOME DOES

There was a pious old lady who prayed daily that the Guru might eat the bread cooked by her hands. One day she earned four paise by spinning and bought wheat and pulses with the money. She baked two pieces of bread and took them to the spot which the Guru used to pass daily. The Guru, who had great supernatural powers, got to know of her desire. He mounted his horse, and on the way to the hunting expedition, went to the spot where she was waiting. Without dismounting from the horse and without washing his hands, he ate the bread with great relish and utmost humility. The Guru's Sikhs were astonished at this gesture but he put them at ease by quoting from the *Granth Sahib*:

"He whose deeds are pure is called a holy man."



GURU HELD CAPTIVE

Another devout and humble Sikh named Bhai Gonda served and waited upon Guru Har Rai. He was forever repeating God's name. The Guru was very pleased with his sincere devotion and said, "O Bhai Gonda, go thou to Kabul, instruct the Sikhs there in the worship of the True Name and preach the Sikh faith. Feed holy men and pilgrims with the offerings thou receivest, and send what remaineth for the maintenance of my kitchen. These are thy duties."

Now Kabul was a foreign country with a Muslim population. It was not very safe to preach Sikhism in such a country. Yet Bhai Gonda willingly accepted the task. On reaching Kabul, he built a gurdwara and carried out the Guru's instructions.

One day while repeating the *Japji*, he fixed his thoughts on the Guru. He pictured the Guru's feet in his mind. He held them tightly and went into such a deep meditation that he became nearly unconscious.

The Guru, who was sitting miles away on his throne, could feel as if someone held him captive by clasping his feet. The Guru, by his great occult power, knew that it was none other than Bhai Gonda and he also knew what was on Gonda's mind.

The Guru sat firmly on his throne, keeping his feet together. When lunch was announced, he made no move. Soon a second

announcement for lunch was made; yet there was no response from the Guru. He kept sitting on his throne for hours. When several Sikhs asked the reason for this unusual behaviour, the Guru said, "Bhai Gonda is in Kabul. In thought, work and deed he is a saint of the Guru. Today he hath clasped my feet. How could I withdraw them from him? And how could I have dinner until he hath let them go?"

The Guru remained sitting until sunset. It was then that Bhai Gonda woke up and came out of the trance. He opened his eyes, bowed and repeated, "Satnam Waheguru" several times. And then Guru Har Rai felt free from Bhai Gonda's clasp, opened his eyes and thereafter had his dinner.

AT THE DARBAR

While the Guru and his Sikhs like Bhai Gonda were busy spreading Sikhism in India and abroad, Aurangzeb the then emperor was a fanatic Muslim. He was determined to uproot the Hindu religion. He destroyed several temples and idols.


Complaints were made to Aurangzeb against the Guru for helping Dara Shikoh and practising Sikhism and performing miracles. Aurangzeb was advised to call the Guru to Delhi and convert him to Islam. When Aurangzeb's invitation reached Guru Har Rai, he read it carefully and decided not to go. Instead he asked his elder son, Sri Ram Rai, to go to Delhi. The Guru instructed him how to conduct himself at the court. He also warned him not to explain the *Guru Granth Sahib* in any way different from what it meant.

When Sri Ram Rai appeared at the court, Aurangzeb asked him to explain a certain verse from the *Guru Granth Sahib* which had a reference to the word 'musalmaan'. Sri Ram Rai did not wish to annoy the Emperor so he gave him a twisted meaning of the same. Aurangzeb was pleased with his answer and gave him a jagir in the Doon Valley. When Guru Har Rai learnt of his son's doing, he was extremely hurt. He decided that his younger son Sri Harkrishan would be the next Guru. He seated his second son, Harkrishan, who was still a child, on the throne in the assembly of Sikhs. He asked his Sikhs to consider Harkrishan as his image. After seating him on the throne, Guru Har Rai died peacefully.

Guru Harkrishan

(1656 - 1664)

THE YOUNG GURU

URU Harkrishan, the second and younger son of Guru Har Rai, was born on July 7, 1656. He succeeded to the gaddi in 1661 at the age of five. His elder brother Sri Ram Rai lost out to him on account of the cowardice which he displayed at the court of Aurangzeb.

When his younger brother was appointed to the guruship at Kiratpur, Ram Rai was at Aurangzeb's court in Delhi. Promptly he lodged a complaint to the Emperor against his father's decision. Aurangzeb summoned the Guru to Delhi for an explanation. At first the Guru refused to go to Delhi but later at the insistence of Raja Jai Singh of Amber, he agreed.

Accompanied by a large number of Sikhs and his mother, Guru Harkrishan set out for Delhi. On reaching village Panjokhara near Ambala, the Guru made a boundary of sand and ordered that no Sikh should cross it after his departure, so that he might hasten his journey to and fro. He asked them to stand there and pray. There is now a gurdwara on the spot in memory of the Guru's visit.

PRIDE HATH A FALL

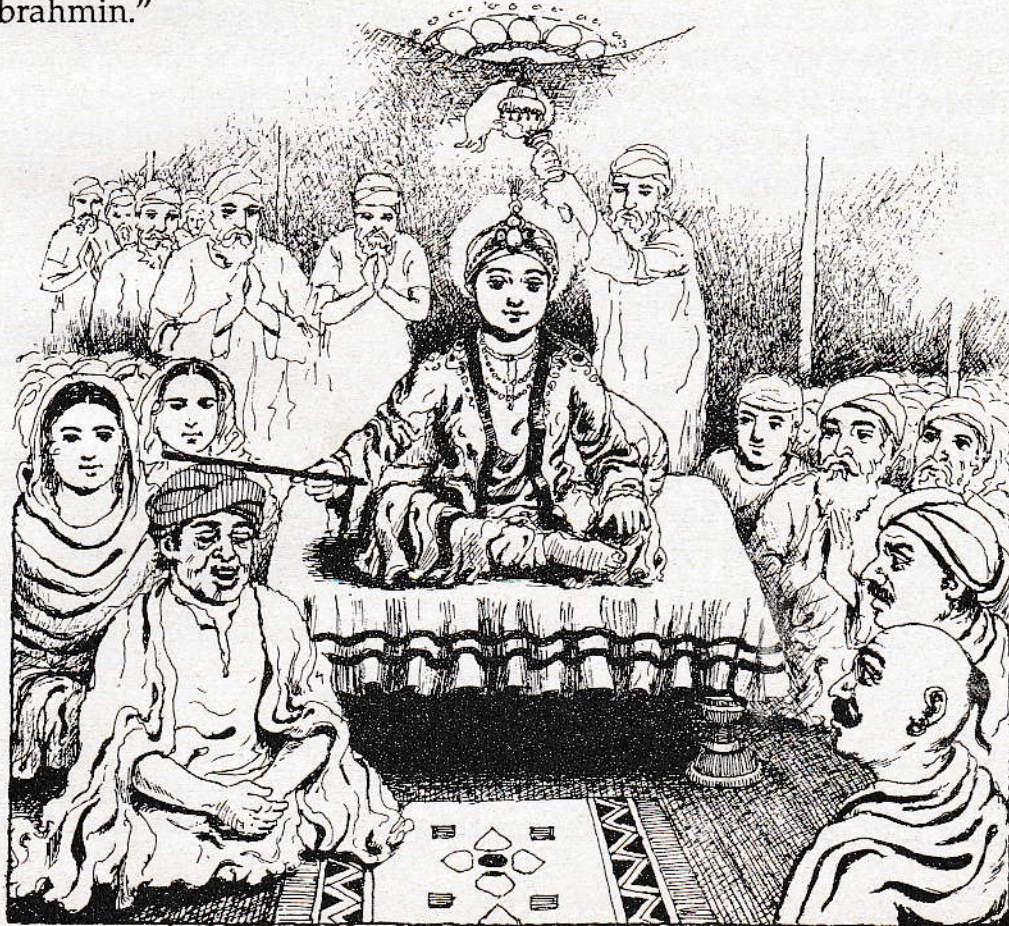
While at Panjokhara, a Sikh came and told the Guru of a proud brahmin who needed a lesson in humility. He reported the dialogue that took place between him and the brahmin: "The brahmin asked me your name. When I said that your name is Sri Harkrishan he became very cross. He said that Lord Krishna gave us the message

contained in the *Bhagwad Gita*. Your guru calls himself Sri Harkrishan. How can he call himself by this name which makes him superior to Krishna?" The Sikh also told the Guru that the brahmin wished to test him on the *Bhagwad Gita*.

Guru Harkrishan asked the Sikh to invite the brahmin. The brahmin walked in haughtily without a greeting or a smile. Pride was written all over his face. He said sharply, "I would like you to explain and discuss the *Gita* with me."

The Guru said very humbly, "With God's grace, any Sikh, any man in the street can do that. Go and fetch an ignorant villager. He will discuss the *Gita* and other holy books with you. When you have defeated him, I shall speak to you."

The brahmin managed to get hold of an ignorant water-carrier named Chhajju. The Guru looked him full in the face and placed his wand on his head. After a while, he said, "Thou hast become a great divinity scholar. Now discuss the meaning of the *shastras* with this brahmin."



The brahmin asked him several questions and the water carrier gave such learned replies that the brahmin stared goggle-eyed. It didn't take the brahmin long to know that the Guru had infused his supernatural powers into the water-carrier. He fell at the Guru's feet and begged pardon for his insolent behaviour. He said, "Thou art really the holy god, Krishna. Make me thy disciple."

The Guru then explained to him the teachings of Guru Nanak. He also added, "Be sweet and humble in your dealings with others. Do not allow pride to enter your heart. Sweet humility is the essence of all virtues. It never fails to win."

