

by JON ENGLE



SERVANTS OF GOD

Lives of the Ten Sikh Gurus

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by Jon Engle
illustrated by Jonas Gerard

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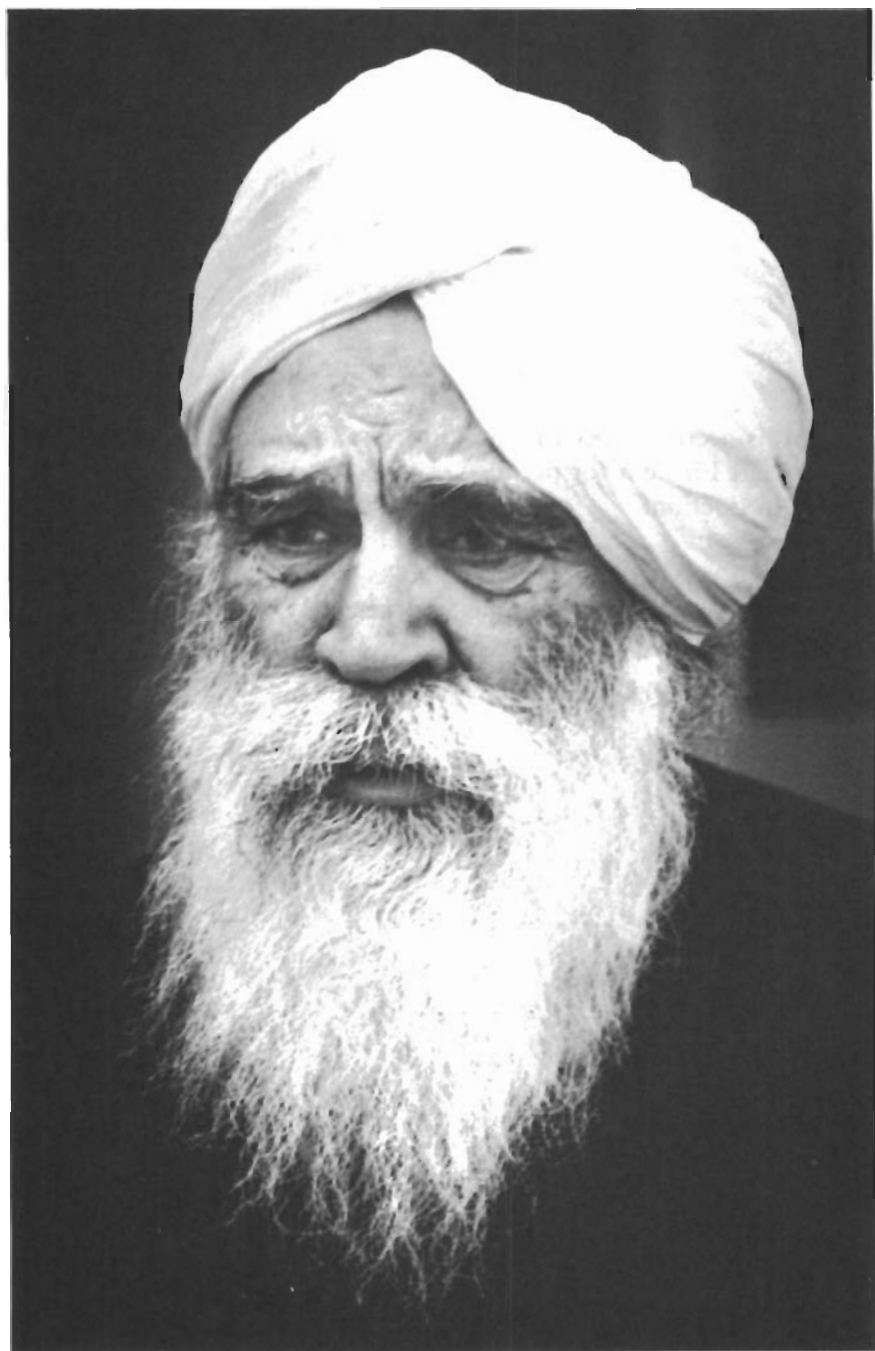
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*Dedicated to
the Beloved Master
Sant Kirpal Singh Ji*

Thou art a King, and I address Thee as an “Elder-man”;
Far from doing any honor to Thee, I bring Thee discredit.

GURU ARJAN

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Preface

For the history of Man to carry a deep significance, it must be more than a record of passing events but rather a history of great deeds which have led men to a higher knowledge. But the history of the Saints lies still deeper than in apparent deeds. It is in the unfoldment and realization of an eternal truth—in the solving of the mystery of life and death—that one passes from “manhood” into “Sainthood” and merges back into the Perennial Source of Life.

To understand a Saint is to understand His teachings, but it is only to a very rare soul that the full knowledge of such a life is given. Outwardly a Saint may come to live with man at his own level: sharing in his laughter and tears, selflessly helping him in his wants and needs—even taking upon Himself the sufferings of others. Yet all the while, He is reminding man, in gentle and persuasive words, of life’s true purpose. But His work only begins here. In a Saint is lodged the whole of spirituality. Through a relentless search for Truth, He has made His will one with the Divine Will; and working as God’s instrument, He leads seekers after Truth to what is their hereditary right: Self knowledge and God knowledge. He may make no claims about Himself, but pass all credit on to His own Master and God, yet His greatness is without limits, incomprehensible to us who live at the level of ordinary men.

*Who can sing the praises of the Master? He is
the source of Truth.*

*He is eternally unchangeable, the source of all life from age to age.*¹

*He is at once the Master of Truth and Truth itself. In every age He comes down for the benefit of the devotees.*²

Little wonder that those who have come to their Feet declare time and again, "It is a great blessing to have a Living Master!"

This paper is an attempt to give a small insight into the greatness of ten such saints—the Sikh Gurus. Its basis is more moral, spiritual and devotional than academic or historical and therefore certain incidents which scholars may reject as unimportant or mere legend are here included simply to emphasize certain character traits of the Masters or to bring out some moral or spiritual point. Hymns that are included are not necessarily composed with direct reference to the story they are connected with but seemed appropriate or even the best means at hand for expressing the inner feelings of the Masters in their search for God or in their guiding of humanity. The reader who seeks to have a much fuller understanding of their path is referred to the writings of Sant Kirpal Singh (especially *Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* and *Naam or Word*), and the writings of Sant Ajaib Singh.

As it is now a time when man has explored the outer world almost to its limits and as he has secured for himself countless luxuries and enjoyments but still lacks an inner peace and meaning to life; he would do well—under competent guidance—to seek within himself, the noble Path of

1. As quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Godman*, p. 143.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

Love and Unity; of the “Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God” which these Masters brought to the humanity at large.

*O Nanak, let us rise up on the Holy Naam and wish,
Peace be unto all the world over under Thy Will O Lord.*

JON ENGLE

Introduction

ALL MASTERS who have come to the earth have brought a simple but universal truth. When they left, due to lack of right understanding, men put much of the truth aside and established their own rituals and customs. These in turn formed what became the “religions,” and the Masters were often credited for their beliefs. Thus—particularly in the West—when many began to tire of worshipping an abstract Deity and turned to science, they also turned away from what they associated with religion. However, what the Masters taught has always been a science in itself: an inner science that deals with Life and has formed the substratum of great thinkers in almost all fields of human endeavor. The man who searches deeply into both religion and science—and more important, into himself—does not find the two to be contradictory, but in fact one. In this regard we have the testimony of scientists such as Albert Einstein:

(When) the individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims, and sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and the world of thought (then) he looks upon the individual existence as a prison of the spirit and wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole . . . The religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image . . . We thus arrive at a conception of the relation of science

*to religion, very different from the usual one . . . I maintain, however, that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest incitement to scientific research.*¹

The Saints say this separation of man from the universe is caused by our own way of life: our thoughts which make us unable to step beyond the "prison of his individual existence." In Eastern scriptures, it is written that God was One: in an absolute state complete within Himself; but "with one Word of His, this vast creation blossomed into being; And a thousand streams (of life) sprang into existence." Within a world of matter, there were varied forms and colors, yet the power of the Unity remained; save for us who became identified with matter and lost our contact with the Conscious Self, the more the veil of illusion thickened.

In the realm of relativity we cannot think, speak, or act except by putting one thing in juxtaposition to another. This is the way to understand what is phenomenal . . . Thus by the very nature of things, and by the nature of the cognizing faculties with which nature has endowed us, we live by the knowledge of the parts only and never get a true picture of anything in its totality. Since we have no knowledge and experience of the noumenon, we are contented all the while with forms and colors of the things we see, their attributes and characteristics that may be apparent or on the surface, without penetrating into the depth, the central life-principle which is the self-same in all in spite of the differences in the mass, the density, the volume, the weight, and the shape of what we see and observe . . . We live all the time in the world of shadows as reflected in the reflecting mirror (of mind and intellect) with our back turned even on the objec-

1. Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion" in *Treasury of Philosophy*: D. Runes, ed.; New York: Philosophical Library, 1935, p. 370.

*tive world around us, what to speak of the subjective world in each of us.*²

But from the beginning of the human race, some rare individuals have ever been in search of the knowledge of this subjective world. Of these few searching men, fewer still had the proper guidance and reached their goal . . . Those who did, however, rarely hid this Truth but shared what they had found with the seeking humanity. This was the mission of the Buddha's life; of Plato's; of Christ's and of many other great figures. This also was the primary mission of the ten Sikh Gurus and it was the same message of Truth which they gave out.

2. Kirpal Singh, *Mystery of Death*, Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1971, p. 11.

Historical Sketch

WHEN Guru Nanak came to earth, it was as though some spirit of awakening was being stirred across the world. He appeared in a time of restlessness among men, but a time of search and discovery as well. By the power of this spirit, many figures contemporary to him were lifted to greatness: some in their search for knowledge of the world in which they lived; others for the worlds of knowledge within themselves—what is man; what is life?

So while in Italy Michelangelo passed hard and austere nights, as though withdrawn from the world, in his search to express an inner drive; Nanak too felt these pangs of sleepless nights in his search to unravel the mystery of life and death. Christopher Columbus began his journey to find new sea routes, while a young Indian boy—Amardas—began his very long and demanding quest for Truth. And as Shakespeare was developing one literary masterpiece after another, his Asian equal, Tulsi Das, was writing the praises of Lord Rama; as was Guru Arjan writing and compiling what was to become the Sikh's holy scriptures.

But if it was a time of artistic and spiritual awakening, it was not always the same politically. In India, the northern part of the subcontinent had long been plagued by Muslim invasions. Repeated slaughters had broken the Indian empire into a number of feudal states, and the unjust and

fanatical rule had caused an even deeper harm to the Indian morale. During Nanak's early manhood, Sikandar Lodi ruled; and not unlike many other Muslim rulers, he razed Hindu temples and executed men for their adherence to non-Islamic beliefs. Following in his footsteps came the invasions of Babar (1483-1530)—a descendant from the line of both Timor the Turk and Genghis Khan. But Babar's rule was brief and soon a short period of political enlightenment and justice followed under the rule of his grandson, Akbar the Great (1556-1605). Akbar surrounded himself with wise and holy men and himself sought to establish a universal religion. His profound insight and great sense of justice make him almost unequaled as the leader of an empire. With his death, the imperial dynasty—though yet to gain in affluence, power and land—declined in its wealth of justice, until it was overthrown by the British Empire.

But India's history is not solely of social and political events. A vast wealth of spiritual knowledge has brought this land a great heritage. Most of the world's great religious teachers were born in or had traveled to her lands as were many of the world's great thinkers, both of ancient and modern times, influenced by her saints and seers. Yet strange enough, none of India's spiritual Masters claimed to be the founder of a new way of life or thought. Each—according to his own level of realization—gave out the knowledge of an eternal and unchangeable Truth, which was passed down from generation to generation: sometimes revealed to many, and at other times available only to a rare few.

It was in the eighth century A.D.—when this inner knowledge had dwindled and men had replaced it with empty ceremonies and rituals—that one of the world's greatest

philosophers, Shankara, appeared on the scene in south India. With his penetrating insight, he reconciled scriptural facts which many saw as contradictions; and he proposed a path called *Advaita* or non-dualism. Here he claimed that man's true essence is in his conscious spirit—Atman—and that one came to know it by rising above the limitations of the mind, body and senses. The world of matter has ever been in flux and those who identified themselves with it were under an illusion. It is the Self or Atman alone which remains unaffected, as it is by its nature primal and unchangeable. Thus the goal of knowledge was to know one's Self, and in such a realization see that the Self and God were not different. This knowledge, however, was to be had by a direct experience of the phenomenon and not merely something grasped on the intellectual level. Shankara was a man of highly rarified discriminatory powers which few people in history have shared. What dips into the Beyond he was able to experience were accessible only to a small number of others who followed his ways. Thus time brought another great figure who disputed Shankara's path and advocated a way accessible to the simple as well as the learned: the way of devotion or *Bhakti Marg*. This man was Ramanuja. His compassion, open-mindedness and wisdom drew large followings to his side but he did not comprehend the full import of Shankara's message. He believed that while the soul could, by devotion, become saturated with the divinity, it could not become one with it.¹

Other Sainly figures appeared, such as Chaitanya, and Madhva, who also spread the way of *Bhakti Marg*. Some time after Ramanuja, there appeared in northern India one Ramananda. He is usually linked with Ramanuja but he

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life*, pp. 123 and 140.

speaks of an inner path about which Ramanuja had little or no knowledge. He was the guru of many great saints including Kabir², Ravidas and Dhanna. It was through such men as these—and especially Kabir—that the secrets of the inner path—Surat Shabd Yoga—were brought into the forefront. In an age of social injustice and religious darkness, it was Kabir who proclaimed that the God of the Hindus and the God of the Muslims was one and the same; and that men, being born of that same Light, were all equal. With the simplicity of Ramanuja, he spoke of a path wherein the individual should see God for himself; and seeing, become one with Him.

Kabir was contemporary to Guru Nanak for several years and may very well have been his spiritual guide.³ Regardless of this, the two—as well as Nanak's successors—gave out the same message of an unchanging Truth. They declared that the Absolute state of God (Anaam) expressed Itself—becoming Naam—in the form of Light and Sound. They clearly stated that the Naam was not to be confused with outer forms of worship—singing hymns, reciting scriptures or even the pranic rhythms. It is the power of life immanent in every form and the All-conscious force guiding and directing the entire creation.

*Naam is the life-principle in all that lives.
Naam is the foundation stone of the Cosmos with
its divisions.*

2. According to the Masters, Kabir came into the world already perfected, but for the sake of form, took on a Guru, Ramananda.

3. While the Sikhs generally do not accept the theory that Kabir was the Guru of Guru Nanak, historical evidence appears to indicate that it was so. Compare G. H. Wescott, *Kabir and the Kabir Path*, pp. 1-2, and Ahmad Shah, *The Bijak of Kabir*, pp. 33-34.

*Naam is the Manifestor of all forms.
Naam is the substrata of all regions.
Naam is the liberator from all bondage.*

*GAURI M.5.*⁴

As man is also a conscious being, he is of the same essence as Naam and can thus return to God by rising above personal limitations and communing with this God-into-Expression Power (Naam). This they said was the highest aim before man and could be had under the guidance and care of a competent Master who himself was one with God.

*There is One Reality, the Unmanifest-Manifested;
Ever-Existent, He is Naam (Conscious Spirit)
The Creator; pervading all;
Without fear; without enmity;
The Timeless; the Unborn and the Self-existent;
Complete within Itself.
Through the favor of His true Servant, the Guru,
He may be realized.
He was when there was nothing;
He was before all ages began;
He existeth now, O Nanak,
And shall exist forevermore.*⁵

4. Guru Arjan as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word*, p. 23.

5. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji*, p. 87.



ONE

Guru Nanak

(1469-1539)

*Guru Nanak is not the sole monopoly of the Sikhs nor of India alone. He belongs to the glory of one God, one brotherhood, one law, the law of human fellowship and love. . . . He came to announce the ancient truth in the common man's language . . . and to show that one flame of love shone in all temples and shrines and sacraments of man.*¹

IT WAS the fifteenth century when Guru Nanak was born and by this time an ancient prophecy had proven true: a dark age—the Kali Yug—had arisen and though the Brahmins (priest class) remained, they had lost the knowledge of Brahm (God). The ignorant led the masses and the vast majority of those who sought the inner knowledge were lost in a bewildering plight.

*This Kali Yug is like a sword, the kings are like
butchers;
And Dharma has taken wings and vanished.
Falsehood is rampant over the land as a thick veil of
darkness
Hiding the face of the moon of Truth.
Saith Nanak, In this Dark Age, where is the Path
of Salvation?*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 5²

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji*, p. 127.

2. The writings of the Sikh Gurus are contained in two volumes: the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Dasm Granth*. The former of these contains

But a cry of anguish cannot go unheeded. Where there is suffering there is also compassion, and God then seeks a place to manifest Himself to guide the child humanity. It was one Baba Nanak—whose heart was pure enough; whose entire life was dedicated to the knowledge of Truth—who became this chosen human pole; born to revive the eternal message of the one God. In a terrible age of darkness, he offered the way out:

*In this Kali Yug, the Word of God is the world's
Light.*

*But only a rare one swims across, through the Guru.
On whom He casts His glance of grace, to him is given
the Holy Word.*

the hymns of Guru Nanak, Angad, Amardas, Ramdas, Arjan, Teg Bahadur and one couplet of Gobind Singh; as well as the writings of other saints (the Bhagats): Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Ravidas, Dhanna, Beni, Sain, Jaidev, Bhika, Pipa, Ramanand, Sadna, Surdas and Trilochan; and fifteen Bhatts or devotees of the Gurus.

After the four main devotional prayers: The Jap Ji (The Morning Prayer); So Daru (First hymn of the evening prayers); So Purkhu; Sohila (the day's final prayer, before retiring to rest); the writings of the Granth are arranged according to different melodies or *Ragas*. Within each particular raga, the hymns are arranged according to meter: Shabds, Astpadis, Chants, Vars, etc. Then within each meter, hymns are arranged according to chronology of the writer (i.e., Guru Nanak's hymns would precede Angad's, etc.).

The Sikh Gurus' names are not affixed to their own hymns: all write under the name "Nanak" (of all poets other than the Gurus, Mardana is the only one who writes under the name of Nanak). However, preceding each hymn is written '*Mahala*' (or M.) followed by a numeral which identifies its author. (i.e., M.I. means the first Guru, Nanak; M. II, the second, Guru Angad, etc.) The hymns of the Bhagats and the Bhatts are simply identified by their names.

The second volume of sacred writings, *The Dasam Granth*, contains only the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh.

*And that man, O Nanak, receiveth the jewel of the
Lord's Naam.*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 3

II

It was in the Indian month of Baisakh (April-May)³ that a first son was born to Mata Tripta and Mehta Kalu—the latter, an accountant of the village of Talwandi. The boy was named “Nanak” after his sister, Nanaki. He at once became his father’s pride; a son who would fulfill his cherished hopes and attain greatness in the world. Then astonishing reports came about the infant and Mehta Kalu’s heart was all the more gladdened. The mid-wife spoke of voices that seemed to sing from within a heavenly music announcing the child’s birth, and then, not with tears did he enter the world but with a composed smile and the laughter of a wise man. When the family astrologer, Hardial, appeared, yet greater omens manifested. Hardial saw the child wrapped in a great halo of light and prostrated himself at what he saw. He had no need of consulting his books to foretell the child’s destiny: he would become a king among kings—the bearer of the Divine Treasure.

As he became a little older, Nanak continued to show unusual signs. From his first years, he was gripped by an inner power: the mystery of life and death had taken possession of his heart and left him without rest. To the conster-

3. Among Sikh scholars, there is some controversy as to the actual time of Guru Nanak’s birth. Some say he was born in Kartik (October-November) while others say Baisakh (April-May). An entire book was written on the subject and most thorough studies indicate that he was born in Baisakh (despite the fact that his birthday is now celebrated in November). However, Hari Ram Gupta shows evidence that the time of his spiritual awakening—his “true birthday”—was probably around the fall months—Kartik. See Hari Ram Gupta, *History of Sikh Gurus*, pp. 34-36.

nation of his parents, he spent many a sleepless night in silent prayer to uncover life's hidden meaning. One stormy summer night as he sat in prayer, his mother entreated him to take some rest. "My child, it is dark and late. Other boys your age are comfortably resting. You should also come in now to sleep." Her words were interrupted by the call of the cuckoo bird⁴ and Nanak replied: "Mother, my rival is awake. How then can I sleep?"

Like one drawn by some mysterious force, he rarely sought the companionship of his peers or passed his time in idle amusements. Rather he was wont to spend the hours enwrapped in the depths of meditation or sitting quietly, reposed in the silence of nature. His innate love of solitude was put aside for little save the company of the holy. And whatever his parents gave him, he would give to the poor or to wandering yogis and sadhus.

At an early age, he had won the hearts of nearly all by his strong religious inclinations; but to his own family, he became a cause of grave discomfort. When he saw his son taking no interest in worldly affairs, Mehta Kalu lost faith in the auspicious signs of his birth. Time and again, he would try to break Nanak of his unworldly habits, but even in his youth, Nanak's saintly determination was unshakable.

At the age of five, Nanak was sent to school. He exhibited a remarkable precocity and seemed to know the ancient languages and texts as though they were already a part of him. Yet his behavior aroused curiosity from his teacher; Nanak would often sit quietly, as though withdrawn from the outside commotions, and when his attention returned to

4. The repeated cry of the Indian cuckoo, "Pee-ah, Pee-ah" sounds like the Hindi word for "Beloved." Here Nanak calls the cuckoo his rival because it is passing the night without sleep calling for its beloved.

outer consciousness, a radiant joy shone from his face. Or at other times, amid the commotions of his playmates, the child saint would stand apart; silently and with a deep sense of compassion, his eyes brimmed with tears as he reflected on the sufferings which men unknowingly brought upon themselves. And yet with his profound sense of independence and detachment, Nanak as a child—and throughout his life—was free from the severe, almost inhumane, qualities of one of rigid dogma or asceticism: he was cheerful and overflowed with love and respect for life.

During his studies, his class was given the alphabet to learn. All others quickly jotted down the letters, but Nanak, without looking up, continued writing diligently. Wondering what Nanak was doing, the teacher walked over to inspect his work. It is said that amazement filled the teacher's eyes and he could not help but bow his head before his own pupil: for to each letter, Nanak had written a hymn expounding upon the Mystery of God. When he looked up at his teacher, Nanak advised him that true knowledge is in having the love of God and without His love, cartloads of books would be of no avail. So impressed was the tutor, that he took Nanak to Mehta Kalu and told him that it was not for another to guide him who had come for the guidance of humanity.

A year later, Nanak was taken to the village mosque to learn Arabic. Again within an astonishingly short time, he mastered all the lessons the priest could give him, and again his teacher beheld this child wonder in awe: "By Thy grace O Lord, has this boy mastered in days what takes others years!" Nanak thus learned to speak to the Muslims of their religion in their own language and to the Hindus in theirs—just as he spoke to the simple man in the common man's words or to the learned, giving references from a great

variety of religious texts—and all listened to the young boy with deep attention. To the Hindus, he was a child saint, and to Muslims, a messenger of God.

In spite of the saintly reputation his son had gained, Mehta Kalu wished to see him wise only in a worldly way and to expose him to the responsibilities of the world. Accordingly Nanak was given a herd of cattle to tend. During these days, many strange incidents came to light. As the young saint's mind was not with this chore, he would let the cattle roam as they pleased while he studied the scriptures or passed the hours in meditation. One day as he was absorbed in prayer, the shade from the tree passed behind him and the sun's light struck his face. Seeing this and drawn by the power that radiated from him, a cobra drew near and raised its hood to provide him shade. The time passed and the serpent remained within the peaceful aura. Only when a passerby feared for Nanak's safety and galloped to his side did the cobra slip away. Another time, as Nanak sat in meditation, his cattle wandered into a nearby field and destroyed its crop. When the farmer saw this and Nanak's negligence, he dragged Nanak to Mehta Kalu and demanded financial compensation. Along with the village proprietor, the farmer's field was inspected to ascertain the loss. When they arrived at the scene, all were amazed to find it more plentiful than it had been before. As word of these and other similar occurrences spread throughout the village, even the wise could not help but look upon the young Nanak with a feeling of awe and reverence. Yet this feeling never came from within Nanak's own household.

So while his fervent search for that knowledge which all scriptures spoke of incensed his father; Nanak was yet urged to perform the Hindu ceremony for his confirmation (*Upanayana*). Here the children were said to be made

“twice born”; they were given a sacrificial thread to wear around them and a sacred mantra (chant) which spoke of beholding the light of the sun within. But how could he who was to be the manifestation of that sun’s Light be part of an empty ritual? So as the Brahmin went to place the thread around the boy’s neck, Nanak refused to allow him. “What is the use of a mere piece of cotton thread that will tear even in this life and helps no one in the Beyond? And where is the good that you say it confers when men who deem themselves ‘twice-born’ by this string, commit the foulest deeds?” The assembly was aroused to indignation by such behavior at a holy gathering. But unmoved by their feelings, Nanak composed the following hymn:

*With mercy as thy cotton
 Make the thread of contentment
 Upon it, tie the knot of continence
 And give it the twist of Truth.
 Such a thread as this, O Pandit, may thou put around
 my neck.
 This thread will not break, get stained, be burnt or
 lost.
 Blessed is the man, O Nanak, who wears this sacred
 thread.*

RAG ASA DI VAR M. 1

These words soothed the Brahmin’s anger, perhaps even opened his eyes to something more profound: how his religion had degenerated to empty rituals and how even its leaders were truly “threadless” ones.

Despite Nanak’s having won the respect of so many of the learned, his father still believed him to be indolent—perhaps even mad. He was forever bent on breaking his son of his unworldly ways and continued to goad him towards conformity. Each time he failed, Mehta Kalu became all the

more outraged but all the more intent. Thinking Nanak incapable of the farming duties, the father had yet another scheme.

He gave Nanak a sum of money and requested him to invest it wisely. He felt that surely once Nanak began handling money in his own hands, he would realize its importance. Obediently and with all good intentions of pleasing his father, the child set out with the money to a neighboring town. On the way, he met a group of renunciates who were emaciated and possessed only a sincere desire to find God. Knowing of no better investment than the feeding of the holy, Nanak gave away the money. When word of this reached Mehta Kalu, his rage knew no limits. He scolded Nanak for his mindlessness, for his inability to make any considerations for his future. To his father's anger, Nanak replied calmly, "Father, you are growing old but have made no plans to meet your death." . . . but his words fell on deaf ears and he was beaten till colored with bruises.

*O Lord, tell me who is my father and who my mother
And from whence I have come.*

*I who am but a poor fish in Thy vast sea.
How can I know Thee and reach to Thy shore?
But pulled from Thy water, I writhe in separation.
In my agony, I call upon Thee for help.*

GAURI & SRI RAG M. 1.

Nanak would now spend days together absorbed in meditation. He would neither eat nor speak with anyone. Each day worried his parents more until finally they sent for a doctor. However Nanak politely dismissed him: "My sickness is not of my body but of separation from God which makes me pine and waste away. And it is from the eye of death that I see constantly over my head. God Himself has

given me this disease and He alone will cure me of it.”

