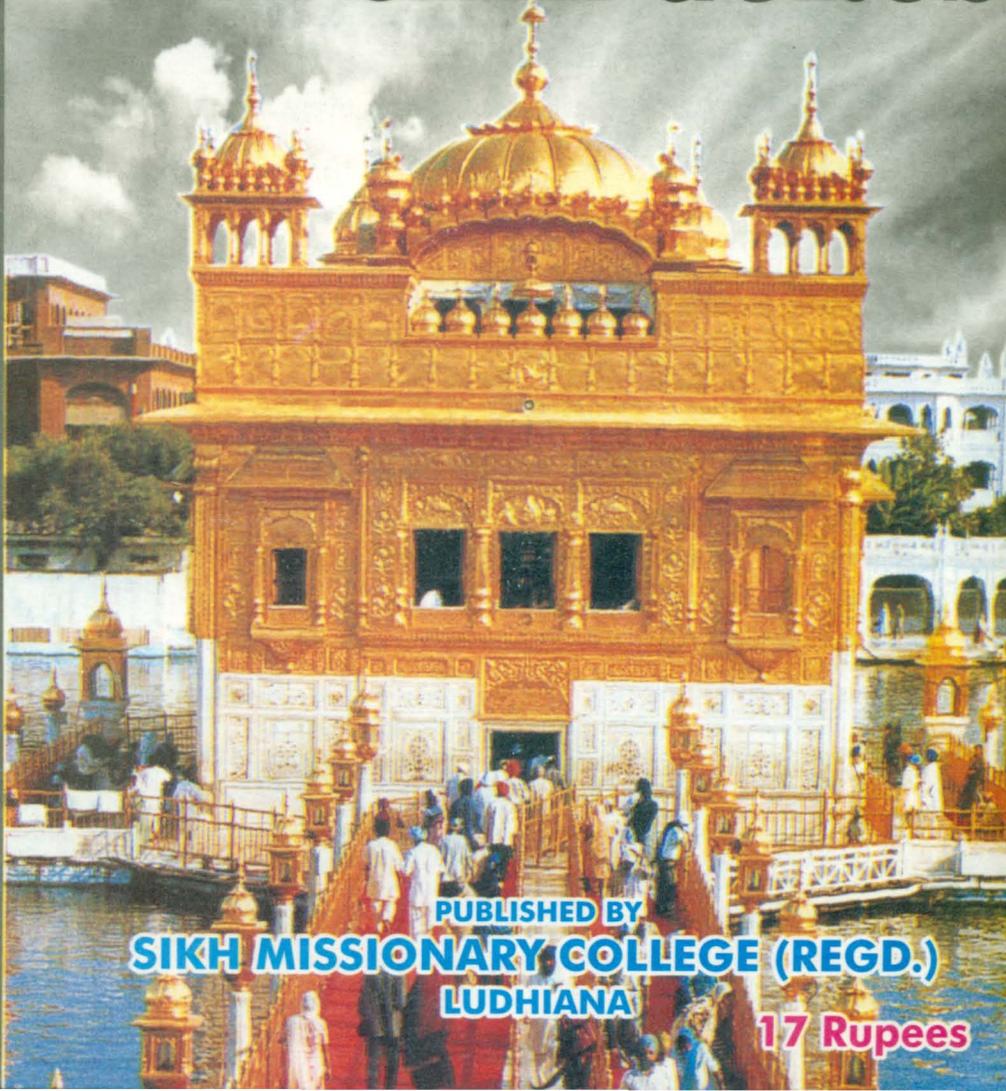




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THE SIKH GURUS



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1. SRI GURU NANAK DEV JI

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji was born on 15 April 1469 at Rai Bhoie Ki Talwandi in Sheikhpura District (now in Pakistan). Its present day name is NANKANA SAHIB. Guru Nanak Dev Ji's father was MEHTA KALYAN DAS' more lovingly called MEHTA KALU while his mother's name was 'TRIPTA JI'. Guru Nanak Dev Ji also had an elder sister by the name of 'NANAKI'. She was five years older than Guru Nanak Dev Ji. As was customary, Guru Nanak Dev Ji always addressed his sister as 'BEBE NANAKI'.

During his childhood, when he was sent to school for studies, his teachers were amazed at his sharp intelligence and perceiving ability. At the age of ten years, when the religious ceremony of wearing sacred thread (JANEU) was to be performed, he decried the ritual and refused to wear it declaring it as purpose-less. At the age of twelve, he undertook the task of taking his domestic animals for grazing out in the fields and meadows. At the age of 18 years he was married to 'SULAKHNI JI' daughter of Shri MOOL CHAND, a resident of BATALA. The couple was blessed with two sons. They named them "(BABA) SRI CHAND" and "(BABA) LAKHMI CHAND".

In 1504, Guru Nanak Dev Ji went to 'SULTANPUR' to live with 'BHAJ JAI RAM JI' who was the husband of his sister 'BEBE NANAKI'. He was arranged the job of managing the grain stores of Nawaab DAULAT KHAN. It was here that Bhai BHAGEERATH of village MALSIAN and Bhai MANSUKH of LAHORE become his disciples - the latter through the former.

During his stay at SULTANPUR he often went to 'WEIN' river in the early hours of the morning to bathe himself in the fresh water. One day when he went there for a bath, he entered

the river and disappeared. There was much commotion among the people. When he re-appeared after three days proclaiming that "There is neither a Hindu nor a Musalman". He went to the Royal Mosque and preached what true devotion and prayer is all about. He convinced the Quazi (Muslim Preacher) and the Nawab that unless your inner mind not concentrated with the meditation mere recitation by tongue of the prayer is futile.

In September 1507, he left his family in the care of his father-in-law "SHRI MOOL CHAND" at BATALA, took his childhood friend 'Bhai MARDANA' along with him and set out on for the mission of reformation of the world at large. His missionary tours are called 'UDASIS'. During these Udasis, he educated people to abstain from futile rituals, blind faith and harmful customs and traditions. He advised them to worship One God, meditate on His name, work and share their toils with others since all are born of one father - the formless one. Some of episodes of his Udasi-period are described in the succeeding paragraphs.

A poor but honest worker by the name of BHAJI LALO residing at EMANABAD became his Sikh (Disciple). Malik BHAGO who was the Chief of the town and often indulged in unfair practices to amass wealth was put on the righteous course by Guru Nanak. He also became his Sikh.

At HARIDWAR, he advised worshipper of Sun-God that the water offered to the Sun during their prayers cannot reach their deity and explained the futility of the ritual. A Vaishnav Brahmin was explained that God's own creation cannot be low or high by birth but their actions and thoughts make them so in their present life.

The YOGIS of Gorakh Mata often lived in disguise, ill treated their bodies, by spending long hours in front of fire and indulged in many forms of meditation and sadhana. Guru

Nanak had a long discourse with them and explained them the simple way of realisation through singing his praises, leaving the evil ways of life, adopting pious living and earning their livelihood through fair means. Because of Guru Nanak's preachings, the name of the place changed from GORAKH MATA to NANAK MATA.

At PRAYAG (near ALLAHABAD), he advised people that ritualistic bathing in the sacred rivers and giving alms to the Brahmins do not remove the filth from the mind which is the cause of all human sufferings. A true Guru can guide you to the path of salvation by appropriate knowledge which would gradually remove the desire of evil deeds from your mind. True Guru is a Pilgrimage.

Amongst the Hindus, it was propagated that if a person breathes his last at known places of pilgrimage like BENARES, he straight away obtains salvation. Guru Nanak went to BENARES and explained the fallacy of the belief. He advised them that only honest and good deeds done regardless of the place of residence can free a man from eternal cycle of birth and death. Some Brahmins had also spread a belief that if a person gets his body sawed with a saw lying at BENARES after giving out all his belongings in alms to the Brahmins, he would straightaway be offered a seat in heaven. Guru Nanak ridiculed the whole game being played by the vested interests and advised people not to fall a prey to them as such foolish acts do not please GOD. CHATUR DAS, a renowned Brahmin of BENARES was also advised that Tilak, Tulsi, Mala, Dhoti, Saligram, Janeu etc. and religious uniform worn by them are only external symbols of their religion but a true Brahmin is the one who forever indulges in singing the praises of God Lord who is omnipresent, omniscient and ever pervading.

At GAYA he advised the people about the futility of

offering kneaded dough of barley flour in alms as a means of salvation for their forefathers long dead.

In the JAGANATH temple at PURI, he educated the priests and the people what a real and appropriate "Aarti" should be for the creator of this UNIVERSE.