AT AURANGZEB'S DARBAR

After this chance meeting with the brahmin, the Guru started towards Delhi. When he reached the outskirts of Delhi, Raja Jai Singh came forth barefeet to meet him. Emperor Aurangzeb sent expensive gifts on the Guru's arrival and expressed his keenness to see the Guru. The Guru replied, "My elder brother is with the Emperor and ready to do whatever he desireth. I cannot meet the Emperor. My father before departing told me that my elder brother would manage all political affairs with His Majesty and I had better not meddle with them. My mission is to preach the True Name."

The Guru then dictated the following hymn of Guru Nanak for the Emperor's edification:

If the True God dwell not in the heart,
What is eating, what clothing.
What fruit, what clarified butter and sweet molasses?
What fine flour and what meat ?
What clothes. What a pleasant couch for billing and cooing?
What an army, What mace-bearers and servants, and what
palaces to dwell in ?
Nanak, except thy Name, all things are perishable.

THE BOLD CHILD GURU

The Emperor was astonished that a child of seven years of age could send him such a reply. He thought the child Guru must be having

supernatural powers and nothing could be gained by annoying him. He waited patiently for the time when the Guru might grant him audience.

About the same time, plague broke out in and around Delhi. The Guru prayed and blessed all the victims who were brought to him. And when they were cured, crowds of Sikhs thronged to see the Guru and receive spiritual consolation from him. Sri Ram Rai was extremely unhappy to find the Sikhs falling away from him and flocking around the Guru.

This incident made Aurangzeb all the more curious to meet the Guru. So he sent his son to talk to him. The Mughal prince said to the Guru, "Your elder brother Ram Rai has made a complaint against you. He says that guruship was his right and has been unjustly handed over to you by your father. What have you to say about that matter? The Emperor, my father, wishes to know your opinion before making his decision."

The Guru replied with utmost calm, "The guruship is not a *jagir*. No one but the most deserving can claim it as a matter of right. The departing Guru makes the selection and his selection is final. No one can question it. Guru Nanak, Guru Angad and Guru Amardas rejected their own sons. They chose their best Sikhs. Guru Hargobind left out his sons and selected his younger grandson to be the Guru. Similarly, my father chose me and not my elder brother. His choice cannot be questioned. The Emperor must not interfere in this matter. It is an internal issue of the Sikh Gurus."

The prince was totally in agreement with the Guru. He said that he would convey his opinion to the Emperor and added that Ram Rai's complaint would surely be dismissed.

Aurangzeb was indeed much impressed by the Guru's viewpoint, but was obsessed with the desire of converting the Guru to Islam and prolonging the enmity between the two brothers.

GURU PUT TO TEST

One day Aurangzeb called Raja Jai Singh and said, "You and others praise the Guru highly and say that he possesses miraculous powers. Have you ever put him to test? If you haven't done so, then do so now."

Raja Jai Singh went home. He and his queen thought of a plan by which they could put the Guru's powers to test. The queen was to dress herself as a maidservant and the Guru was to be asked to recognize the queen. When Raja Jai Singh invited the Guru, he at once guessed the Raja's plan. He did not like to show off his spiritual powers. Still he went along with him and at the palace he straightaway recognized the queen by touching her with his wand.



Raja Jai Singh informed Aurangzeb of the success of the plan. Even he had to acknowledge him as a saint with supernatural powers. He dismissed Ram Rai's complaint as false and asked the Guru to return to his place whenever he so desired. He, however, became still more anxious for an interview with the Guru. He asked Raja Jai Singh to arrange a meeting with him.

"BABA BAKALE"

Unfortunately, the Guru was too ill to give any definite reply. His

body was burning with high fever and the following day red pimples appeared on his body. It was an attack of smallpox. The Guru did not utter a cry of pain and continued to repeat God's name.

During his illness everyone was asked to repeat the hymns from the *Granth Sahib*. The Guru knew that it was time for him to depart from this world. He invited all his Sikhs and admirers around him. Among them were Raja Jai Singh and Gurbaksh. Gurbaksh clasped his hands in despair and said, "Great King, the preceding Gurus before their departure entrusted their Sikhs either to servants or sons. Thou being so young art going to leave us without a Guru. When thou hast a son who is fit for the guruship, then mayest thou depart, but not now."

The Guru said, "Be not anxious. The Creator will do what is best. My death cannot be averted. Put faith in Guru Nanak and remember his words." Then he went on to quote Guru Nanak:

What pleaseth thee, O God, is Good.

Here the Guru's strength failed him. He became silent and closed his eyes. All the Sikhs who had gathered around him showed great anxiety for their future. They suspected that since Ram Rai was on good terms with the Emperor, he might claim the guruship. And once he asserted his claim, the Sikhs would suffer at his hands. They joined hands and requested their Guru to appoint someone like himself for their salutation.

The Guru replied in a feeble voice, "Why be anxious ? The tree planted by Guru Nanak's holy hands shall never wither. Droughts, storms and heat may prevail but that shall never fade."

The Guru then called for five coins and a coconut. He took them and, not being able to move his body, waved his hand three times in the air gesturing the choice of his successor and said : "Baba Bakale" This meant that his successor would be found in the village of Bakala. When he could speak again, he ordered the minstrels to sing the Guru's hymns and repeat God's name.

In the midst of the hymns and the repetition of God's name, the Guru breathed his last on March 30, 1664.



Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Tegh Bahadur

(1621 -1675)

THE PROPHECY COMES TRUE

BEFORE dying, Guru Harkrishan had uttered "Baba Bakale". By this utterance he had implied that his successor would be found in village Bakala. On hearing the Guru's prophecy, many of the Guru's greedy and scheming relatives flocked to Batala, each claiming to be the successor. Thus there appeared in Bakala several self-made Gurus.

These fake gurus grabbed the Sikhs' offerings since the devotees could not tell who was their real Guru. This confusion lasted for nearly a year. Then an event occurred which led to the discovery of the real Guru.

A rich Sikh trader, named Makkhan Shah, sailed from Gujarat with a cargo load of goods when his ship got caught in a violent storm. Makkhan Shah prayed to Guru Nanak and vowed to make an offering of five hundred gold coins to the Guru on escaping shipwreck. His prayer was answered. In order to keep his promise, he visited Punjab. He went to Bakala but he was confused to see so many gurus. So he decided to make a trial of the pretenders.

He visited them all and made offerings of two gold coins each. None of them knew that Makkhan Shah had brought five hundred gold coins for the real Guru. That made Makkhan Shah's job easier. He discovered that these men claimed to be gurus in order to loot the Sikhs.

He then enquired of the people if there was anyone else in Bakala

who claimed to be the Guru. He was told that there was a pious man called Tega (Tegh Bahadur) who was the son of Guru Hargobind* but he made no claim to the guruship.

Makkhan Shah was very keen to meet this pious man Tega, whose full name was Tegh Bahadur. He requested Sri Tegh Bahadur's mother for an interview with her son. She conveyed the message to her son.

Tega pondered over the request for a while and then said to himself, "Makkhan Shah has tested all the pretenders and has still not found the real guru. If I now conceal myself from him, he will lose faith in the Gurus. He hath placed great reliance on the last words of Guru Harkrishan, "Baba Bakale", and if his desire be not fulfilled, he will die. Moreover, he hath come from a great distance. It is therefore necessary that I should receive him and tell him his thoughts."

When Makkhan Shah was shown into Sri Tegh Bahadur's house, he was in deep meditation. Makkhan Shah fell at his feet and placed an offering of two gold coins before him. Sri Tegh Bahadur slowly opened his eyes and said: "Where are the five hundred gold coins thou didst promise when thy vessel was sinking?"

Makkhan Shah prostrated himself before Sri Tegh Bahadur and presented the five hundred gold coins as promised to him. He then ascended a housetop and waving a flag announced from there, "I have found the Guru! I have found the Guru!" Thus he hailed him as the real Guru.

On hearing Makkhan Shah's excited voice from the roof-top, the Sikhs assembled from every nook and corner. There was great rejoicing amongst them. They were relieved to find their Guru, whom they formally installed on the throne with much pomp and ceremony.

GURU AND DHIR MAL

Guru Tegh Bahadur began to preach Guru Nanak's religion. Sikhs

* Although qualifying in every way to ascend the gaddi after Guru Hargobind, he was not named as the Guru's successor because he left for Bakala at a very young age to practise 'yog'. He entered a sand cave from where he emerged after 26 years.

from far and near came to pay their respects and offerings to him. Dhir Mal, the eldest son of Gurditta, seeing the offerings made to the Guru and the honours he received, became overly jealous. With the help of a Sikh, he plotted to kill the Guru. The Sikh took a score of men to accomplish the task. While these men fell at the Guru, the Sikh fired at him. The Guru was wounded. All the Sikhs rushed to the Guru's help. Taking advantage of the situation, the errant Sikh packed up and took away the Guru's property. The Guru kept calm and continued to pray, for "neither access of wealth, nor grief at its loss or bodily harm disturbed him."

When Makkhan Shah learnt about Dhir Mal's wicked deed, he took a party of Sikhs and raided his house. He recovered the Guru's stolen things. But along with the Guru's property, some of Dhir Mal's personal things and the *Granth Sahib* were carried away by the Sikhs. They also managed to capture the culprit who had fired at the Guru.

FORGIVENESS, THE HIGHEST VIRTUE

On being presented to the Guru, the culprit fell at his feet and begged forgiveness. The Guru readily forgave him and ordered him to be freed. His Sikhs expressed great surprise at the Guru's kind gesture. The Guru put them at rest by saying:

To exercise forgiveness is a great act

There is no virtue equal to forgiveness.

Addressing his Sikhs, he added, "I learn that you have brought away Dhir Mal's things. Return the whole of it to him."