Thus Mehta Kalu began to see that no one could help his son: neither could the doctor cure him nor the wise change him. But he felt certain that if only Nanak would get properly involved in worldly affairs, it would pass that not only his son be all the better for it, but Mehta Kalu himself would thus be relieved of the shame which the boy's strange behavior caused him. To Mehta Kalu's encouragement, Nanaki offered to make suitable arrangements for her brother. Her husband got him a job as a keeper in a small grain store, and Nanaki further arranged for his marriage. His family was at last well-pleased for Nanak had proven himself a competent store keeper. Though he still enjoyed his spiritual practices and the company of the holy, yet he managed the store responsibly and with a rare honesty. Further his straightforward and friendly nature drew him ample respect. As a family man, he had become the father of one son Sri Chand, and was the expectant father of another. But amidst the worldly affairs, his heart was attached to God. Then one day while Nanak was busy at his work, a faqir entered the shop, straightway walked up to Nanak and declared: “We have not come into the world for this.” He then promptly walked out of the store. The fire that had burned in Nanak's heart was again set ablaze. Later in that same day, he was weighing off grain for a customer, counting the pounds as he loaded it on the scale. When he reached the number “tera”—which in Punjabi means thirteen but also “Thine”—he went into a state of Divine intoxication over and again repeating the words “Tera, Tera” (“I am Thine O Lord; I am Thine”) and continued heaping more and more wheat onto the customer's load. When word of this reached the store owner, he rushed to reprimand Nanak and to ascertain his loss, but God has

mysterious ways and cares for those who put their cares in Him. It then turned out that rather than having squandered any of the store's money, a large sum was due to him. The store keeper apologized and asked Nanak to stay on with his work; but he replied that it was now time for him to attend to his true business: the realization of God.

III

*O Lord! No longer can I live in this separation
The night of remembrance and waiting for Thee is
past,
Thou knowest how my soul thirsts for Thee and how
my heart aches
Please come and save me now.*

GURU NANAK

One morning Nanak left for the Ravi River, at whose banks he sat lost in meditation. It is said that he attained to his supreme realization here and saw what his worldly mission was to be: to serve the poor and needy, dedicate himself to the Name of God (Sat Naam) and bring men nearer to God.

For three days he remained within a glorious vision, and on the fourth he broke his silence, declaring, "There is neither Hindu nor Muslim." This simple message spread through the town and left people in bewilderment. When the town qazis (Muslim priests) heard it, they approached Nanak and asked him its meaning. They received no reply; but both curious and offended, they invited him to pray with them: to prove they were indeed Muslims. Nanak accepted and entered the Mosque with them. When all others knelt for prayer, Nanak remained standing. The prayers finished and the qazis left up in outrage that a Hindu should pay such disrespect to their religious practices. Nanak replied: "You were not praying but thinking of your

mare who had just given birth.” And then referring to the qazi beside him, he added, “And you were in Kabul buying horses.” Both men were ashamed; they bowed their heads admitting that Nanak had spoken the truth. Now they further questioned him as to who he was and Nanak replied: “If I say I am a Hindu, you will kill me, and Muslim I am not. I am a puppet made up of five elements in which something invisible plays. That something invisible is what I am.”

“What is true religion? How can one live by it?” pressed the qazis. Nanak replied in verse:

*Make mercy thy mosque
Faith, thy prayer mat
And righteous life, thy Koran.
Make modesty, thy circumcision
And piety thy fasts.
In this way wouldst thou become a true Muslim.*

*Right deeds are the Kaaba⁵
And the True Pir,⁶ the Kalma.⁷
And to live in His Will, thy rosary
Saith Nanak, Such a Muslim will the Lord preserve.*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 1

Leaving the qazis, Nanak gave away most of his possessions and left for a secluded place just outside of Sultanpur. With his faithful disciple, Mardana, he awaited the inner command which was to start him on the first of a series of long

5. Kaaba—a place of pilgrimage to Muslims, considered to be the house of God. See Glossary.

6. Pir—a spiritual guide. Same as guru.

7. Kalma—lit. Word. A holy recitation, proclaiming “There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger (Rasul).” See Glossary.

travels to remote and strange lands. During his stay in Sultanpur, a second son was born to him—Lakhmi Das. The birth was a final prompting for his family to dissuade him from his renunciation. Each for his own reason remonstrated with the Guru for renouncing his worldly ties: as a family man he was told it was his duty to maintain his household; as a son, he should not forget his parents; and as a husband, how could he leave his wife and children? When all had finished their words, he replied in a tone bespeaking his heart—unshakably strong but gentle and filled with understanding: “All humanity is my family, and the Lord overhead is our one Father. I leave you all in the care of Him who cares for us all. The world is in the grip of deadly flames and I go to extinguish the invisible flames which envelop all mankind.” As though mesmerized by the music of his voice, each one silently acceded and stepped back.

Then, knowing the burden of what his wife had yet to face, he gazed upon her with eyes that could hold the sorrows of the world and placed his hand upon her head. “Your love has been great, Sulakni, and great too is the sacrifice you must make; but be rest assured that He whose work I do shall reward you greater still.”

Finally the Master turned to his sister, who all the while looked on silently, holding back the tears in her eyes. She had long since ceased to consider her brother as merely another man but saw him as a divine incarnation. “Nanaki, that love and devotion is the greatest in which one asks nothing for himself but remains silently content in the Will of the Lord. Know that I am forever residing with you and when you turn your attention within, there will you find me. But many are my sisters in this world who suffer pain and I am called forth to go.” He then blessed them all and took his leave.

IV

*There are lowly amongst the noble
And pure amongst the low.
The former shouldst thou avoid
And be like dust under the feet of the latter.*

GURU NANAK

Nanak began his travels within the Punjab area, after which he went eastward, preaching at places of Hindu worship: notably Hardwar, Benares, and Patna; and he traveled as far as the delta of the Ganges at Dacca and Assam. When he came to the village of Saidpur (now Eminabad in the Punjab), he saw a poor carpenter busy at work.

“What dost thou do, Lalo?” the Master asked.

“I am busy at my repairs,” replied the carpenter without looking up.

“Come. I shall give thee better work than this, that thou mayest repair thy heart to contain the Lord.”

Looking up, Lalo saw the holy figure before him; spontaneously he fell at His feet. A mere touch and a glance were enough to transform his simple heart to that of a devout disciple. Drawn by Lalo’s devotion and simplicity, Nanak remained with him for several days.

Quickly the word spread that a holy man was staying with the carpenter Lalo, and many came there for his Godly counsel. But when one Malik Bhago, a high official of the army, invited Nanak to a religious feast and the Master refused, scandalous reports were spread against him. Bhago himself sought Nanak out and demanded an explanation: why had he refused the Malik’s feast and instead partaken of food from a low caste carpenter? But the Guru, who had renounced all idea of castes except the “caste of God,” replied: “That man is holy who loves the Lord and earns his

livelihood by the sweat of his brow. Lalo's food is coarse and plain but earned by honest means and cooked in the remembrance of God—and such food is pure and peace-giving. But your wealth, Bhago, has been gained by extorting the poor, and to partake of it breeds a restless mind and evil passions. Lalo's food is sweet like honey but yours reeks of blood.”

Nanak then took a loaf of the Malik's bread in one hand and a loaf of Lalo's in the other. As he squeezed Lalo's, drops of milk fell to the ground; but when he squeezed the Malik's, blood oozed out of it.⁸ It is said that Bhago then repented his past and sought the Guru's forgiveness, and thereafter sought to live a life of devotion to the Lord.

Beckoned on by the Divine Will, Nanak left Saidpur, to the deep anguish of his disciple Lalo. Enroute to Tulamba, he came across one Sajjan, who posed as a wealthy man of God and offered hospitality to tired wayfarers. As they took to sleep, he would empty their purses and cut their throats. When Nanak and Mardana passed by, Sajjan mistook them for rich travelers and offered them the accommodations of his house; and with darkness, a place to

8. Guru Nanak claimed, “I have no miracles except Naam.” Because of this statement, many modern historians reason that any miracles associated with him are inconsistent with his own words. Therefore they discredit them as inventions of overzealous Sikh historians (of which there are unfortunately many).

However, God-realized men understand nature's higher laws, many of which appear as miracles to people living wholly within the laws of this world.

If at all there are miracles to a Saint, they occur when the soul is re-connected with the Oversoul, God, through the Power of Naam. Moreover, Saints do not use these “occult powers” for any personal gains (as many yogis or others may do): to attract attention, gather a following or whatever other reasons one may have. However, they may use them in some rare instances for the sake of a devotee; to change a man's heart

sleep. Nanak accepted, but perceiving his host's intentions, first requested to sing a hymn:

*Behold the luster of the bronze—but rub it and
your hands are blackened
Wash them but the impurities remain.
They are true friends⁹ who always abide at one's side
and are ever prepared to account for their deeds.
Temples arrayed in pomp but hollow within
are but a disguise to deceive the world.
Mansions too may dazzle the beholder
but all things pass away.
White herons stand silently as though in prayer at
places of pilgrimage
But behind their appearance they await the
chance to devour living things.
Who can call them 'white'?
This body is like a tree whose fruit is useless
but men beholding it, mistake it.
A blind man carries a burden on a long mountainous
way
He seeks eyes, which he cannot find; how shall he
rise up and reach his journey's end?*

toward God, or other reasons, unbeknown to us. But they act in accordance with God's Will, and not by exertions of their own powers. Ordinary men may praise them for working miracles but they themselves take these powers as they take all other worldly things—passing displays. Therefore, they not only avoid using them when possible, but strictly enjoin their disciples who are yet on the way to avoid them at all costs as they are fraught with dangers.

Further, "miracles" upset a balance in Nature's plan and this balance must somehow be restored. Whoever has been around a true Saint feels the deep pain of seeing Him take upon Himself great suffering to lighten the burden of His "children." But moved by disciples' sufferings or by their love and devotion, He will sacrifice His own well-being for their sake.

9. The word *Sajjan* implies a true friend.

*Of what avail are services, cleverness and virtues?
O Nanak, contemplate the Naam, so thou may be
released from thy bondage.*

SUHI M. 1

Hearing these words, Sajjan was stung to the depths of his life. In this holy presence, he began to tremble from head to foot, as the full weight of his sins came before his vision. His tears became as washings on the Master's feet—which he clung tenaciously to, while he sobbed in repentance. His deceit and treachery were exposed, yet he felt a great love and forgiveness there also. When he looked up, Sajjan folded his hands and confessed all that he had done. "In the Name of God, distribute your wealth to the poor and holy," Nanak told him. "Leave off the evil ways of your past and devote yourself to the service of God and humanity."

In the presence of a holy man, life abounds with miracles; but the greatest of them all is the spark which kindles the Divine Love; and in Sajjan, such a miracle was worked through the Master's grace. He not only distributed his ill-gained wealth, but also destroyed his palace in which countless murders had been committed, and built for himself a small hut in its place. He then constructed a house for meditation and prayer, which was to become the first Gurdwara. But above all else, he was blessed with the treasure of Naam.

Nanak continued his travels and eventually arrived at Hardwar, a place of Hindu sanctity. Here, as in many places yet to come, he found men who, though seeking righteousness and God, followed fruitless paths. With the fullness of compassion, he came to awaken them from their spiritual slumber. The day was just breaking as he approached the banks of the Ganges and there several pilgrims

were offering water to the rising sun. He questioned them about their actions and they replied that they were offering this sacred water to their ancestors in the 'land of the sun.' Nanak walked down to the river bank and began throwing water to the west. They in turn questioned him concerning his offering. "I am watering my fields in the Punjab." The pilgrims broke into mock laughter: "Your water falls into the Ganga itself. How can it reach your fields in a faraway land?" The Master replied, "You claim your water can reach the world of the dead; why is it foolish to believe that mine can reach a corner of this world?" At this all were silenced. And then stepping onto dry land, the Guru instructed the men thus: "Your offerings of water, food or money cannot reach your departed ancestors. Rather they stay in the hands of him to whom you give them. Do not be misled by false counsel nor follow another's words blindly. Each man receives the fruits of his own actions—as did your ancestors in the past, so do you now. Thus one who lives a life of high character and self restraint will find happiness both here and hereafter."

Later at Hardwar, under the pretense of needing firewood, Nanak walked within the sacred lines of a Brahmin's cooking square. This was considered a bold sacrilege and the Brahmin was outraged. He shouted at the Master for entering his sacred area and thus defiling his food. "Your kitchen was already made impure," the Guru replied. "Of what avail were your lines?" "An evil mind is like a scavenger; cruelty, a butcher. Slander is a sweeper, and anger, a jester."¹⁰ While these four are seated within one, he is yet of

10. People of lower castes were believed by orthodox Hindus to pollute the atmosphere of the kitchen and the food that was cooked in it. Therefore many Hindus would draw lines around their cooking areas, allowing no one to enter within them.

the lower caste. Only by a pure heart, a noble character, and the loving remembrance of God, does one's touch become pure."

From Hardwar, the Guru proceeded to Gorakhmata (re-named Nanakmata after his visit there) and on to Benares, Patna, Ayodhya, Gaya and then into Assam and Dacca. From Dacca, he went on to Puri where he met the God-intoxicated Vaishnava, Chaitanya (who is well-known for his chanting of "Hari Bole") and his chief devotees. The two spent some days together singing the praises of God before Nanak resumed his travels.

By now, Mardana was exhausted by the demands of travel and requested that they return to the Punjab. His wish was granted, but first the two met with Sheik Ibrahim—the twelfth successor to Farid, a famous Sufi Master. The great Sheik bowed humbly when he met Guru Nanak, and the words "Thou art Allah" poured involuntarily from his lips. Nanak replied, "Allah is only the aim of my life, O Farid! Allah is the very essence of my being." Ibrahim gave Nanak Farid's writings, which were later to be incorporated into the Sikh holy scripture. Here also Nanak founded the city of Kartarpur. (*lit.* The Abode of the Creator Lord) where he built a house and settled his family. But his rest was short as the world's confusion called for a place of refuge. In response, he gain set out to fulfill the Divine Orders. This time he headed to the south, as far as Ceylon.

These travels were to lead Nanak into strange lands, where he met people of diverse ways and varying powers. Though warned repeatedly of great dangers, Nanak disregarded them. Wherever there was the yearning of love and devotion, or where there was suffering that cried for relief, he responded as a messenger of the Divine Will, without allowing the smallest thought of self to interfere:

“He who has sent me forth, shall also provide for me.” Here he saw people blinded by their own powers, by their worldly charms or wealth or by their own selfish motives. But he remained ever of steady mind. And each time, the dim glow of the ephemeral dwindled before the Sun of Divinity and the miracles of witchery and yoga became insipid within its light.

On the final leg of this journey, Nanak met with a wealthy banker named Dhuni Chand. Dhuni Chand invited the Guru to attend a ritual where he offered homage to his deceased father. Nanak however discouraged such performances as they had become a source of livelihood for priests but incurred none of the supposed benefits. The following night Dhuni Chand had a vision which confirmed the Guru’s words. After this, he sought the Guru’s company more closely and would listen carefully to his discourses. One day he approached Nanak—perhaps with a tint of pride over his vast wealth—and asked him to accept some favor. The Master handed a small pin to Dhuni Chand and said, “When we meet again in the Beyond, please return this pin to me.”

“How can that be done? Who can take anything along with himself when he dies?”

“Then what do you gain by a treasure, not one cent of which you can take along with you?”

Dhuni Chand was stunned by these words: his whole life had been spent in amassing a fortune, and once gained, he had dwelt constantly upon it.

“The Lord’s Name—which is within you—is the only profit that benefits you both here and hereafter,” Nanak continued. “The Guru can give you some capital—spiritual capital—to start with and that can be developed from day to day. The disciple need only follow the Master’s injunc-

tions and he will reap the true profit of life which will never fail him.” Shortly thereafter, Dhuni Chand was initiated into the mysteries of the Panch Shabda. He worked hard to cultivate this Divine gift and distributed much of his wealth in the service of the holy, the poor and the needy.

After these long travels, Nanak again retraced his footsteps to the Punjab. Nanaki, his sister, was told of his homecoming in her meditations and left her house in Sultanpur to see him in Talwandi. She was the first to see him coming but respectfully waited in the background as others rushed forward to greet him. Mehta Kalu was the first to meet him—and joy filled the heart of the father who again saw his son. Nanak bowed low to his feet and then bowed before his mother. Tears rolled down from Tripta’s eyes as she embraced her son. Only when called for did Nanaki come forward—and then not to meet her brother but to meet her most dearly beloved Guru. She bowed down to touch his feet but Nanak would not allow this. He picked her up and embraced her with a warm, loving caress.

News spread of the Guru’s arrival and many came to receive his darshan and to hear his holy words. For Mehta Kalu, however, while the animosities of earlier years had faded, the idea of his son’s divinity could not penetrate into his heart. Thus he continued to speak to him concerning future responsibilities: Had he not traveled enough now? Was he not now ready to take over the cares of the household? And was it not a parent’s due right to have some claim on his child? Such were among the many questions he put to Nanak when alone with him and his wife Tripta.

“I am but a poor servant to the Lord,” Nanak replied. “Mine is simply to live within His Will.” The Guru then sat silent for some moments and looked deeply into their eyes. He became ablaze with Light; and when he now spoke, his

parents no longer heard the voice of their son but of a divine personage whose words brought solace and awakening. "There is One God who pervades His creation as Conscious Spirit (Naam). He is the Light that is everywhere and is found deep within ourselves. Those who turn to Him find Divine beatitude. Others wander lost in the torments of worldliness. In the veil of egoism, man runs blindly after sense pleasures and evil desires though they never bring fulfillment. In contacting the Naam, the mind is brought to rest and the curtain of darkness is rent asunder. Only then does the inner man find peace."

After much silence, Tripta finally spoke. "Under our delusion, we tried to hold you within the bounds of filial attachment. Why didn't you show us earlier your heavenly mission?" But Nanak remained silent.

A few days later, the Guru began his third journey which took him north: through the Himalayas into Nepal and Tibet. In the mountains and foothills, he gathered yogis from their hermitages and preached to them of the vanity of their performing miracles; of the needlessness of their total isolation and the wasted efforts of their outer and symbolic worship.

When they asked Nanak how the world below fared, he spoke of a pitiable condition and condemned these renunciates for living on the alms of those they hid themselves from, during a time when the very same people were desperately in need of guidance. "God cannot be gained by selfish prayer. And you who should have been the example of Hindu society, have concealed yourselves in the fastness of these mountains. You have deserted your responsibility to those seeking guidance and taken to a life of waste. When you turned your face from suffering humanity, you also turned your hearts from God." He then spoke to them at

great length on the true path of yoga: that while man must live in solitude to realize God, that solitude is within oneself, found by an unceasing communion with the Holy Naam. He who wished to cross the ocean of life must do so with an ever-alert and worshipful mind; and though living in the midst of impurities, he must remain pure. Then whether in the jungles or towns, one would dwell with the inner Peace and behold the Light of the One reality present in all life.

These men were great ascetics: old in years and endowed with supernatural powers. That one who by age seemed but a mere child to them, had such wisdom, aroused within them the desire to convert him to their own path—so that its respect might be revived. But Nanak replied that he followed a different system:

*My own system is unbroken communion with the Word
My wearing of earrings is in discarding pride and
attachment.*

*My renunciate's garb is seeing the Lord in all things.
Only God can make me free.*

*Saith Nanak, He is the Truth: Eternal, Unchangeable
He who will, may test this.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 1

He continued that his system was not of man's make but stemmed from God's own infallible wisdom, and only by treading such a path could man attain to the Highest.

*With the beginning of the life breath
So too began my system.*

Its source is the Satguru.

Shabda (the Word) is the Guru

And Surat (soul or attention) is the disciple.

*My detachment is maintained by meditating upon the
Incomprehensible One.*

*Through the Divine Word is God revealed to us
And in the company of the Saints is the fire of
Ego destroyed.*

*I am a slave to Him who knoweth the Unknowable
And enables others to know Him as well.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 1

The yogis were moved by the depths of wisdom with which he spoke and their pride was broken. But only one, Bharathri Yogi—who had earlier met the Master in a dense forest Ashram, and still before that, had come to know of his advent into the world while in deep contemplation—left the isolation of the Himalayas. He spent his remaining years in the Guru's home village of Kartarpur, living to enjoy His holy darshan.

After his meeting with the Siddhas, Nanak returned to the Punjab. His stay was again brief as his mission called him to the fourth point of the compass—west—and to the land of the Muslims.

When Nanak entered the city of Multan (which was considered to be a place of many holy men), he met a high priest who carried a bowl full to the brim with milk. It was a silent message that the city had no more room for holy men. Understanding it, Nanak floated a jasmine flower across the milk, allowing none to spill: his silent reply that he would pass through so lightly, so silently, that all would be left undisturbed, yet they would receive the sweet fragrance of God's holy Word.

Passing through various stations on his long march, Nanak eventually reached Mecca, a famous place of Muslim pilgrimage. At the city's outskirts, he went into meditation with his feet pointing toward the Kaaba. This was considered a sacrilege; and espying it, a priest kicked him, shouting that the Guru had his feet pointed toward the

“House of God.” Unperturbed, Nanak replied: “Would you kindly turn my feet in that direction where God is not?” The Mullah was startled by the answer, but from it, realized how he had narrowed his worship by limiting God to man-made temples and forgotten the words of the Koran: that the Lord God is omnipresent and that any place becomes sanctified where one sits for devout prayer.

When the people of Mecca had heard of this strange Master, they crowded around him and pressed him as to which was the greater of the two: Hindu or Muslim? He replied that without right deeds, both would perish, “but to him whose delusion of mind is gone, Hindu and Muslim are alike.”¹¹

Leaving Mecca, he traveled on to Bhagdad. Here again, people thronged around him. They asked him his religious faith and he replied: “My religion is that of God. I have renounced all sects. I know only the one true God, the Supreme Being who is on earth, in the heavens and in between and in all directions.”¹² Here he also met the Muslim divine Shah Bahlol. After a short stay with him, Nanak prepared to leave; but the faqir quickly attached himself to the Master’s presence and begged him to settle there. To the Shah’s regret, the Guru replied that no place of impermanence can be a man’s home:

*We have made this world our home; but a true home is
only that which remains.*

What kind of station is this world?

*Do the deeds of faith, gather thy needs for travel
beyond and meditate upon the Naam.*

Home is that place where the Hand of Death is no more.

11. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji*, p. 136.

12. *Ibid.*

*The skies and the earth will pass away; the One God
alone remains.*

*The sun, the day; the moon and the night and millions
of stars will all vanish.*

The True Lord alone remains.

Listen, O Man, for Nanak speaketh the Truth.

SOHILA M. 1

“In memory . . . of the Divine Master Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia” Shah Bahlol constructed a shrine.

For the final time, Nanak turned his feet back toward Kartarpur. He had spent nearly thirty years carrying his message to the four directions of the compass and tirelessly given of his own life in the service of God and humanity. But even as he returned to the Punjab, he found no chance for rest. While staying with his disciple, Lalo, he witnessed Babar launch his third massacre upon the Punjab. Palaces were reduced to rubble; men were ruthlessly slaughtered and women and children were dragged into slavery. He was deeply moved and wrote the following:

*Though Thou hast protected Khurasan
And struck terror to the heart of Hindustan
Thou O Creator bringest no blame unto Thyself.
Thou hast sent Death in the guise of the Mughal, Babar.
Terrible was the killing.*

*O Lord, did Thou not hear the cries?
Did not Thy heart fill with pain?*

*A jewel among kingdoms was wasted by the dogs
But now they are gone; who shall recall their names or
mourn their death?*

It is Thou who unites and Thou who divides.

*That man who thinketh himself great, indulging him-
self to his every whim
Before the Lord is but an insect nibbling at grain.*

*Saith Nanak: Only they who die while yet alive have
truly tasted life;
And only they can gain the gift of Thy Naam.*

RAG ASA M. 1

The emperor's soldiers arrested Nanak and Mardana and put them to labor. However word got back to Babar of a "holy man who sat in meditation, while his mill beside him worked of its own accord," and thus his imprisonment was brief. The emperor himself went to see this holy man and on meeting him was deeply humbled. His apologies were profuse. Taking Nanak into his tent, Babar offered him some hashish, but the Master refused. "The effect of this drug, if taken in the evening, will be gone in the morning. But the intoxication of Naam is with me twenty-four hours of the day and night." Babar then requested Nanak to please take some other favor, but again he refused: "Foolish would be the faqir who would beg of kings. God is the only giver, munificent beyond all measure. Nanak hungers for God alone and he asks for naught."

The Guru spent his last days with his family in Kartarpur. Here he worked as a farmer to provide for himself and his family and likewise employed many of his disciples. Ample food was thus provided and a huge langar (community kitchen) was started. Free meals were given to all who came, regardless of caste, religion, or position. The langar continued to be used by the later Sikh Masters and even now the tradition of serving meals to all is carried on.

Nanak's disciples would daily rise early for meditation and prayers, often followed by discourses given by the Master. Without fail, a certain young boy would come and sit for the meditation, and afterwards listen attentively to the Master's Satsang. Soon Nanak approached him and asked why he was not asleep as were other children his age.

The child replied that he sought refuge from death: "One day I watched my mother start a fire. It was the little sticks that burned first and I thought how death could likewise so easily overtake me, also being so little. Then the emperor came and burned our fields. I was afraid and ran to my father but he could do nothing. I thought that since my father could not even protect me from the emperor, who would protect me from death? So I sought the refuge of a Saint." Nanak was very pleased with the boy's reply; though so young, he had the wisdom of an old man—a budha—and from thence onward, he was known as Bhai Budha.

Bhai Budha grew to an old age and fully developed the gift Guru Nanak had given him. He lived to serve the five succeeding Masters after Nanak, performing for each the ritual which symbolized their ascension to the spiritual throne. The love and respect that the Masters had for him is clearly shown in many instances, but devout disciple that he was, he never transcended the bounds of humility. When finally he lay on his deathbed, Guru Har Gobind (the sixth of the Gurus) hastened to his side. Bhai Budha was thrilled with the joy of the Master's presence in his dying hour. But the Master bent before him and asked for his last counsel. "Thou shinest forth like the sun and I am no more than a firefly," replied the aged sage. "By Thine own grace, help me to swim across the vast Sea of Life."

"You ask for what you have already gained," said Har Gobind and placed his hand upon Bhai Budha's forehead, whereupon his soul withdrew forever into the Region of the Imperishable One.

So many came to the Master's feet, and while that great love radiates to all alike, each can receive it only according to his own level of receptivity. Some saw Guru Nanak only

then turned to Ajitha: "Now, this is the type of person who enjoys the very Essence of the Guru's presence."¹³

V

After seventy years of his earthly mission, Nanak's life drew to a close. But if flesh and blood decay, that Power within does not, but continues to provide to the seeking humanity. So when the people grieved, he assured them he would not leave: "If your Friend comes to you in one garment or the other, won't you recognize him?" The Power that worked through Nanak was now passed on so that the divine work could continue. He had two sons, but found them both lacking in the necessary spiritual qualities. In his devout servant, whom he had made "Angad," he found the fullness of self-surrender and Godliness; and through this human pole, "Nanak continued to reign."

The Master's final day arrived—that day, the thought of which was an unbearable remorse to each disciple. But amidst their immeasurable grief, Nanak found great delight: it was the time when he was to rejoin the Beloved Lord forever.