People often indulged in evil deeds and attributed their actions to KALYUG. Where only evil prevails and all events take place on its command. Guru NANAK explained to the people of MATHURA that evil doers are themselves responsible for all ill happenings for their own pleasures and benefits and fool the people by attributing their views on the influence of KALYUG. The creator has never desired that his children should suffer by the division of time into good or bad periods or era.

He imparted the true knowledge to Bhagat MAJNU at DELHI and Sheikh TAHIR at PANIPAT. He also educated people at KURUKSHETRA about the solar eclipse phenomenon and allayed their false beliefs.

He visited SUMER Mountain, the adobe of SIDHAS & YOGIS and in his dialogue with them he convinced them that renouncing home & hearth and living in the mountains is not an act of religion. The true path to salvation is in carrying out ones duty as a man of the world, living with his family, keeping a check on the evil tendencies of the mind, serving humanity; yet keeping the flame of Gods NAM kindled in the heart every moment of life.

Pandit BRAHM DUTT of MUTTAN in KASHMIR had read a number of holy books and was very proud of his bookish knowledge. He often indulged in discussions with others and felt very happy at their defeat. Guru NANAK counselled him to abstain from such deeds as these in no way pleases GOD. Instead win HIM over by loving and devoted prayers.

At AMARNATH and VAISHNO temples, he educated pilgrims that worship of LING and STONE STATUES can impart no boons to them since these are only symbolic representations of the form less. Therefore their worship was fruitless. GOD alone is the giver and He has not appointed anyone else to do His job for HIM.

During his last UDASI, Guru NANAK collected the sacred composition of Sheikh FARID. These sacred hymns were held by Sheikh BRAHAM at PAKPATTAN. Sheikh BRAHAM was then occupying the holy seat of Sheikh FARID Ji. From there he visited TULAMBA. A man named SAJJAN often looted visitors who stayed in the town overnight. He was doing this heinous act in the garb of a holy and pious man. Guru NANAK disclosed his damnable deeds and put him on the course of righteous actions. At MECCA (in UAE), he convinced people that GOD is all pervading and not confined to anyone religious place. At BAGHDAD, (IRAQ) he educated people that praising LORD'S greatness through melodious singing is a decent way of prayer and should not be construed as damnable. At HASAN ABDAL, he brought down the false pride of WALI QUANDHARI.

As soon as Guru NANAK reached EMANABAD again, BABUR invaded the town and resorted to massacre and looting. Guru NANAK was so distressed that he called BABUR by the name of JABUR meaning "Tyrant". Guru NANAK was imprisoned by BABUR. The king realised his folly and begged GURU'S pardon for his excesses. Guru NANAK composed four hymns related to this event.

On termination of his first UDASI, Guru NANAK founded a township on the bank of River RAVI and named it KARTARPUR. After completion of his UDASIS, he came to KARTARPUR to reside and spent the last eighteen years of

his life there. Every morning and evening, he would hold congregation in the DHARAMSHALA of the town, sing his own composed hymns in praise of GOD, hold discourses on spiritualism and educate people about the new founded religion of SIKHISM. During the day, he would toil in the fields. He would often set out on missionary work in the neighbouring areas of Punjab (now Punjab, Himachal, Haryana and Punjab of Pakistan). During one such travel, he held a long discussion with YOGIS at ACHAL near BATALA. At KATHUNANGAL, he met a child named BOORHA who later became famous by the name of Baba BUDHA JI. During his stay at KARTARPUR, he composed ASA DI WAAR, JAPJI SAHIB, ONKAR, BARAMAH in TUKHARI RAAG, SIDDHA GHOST and other BANIES.

Bhai LEHNA, a devout idol worshipper and staunch follower of VAISHNAV rites visited KARTARPUR per chance and was so impressed by the GURU's teachings and his simple living that he gave up his life style of the past and adopted Sikh way of life. The Guru put him through many ordeals from where he emerged successful. Bhai LEHNA was then named ANGAD by Guru Nanak and bestowed the GURUSHIP in his own place. In September, 1539 while at KARTARPUR, Guru Nanak breathed his last and merged with the eternal light - the Supreme.

2. TRUE JANEU

It is a religious tradition amongst the Hindus that a boy of ten to twelve years is baptised into the mainstream of their faith by making him wear a thread, prepared and blessed through religious rites and ceremony called JANEU. The Janeu is prepared from a few strands of cotton thread. On a determined day, all the close relatives and family associates assemble and

the family Brahmin (Priest) performs the ceremony.

Since Guru Nanak was born in a Khatri family of Hindus, his father decided to hold the Janu ceremony for his son. Pandit Hardayal, the family priest was consulted who fixed a suitable day after studying the horoscope. All members of the family including close relatives were invited. On the determined day, Pandit Hardayal commenced the ceremony as per the sacred books and other traditions. Guru Nanak kept on watching the proceedings. As soon as Pandit ji raised Guru Nanak's arm to facilitate wearing of the holy thread, he caught hold of his hand and asked "What is it Pandit ji? Why are you putting this thread around my body?" Pandit Ji answered that it was not just a thread but a sacred symbol of higher caste of Hindus. Without it a man is like a Shudra (Low Caste). Wearing it places him amongst the high caste HINDUS. The sacred thread will even help him in all matters in his next life after death.

Guru Nanak was quite amused by Panditji's explanation. He expressed his disagreement that the thread was a symbol of high caste, because one whose deeds were honest and upright truly belonged to a high caste. To the contrary a man whose deeds and actions were worthy of condemnation was of low caste. Besides, the thread was not firm enough and also prone to breaking. Then one would have to wear a new one. How could such a thread bestow greatness on any one? A respectable life results from good and pious deeds. You have also stated that this thread helps a man in his next life. How can it be? This thread will not accompany a man to the next life after one's death since it will get burnt with one's body. So please make me wear that thread which never gets spoiled, never breaks and would never be burnt by fire. The thread that will inspire me to tread on the right path in this as well as in

the next world and thus be of help to me in leading a worthy & respectable life. If you have a thread that would imbibe me with such qualities, please bring that and I shall gladly wear it." Said Guru Nanak. The Great Guru has also expressed these views in one of his hymns which is as under :

**Daya Kapah Santokh Soot Jat Gandi Sat Wat
Eh Janeu Jee Ka Hei Ta Pandey Ghat
Na Eh Tute Na Mal Lage Na Eh Jale Na Jae
Dhan Su Manas Nanka Jo Gal Chale Paiye**

Guruji's views were very specific to the point and well within every one's level of understanding. However everyone was amazed as to why no one had ever raised such doubts before, what a ten year old boy has brought forth now. Both his parents and Panditji lovingly explained to him that it was incorrect to go against the tenets of Hindu holy books. However he stuck to his views and insisted that he would only wear a thread that would help him in his spiritual progress. Panditji had no such Janeu with him.

Guruji then explained to all that the only purpose of this Janeu was to accept spiritual supremacy of the Brahmin and hold him in high esteem like a Guru – the religious preacher.

This was the first encounter of ten year old Guru Nanak with the Hindu priests where he condemned their futile rituals and proved beyond doubt that he was a follower of another faith totally independent of Hindu religious beliefs and traditions.

From the foregoing episode of Guru Nanak's life, we learn that no one is high or low by birth but one's actions and deeds make one high or low. A Sikh does not believe in any caste system. One who is honest and righteous is worthy of high respect and on the contrary any one doing indecent deeds is worthy of condemnation and therefore of low caste. The Janeu

does not make a man religious. Thus the Guru fore-warned his Sikhs not to fall in the ritualistic clutches of Brahmins.

3. THE REAL PRAYER

When Guru Nanak Dev Ji came out of the WEIN river, he proclaimed that there is “Neither Hindu Nor Musalman”. What he meant was that we should give up Hindu - Musalman differences and see the presence of one God in the whole world. Remember one GOD who is omnipresent (present in everything around and within us).

When DAULAT KHAN the Nawab of SULTANPUR LODHI and QAZI heard his statement, they said to GURU NANAK, “If you see the presence of GOD both in Hindu and Muslims alike, then let us all go and pray together in the Mosque.” The true GURU agreed to go to the Mosque with the Nawab and the Qazi for prayer.

All Muslims had assembled in the Mosque. The Qazi led the prayer while GURUJI stood by his side and kept looking at Qazi’s performance. After a while, he smiled a little because he had realized that the Qazi was not present in the prayer meeting with heart and soul.

In a congregation of Muslim prayer led by Qazi and where the ruler of the state himself was present alongwith hundred other co-religionists, only a brave person like Guru Nanak could laugh at the futility of Qazi’s exercise. Guruji wanted the truth to emerge. He could clearly perceive that Qazi’s mind was not in his prayers. He never felt shy of calling a spade a spade. He had not known what fear was.