Very reluctantly they returned Dhir Mal's things but kept back the *Granth Sahib*. They felt that it was not his private property as it belonged to the Guru and his Sikhs. But the Guru did not agree with them. He said: "The sacred book has been in his possession for a long time. Even Guru Hargobind, Guru Har Rai and Guru Harkrishan never asked for it. It must, therefore, be returned to him."

GURU'S MISSION

Guru Tegh Bahadur wished to live in peace and avoid any abrasions. His main aim in life was to spread Guru Nanak's teachings. He

founded a new township Anandpur and started work on several buildings.

He also travelled extensively not only in the Punjab but also in other parts of the country. His mother Nanki and wife Gujarī accompanied him on his tours. These two pious ladies stood by him through thick and thin and gave him all the assistance in making it a successful mission.

The Guru visited Ropar and Saifabad. He then proceeded to Delhi and Agra. From Agra he went to Allahabad, where he stayed for a long time. It was here that they learnt of the happy news that Mata Gujarī was with child. At that time Mata Gujarī was 43 and Guru Tegh Bahadur was 45. They were thrilled with joy and hope.

After his stay at Allahabad, the Guru visited other places and reached Patna in May 1666. When the Guru visited the city, thousands of people came to see him and seek his blessings. The Guru preached the Name of God to the people.

Leaving his family at Patna, the Guru left for a tour of Bengal and Assam in August 1666. At all the places where he halted, 'kirtan' was held and sermons delivered. He met several scholars, saints, pirs, fakirs, with whom he had religious discourses.

A SON IS BORN

The Guru reached Dacca (now Bangla Desh) in October 1666, where he preached fervently the teachings of Guru Nanak. While still at Dacca, he received the news of the birth of his son on December 26, 1666. There was joy and happiness in the Guru's camp and the great event was celebrated with illuminations and kirtan.

REIGN OF TERROR

After extensive tours of Bengal, Assam and Dacca, the Guru finally returned to Patna. On his return the Guru discovered that Aurangzeb had let loose a reign of terror. He was forcing the non-Muslims to embrace Islam. Those who resisted were being killed mercilessly. He had razed to the ground several temples, and banned Hindu fairs and festivals. He had ordered the Governors and others in authority not

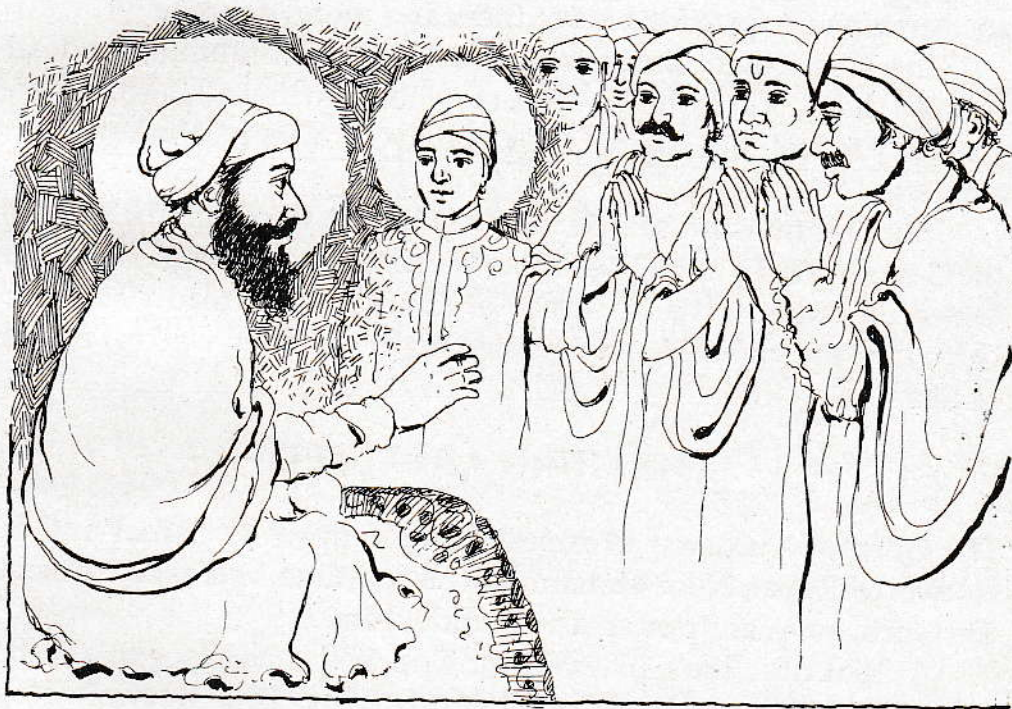
to employ Hindus. They were treated as third rate citizens.

The Guru's heart went out to them. He resolved to return to Punjab. He reached Anandpur in February 1671 where he spent two years organizing and training his disciples to carry forward his mission.

After a brief tour of the Malwa region of Punjab, the Guru returned again to Anandpur. By then the situation had become worse. The Emperor had ordered mass conversion of Hindu brahmins to Islam.

THE KASHMIRI BRAHMINS

The Emperor decided to convert the Kashmiri brahmins to Islam as part of his first experiment. The Kashmiri brahmins were desperate. They wished to lose neither their religion nor their lives. Some of them went to Anandpur to meet the Guru and seek his help and protection.



On reaching the Guru's darbar, the brahmins told him their tales of woe. The Guru was moved by their plight. He appeared sad and thoughtful when his eight year old son Gobind Rai walked in. He asked his father the reason for his unhappiness.

The Guru tried to explain the situation. He said, "These people whom you see are Kashmiri brahmins. They are ruled by a Muslim Governor called Nawab Iftikhar Khan. He has ordered them to choose between Islam and death. They have come to me for advice so that they can retain their religion as well as save their lives."

Gobind Rai said to his father, "What solution have you offered these brahmins?"

The Guru replied, "I have suggested that some noble soul must lay down his life for saving the 'dharma' and honour of these miserable people."

Gobind Rai promptly said, "For that sacrifice, dear father, who could be more worthy than you?"

The Guru was at once stunned and happy to hear these words from his young son. He was stunned because of his wisdom for one so young and happy for his boldness and moral courage.

The Guru then summoned the Kashmiri brahmins and addressed them, "Go to the Governor and tell him that all the brahmins are ready to embrace Islam if their leader, Guru Tegh Bahadur, is first converted."

The brahmins presented their petition to the Emperor through the Governor of Lahore. The Emperor was filled with rage. He at once issued an order to the Governor of Lahore which read, "Have the Guru arrested, fettered and detained in prison. Then wait for further orders."

THE GURU ARRESTED

The Guru was ordered to appear at the Emperor's darbar and the Kotwal of Ropar, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, was asked to arrest the Guru, as Anandpur area was under him.

At that time the Guru was moving from one place to another accompanied by a large number of Sikhs. The Kotwal, Noor Mohammad Khan Mirza, realized that it was not easy to arrest the

Guru when he was surrounded by his Sikhs. He had to look for an opportunity to find the Guru alone or only with a handful of companions.

He did not have to wait long. In July 1678, the Guru, accompanied by a small band of Sikhs, left Anandpur for another tour. He arrived at the village Malikpur Rangharan near Ropar, where he waited to cross the Sutlej. The Kotwal's reporters informed him about the Guru's whereabouts and he headed straight for Malikpur Rangharan with a strong police force. Since the Rangharans are Muslims, they helped Noor Mohammad. Even though the Jats fought bravely, they could not withstand the combined force of the police and the Rangharans. Thus the Guru and his companions were arrested.

Noor Mohammad despatched the Guru and his followers to Sarhind where they were fettered, chained and detained in prison. The Guru was kept at Sarhind for over three months until he was sent for by the Emperor to his darbar at Delhi.

THE GURU REFUSES TO GIVE UP HIS FAITH

At Delhi, Guru Tegh Bahadur was kept chained and imprisoned in an iron cage. The Subedar of Delhi and the Royal Qazi tried their best to convert him to Islam. But Guru Tegh Bahadur refused to give up his faith. He was then tortured in a most cruel manner. It is believed that during his captivity he composed most of his 'slokas' and hymns. His first sloka was written for the general instructions of his followers:

He who singeth not God's praises, rendereth his life useless;

Sayeth Nanak, worship God, O my soul, as the fish loveth water.*

The Emperor ordered the Guru's Sikhs to be tortured and killed before his eyes. These brave disciples—Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Din Dayal and Bhai Sati Das—sacrificed their lives with God's name on their lips and eyes fixed on their Guru. The Guru was so overwhelmed that he composed the 55th sloka and sent it to his son Gobind Rai:

ਗੁਨ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਗਾਇਓ ਨਹੀ ਜਨਮੁ ਅਕਾਰਥ ਕੀਨੁ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹਰਿ ਭਜੁ ਮਨਾ ਜਿਹ ਬਿਧਿ ਜਲ ਕਉ ਮੀਨੁ॥੧॥

My associates and companions have all
abandoned me, no one remaineth
with me to the last.

Sayeth Nanak, in this calamity God is mine only support.
Young Gobind Rai replied to the sloka with the 54th sloka in the
collection bearing the name of the 9th Guru:

Strength is thine, thy fetters are loosed,
thou hast every resource,
Nanak, everything is in thy power;
it is only thou who canst assist thyself.

A TRUE VISION

Guru Tegh Bahadur was very pleased at receiving this sloka and message from his son. He remarked that his son was fit for the guruship. He sent for five paise and a coconut to forward him in token of his appointment as the Guru. When these things arrived, the Guru placed them in front of him, meditated on his distant son, and bowed to him. He sent these articles to Gobind Rai through a messenger.