*Sing ye my comrades! Sing ye all
Sing now my wedding song.
. . . The blessed day hath dawned.
The hour of consummation draweth nigh.
Come ye my comrades, come!
And consecrate me with your blessings.
Behold ye the Bride uniting with the Bridegroom.*
GURU NANAK¹⁴

13. Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle*, pp. 202-4.

14. Guru Nanak as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *The Jap Ji*, p. 144.

He had long spoken to them of death: that all should learn to rise above the body at their own will and commune with the Lord on the Spiritual planes. Then there would be no fear of death and their days left on earth would be finished peaceably and in love's detachment. He assured them that that Power was ever with them; they need only turn their attention within—with a silenced mind and full faith and devotion—and He who had once dwelt amongst them, would again appear before their vision and guide them step by step through the spiritual regions until they reached the True Home of the Father and were absorbed into it.

VI

*He who transcends the Sat Lok
Alone knows the essence of Agam and Alakh
The Saints have their abode above these
And poor Nanak too is a resident there.*

GURU NANAK

As a young boy, Nanak had known the deep torment of yearning to reunite with the Most High; and on attaining his goal, he spared himself no effort in his mission of rekindling this knowledge across the world. He had become one with a sublime and indescribable state of awareness and beauty—which is given to few men even to conceive of—yet he walked the earth in all humility and lived as a servant to the poor, the sick and the neglected. To the confused masses, he brought a message of righteousness, service and worship of the One God; and his words were so charged with a confidence, love and insight—which sprang from the depths of his heart—that even those who once formed the sub-strata of society, sought refuge in them. But he, who

had in no uncertain terms spoken of *seeing God*, endured countless hardships not only to bear testimony to that Reality but to enable others to see It as well. For this reason, above all others—to guide the lost but seeking souls back to a Vision of God—did he live and travel among men. Whosoever approached him with a sincere and humble heart, lost himself in the ineffable joy of his presence. And whosoever was blessed with his gift of Naam, found that the Master's own life impulse could lift his attention above the physical and mental limitations, and he would behold for himself the glory of God's primal manifestations, on which the soul could ride "joyously Homeward."



TWO

Guru Angad

(1504-1522)

ANGAD was born in the Ferozepur district of the Punjab, the son of a poor trader. His parents gave him the name Lehna—which means a debt which is due to one—but by the grace of Guru Nanak, he became “Angad” or a “Limb of His own Self.”

*By Lehna's devoted service
Did Nanak proclaim him as his successor.
The same Light is manifest within him.
His ways of life are the same.
The body alone has changed.
Through him, Nanak himself reigns as Guru.*

RAMKALI VAR SATTI BALWAND

Lehna spent many years as a devotee of the goddess Durga (an aspect of the Divine Mother); and in his fervor for inner knowledge, he kept night-long vigils of supplication to her. True prayers cannot go long unheeded, and one night he heard the melody of devotion sung from the tongue of Bhai Jodha—a disciple of Guru Nanak. Divine beatitude thrilled his whole being, and with daybreak he found his way to the inspired devotee. Bhai Jodha told him that they were the hymns of the great Living Master, Guru Nanak. When he heard the words “Guru Nanak” something strange and mysterious was kindled in his heart, and the desire to meet this great Saint would not leave him.

The days passed and Lehna could not rid himself of the

yearning to behold the Master Nanak. When the time arrived for the annual pilgrimage to Jawalmukhi, Lehna expressed his wish to meet Nanak on their way—thus to gain benefits both from the goddess and from the company of a holy man. All agreed to the double merits to be won and Lehna rode ahead to have the Master's darshan. On his way, he met an old man who said he was also bound to see the Guru and could lead Lehna there. Overjoyed, Lehna rode on, just behind the old man who continued on foot. Reaching the gate where Nanak was staying, the two separated and Lehna was soon taken to the Master's room. On entering, he found the same old man who had led him there, and fell at His Feet. Lehna expressed his shame for riding while the Master walked, but Nanak only smiled: "How were you to know?" Perhaps a silence followed: who can say? A silence filled with an indescribable joy. But whatever it was, in it was the answer to the eternal cry of a heart: "So your name is Lehna? You have come at last for your 'lehna' [that which is due you]. I have been waiting for you."

*Were a hundred moons to rise together
And a thousand suns to be shining in their brightness
All that light
Leaves man yet in darkness
Without the benevolence of the Guru.*

VAR ASA M. 2

Though he left the Master physically to return to his fellow pilgrims, Lehna could not take his mind from the joy he had at His feet. Reaching the camp, he tore off the bells he wore as part of his worship to the goddess and proclaimed that all his pilgrimages were now completed. The blessings he had long sought became his with one glance from the holy Nanak.

On Nanak's instructions, Lehna returned to his home to settle accounts there. He told his wife of the holy man of Kartarpur and the divine intoxication that He radiated. Lehna purchased a new suit and with a heavy rock of salt for the Master's langar on his shoulders, began his return journey to Kartarpur. Arriving there, he was met by Nanak's wife, Sulakhni, and told to take rest. Lehnaji was not set on rest for his body but for his heart which throbbed for a glance from the Master. Thus he excused himself and rushed to the fields where the Beloved was at work. As Lehnaji approached Nanak, he saw three large bundles of hay and heard the workers complaining about being asked to carry them in. Even Nanak's sons shrank from the service as the bundles were heavy and dripped with mud. Instead they suggested that a laborer be found in the morning. But when Lehna heard these words, no more needed to be said. He paid his humble respect to the Master and then with disregard for human capacities, thrust all three bundles on his shoulders, crying, "I am the laborer you seek!" Aided only by divine grace, he carried them in from the fields and to the storage area, past Nanak's house. Seeing him pass, Sulakhni remonstrated the Guru for allowing their guest—who should still be tired from travels—to perform such heavy labor. And moreover, not only were his physical comforts ignored but his new silken suit was stained and ruined by the mud. But Lehna replied, "To me this is not mud, it is saffron."¹ Such was his love and service to the Master.

*O Nanak, obey him who himself hath obeyed God;
The Lord is found by the Grace of the Master.*

RAM KALI KI VAR M. 2

1. Guru Angad as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, from a discourse at Sant Bani Ashram, Franklin, N.H., August, 1977.

So great was Lehna's devotion that he labored without cares for himself. It was through such a service of love that his soul was soon to be made one with the Master's. However, before the disciple's devotion is consummated, it is first tested, both within and without; and while what happens within may be locked in the hearts of the lover and the Beloved, what happens without can be known to all. One night when the late hours had put most men to bed and the storms and cold would make them reluctant to leave it, Nanak awakened his sons and told them to repair a wall outside his house at that very hour. They thought their father had lost his wits and refused the work; they told him to wait till morning and then sevadars could be found. But Nanak would not agree and proposed that the disciples do this work now. His request reached many ears but there was no response until Lehna heard of it. Many called him a fool to obey such strange demands, but Lehna only heard the joy of devotion and completed the task as a humble servant. Over and again did strange situations arise which showed the depths of love and faith of His devotee and exposed those attached to him for personal motives. When Guru Nanak threw a bowl into the mud and told his eldest son, Sri Chand, to fetch it, Sri Chand replied, "I am your son and you are a great saint. You have many servants. Why should I fetch it?" Guru Nanak then just looked at Bhai Lehna and he jumped into the mud to get the bowl. About this incident Nanak later said, "If anyone is really devoted to the Master, he has to understand His very hint as the order and has to do that. One even has to go and bathe in the dirt."²

When not in the physical service of the Guru, Lehna

2. Guru Nanak as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, from a discourse at Sant Bani Ashram, Franklin, N.H. August, 1977.

would give his time to spiritual practices. On his Master's orders, he once returned to his home town of Khadur, and in the pain of separation would spend his whole day lost in the inner joys of the holy Naam.

No one possessed his devotional enthusiasm, and while he had already won the esteem of his brother disciples as well as many others, it was as though he were blind to it—being lost in the oneness of divine love. Nanak, so moved by his beloved disciple, told his wife that while Sri Chand and Lakmi Das were her sons, his was Lehna. Despite all this, there was still one test that was yet to come.

When a yogi one day came to the Master, he was very impressed by the number of disciples that he had. But to this, Nanak responded that the truth of matters was not always as it appeared, and actually, he had very few real disciples. Tomorrow Nanak would show him the truth of matters. When the sun rose, Nanak appeared before his Sangat—not with simple farming tools but with a knife at his waist, hunting dogs at his side and a gleam of madness in his eyes. Certain that the Master had gone mad, many of the followers immediately fled. Those that remained proceeded into the jungles with the Guru. But soon all save a very small number had left; either due to his strange behavior or chasing allurements found along the way. When finally only the on-looking yogi, Lehna, and two other disciples remained, they stumbled across an old corpse. It had long been infested with worms and emitted a foul odor; but on its discovery the Master demanded: “Let him who wishes to remain with me eat this corpse!” Two disciples stood frozen in horrified amazement and then ran off. But Lehna approached the dead body and bent down to eat it. Suddenly it changed into parshad. Now being a sweet-tasting and

blessed food, in deep love and humility, he offered it to the Master. The guise of madness lifted from Nanak's face and He stood revealed in a divine glory. Betraying a pleasure rarely gained, Nanak spoke and the sound danced like music upon Lehna's heart: "You have performed excessive devotions, and between you and me there is now no difference. None of my sikhs have shown such faith and surrender as you. Truly you are 'Angad'—a limb of my own self."

Soon the time of Nanak's departure from the earth plane came and he made it known that "Angad" was his spiritual successor. While his sons Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das became jealous, a devotee is happy only in the service of his Beloved and cares nothing of what the world thinks about him, nor its wealth or powers. Thus in the agony of separation, Angad spent six months in seclusion and almost unbroken meditation, seeing no one but one woman who brought him a glass of milk each day for his sustenance.

*Die before thy dearly Beloved
To live after him in the world is a curse to life.
Sever the head which boweth not to the Lord.
Nanak, burn the wretched body which feeleth not the
pain of separation.*

SRI RAG KI VAR M. 2

But the time of his seclusion ended as other souls cried for the darshan of the Living Master. Led by Bhai Budha, they came to him for mercy. With a Master's rare love, he took them all in as his own children and his work as a servant to humanity now began. And yet while a period of uninterrupted meditation may thus end, a devotee's love for his

Master never leaves him. When he was asked why he, who had himself become one with the Guru, should suffer so much pain at the Master's physical death, a solemn look covered his face: "Yes, I know . . . that's all right. The Master is ever with me, but the initiate, as a son of man, has a great suffering."³

II

*He is not blind
Who has no eyes upon his face.
O Nanak, he is blind
Who sees not the Will of God.*

VAR RAMKALI M. 2

As did Nanak and those who were to follow him, Angad taught his disciples to worship the one God Who was manifested in the form of Light and Music of the Spheres. He taught that man is entitled to a great spiritual wealth and yet he blindly attaches himself to the ephemeral and shallow pleasures of the world. Others were lost in severe penances, intellectual wranglings or outward devotions; but God, Who is within, cannot be found by these outer means. He taught that men must first lead an ethical life of love, purity, humility and honesty. They must support themselves and their families and help others in need with money gained through their own labors. To live a simple and pure life causing injury to none⁴ were his basic injunctions; and then, while living in the world, one must develop the ruling

3. Guru Angad, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in a discourse, Manav Kendra, Dehra Dun, India, Dec. 25, 1971.

4. The principle of *ahimsa* or nonviolence espoused by the Gurus includes non-injury to all alike and not to man alone. It therefore included the strict abstinence from all flesh foods. Certain biographers have por-

passion to know God. As an ideal teacher, Angad radiated the perfect example of true living and high thinking.

Countless people came to him daily and to all he showed patience and understanding—even those who did not understand him or whose beliefs differed from his own Path. He always avoided controversies that were just for the sake of intellectual display, but was nonetheless often confronted by men who came just to dispute with him. Once a yogi came to him and, while questioning his teachings, added that should Angad take to the path of

trayed the Gurus as meat-eaters but even a surface examination shows that this is not so. In his writings, Guru Nanak asks how a heron can be called “white” (i.e. “pure”) when it “devours living things” (Suhī M.I) and further states that “Gurus and Pirs are pleased when their disciples eat nothing which has knowr. life.” (Majh M.I) In the Persian manuscript, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (written by a historian friendly with the fifth Guru) it is stated that Nanak forbade the use of “wine and pork” among his following and ordered them not to injure any living being. He goes on to say that when it came to Guru Arjan’s notice that certain disciples were not abiding by the vegetarian injunction, he at once let it be known that none should partake of flesh foods.

As Sant Ajaib Singh has pointed out, most biographies of the Sikh gurus—and particularly of Guru Gobind Singh—were written well after they had left their bodies, and are usually colored by the biographer’s particular feelings. Those who were close disciples of Gobind Singh and who were in a position to write accurately about him were mostly in the deserts or in the jungles engaged in combat—and thus unable to write anything. Sant Ji went on to say that Sawan Singh had shown him documents written at the time of Gobind Singh in which it is declared that he also forbade the eating of flesh foods.

The importance of a vegetarian diet is stressed not only for its moral implications but also with regard to the biological effect which a simple vegetarian diet, as opposed to a meat diet, has upon the nervous system. While vegetarian foods are more conducive for calming the mind, meat tends to flare up passions and anger. This has been a well-known fact in most systems of yoga and mysticism for centuries. In most cultures, both ancient and modern, outstanding figures also have been aware of this fact.

Gorakh, wealth, supernatural powers and long life would all be his. Angad replied that none of these could confer inner peace. Rather they were the cause of pride and avarice and therefore led not to freedom but to bondage. He further told the yogi how, by the grace of Guru Nanak, he had crossed the vast ocean of life and not for a moment could wealth, powers, or attractions of the world tempt him. When one experiences the inner spiritual happiness, his mind is held steadfast. Then, while living the life of a householder and family man, one would remain unaffected by the world. The yogi heard the message only superficially but said he was pleased with the Master's reply, so pleased in fact that he would grant him any wish he made. Angad replied that he had already received all that he wished and therefore the boon was of no avail. But the yogi continued to press him and finally Angad replied that he wished the gift of humility. The yogi was startled by this reply and confessed that he could not give it—since he did not have it himself. Thereupon he closed his eyes and prayed that he might receive the gift of humility. In his prayer, it is said that he was directed by an inner voice to Guru Angad, the Master of the time, but unable to thus humble himself, the yogi went his own way.

Once also Humayun, the son of Babar, came to Angad. Humayun ruled for some years but lost his empire in battle against an Afghan soldier, Sher Khan. Now a fugitive and in utter despair, he sought the Guru's blessings that he might regain his throne. However, Angad was very fond of children and happened to be playing with some when Humayun arrived. So the time passed but no attention was paid to him and Humayun's annoyance was stirred. He put his hand to the hilt of his sword, but although he pulled as hard as he could, he could not remove it from its sheath.

The Guru looked up and smiled: "Brave Humayun! Where was your sword when you fought Sher Khan? Beaten by him, you wish to use it on a poor fakir." Humayun felt ashamed and he bowed at the Guru's feet asking his pardon. The Master's blessings were given but he told him some years would pass before he would regain his kingdom. And so it came to pass: Humayun spent many years in lonesome exile before he was able to raise forces and step back upon his throne.

*Nanak, cast the glories of this world into the flames.
By them have men forgotten the Holy Naam.*

VAR MALAR M. 2

Wherever greatness manifests, pettiness and jealousy also seem to arise. In Khadur Sahib, there lived one spiteful yogi who made the Guru his target of condemnation. He had performed austerities which gave him certain powers; but these, rather than helping him on the spiritual path, only served to inflate his ego and further obscure his vision of Truth. And then as men began to follow the Living Master, they turned away from this yogi, and his business was impaired and his pride annoyed. So when a long period of drought came, he seized the opportunity to exile Angad. He gathered the village people and told them that the Master was the cause of the drought. He said that though men revered Angad as the True Guru, he was not; or else why would he not bring them rain? If, however, Angad were driven from the area, the monk himself promised to bring the rains. Anxiety gripped the hearts of the poor village folk. Even through the rainy season, they were without showers; and if their crops should fail, what would be their means of sustenance? They approached the Master and pleaded with him to make it rain. In his unflinching equipoise,

he bid them to put their faith in God's Will: "He knows what we want and what we need and He will give us that, so we should not ask for anything."⁵ With all the power and love his presence afforded them, with all the peace and assurance they felt from his words, yet when they left his presence, they found themselves unable to obey his words. Fear had overtaken their minds and they sought refuge in the monk's promise: they drove Angad from the village. From one village to the next was he driven, suffering abuse as he went. But as his mind was fully embedded in the Divine, Angad peacefully underwent the torments until finally he found shelter in a small village in the jungle where people welcomed him with reverence and where he was able to devote himself to long hours of meditation.

The time for the promised rain passed but despite all the monk's incantations, it did not come. But in the meantime, Amardas, Angad's most devoted disciple, returned. When he heard what had happened, he asked the people if they had taken leave of their senses; what fools they were to expel divine shelter and hope to replace it with an unworthy monk. Realizing what they had done, the people cursed their own ignorance; not only did the rain not come, but they had betrayed the True Guru. Amardas then said that wherever they dragged the yogi, there would the rain fall in abundance. Men at once began pulling at the poor yogi to drag him through their fields,⁶ and Amardas' words proved

5. Guru Angad, as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, *op cit*.

6. History seems to indicate that when one willfully obstructs the mission of a true holy man, the very forces of nature seem to turn against him. When Devadatta tried to set himself in opposition to his Master, Gautama Buddha, he died a pitiable death. Similarly was it with Judas at the time of Christ's death, or with Chandu, who was responsible for Guru Arjan's execution. Nature may show her displeasure either in im-

true: wherever the yogi was dragged, the rain fell. Satisfied that justice had been done, the people began searching for the Master. When they found Him, Amardas went before Him, but the Guru turned His back. Amardas then went to His other side, but again the Guru turned around. Amardas asked why He was displeased, and the Guru replied: "I gave you the Power not to show miracles. I gave you the Power to keep within you. Why did you do that?"⁷

"Tranquility, forgiveness and forbearance are the qualities of a disciple. Thus you must endure the unendurable and suffer the insufferable. Like the earth must be your perseverance; like a mountain, your steadfastness in joy and sorrow; and forgiveness must flow from your heart like a river. As such, do good to all, irrespective of their actions; and always be humble, for the humble shall be exalted."

Amardas took these words deep into his heart and became the living example of these virtues.

When Angad saw his earthly end approaching, he advised his disciples accordingly. He told them that Masters come into the world to distribute the wealth of Divinity. When their mission is finished, they joyously respond to the Will of the Lord and return to the place of abiding peace.

personal means, such as the terrible storms like those following the death of Christ or Teg Bahadur; or it may be executed through the hands of man. But if a Master's hands are to dole out justice, they are conscious of what they are doing and not dragged impulsively by the forces of nature. And by their very nature, the Saints temper their justice with mercy and forgiveness, like Christ or Mansur who prayed for the blessings of their "enemies" (but we ordinary people who see only the happenings of this world may well be blind to the grace extended).

For details of "Non-violence" in physical violence, see the Bhagavad Gita, especially discourses II, III and XI.

7. Guru Angad, as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, op cit.

He had put his disciples—including his sons—to the test, but found only his beloved servant, Amardas, to be worthy of the immaculate duties of the Guru.



THREE

Guru Amardas

(1479-1574)

*God put the soul into the cave of the body
And then blew life into it, like a musical instrument.
The nine doors of the body He disclosed
But the Tenth He concealed.
When, through the Guru, faith is given,
Then is the mystery of the Tenth Door resolved.*

*Many are the forms of God
The Treasures of Life stem from His Name
But never is His limit to be found*

*Saith Nanak, when the Beloved Lord put the soul
into the cave of the body;
He blew life into it as a musical instrument.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND XXXVII)

AMARDAS was born in the district of what is now Amritsar and earned his livelihood as a farmer and trader. He worshiped God as a devoted Vaishnavite (devotee of Lord Vishnu) and his inner search was very long and hard. He would make a yearly pilgrimage to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges River and observed regular and frequent fasts. With all this, however, he could not rise above the outer practices. He reaped the fruits of his good deeds but sorrow remained in his heart: in his actions, the "I-hood" was there and he was thus barred from the vision of God which he sought.

*Without great good fortune, you cannot get the Naam.
I was so tired doing the outer practices.*¹

GURU AMARDAS

He was later to compare all actions at the level of the senses to the work of a man who labored from morn till night but received no payment and returned home tired and unhappy; but now he was still himself working as though such a laborer—unable to still the ceaseless wanderings of the mind and contact the Lord within. As he grew on in years, his search for Truth continued without rest; but the pain of it increased in its intensity and often left him without sleep. He appeared to live in an unbearable condition; yet when people came to him and told him to give up this search, he replied, “Do not utter such words, for even in this pain, there is a sweetness.”

*This cobra of separation has filled my mind and cannot
be controlled by any mantra;
Without seeing the Beloved, sleep does not come;
Without Naam there is only misery.*²

From the depths of his heart, he knew that without seeing God, human life passed in vain; but this highest destiny was not possible except through the grace of a competent Guru—one who had himself known God.

The cry from the heart is not left unattended; God hears the prayers of those seeking Him—but His ways are strange and wondrous and incomprehensible to man. And so Amardas, having spent more than seventy years of his life in

1. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in “It is a Noble Search,” *Sat Sandesh*, Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan. 1971, p. 13.

2. *Ibid*, p. 12.

fervent prayer, became almost exhausted from the long, long quest before the Divine Mercy was to become manifest to him.

One day, on returning from a bath in the Ganges River, he met a young ascetic. Each was drawn to the other by a similar pious manner and very quickly a close friendship was formed. Together they went to Amardas' shelter where they partook of food and discussed the Path of God. Both spoke with love and inspiration until the ascetic asked Amardas which guru had implanted such wisdom and piety in him. "I have no guru," was the reply, and the ascetic was shocked. He cursed himself for he had taken food from the hands of one uninitiated. He believed such an evil destiny had caused him to lose the merit of his ablutions, and he promptly left the old man's company.

Like a terrible and long-standing sore that had finally burst, so was the pain stabbing Amardas to the deepest roots of his life. The night passed for him without sleep—the fire of his prayer became too great to allow him cares for his own body any more. He was old and might not live much longer. There could be no rest for him now, until this cry was answered in all its fullness.

*O clouds, if you rain, then rain in torrents.
Why rain at all when the season is past?*

GURU AMARDAS

That night may have been to him like a thousand years of separation, but it did not end without tidings of the "greatest good fortune." Before the break of dawn, he heard a song which seemed to silence even the stillness of Nature: it was Guru Nanak's Jap Ji—which spoke of the greatness of God and of His chosen Servant; and it was sung by Guru Angad's daughter who had married into

Amardas' own family. Through her, Amardas met the Living Master.

*The True One listens carefully
And from the abundance of His mercy, He grants consolation.
He gives the order to the Cloud and the rain falls in abundance.*

GURU AMARDAS

In his quest for God and a Perfect Saint, Amardas had tirelessly searched almost all paths, and on coming to the feet of the Living Master, he gave himself to His service with the same enthusiasm. He spent the day doing physical work in the Guru's cause and he would pass the whole night in meditation, standing with his hair tied to a peg on the wall to ward off sleep. By the Guru's grace, the inner treasure of Divinity was revealed and his mind bathed in a perpetual calm, held silent by the unending Music of Naam.

II

When Guru Angad told Amardas to move to Goindwal, some miles away, he would walk the long distance daily to bring the Master fresh water from the Beas River and to have His darshan. Each step of his daily journey was like a prayer to him, of sweet remembrance of the Beloved Satguru.

*We are but humble mendicants and beggars,
Thou art the Protector of our honor.
Be kind and give us the alms of Thy Naam, so that we
may remain always intoxicated in Thy love.³*

DHANASRI M. 3

3. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Prayer*, p. 82.

One stormy night when Amardas was with the Master, a situation arose which showed the world something of a devotee's great love. The wind was cold and the rain fell in torrents; and so dark was the sky that one could not see what was before him. It was late in this night that Guru Angad called out for water. Once, then twice he called but received no response. He awakened his two sons and told them his wish. When they refused, Amardas humbly begged that he might be allowed this service. Drenched in his devotion, he disregarded both his old age and the weather and felt his way through the dark woods till he reached the river. There he filled his pitcher with water. On making his return, he fell into a weaver's pit and struck his foot against a peg. Yet he wished only that the water should not spill, and ignored the pain of the fall. When this noise awakened a family, commotion began for fear of a thief. Only when a woman recognized Amardas was there reassurance: "It is only that poor homeless orphan Amru who behaves like a madman. When other people sleep he will not, but forever seeks to do the work of twenty men: carrying water from the river, wood from the forests—all to please his Master—and then, what a Guru it is that he serves!" Silently and without ill thoughts, he had learned to endure gossip and slander against himself; but to affront the Guru seemed to him no less than madness; and when he uttered his thoughts, the woman herself went mad (only to regain her sanity through the Guru's pardon). Amardas returned to Khadur and, with love-filled eyes, placed the water before his Master.

*O my mother! I am filled with joy:
I have found the Satguru.
Very easily has He come unto me
—by no efforts of my own*

*And the Song of Rejoicing fills my heart.
When the Lord became Kirpal (merciful)
This joy was found, through the Guru.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND I & VII)

As the Gurumukh was pleased with the Master, so was the Master pleased with him. One who sees competence alone knows the fruits of full faith and surrender. When Amardas saw this competence in Angad, he put aside the opinions of the world and the waverings of the mind and plunged into the Master's endless ocean of love. Through such perfect devotion, he in turn was filled to the brim with the essence of the One to whom he had surrendered: "Amardas' service has been great and his labors have been crowned. What he utters shall prove true and the forces of Nature are now at his beck and call. Amardas will gain the fruits of his desires." Turning to Amardas, He said, "You are not homeless but shall be the giver of homes to many people. You shall be the strength of the weak; the protector of the unprotected; the redeemer of the lost and the Emancipator of the soul." Finishing these words, Guru Angad solemnly made it known that Amardas was to be the third Guru.

III

*If you sing the Song of the Lord,
Forever will the virtue of tranquility reside in you.*⁴

GURBANI, M. 3

Through the grace of Guru Angad and the human pole of Amardas, the holy work flourished. People flocked from all corners to bask in the light of the Guru's presence. Without wishing it, fame came to him; and with fame arose

4. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "The Destiny of a Gurumukh," *Sat Sandesh*, Vol. 1, No. 7, July 1971, p. 32.

jealousy. Sri Chand and Angad's son, Datu, both saw the Guru as a threat to their pride and power and did what they could to oppose Him. But wherever he went, whatever befell him, Amardas remained detached and forbearing and never left the bounds of his inherent humility.

With Amardas in Goindwal, Datu sat on his father's chair in Khadur. He had proclaimed himself the Guru—but found no following and so burned with rage: "Amru is an old man, my servant! Yesterday he was a water carrier in my house and today he sits as Guru." With these thoughts, he went to Goindwal. Seeing the Master, his anger burst and he kicked Him off His chair. From the floor, Amardas pressed the feet of his offender: "O great king, please forgive me. I am old with bones that are hard and dry. Your poor feet must have been hurt by them."

Amardas then left Goindwal to go into seclusion, allowing Datu to sit upon the Guru's seat. When Datu still found no following, he took what wealth he could and headed back toward Khadur. On his way he was attacked by robbers and ironically (or otherwise) was wounded in the same foot with which he had kicked the aged Master. This wound vexed him with pain for years afterwards.