How could the Qazi tolerate his fun being made? He went to the Nawab and complained against Guruji. When the Nawab asked Guru Nanak why he had not recited Namaz and instead indulged in laughing at the Qazi, Guruji replied,

“When the Qazi’s mind was wandering at his house and he was only making a lip service at the Namaz, how could I join him in the prayer? He was more concerned about his young Colt’s safety lest it falls into the well in his compound.” Guruji was emphasizing that only lip movement does not constitute a Namaaz and is irrelevant unless your mind also participates and feels His presence during the prayer. All assembled realised what the Guru had said and they were all praises for him.

There is a lesson to be learnt from the foregoing event of Guruji’s life. A true and dedicated prayer is that when the meanings of the said hymns dwells in your mind as you are reciting it. Mere recitation of words without grasping the crux of it is not real prayer. It is a facade and does not benefit a man spiritually.

4. THE REAL AARTI

Sermonising people on true religious practices Guru Nanak reached JAGANATH PURI. This city is located on the seashore and is a famous pilgrimage centre of Hindus. One of the many temples of the city has an idol of Lord Jaganath installed, which is worshipped with profound devotion.

The Guru along with Bhai Mardana went and sat near the temple. Bhai Mardana started playing on his Rhubab (harp) while the Guru started singing Lord God’s praises in his melodious voice. People around were enchanted by his singing and the divine music. Soon a large crowd had assembled. They started enquiring about God, salvation and other related subjects. Guru Nanak satisfied all and sundry till late in the evening. It was almost time for the evening prayer in the temple. The priests invited Guru Nanak to come and join them in singing the Aarti of Lord Jaganath. Guruji agreed.

Guruji reached Jaganath temple at the appointed time. He saw a diamond studded gold plate with a four cornered beacon placed in it. All the four comers of the beacon were alight. The incensed sticks placed close to the beacon were also smouldering and spreading fragrance around. Another silver salver had saw dust of sandal wood which had a piece of camphor placed on it. The camphor piece was set on fire. The idol was whisked with a fly whisker. Drums and symbols were playing. The gold plate was rotated around up & down in front of the idol while Brahmins and other devotees were singing hymns.

Guruji came out quietly. He kept on gazing at the dark sky embedded with myriad stars and in his mind was singing the praises of the Lord God, the creator.

After finishing the chore, people came out of the temple and asked Guruji, "Why did you not participated in the Aarti?" Guruji replied with utmost patience, "I was myself busy singing and performing the Aarti of the True Lord of the universe. You all were not participating in the true Aarti of the Lord, the creator.

The Brahmin asked Guruji "When the Aarti was being performed in the temple, what type of Aarti were you doing outside?"

The Guru said, "The true Aarti of the Lord is being performed every where all the time. I do not indulge in Aarti in front of a manmade idol but perform the real Aarti of the Lord God". Saying so, he signalled Bhai Mardana to play on his harp (Rhubab) and himself started singing the following hymn in Rag Dhanasari :

**Gagan Mein Thal Ravi Chand Deepak Bane
Tanka Mandal Janak Moti.....**

Thereafter, Guruji explained the meaning of the hymn. He said, "The sky is a large plate with sun and the moon placed

in it as beacons. The stars are like diamonds and pearls embedded in it. The waft of fresh air is blowing the fragrance of flowers and Sandalwood and the cool breeze is whisking the Lord all the time. The Lord God is seeing this Aarti being performed all the time and is very pleased with it. You all should enjoin in this real and eternal Aarti. It is a facade to do Aarti of the Lord with these plates. No human being can make the idol of Jaganath - The Lord of the universe." Everyone present realised the futility of idol worship and felt that singing praises of the Lord is the real prayer.

The God is omnipresent. So making His idols and then performing Aarti of these images is incorrect. Singing His praises is the true and real Aarti.

5. HONEST EARNINGS

The disciple of the Guru earns his livelihood through honest hard work. He never begs alms from others. He neither uses force nor cruel means on anyone to extract gains for his living. He believes in just and true earnings and even extends material help to others out of his savings. He contributes a tenth part of his income to religious institutions for the good of others. This practice is called Dasvandh. Guruji loved those who would work hard to earn their livelihood.

Bhai Lalo a devotee Sikh with similar attributes lived in Emanabad. He was a poor carpenter by profession and earned his living by working strenuously during the day. Despite limited earnings, he would still feed the needy who came to him. Yet he was considered of low caste by the people. But Guru Nanak loved him and often stayed with him at his house. The Brahmins, the Khattris and others of high caste felt very jealous and often spread ill-will against Guruji.

Malik Bhago was an official of the ruler of Emanabad. He

was a corrupt man and poor people were fed up with his high handedness. To prove to the world that he was a religious, kind hearted and honest person, he would hold a big feast once a year. He would invite all Brahmins, saints, Sadhus and other officials of importance on this grand feast. He would even give alms to Brahmins and mendicants. Such people would sing his praises and proclaim him to be a God's man.

During the first Udasi, Guruji stayed with Bhai Lalo at Emanabad. Incidentally Malik Bhago held the grand annual feast during this period. He invited Guru Nanak to attend the feast but the Guru declined. Malik Bhago took it as an insult. Brahmins and Khatri instigated him further. In a rage he again sent a man to call Guru Nanak. Guruji along with Bhai Mardana came to the feast site but refused to partake the meals. Malik Bhago asked him, why did you not attend my religious feast? Being a high caste Khatri, why are you eating meals in the house of Lalo who is a low caste shudra? Don't you know that by such acts our religious image is tarnished?

Guruji replied, "Bhai Lalo is not a low caste but my beloved Sikh. He earns his livelihood by dint of hard work and honesty. His bread may be of coarse grain but it contains milk. Your earnings are not just. You receive graft from the people, use force to extort money like a leech. So your delicious dishes are prepared of blood of the poor. So, I relish Lalo's coarse bread more than your meal. I cannot eat your blood soaked bread." This was indeed a courageous reply of the Guru in the presence of all courtiers and guests.

Guruji impressed upon all present that no one became low caste just because he is born in a low caste family. A low caste is one whose deeds and actions are condemnable. God does not feel pleased by holding big feast out of ill gotten wealth. He feels happy with those who work hard to earn their living

and yet serve the needy who are less fortunate.

Let us all be good and true Sikhs like Bhai Lalo and earn our living justly and rightly through hard work. We should not accumulate wealth by extortion and other evil and corrupt practices. Let us not behave in caste distinctions. Humanity is the common caste of all His people.

6. BHAI SAJJAN JI

Once Guru Nanak Dev Ji and Bhai Mardana reached a village named Tulamba, in district Multan now in Pakistan. There lived a renowned cheater by the name of Sajjan. He had constructed an inn at a little distance from the town. He would provide resting place to the travellers beside meeting their other needs.

Sajjan always adorned himself with saintly dresses. Any traveller who came to the inn would be served good meals, bedding and other facilities. After the traveller would retire to his bed and would fall asleep, Sajjan along with his associates would kill him and take away all his precious belongings. However, people all around him knew nothing of this and were full of appreciation for him and considered him a man of God and a philanthropist.

One of the tasks of Guru's mission was to set right those people who had gone astray from the right path. Sajjan tried his patent approach on Guru Nanak but the Guru had forewarned Bhai Mardana not to eat anything offered by Sajjan. Sajjan was under the impression that he was in for a big loot from Guruji and his companion. Guruji was aware of Sajjan's evil intentions. So when he brought many delicacies for the Guru, he refused to partake any. Then he asked Guruji to rest for the night to awaken fresh for their onward journey next morning, but the Guru replied that he would retire to bed after

he has accomplished the task for which God almighty had sent him. Sajjan went to the adjacent room to wait for his opportunity to do his evil deed. Guruji asked Mardana to play on his Rhubab (Harp) and he himself started singing the following hymn :

Ujjal Kehan Chilkana Ghotam Kalari Mus

Dhotian Jooth Na Utarae Je Sau Dhovan Tis

When Sajjan heard the hymn in Guru's melodious voice, he was amazed to see reflection of his own actions and evil deeds in its composition. He was so moved by it that he went to Guruji's room since he had realised that Guru Nanak knew all about his evil deeds. He begged for his pardon there and then. Guru Nanak asked him what his name is? Sajjan replied that he is called by the name of Sajjan Mal by the Hindus and Sheikh Sajjan by Muslims.

Guruji smiled and said, "you have a beautiful name (Sajjan means a true and devoted human being) but are your actions as good as your name suggested? Sajjan could not face Guruji any more. Guruji said, "Dear friend, your deeds are not honourable and pious. You deceive people and amass wealth by sinning. You may be respectable person for your people but you cannot deceive God. He knows every detail of your actions. Remember; all this wealth will be left behind after your death while your sins will accompany you to the next world. When you are rewarded with the fruit of your actions, what will be your share? Beware even now and indulge yourself in pious deeds by serving humanity without greed and selfish motives; for it is never too late to mend your ways and adopt a righteous path."