Even before the messenger reached Anandpur, the Guru's wife had seen a similar vision. In her vision, Guru Tegh Bahadur appeared with five coins and the coconut. He bowed to Gobind Rai in token of his appointment and then she beheld the Guru's head separated from his body. Disturbed by the haunting vision, she begged her son to send a Sikh at once to ascertain if what she had seen was true.

THE GURU'S REFUSAL

Meanwhile, the Emperor was adamant on the Guru's conversion to Islam. He sent a Muslim priest and a noble to the Guru with this message:

"Thou art to accept the Muslim religion or work a miracle. If thou work a miracle, thou mayest remain a Guru as thou art. If not then accept Islam, and thou shalt be advanced to an exalted position and be happy. If thou fail to accept these offers, thou shalt be put to death. This is my final decision."

The Guru replied firmly, "I will never abandon my faith. I want no honour in this life. I want honour hereafter. The threat of death possesseth no terrors for me. For death I am prepared and I cheerfully accept it."

On hearing this reply, the Emperor gnashed and ground his teeth in anger. He ordered that the Guru should be executed without any further delay.

A MARTYR IN DEFENCE OF FAITH

Guru Tegh Bahadur was led out of his cage to Chandni Chowk in Delhi where he was to be beheaded. Meanwhile, the messenger from the Guru's son and wife arrived from Anandpur. The Guru said to him, "My last hour hath come. Stand thou near me. My head shall fall into thy lap. Fear nobody, but take it to Anandpur and cremate it there."

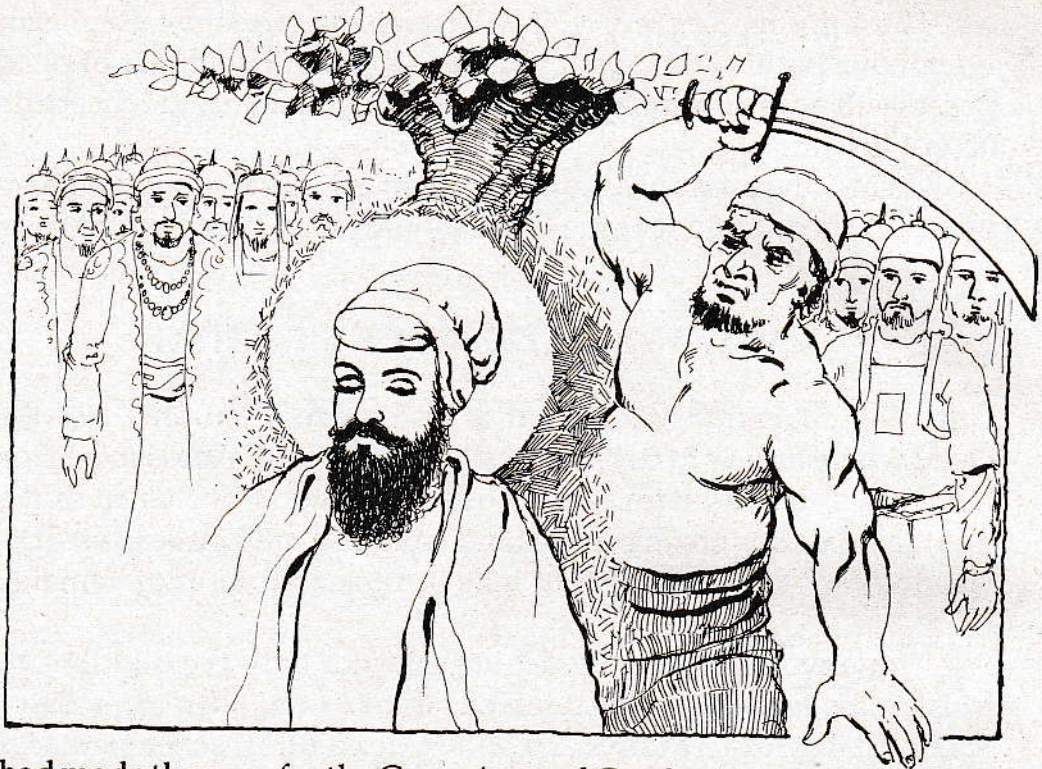
These words were so touching that not only the Sikh but the Muslim Governor of the jail too began to weep. Then came Saiyid Adam Shah with a warrant for the Guru's execution, accompanied by all the Emperor's courtiers and Muslim priests of Delhi. Adam Shah begged the Guru to embrace Islam.

The Guru replied, "My religion is dearer to me than life, I cannot renounce it."

The Guru was taken out of the cage and brought to a neighbouring well, where after his bath he sat under a banyan tree and recited the *Iapji*. He then told Adam Shah to take his sword and strike when he bowed to God at the conclusion of his prayer. Adam Shah did as he was told... At the place where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded stands the Gurdwara called 'Sis Ganj'.

At night, the daring Sikh named Bhai Jaita took away the Guru's head to Anandpur. He ran as fast as his feet could carry him. At Anandpur, it was cremated with due rites performed by his son, Guru Gobind Singh. At the place of its cremation stands a Gurdwara called 'Sis Ganj' Anandpur.

The next day a severe dust storm began to blow. A daring Lubna Sikh, Lakhi Shah, managed to retrieve the headless body of the Guru and cremated it respectfully by setting fire to his own hut wherein he



had made the pyre for the Guru. A grand Gurdwara stands at the spot and is called Rakab Ganj.

On the fateful day of November 11, 1675, Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred. But his great sacrifice saved the country from being converted into 'Dur-ul-Islam'.

Guru Gobind Singh

(1666-1708)

BORN WITH A SPECIAL MISSION

GURU Gobind Singh was the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs. He was born at Patna, now the capital of Bihar, on December 26, 1666.

He was born at a time when the nation's honour was at its lowest ebb. The morale of the people was very low. They were groaning under pain, agony and humiliation caused to them by Mughal rulers.

It seems Guru Gobind Singh came into this world with a special mission. In the Guru's own words :

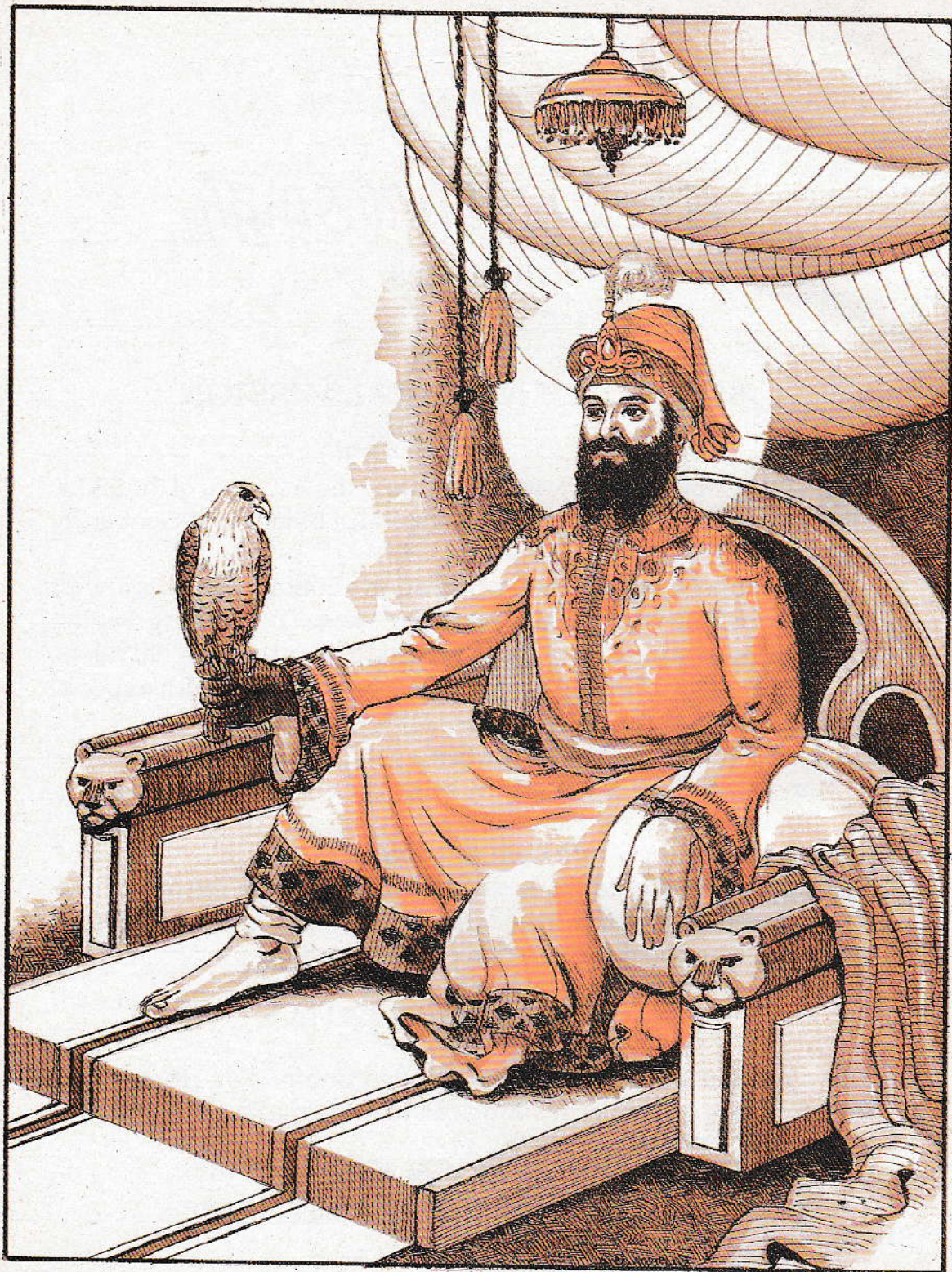
I have cherished thee as my son
And made thee to extend my religion.
Go and spread my Name there
And forbid the world from evil acts.*

Throughout his life, he worked for the upliftment of the downtrodden irrespective of caste, creed, race or sect. He stood for national unity and emotional integration of the Indian people.