Meanwhile, Amardas had shut himself inside a simple dwelling where He spent all his time in samadhi. His disciples who had tasted the joys of His presence were now distressed and restless and begged Bhai Budha to help them find the Master. Finally he led them to His hut; but the door was bricked up and a sign read: "Whoever opens this door is no sikh of mine." In their distress, but not daring to disobey the order, they sought an alternative. Going to the other side of the house, they broke down the wall and entered the dwelling where the glorious form of God sat in meditation; but when the Guru arose from his meditation,

He frowned to see his disciples standing before Him in apparent disregard of His order. They explained what they had done and how their eyes yearned to behold Him, and then He could only stand silently and smile. How can the father turn his back to his children or the Master to his loving Sangat?

Despite his old age, Amardas worked constantly to carry on the services and message of his predecessors. He expanded the Langar and made Hindus and Muslims, kings and peasants, sit side by side. The following increased and the word of the Master's greatness spread even to the Emperor Akbar's court. In fact, the emperor was so impressed on hearing of His universal message and his selfless work, that he personally went and paid homage to the Master. On seeing Him, Akbar was still further moved. He offered a very large donation for the Langar. Despite the aura of greatness that naturally emanated from the Guru, He preferred a simple and unostentatious way of life and therefore declined the offering: "The Guru's kitchen depends upon the humble and voluntary offerings of the devotees and not upon imperial donations." Akbar however continued to press that the Master accept some favor till finally it was agreed that a tract of land could be set aside in the care of his disciples, which would be developed to serve the needy and the seekers after Truth. This was to be developed by the two succeeding Gurus—Ramdas and Arjan—and ultimately became the city of Amritsar.

IV

*By the grace of God, one can meet a Master
Who puts him in the service of Surat Shabd Yoga.*⁵

RAG MAGH M. 3

5. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Baba Jaimal Singh*, p. 38.

Once again, Amardas made pilgrimages to the various holy places; not now as one searching but as the world enlightener.

You have got the body of a man—the highest in all creation; just reap the true profit of life: know yourself and know God. (You) will get that . . . when you sit at the feet of some Master who gives you initiation to go ahead; how to leave the body and gives you a contact . . . with the Divine Word within.

There is a precious, untold treasure of Divinity pervading all creation—that is in you and everywhere. If you just have contact with that and taste that sweet elixir, (your) mind will leave off all sensuous enjoyments. And that (Divinity) is called “Naam.”⁶

He approached the seekers after Truth with the understanding of one who had himself sincerely performed all the prescribed modes of worship and in every way encouraged them to seek out this Reality. If the goal seemed far off to those worshipping at an outer level, He let them know there was hope for everybody: “I was once just like you—at the mercy of the mind and out-going faculties—and now I am not. With His grace, I’ve risen above these things. God’s grace descended through the Guru. He withdrew my self from the abyss of the poisons of the out-going faculties.” Thus he let people know that what one man had done—what he had himself done—others could do as well, of course with the proper help and guidance.

Further, he said that it was a man’s birthright to experience God; that if one learned to die while alive, he would see that Power controlling all the universe. But if one did not actually have this experience for himself, then all his

6. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in a discourse, Washington, D.C., 1955.

learning and spiritual exercises would not bear forth the full fruit and one would still be left in darkness. “Without seeing, who praises God, he is a blindman . . . he is just like a blindman singing the praises of the sun.”

When he met with a group of men with whom he had once worshiped, Amardas gave them a gourd and asked them to bathe it in each of the holy rivers. Returning from this long pilgrimage, they gave Amardas the gourd and he in turn cut it and gave them each a piece to eat. When they complained of its bitter taste, the Master pointed out that all of its bathings at holy places were of no use. So also was it with man’s spirit: how could it become sweet by merely cleaning the body?

The Saints, who so patiently and lovingly guide the souls on the Way back to God, Themselves become helpless in the face of a truly loving disciple. Bibi Bani was the daughter of Guru Amardas and one of His great devotees. Once she upheld the Master’s cot that He was meditating on for the whole night: one leg of the cot was broken and fearing that he might be disturbed, she held it up—without regard for a nail that was stabbing into her hand. On seeing what she had done, the Master offered her a boon but she said that she had all she wanted just in serving the Master. The Guru insisted that she should take some boon, and finally she requested that the Guruship should stay in her family. The Master told her that this would be so, but as He spoke, His face turned very grave. “You will give birth to a great savior (Guru Arjan) but the clear-flowing waters of the Guruship have been dammed and the results will be greatly troublesome.” It is said that the results were the execution of the fifth and ninth Gurus and that the sixth and tenth Gurus had to become warriors.

When he thought it time to appoint a successor, Amardas put his disciples to the test. He asked that they should each build a small platform for him. This seemed a simple enough task and was done in little time. But when the Guru inspected them, they did not meet with His approval and He asked that they be rebuilt. As these were finished, He said that He wished them to be built in another site. Again and again, the platforms were built and then destroyed; and one by one the workers left until only one worker remained. The others jeered at him for following the requests of an old man, who to them appeared to be affected by His age. The sole worker, Jethaji, looked at them with tears in his eyes and replied: “The Master is all-wisdom, all-conscious. If I am ordered to build these platforms and break them all through life, my outlook is only to obey His orders.” Amardas then embraced his beloved servant, Jethaji—now retitled Ramdas—and told him that he alone was fit to carry on the Master’s work.

*O My eyes, it is the Lord who gave you Light
 Look on Him intently.
 All this world that you behold
 Is but His image
 When, through the Guru’s grace, I received under-
 standing,
 I saw that God was one, and there was none besides.
 Saith Nanak, these eyes were blind,
 But on meeting the Satguru they obtained Divine Light.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND XXXVI)



FOUR

Guru Ramdas

(1534-1581)

*The Lord's arrow of love has pierced my heart.
My mind is in torment for a glimpse of the Lord,
Like a man athirst without water.
The pain of inner torment, only the Lord knows.
He is my true brother who will tell me something of my
Lord, my Beloved.*¹

RAG GOND, M. 4

IN A SECTION of Lahore lived a pious and simple couple—Hari Das and Daya Kaur—who had long prayed for a great son. Their prayers were answered, and in the autumn of 1534 a child was born to them. He was named Ramdas—or God's servant—but was commonly called Jetha, or first born. Like Nanak before him and other Saints yet to come, he had little attraction for the world's sports and cares. His young mind was in search of an inner harmony, and his enjoyment was in meditation and the company of the holy. Also like the young Nanak, he enjoyed distributing his few possessions to the poor and the holy. His unworldly disposition made his parents regret their prayers.

*O fulfill the yearning of Nanak's child:
Peace will descend in this body
With a glimpse of the Lord.*²

1. Guru Ramdas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "The Heart's True Yearning," *Sat Sandesh*, Vol. 6, No. 4, April 1973, pp. 4-6.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

But when the prayer of Jetha's heart was answered, never again was another wish to enter his mind. For selflessly giving his goods to a group of holy men, Jethaji received their blessings—and these soon bore fruit. He met with a band of men who told him of the great living Master, Guru Amardas. Jethaji wasted no time in entering into the presence of Him to whom he was to devote his life, and when he beheld Him, heart spoke to heart and eyes to eyes, and he was soon put onto the Path of Naam.

*Glory, glory to the Satguru,
O Nanak, a contact with Him destroys pain and suffering.*

RAG GAURI, M. 4

*Unto Him, I joyfully surrender myself in sacrifice.*³

GURU RAMDAS

God, Who serves the whole world as the Lord of Justice—keeping men inexorably bound by their own actions—becomes the Lord of Mercy when He appears as the Satguru and rejoins the lost souls to that Power through which they can return to the Oneness of Life and thus bring to a halt the otherwise endless wheel of transmigration. Whosoever thinks of such a Master is transported with wonder. And while the Satguru's love may be as a sheer act of grace—in no way repayable—yet he whose heart is touched by It wishes only to serve and be absorbed in His presence. Even he who was destined to carry on this most holy work folded his hands and bowed in deepest gratitude: "Who but the Satguru could have saved a sinner like me?" and forever carried in his heart a silent prayer.

3. Guru Ramdas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "Joyfully I Surrender," *Sat Sandesh*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Feb. 1972, p. 6.

*O God, make us the servant of Thy Servants
Grant us the boon to bask in the Light of the Saints
So long as the breath of our life lasts.*

KALYAN M. 4

Jethaji was married to Amardas' daughter, Bibi Bani; and to remain with the Master, he disregarded the custom of returning to his own family.

This gentle servant, whose love came to inspire many a disciple and was yet destined to be the source of refuge for many more, was to his own household a cause of shame. Learning of the menial tasks Jetha performed for Amardas, his brothers reprimanded him. Jetha was a Khatri and not a servant boy, they reminded him; especially not a servant to his father-in-law. But Jethaji could not take Amardas as his father-in-law. To him, He was God manifested. He had lifted him from a low position and accepted him as His own. "How can I do other than I do? What more could I wish than to be a slave to such a one?" But Jetha's replies only incensed his brothers all the more and they took their complaints to the Master Himself. He, however, welcomed them graciously and was unruffled by their animosity. "I have not given him unbecoming labor but have ended his labors in this world and sheltered him with the umbrella of true sovereignty. He is the very incarnation of devotion and righteousness; and if he had not been born in your family, you would all have been damned."

*I am but a useless slave bought in a shop.
Even if Thou wert to seat me upon the Throne, I am still
Thy slave.
By Thine own Power, help this lowly one to repeat Thy
Name.*

GAURI, M. 4

Under the Master's orders, Jetha left Goindwal and began the construction of a new city (first called Ramdaspur but later to become Amritsar) and several bathing tanks. He worked continuously in the Master's service with only the goal of self-surrender before him. Though he often received ridicule for his unrelenting services, he had discarded all thoughts for himself. If the world praised him or condemned him, his own mind remained unaffected, being lost to the constant prayer of the Lord's remembrance. It was for such an unwavering faith that the veil of separation was lifted and strange and bewitching wonders befell his inner sight. And when he beheld the Supreme Vision, he bowed his head in most humble reverence and awe before the Beloved Master—for he saw that He and God were one.

*When I churned the sea of body,
A strange phenomenon came to light:
God was embedded in the Master and no difference
could Nanak find.*

GURBANI, M. 4

Jethaji—now renamed Ramdas—was transformed into the Master's own mold and commissioned to carry on the spiritual work. So that there would be no doubts, Amardas told his two sons, Mohan and Mohri, to bow before the fourth Guru. The elder was proud and refused to touch the feet of a servant, but Mohri saw the same Light within him as within his father and bowed low in obeisance. Ramdas himself was too humble for this and found it hard to bear. "O sir, I am but a poor disciple and wish only to remain as such. It would be far better should Mohri carry on the holy work." But the Divine Order was set and the servant was seated upon the Throne.

Ramdas continued to develop the city which his Master

had expressed desire of as well as the famous tank, Amritsar, after which the city was eventually to be named. In time it was to become a large trading center and a new provision of revenues for the Sikhs.

During Ramdas's life, the strings of grace began to pull Sri Chand—Guru Nanak's renunciate son—back to the Path. In his pride, he would not meet with Angad or Amardas; but reflection had humbled him and he left his jungle retreat to pay homage to the Living Master. But to Ramdas it seemed that homage was due to the son of the Great Guru Nanak. When they met, each bowed before the other; then for a moment pride struck Sri Chand: "Why is it that you grow your beard so long? Is it in imitation of my father?" "No," replied the Master. "I have grown it to wash the feet of Guru Nanak's son." Sri Chand was embarrassed and again bowed before the Great Master and now gave all credit to the one who reigned in his father's place.

Ramdas himself had three sons: Prithi Chand, Mahadev and Arjan; and when the time arose, their devotion was tested. A cousin of Ramdas' invited Him to his son's wedding. As the wedding was to be in Lahore and the Guru was very busy in Amritsar, he replied he would send one of his sons instead. First, the eldest, Prithi Chand, was approached. He was requested to attend the marriage and remain there for about fifteen days. Prithi was afraid that his absence could be detrimental to the spiritual succession which he jealously desired. Therefore with lame excuses he refused to go. Mahadev was usually in a state of spiritual intoxication and held worldly affairs in contempt. Finally Ramdas approached Arjan. To him the Master's presence was as precious as life itself—but still more dear were His wishes, and so he proceeded to Lahore. The marriage ended, the days passed, but Arjan received no message

from the Master. Out of yearning of his heart he wrote this poem, which he sent to the Master:

*My mind is desiring Thy darshan
Like the rainbird in anguish
The thirst remains unquenched—there is no peace;
I am living like that without the Beloved's darshan.*

Ramdas happened to be resting when the messenger arrived, and Prithi Chand said he would deliver it when He awoke. But when the messenger left, Prithi hid the note in his coat. Thus more time passed and Arjan was still without word from the Guru.

The Master knows the hearts of all—whether near or far. He hears the silent prayers of one and sees through the deceit of another. Yet mysterious are His ways and He may or may not choose to disclose His knowledge. Thus, still burning in the fire of separation, Arjan wrote another poem:

*Glory to that place where You reside;
Your face is so beautiful,
Seeing this, the inner Sound easily vibrates.*

Prithi again intercepted the poem and Arjan wrote a third one:

*The separation of minutes was likened unto an age;
O Beloved, when will that time be when I may see You?
I cannot sleep and the nights cannot pass without Him
who is my Lord.*

This time, Arjan marked the letter with a '3' and ordered that it be delivered only to the Guru. When the Master read it, he asked his eldest son where the first two letters were. Prithi Chand swore three times he had no knowledge of them but Ramdas ordered his clothes to be searched and

they were found in his coat. Meanwhile Arjan had been summoned to return to Amritsar. Ramdas now said that whoever could write the fourth stanza to these poems would be the one fit for the spiritual succession. Arjan wrote the following:

*With great destiny I met Him:
The Ever-Permanent Lord was found in the house;
I desire only to serve and never be separated for a
moment.
I am thy servant, O Lord.*⁴

Greatly pleased with his son's devotion, Ramdas filled him with his own Life impulse—so much so that the two were blended into One. While others sought their own gains, Arjan could not step beyond the bounds of the Guru's words. He had surrendered his mind to the Satguru, and for such perfect obedience and devotion Ramdas appointed him as his successor. Prithi Chand, however, became all the more spiteful. Not only was he publicly exposed for his fraudulence, but his younger brother was given the position he felt was rightfully his. He swore he would take the seat of the Guru and cursed his father and Arjan until he was ordered to leave the Master's presence.

Ramdas' earthly mission was at its close. He returned to Goindwal where he had spent his early days of service to his Master. He bade the Sangat live up to the message Guru Nanak had given them, told Arjan to complete the works at Amritsar, and left the scene to abide at the Lotus Feet of the Lord within.

4. Guru Arjan, as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle*, p. 284.



FIVE

Guru Arjan

(1563-1606)

*Who knows God lives in the world but is untouched by it,
Like the lotus in the water.*

*Who knows God sees all with an equal eye
Like the wind that blows alike upon the king and the poor.
Who knows God, his purity is immaculate
Like the flow of water in which dust gathers not.*

*The mind of this God-realized man is filled with Light
And His glance of grace is like a shower of nectar.
He who knows the Lord lives ever in joy and peace—
beyond the reach of Death.
He is the highest of the high
And yet deems himself as the lowliest of the low.*

*This knowledge of God is gained only by the Lord's own
favor.
O Nanak, He who knows God is Himself the supreme
Lord.*

RAG GAURI M.5 (From Sukhmani 1-6)

The promising signs of childhood had now become manifested in Arjan. The dearly beloved of two Masters (Amardas, his grandfather, and Ramdas) became awakened himself and competent to distribute their precious gift. He who was both an inspired poet and great builder and planner of cities was also the human pole where the Divinity became manifest.

With Ramdas' death, Prithi Chand became intent on tak-

ing his revenge; but for all his brother's spite, Arjan returned only forgiveness.

*My property and wealth may go to ruin
My treasure is in God's Feet.*

GAURI M.5

On Prithia's demands, Arjan gave him the turban received as a symbol of his ascension to the spiritual throne as well as belongings inherited from his father. Whatever work was to be done in the Master's cause was now to be financed by the voluntary offerings of the disciples. Though Prithi often intercepted even these, the Lord does not turn His back on His devotee; and funds came from unexpected quarters so the works Ramdas had begun were able to be completed. Many sikhs worked long and hard hours in selfless devotion, and great was the Master's joy when he beheld them so engaged. Guru Arjan then began work on the great temple, *Har Mandir* (lit. the Temple of God, but more commonly known in the West as the Golden Temple of Amritsar). Rather than a towering building, it was to be a temple surrounded by a pool of water and which people must descend steps to enter.

It is said that Guru Arjan explained its reason for being below the ground level thus: "God takes His joy in what is humble. As a fruitful branch hangs low with the weight of its own fruit, so also does that which God exalts. Therefore, Har Mandir will be the lowest of all buildings. Men will have to descend steps to enter the temple—but it will be open to receive them from all four sides and from the four castes." Arjan gave the honor of laying the temple's foundation to a Muslim holy man, Mian Mir, and thence began its construction. Again the devotees' services seemed beyond human capacities and it was but a short while

before the temple was completed. Inspecting the building, Arjan noticed some workers bathing beside it. Tears came to his eyes when he saw their bodily suffering and knew how tirelessly they had worked, asking for nothing in return. On the occasion, he composed the following hymn:

*He who hath bathed herein and meditated upon the Lord
Shall be restored to health.
He who hath bathed in the pool of the Saints¹
Shall obtain salvation.
And he who meditateth upon the Holy Naam
Shall be free of death and the long wanderings of his soul
shall come to an end.*

BILAWAI M.5

The temple doors were open to all who had a thirst for Truth—barring people neither by sex, status, or religion. And within its halls sat the blessed Guru Arjan—who held Satsangs daily: chanting hymns and discoursing on the way to God.

II

During his ministry, Guru Arjan saw the importance of gathering the holy words of different saints into one volume and traveled to Goindwal to obtain his predecessor's hymns from Mohan (Amardas' son). On his return, he stayed in Khadur where Angad's son, Datu, came to seek forgiveness for having been a jealous maligner of the third Guru. With humble thoughts, Datu confessed his earlier arrogance and selfish manner and mentioned also that the foot with which

1. As the temple represented a universal place of worship, so did the bathing tank which surrounds it symbolize a pool of heavenly nectar wherein men—having risen above mind and matter—were cleansed of all their deeds which bound them to the otherwise endless wheel of transmigration.

he had kicked the aged Master from His chair, still pained him. Arjan relieved the pain and blessed him for his repentance. He then proceeded back to Amritsar to compile the sacred writings. With the aid of a few disciples—most notably Bhai Gur Das—Guru Arjan arranged the hymns of his predecessors, his own hymns and also those of holy men from the time of Jaidev (1180-1202 A.D.) onward. The works were all written in the common language and put into the “Gurmukhi” script: the Punjabi alphabet which was invented by Guru Angad. The completed work contained the writings of men from all the castes and from different religions. At the end of the sacred writings (first called the Pothi Granth, but later known as the *Adi Granth* or *Guru Granth Sahib*), he left some pages blank. When asked about this, Arjan replied that the pages were left for the ninth Guru who was to follow him and one couplet for the tenth.

Aside from the scriptures, the Masters record their message of love and grace in the lives of those whose attention is always turned toward the Guru (God-in-man); in the one who is always absorbed in the higher consciousness and sees that the circumstances on earth are passing and are according to the reactions of one’s own past actions. Those who have achieved this awareness are like an overflowing fountain of love—and yet ever conscious of the divinity, they remain calm and detached from all sense of personal gain or loss. To them the past and the future are like “an open book,” and yet with all their inner knowledge they remain but humble servants to the Divine Will. Though such a disciple is a rare thing, Guru Arjan often spoke of the qualities of a true *Guru-sikh*, and at one time he was asked to show a living example of such a one. Thus he sent the questioning disciple to stay with another disciple in Gujarat. When the first disciple arrived, he noticed his host

preparing a funeral bier. Asking what it was for, the host replied, "Oh, it will be useful later." A few days passed and the host's son was to be married, but amid all the festivities and excitements, the host remained calm. When the ceremonies ended, the son suddenly died. The dead body was carried home and the host—still calm and unaffected—brought out the bier he had been working on. The visiting disciple was amazed: "You must have known your son was going to die, but why then did you allow him to marry?" "Yes, I did know," replied the host, "but I could not change what had to happen."

III

*When one throws a handful of dust at the moon
The moon remains unaffected;
The dust recoils upon the thrower.*

GURBANI: GURU ARJAN

The remaining events of Arjan's life are like a long sequence of persecutions. Amidst them, one finds the Guru as a living example of human qualities at their heights. He who while living in the world, had at heart renounced it: when his position or property were the cause of strife, he quietly and cheerfully left them behind and traveled about content in the Will of God. However, he was not a man to turn his back on the needs of others, and time and again one finds him ready to sacrifice his very life—as finally he did—for the good of others.

While at Amritsar, Arjan was approached by Birbal, a minister of the emperor. Birbal tried to impose a tax on the Guru and his disciples. Arjan refused to pay and encouraged his following to do likewise. He told the minister that he had no money to give but whatever food he and his

troops required would be freely offered to them from the langar. The reply made Birbal indignant and again he sent soldiers to advise the Guru of his military power and the consequences should Arjan not pay. But the Master was firm in his decision: "I will not pay. The minister may enter the city and do as he pleases. God is at my side and will protect me." Afraid of Birbal's anger, the soldiers told him that Arjan would come to him later, hoping the Guru would in the meantime change his mind. It happened that that night, Birbal received orders to hasten on on his expedition and so he was forced to delay his collecting. Later he joined forces with another commander and was soon to be killed in battle.

But no sooner was one intruder gone than did another come up. Prithi Chand again raised his head in vengeance, and to allay his brother's spitefulness, Arjan left Amritsar. He traveled through several villages, spreading his message of hope and bringing light to darkened homes. During his travels, he purchased land and planned the construction of the city of Tarn Taran (lit. The Raft Which Carries Men Over The World's Ocean). This city became a small colony to serve lepers as well as a place reserved for sacred meditations. Here lepers were given homes, food, clothing, medical aid and human care. And still above this, they were given spiritual and moral training to help them on the path Godwards. It was probably the first instance in the history of India that lepers were given such care and respect. Later, Guru Arjan began the city of Kartarpur. After his long period of self-imposed exile, Arjan decided to begin his return journey to Amritsar—stopping on the way to meet with Sri Chand.

By now Prithi Chand realized that he would not lord over his brother nor himself be revered as Guru. But as he could

not relinquish the desire, he made his son heir to his schemes. Arjan presently had no son and Prithia believed this to be to his advantage. But when a son, Har Gobind, was born to Arjan, Prithia was enraged. He devised ways to kill the child but the results were that the hired assassins suffered and Prithia was again exposed.

As Har Gobind became older, Chandu Savai Divan of Akbar's court requested Arjan to marry Har Gobind to his daughter. But because of Chandu's arrogance, Arjan refused the offer and engaged his son to the daughter of humble village sikhs. Chandu felt insulted and allied himself with Prithi Chand. Together they brought a case against Arjan before the emperor, stating that he had compiled a book that ridiculed both Hindus and Muslims. Akbar ordered that the Granth be brought before him, but upon examination, he found that the charges made were unwarranted. In fact, he was very impressed with the scripture and made arrangements to meet with the Guru. The monarch—who delighted in the words and company of the wise and who had earlier met Guru Amardas and Ramdas—now beheld the holy Arjan and in sincere devotion prostrated himself before Him. He sought the Guru's advice and offered Him a large donation. But the Guru never accepted personal donations and made no exception to the emperor's. He advised Akbar to serve his subjects and regard their well-being and happiness even before his own. Akbar ruled his people by such counsel; but with his death, a less enlightened son, Jahangir, seized the throne.² Chandu

2. Once Jahangir was established in power and Guru Arjan's increasing influence had come to his notice, he resolved to take actions against him. Thus he writes in his memoirs:

In Goindwal, on the banks on the River Beas, there is a Hindu called Arjan. He poses as a saint and pious man, so much so that

and Prithia again brought false charges against Arjan. But when Prithi Chand was summoned to the emperor's court, he died on his way. With his death, Prithia's son began to carry on his spiteful work, and brought the charges of theft, blasphemy and treason (Arjan was said to have earlier aided Akbar's son, Khurso, in his flight from Jahangir) against the Master. Guru Arjan was summoned to the emperor's court and knowing the awaiting consequences, let it be known that Har Gobind would carry on the spiritual work. He consoled his wife and followers and bade them not to mourn his approaching death: "Whoever is born in this world, must also die. This is nature's law. Therefore do not love the body but the Power within it."

When he arrived in the imperial court, Arjan was ordered to pay a large fine and told to remove the hymns from his scripture which were disrespectful to Hindu and Muslim writings. Arjan did not meet either of the demands: he did not have the money to pay the fine and he testified that there were no hymns disrespectful either to the Hindu incarnations or to the Muslim prophets. Jahangir ordered Arjan to be imprisoned and left him in the care of Chandu. The emperor's orders to his minister were that he should get from him whatever information he could regarding Khurso. However, when the case was in his own hands, Chandu transcended these orders, first threatening the Master and then giving the order that He should be tortured. Arjan was dipped into boiling waters, seated on red-hot plates and had

he has captivated the hearts of simple Hindus and even foolish, ignorant Muslims . . . They call him "Guru" and throng about him to worship him and give their faith to him. This has been so for three or four generations (of spiritual succession) and it has many times occurred to me to put a stop to this vanity or else to bring him into the folds of Islam.

burning sands poured on him. Throughout his tortures, he showed no signs of pain but remained calm.

*The earth, the skies and the stars are under the shadow
of Fear; over their heads reigns the unchanging law.
Wind, Water and Fire are under that shadow;
so too is poor Indra.
All things know fear; only the Creator is free from it.
Saith Nanak, God is the companion of the Saints;
they adorn His court and therefore they too are with-
out fear.*

MARU M. 5

Men came to the Guru for his final blessings and none could help but admire his undaunted courage. One Muslim holy man, Mian Mir, also came. Seeing the pain that the Master bore, tears filled his eyes and he begged to be allowed to take vengeance. He said that by his powers, he could raze the entire city to the ground. Arjan replied by uplifting his soul and the holy man saw heavenly powers all bowing before the Master's feet, each one begging the same favor. In wonder, Mian Mir looked into Arjan's eyes while the Master spoke: "Faith is truly tested at the time of suffering. My one joy in this life has been as a humble servant of God. How can I now care to turn my face elsewhere? By my example will courage be lent to weaker men in the hour of their trials."

The days passed and the tortures became more severe. After some time, however, Arjan was permitted, upon request, to bathe in the Ravi River's cool water. People collected around him as he walked toward the river. His body was emaciated and worn with scars but his face was illuminated by the Light within and the strength of his faith made him unaware of the body below. Thus he bathed and af-

forded a final darshan to his disciples. He advised them that his earthly life was soon to end and Har Gobind would continue the work begun by Nanak. He was to be instructed to act as did his predecessors, save that he wear weapons at his side and command an army. With these words, the Master returned to the tortures until his death on May 30, 1606.