Guruji's advice had a profound effect on Sajjan. He felt ashamed of his past and begged pardon from the Guruji. He vowed not to indulge in evil deeds again. He was advised to

meditate on the True Master's name, do honest work and share his earnings with the needy fellows. In this way he became Sajjan in the real sense and worked to spread the Gospel of Guru Nanak fervently.

A Sikh must become religious from mind and soul & not just outwardly. We should beware of false saints who make fool of the people for their benefits and wean them away from Guru's teachings.

7. HARIDAWAR

Once Guru Nanak Dev Ji went to Haridawar, a famous and important pilgrimage centre of Hindus. The town is located on the bank of river Ganges. Amongst the Hindus, it is customary to consign the mortal remains of their dead to this river. It was a matter of faith with them that without this ceremony, the dead cannot reach salvation. But it was just a false notion and misconception.

It was Baisakhi fair time when Guru Nanak reached Haridawar. People were beathing in the sacred river. Many were standing in the river facing the rising sun and offering it water with their hands shaped in the form of a cup. They were of the belief that through such act, the water will reach their ancestors in their heavenly abodes. Guruji had obviously come to Haridawar to remove such wrong ideas from their mind.

Guruji entered the water and started throwing water westward with the cups of his hands. This was a new and strange sight for the people around as none had ever seen such a thing happen before. People gathered around Guruji and asked him what he is doing by throwing water westward. Guruji ignored their question and kept throwing water vigorously. More people gathered and soon it became a crowd in the river.

A man amongst those gathered stepped forward, caught hold of Guru's arm and asked. Which direction are you throwing the water to? Guruji looked around and asked them, "Where are you throwing the water?" Some out of the crowd replied, "We are throwing water to the East so that it reaches our long dead ancestors through the Sun."

Guruji further enquired, "Where and how far are your ancestor?"

People replied, "Very far; perhaps million miles away." Guru Nanak then told all present that my fields at Talwandi located only 350 miles from here are badly in need of irrigation due to lack of rains and I am sending water to them. He immediately resumed his task of throwing water westward.

The people burst out in laughter and commented, "Whatever water you throw is dropping here. How can it reach your fields in Talwandi which is located so far away?" Guruji replied, "If the water thrown by you for your great grand parents can reach them, then my water would also reach my fields in similar fashion. If my water cannot reach comparatively very small distance of 350 miles; then how would your water reach your ancestors' abode which you say is millions mile beyond the Sun?"

People around were struck dumb. They realised their folly and understood that their faith was misplaced. Guruji has rightly stated. They all fell on his feet and sought forgiveness for their misapprehensions. Guruji advised them to do honest work in their lives and never leave meditating on His 'Name'. He also advised them that alms given by people in the name of their long dead elders do not reach them anyway and therefore is wasted. Only good deeds done during this life time would serve them well in the next world after their demise.

Salvation and freedom from rebirth cannot be achieved by

purposeless rituals. Only the righteous actions and perpetual singing of God's praises can absolve you of the re-birth cycle.

8. REFORMING VAISHNAV SADHU

There is another incident associated with Guru Nanak Dev Ji during his stay at Haridwar. A vaishnav mendicant had his place of residence on the bank of river Ganges; at a slight distance from Guru's abode. He had successfully created an impression on the people that he was a very pious and God fearing man. Guruji was determined to bring out the truth about him in the open. So he too established his living and resting place near the vaishnav sadhu.

Next day, the Sadhu woke up early in the morning, bathed himself and got busy in preparing his meals. He plastered his cooking place with cowdung, washed the firewood pieces with water to purify them and then drew a line around the kitchen so that the demons do not take away the essence of his food. He burnt the fire and started cooking his meal. Piety of the kitchen was a matter of religious faith for him and he considered himself a man of God.

Guruji was determined to remove his misplaced sense of faith and also educate people that it was not an act of Dharama but deceit. Guru Nanak sent Bhai Mardana to fetch some embers from the Sadhu to light his own fire. When Bhai Mardana asked for some burning charcoal from the Sadhu, he flew into a rage, abused Bhai Mardana and said, "You have made my kitchen impure." In a fit of anger, he ran after Bhai Mardana holding a piece of burning twig in his hand. Bhai Mardana ran back to Guruji and the Sadhu followed on his heels.

Guru Nanak asked the Sadhu why he is fuming with anger. The Sadhu replied in dismay that this low caste bard had

polluted his kitchen by throwing his shadow on it. It had become impure. The presence of this low caste had also viled his life.

Guruji asked, "How can it be? Mardana is as good a man as I am. A low caste is one who indulges in evil deeds. Your introspection will reveal how many ill traits you have in you. You have no compassion but anger in your heart. You have no love but hatred. You don't carry good in your mind but scorn and evil thoughts for others. When your heart is so polluted, how can you love God? Look for the divine light in everyone. Hate the evils in a man and not the man."

Guruji said, "What good is the cleaning of woods, kitchen and so on if your heart is malicious? Bathing at the pilgrimage centres do not make the heart pure. It becomes clean by singing his praises. Protection from evil forces is provided by pure and true character."

The Sadhu felt awakening of his conscious mind and suddenly realised all his shortcomings. He fell at the Guru's feet and became his disciple.

No one is ever inferior on the basis of his birth. Those infested with evil intentions and thoughts are inferior and of low caste. These people can never receive the grace of God.

9. SERMONS TO KALJUG PANDIT

There lived a Pandit by the name of Kaljug at the famous town of Jaganath Puri. This Pandit was a cheater, fond of deceiving poor and simple people. During the course of missionary tours, Guru Nanak Dev Ji visited Jaganath Puri and saw for himself the nefarious activities of Pandit Kaljug. When the Guru went to see him, he saw the Pandit sitting in a meditating posture surrounded by his followers who believed in his spiritual prowess. He had kept a small urn shaped vessel

in front of him where the devotees were dropping their offerings of money and other precious items. The Panda would often open and close his eyes. Sometimes he would hold his nose with his thumb and two fingers and declare that he was then seeing the God in the heavens. He had kept his devotees glued to the scene by narrating the myths of Brahmपुरi (Abode of Brahman), Shivpuri (Abode of Shiva) and Vishnu Puri (Abode of Lord Vishnu). It was all deceit but people were listening his talk with rapt attention. Than he directed all his devotes to close their eyes and he would help them see Heaven with his occult powers.

Guruji was watching all his pranks. He knew that the Pandit was making fool of the people. When the devotees closed their eyes as directed by the Pandit, Guru Nanak signalled Bhai Mardana to pick up the metallic pot and place it behind the Pandit. Bhai Mardana did like-wise. After a while when the Pandit opened his eyes, he found the pot missing from his front. He kicked up a row and in anger demanded to know who had taken away his pot. He also stated that it was incorrect to play a joke on holy people who were least interested in material things of life. Actually he was disturbed to see his pot of money missing from his presence.

Those standing around were surprised. Hearing the noise of the Pandit. More people gathered around. Sensing the situation as appropriate Guruji asked the Pandit, "Pandit ji, you were seeing the Universe and the God Himself. If you look around in the universe, for your metallic pot, you may he able to spot it." This disturbed the Pandit further. Many amongst the gathered said, "Pandit ji, if your vision can reach the heaven, why can't you locate your pot?" Panda was feeling ashamed and at a loss for appropriate answer. People had realised his falsehood and Guruji further corroborated it by

saying that the pot was lying just behind him.

Guruji advised all present there not to believe and trust those who display saintly disposition, ability to close their sense organs for a while. Such people are not saints but debauches.

The Kaljug Panda was so impressed by Guru's sermons that he fell at his feet and became his disciple. He was then educated on Sikh faith and appointed as a missionary and preacher.

We should live a life as dictated to us by the great Guru in his Bani. We should be aware of the false Sadhus and Saints who deceive people like Kaljug Panda.

10. SRI GURU ANGAD DEV JI

The life of Guru Angad Dev Ji teaches us how a common and ordinary human being can become a person extra-ordinaire by willful compliance of Guru's order. Guru Angad Dev Ji was formerly known as Bhai Lehna. He was born on 31 March, 1504 at Matte Di Saran in Ferozepur District, in the house of Pheru Mal Ji. His mother's name was Daya Kaur Ji. In 1519, Bhai Lehna married Kheevi Ji a noble daughter of Devi Chand Ji. Bhai Lehna Ji and Mata Kheevi Ji were blessed with two sons and two daughters in the course of their lives. The sons were named Dattu and Dasu Ji while the daughters were called Bibi Amro and Bibi Anokhi Ji.