CHILDHOOD AT PATNA

As a child, Guru Gobind Singh was called Gobind Rai. He spent the first five to six years of his life at Patna. Even as a young boy he

* ਮੈ ਅਪਨਾ ਸੁਤ ਤੁਹਿ ਨਿਵਾਜਾ, ਪੰਥ ਪ੍ਰਚਾਰ ਕਰਬੇ ਕਉ ਸਾਜਾ॥
ਜਹਾ ਤਹਾ ਤੁਮ ਧਰਮ ਬਿਥਾਰੋ, ਦੁਸਟ ਦੋਖਿਅਨਿ ਪਕਰਿ ਪਛਾਰੋ॥



Guru Gobind Singh

displayed all the signs of a prospective leader. He was active and cheerful and had a large following of friends and playmates. All the games played by him and his companions revolved round playing the soldier, with Gobind Rai as their leader. He formed two groups and invented games and matches which required great skill, courage, strength and patience.

He was very bold and absolutely fearless. Once while he was playing with his friends, the Nawab of Patna happened to pass that way. He was accompanied by his retinue of servants and ministers. The Nawab's servants asked the boys to salute the Nawab. Gobind Rai not only refused to do so but also stopped his friends from doing the same. On the contrary, led by Gobind Rai, the children clapped hands, made faces at the Nawab and laughed their guts out. When the Nawab's servants tried to catch them, they ran as fast as their feet could carry them.

Gobind Rai was an extremely lively and charming child, full of strength and courage. His upright conduct and manners won him a large number of admirers consisting of the young and the old, the rich and the poor, the learned and the illiterate, Hindus and Muslims.

PIR BHIKHAN SHAH AND THE INFANT GURU

One of Gobind Singh ji's admirers was Pir Bhikhan Shah. He was a Sayyed, who lived at the village Thaska in Karnal. The day Guru Gobind Singh was born, the Pir looked towards the East in the direction of Patna, his place of birth. This was, indeed, a peculiar gesture for a Muslim for they bow to the West in the direction of Mecca.

His surprised disciples asked the reason for this peculiar behaviour. The Pir replied solemnly, "In the East there lies a city named Patna, where God has appeared in human form. I am visiting Patna to see him."

Pir Bhikhan Shah set out for Patna. He went to Gobind Rai's house, where he bowed and sat at the entrance. When he was asked the purpose of his visit, the Pir said that he wished to see the holy child.

As soon as he saw the child, he bowed to him and placed before

him two earthen pots containing sweets. One was bought from a Hindu 'halwai' shop while the other was bought from a Muslim sweetmaker's shop. He closed the Guru's eyes. Gobind Rai covered one pot with his right hand and the other pot with his left hand. Then he smiled and looked at the Pir. At this, Pir Bhikhan bowed deeply in reverence .



The Pir's disciple said to him, "Kindly explain this spectacle to us." The Pir replied, "I wanted to know whether this man of God will favour the Hindus or the Muslims. If he had placed his hand on the pot bought from the Hindu shopkeeper, then he would have favoured the Hindus. And had he placed his hand on the pot got from the Muslim 'halwai's' shop, then he would have favoured the Muslims."

He added, "Now that he has covered both the pots, it means that both Hindus and Muslims will be equally dear to him. This has pleased me immensely."

Pir Bhikhan Shah remained a loving admirer of Guru Gobind Singh throughout his life.

RAJA RATAN RAI OF ASSAM

Raja Ram of Assam was another ardent admirer of both Guru Gobind Singh and his father Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was highly indebted to the latter for he had prayed for the Raja and his wife to be blessed with a son. The son born to Raja Ram was named Raja Ratan Rai. When Ratan Rai was twelve years old, the same age as the Guru, he expressed a desire to meet Guru Gobind Singh.

Accompanied by his mother and several trusted ministers, he set out for Anandpur. He took with him several gifts. There were five strong and handsome horses with gold trappings, a diminutive but a very intelligent elephant, a strange weapon which was a rare combination of a sword, lance, dagger, club and pistol, a throne from which stepped out puppets to play chess, a drinking cup of precious metal and several costly and beautiful clothes and jewels.

Of all these wonderful gifts, the tiny elephant was the most extraordinary. It was jet black in colour with the exception of a white stripe which stretched from the tip of his trunk, along the forehead and back, right to the end of his tail. The elephant could perform several wonderful feats. It could wipe the Guru's shoes and place them before his feet which he washed lovingly with a jug of water held in his trunk. It could take a 'chauri' or fan and wave it over the Guru. At night the elephant lighted the Guru's path with two glowing torches held firmly in his trunk.

Raja Ratan Rai stayed with the Guru at Anandpur for nearly five months. During that period they went on several hunting expeditions and enjoyed each other's company. When it was time for Ratan Rai to return home, the Guru granted him the gift of the Sikh faith and sincerity.

He said to him, "True worship means doing one's duty honestly and diligently while one's mind is firmly fixed on God. A good ruler must regard all his subjects as his own children. He should be just and kind to them and look after their welfare."

PAUNTA SAHIB

Once Guru Gobind Singh visited Nahan (now a part of Himachal

Pradesh) at the invitation of the ruler, Raja Medni Prakash. He wished the Guru to enjoy the cool climate and abundant sport in his State.

On one of the hunting expeditions, the Raja said to the Guru, "Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar (then capital of Garhwal) has often quarrelled with me over the land on which we are presently standing. I would, therefore, be very pleased if a fortress is constructed on this spot for protection against all enemies." The Raja requested the Guru to allow his army to assist in the construction of the fort while he would send his own workmen and labourers.

The Guru laid the foundation stone of the fort, which was completed in a record time of twelve days. The Guru gave it the name Paunta. He stayed there for a while and continued to add to increase his army and enlist Muslims as well as Hindus.

At Paunta, the Guru spent much of his time composing poetry and meditating along the river bank. Here he led a quiet, peaceful life and indulged in his favourite sport, hunting. He also set about extending Paunta and beautifying it with gardens and pleasure grounds.

SAYYID BUDDHU SHAH

Twenty-five kilometres from Paunta, in a place called Sadhaura, there lived a Sayyid Fakir named Pir Buddhu Shah. He was very eager to meet the Guru. On visiting Paunta, he was received by the Guru most warmly. The Sayyid confessed, "Holy Guru! I am a sinner. I am scared of what might happen to me after death. Grant me pardon for my sins through your prayers and meditation."

The Guru replied, "Guru Nanak has procured your pardon. Now go and repent for your sins and do good deeds. Help the needy and the poor and serve them with humility. Always remember Him and pray to Him for mercy and grace. If you live such a life then you need not have any fears about your life after death."

Sayyid Buddhu Shah bowed to the Guru and vowed to follow his instructions. Thus he became a staunch devotee of the Guru.

On Buddhu Shah's return home to Sadhaura, five hundred

Pathans in uniform presented themselves before him one morning. They said, "We have been Emperor Aurangzeb's soldiers and now for a trivial offence we have been disbanded. No one is ready to employ us for none can face his wrath."

Buddhu Shah at once thought of the fearless Guru. He was convinced that the Guru would readily accept their services in his rapidly growing army of Sikhs. He led these disbanded Pathan soldiers to the Guru, who was delighted to enlist them in his army. Some of them even became his trusted officers. Prominent among them were Haiyat Khan, Kale Khan, Nijabat Khan, Umre Khan and Bhikhan Khan.

Guru Gobind Singh spent some very peaceful and happy days at Paunta. However, this stay was interrupted by frequent attacks from the jealous hill chiefs, who often got together under Raja Bhim Chand of Bilaspur.

During one of these attacks all the above mentioned Pathans, barring Kale Khan, decided to desert the Guru. They actually joined hands with his enemies.

The Guru informed Sayyid Buddhu Shah of the misconduct of the Pathan soldiers. Buddhu Shah took their desertion as his personal defeat and insult. He vowed to fight for the Guru. He joined his forces along with his four sons, brother and seven hundred disciples.

A bloody battle raged at Bhangani near Paunta, where two of Buddhu Shah's sons and several disciples lost their lives and the Guru's enemies suffered heavy losses and a crushing defeat.

After the battle was over, Sayyid Buddhu Shah went to the Guru to take leave of him. Overcome by his devotion and loyalty, the Guru said, "I hail thee as a true priest of God. Deem not that thy sons are dead. Nay, they shall live forever. Only those die who despise God's name and turn cowards on the field of battle."

Buddhu Shah replied humbly, "True King, I do not mourn for my sons who are slain, because, in the first place, they have gone to enjoy seats in Paradise. Secondly, because they have lost their lives in defence of thee. Such a boon is not obtained even by the greatest austerities."

The Guru wished to reward Buddhu Shah. He gave to him the most precious gift of God's name. The Guru at that time was combing

his hair and a servant stood by holding his turban. He laid his comb with loose hair in it upon the turban and presented them to Buddhu Shah to preserve in remembrance of him. He also gave him a small knife which Sikhs usually carry and a sum of five hundred rupees to distribute among his disciples: All these things: the comb, knife and the Guru's hair, are preserved as relics in the Sikh State of Nabha.

SADHU TURNS WARRIOR

Guru Gobind Singh had to engage in a bloody battle against the hill chiefs at Bhangani. He urged all the Sikhs to prepare themselves for the ensuing battle. He ordered even the Udasi' Sikhs to arm themselves in that hour of need.