*The egg of illusion has burst
 Divine Light pours in upon the mind.
 The Master has snapped the chains of the captive soul
 And the Cycle of transmigration has come to its end.
 Cooled in the Guru's Naam,
 The world's cauldron boils no more.
 In the company of the Sant, Death's friends do not come
 near;
 The Lord of Judgement himself cannot now call me to his
 court.
 Freed from the weight of my karmas
 I act now with no desire.
 From the sea's depths have I reached the shore;
 Such is the mercy of the Guru.
 Truth is my place, Truth is my seat and Truth is my
 purpose.
 Saith Nanak, within myself have I gathered this Truth.³*

RAG MARU M. 5

3. This hymn is said to have been written during the time of Arjan's tortures. It gives an indication of a Master's outlook on afflictions: that our enemies and tortures are not those people or circumstances that inflict pain to our lower selves or to our bodies; rather, they are those things which keep us separated from God (i.e. desires and attachment to the sense organs).

Similarly, one should note the extreme cheerfulness and optimistic outlook of the Masters despite what we would take as great travails and sufferings. When compiling the *Granth*, Arjan included the following hymn of the Sufi Master, Baba Farid:

*O Farid, I thought I alone had sorrow.
Sorrow is spread across the wide world.
From my housetop I saw every home burning
in the flame of sorrow.*

But underneath it, Arjan wrote a reply to the Baba's verse:
*O Farid, the world is beautiful
But in it there is a thorny garden.
Those to whom the Master is kind
They remain sound even in the midst of
troubles.*

In another place, he adds, "Whatever Thou givest, O Lord, I take as my joy. Wherever Thou placeth me, there is my heaven."



SIX

Guru Har Gobind

(1595-1644)

Whose soul is attuned to the Lord

Whatever his actions, they are pleasing unto Him

GURJI M. 4 (Guru Ramdas)

AT THE AGE of eleven, Har Gobind was given the spiritual mantle that his father had worn. At his father's last behests—and fulfilling a prophecy made by Bhai Budha—the young saint appeared with two swords¹ girded around his hips and called his followers to arms. He had earlier received instruction in both the holy books and the martial arts. What he so rapidly absorbed and made a part of his own life, Har Gobind began giving to others. No longer were donations of food or money of prime concern, but he requested offerings to be made in the form of horses and arms. Opposite the Golden Temple he built a congregation hall called the *Akal Takht* (i.e. The Throne of the Timeless One) where not only spiritual matters were discussed but political and community concerns as well. He also built a great fortification called *Loh Garh* (Fort of Iron).

The rapid and radical change that Har Gobind brought

1. It is said that Bhai Budha was given the duty of placing the swords on the young Guru, but being innocent of the art of warfare, he put the sword on the wrong side. He realized his mistake and went to gird the sword on the correct side but Har Gobind would not let the sage undo an action. Thus Har Gobind simply ordered him to give him two swords.

about caused confusion and doubts among the following. Some feared for themselves, knowing that the emperor would not turn his back on an uprising army. Others questioned the apparent change from the ways of the earlier Gurus. Har Gobind remained unmoved by their doubts and stood fast in the Guru's wishes:

*The Lord who sees all hearts
Is my protector*

BHANO M.5

he quoted and then added, "In the Guru's house, religion and service shall be combined—food for the poor and needy and the sword to protect the weak." From his own words—and more significantly, from his actions—Har Gobind showed that he had not transgressed any sacred lines of behavior nor left the path of his predecessors. As a warrior, his wishes were only for the good of the people "to restore the balance between good and evil." Moreover, Guru Arjan himself had had many soldier disciples whom he brought into his service. While he never engaged them in active battle, he prepared them for his successor. The advice he repeatedly gave them was brought into practice under Guru Har Gobind: "When fighting, think only of God and fight only for the sake of righteousness: protecting the weak and the oppressed and overthrowing the tyrants."

As Har Gobind began to rise in power, Chandu became increasingly fearful of him. When he was unable to reconcile himself with the Guru, he petitioned the emperor to have him imprisoned. When the emperor came down with a fever, Chandu took advantage of it. He bribed a priest to tell Jahangir that when a holy man went into the emperor's prison to perform penances, then the emperor's disease

would go away. Hearing this, the emperor ordered for this to be carried out and Chandu thus summoned Har Gobind to fulfill this end.

As God had descended in the form of the Guru to a world of misery so that men could be freed from the bondage of mind and matter; similarly, at the level of man, He allowed Himself to be imprisoned within the prison walls to bring relief to those suffering there. Here he found men who, though emaciated and weak, were overjoyed to behold the living Master. Har Gobind, at different levels, took upon himself the burdens of others so their sufferings might be less. What few comforts he might have had, he gave up for those in need, at times even giving away his meals to feed others. Yet his prison life was not only to relieve physical sufferings but also to fulfill the yearning of a searching soul. The prison's governor, Hari Das, had long wished for the Guru's darshan and now at last his heart-felt desire was granted, and he gave himself to the path of devotion.

When Jahangir recovered from his fever, he forgot about the holy man he had imprisoned and the years began to pass. A group of disciples arranged for his escape but when they notified him of it, he would not leave: "These walls have become my shelter from the petty demands of the world and here I can give my time to meditation."

When many years had passed and his disciples could bear the separation no longer, a plan was made that led to his being released. Two disciples, using their supernatural powers, changed their forms into those of wild beasts. Then late at night they prowled around the emperor's room, haunting him and leaving him without sleep. When morning came, they disappeared and Jahangir, terrified, sought help. One of these same disciples, Bhai Jetha, now came

back, posing as an astrologer. Jetha told the emperor that he had the power to see past, present and future and could help him with any of his troubles. When the emperor was convinced of Jetha's abilities, he brought him into his private chambers to hear his council. "You have imprisoned one innocent holy man," the disciple told him. "His name is Har Gobind and these visions of terror will continue until he is set free." At once orders for his release were issued, but still the Master would not agree to leave until all the other prisoners were also set free.² Jahangir considered and offered an alternative: "However many men can hold on to your shirt, that many may be released with you." Har Gobind agreed and then made such a long shirt that a hand of each prisoner found a place on it. Thus he brought another happiness to the lot of prisoners, finally able to return to their families. But to one—to Hari Das—heaviness weighed upon his heart as the Beloved Master prepared to leave. His tears fell profusely but Har Gobind gave him a fatherly caress and reassured him that the Power was not limited by time or space. "The physical presence of the Master—though a great blessing—is yet a passing affair. But to be spiritually connected is something to be treasured forever. I am never away from you, and when you turn your face within, there will you behold me."

II

*Who slanders a saint, meets confusion at every step.
He becomes like one helplessly lost in a wilderness
—wandering here, then there.
Empty is his life; living yet like a corpse.
Who shall support such a man?*

2. These prisoners were prisoners of war—mostly princes and kings—and not outlaws.

Only the saint, who may in His mercy save even his slanderer.

ASTAPADI M.5 (Sukhmani)

When he realized something of what he had done, Jahangir wished to reconcile himself with Har Gobind. He brought Chandu's vile actions to his attention and added that Chandu had exceeded his orders concerning Arjan's treatment. He told him how Chandu was truly his enemy and that he (Jahangir) would see that the Master had his vengeance. Har Gobind replied that neither he nor his father bore enmity nor did they seek revenge. If an emperor must inflict punishment, it should be for justice, and not for the sake of personal desires. Chandu was turned over to the Master and He in turn gave him to the keeping of His disciples. A disciple can forgive all things but not abuse to his Guru. Thus after Har Gobind left, Chandu was punished: he was beaten and pelted with rocks as he was dragged through the streets. Finally he met his death as a heavy blow was struck to his head by the same man whom Chandu had ordered to execute Guru Arjan's tortures. But if at the level of man justice may be necessary, at the level of the Saints it becomes tempered with mercy. When Chandu Savai left the body, the Angel of Death came to take him; but from the time his tortures began, his mind had been on Guru Arjan whom he had executed and the Gurus preceding Him, and on Guru Har Gobind whom he had persecuted. Now he began weeping and praying: "Guru Har Gobind! Please save me from the Angel of Death." The line of Masters from Nanak to Har Gobind then appeared to him and, freeing his soul from death, took him into the realms of grace and forgiveness.³ Jahangir now met with the Guru and

3. This story was related to Daya Singh by Gobind Singh, when the

found his presence to be of great satisfaction. He listened attentively to Har Gobind's advice concerning both spiritual matters and the responsibilities of an emperor. He was told that it was his duty to bear the pain of his subjects who suffered and to make every effort to relieve their miseries. He should give to those in need and provide work for the poor. The relation between the two strengthened. Jahangir could find nothing wrong with the Master's pious but fearless behavior; with the man who—though a king in his own right—saw only God as his emperor and took no credit for his own immaculate deeds.

The time passed and Jahangir kept the Guru with him as an honored guest. When he traveled, he also enjoyed the company of the Master, establishing a separate camp for him nearby his own. Thus the temporal king and the spiritual king had, for the time, formed an alliance. But the two have no comparison for one who knows even a little about the ocean of spirituality. In Agra, a humble grass-cutter set out to behold his beloved Satguru. He was carrying on his head a heavy load of hay which he wanted to give as an offering for the Master's horses. As he walked toward the camp, he kept his eyes cast down; having vowed that he would not look up until he was before the Guru; and with each step he prayed, "O True King, I am at the mercy of the senses and have forgotten. Please show Thy mercy and take me into Thy refuge." But as he spoke of the "King" a man mistook his words and led him to Jahangir's tent. Without

former asked if Chandu was now suffering in the pits of hell. Gobind Singh told him how Masters were all-forgiveness and then told of these inner happenings concerning Chandu's last moments. The story was recorded in a book by Bhai Mani Singh—and this book in time came into the hands of Bishan Das. He gave the book to Sant Ajaib Singh to read and Sant Ji in turn related the story to me.

yet looking up, the simple disciple bowed down and offered his heartfelt prayer. At this point Jahangir knew the man had been led to the wrong tent. "O Brother, you have come to the wrong king. I can give you wealth and worldly goods, but for the blessings of God, you must go to Guru Har Gobind." Immediately the grasscutter jumped up with his offering of hay and hastened toward the Guru's tent. "I don't want your wealth or worldly goods. I only want the darshan of my Satguru."

With Jahangir's death, his son, Shah Jahan, ascended the throne. The intolerance of human rights and dignity which had steadily increased since the death of Akbar, became still more severe under Shah Jahan's rule. When he heard the news of the new emperor's ascension to the throne, Har Gobind knew that the time of battle was approaching. No more were the people to live under the tyranny of the Moghuls—but as God willed, they should be met squarely and defeated. Shah Jahan's own mind was poisoned against the Guru and soon he waged war against him. Imperial troops numbering in the thousands were sent with the order to quell the Guru's party and bring Har Gobind to him, regardless of the means. But the sikhs were well-prepared for the attack, and to safeguard the innocent people, the city was evacuated. An intense battle ensued and brave men from both sides were killed, but within only nine hours the Muslims had suffered too heavy a loss and were forced into retreat. Under the counsel of Wazir Khan, the emperor decided to abandon thoughts of retaliation. Har Gobind did not seek power or lands for himself or his people. Moreover, the emperor wondered how such a small band of men could so readily annihilate his own massive and well-trained army, except through Divine intervention. The Guru, also hoping to avoid further bloodshed, went to

Kartarpur. His fame as both a spiritual and a worldly king had spread, and many came to join his ranks and seek his refuge. From Kartarpur, he moved to further seclusion along the River Beas. Here he founded a city which came to be known as Sri Hargobindpur. As many of his followers were Muslims, he had a mosque built for them—letting it be known that he had not sided against any sect of people but against the oppression and religious intolerance which had become prevalent. Men were to remain within their own social bodies and all modes of worship were to be respected.

For a short time, Har Gobind left Sri Hargobindpur, traveling through the Punjab and Kashmir, to meet with disciples and other men in need. In Kashmir, he met a holy man, Samrath Ram Das of Maratha. The Guru was fully armed and mounted on a horse when they met. Ram Das was somewhat taken aback by his appearance: “I understand that you follow the line of Guru Nanak; but Nanak was a renunciate and you wear arms and keep an army of horsemen. What sort of sadhu are you?” To this Har Gobind replied: “The ideal man is a saint within and outwardly a prince: spiritual and temporal powers combined. Arms are for the protection of the weak and the poor and to overthrow tyranny and cruelty. Moreover Baba Nanak did not renounce the world but simply renounced Maya.” The profound impact Har Gobind’s words had upon Ram Das influenced the course of Indian history. Ram Das became the Guru of Shivaji (1627-1680) in whom he not only instilled a keen sense of virtue but also the idea that it was his duty to free his people from the onslaughts of the Muslim Rule. Shivaji became a great soldier—as well as a man of rare integrity and selflessness. He greatly raised the morale of his people and eventually formed an Indian state independent of Muslim rule. The climax of this meeting was

more than a hundred years later, when the Sikhs in the north and the Marathas in the south played a prominent role in destroying the Moghul empire.

As time went on, more battles were waged against the Guru, some by the emperor and one by men who sought revenge against Him. But each time, His assailants met a rapid defeat by a small but intrepid band of sikhs. The final battle was prompted by the betrayal of a certain disciple, Painda Khan. Painda Khan was an orphaned child whom the Guru had brought up as though a favorite son. His strength, skill and bravery made him, as a soldier, unequaled by all save the Guru himself. For many years, his devotion was like his strength, and he whose might made him a fearful sight upon the battlefield, was also of tender heart and could be brought to tears out of his love. But torn by strifes within his own family and having become inflated with pride, he one day lied to the Master. Three times the Master asked him to tell the truth so that he could be forgiven, but three times Painda Khan lied. Evidence was brought against the disciple and he was told to leave the Master's presence. Still the Master would have pardoned him; but now, rather than humble himself, Painda Khan sought vengeance. Painda Khan gained the emperor's audience and brought false charges against Har Gobind. He further attested—as a former sikh—to their present weakness: he claimed that whatever battles Har Gobind had won earlier were due solely to his own (Painda Khan's) military power. Assuring the emperor that together victory and vengeance would be theirs, he was given an army numbering in the thousands and set forth on a campaign to destroy Har Gobind and his following. One night as the soldiers prepared for battle, a voice was heard: "One of thee hath been untrue to his salt. With him shall thousands perish."

An immediate search was made but the speaker could not be found and the incident was for the time forgotten. Fierce battles began and the mysterious voice proved true: Har Gobind's army of less than two thousand men was victorious. The Guru and His ungrateful disciple met in private combat. Painda Khan cursed Har Gobind to His face but the Master's love for the disciple remained undiminished. Like a father teaching his son some stern lesson, so did Har Gobind now treat Painda Khan: "Brave soldier that you are, Painda Khan, draw your sword that you may strike first." The mighty Pathan rode up to Har Gobind and swung his sword with all his might. The blow was parried. Then again Painda Khan struck and then again, each time unsuccessfully. Painda Khan was filled with rage when finally Har Gobind claimed his opportunity to strike—and with one deftly powerful blow, the Pathan was felled from his horse. Sitting upon his horse, the Master looked down at the fallen soldier and spoke as though to Himself: "I loved you as my own son and made you a hero. Men spoke ill of you but my love for you remained and I forgave your shortcomings. Ill fate misled you and you brought an army against me. Without serving the Saints and worshiping God, one's good fortune turns to ruin; one's mind becomes clouded by pride, and the body poisoned till one meets his destruction. Though you have been ungrateful and untrue, may the Almighty Lord forgive you." He then dismounted and walked to Painda Khan's side. With a look of compassion on His face, He took him in His arms. The Guru's blow and then His final touch of mercy rebestowed Divine grace in Painda Khan's heart, and he once again felt the joy of humbly being before the Master. Har Gobind shielded Painda Khan's face from the sun and spoke to him thus: "Painda Khan, recite thy

Kalma, for thou art a dying Muslim.” Looking into the Master’s eyes, Painsa Khan replied: “With the strike of Thy sword, my heart has tasted the Nectar of Life. Thy sword cut has become my Kalma.” And thus speaking, the disciple left his body.

III

Refuge at the feet of the Master has a merit that is inconceivable.

I wish and long for the dust of his feet—the dust that has created the Universe.

His lotus feet are the true wealth and a true haven of peace.

They grant ineffable vision and lead to the Path Godward;

His lotus feet have a glory that is indescribable and incomprehensible,

*Not this, not this, I bow to thee again and again,
O Lord.⁴*

BHAI GURDAS KABIT 72,219

During times of fighting, Har Gobind never overlooked the needs of his disciples but rewarded all—both from without and within—according to the yearnings of their hearts.

One day Har Gobind was sitting with his feet pulled up in front of him when a disciple came in to see Him. Har Gobind sent him away. Later his meal was brought to him, but without moving, he refused it. Several hours passed but Har Gobind neither ate nor moved, and spoke but little, asking to be left undisturbed. Finally, he stretched out his legs, rubbed the blood back into them and then began going about his usual routine. Many disciples questioned him about this incident but he remained silent. Only after persistent questioning did he reply: “A certain disciple sat for

4. As translated by Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word*, p. 306.

meditation and as he gave his heart, the Master appeared to him in His Radiant Form. So overwhelmed with joy and gratitude was he that tears flowed freely from his eyes. Then he grasped my feet within in devout and humble reverence; and for several hours remained bowed down, holding onto my feet. Was I to pull them away from him?"⁵

The more the disciple goes within and surrenders his heart to the Guru, the more all differences and all dualities are removed. Like his predecessors and his successors yet to come, Har Gobind emphasized this point of complete surrender to the Guru as the necessary means to at-onement with God.

And thus along with any other divinely ordered functions that they may perform—such as the restoration of morality—they yet remain Saints and delight in the role of raising those that come to them up to their own level: they are God-in-man and wish to make others God-in-man as well. But if the disciple wishes for worldly things, then what can the Master do? Once Har Gobind called a gathering of his disciples and said that whosoever could recite the Jap Ji with single-minded attention could ask for his heart's desire and it would be given. One man came forward and with no intervening thought, began reciting the Jap Ji. As he came to the end of the prayer, he thought: "Master has received a beautiful Arabian horse this morning. I would like to have

5. A somewhat similar story occurs in the life of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh. It is said that one day an attendant brought him his morning meal but he refused it. Some hours passed and again she brought him some food, but again he refused it. Several times she came in to serve him his meal, but each time he signaled her out. Finally when evening came, she remonstrated with him. He then got up and took her to the window—from where a gathering of devotees could be seen, all sitting in prayer. "All those souls are feeding me," the Great Master told her. "How then can I be hungry?"

received that." When the recitation was finished, Guru Har Gobind had the horse brought to him and told him, "Well, look here, I had a mind to give you my own place and you wanted only a horse."⁶

IV

After the many years of warfare, the Guru was finally able to guide his following within a peaceful reign. He happily put aside his weapons and armor and retired to simple and natural ways of life which allowed him to devote long unbroken hours to meditation. These last days passed quietly, and when his wife lay on her deathbed he consoled her: he too soon would end his earthly life. He appointed his grandson, Hari Rai, to carry on the spiritual mission and withdrew his spirit into the heavenly abode. As his body was placed upon the funeral pyre, one devoted sikh walked into the fire and clasped His feet; and held to them unflinchingly till he died. Then another man cast himself into the fire and died; and others might also have done the same, but Guru Hari Rai now stepped forward and forbade it.

V

*Praised be the one who while living in this world
Ever repeats the Lord's Name and contemplates the
War within his heart.*

*He knows that the body is fleeting—it does not
remain—and has embarked upon the ship of the
Lord's Name to carry him across the Ocean of Life.
Detachment is his fortress. The Light of Knowledge,
his lamp. And with the broom of Wisdom, he has
swept away timidity and falsehood.*

GURU GOBIND SINGH "Krishna Avatara"

6. Kirpal Singh, *Morning Talks*.

The grandeur or disdain that war often attracts may bring one to an inadequate judgment of this great being. Har Gobind was brave, adventurous and of steady bearing regardless of circumstances. But his intrepid character was blended with a loving and compassionate heart, and as has been shown, he wished only good for others, even those who betrayed him, slandered him and attempted to kill him.

Since it was a time of great oppression, and since dharma is destroyed when there is unchecked tyranny on the one hand and cowardice on the other, he took on the role of a warrior and cast aside all thoughts of personal gain—be they for wealth, land or worldly respect and admiration—and fought for the good of humanity and the re-establishment of the higher values of life.

But as has already been noted, Har Gobind was a Saint first and then a warrior, and Guru Arjan's reply to an accusation of having lawless men among his followers—"They were once thieves and outlaws but now they are great souls (Mahatmas)"—holds equally true with much of Har Gobind's following. Whoever entered into His presence felt his mind come to rest, and whoever followed His behests was rapidly transformed for the better. And whoever came to Him for refuge was taken into His fold, without the least of selfish motives on the Guru's part, as He offered of Himself according to that man's pleas. Those who wished protection from the cruelties of the world felt a strong and able hand over their head, one which fed and clothed the needy and lent strength to the weak. But those rare souls fortunate enough to seek a spiritual shelter, found in Him the Light of Divinity, which led to an unceasing and joyous peace, and finally to at-onement with God.



SEVEN

Guru Hari Rai

(1630-1661)

*One who repeateth His Naam day and night
Consider him as the form of God.
There is no difference between the beloved of God and
God.
Nanak says, Know this as true.*

SLOK M.9 (trans. Sant Bani Mag. staff)

HARI RAI was an embodiment of courage, compassion and devotion. Once as he rushed to meet his Master, a loose flap of his coat knocked several flowers from a bush. Seeing the harm he had done, he was heavy with remorse. When the Master came to him, he was consoled but also warned that, as a servant of God, it was his duty to be merciful to all life. Therefore, he should wear his coat fastened while walking—an injunction he never broke. As a disciple, he allowed himself no rest but did his utmost to escape sleep, in favor of prayer and meditation. He showed no signs of pride concerning his birth as a grandson to the Guru—but on the contrary, was humble and eager to serve. Rather than wishing the Guru's position—as did his elder brother, Dhir Mal—he sought only the spiritual solace afforded at His feet. Thus it was that Har Gobind kept the boy always at his side and found him alone prepared for the onerous responsibilities entrusted to the Guru.

“Have no fear. None shall prevail against you. God will

forever be with you and assist you. Keep with you always two thousand, two hundred fully armed soldiers, but do not provoke fighting nor involve thyself in the quarreling and fighting around you. To protect the poor, the helpless and the oppressed, do not hesitate to call upon your army.” These were Har Gobind’s final words to his spiritual son. And then, by His grace, were His people sheltered by a reign of peace.

Nonetheless, the army was kept in training—as Guru Har Gobind had wished—and would patrol surrounding areas. On one such excursion, the Guru with His retinue passed the house of a very poor devotee. Suddenly, Hari Rai stopped and asked her to feed him some bread. With tearful eyes, she placed a loaf of coarse bread before her Guru. The Master himself showed great delight in having received this bread, then blessed the woman and proceeded onward. All who were with him were surprised by this: it was neither the Guru’s usual meal time nor was it ever his practice to accept anything which he did not himself pay for. And yet none dared to ask him the meaning behind what had happened. However, the next day when these disciples offered Hari Rai some food at the same time he had taken the bread the day before, he refused. Understanding their intent, he explained what had happened: “Brothers, I did not ask for bread out of hunger, but asked due to the devotion with which it was cooked. Very rarely do I get such food.”

Not long after he had taken up the role of a Master, Hari Rai received a desperate plea from the emperor: Shah Jahan’s son was dying; could Hari Rai save him? When he received the emperor’s petition, Hari Rai smiled: “With one hand a man breaks the flower and with the other, he makes an offering of it. But the flower scents both hands

alike.” He paused a moment and became more serious: “Thus, the Guru returns good for evil.” Hari Rai sent certain herbs which saved the emperor’s son and a bond of friendship was established. But as Shah Jahan grew old and sick, another son, Aurangzeb, rose in rebellion. He imprisoned his father and a brother (Murad)—who had assisted him in battle against yet another brother (Dara Shikoh). Dara Shikoh, who had been the heir apparent to the imperial throne, was badly defeated but escaped death by roaming the country in exile. This same man whose life the Master had earlier saved, again sought his refuge. He dispatched a letter to the Master in which he humbly requested shelter—no longer for his body but for his soul: “The desire to meet God has taken hold of my heart. I now seek an empire from which I needn’t depart.” Hari Rai replied by blessing him for his wisdom and devotional attitude. When they were able to meet, the exiled son was graced with the gift of Naam. Having spent a short time with Hari Rai and gaining the path to that which he sought, he turned his faith within and went to meet his destiny. His flight was brief; he was captured and put to death. But even as he approached his execution, it is said, he emitted a radiation of calm and showed no signs of pain when death was inflicted upon him.

When Aurangzeb firmly established his power, he felt it to be his God-given duty to destroy all “heathen” religions— either by conversion or by force. Hindu temples and places of worship were razed and often mosques were built in their place. As soon as he heard of Hari Rai, he felt both troubled and angered: not only did this Guru preach a religion distinct from the prophet’s, but also he had given aid to Dara Shikoh. However Aurangzeb decided there might be a certain risk in directly confronting the Guru, as

He had a large following and was held in high respect. And yet on the other hand, if the matter were handled carefully, things could work to the emperor's advantage: he need only convert the Guru to Islam and thousands would follow. The emperor toyed with this idea and then set it firmly in his mind: he would take all measures to convert Him but would pardon Him if he performed a miracle. Accordingly, the emperor sent Hari Rai an invitation to the imperial court. However when Hari Rai received it, he declined to go. Their meeting would be of no value, as far as the Master felt, since Aurangzeb had no spiritual longings and Hari Rai desired nothing from him. But not all disciples had the Master's courage; many feared that refusing the emperor would bring his wrath upon them. Counsel was held and it was decided that Hari Rai's eldest son, Ram Rai, could go on the Master's behalf. Aurangzeb was disappointed that the Guru himself did not show up but nonetheless wished to put Ram Rai to the test. It is said that to the emperor's amazement, Ram Rai performed miracles and represented himself well as an authority on religion. The emperor was quickly pleased with both him and his Master's sacred writings. However he one day found a passage in the holy Granth which aroused his anger:

The Muslim's ashes fall into the kiln.
Bricks and pitchers are formed from them;
they scream as they burn.¹

ASA KI VAR M. I

Aurangzeb summoned Ram Rai and demanded an explanation. Fearing to lose the emperor's favor, Ram Rai told him

1. This hymn as originally written should not be taken as slanderous to Muslims. It simply implies that all—the rich and the poor; the persecuting and the persecuted—must suffer the same fate of death.

that the hymn as he read it was actually a corruption of the Guru's words. He thereupon altered the hymn to make it more pleasing to the emperor, and posed his version as the original. Delhi sikhs reported Ram Rai's disloyalty back to the Master. Saddened but unwilling to compromise the truth, he replied, "Tell my son, he may go where he likes but he is not again to enter within the Guru's presence." His father's words stung deep into Ram Rai's heart—not only for whatever personal affections he felt toward him, but also because he knew the verdict had stolen from him his cherished desire to be respected as the succeeding Guru. Hoping to regain his position, Ram Rai wrote his father requesting a pardon, but his pleas were denied. With this failure, he ironically sought the aid of Dhir Mal—who himself had earlier betrayed Har Gobind and was yet to be the source of antagonism to the ninth Guru. Dhir Mal spoke vehemently on Ram Rai's behalf but the Master's pleasure could not be won through fraudulence and demands and the sole outcome was that Hari Rai quietly moved to another town to avoid further conflict.