Bhai Lehna Ji was an ardent worshipper of goddess and went on pilgrimage of Devi Darshan every year. He was not aware of the true nature of God.

Bhai Jodh a close friend of Bhai Lehna Ji and a devoted Sikh of Guru Nanak recited Guru's Bani, a collection of sacred hymns composed in His praise. Bhai Lehna found it very captivating and felt a strange bloom in his heart. He decided

to meet that Guru who had composed such peace and tranquility bestowing hymns.

A little while later on his way to the famous temple of the Devi (goddess), he passed close by the place where Guru Nanak was residing. He decided to visit this place and have a glimpse of the great Guru. The sight of Guru coupled with his discourses pleased Bhai Lehna so much, that he gave up the idea of going for the Devi darshan and continued staying at the common living place of Guru Nanak's disciples. He became an ardent Sikh of the Guru.

Staying at Kartarpur, he started enjoying the daily recitation of Gurbani. Spiritual wisdom started dawning on him. All his false notions and beliefs started disappearing. He realised that his idol worship all these years was purposeless. A true Guru is all powerful and can bring about sea changes in a man to help him commence his journey on the road to salvation. Visits to the temples believed to be abode of goddess and singing of her praises seemed a futile exercise to him now. Now he would read Gurbani with devotion, listen to Guru's discourses and remained ever ready to carry out his command. Thus Bhai Lehna became a devout Sikh of the Guru.

Guru Nanak Devji put Bhai Lehna through many tests and he emerged successful every time. Guru's own sons Baba Srichand and Baba Lakhmi Chand along with many other Sikh disciples were however not so fortunate to earn his grace and favour. Some tests that Bhai Lehna had to undergo are as follows :

(1) Brought out a small utensil from the mud and slush despite the fact that he was wearing very expensive clothes.

(2) Brought mud soaked and dripping fodder on his head for the cattle from the fields.

(3) Considered to be a menial work fit for low castes, he

picked up a dead rat from a room of the dharamshala and threw it out. Guru's own sons had refused to do this task.

(4) During a cold winter night, Guru desired that a fallen wall be re-erected. Every one refused to do work in the inclement weather except Bhai Lehna who commenced the job at night and completed the task as desired.

(5) Similarly, Guru ordered his sons to go to wash the clothes at the river during the night which they refused. Bhai Lehna ji complied with Guru's desire immediately.

(6) He even agreed to eat a dead man when the Guru ordered him to do so.

Guru Nanak was immensely pleased with Bhai Lehna because he had shed his false wisdom and adopted Guru's advise so willingly and without hesitation. He obeyed all orders of the Guru with pleasure. Guruji embraced him and named him Angad meaning a part of his self. He bestowed Guruship on him, himself bowed before him in the presence of the full congregation, handed over the sacred book containing hymns to him and then in September 1539 left this world to merge with the divine light for ever.

Guru Angad Devji then shifted his residence to a place called Khadoor and commenced his missionary work on the lines of Guru Nanak thus strengthening his philosophy. He continued the tradition of common kitchen which was supervised by his noble wife Mata Kheevi Ji. The common kitchen served such delicacies as Kheer cooked in milk and pure Ghee.

Guru Angad Devji arranged to record the life of Guru Nanak chronologically. He promoted the use of Gurmukhi script and got many primers written for free distribution to the children. He even arranged writing of Gutkas (small booklets containing Gurbani) and had those sent to far off centres for helping preachers spread Guru Nanak's gospel. While on one

side he was endeavouring to promote reading of Gurbani amongst the Sikhs, he had wrestling arenas prepared to ensure that Sikhs remain physically fit. He had even established play grounds for the children.

After facing defeat at the hands of Sher Shah Suri, Humayun visited Khadoor Sahib while on the run. Guru Angad Devji was watching wrestling bouts of young men and did not pay much attention to Humayun's arrival. He felt insulted and in anger started pulling out his sword. Guruji said, smiling, where was your bravery and sword when you were fighting Sher Shah Suri. It does not behove you to use on Godly persons. Humayun apologised for his action and respectfully bowed before the great Guru. He was advised to follow the path of truth, justice and righteousness.

Baba Amar Dasji came in contact with Guru Angad Devji in 1541. He gave up ritualistic religious practices and accepted Guru Nanak's philosophy of Sikhism. He won over the heart of Guru Angad with his service and devotion. He revealed to the Sikhs the reality of Shiv Nath the famous Tappa of the town who always bore a grudge against the Guru and his followers. On command of Guru Angad Devji, Baba Amar Dasji commenced construction of Goindwal township in 1546.

Guruji advised Sikhs to lead a life of hard work with their own hands to earn their living. He himself used to prepare twine of straw and used the earnings from this activity in the running of the free Kitchen.

These expenditures were also met partly from the earnings of the shops run by his sons Datu and Dasu. The contributions made by the Sikhs were used for other welfare tasks in the town.

After remaining Guru for nearly 13 years, he merged his mortal remains and soul with the divine light on 29 March

1552. Before his end, he had bestowed Guruship on Baba Amardas Ji.

Those who devotedly and willingly obey their Guru's command are loved by him and are readily accepted. We must also abide by the Guru's sermons as recorded in Gurbani and earn his grace and happiness.

11. SRI GURU AMARDAS JI

Sri Guru Amardas ji was born on 5th May, 1479 at Village Basarke in Amritsar District. He was son of Sri Tejbhan and Mata Sulakhni Ji. He wedded Mata Ram Kaur Ji daughter of Sri Devi Chand in 1503. The couple was blessed with two sons named Baba Mohanji and Baba Mohriji and two daughters Bibi Danni and Bibi Bhani.

Sri Amardas Ji used to go on pilgrimage to River Ganges every year and had visited it twenty times. Once when he was returning from his annual visit to the Ganges that he became a co-traveller of a vaishnav sadhu. After a few days of travel together, the sadhu asked him who his Guru was? He replied that he had not yet found a Guru. The sadhu was beside himself with anger and said, "What? Have I been eating from the hands of a person who has no Guru? All my fasts, bathings at holy places and other religious acts have come to naught. It is even evil to look at a person who has no Guru." So saying, the sadhu left his company but this made Sri Amar Das very sad and shattered. He decided to become a disciple of some Godly person but none could provide him with peace and tranquility.

Bibi Amro daughter of Guru Angad Dev was married to the nephew of Sri Amar Dasji. One morning she was churning the curd and reciting Gurbani in her melodious voice when Sri Amar Dasji started listening to it with rapt attention. He suddenly felt the urge to see the holy man who had composed

such divine message. He asked Bibi Amro who accompanied him to Khadoor Sahib the next day to see Guru Angad Devji. Seeing Guru Angad was a divine bliss for him. He had never felt so much serenity and tranquility at any other place and in any other company. He immediately became a devout Sikh. He was 62 years old then while Guru Angad Devji was only 36 years.

Sri Amar Dasji did not return home but stayed back at Khadoor Sahib to serve Guru's disciples with all his body, mind and soul. He would get up in the middle of the night, bathe himself and then bring fresh water for Guru's bath in the ambrosial hours. This became his daily routine. Very often he would stumble in the darkness, lose control of his body due to old age and get hurt. People would mock at him at times but all this could not wean him away from the service of his noble Guru.

After finishing his morning chores of bringing water for Guru's bath and other saintly persons in Guru's camp, he would spend the whole day doing service in the kitchen till late at night. During this service he would keep reciting Gurbani or meditate on His Nam. He would be ever ready to carry out Guru's command. Before breathing his last, Guru Angad Devji bestowed Guruship to Baba Amar Dasji considering him to be the most eligible and deserving of the elite status. Thus he became Guru Amar Das; the third Guru of the Sikhs. He shifted from Khadoor to Goindwal to carry out the mission of spreading Guru Nanak's gospel. Goindwal town-ship was founded by him on the bank of River Beas, by order of Guru Angad Devji.

Baba Datu ji and Dasuji could not accept their father's decision of bestowing Guruship on Baba Amar Dasji. He was insulted by them. Datuji even kicked him in the chest but he

was unperturbed so much so that he started comforting Datu's leg and said, "My old body is hard whereas your feet are very delicate. It must have been hurt." He left Goindwal and hid himself in a room at Basarke, spending all his time in meditation and contemplation of God Lord. Baba Buddha Ji searched him around and located him at Basarke. He requested him to appear before his devotees and guide them in their search of eternal peace. On his request he went back to Goindwal.