The Udasi faith was a branch of the Sikh faith. It was started by Guru Nanak's son, Baba Sri Chand. The Udasi Sikhs were celibate and wandered practically naked, save a loin's cloth, in the forest.

Even though a large number of Udasis lived at the Guru's darbar and ate at his langar, they had no intention to fight for the Guru. With the exception of their leader, Mahant Kirpal, all the Udasis disappeared overnight for fear of being roped into a battle.

The next morning the Guru summoned Mahant Kirpal. He apologized to the Guru on behalf of the Udasis and offered his services. The Guru tried to dissuade him from fighting but consented on seeing his determination.

Poised with only a 'kirpan', and dressed in his loin cloth, the Mahant rode on horseback. It was indeed, a sight to behold. The soldiers on the battlefield could not suppress their laughter. Some smiled while others giggled and laughed openly.

Mahant Kirpal challenged Haiyat Khan, a Pathan deserter. He smashed his sword to pieces with his club and later with the same club struck Haiyat Khan a fatal blow on the head. He thus proved a real sadhu-warrior.

LAL CHAND TURNS A WARRIOR

The wonderful heroic exploits of Mahant Kirpal at Bhangani were being talked about all round. People attributed this miracle to the

Guru who they believed could turn a *sadhu* into a warrior. It was a popular belief among his followers: "Only our Guru can turn sparrows into hawks. Nay, he makes tiny sparrows pluck and kill mighty hawks. Praise be to him."

When Lal Chand, a 'halwai' by vocation, heard about the exploits of the sadhu-warrior, he resolved to go to Bhangani and join the Guru's forces. He was convinced that if the Guru blessed him, he could encounter the fiercest of enemies. The Guru armed him with a sword and shield and gave him a horse to ride.

Without a thought or care, Lal Chand plunged headlong into the thick of war and charged at the Pathan army. He went for Bhikkhan Khan, another deserter. Bhikkhan Khan's friend, Mir Khan, was standing close to him. He charged forward to meet Lal Chand, drew his sword and aimed a blow at him. Lal Chand thrust his shield forward, fixed his mind on the Guru and struck a fatal blow at Mir Khan with his deadly sword.

FOUNDATION OF THE KHALSA PANTH



Guru Gobind Singh had such an imposing personality that whoever came in contact with him turned into his devotee or a warrior-sadhu. Like Guru Nanak he wanted to rid the society of its sick caste-system. He wished to create a casteless society, where people stood by each other in the hour of need and were bound by the principle of "Oneness of God".

He called his Sikhs 'Khalsas', the pure ones.

On the 1st of Baisakh (April 13) 1699, the young guru assembled his Sikhs at Anandpur (where now stands the famous gurdwara called Sri Keshgarh). He baptized five of them known as the 'Punj Pyaras' or the Five Beloved members of a fighting fraternity. This brotherhood he named as the 'Khalsa' or the pure ones. He gave them a new surname 'Singh' (lion) to be attached to their first name.

The Guru said, "Let all embrace one creed. Adopt one form of adoration and become brothers. Let no one deem to be superior to another. Let men of all castes receive my 'baptism', eat out of one dish and feel no disgust or contempt for one another."

The five Sikhs were told by the Guru to repeat 'Wahe Guru' and the preamble of *Japji Sahib*. He then gave them five palmsful of *amrit* to drink. He sprinkled it five times on their hair and eyes. He made them take an oath to observe the five Ks namely, Kesh (hair), Kangha (comb), Kirpan (dagger), Kachha (short drawers) and Kara (steel bracelet).

When the Guru had thus administered baptism to his five tried Sikhs, he stood before them with clasped hands and begged them to administer baptism to him. They were astonished at this proposal and expressed their unworthiness to accomplish the task. The Guru bowed before them and said, "The Khalsa is the Guru and the Guru is the Khalsa. There is no difference between you and me."

Upon hearing this many others prepared to receive baptism. After them many thousands were baptized. Thus was born the 'Khalsa', a nation of saint-soldiers amongst whom there were no distinctions of caste, creed or sex.

The new Khalsa Panth was hailed by a majority of the people who belonged to the so-called low-caste or out-castes. At last they saw hope of liberation from the evil social systems.

While the majority welcomed the Guru's revolutionary act, the Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas felt that they might have to surrender their privileges which they had been enjoying at the expense of the low castes. They could not accept the Guru's principle of feeding at the common kitchen. Nor could they stomach the idea of everybody being allowed to carry arms and weapons, which for long had been the prerogative of the Kshatriyas.

The new religion placed women shoulder to shoulder with men. Earlier even high caste women were not permitted to take part in Vedic rites. Since Guru Gobind worked for ending the prejudices and evils of the caste system, irrespective of caste, creed, or religion, both men and women could dine together in the Guru's langar. They also enjoyed the freedom of reading religious books and participating in religious rites.

All these reforms, however, offended the high caste people who misinterpreted the principles of equality and common brotherhood. They felt humiliated at being treated at par with the so-called low castes.

The first to rebel against Guru Gobind's reforms were the Khatri Rajas of the twenty Hill States near Anandpur. They had been incited by the Brahmins, who deplored the mixing of all castes. They resented the formation of a casteless society and urged the Rajas to take up arms to safeguard their religion. As it is, the hill chiefs were already jealous and secretly afraid of the Guru after their encounter with him at Bhangani. They resolved to meet the Guru before taking any further action.

A deputation of the hill chiefs went to Anandpur to have a dialogue with the Guru. These chiefs were well-received and respectfully seated at the Guru's darbar. Even before they spelt out their disturbed thoughts, he assured them that their fears and doubts were baseless. He said, "Neither your kingdom nor your religion is at stake. My aim is not to usurp your domain or destroy your religion. I only wish to end the tyrannical foreign rule where the rulers are forcing you to convert to Islam. To suffer shame and humiliation at their hands! Aren't you ashamed to call yourselves Rajputs?"

But the Guru's words fell on deaf ears. They were determined to

work against the Guru and did not hesitate to seek the Emperor's help if the need arose. They wished to get rid of him at any cost .

A SURPRISE ATTACK

One day, accompanied by a small party of strong, selfless and brave Sikhs, Guru Gobind Singh went out hunting in the hills. The two hill chiefs, Balia Chand and Alim Chand hastily called out their armies and marched cautiously and stealthily and attacked the Guru's companions on the sly. The Guru's Sikhs put up a brave fight but, being small in number, were forced to retreat.

When Guru Gobind Singh learnt of this encounter, he rushed to the spot raising the cry "Akal ! Akal ! Sat Sri Akal !" Inspired by their leader's war cry, the retreating Sikhs rallied around their Guru and together they fell upon the hillmen. The Sikhs fought with great zeal, courage and skill. The bravest and strongest among them were Ude Singh and Alim Singh.

When Balia Chand saw his men being killed by the Sikhs, he rushed forward to their aid. Ude Singh moved on to oppose Balia Chand. Alim Chand too advanced to support the hill army while Alim Singh hastened to meet Alim Chand. A fierce battle was fought in which Alim Chand deserted his men while Balia Chand was shot dead by Ude Singh.

Thus honour and victory came to the Guru and his brave and devoted Sikhs. After the battle, the Guru had a peaceful time hunting and meditating in the beauteous surroundings.

SAIYED BEG

Guru Gobind Singh was keen to carry on his mission in peace and prepare his Sikhs for winning freedom and equality in all spheres of life—religious, social, economic and political. The hill chiefs neither appreciated nor trusted the Guru's plans and campaigns.

Raja Ajmer Chand of Bilaspur seemed most distrustful and anxious over the Guru's activities. About the same time, two Muhammadan Generals, Saiyed Beg and Arif Khan were on their way from Lahore to Delhi. Each was in command of five thousand men.

Ajmer Chand sought their assistance to attack the Guru on a promise of one thousand rupees a day.

Saiyed Beg, however, after hearing favourable accounts of the Guru and his Sikhs withdrew from the Muhammadan army. The battle which ensued began with great fury between the Guru's and Arif Khan's troops. At this critical juncture, Saiyed Beg approached the Sikhs and said, "You believe in the Guru, so do I. I would, therefore, fight on your side."

Arif Khan, on seeing that Saiyed Beg had joined the Sikhs, knew that he had no chance of victory and retired from the battle. He was chased by the Sikhs and Saiyed Beg.

After some time Aurangzeb sent a large army against the Guru. The brave and faithful Saiyed Beg led the Khalsa army. Even though he fought bravely, he was mortally wounded. Until his last breath he praised the Guru and thanked the Lord for granting him the privilege of dying while fighting for the Guru. The Guru came to the spot where his devoted soldier lay dead. He blessed the martyred hero and proclaimed him immortal.

SAIYAD KHAN

By now the hill chiefs had become sworn enemies of the Guru. They made numerous futile attempts at expelling him from Anandpur and killing him. Out of desperation, they sought Aurangzeb's help. Emperor Aurangzeb had his own apprehensions against the Guru. He decided to send a large army under Saiyad Khan to conquer and capture the Guru.

Saiyad Khan, the general of the imperial forces, was a secret admirer of the Guru. He was the brother of Saiyid Buddhu Shah's wife. On the battlefield when he saw Muslims like Maimun Khan and Saiyed Beg fighting in the front columns of the Guru's army, he was deeply moved. He had a strong desire to submit to the holy Guru but his duty and loyalty to the Emperor held him back.

The Guru could read Saiyad Khan's mind. He smiled, advanced towards him and said, "To conquer in war is ever held honourable."

Saiyad Khan aimed a shot at the Guru but missed. The Guru smiled and urged him to take another shot. To his utter surprise,

again he missed the shot. The Guru encouraged him to take a third shot. This time when Saiyad Khan levelled his gun and took aim, the trigger would not pull. Saiyad Khan was in a fix. His entire body was trembling and sweating.