Not long afterward, Hari Rai saw his worldly departure approaching. He summoned his younger son to his side and passed the spiritual powers on to him so that the mission of truth and service could continue.



EIGHT

Guru Hari Krishan

(1656-1664)

AT THE AGE of five, Hari Krishan began his divine mission, under the grace of his Master, Hari Rai. Ram Rai received the news with a jealous heart yet hoped that his brother's tender age would provide him an opportunity to usurp the title of Guru. Accordingly, he petitioned the emperor to call his brother to the imperial court. Hari Krishan, however, was admonished by his Master not to be in the emperor's presence and therefore refused to go. Though he was firm in his resolve, several disciples—as had happened with his father—feared the consequences of rejecting the emperor's invitation and pleaded that he reconsider. He stood firm in his decision until someone mentioned that many devout followers lived in Delhi and had a great yearning for the Guru's darshan. While the force of an imperial army left the young Master undaunted, a small amount of love was like a powerful magnet which drew his presence. So with his heart moved to compassion, Hari Krishan began the journey.

On his way to Delhi, he met a learned priest who was filled with the pride of his learning. Noting that such a young boy was called a Guru, the priest challenged him to a debate concerning the Hindu scriptures. Rather than confront him directly, Hari Krishan called an illiterate washerman to his side. He touched the washerman's

shoulder with a stick and said to the priest: "He will speak on my behalf." So profound did this illiterate man's knowledge suddenly become that the priest was overwhelmed with amazement and begged the Master to forgive him for his pride.

When Hari Krishan arrived in Delhi, he was showered with gifts and given another invitation to meet the emperor. The Guru again refused: he had come only for spiritual matters and if the emperor wished political counsel, he could meet with Ram Rai. Moreover, should the emperor confer any favor to Hari Krishan, then his brother would be all the more spiteful and the Master wished to avoid this. When he received his reply, Aurangzeb was surprised that such a young boy could answer so intelligently and courageously; but the emperor did not accept his reply and again requested the Guru's audience. Again the reply was same with the addition of a hymn by Guru Nanak:

*Ij the Master is not in one's heart,
 What then is good food or fine dress?
 Of what avail is an army, servants or even a palace to
 dwell in?
 O Nanak, All things perish except the Naam.*

MAJH KI VAR M. 1

While Hari Krishan was in Delhi, a plague infected the city. With no cares for his own welfare, he worked tirelessly to administer relief to the sick. That he could give to men in need was a source of happiness, but when he could cure one forever, by the spiritual medicine, great indeed was his joy. Even the emperor Aurangzeb was inspired by the boy's wisdom, but his mind could not rest long with deeper spiritual matters as he had a flair for outer displays. Soon he told a raja of his court—who also

held the Guru in high esteem—to put Him to the test: to see if He had supernatural powers. To the Guru's grave disappointment, the raja acted on Aurangzeb's wishes. He invited the Master to meet his head queen but dressed her as a slave woman. Knowing the raja's intentions, Hari Krishan was very reluctant even to meet with the raja; but circumstances arose which made the meeting necessary. He was taken to the palace and passing by many women of royalty, picked the queen out from amongst an assemblage of slaves. Satisfaction came to the minds of all except the Guru. Saddened, but with a stern voice, he spoke: "Guru Nanak extends happiness to those of unwavering faith. He is ever with them, giving His protection; and they who live by His Will, will be loved by God, both here and hereafter. But one whose mind is swayed by doubts, has not yet tasted the fruits of true discipleship; one who thinks himself exalted, must like a high peak, ultimately meet his fall. Devotion is like the rain which does not gather on lofty peaks."

Soon Hari Krishan became very ill with fever and announced that his time of departure had come. His sikhs pleaded with him to remain in the world longer: he was still so very young and moreover who was there who would carry on the spiritual work? He remained composed and reminded them of God's Will. And then he spoke on Death—that all must leave the body someday, and why then should it matter whether one be young or old? To those who had learned to die while yet living, death would come as the greatest joy—for it meant the final reunion with the Beloved Lord. And regarding a successor, there should be no worries as God would always provide for the spiritual welfare of His children. "The seed planted by Guru Nanak's holy hand will abide forever. Droughts, storms and heat may prevail, but that seed shall not perish." A

long period of silence followed and the power in his eyes gave men assurance. "None should weep for me, for I will be ever with you. Seek me in Bakale." And uttering these words, he closed his eyes to the world for the final time.



NINE

Guru Teg Bahadur

(1621-1675)

*Like a dream is the play of this world without the Lord;
All things shall forsake thee.
Four things alone are eternal:
Naam, Sadh, Guru and God.
Very dear to my heart do I hold the Naam;
In remembering which all sufferings vanish, and Thy
Sight is obtained.*

SLOKAS 54-56 M.9

MEKHAH SHAH, a successful merchant and devout disciple, was enroute to Bombay when a storm struck and his ship began to sink. He prayed that the living Master should save him and his vessel, and in return he would give an offering of five hundred gold coins. No sooner had he finished his prayer than did the waters calm and the boat set itself aright. Reaching port, he sold his cargo and hastened for Hari Krishan's darshan; only to find that Hari Krishan had left His body and was succeeded by one living in Bakala. But his arrival in Bakala was a source of further consternation: Hari Krishan had not named his successor but only the place where He was to be found; and twenty-two men all claimed themselves to be the Guru's successor. To solve the problem, Mekhan Shah went to each and made an offering of five coins, knowing that the true Master would demand the full amount promised. When all twenty-two gladly accepted his offering and made

no additional request, the merchant became very heavy of heart. Throughout the village he made inquiries—was there any other holy man in Bakala? Finally an old woman came to him with the most heartening news: There was one other holy man—Teg Bahadur. But he had no desire to be called a guru nor to have a large following. He spent most of his days in meditation and rarely saw anyone. Undeterred by such reports, Mekhan Shah sought His audience and on receiving it, offered the usual amount. “Brother, where is your honesty, when in your desperation you had offered *five hundred* gold coins?” Before the merchant could reply, Teg Bahadur took off his shirt and showed the scars he had received from saving the ship. Mekhan Shah was overjoyed: he had found the true Master! He paid his humble obeisance and the remaining gold coins and then quickly ran to the roof top from where he waved his turban, proclaiming the true Guru: Teg Bahadur.

The news spread quickly and the imposters were put to shame. Most hid themselves but Dhir Mal—Teg Bahadur’s nephew—who was prompted by an ambitious servant named Shikan, sought vengeance. An assassination plot was made: if there were no rival, it was reasoned, Dhir Mal could maintain a position of authority. Shikan led a party of armed men, at the back of which rode Dhir Mal, to the Guru’s house. They broke into the house; Teg was shot and the party ran off with stolen belongings. The wound was small and the entire incident did not affect His composure—except when He saw Dhir Mal involved in such a vile act: “You, Dhir Mal, son of my noble brother Gurditta¹; may God bless you!” When they found their own Master wounded and his house ransacked, a party of

1. Teg Bahadur had two brothers: Baba Atal and Baba Gurditta. All three were very devoted children and disciples of Guru Har Gobind.

disciples chased after the culprit and looted his home. They were able to regain the Master's property as well as other objects—including the original copy of the *Granth Sahib*—which rightfully belonged to the Guru. Shikan was also captured, punished and brought before the Master. When he saw Him, Shikan begged forgiveness and Teg Bahadur glanced compassionately at him and then ordered his release. But when He addressed His followers, He was all but pleased with their behavior. "Anger befouls a man's every deed, turning righteousness into evil. It makes one turn his back even on his own Guru. Though the source of strife and misery, yet man too easily becomes its slave and ruins his life. Now you have stooped to the same level as those seeking power, wealth and worldly recognition. What has been taken from Dhir Mal is to be returned and you are to bear him no enmity. Those who wish to follow me should value only the gift which the Saints confer. That no man can steal nor time ruin. In forgiveness, not in hatred, will that gift be preserved."

II

*Whosoever searches for joy eternal,
Let him seek that in the All-pervading Spirit (Naam).*

Though earlier, under his father's command, Teg Bahadur had proved himself as a valiant soldier, he preferred a life of quiet. He was also known as Tyag Mal or one who re- According to legend, both Atal and Gurditta (at different times) revived the dead (Atal, a young playmate and Gurditta, a cow) and for this, the Guru turned his back on them. "I am not pleased when one sets himself up as a rival to God's Will, restoring the dead back to life," He remonstrated. Feeling the pain of His displeasure, they both restored the balance in nature which they had upset, by entering into samadhi and giving up their own earthly lives. Atal died while still in childhood and Gurditta while in his twenties.

nounces. (Teg Bahadur means “Brave Sword.”) As a child, he was a source of worry to his mother as he rarely ever saw others, but spent hour after hour in spiritual practices. She found comfort only when Har Gobind assured her that his devotions pleased the Lord, and he would one day be the spiritual solace of mankind. And yet before taking on this duty, he—under Har Gobind’s orders—settled in Bakala with his wife and mother, and here for twenty years lived a life of solitude and meditation. Daily he would give but a few hours to rest or physical activities and for a few more hours he might discourse on spiritual matters to sincere seekers after Truth. He generally spent the rest of the time in deep meditation. When Hari Krishan left his body and twenty-two claimants for Guruship fought for the recognition of that position, Teg Bahadur remained apart and simply continued his spiritual practices. Even before he was discovered by Mekhan Shah, certain advanced disciples—including Baba Gurditta, Bhai Budha’s son—had found the same Light shining in Teg Bahadur as was in the preceding Masters. They begged that they should be allowed to announce the true successor to the people at large, but—though he had already received from within the commission to carry on the spiritual work and the Power had already been transferred to him—he was too humble for this: “I am just a poor servant, not fit for this task, but the command has been received from within. Thus if you take me as Guru, I give you my first order: ‘Do not proclaim me to the crowds who are judging gurus by material values.’ Still you should have no fear; can the Guru’s Light be stolen by imposters? They have tried in the past and have failed, and in the times yet to come they will try again, and again they will fail. How long can false masters pretend to bear a Light which they do not have?” As such, He continued liv-

ing quietly and virtually unknown to the Sangat until Mekhan Shah revealed him as the Living Master and that great torch of Light was made known to the world.

III

The Guru's love and mercy are for all to enjoy.

I do not wish to disturb anyone.

Under Guru Nanak's order will I make the True Name

(Sat Naam) be repeated across the world.

Teg Bahadur began traveling to answer the prayers of those gripped by the mystery of life and death. But almost everywhere he went, he met with antagonism; yet he remained calm and centered in the Divine Will, quietly giving to the seeking few and then continuing on his way. During these travels, he learned that his followers had retained the *Granth* stolen from Dhir Mal. With displeasure, he ordered it to be returned. Though the sikhs claimed that the *Granth* was rightfully the Master's—as Dhir Mal had gained it by his false claim to guruship—Teg Bahadur would not accept this: “If he has gained it by deceit as you say, you have now also gotten it by theft—which makes your actions no better. Though it may be sacred or of historical value, it is stolen and must be returned. We have other copies of the *Granth* and they shall serve our needs. There is no reason to make a cult of or to deify this particular copy.” It was left on the banks of the Beas River and Dhir Mal was informed accordingly. Shortly thereafter, he was able to find it and had it preserved within his family.

Teg Bahadur passed through many villages and rejoiced in the simple and innocent country people who so deeply gave their hearts in devotion. But when He reached Amritsar, He found a different scene. Guru Har Gobind had shifted His seat from Amritsar to Kirtapur and at that time

most disciples also moved. The Golden Temple then came into the hands of men seeking wealth and power, and as Teg Bahadur went to enter it, the doors were shut and barred before his face. Some disciples wanted to enter the Temple by force but He would not allow this, and sat quietly under a tree for some hours. As the priests wielded much power, the men of the area were afraid to take any action. Finally a woman from a nearby village came forward and, bowing before the Master, offered her simple home to Him. And then following suit, the other women came out and welcomed the Master. Only when they were put to shame by the women's love and courage, did the men of Amritsar come forth and seek the Guru's pardon. From Amritsar, Teg went to Kirtapur and from Kirtapur he moved to a plot of land a few miles away—where He began the construction of the city of Anandpur. But Dhir Mal continued to pursue the Master and He again continued his journeying. Wherever pious and sincere hearts were, He appeared to give his blessings; and to hearts plagued with the world's cravings, He gave rest in the cooling Light of Naam.

As Teg Bahadur's influence began to grow, it came to the emperor's notice; and fearing His power, Aurangzeb ordered His arrest. Fortunately a Rajput general, Ram Singh, intervened on the Master's behalf and the order was, for the time, dismissed. Soon the favor was repaid. The emperor ordered Ram Singh to lead an army against the feared king of Kamrup. Many expeditions had gone before but none returned, and the land had become associated with the mysterious and dreadful. Thus Ram Singh desperately sought the Guru's aid. Teg Bahadur accompanied the general on his campaign—and while refusing to give active support to either side—He was eventually able to bring about a peaceful reconciliation.

At this time, in Patna, the Master's wife gave birth to a son, Gobind Rai. It was three years later however, before He was able to return to His family and first see His child; and even then, His stay was brief. After making the necessary arrangements for His son's welfare and education, the Master resumed His travels—which were to take him through the Punjab, to Kashmir; and on to Anandpur and Agra. Wherever He went, He found terror: religious oppression was again on the increase and Aurangzeb threatened execution to those who refused to embrace Islam. Innocent people were imprisoned—the weaker, or those to whom Hinduism had little to offer (the low caste Hindus), saved their lives by changing their religion. But many others chose death over a breach of their faith. The emperor then directed his attention towards converting the Brahmins, for if he succeeded in this, others would more easily follow their example. The Brahmins became desperate, and secret meetings were held with the hope of finding a way out of this terrible plight. In Amarnath (a holy place in Kashmir) a small group of Brahmins met to invoke the grace of Lord Shiva. Here one of the Pundits had a vision: Lord Shiva appeared to him and directed him to the Living Master, Guru Teg Bahadur. Taking with him a group of five hundred pundits, this Brahmin, Kirpal Ram, went to Anandpur. Then coming before the Divine Master, he—with tears in his eyes—begged His mercy: “Our holy books are being burned, our shrines desecrated, and now our lives are threatened if we do not convert to Islam. In our utter helplessness, we turn to you.”

“The House of Guru Nanak,” replied the Guru, “has ever upheld men's fundamental rights of worship. You may now be at ease for I will not rest until something is done.”

For some time, Teg Bahadur sat alone, his eyes brimming with compassion as he reflected upon the suffering of his fellow man. Just then, Gobind Rai entered the room. Moved by the sorrowful look on his father's face, he touched his feet and asked him what it was that weighed so heavily upon him. Teg Bahadur told him of the Brahmins' plea, adding, "Some brave and holy man must be ready to sacrifice his life for this cause." Spontaneously the divine child replied: "Who is there that is greater than thee, Father, and who is more holy or brave? In this dark age, who is equal to such a task but thine own self?" Hearing this the worry lifted from the Master's face. He called the leader of the Brahmins to his room and told him: "Don't be afraid nor allow others to be so either. I will lay down my life rather than allow harm to come to you. You may tell Aurangzeb's governor that if he can convert me, only then will you follow suit." When the Brahmins heard this, hope was reborn, for they had seen the Master's greatness and trusted in his courage. But within His own following, there was deep sorrow: all knew that when the choice between conversion and death was offered, their beloved Master would choose death.

When Aurangzeb received word of the Guru's declaration, he was also filled with happiness. He thought that surely he could convert this one man and then thousands would follow His example. Feeling greatly self-assured, the emperor dispatched the order that violent means against the Brahmins should be withheld until after his meeting with Teg Bahadur.

*O madman, thou hast forgotten the jewel of the Lord's
Name;
Thou rememberest Him not and thy precious life pass-
eth in vain.*

*Saith Nanak: Man wanders forever in error;
O Lord, may I think only of Thy forgiving grace.*

The time passed and the Master had not arrived in the imperial court. Aurangzeb dispatched an order for His arrest and though on his way to the court, Teg was captured and brought before the emperor under guard. When they met, the emperor tried every means to persuade the Master to follow the path of the Prophet—but if not this, then to perform a miracle. After many an appeal and many demands, the Master finally tired of the emperor's schemes: "When your Prophet could not unite all men into one religion, how do you think that you can!" With this, the emperor became enraged and had Teg Bahadur and His five accompanying disciples imprisoned. And then after some days, tortures began but the Guru and His disciples remained steadfast and unmoved. To the emperor's many demands, Teg only replied that God, as the Master over all, would hold each man accountable for his deeds.

Certain sikhs approached the Guru, informing him that they had arranged for his escape. One begged that he might use his spiritual powers to destroy the Mohammedan world. Far from pleased, Teg Bahadur reminded them that he had espoused this cause of his own will and was ready to face its consequences. And that to use the little power that one has gained to perform a miracle was more than foolish. ". . . The whole world is caught in the play of its own desires, but it behooves a disciple to be content with God's Will. I must sacrifice my body so that many more may be free." Saying this, the Guru looked into the disciple's eyes and, to save him from wasting all his meditations, He took his powers away from him.

All other methods had failed and the emperor's patience

grew short. He ordered that before the Guru's eyes, His disciples should be tortured to death. As they were led to their execution, each disciple was offered an alternative: they could embrace Islam and hold high imperial offices, thus gaining wealth and power, or they could meet a painful death. All scoffed at the emperor's offer. Amidst whatever hardships a man must face in life, they whose hearts the Master's words and presence had deeply penetrated found a joyful and abiding peace. And so it was that each disciple was reassured and established in the fullness of faith. Mati Das was chained to pillars and sawn in half but he silently and unaffectedly underwent this torture. Before his execution, he was granted a final request: "I ask only this, that my face be turned so that I can see the Beloved Master with my dying breath." Then his brother, Sati Das, was brought forth to meet his death. But like his brother, he remained fearless, proclaiming that death was welcomed when it came for the sake of Dharma and Truth. It was the emperor, he continued, who should fear the death that hovered over his head.

My strength is exhausted, I am bound and without resource.

Saith Nanak, the Lord is now my refuge: He will save me as He did the elephant.²

SLOK 53 M.9

The tortures continued but the Master's gentle and joyful spirit was ever with him. When left alone, he spent much of

2. In the Srimad Bhagavatam, the story is told of an elephant battling a crocodile. When the elephant was exhausted and had lost all hope, he remembered the Lord and began calling His Name. He appeared to the elephant in his time of hopelessness and saved him from death, and for his remembrance, bestowed salvation upon him.

his time writing hymns or in meditation. To his plea of refuge, his son Gobind Rai replied:

*Strength is thine own; Thy fetters are loosed.
All things are in thy power; Even thou art thine own
helper.*

DHORA M.10

Teg Bahadur was pleased with the reply and he knew that his son was ready to carry on the spiritual work.

The remaining disciples were brought before the executioner and tortured to death as the Master was made to look on. Aurangzeb would wait no longer. If the Guru would neither convert to Islam nor perform a miracle, then the time of his execution had come. Teg Bahadur had long awaited this appointed hour and so when the final message came, he remained undaunted.

At this time, Gurditta, the son of Bhai Budha, gained a final visit with the Master. But when left alone, Teg Bahadur turned to him and told him to leave. "O sir," replied the sikh, "there is nothing I desire more than to die at the feet of the One I love." "Do as I tell you but do not fear. Where your father once grazed the horses of my father, outside the walls of Gwalior, there will you leave this body and meet me in the Beyond."

The guards entered Teg's cell and led Him before the executioner's block. From the balcony, the emperor shouted: "A miracle! A miracle!" but to this the Guru replied, "You will see a miracle when my head is cut off: the miracle of a man sacrificing his life so others may be free to pray as they choose. But I have no respect for the cheap tricks of magic that you are shouting for. I pray for you that you may realize what you have done against man and against your

own self. But I shall not change my way: I shall sacrifice my head but not my faith.”

The order for the execution came and the Master fearlessly met His death. He entered samadhi as the sword struck His neck . . . and then cries and screams were to be heard everywhere. A terrible dust storm began and covered the city, and Gurditta made his escape—first to Anandpur where he related to Gobind Rai what had happened. He gave the Master’s message to the Sangat: that Gobind was to be the succeeding Guru, and then bowing before Him, begged His permission to leave. Hastening to Gwalior, he sat down in meditation and entered his final samadhi, to unite forever with the Radiant Master within.

In Delhi, Teg Bahadur’s severed head was seized by a faithful sikh, Bhai Jaitha, and carried to Gobind Rai, where it was cremated. But when the storm lifted, the body remained where it was and Aurangzeb ordered that no one should touch it, under penalty of death. Some time passed before another disciple, Bhai Lakhi, quietly lifted it into his cart in the dark of night and brought it to his house. There he cremated it with full respect, burning his own house as well to escape notice. Bhai Lakhi then went before Guru Gobind to relate to him what had happened. The Master replied that he would create a body of men so powerful that none would need ever to hide themselves nor their beliefs again.



TEN

Guru Gobind Singh

(1666-1708)

*Upon the Mountain of Hemkunt, high in the Hima-
layas*

*There I underwent great penances—great meditations
And ultimately I realized that God was in me and I
in Him.*

*Then God ordered me: "Take birth in this Kali Yug."
I did not want to come for my attention was on God's
Feet*

*But He remonstrated me and sent me with this
command:*

*"Go! I make you my son to guide the child humanity.
Lead the people from their folly and spread the True
Religion:*

To Worship God and God alone."

*With folded hands, I bowed my head and spake thus
meekly:*

*"Thy religion shall prevail, O Lord, when Thou ex-
tendeth Thy help in its prevailing!"*

*For this purpose God sent me and so I took birth in
this world.*

*. . . And as He spoke unto me, so shall I speak unto
man:*

Fearlessly shall I proclaim His Truth

But with enmity to no man.

Whosoever calls me God will fall into the pits of hell.

*I am but His lowly servant—and of this, have not the
least of doubts.*

I am the slave of the Almighty Lord

And have come to behold the wonder of His creation.

FROM BACHITAR NATAK, vs. 1 to 33

IT WAS the hours of prayer, the winter of 1666, when Mata Gujari gave birth to a son. The news quickly spread and there was great rejoicing among the following of the Divine Gurus—for all knew the child was he whom Guru Har Gobind had prophesied of: a great saint and warrior who would free men from a reign of oppression. Far outside the crowded city of Patna, a pious faqir received this message through divine perceptions. He bowed to the east, where Patna lay, rather than toward Mecca, and exclaimed his vision to his following, and then began the journey to behold the new-born savior. Weary and thin from fasting and travel, the faqir finally gained the infant's presence. He bowed in obeisance and placed two vessels before the saintly child, both of which He took into His hands. The faqir smiled as though relieved and then explained: "One vessel belonged to a Hindu, the other to a Muslim. Had he taken only one or the other, then he would have favored that people only. But when he took them both, he declared that he had come for all mankind alike."

Very early, the child began to resemble his grandfather—Guru Har Gobind—after whom he was named. Hardly beyond the first days of walking, Gobind Rai (as he was then called; in some accounts, he is called Gobind Das) displayed a remarkable strength; and not long afterward the first blossoms of military genius appeared. In character, though not without the saintly garland of humility and compassion, he was yet bold and self-assured. He had come

with the mission of both a saint and an avatar: to lead men on the path of love and to expose hypocrisy and uphold righteousness.

He had received instruction in the use of weapons and enjoyed the sport of engaging his peers in small skirmishes. But when alone, he would sit for long hours of meditation or enjoy the natural beauty along the banks of the Ganges. Here also, many a cross-legged yogi became the target of young Gobind's mischief: He would sneak up behind them and flood them with splashes of water. When they took to flight, the child teased them for not being so detached from the world as they pretended. On the fields, Gobind Rai's favorite pastime was his toy catapult, and it took little time before the water-carrying women knew of his expert marksmanship. One day, however, he missed the earthen pitcher balanced on a Muslim woman's head and hit her on the forehead. She ran to the boy's mother and threatened to take her case to the emperor's courts. The Emperor Aurangzeb's fanaticism had long been a cause of great fear to the non-Muslim India under his rule and Mata Gujari was not an exception. Finally she calmed the affronted woman with an offering of sweets and chased after her son; but Gobind's quick little legs carried him to safety and his mother could only scold from a distance: "Such foolish things for a child to do in these times. Do you have no fear of the emperor?!" Gobind looked at her boldly and retorted: "I fear none but the One God!"

II

*The dawn of Heaven's Light makes one a worshiper
of Truth alone,*

*The blossoming of loving devotion makes one forget
lifeless objects of adoration,
The knowledge of Him shows the futility of all rites
and rituals,
The manifestation of the holy light within,
distinguishes the pure from the impure.*¹

GURU GOBIND SINGH

By the age of eleven, Gobind Rai had fully known the joys of the inner life and the cruelties of the world. He had already been made fatherless by Teg Bahadur's execution and had long borne witness to the fear under which his people lived. But these circumstances also drew more and more men to the Guru's side, and as Gobind Rai perfected himself in the martial arts, so did he train his following. And under his expert training and divine presence, a group of farmers, traders and workmen soon became a fierce and powerful army. Men who had earlier looked on helplessly as their wives were raped or dragged into slavery along with their children; who feared to practice their religious beliefs openly, now found a place among the most courageous soldiers in history.

But with all the military fanfare, the spiritual welfare of his following was in no way neglected. The early mornings and evenings were set aside for meditation and religious gatherings. Here the Master would often meet with his disciples and tell them of their true purpose in life, both within and without: "He who ponders the mystery, 'Who am I?' and 'What am I?' will one day know himself and obtain salvation. But to worship God for the sake of worldly gain is like sowing seeds in the dust."

When Gobind was married to a disciple's daughter, he

1. As quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Prayer*, p. 9.

moved on to Patna, under the advice of his uncle, Kirpal Chand. The young Guru was very pleased with the natural sceneries here in the Himalayas and would spend long hours in seclusion along the River Jumna. It was here that he wrote most of his verse and translated the Hindu epics. Like his predecessors, he praised the One God and acclaimed the virtues of His devotees; but his writings also contained a new spirit of the battle.

*Sword, striking in a flash,
Scatterer of the armies of the wicked
On the Great battlefield of Life
Thou art the symbol of the brave.
All-powerful is thine Arm. Thy splendor dazzles like
the sun.
Sword, Thou art the protector of the saints;
the scourge of the evil doers
And destroyer of sinners, I come to Thy refuge.
Glory to the Creator of the world, the Savior.
My Beloved, Glory to Thee: Supreme Sword.*

BACHITAR NATAK, VS. 29-35

These works were later incorporated into a volume called the *Dasm Granth* (The Granth of the Tenth Guru) by a devoted follower, Bhai Mani Singh. Guru Gobind also mastered the languages of Hindi, Sanskrit, Persian and the Gurmukhi characters at this time and studied the various religious texts and mythologies. Here too the military training continued and his forces increased. His growing power brought fear to several Hindu rajas, and his abolishing of caste distinctions made them jealous. Under the command of Fateh Shah, they combined forces and marched against the Master. On the eve of battle, a large segment of the Master's army deserted him and all might have lost hope

had it not been for the Master's own unshakable faith. Gobind himself described the battle in his autobiography, "Bachitar Natak":

God protected His servant and I was not harmed. I let loose arrows that covered the sky like clouds, making the hillmen flee for their lives. By the grace of God, did we gain victory. Blessings were showered upon my men.

BACHITAR NATAK. CHAP. 8

With victory, the Guru ordered his men to tend to the wounded and the dead and not to pursue the fleeing hillmen.