To rid the society of the evils of caste and untouchability, he had ordered that anyone coming to see him or seek his audience must first partake of meal in the common kitchen run by the Guru's sangat. This was implicitly followed even in the case of Emperor Akbar who enjoyed the meal in the Langar (Common Kitchen). He paid particular attention to end the evil custom of self immolation (Sati) by woman on the pyre of their deceased husband. He opposed it vehemently. He even opposed the veiling by women folks and the tradition of their staying behind the curtain in the house. Many other post death customs were stopped by Guru's order. Widows were encouraged to re-marry. To remove untouchability, he constructed a deep well at Goindwal from where people of all caste and religion could draw water.

Guru Amardas Ji divided the area of his influence in 22 zones for the purpose of effectively spreading Guru's teachings. He appointed a head missionary in every zone. These appointments were popularly known as 'Manjis'. 52 sub zones were also established which were called "Peehrhas". The impact of such establishments was so effective that a very large population adopted Sikh faith in a very short time. Not only Hindus but many Muslims also chose to become Sikhs with pleasure. Even women were entrusted with missionary work.

Bibi Danni, the elder daughter of Guruji was married to a simple Sikh named Bhai Rama while the other daughter Bibi Bhani was married to a handsome orphan Sikh named Bhai Jetha who used to sell boiled grams to earn his livings. Bhai Jetha ji was a devoted and laborious Sikh who pleased Guruji with his simplicity, zeal of social service, implicit obedience that he became his most trusted and favourite Sikh. He passed all trials and tests successfully and proved himself worthy of Guruship on all accounts. Guru Amardas ji bowed before Bhai Jetha Ji and conferred the title of Guru before breathing his last on 01 September, 1574. Bhai Jethaji then became Guru known as Guru Ramdasji.

Unconditional surrender and service of the Guru brings the most cherished happiness to a man. One should rid oneself of all elements of pride. Periodic bathing at sacred places cannot provide one with the peace of mind. Sikhs are prohibited to indulge in caste based divisions and should never consider caste as a factor while establishing relationships through marriages. Such acts are against the tenets of the Guru. Even the woman must not cover their faces while sitting in the religious congregation or participating in social functions.

12. SRI GURU RAM DAS JI

Sri Guru Ram Dasji was born on 24th September, 1534 in Bazaar Chuna Mandi, a locality in Lahore city. His father's name was Sri Hardas and mother was Mata Daya Kaur. Since he was the first born of his parents, he was affectionately called Jetha, a name which became more popular. He was very young when his mother expired. When he was seven years old, his father also died. His maternal grand parents hailed from Basarke. Since he had lost both his parents, he came to reside with his maternal grand parents where he met (Guru) Amardas who consoled him on his unprecedented lose.

To earn his living at Basarke he started selling boiled grams. He stayed with his grandmother for five years. In 1546, when (Guru) Amar Das established Goindwal township, he migrated some of his relatives from Basarke to Goindwal. Jetha Ji also migrated to Goindwal along with his maternal grandmother. He was 12 years old then. He continued to sell boiled grams at Goindwal too. His relationship with (Guru) Amardas became very close and affectionate. In 1552, Guru Amardas became the third Guru of the Sikhs and in 1553, he married of his daughter Bibi Bhani with Bhai Jetha Ji. They were blessed with three sons. They were named Pirthi Chand, Mahadev and (Guru) Arjun Dev.

A mendicant of Goindwal named Tappa and few others high caste Hindus had complained against Guru Amar Dasji to Emperor Akbar. Guru Amardas Ji sent (Guru) Ramdas Ji to the Emperor to clarify all his doubts and remove misunderstandings. (Guru) Ram Das Ji explained Sikh philosophy and its ideals in such convincing and forthright manner that Emperor Akbar was highly pleased and satisfied.

Although he was a son-in-law of Guru Amar Das Ji yet he served him like a devout Sikh. When the deep well was being dug at Goindwal he performed such tasks as carrying of 'basket' filled with loose earth and lime slush on his head with pleasure.

Even sarcastic remarks of his near relatives did not deter him from this honourable task. With his un-reserved service, he won over the heart of Guru Amar Das Ji. He fully understood and grasped the Sikh tenets and moulded his life style accordingly. Once when Guru Amar Das Ji tested the extent of obedience of both his sons-in-law (Bhai Rama Ji and (Guru) Ramdasji) by ordering them to construct a brick & stone platform, he passed the test with aplomb.

Seeing the ever increasing popularity and acceptance of the Sikh faith, Guru Amar Das Ji decided to shift the centre from Goindwal to its North-West in Majha. In 1570 he selected a site and ordered (Guru) Ramdas to commence necessary constructions. He named it Guru Ka Chak, now famous by the name of Amritsar. He along with Baba Buddha Ji started work on digging of Santokh Sar pond (Sarovar) and then laid the foundation of the township. At a later stage, Guru Arjun Devji named the township as 'Chak Ramdas' or 'Ram Das Pura'.

In 1574, Guru Amardas Ji bestowed Guruship on (Guru) Ramdas Ji in the presence of all his family members and the holy congregation. At this auspicious occasion, Guru Ramdas became very emotional and said to Guru Amar Dasji, "Oh Divine King, you know that I was a poor orphan living a street urchin life in Lahore and none was willing to help me. It is your kind benevolence that a low insect of my stature has been placed at a sky high pedestal."

Guru Ramdas laid more emphasis on the preaching of Sikhism in Majha area. He appointed Masands from amongst the honourable Sikhs. Their task was to collect offerings and reach these to the Guru's camp besides preaching the Sikh faith.

He started habilitation at Guru Ka Chak and made sure that all type of tradesmen came and lived there. In 1577, he undertook the task of digging a pond near Dukh Bhanjani Beri a task that was subsequently completed by Guru Arjun Devji.

Of his three sons, Baba Pirthi Chand was a good administrator but devoid of divine qualities. The other son named Mahadev was a recluse and totally detached from the worldly affairs. The third son (Guru) Arjun Dev had all the deserved qualities of a Sikh. He was most able in all respects. So in August 1581, Guru Ramdas passed on the responsibility of

Guruship to him and then merged with eternal light on 1st September, 1581 forever.

13. SRI GURU ARJUN DEV JI

Guru Arjun Dev Ji , youngest son of Guru Ram Das Ji , was born to Mata Bhani on 15 April, 1563 at Goindwal. Till the age of eleven, he stayed at Goindwal, where he learnt Sikh tenets from his maternal grandfather Guru Amar Das Ji. After the demise of Guru Amar Das Ji he came to Guru Ka Chak along with his father. At the age of 18 years, his father felt that young (Guru) Arjun was fit to become the revered head of the Sikhs, he coronated him Guru and handed over all the collected Gurbani including Bhagat Bani to him. His elder brother Baba Prithi Chand was deeply annoyed since he thought himself to be the rightful heir to the Guruship being the eldest son of Guru Ram Das.

Guru Ram Das breathed his last on 1st September, 1581 at Goindwal. At his final rites a large congregation assembled. Bhattas—the singing bards also came. They sang praises of all the Gurus and composed and sung Sawaiyas in their praise. These are recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Arjun returned to Guru Ka Chak. He had faced considerable opposition from Baba Prithi Chand but he remained steadfast and peaceful. He commenced work on the digging and construction of Amritsar, the holy pool of nectar and exhorted people to pay Dasvandh for meeting expenditures of all welfare projects and honourable causes. The Sarovar (Pool) was completed in 1588 and Guru Arjun Dev Ji named it “Amrit Sarovar”. He then planned to construct a Hari Mandir in the middle of the holy pool and had the foundation laid in October 1588 by his noble friend Sain Mian Mir. In due course of time, even the name of the township

changed to Amritsar.

He married Mata Ganga Ji a noble daughter of Sri Krishan Chand of village Mau of Tehsil Phillaur in 1589. After six years, she gave birth to a son who was named Hargobind who later succeeded Guru Arjun Dev Ji.

Guru Arjun preached Sikhism in the villages of Majha. He founded the township of Taran Taaran in 1590. He spread Sikh gospel in Khadoor, Goindwal, Sarhali Khanpur areas, and then founded another township by the name of Kartarpur near Jalandhar. Many Sakhi Sarvaria of Doaba became Sikhs. In 1595, draught conditions prevailed in the area. To overcome the shortage of water, he got many wells dug all around.

Lahore was hit by famine causing spread of many epidemics. Its streets were littered with corpses. Guru Ji reached there along with some Sikh families and provided relief by spending Dasvandh to share the burden of the ill-fated families. Emperor Akbar visited Lahore and was pleased to see the yeoman service done by Gurujji and his Sikhs. He waived the revenue of the farmers who were unable to bear its burden due to the natural calamity.

Guru Arjun Dev Ji commenced construction of the building in Chuna Mandi where Guru Ramdas was born. He also commenced construction of Gurdwara Baoli Sahib in Dabbi Bazaar, Lahore. Thus he provided employment to the needy. He opened an orphanage and free kitchen during his eight months long stay at Lahore.