He thought to himself, "It is I who had come to conquer but find myself conquered instead." He dismounted from his horse and fell at the Guru's feet. The Guru lifted him up gently and conferred on him the gift of True Name.

Despite becoming his ardent fan and follower, Saiyad Khan did not actively assist the Sikhs. He, however, gave up his career as a soldier and spent the rest of his days praying and meditating.

After Saiyad Khan's retirement, Ramzan Khan took over command of the Mughal army. Under his leadership, the Mughal army fought bravely against the Sikhs. The Guru decided to evacuate the city of Anandpur while the Muslim soldiers plundered the city as well as the Guru's property.

The Sikhs took their defeat to heart and sought the Guru's blessings to attack the Mughal army at night when their soldiers were busy celebrating their victory. The Turks were taken unawares and hundreds were put to the sword by the Sikhs led by Guru Gobind's eldest son Ajit Singh, while large numbers fled to safety. The Sikhs recovered all the booty which had been plundered.

Infuriated by their defeat, the Emperor asked his troops for an explanation. They pleaded, "The Sikhs had waylaid and attacked us unawares." Burning with anger the Emperor asked one of his soldiers to describe the Guru. He said with great awe and respect, "He is a young, handsome man, a living saint, a father to his Sikhs, and in war equal to one lakh men put together." This description further annoyed the jealous emperor. He ordered the soldier to be dismissed from service. Even though he dismissed the soldier, he could not erase from his mind the image of the Guru as described so vividly and aptly by that wonderstruck soldier.

AURANGZEB INVITES THE GURU

Now more than ever Aurangzeb was hell bent on putting an end to the Guru's life. The Court Qazi, who was very diplomatic, advised

the Emperor to somehow invite the Guru to his court for if they were able to win him over, he would prove "an excellent and trustworthy ally."

Promptly an invitation was extended to the Guru. The Guru knew how Emperor Aurangzeb had treated his brothers and father, Guru Tegh Bahadur. Hence, he declined the royal invitation.

Aurangzeb fumed at the Guru's audacity. And to add fuel to the fire, the hill chiefs headed by Ajmer Chand, presented a petition imploring the Emperor to send a strong army of trustworthy generals to crush the Guru.

Aurangzeb ordered that all available troops under the Nawabs or Viceroy of Delhi, Sarhind and Lahore be dispatched post-haste. The Nawab of Delhi, however, had his own reason for not sending his troops. The Nawabs of Sarhind and Lahore ordered their troops to march towards Anandpur. These troops were joined by the armies of the twenty-two hill chiefs, the Ranghars and the Gujjars.

A furious battle raged between the Guru's army and the Royal army. It continued for days on end. Despite heavy odds against them, the Guru's Sikhs had full faith in their Guru, and were prepared to die fighting for him.

BHAI GHANAEEYA

Bhai Ghanaeeya was one of the Guru's devout Sikhs. He was all for peace. Because of compassion and kind-heartedness, he never chose to be a soldier like the other Sikhs. He loved to serve the poor, helpless and the needy.

During the battle between the Guru's Sikhs and the Mughal army, Ghanaeeya had been serving water and rendering first aid not only to the Sikhs but to the wounded enemy as well.

When the Guru asked him why he was serving the enemy, Ghanaeeya replied, "My eyes could not distinguish between the Sikh and enemy soldiers as I saw the Guru's face in everyone."

The Guru blessed him and told the Sikhs that Ghanaeeya had truly understood his mission.

THE GURU LEAVES ANANDPUR

The Mughal forces suffered heavy losses but succeeded in laying seige to the Anandgarh fort. The Sikhs continued to fight with God's name on their lips. The fight carried on for several months.

Inside the fort, provisions ran out and the Sikhs began to starve. Even the elephants and horses started dying for want of food. At last the Guru decided to evacuate the fort.

Accompanied by his mother, wife and children and his Sikhs, he left the fort at the dead of night. It was the month of December, bitterly cold and wet.

When the beseigers learnt that the Guru and his Sikhs had evacuated the fort, they pursued them. Soon they overtook the Guru and his soldiers near the bank of the swollen river *Sarsa*.

The Turks fell upon the Sikhs and killed a large number of them. Those who survived managed to cross the river but while crossing the flooded river, much of the Guru's property and many precious manuscripts were washed away. In the confusion, the Guru's mother and his younger two sons got separated from the others.

Accompanied by forty Sikhs, his two wives, Mata Sundari and Mata Sahib Kaur, and his two elder sons, Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Zorawar Singh, Guru Gobind Singh proceeded towards Ropar and reached Chamkaur Sahib. Amongst these forty Sikhs were his "Panj-Pyaras".

AT CHAMKAUR SAHIB

On his way to Ropar, the Guru learnt that the two Nawabs were pursuing him. He had only a fistful of Sikhs. He, therefore, decided to change his course and go to Chamkaur, where he took residence in an old high-storeyed 'haveli'. This haveli served as a fortress and it was guarded by soldiers.

At night, the Mughal armies surrounded the village and attacked the haveli. They were greeted each time with a volley of bullets and arrows from the top storey of the haveli, where the Guru, his five Sikhs and two sons held fort. Many Mughal soldiers perished and two army officers, Nahar Khan and Gairat Khan were shot dead by

the Guru when they attempted to scale the wall. Another officer, Mahmud Khan, however, managed to hide himself behind a wall.

The Mughal army tried to force open the gate but a number of Guru's faithful Sikhs resisted with all their might and strength. At last they were overpowered and slain.

The Sikhs urged the Guru to escape, for they felt that if he survived, he would raise thousands of Khalsas to continue his mission. But the Guru refused to go. His eldest son, Ajit Singh, who was hardly eighteen sought his permission to check the advancing enemy. He stood with folded hands before his father and pleaded, "Dear father, you have named me 'Ajit' or unconquerable. I shall not be conquered. If overpowered, I shall die fighting."

The Guru watched the heroic deeds of his son from the top storey of the haveli. When he saw him fall, he thanked the Lord that his son had kept his vow and saved his honour.

Now it was the Guru's second son, Jujhar Singh, who sought his father's permission to join the battlefield. The Guru kissed his forehead and blessed him thus: "Go, my son, and join your grandfather, Guru Tegh Bahadur, and your elder brother. I shall soon follow thee."

Jujhar Singh, who was no more than fourteen years, fought as valiantly as his brother Ajit Singh had done. This child warrior put to death a large number of Muslim soldiers. He kept fighting with great courage and skill until his last moment.

The Guru was now left with only five Sikhs by his side. They pleaded with the Guru to make good his escape in order to defend the Khalsas against the ruthless Mughal rulers.

Their argument was so persuasive and so appropriate that the Guru had no choice but to abandon the haveli. He blessed his martyred sons and the other Sikhs who had died fighting and lay strewn on the battlefield.

One of his Sikhs, Bhai Daya Singh, said to the Guru, "O true King, I have a sheet over my shoulder. If you permit me, I wish to tear it into two pieces and cover the bodies of the two young martyrs."

The Guru replied in a solemn voice, "Your idea is indeed noble. You have my permission only if you can first cover the bodies of my thirty-five martyred Sikhs, for they are my sons in spirit and equally dear to me."

'UCH-KA-PIR'

When the Guru was escaping, he bade his men to stand firm. He said, "I am going to awaken the enemy, so that they may not say that I have absconded." He discharged two arrows, which first struck the torches held in the hands of the sentries and then pierced through their bodies.

The Guru proceeded barefoot on his journey, and on feeling tired sat down to rest on the margin of a lake in the Machhiwara forest between Ropar and Ludhiana. Here he was met by his three Sikhs, who found their Guru sleeping with a waterpot for his pillow.

The Guru told the Sikhs that they might seek shelter in a neighbouring garden. Man Singh, one of the Guru's Sikhs, carried the weary Guru on his back. They found there a Sikh called Gulaba, who treated the Guru and his faithful attendants with kindness and hospitality.

On hearing that the imperial troops were searching the country in quest of the Guru, Gulaba and his family spent an anxious night and begged the Guru to arrange for his departure.

While the Guru was in Gulaba's house, an old Sikh lady named Gurdevi had presented him with a cloth which she had woven very lovingly for him. He had the cloth dyed blue and stitched like the robe of a 'haji' or a Muslim pilgrim. He then departed from Gulaba's house borne on a litter. When curious glances met the Guru's procession, his Sikhs said that they were escorting Uch Ka Pir. The expression 'Uch-ka-pir' meant either high priest as a general religious title or priest of Uch, a well-known Muslim city in the southern part of Punjab.

'SIS DIYA...'

The Guru now proceeded from Machchiwara towards Jagraon and Raikot in Ludhiana district. On the way he met a Muslim called Kalha. He was the Chaudhri of these two towns. He entertained the Guru at Jalpura. The Guru requested him to send a messenger to Sarhind to inquire the fate of his mother and his two youngest sons Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh.

The messenger returned home with a pathetic story to tell. He

narrated to the Guru how his mother and his two sons had taken refuge with a brahmin, who was instrumental in handing them over to Wazir Khan the Nawab of Sarhind. The Nawab had ordered the children to be brought before him. He said to them, "Your only hope of escape is to accept Islam."

Zorawar, who was the elder of the two, addressed the Nawab boldly, : "When we have dedicated our heads to such a Guru as our father why should we bow them before a false and deceitful sinner?"

Wazir Khan told them that if they would accept his faith, he would grant them an estate, marry them to the daughters of chiefs.

Zorawar Singh looked at his younger brother Fateh Singh and said, "My brother, the time to sacrifice our lives, as our grandfather Guru Tegh Bahadur did, hath now arrived. What thinkest thou?"