After the battle, he returned to Anandpur and in the following years became the father of four sons.² Meanwhile, the same rajas who had just been defeated refused to pay an imperial tax and turned to the Guru for aid. Whatever they had done against him was forgiven and the Master granted their plea, by which victory was gained. Alarmed by this, Aurangzeb sent his son with great forces and while not molesting the Guru, crushed the Hindu chieftains.

III

*Those who wish to play the Game of Love,
Let them come forward with their heads upon their
palms as an offering.*

GOBIND SINGH

2. It is often stated that Gobind Singh had three wives. However, He had only one wife, as He lived a life of high ideals and great worldly detachment. He was betrothed to one Jito Ji, whose name was changed to Sundri after her marriage. Later, a disciple vowed he would marry his daughter to none but the Guru, but He refused this proposition. As there was much intervention from the following, He proclaimed her as "The Mother of the Khalsa"—but not his wife. (Baba Kirpal Singh gave me

Moved by the pitiable conditions of the time, Gobind Rai vowed to establish a community which would dedicate itself to the abolishing of social hierarchy and iconoclastic practices and which would fight for the birthrights of all men. In 1699 in Anandpur, the first step toward this was taken. The Guru came to the front of a large congregation with a gleam in his eyes and a brandished sword in his hand. He stood before the people and called out: "I am looking for true disciples; for ones that are willing to sacrifice their heads for the Supreme Cause!" There was a long silence, filled with fear and hesitation, but then one sikh, Daya Ram, came forward. The Guru took him into a tent and after a few moments, returned to the platform with blood dripping from his sword. Again he asked if there were any who wished to be his disciples. Many became horrified and ran off, but soon another came forward and yet another and another, until five had thus offered their lives. When no others would come forward, it was disclosed that the blood was from a goat, and the five disciples were brought out from the tent. "He did not take their lives but gave them His own Light," and annointed them as the "Five Beloveds." He gave them charged sugared water from His own hands, and stirred by the blade of his dagger. Then He had them call out: "The pure are of God and the victory is to God!" Then in turn, he bade them to baptise him and showed that the Guru would be the disciple and the true disciple, the Guru³. At this time, the Guru changed from "Gobind Rai" to "Gobind Singh" (Gobind the Lion) and had his Five Beloveds do likewise. As the following expand-

the basis of this information. See also, *Guru Gobind Singh: A Study* by K. Jagjit Singh.)

3. Gobind Singh as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *The Night Is a Jungle*, p. 338.

ed, all sikhs suffixed “Singh” to their names. It was only a short time before thousands were initiated into his folds, and those who truly followed the Way discarded any thoughts which divided men and cultivated instead a faith in the Guru and a willingness to defend the beliefs of all man: “Among my sikhs, there shall be no difference between Hindu and Muslim, touchable and untouchable, high and low. All shall be as one family of man, under the Fatherhood of God.”

But as the Guru’s dream materialized, the Hindu chiefs again felt the threat of His power. They had gained imperial aid and marched against him a second time. When they approached, the Master first showered his assailants with cannon blasts, and then the charge of his soldiers, led by the Five Beloveds. When the Master himself entered the fields, he slew the enemy’s general and victory was theirs. But subsequent battles followed and—broken only by short term peace treaties—the Battle of Anandpur dragged on for years. Despite heavy loss of lives through fighting and starvation, Gobind Singh—by the presence of his own confidence and determination—was long able to uphold a high morale among his following. And amid the stresses of warfare, the spiritual practices continued and an inner solace was granted. It was during this time that one sikh was brought before the Master, being charged with administering aid, not only to wounded sikhs, but to the wounded of the enemy as well. The disciple was undisturbed by the charges: “Master, I see the same Light in all men—whether of one side or the other—as I see within the Guru. How then can I but do what I am doing?” Far from displeased with such an attitude, Gobind embraced him and encouraged such a selfless and spiritual love.

The battles continued under severe hardships for the

sikhs, and finally the stress became too heavy: the winters were cold; the hardships, prolonged; and rations, scarce. Men approached the Guru and begged that they be allowed to leave. "Those who will deny me in writing may go!" he replied, and forty did so. Time passed and the hardships continued. Again His disciples pressed him for relief and when the enemy promised them a safe flight from Anandpur, they urged that the Master take the opportunity. Gobind Singh, seeing through the deceit of this promise, refused; but after repeated demands, he relented. No sooner had they come out of the fort than they were attacked and scattered by the enemy.

Beloved Lord, lend Thine ear to the condition of Thy servant.

When Thou art not near, the comforts of home are like a nest of serpents

And fine food and drink are like a noose around the neck.

When Thou turnest Thy face, man suffers as the beast suffers from the slaughterer.

Happily shall I be with Thee amidst hardships and trouble

But apart from Thee, comforts and ease would become like Hell.

SABAD HAZAR (GOBIND SINGH)

The Guru himself was separated from his family—save his two elder sons—under these attacks. In Chamkaur, he met his mother, and later reunited with the rest of his family. But hard times continued to bear against him. A servant betrayed him and had his younger sons killed. His mother died of shock from this. A battle then ensued in which his other sons were killed. Now childless, his wife asked him how much longer could this go on; how could he continue

fighting when all his children had been killed? To this the Guru replied, "For the heads of these sons (the followers), have I sacrificed the four."

When battles seized Chamkaur and there seemed little hope for their victory, the Guru was prepared to die fighting at the side of his devoted disciples. But the disciples would not allow such a fate for their Beloved Master and held him to his vow: whenever five or more devotees gathered, He would be there as their servant. Whatever was their wish, whatever their words, He would take that as His order. Therefore, they commanded him to escape while safety remained. Touched to the heart, the Master embraced them as tears filled his eyes—but he was bound by his word.

Gobind Singh traveled to Jathpura where he wrote a letter to the emperor—the *Zafarnama* (Epistle of Victory). He boldly charged Aurangzeb with cowardly and unreligious actions and justified his own fighting against him.

*When the affairs had passed all remedies
It became righteous to draw the sword.*

He continued that if Aurangzeb wished peace, he should meet with Him; but if he refused, he would be crushed.

By the Grace of God, shall I vanquish the enemies of religion. You depend upon your wealth and mighty armies, but I upon the power of God; and when God is one's friend, no enemy can triumph against him. When one has taken the protection of a powerful tiger, what need he fear a goat, a buffalo or a deer?

Finally, the Guru warned Aurangzeb not to be vain of his imperial powers:

Though thou sittest upon an imperial throne, how strange is thy justice, thy qualities and thy respect for religion. Promises not meant to be kept injure those that make them⁴. Be not foolish; this world is but for a few days only. People leave it at all times.

But before he received the emperor's reply, Gobind was yet to fight another battle. As his forces were limited and aid denied, he took refuge in a forest in the center of the Malwa desert. Here the forty men who had deserted him in Anandpur returned and begged his forgiveness. They fought valiantly and caused severe losses to the enemy forces, but in the end lost their own lives to the massive numbers of the Muslim army. Confident that the Guru lay among the dead, the Mughals left the desert. But Gobind Singh was only to reach the field later and as He looked upon the mutilated bodies of men that had died, tears welled in his eyes. Mahan Singh was breathing his last breaths of bodily life. The Guru bent at his side and wiped his face. "Mahan Singh, you have fought bravely in the Holy Cause. Whatever is your desire, that will be granted." Mahan Singh opened his eyes and looked deeply into the Master's strong and Godly gaze. "That the Guru's darshan is mine at my last hour, there remains but one desire still troubling my heart. O Sir, forgive myself and my comrades for our desertion at Anandpur. Tear the contract we had signed and once again make us as your disciples." "You wrote the contract and not I," replied the Guru. "The disciple may leave the Master but the Master cannot leave the disciple." Then to satisfy Mahan Singh, the contract was torn and Gobind Singh asked him to request another boon. "Having that, there is

4. Refers to the promise given at Anandpur, regarding Gobind Singh's disciples safely being allowed to leave their fortifications. Aurangzeb is said to have given this oath on the Koran to Gobind Singh.

naught else that I wish.” And so saying, Mahan Singh left his body to join the 39 other soldiers—to be revered by all Sikhs in times to come; and to be blessed in the eyes of God, by the Grace of the Guru.

Gobind Singh proceeded to Talwandi Sahib where he received a reply from Aurangzeb, inviting him to the imperial court. But before the Master reached there, the emperor had died. He then went on to Agra, where he met the succeeding emperor, Bahadur Shah. The Master traveled south with him, camping near his encampments. In Nanded, the Guru was attacked by two Pathan assassins, and though the wounds healed temporarily, He reopened them as He strung a heavy bow. This time, they did not mend. The Guru called his disciples to his side and gave them his parting words: “Death is that thing most feared by men, but I have always looked it squarely in the face and so should any of you who claim to be my disciples. Do not grieve for me: I shall meet my death like a lover, rushing to embrace her Beloved.” He paused in silence for some minutes and gazed upon His children with His Kingly eyes. “As the rain nourishes the seed, so shall my words nourish you, my Khalsa, and bear forth fruit. Through the Holy Word—the Shabda—can you maintain your link with the Lord. May God preserve you.”

Then before sunrise on October 7, 1708, the Master gave up his body.

But another account says that the Guru did not die here but retired to a small village where he could support the poor and hungry and devote his last days of the earthly life to the service of God and humanity.

*Leaving all other doors, Lord,
I am at Thy door.*

*As Thou once clasped my hand,
Must Thou not now make me Thine own?
I Gobind, Thy humble servant.*

RAM AVATAR (GOBIND SINGH)

IV

Like his grandfather, Har Gobind, Gobind Singh did the work of both an avatar and a saint. He used the necessary means to restore the balance between good and evil—punishing the wicked and upholding the righteous as well as uplifting the conditions of man in general. He who proclaimed that the poor man's mouth was the Guru's treasury and elsewhere added: "He who earns but does not share; who enjoys but knows not self-sacrifice; who pursues the passing allurements of life rather than dedicating himself to God, forever and at all times, cannot claim the Guru as his own"—himself lived a life that exemplified this noble sacrifice for the upliftment of humanity. When the times demanded action, he gave up the joys of solitude, the beauty of nature and the long, unbroken meditations that the saints hold so dear; and instead, suffered toils and hardships so that the poor could be provided for; so that strength could be instilled into the weak and courage and self-respect into the cowardly. Men who were once laughed at and spat upon by their foreign rulers were now so uplifted that even their enemy could not help but hold a certain respect for them. Qazi Nur Mohammad witnessed men directly inspired by the great Guru as they fought off the invading army (1764-'65) that he accompanied. And while he at places slanders them (as with almost all Muslim accounts contemporary to the Guru) yet he cannot help but also extol their virtues:

Say not that the "dogs" are dogs; they are lions. For in the battlefield, they show the courage of a lion. When a hero roars like a lion in the field of battle, can he be called a dog? Who seeks to learn the skill of battle, let him come face to face with them in the battlefield. They will demonstrate it in such a way that all will praise them. Truly they are lions in battle, but in times of peace, they excel in kindness and mercy.

Leave aside their skill of battle and hear another point in which they surpass all other fighting people. Never would they slay a coward nor block the path of a fugitive. Neither do they loot the wealth and jewelry of a woman, be she wealthy or a maidservant; nor do these "dogs" know of adultery . . . or even befriend adulterers or housebreakers.

And yet simultaneous with his work as an avatar, he brought men back into the Kingdom of God. If to meet with the demands of the times the appearance of the spiritual work had changed—from the simple farmer's life of Guru Nanak to the princely reign of the warrior saint, Gobind Singh—yet the essence remained unchanged. The same God Power that had worked through Nanak now worked through Gobind Singh; and that same Power was likewise bestowed upon those who came to him for spiritual refuge. Even behind his fierce lion-like gaze, there was a love and compassion too great to be contained within the scope of the intellect. He used arrow heads made of gold to supply money to those wounded by them; and his presence, which brought awe to the beholder, overflowed with the essence of the divine. Once a simple farmer, Bhai Bela, came to serve the Guru. He was unskilled in the use of weapons and unlearned, and of the many tasks available, he knew only how to tend the horses. Thus he was given this service; and

day after day, he performed it with such love and diligence that it soon came to the Master's notice. Gobind Singh singled out Bela, telling him how pleased He was with his services. He invited him to come daily to learn and digest something from the scriptures. Each day Bela received his lesson, and then throughout the entire day he would repeat his lesson with full concentration on the Master. One day Gobind Singh was leaving early for urgent work when Bela stopped him and reminded him about the daily lesson. "Oh Brother Bela, do you not see the time or the opportunity?!" the Guru sharply answered, and then galloped off. Bela accepted these words as his daily lesson and with all sincerity began repeating them with deep concentration. Gobind Singh's attention was so fierce when he uttered these words that they were charged with the full force of his radiation. The result was that as Bela went on repeating them, he entered into a state of divine intoxication and then withdrew into deep meditation; something which even many of the Guru's long-standing disciples—who were very learned and had fought hard with Him—could not do successfully.

As with all other great saints, Guru Gobind Singh's love for his disciples knew no bounds. That Guru Power forever watched over them, giving forth all grace and protection until the soul was blended into the Spirit of God. Even if the disciple forgot the Master, the Master would not forget the disciple, but silently watched over him until he was brought back into the Way.

One story states that a devoted couple offered their son, Joga Singh, for the Guru's service. *Joga* means "for the sake of" and when they brought the young boy before Gobind Singh, He renamed him Guru Joga—"For the sake of the Guru." Many years passed and the boy's love and

devotion grew greater and greater.

When Joga Singh became of age, his parents arranged for his marriage and requested that he be sent back to Peshawar for the ceremony. Joga went to the Master to get his permission. Gobind Singh sent him with his blessings but added, "Should I send for you, come at once. Do not delay even for a moment." Joga readily agreed, and paying his respects, set out for Peshawar.

The day of the marriage arrived and all went well until only a few minutes before the ceremony was finished. Then suddenly a messenger rode up and gave Joga Singh the Guru's order: "Proceed to Anandpur without delay." Refusing to wait even the few minutes needed to complete his marriage, he mounted his horse and rode off.

But midway between Peshawar and Anandpur, his ego began to trick him. His Sweet Remembrance of God began to break off and his pride began to grow. "Very few disciples would leave their own wedding to obey the Guru's wish. When I reach Anandpur, He will be very pleased with me and proclaim me as an ideal disciple." Then the thought came to him, that devoted as he was, he could do as he liked. First he thought he would rest for the night; then seeing a charming prostitute, he decided that he would spend the night with her. But as he approached her house, Gobind Singh appeared in the form of the gatekeeper and would not allow him to enter: "A very important person is upstairs now. You must wait." Joga Singh left and after a few hours, he returned, but again the gatekeeper told him he must wait. Several times this happened until finally it was 3:00 in the morning. Then when Joga Singh came up, the gatekeeper told him: "You are a good sikh. You shouldn't be here for enjoying your body. It is the time that you should be meditating." Now Joga Singh realized his

mistake and repented. He meditated for the morning and then continued on to Anandpur.

When he arrived, he met with Gobind Singh but He was very tired and often dozed off to sleep.

“Sir, why are you so tired?”

The Guru replied, “Last night I didn’t sleep because I was watching one of my disciples, keeping him from going astray.”

Immediately it struck Joga that it was he whom the Master was talking about and that it was the Master who had appeared before him as the gatekeeper at the prostitute’s house. Joga begged his forgiveness.

“The Guru was with you all along. But in your pride, you broke that contact and went astray. Then He had to suffer along with you and save you from falling.”

V

History seems without dispute as to who was to carry on the holy work of the other nine Gurus, but little mention is made as to who was to carry on the work after Gobind Singh. Most state that he proclaimed the *Adi Granth* his successor; but would the same Master who taught his followers to worship life and not mere words (even though they may be holy words); who embraced a simple village boy who said he needed no more learning after learning but one line of the Granth: “Oh my mother, it is blissful for I have found the Living Master”—now leave them with no living guidance but only that of their holy writings?

Epilogue

The Gurus After the Ten Gurus

Only vague indications are given as to who Nanak's spiritual Master was; but in his discourses with the Siddhas he was asked who his Guru was and he replied, "Shabda is my Guru." The place where that Power is manifest is the Living Master of the time and it was for such company that Nanak and his successors repeatedly prayed.

That human pole, being composed of flesh and blood, lives on earth according to the laws of nature; and so it too must one day pass away. But the Power that works through it is eternal and its work on the earth continues for all times. Each of the Masters, as he lay on his deathbed, reassured his disciples that He Himself, being one with God, would remain ever with His disciples, even after His own physical death; and even on the earth plane, that power would continue, being passed through the eyes of the Guru to his chosen gurumukh disciple. That Shabd Power that Nanak passed on to Angad and Angad to Amardas, continued to manifest, and history records its presence to the time of Guru Gobind Singh.

But Gobind Singh was only the last of a line singled out by history—the Ten Sikh Gurus—and he did not leave the earth without first appointing one to carry on the divine mission. He in fact had at least two gurmukh disciples: one, Bhai Nandlal, and the other, Ratnagar Rao.¹ The former was a well-known poet of the Persian language whose

1. Kirpal Singh, *Baba Jaimal Singh*

works and devotion Gobind Singh oft-times publicly acclaimed. Ratnagar Rao, on the other hand, is virtually unknown. He had no public ministry but was commissioned to pass on the sacred treasure to a very small and select group. Within his own family was one Sham Rao Peshwa, the crown prince of Poona and Sitara, who showed strong spiritual aptitudes. On the day before he was to be crowned he left his palace to dedicate himself to the finding of God. He went south to Hathras, where he continued the work of his Guru. He changed his name to Tulsi Sahib and it was here he wrote his famous *Ghat Ramayana*.

Of his followers, Tulsi had one family that was particularly devoted and he prophesied a great saint would be born to them. The child, Shiv Dayal Singh, proved the truth of these words. He was an ardent student of the *Granth Sahib* even in his youth and soon began his divine ministry under the Master's orders. On his worldly departure, he in turn conferred the Guru-sonship to one Baba Jaimal Singh.²

Jaimal Singh's life was one of great precocity and intense spiritual searching. His parents had prayed for a saintly child and his mother-to-be soon dreamed that their prayers had been answered. Ten months later, Jaimal Singh was born. As it turned out, the boy showed remarkable abilities as a student of the scriptures. When his father tried to take him away from his studies and put him to work, tending the goats, the young boy would let them out to graze while he spent his time in study and meditation. At night, he continued to visit his teacher. More and more, his parents regretted their prayer, as the boy neglected all else in his search for spiritual knowledge. Several times he trekked

2. For details, see *Baba Jaimal Singh*

across India in search of the Master who could reveal the “Five Shabdas” discussed in the *Granth*. After years of searching, he found the blessings of such a Master in Shiv Dayal Singh. When Jaimal left the earth plane in 1903, he passed the spiritual throne to Hazur Sawan Singh.

Sawan Singh³ spread the holy gift of Naam not only throughout India and into Africa, but extended the Path into the West as well (Europe and America). His following reached great numbers, as he freely gave of the divine treasure to whosoever truly sought it, claiming that Truth was man’s birthright, as were nature’s gifts of air, water, etc.

In this materialistic age, that Power came to earth in all its glory, extending the fullness of its mercy through the Beloved Satguru Kirpal Singh. And even now that same Power works in the world through His gurmukh son, Sant Ajaib Singh.

3. For details, see *Hazur Baba Sawan Singh, A Brief Life Sketch*.

The Sikhs After The Gurus

During his travels in India, Guru Gobind Singh heard of a powerful ascetic living in the caves of Decca. On their first meeting, Gobind Singh offended the renunciate who in turn exerted his supernatural powers against the Guru. But when he found them of no avail, the sadhu recognized Gobind Singh as an Enlightened One and fell at his feet—becoming his disciple and slave: His “Banda.” The Guru remonstrated this new disciple for hiding in caves when his fellow men were being persecuted; He dressed him in a warrior’s garb, gave him His own arrows and sent him on the mission of freeing the people from tyranny.

Among Banda’s victories is included the fulfillment of a prophecy of Gobind Singh’s: that the town in which His sons were cruelly murdered—Sirhind—would be razed to the ground (except for a small section where a disciple of the Guru’s lived) and that the town’s governor who had killed them would also meet his death at this time. Banda launched two heavy and successful attacks against Sirhind and then passed up opportunities for important victories in favor of capturing and executing the guilty governor. As his power increased, Banda was able for a time to establish a small independent kingdom. But repeated imperial attacks soon forced Banda and his following into hiding until ultimately he was captured and killed by tearing his flesh apart with red-hot pincers.

With Banda’s death, the emperor continued a strong

persecution of the Sikh people, offering a reward to anyone who brought him the head of a Sikh. Thus some of the following changed their religion, while most others took to hiding in the jungles and deserts and there took to guerrilla warfare.

The Sikhs took advantage of the weakening of the Mughal Empire; of internal strifes—mostly from Marathans—and of the devastating Afghanistan invasions—first by Nadir Shah (1739) and then by Ahmed Shah Abdali (1750 and 1751)—to ultimately establish themselves as an independent nation.

However the courage and perseverance which they had shown would have lost its value—as they became a divided people, often fighting amongst themselves—had not a figure arisen who was able to unite the Sikhs into one body. This man was Ranjit Singh (1780-1839). Ranjit Singh extended the borders of the Sikh Kingdom, repulsed foreign invasion both by his military genius (particularly against further Afghanistan invasions) and by his diplomatic abilities (i.e. with the British). But above all, he united his people under one independent rule which remained till their land became part of the British dominion in 1849.

Related Persons

Bhai Nandlal (Goya)

A famous poet and follower of the tenth Guru, Gobind Singh.

At the age of nineteen, Nandlal was orphaned. Finding no suitable means of employment, he left his native land of Persia and traveled to India. Here he married, and in Delhi he came to the notice of Prince Munzzan (later, Emperor Bahadur Shah I) who employed him for his writing skills. His genius brought him much acclaim; but when Nandlal, a Hindu, gave a masterful interpretation of a selection of the Koran which even the Muslim priests could not understand, the emperor Aurangzeb was dismayed. He felt a man of such abilities should be converted to Islam.

Nandlal's wife's family were disciples of the Gurus and she was often singing their hymns. Nandlal was also spiritually inclined; he often sang the Guru's hymns and had learned the Gurmukhi script. He was further aware of Gobind Singh's being a great saint; and consequently, when he heard of the emperor's intentions, he decided to secretly leave Delhi for Anandpur.

When he arrived there, Nandlal felt he should test Gobind Singh before accepting him as Guru. Nandlal told no one in Anandpur his name but would not go to the Master till he was invited personally and by name. The time passed but to his secret desire he received no reply. With each day Nandlal felt the deep pain of separation grow within his

heart and the waiting became unbearable. Finally he sent a poem to the Guru:

*How long shall I patiently await Thee?
My heart has become restless desiring to behold Thy
Form.
Saith Goya, Mine eyes have become flooded with tears
flowing in streams of love.*

The Guru gave no reply to his poem and then a second one was written:

*My heart burns in the fire of separation
I am so much consumed in this flame
That whoever sees me, he too catches afire.*

Receiving this poem, the Guru invited him to his darbar; and on seeing him, Nandlal spontaneously uttered:

*O Lord of heaven, King of the Beautiful Ones! Do not
become more beautiful for I would not then have
the strength to behold Thee. I sacrifice myself unto
Thee.*

And at this time, it is said he composed the following poem:

*My life and faith are enslaved by His sweet, angelic
face.
For one hair of my beloved Satguru, I will sacrifice
both worlds (this and the next).*

From that time onward, he became one of the Guru's most devoted disciples, born to bear testimony to the Guru's glory. He himself claimed to have taken birth in this world "only to see the beautiful form of the Beloved."

Once he wrote a book of prayers which he offered in dedication to Gobind Singh. When the Master received it, He retitled it from *Bandgi Nama* [Book of Prayer] to Zindgi

Nama [The Giver of Life], as He uttered the following:

*Filled with the immortal nectar
The cup was named Zindgi Nama.*

(Of this book, Master Kirpal Singh has said, “If you have the opportunity to read it, you will become thoroughly awakened to the true teachings.”)

True to his pen-name, Goya—which means “One who is not afraid to speak out”—he declared the greatness of his Master and His Teachings in no uncertain terms. When he heard a hymn of a Persian poet which said one should leave everything and go to the jungles to find God, he pointed to his Guru and exclaimed, “Why go to the jungles when God is here standing before you!” And in a clarion voice, he spoke of the path to God realization:

*Get hold of a perfect Master and follow his instructions
fully, then shalt thou gain salvation even while engaged
in worldly duties. God is with thee from eternity but
thou hast to turn thy face unto Him.*

Dhanna

(15th Century)

Dhanna—or Dhanna Jat—was a poor, hard-working farmer born in Rajputana (now Rajasthan). From his childhood, he had an unshakable faith in God. Throughout his life he remained illiterate, but by the grace of Ramananda he became a perfect saint. Like many other of the Bhaktas, Dhanna first worshiped idols but later practiced the inner yoga of the Sound Current.

From within, Dhanna was directed to Swami Ramanand. The Swami was pleased to see such a pure heart and readily

initiated him. Dhanna, in turn, cultivated his Guru's gift and attained to sainthood.

Once when still young, Dhanna went to Trilochan asking for one of the idols which he worshiped. Trilochan was proud of his higher caste and held the illiterate farmer boy in contempt. Finally he consented to give Dhanna one of his cheaper idols in exchange for a milk cow. When he got home, Dhanna put the idol aside. When he next saw Trilochan he asked him if his idols ever spoke to him. "How can stone idols speak?" he replied. "But the idol which you gave me speaks with me and is doing all my work: he is plowing my fields, looking after my cows and doing every job for me." Trilochan was startled to hear this and wanted to see for himself. When they reached the field, Dhanna told him, "Look there, he is plowing my field. Look there, he is taking care of my cows." And he showed him many places where work was being done. Trilochan couldn't see the god working and when he told Dhanna this he was rebuked: "You have the dirt of lust, anger, greed and attachment within you; how can you see that pure and high God? First you have to remove this dirt from within and then you can develop in such a way as to see God." Trilochan made up his mind then and there to purify his mind. When he succeeded, he returned to Dhanna and Dhanna gave him his attention and Trilochan rose up to see God.¹

Another time as Dhanna prepared to plant his fields, some holy men approached him for alms. All the poor *jat* had was the seed he was about to plant—yet without hesitation, he gave up that food to feed the *sadhus*. It is said that seeing this God thought, "A man who plants these seeds in

1. "O Man, Why Are You Afraid", *Sant Bani Magazine*, July/August 1977, pp. 5 & 6.

his field expects a return several times greater. Should not one who has planted in the mouths of my devotees receive several thousand times more?" Accordingly to Dhanna's own great surprise, he reaped a very great harvest from his field.

Three of his verses are included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Farid

(1175-1265)

Farid was a great Sufi mystic, many of whose hymns are included in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. His family traces back through kings and princes while one of his spiritual instructors, Khwaja Qutub-ul-Din Bakhtiyar Ushi, is said to be a successor in the line of Mohammed.