From Lahore, he reached Amritsar via Goindwal. After a short stay at Amritsar, he visited Dera Baba Nanak, Kartarpur, Kalanaur, Barth and other villages on preaching mission during the following two years. On his return to Amritsar in 1601, he established a daily and regular religious routine in the precincts of Harmandir which had been fully constructed

by then. During this period, his son (Guru) Hargobind was struck by small pox. Some Hindu families also came to enquire about the child's health. Some amongst them suggested that the child be taken to Seetala Mandir (a temple dedicated to Goddess of Small Pox disease) for her blessings. Guru Ji educated all of them that there is nothing like a Goddess of Small pox and that it is like any other ailment which needs regular treatment.

In 1601, he commence work on compilation an editing of the available Gurbani and Bhagatbani into a holy book called Adi Granth or Pothi Sahib. He appointed Bhai Gurdas Ji as the recorder who commenced work at Ramsar Sarovar under the able guidance of the fifth master - Guru Arjun Dev. The onerous task was completed by him in 1604. The holy Granth so prepared was installed in Harmandir Sahib and Baba Buddha Ji was appointed the first Granthi – the official incharge of the sacred place.

The ever increasing popularity of the Sikh religion exhorted many Hindus and Muslims to come into its fold. Many Muslims willingly accepted Sikh faith. This was a severe blow to the Maulanas and other Muslim fundamentalists. With the help of Sheikh Ahmed Sarhandi and Sheikh Farid Bukhari, Jehangir secured the throne of his father Emperor Akbar. They also poisoned Jehangir's ears against Guru Arjun and stressed that the ever increasing influence of Sikh faith on the Muslim must be halted. Prithi Chand, Birbal and Chandu contributed their might in achieving their nefarious designs. Emperor Jehangir falsely accused Guruji of helping Prince Khusro when he revolted against the king. Based on this allegation, he ordered execution of Guru Arjun Dev Ji. On 30 May 1606, he was put through unimaginable torture where he breathed his last. His torture included his being made to sit in boiling

water, sitting on hot plates and pouring of hot sand on the body that had left his body full of burns and blisters. Despite all this, he did not falter and accepted it as the Divine Will and order. He was then thrown in the River Ravi. The cold water further added to his torture. Thus Guru Arjun Dev Ji took the Sikh religion to its zenith and died a martyr's death. Before his ordeal, he had bestowed Guruship on (Guru) Hargobind, his only son.

14. BHAI MANJH JI

Bhai Manjh of village Kang Mai in Hoshiarpur was a priest of a Muslim sect called Sakhi Sarvar. He had established a Pirkhana (a place of worship for the sect) in his house where he would offer sweetened bread every Thursday. He along with other devotees would visit village Nigahe - burial place of the Pir of the sect once a year.

In 1585 while on his way back from Nigahe to his village, he stopped at Amritsar. He attended a religious discourse and congregation of Guru Arjun Dev, had an audience with him, listened to the divine message sung in music and felt an instant solace, peace and tranquility. He felt he could attain lifelong bliss at this place. He requested the great Guru to take him in his fold of Sikhism. The divine Guru replied, "Sikhism cannot be superimposed on any cult or religion. Go and bring down the Pirkhana in your house, give up worship of Sakhi Sarvar, all acts against the tenets of Sikhism and only then can you become a Sikh."

Bhai Manjh did like-wise. He brought down the place of worship of the Pir, stopped the ritual of offering sweetened bread, gave up wearing and distribution of lucky charms and threads as well as sleeping on the ground. He came over to Guru's place. He was removed from the high post of priest-

hood by other followers of Sakhi Sarvar cult who had become his enemy since his becoming a Sikh. He was even removed from the post of head man of the village. All this did not deter him. He took to service whole heartedly in the true spirits of Sikh traditions. He took upon himself the task of bringing firewood for the common kitchen. He would meditate on His name, listen to Guru's sermons and bring firewood from the jungle every day.

One day he was caught in a dust storm while on his way back from the jungle, he had a bundle of dry firewood on his head. In the confusion, he fell into a shallow well that was out of use. To ensure that the fire wood did not get wet he kept the bundle on his head. Standing in the water of the well, he started reciting Gurbani. When quite sometime had passed and Bhai Manjh had not come back from the jungle with firewood, the omniscient Guru set out in his search along with some Sikhs. Soon they came near the well and heard some one reciting Gurbani. Thus they located Bhai Manjh. A rope was lowered into the well and he was told to come up by the rope. Bhai Manjh replied, "Please take out the firewood first so that Langar could be cooked". The Sikhs did accordingly. Then Bhai Manjh was pulled out of the well. Guruji was so pleased with him that he took him in his embrace and said :

Manjh Piara Guru Ko Guru Manjh Piara

Manjh Guru Ka Bohitha Jag Langhanhara.

Thus he succeeded in proving his total acceptance of Sikh faith. He was then appointed a missionary to preach Sikhism to all the people around his village in Hoshiarpur. He went back home and established a Sangat, commenced Langar and worked hard for the preaching of Guru's message.

To become a Sikh, one has to foresake customs, traditions and believes of all other religions and cult and adopt a life style

as per the tenets and sermons of the Guru's given in their Bani. Worshipping of graves and other such like places are forbidden in Sikh religion.

15. BHAI KALYANA JI

During the construction of Sri Harimandir Sahib building, Guru Ji sent a devout Sikh named Bhai Kalyana to Mandi state in Himachal Pradesh for bringing timber for the buildings. The state was under the rule of Raja Hari Sain who followed brahminical rituals implicitly. He would fast and impose this rituals on all his subjects.

Bhai Kalyana reached Mandi on Janam Ashtami day - the day Krishna is believed to have been born. An official proclamation ordered all to observe fast on that day. Bhai Kalyana ji did not fast but even coaxed other Hindus not to observe the ritual since it had no spiritual significance. He prepared meal in the name of Guru and invited all around him to come and partake the meal without any reservation. When the king heard about it, he was very annoyed and sent for Bhai Kalyana. Without any fear and remorse, he appeared before the king who asked him why he had not observed fast on the auspicious occasion of Janam Ashtami. Bhai Kalyana replied, "You yourself have made a stone idol of Shri Krishan whom you worship. The stone idol cannot eat anything. My Guru has taught me that God is all prevading and not only in the stone idol. No day created by Him is bad or indifferent and they are all alike. Fasting is a hoax and certainly not a way of worship of the Lord God, but a means of unnecessary torture to your body. My Guru's advise is :

"Ann Nahn Khaae Dehi Dukh Deejay

Bin Gur Gian Tripat Nahin Theejay"

"Without Guru's true knowledge one cannot find peace in

life. You say that today is God's birthday, but I am sad to say that you have not understood God. He neither takes birth nor dies. No man can be God." Raja said. "Whatever you say is true but you have disobeyed my orders. Therefore you are a culprit and would be punished."

Bhai Sahib replied "Anyone who has disobeyed your order is a culprit in your eyes. Similarly you too are a culprit for disobeying the true tenets of God. He provides food to all and you are stopping their meals. You eat sweet meals and drink milk during fast, but what would the poor people do? Isn't it a crime to keep the poor people hungry? Forcing people to forsake meals is not only unwise but a hoax in the name of religion".

The king was very pleased to hear the true, knowledgeable and brave conversation of Bhai Kalyana. He realised the futility of brahminical rituals. The king desired to meet the true Guru who had given such wonderful education to Bhai Kalyana. He expressed his desire to Bhai Kalyana who escorted him to Amritsar to see the Guru. The king and his associates then obtained the blessings of the Guru and were brought into the folds of Sikhism.

Sikh does not fast. He always obeys his Guru and exhorts others to obey like wise. Guru's Sikh reads Gurbani and makes every effort to understand the divine message in it. He adopts these in his life and does not follow others blindly.

16. SMALL POX (SEETALA)

The contagious disease of small pox is known by the name of Seetala Mata amongst the Hindu families. It is also considered to be a goddess since no trusted treatment of the disease was available, many deaths used to take place. Children were highly susceptible to its vagaries. The disease would

generally spread during rainy season. Initially the victim would have an attack of high fever followed by appearance of pimples on the body. The pimples would then get infected. The patient would lose his eyesight or function of any other limb or appendage. The right eye of Maharaja Ranjit Singh was affected by this very disease.

Wise people would go for the treatment of the disease whereas the illiterates and superstitious pass it off as a visit by the goddess Seetala. They do not call it a disease or ailment for the fear of annoying the goddess. They do not even go for the treatment of the disease but sit around the patient and sing songs in praise of the goddess. These people also construct Seetala Mata temples on the banks of ponds. The wet soil of the pond is considered as Prashad of Seetala Mata. They apply it on the pimples as the only treatment.