Fateh Singh replied, "Brother dear, our grandfather parted with his head but not with his religion and he ordered us to follow his example: "Sis diya par sir na diya".

The Muhammadan Nawab could not endure their outspokenness. He was mad with rage and decided to put the children to death; for he feared that if they grew up they would follow their father's example and destroy the Mughal armies. There were no means for their repression but death.

It is a general belief among the Sikhs that the children were bricked into a wall and suffered to die in that position. But there is another version according to which the children were put to death in order of their ages by the sword of the Ghilzai executioner. The two children Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh, aged nine and seven years respectively, perished in the year 1705.

At last Guru Gobind Singh reached south-east Punjab. The Mughal forces were following him close at heel. The Emperor had issued an order that no one should help or shelter the Guru. Disregarding the order, several of Guru's Hindu and Muslim admirers and devotees helped him from time to time.

At Dina, the three brothers Shamira, Lakhnura and Takhat Mal extended both shelter and hospitality to the Guru. When the Nawab of Sarhind, Wazir Khan, came to know about this, he ordered Shamira to arrest and surrender the Guru to him. But Shamira refused to obey.

On the contrary, he sent spies to obtain information of the Nawab's moves. The Guru learnt through him that Nawab Wazir Khan was following him with a force of five thousand. Accordingly, the Guru decided to move on to Khidrana and face the Mughal army near the lake.

At Khidrana, the Guru was joined by a band of forty Sikh soldiers who had deserted the Guru during the siege of Anandpur. It is believed that these Sikhs belonged to the Majha tract of the Punjab. When they had returned home after deserting their Guru, their women-folk instead of welcoming them, hurled abuses at them and refused to let them enter their houses until they had sought the Guru's pardon. They further threatened their husbands, "If you will not make amends for your cowardly act then we shall go and fight and die for the Guru in order to wash away the sin and shame brought to the Sikhs of the Majha."

MAI BHAGO

These forty Majha Sikhs were led by Mai Bhago of Jhabal and Bhai Mahan Singh of Sur Singh (near Amritsar). They travelled mostly by night and in small numbers.

On reaching Khidrana, they found it bone dry. Bhai Mahan Singh proposed to engage the enemy there so that the Guru would get time to reach some safe place.

According to his plan, big white khaddar sheets were spread on shrubs and bushes to make them appear like tents. The sight of these imaginary tents were to deceive the enemy into believing that the Sikhs were camped out there.

The Mughal army arrived and soon a long and bloody battle ensued. The Sikhs fought bravely with Mai Bhago fighting in the foremost rank. By then Guru Gobind Singh had secured a command post over a sandhill on the other side of Khidrana. The Mughal army attack was repulsed by the valiant Sikhs, whose main aim to fight was to seek the Guru's pardon and blessing. After putting up a brave fight, these Sikhs lay dead on the battlefield amidst an unbelievably large number of Turks.

After the Mughal army had left the battlefield, the Guru visited

his martyred Sikhs. He lovingly caressed and blessed each one of them. When it was Bhai Mahan Singh's turn, he opened his eyes and said, "Who could be more fortunate than me to feel your holy touch just before departing from this world? I have the honour to die for your cause. Do forgive me my sins."

The Guru was greatly pleased to hear Bhai Mahan Singh's last wish. He blessed him and said, "You have done me proud and saved the root of Sikhism and honour of the Majhas; you and your forty companions are 'Muktas', the saved ones." And Khidrana has since that time been called Muktsar, or the tank of salvation.

Then the Guru approached the unconscious Mai Bhago. She was badly wounded. The Guru got her removed from the battlefield and had her wounds nursed. When she recovered she was duly baptized and renamed Mai Bhag Kaur. She remained in the Guru's service until the end.

THE PARTRIDGE AND THE HAWK

After the battle of Muktsar, the Guru kept wandering until he reached Wajidpur, near Ferozepur. While he was camping at Wajidpur, one day he heard the cry of a partridge, and pursued it. The partridge gave him such a chase that even his men and horses were utterly exhausted. At last, the Guru caught it, plucked it, and threw it before his hawk. After a slight hesitation, the Guru's hawk began to devour the partridge.

The Sikhs, who stood watching closeby, asked the Guru the reason for this unusual spectacle. The Guru then went on to tell them the following anecdote :

In the previous birth, the partridge had been a farmer while my hawk was a money-lender. The farmer had borrowed some money from the money-lender and squandered it. And after doing so, he had migrated to another village. The money-lender chased him and demanded his money. The farmer begged to be given some more time to clear his debt. When the money-lender asked for surety, the farmer said that the Guru alone was his surety.

Despite his promise, the farmer failed to repay his debt and as

luck would have it, they both died. The farmer became this partridge and the money-lender, my hawk. I have now fulfilled my suretyship by bestowing the partridge on to the hawk.

THE FINAL DEPARTURE

From Wajidpur, the Guru travelled through ruins and forests, until he reached Talwandi Sabbo, which is now called Damdama Sahib or the sacred resting place.

The Guru's wives, Mata Sundari and Sahib Kaur joined him there. Together they stayed at Damdama Sahib for a period of nearly nine months with a rich and influential Sikh named Dalla.

The Guru made Damdama Sahib a great seat of learning. It is often referred to as the Guru's "Kashi". It was here that the Guru gave the final form to *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

After his stay at Damdama Sahib, the Guru proceeded to the Deccan. Around that time, Emperor Aurangzeb died at Ahmednagar. His elder son, Bahadur Shah, was engaged in a military expedition in Afghanistan. In his absence his younger brother, Tara Azim, had usurped the throne. Bahadur Shah rushed back and won the war of succession with the help of the Guru.

When Bahadur Shah ascended the throne, he invited the Guru to Agra and received him warmly. He also bestowed lavish gifts upon the Guru. So much so that he asked him to accompany him to Deccan. At every halting place, the Guru separated himself from the royal camp to preach his mission to the people. After some time he took leave of Bahadur Shah and proceeded towards Nander, at the bank of river *Godavri*.

There lived a *bairagi* monk named Madho Das, who was well-versed in the science of *Jog* and incarnations. But when he met the Guru, he was totally won over by his teachings.

The Guru instructed him in the tenets of his religion, and in due course baptized him. On that occasion he received the name Gurbaksh Singh, but continued to be known as Banda (Guru's banda or slave).

Banda was the short name for Banda Bahadur Singh. He had proclaimed himself Guru's slave. The Guru said to him, "You have called yourself my slave, but you shall be the most exalted of all."

He appointed Banda as the Commander of the Khalsas. He gave him a drum and a banner as emblems of secular authority. He also bestowed upon him five arrows from his quiver as a pledge of victory. Five Sikhs were deputed to accompany him. He was given a number of *hukamnamas* (letters) addressed to leading Sikhs in the Punjab and to the general body of the Khalsa. These *hukamnamas* called upon all Sikhs to help Banda Bahadur fight the Mughal ruler's oppression and tyranny, thus helping Guru Gobind Singh in fulfilling his mission—"to consolidate the faith and destroy the oppressor."

Guru Gobind Singh's growing army and cordial relations with Bahadur Shah alarmed Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sarhind. He, therefore, planned and plotted to get the Guru murdered and did his utmost to poison the Emperor's mind against him.

With the consent of the Emperor, Wazir Khan hired the services of two Pathans to accomplish his plan. One of the Pathans was Gul Khan, a grandson of Painde Khan. Painde Khan and his entire family bore a strong grudge against Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Now, Wazir Khan was well aware of his deep-rooted hatred for the Gurus. He had Gul Khan specially deputed by Emperor Bahadur Shah to assassinate the Guru.

There is yet another version as to how the Guru was killed. It is believed that the Guru used to address mixed assemblies of worldly persons, religious fanatics and a large cross-section of people. One day an Afghan, who sat listening to the Guru, found certain expressions disagreeable. Enraged by the Guru's sermon, he stabbed him twice or thrice with his poniard. Even though he was badly wounded, the Guru struck his assailant a fatal blow and then called out to his Sikhs for assistance.

The Guru was attended upon by the most skilful surgeons and his wounds nearly healed in a fortnight. But one day, he tried to bend a stiff bow which had been presented to him. This movement was enough to cause his freshly healed wound to burst open. Blood began to flow copiously from the open wound. Despite all efforts, the wounds showed no signs of healing.

The Guru, feeling that his end was approaching, sent for his wives. When they saw him critically ill, neither his wives nor his Sikhs could be consoled. They were absolutely miserable and wailed

loudly, "Hereafter, who will guide us to salvation?"

The Guru replied, "He who is born must assuredly die. Guru Arjan hath said, 'Everything we behold shall perish. It is the immortal God that alone abideth'."

He added, "O Khalsa, therefore, remember the True Name. Read the *Granth Sahib* or listen to it. So shall your minds receive consolation. I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the *Granth Sahib*."

After saying so, the Guru bathed and changed his dress. He then read the *Japji Sahib*. He opened the *Granth Sahib* and placing five coins and coconut before it, solemnly bowed to it as his successor and chanted, "Wahe guru ji ka Khalsa, Wahe guru ji ki fateh."

The Guru then went to an enclosure, where his bier had been erected. He lay on the bier and expressed gratitude to Guru Nanak, the founder of his religion:

"Guru Gobind Singh obtained from Guru Nanak hospitality, the sword, victory and prompt assistance."*

With these words on his lips, Guru Gobind Singhji breathed his last on October 7, 1708. At that time the tenth and the last Guru of the Sikhs was less than forty years of age. With him, the line of the Gurus came to an end... and *Guru Granth Sahib* has thereafter been regarded as the living Guru.