His mother had some spiritual awakening and encouraged Farid to begin meditating at a very young age. The child questioned her as to what he would get from meditating and she replied that God would give him sweets. Happy to hear this, the boy began sitting every day for five or ten minutes. While his eyes were closed, his mother put a piece of candy under his prayer mat. This went on for some time but when his mother saw that he was ready for true meditation, she put her attention on him and the child began to rise into the spiritual realms. When he returned to normal consciousness, he composed the following little poem:

*Sugar is sweet
Honey is sweet
And sweet is the milk of buffaloes
But none are as sweet as Thy Naam*

After this, Farid became nicknamed *Shakar Ganj* or the Treasury of Sugar.

When he became older, Farid went into the jungles to perfect his meditations. But rather than advancing spiritually, he became caught in the net of rigid asceticism.

For twelve years he hung by a chain upside down inside a well. When a simple farmer passed by, he questioned the ascetic about the purpose of this austerity. "I am hanging like this to find God," Farid replied. Overjoyed to hear of a path to God, the poor peasant made a flimsy twine and began hanging inside another well. Within minutes his unwavering faith was rewarded and he was awakened to a vision of God. When he told Farid of his experience, Farid was wonderstruck: someone had found in minutes what he had spent years searching for. Time passed before he realized that it was the peasant's child-like faith—his throwing his life into his quest for God and not caring that a flimsy rope might not hold him—that gave him his vision of God.

One day after he had gained powers from these meditations, Farid was sitting in the fields when he saw a flock of sparrows. He looked at them and thought: "Fall dead," whereupon the whole flock died. "Revive!" he thought and they did. Several times he tested this newly found power and though at first he was struck with surprise, he soon became filled with pride. He walked away from the fields till he came to a well where a woman was drawing water. He was very thirsty and asked for water. But the woman ignored him and poured water on her feet. He got angry and threatened to curse her, but the woman replied, "I am not like those sparrows. My house is on fire. When I have extinguished the fire, then I will give you water to drink." Farid was shocked; an ordinary woman had the power to withstand his curse and to read his mind, as well as extinguish a fire from a distance. "How did you gain this power?" he asked. "Through devotion to my husband,"

replied the woman. Farid then realized the value of devotion and faithfulness.

Ultimately these and similar incidents must have awakened within Farid the awareness of the uselessness of rigid austerities and how much more effective were the simple ways of pure faith and loving devotion. Thus after many years of severe penances, he renounced these also and came unto the true path to God.

Kabir

According to the *Anurag Sagar*, Kabir was the first saint, incarnating in all the four yugas to guide souls back to God. In this age, he revived Sant Mat or the Path of the Masters which offered a direct way back to God—free of all artifice and strenuous practices. Among his following, he abolished religious and caste distinctions and taught only of the One God, Whose same Light shines within all.

He was born in this world as a low-caste Muslim weaver but challenged the knowledge and position of the high-caste Brahmins:

O Brahmin, you also were born of woman! How can you be called "Brahmin" when you came into the world the same way as we outcastes? Blood runs in our veins; does that mean that milk flows in yours?

And elsewhere he wrote:

*O wearer of the Sacred Thread²
Know that it is spun in my house
While you recite the Vedas and the Gayatri
On my lips is the Lord's Remembrance.*

2. At a Hindu confirmation ceremony, the higher caste men are given a "sacred thread" to wear. This is the ritualistic remains of a one-time meaningful mystical experience.

*You are a Brahmin and I am but a lowly weaver
But how did I find this knowledge?
You seek the blessings of princes
But my mind is set upon the Lord.*

*The Name of God is on my lips
He shines in my eyes and has His abode in my
heart.
O Brahmin, what about you?
What will be your fate when death comes?*

He further denounced idol worship, pilgrimage and other outer ritualistic means of finding God; claiming that he himself had tried all these ways but could not gain God's pleasure through them:

*The idols are all lifeless
I know: I have cried aloud to them.*

And when he started out on pilgrimage for Mecca, "God stopped me on the way and rebuked me: 'Who told you I am there? I am within you.' "

Never hesitating to speak the Truth—though it often wrought havoc within the temples and mosques—Kabir found himself a target of condemnation of both Hindu and Moslem priests. A case against him was brought before the ruler of the time and Kabir was sentenced to death. But all attempts failed—the ocean would not drown him nor would a rogue elephant trample him—and finally he was released.

Kabir was born in this world already spiritually perfected; but for the sake of form, he took on Swami Ramanand as his guru. Ultimately, however, it was Kabir who enlightened Ramanand and the disciple gave grace to the Master.

Having shed the darkness of dogma and ritualism, Kabir revived the Yoga of the Sound Current, which is made audi-

ble through the Guru. Kabir stressed that once one has gained the favor of a true spiritual guide, he needs to follow the cornerstones of a pure life and an unwavering love and devotion—which follows when one is ready to sacrifice his all.

*Love grows not in the fields
And is not sold in the markets
Whosoever would have it, whether king or beggar
must pay with his life.
Carry your head upon your palm as an offering,
If you would step into the wonderland of love.³*

When it was time for Kabir to die, with the same wit as he had exposed many other hypocrisies, he gathered a few belongings and left the holy city of Kashi (Benares) where he had lived all his life and set out for Maghar. (It was believed that if one died in Kashi, he would go straightway to heaven; but one who died in Maghar was supposed to receive the curse of the gods and return to the earth as an ass.) Certain followers pleaded with him not to do this, but fearlessly he followed through with his intention.

*Men say Kabir has gone mad; only a few know the truth
—man sees a rope and believes it to be a snake. The
Lord sustains all, just as the water sustains the fish.
The world will die but I will not die for I have found the
Giver of Life. Will God forget His devotees's love
though he leaves this world in Maghar? Or will the Lord
of Judgment forget a man's sins if he should die in
Kashi? This is not the truth.*

At the age of 120, Kabir left this world; and both Hindus and Muslims wept for the saint who had taught them that

3. Kabir as translated by Kirpal Singh, *Crown of Life*, p. 183.

Allah and Ram were different names for the same Power.

Kabir's recognized successor was one Dharam Das—a one-time wealthy businessman who spent all his fortunes seeking the saint who appeared to him on various occasions, counseled him and then mysteriously disappeared. When he found him penniless and without hope—on the brink of suicide—Kabir appeared to Dharam Das and initiated him into the mystery of Surat Shabd Yoga.

Other men also reached to spiritual perfection through Kabir's intercession, but foremost of all disciples was Guru Nanak, who, alongside Kabir, was most responsible for rekindling the forgotten science of true spirituality. In this modern age, these two Saints first revealed the truth of Kabir's words: "In this world, there is no giver so great as the Guru." and gave freely to the common man what was once revealed only to a very select few.

Of all the Bhaktas in the *Granth*, Kabir's hymns are the most numerous.

How can the love between Thee and me sever?

As the leaf of the lotus abides in the water,

so dost Thou in Thy servant;

As the night-bird, Chakor, gazes at the moon all the night o'er,

So do I my Lord, thy servant;

From the beginning of time until the ending of time,

there is love between Thee and me,

How can such a love be extinguished?

Kabir therefore says, As the river plunges into the ocean, so doth my heart in Thee.⁴

4. Kabir as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *Prayer*, p. 102.

Mardana

A low-caste Muslim rebeck player and close friend of Guru Nanak's from childhood. Before Mardana's birth, his parents had lost their other children and in utter despair, they named this child "Marjana"—one who is soon to die.

Marjana's father was a village Bard of Talwandi and his son soon began to accompany him as he sang from house to house and collected alms—usually in the form of some kind of food. One house which they frequented was that of Metha Kalu and perhaps they sang there the day of Nanak's birth. (Mardana was ten years his senior.) Nanak was drawn to the young minstrel's music from an early age and formed a close friendship with this witty, blunt-mannered bard.

Perhaps more than any other person, Marjana stayed in the personal company of the Guru—and as his name did not prove prophetic, the Guru renamed him more aptly "Mardana" (or Brave One). When Nanak's parents sent him to Sultanpur, Mardana was asked to join him. Together the two would pass the night singing hymns to the Lord and enrapt in meditation. For seven years passers-by would tearfully remember their devotion to God as they stopped to hear the two devotees singing hymns of saints like Ravidas, Dhanna, or Kabir, as well as their own compositions.

When Guru Nanak received the inner command to trek across Asia, again he called his faithful companion and first disciple to his side. Throughout these journeys, Mardana faced hunger, weariness and even tortures; but as steadfast as his love was, so was the unfailing grace of the Guru over his head and time and again he was saved—ultimately to be raised from "the low one" to the highest status.

The Guru's closest worldly companion left his body while with Him in Afghanistan on the banks of the River Khuram. Head bowed before his Beloved, Mardana uttered his dying words: "Please grant me only this: Take me to the other side of the Ocean of Life, for the sake of Thy Word." With his own hands, Nanak performed the funeral rights of the disciple whom He affectionately addressed as "Bhai" (Brother).

Mardana himself wrote several hymns, three of which are included in the Guru Granth Sahib. He is the only poet other than the succeeding Gurus to write under the pen name Nanak (a probable indication of elevated spiritual status. Guru Angad also referred to him as Nanak the Second).

*Let good deeds be the pitcher and Truth thy sweets
And drink the wine of the True Name
Have the bread of virtue, buttered with good conduct
And let modesty be thy meat.
O Nanak, when one finds this food,
Through the Guru it will consume all one's sins.*

Namdev (1269-1344)

Namdev was born in a low-caste family of cloth dyers in Maharashtra, India. From his very early years he had the yearning to realize God—first by worshiping the idols as his family did, but later through devotion to the Naam.

Namdev's grandfather was a devotee of idols and would daily take milk as an offering. Everyone was familiar with his daily journey to the temple with the milk and he would say, "I am going to take milk for the gods to drink." One

day he had some affairs in another town, and he called Namdev and told him, "You do the *puja* (worship), and take the milk while I am away." The child knew that his grandfather took the milk for the gods, but he did not know that his grandfather himself drank the milk, according to the custom. So the following day, Namdev performed the *puja* and then placed the milk before the idols. He closed his eyes and prayed that they might accept the offering of milk, but when he opened his eyes the milk was still there. Again he prayed but the milk remained. He wondered why they were not drinking it. Namdev then said to the idols, "Every day you have been drinking the milk. What has happened today?" On receiving no reply, he became very unhappy and bothered and cried, "If you don't come and drink the milk, then I am going to cut my throat!" and he took out his dagger. At once the Lord appeared and drank his milk.⁵ It was with this innocent but unwavering determination that Namdev continued to seek God, until he became one with Him.

Throughout his life, Namdev was taunted by his family—first his mother and brother, then his wife—for forgetting or ignoring worldly duties and instead spending his time in meditation. But because of his deep-seated faith, the Lord always came and did his work for him.

Namdev took initiation from Guru Giandev, perfected that gift, and spent his later years traveling in the Punjab. Legend holds that in the village of Ghuman, he once entered a temple to pray; but because he was an outcaste, the priests would not allow him within the temple's walls. Undeterred, he went and sat behind the back wall and was soon lost in samadhi. The Lord, unhappy at the insult of-

5. Kirpal Singh: "It Is A Noble Search", *Sat Sandesh*, Jan. 1971, pp. 6-7.

ferred to His disciple, turned the face of the temple toward the place where Namdev sat, and all the priests and brahmins fell at his feet asking for forgiveness.⁶

Sixty-one of Namdev's hymns are in the Guru Granth Sahib.

*Love for Him who filleth my heart shall never be
sundered;
Nama has applied his heart to the True Name.
As the love between a child and his mother,
So is my soul imbued with God.*⁷

Ravidas (15th Century)

Ravidas (Hindi, Raidas) was born in a low-caste cobbler family, but when he became a disciple of Ramananda, he reached spiritual perfection.

Like his Gur-bhai (Guru brother) Kabir, Ravidas suffered abuse from the high-caste priests. Yet also like Kabir, his God-inspired wisdom towered above the bookish learning of his tormentors and drew people from all walks of life into his folds—including Jhati, the queen of Chitaur; Raja Pipa, and the princess Mirabai. Thus he sings of the transforming power of Naam:

*Of low caste, I am a cobbler by trade.
In Benares I dragged the dead cattle.
But nobles and Brahmins bow before me,
Since the slave Ravidas has taken refuge in Thy Naam.*

Once Mirabai, seeing the poverty he lived in, brought Ravidas a large ruby. The saint refused it but as she in-

6. Kirpal Singh: *Baba Jaimal Singh*, p. 19.

7. Namdev as translated by Kirpal Singh in *Baba Jaimal Singh*, p. 6.

sisted, Ravidas told her to leave it in a certain corner of his hut. Satisfied that her Master would now live more comfortably in this world, Mira went to her home to continue with her devotions. After several months she returned, only to find him living just as before. Surprised, she asked him about the jewel she had left. "Oh, it's probably in the same corner where you put it."

Having the wealth of God's Name, he cared for nothing else; and yet having this wealth, he remembered himself as a humble servant and supplicant to the Lord.

Day and night my companion is evil.

My deeds are corrupt

And my birth is low.

O my Lord, the very life of my life

Do not forsake me

As I am Thy servant.

Should my body perish

Even then I will cling to Thy Lotus Feet.

Saith Ravidas: As I have sought Thy shelter

Take me into Thy protection without delay.

GAURI RAVIDAS

*Between Thee and me; me and Thee, where is the
difference?*

*Like the bracelet and the gold; like the wave and the
water (so am I to Thee.)*

Were I not a sinner, O Lord

How could Thou be called the Purifier of sinners?

SRI RAG RAVIDAS

Sri Chand

One of Guru Nanak's two sons, Sri Chand, as a disciple of his father, was able to make some spiritual headway but became proud of his status. He took on more and more the outer habits of a renunciate and blocked his receptivity to the Guru Power within. When Guru Nanak left the body, Sri Chand began calling himself a guru and wandered in the forests as a naked ascetic. While his reputation is primarily that of a performer of miracles, he also mastered his meditations to a fairly high degree. Therefore he was able to give out spiritual experiences within the inner realms he had mastered. This caused at least some confusion among Guru Nanak's following. There is a recorded dialogue between two disciples in certain *Janam Sakhis* (biographies of Guru Nanak) where one disciple is questioning the other as to who the true successor was: Angad or Sri Chand (and where the questioner, at least for the time, believed Sri Chand to be the true successor). This point is of particular interest because throughout *Sant Mat* men have been confused by disciples of varying degrees of attainment, claiming the successorship to their own gurus (and often it has been a member of the Guru's family as with Sri Chand). Eventually Sri Chand realized how he had been misled by pride, and bowed before the fourth Guru, Ramdas.

There is still one branch of Sikhism modeled after his ascetic ways, the Udasi sect. Further there was a line of gurus following him who were able to initiate up to the first two spiritual planes—of which Bishan Das, the first guru of the present master, Sant Ajaib Singh, was one.

Other Persons

AKBAR

Grandson of the emperor Babar. Once established in power, he became one of the most enlightened rulers in history.

BABAR

A powerful Mughal conqueror and emperor who plundered Northern India during the life of Guru Nanak. He was the first of a long line of emperors whose reign began during the life of Guru Nanak and began to decline during the life of Gobind Singh, finally to be overthrown by the British. The succession was broken for a short time during the life of the second emperor, Humayun, who was defeated in battle by an Afghan soldier, Sher Khan. Humayun spent several years in exile (during which time he married Hamida Banu Begum who bore him his great son, Akbar) before he gained the aid of a Persian king and recaptured his kingdom.

The emperors contemporary to the Gurus ran in succession as follows: Babar, Humayun, Akbar, Jahangir, Shah Jahan, Aurangzeb and Bahadur Shah I. The line continued for almost another 150 years, during which time twelve more emperors ruled. However, no succeeding emperor could fully subjugate rivaling powers (the Sikhs, the Rajputs, the Mahathas and eventually the English) and thus none enjoyed a secure rule. The last few emperors acted more as figureheads over whom the British ruled. The line ended with Bahadur Shah II who was exiled by the British in 1857 and died seven years later at the age of 87.

BHAI BUDHA

A disciple of Guru Nanak who perfected the gift of the

Guru. He lived to serve the five succeeding Gurus after Nanak; served as the first caretaker of the *Granth* after its compilation and performed the ceremony of declaring each succeeding Guru as the true successor when they took on that role.

GORAKH OR GORAKH NATH (13th century)

The great yogi disciple of Machandra Nath who developed a new kind of yoga for achieving powers of concentration and performing miracles. A sect of yogis was formed after him. Nanak had encounters with followers of this sect and tried to lead them from their rigid formalism, ritualism and stress on supernatural powers.

BHAI GURDAS

A poet, historian and advanced disciple of Guru Arjan. He was instrumental in helping Guru Arjan compile the *Guru Granth Sahib* but declined the opportunity to include his own writings in the scripture, saying that his works were not fit to be compared with the other saints whose hymns were included. Arjan acceded to his wish but added that whoever read and digested Gurdas' writings would gain much from them spiritually. When Arjan left his body, Gurdas served the sixth Guru, Har Gobind.

A sage in his own right, his works include many important historical documents concerning the Sikhs; aphorisms (e.g., Be wise inwardly but simple outwardly); and poems, predominately in praise of the Gurus:

*Like a herd of deer fleeing before a tiger
not looking back
not pausing for breath
So fled the Fog of Illusion
before the holy Nanak.*

Glossary

Agam: The Inconceivable Region; seventh spiritual plane; the last spiritual region before the Absolute God.

Ahimsa: Nonviolence in thought, word, and deed. Includes abstaining from flesh diet.

Alakh: The Indescribable Region: sixth spiritual plane; the region beyond Sach Khand.

Amritsar: 1) The heavenly fount of nectar wherein the soul may cleanse itself of its past karmic impressions. 2) The pool of water surrounding the Golden Temple. 3) A large city in the Punjab where the Golden Temple is located.

Anaami: The Nameless Region. The absolute God; the formless, unmanifest God. The eighth and ultimate spiritual region.

Avatar: An incarnation of some spiritual advancement (but not necessarily perfected) who is commissioned by God to restore the balance of good and evil. The most famous of these are Rama and Krishna.

Baba: Father; a term of respectful affection.

Bhai: Brother; a term of affection.

Brahma: The creating power in the triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

Brahmcharya: The course of conduct necessary for realizing God. Control over all the sense organs, with special

reference to chastity. Declared by all true saints to be the foundation of both the physical body and the spiritual life. (While the Masters consider repression of desire as unnatural and unhealthy, they offer the means for overcoming it: the inner Light and Sound, which are more blissful and more fulfilling. The Sikh Masters taught that married life is no bar to spirituality if conducted according to the scriptures. Most of the Ten Gurus and their successors were married and lived the life of householders.)

Brahmin: lit., the Knower of God (Brahm). The highest caste of Hindu society: the priest caste.

Darshan: Seeing a holy figure and becoming absorbed in him through the eyes. Can also imply sitting in the presence of a holy man.

Dervish: Persian. Same as *Sadhu* or *Sant*.

Dharma: righteousness; also duty.

Durga: Hindu goddess; an aspect of the Divine Mother.

Faqir: (also fakir) Arabic. Same as *Sadhu* or *Sant*.

Gayatri Mantra: Basic Vedic mantra which refers to the "inner sun."

Gurbani: the words of the Masters as contained in the *Guru Granth Sahib*.

Gurdwara: a Sikh temple.

Gurmukh: Mouthpiece of the Guru. The disciple who has achieved such a high level of spiritual receptivity that the Guru works through him.

Guru: Dispeller of darkness. One who leads the soul from the darkness (of matter) to the Light (of God) by his example, by instruction and by uplifting the soul through his attention. Though one Power, the Guru manifests at three

levels to guide the soul: 1) Guru or Master at the physical level; 2) Gurudev or Radiant Form of the Guru which appears in the spiritual regions and guides the soul from there; 3) Satguru or Master of Truth where the Guru is revealed in all His glory and seen to be one with God. For details, see *Godman* by Kirpal Singh.

Guru Granth Sahib: The voluminous scripture of the Sikh Gurus compiled by the fifth Guru, Guru Arjan. It contains the writings of seven of the gurus as well as of several other holy men.

Gwalior: A prison where Guru Har Gobind was incarcerated.

Hindustan: the Persian name of the land across the Indus; i.e. India.

Jap Ji: The prologue and essence of the Guru Granth Sahib. For translation see *The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* by Kirpal Singh.

Ka'aba: a Muslim place of pilgrimage in Mecca. A small cubical building believed to have been the Biblical Abraham's dwelling and a place of worship during Mohammed's times.

Kal: Negative Power or that aspect of God which flows downward and outward, creating, maintaining and destroying the creation of the physical, astral and causal planes. See Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu.

Kali Yug: The Dark Age. The present cycle of time wherein moral and spiritual living are overshadowed by evil. The compensating factor is that true spirituality is offered more freely to those who will accept it than in any other time cycle.

Kalma: The Arabic equivalent of Naam or Word. Also an

Islamic recitation: There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger.

Karma: Action; the Law of Action and Reaction where each soul gains the fruit of its own thoughts, words and deeds, either in this life or in future incarnations. The principle of the Negative Power which binds the soul to the Wheel of Transmigration—of Birth and Death; this principle is sustained by one's own desires—whether good or bad—which perpetuates “I-hood” and keeps one separated from God. See *The Wheel of Life* by Kirpal Singh.

Khalsa: 1) One in whom the full light is manifest. 2) the “Brotherhood” of Gobind Singh whose first members were five disciples ready to give their heads for the Holy Cause. It later extended to include the entire following and did away with rites and rituals and distinctions between one man and another.

Khurasan: Persia.

Koran: The major Islamic scripture revealed to the Prophet Mohammed by the Angel Gabriel.

Langar: Free kitchen. Established by the Sikh Gurus as a place where rich and poor alike could come for meals.

Mantra: Sacred syllables to be repeated rhythmically which are given by the Guru at initiation. Also a holy chant.

Maya: The power of illusion which separates the soul from God.

Mughal: Arabic and Persian word for Mongol. Generally refers to the imperial dynasty begun by Babar (who was a direct descendant of the Mongol Gengis Khan.) The Great Mughal Emperors were those of this line beginning with Babar and ending with Aurangzeb. The last emperors are

generally called the Later Mughal Emperors, under whose rule the empire declined in both power and dominion.

Naam: Name. The primal manifestation of God; the Creative Principle. The Divine Light and Sound Principle (*Nada* or Music of the Spheres). From Naam, the entire creation—from the purely spiritual regions to the gross physical region—was created and by this same Power is all sustained. When the soul contacts this power, it finds its way back to God. Same as Word in the Bible. See *Naam or Word* by Kirpal Singh.

Panch Pyare: The Five Beloveds. Five disciples of Guru Gobind Singh who were ready to sacrifice their heads for Him. For their unwavering faith, He raised them to His own level and declared himself as their disciple. Their names were Daya Ram, Dharam Das, Sahib Chand, Himmat Chand Kahar, Mohkam Chand Chhimba. When the Khalsa was formed—of which they were the first disciples—“Singh” was suffixed to their names.

Panch Shabda: The Five-Sounded Word. The five strains of the One Shabda as heard on each of the five spiritual planes.

Pandit: A Hindu priest learned in the scriptures.

Parshad: Food blessed by a holy person.

Peshwa: Originally a chief minister’s position under Shiva-ji’s rule in Maharashtra. Later the power of this position increased until the Peshwa was the virtual ruler of the Marathas, leaving the king as a mere figurehead. Ratnagar Rao—who was commissioned to carry on the spiritual work after Gobind Singh—was one of the Peshwa family as was Sham Rao Peshwa (later Tulsi Sahib) who carried on the mission after him. (Peshwa should not be confused with

Peshawar, which is an important town in the North West Frontier Province of India, now in Pakistan.)

Punjab (also Panjab): Land of the five rivers (i.e. Jhelum, Ravi, Beas, Sutlej and Chinab—all tributaries of the Indus River). It is the land of the Ten Gurus and became an independent Sikh kingdom under Ranjit Singh, until it came under British dominion in 1849.

Qazi: A Muslim learned in both law and theology.

Rajputana (presently Rajasthan): A largely desert area which borders the Punjab. It is the homeland of many Saints including Dhanna, Mirabai and the living Master, Ajaib Singh, as well as the birthplace of the great Mughal emperor, Akbar. Many Sikhs took refuge in its deserts during the days of heavy Mughal persecution following Gobind Singh's death. It is also the land of the Rajputs, a brave and princely band of men who did much to defend the Hindu people against the onslaughts of Islamic invasions.

Sach Khand: The Region of Truth. The fifth spiritual region wherein the soul realizes "I and my Father are one". This is the stage of full liberation; of pure spirit and the ultimate stage to which the Guru leads the disciple (From here, the soul is reabsorbed into the Formless God by God Himself.)

Sadhu: A disciplined soul. One who rises above the three regions (physical, astral and causal) to the realm where Spirit predominates. Also refers to a wandering renunciate. *Faqir* and *Dervish* are Arabic and Persian terms with similiar meanings.

Samadhi: Absorption in God.

Sangat: The members of a Guru's Satsang.

Sant: One Who has reached the purely spiritual region of Sach Khand.

Sant Mat: The Path of the Masters. In this modern age, it was most notably revived by Kabir and Guru Nanak.

Satguru: The True Guru. A Master of the highest order, commissioned by God to take souls back to the "Father". See *Godman* by Kirpal Singh.

Sat Lok: Same as Sach Khand.

Satsang: The contacting of the Truth or the True One; either within in meditation or through the agency of one who is a full expression of that Power.

Seva: Service for the good of others or in a holy cause.

Sevadar: One who does seva.

Shabda: The Word. Same as Naam. The inner Sound Principle which one may hear for himself, when connected to it by a Living Master.

Shiva: The destroying power of the Hindu Triad, of Brahma, Shiva and Vishnu.

Sikh: A disciple. Generally refers to the religious sect formed in remembrance of the Ten Gurus.

Surat: The attention or the soul.

Surat Shabd Yoga: The joining of the soul with the Shabda. The Yoga of the Sound Current which bestows full liberation and is free of strenuous exercises involving pranas and ritualistic worship. It is the path taught by Kabir, Guru Nanak and their successors. See *The Crown of Life* by Kirpal Singh.

Tenth Door: (Daswand Dwar) 1) The spiritual egress through which the soul leaves the bodily coverings and

enters into the spiritual regions. 2) The Third Spiritual Region made up of pure spirit with some degree of subtle matter. The region of the heavenly pool Amritsar, where the soul is washed clean of all impurities.

Vedas: lit. Knowledge. The oldest of all scriptures and the most sacred to orthodox Hindus.

Vishnu: The sustaining aspect of the Negative Power.

Yama: The Lord of Death in Hindu mythology.

Yoga: Sanskrit *yuj*, to join. 1) The practice which aims at stilling the mind as a means to concentrated meditation for securing at-one-ment of the soul with the Universal Soul. 2) One of the six major Hindu systems of philosophy as expounded by the sage Patanjali (c. 300 A.D.) comprising Ashtang or an eight-fold path of reunion with the Divine. 3) Of all forms of yoga, the highest and the easiest is the Yoga of the Sound Current or Surat Shabd Yoga. It can be practiced alike by old and young; man or woman. See *Crown of Life* by Kirpal Singh.

Yuga: A cosmic time cycle. There are four yugas: Sat Yug, Treta Yug, Dwapar Yug and Kali Yug which correspond to the Golden Age, the Silver Age, the Copper Age and the Iron Age. Virtue and True Living decrease as well as the life span as the Yugas work in their downward cycle from Sat Yug to Kali Yug. After Kali Yug, the cycle begins at Sat Yug again and thus virtue begins again to increase. We are presently said to be in Kali Yug.

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