There is another aspect of this superstition. Since the disease appears in rainy season, the illiterate and naive people think that the thunder and lightning would antagonize the goddess who has descended on the patient. So they put pebbles in a shallow basket and shake it vigorously near the patient hoping that sound thus generated would drown the noise of thunder making it inaudible for the goddess. Many people indulge in nightlong 'Kirtan' and sing praises of the goddess in Seetala Mandir. Such acts do not remove the sickness but aggravate it.

Once the epidemic of small pox spread in Lahore taking a heavy toll of its population. Streets were littered with corpses. Guru Arjun Dev Ji went over to Lahore to help people fight the dreadful disease. His one and a half year old son named (Guru) Hargobind was also with him. Guru ji provided food, medicine, shelter and cremation facility beside rendering service to them with his own hand. This service continued for

many months. When he returned to Amritsar, his child Hargobind was attacked by the dreadful disease. Some superstitious people counselled him to take action as per their own belief but Guru Ji stressed upon them that small pox is a disease and not a goddess as they believe it to be. Therefore the ailment must be treated beside staying in a state of equanimity both in pleasure and pain. All good or bad events take place by His will and we must learn to accept His order willingly. To educate his Sikhs for posterity, he had composed many hymns on Seetala. These are all recorded in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

Now a days, people are vaccinated against this disease. It has more or less disappeared from India. So much so that anyone giving any clue of smallpox patient is rewarded with a sum of Rs.1000/-. No patient has ever been found so far. As long as it was worshipped as a goddess and no treatment was carried out, many people lost their lives. Now that everyone has become aware that it is an ailment and can be cured, no one considers it as descension of goddess Seetala.

Smallpox is a contagious disease and not a goddess called Seetala Mata. The disease can be cured. One should not impose so much faith on non existing gods and goddess, but trust the authority of all prevading, omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God Lord.

17. SRI GURU HARGOBIND JI

Sri Guru Hargobind Ji was born on 19 June 1595 at village Wadali, District Amritsar in the house of Guru Arjun Dev Ji and Mata Ganga Ji. Guru Arjun Dev's eldest brother Baba Prithi Chand was most unhappy on the birth of Sri (Guru) Hargobind and he deliberately tried to bring harm to the child. Prithi Chand tried to kill child Hargobind through a nursing

maid who was instructed to apply poison on her breasts so that when the child suckles her, he would die of poison. The child did not suckle her breast however and the poison had reverse effect on the nursing maid who died later. In the second instance, Prithi Chand sent a poisonous snake through a snake charmer.

The snake was detected by a servant appointed for safeguarding the child. He killed the reptile thus saving the child from another fatal attack. Yet again an attempt to kill Hargobind was made. This time the daycarer – A Brahmin was engaged who tried to feed the child with poisoned curd. The child refused to touch the polluted curd. The Brahmin suffered from a strange pain in his stomach and he died of its effect after a short while. The God Lord Himself protected the child. Prithi Chand earned notoriety in the whole town. The God even saved the child during his smallpox ailment.

The physical and spiritual training of Guru Hargobind Ji took place under the able supervision of Baba Buddhaji and Bhai Gurdas Ji respectively. Baba Buddha Ji made him an expert in use of weapons and horse riding. Just before leaving for Lahore in connection with his own martyrdom Guru Arjun Dev Ji summoned Bhai Gurdas Ji, Baba Buddha Ji and other respected Sikhs and appraised them of the prevailing political situation in the country. He also forewarned them of a possible confrontation with the ruling king in the foreseeable future. In the presence of the congregation at Harmandir Sahib, he bestowed Guruship on Sri (Guru) Hargobind Ji who was just eleven years old then.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjun Dev infused a new vigour in the mind and body of the Sikh Sangat. Guru Hargobind Sahib donned two swords on himself. One of “Meeri” and the other of “Peeri”. Meeri pertains to the political authority while

'Peeri' has spiritual connotations. To imbibe the spirit of bravery amongst the Sikhs he directed all Masand through a written dictate that all Sikhs must bring weapons, horses and other military hardware with them when they come to visit Amritsar. The great Guru and his Sikhs took to hunting—a warrior sport. All Sikhs were taught the use of weapon systems and horse riding. Many muslims too joined the new founded army of the Guru since they were fed up with the highhanded attitude of the rulers.

Guru Hargobind constructed a high platform in front of Harmandir Sahib and within its precincts. This was symbolic of the new founded political attitude of the Sikhs in their lives. The place was named as Akal Takht (the Timeless throne). The mere sight of the place fills a Sikh with political pride and its role in its day to day life. Under the watchful eyes of the Akal Takht, the Sikhs started improving their physical powers. To infuse them with warrior spirit, bards were engaged who would sing the brave deeds of great warriors of yester-years. Guru's own contributions were no less in this matter.

To bring about a new awakening amongst the masses, Guru Ji toured the villages of Doaba (Area between Rivers Satluj and Beas) and educated people on Sikh way of life. At Kartarpur, many Pathans joined Guru's army. Paindey Khan was one such Pathan who came into Guru's service. Then the Guru visited Malwa (Area South – West of River Satluj) where Bhai Sadhu of village Droli became his ardent Sikh. In 1616, he visited Kashmir where people were suffering due to famine. Satguru Ji spent the Dasvandh amount on improving the conditions of the people there. Impressed by the gesture, many Muslims accepted Sikhism. Bhai Kattu is a famous person of this conversion. From Kashmir, he reached Nankana Sahib via Baramulla, Gujrat, Wazirabad and Hafizabad. After paying

homage to the birth place of Guru Nanak, he reached Lahore where mumps & fever was causing havoc on the lives of people. Guru Ji stayed at Lahore to serve the suffering people. He returned to Amritsar in 1618.

The ever increasing military strength of Sikhs became a virtual threat for the Emperor Jehangir. He ordered an immediate arrest of Guru Hargobind Sahib and put him under imprisonment in the Fort of Gawalior. His orders were complied with. On reaching Gawalior Fort, he consoled the imprisoned Hindu Kings in their grief. Those in attendance of the prisoners were highly impressed by the magnetic and imposing personality of Guruji. They were too eager to embrace Sikhism. Many Sikhs came to Gawalior from all around to meet their beloved Guru but no one was permitted to have an audience with him. Many saintly Muslims condemned Guruji's arrest. Under pressure, the Emperor ordered his release. Guruji also arranged release of 52 Hindu kings and chieftains who were imprisoned at Gawalior. He was thus named "Bandi Chhod."

Emperor Jehangir tried to establish cordial relationship with Guruji. Chandu the executioner of Guru Arjun was handed over to the Sikhs. He was taken around the streets of Lahore. Gurditta who poured hot sand on Guru Arjun Dev ji by Chandu's order struck the big shovel on the head of Chandu and killed him. Spread of Sikhism intensified further. Bibi Kaulan, daughter of Rustam Khan, the Quazi of Lahore became a staunch Sikh and came over to Guru Hargobind Ji's camp. She became such a respected personality that a sacred pond named Kaulsar Sarovar was constructed in her memory by the Guru. Another sacred pond called Bibek Sar was also constructed at Amritsar.

After the death of Jehangir, his son Shahjehan became the

king. He was a staunch and fundamentalist king. He ordered a ban on all Muslims to change their religion. He filled the deep well constructed in Dabbi Bazaar Lahore and converted it into a Mosque. This antagonised the Sikhs. In due course Guru Hargobind fought four battles with Moghul army and won all of them. Thereafter, he again became busy in the task of spreading Sikhism and the Gospel of Guru Nanak.

Guru Hargobind Ji was blessed with five sons and one daughter. They were (1) Baba Gurditta Ji (2) Baba Suraj Mal Ji (3) Baba Ani Rai Ji (4) Baba Atal Rai Ji (5) Baba Teg Bahadur Ji. The daughter's name was Bibi Veeroji.

Guru Hargobind appointed (Guru) Har Rai Ji son of his eldest son Baba Gurditta Ji as the next Guru to succeed him. Thus he handed over the reins of Sikhism into the able hands of his grandson and breathed his last on 3 March, 1644.

18. THE TRUE EMPEROR

Of many things that JEHANGIR did not like about Sikhs, one that hurt him the most was why The Sikhs would address their GURU by the honourable title of SACHA PATSHAH or THE TRUE EMPEROR. He once sought clarification from GURUJI in this regard. GURU JI replied that he would get to know it at an appropriate time. He accepted the answer quietly but was never at peace with it in his mind. He could not reconcile to the fact that ruler of India should be addressed as a king while a FAKIR (recluse) is called by the title of SACHA PATSHAH. Does it imply that I am a FALSE PATSHAH, he would often think.

Once both GURU HARGOBIND JI and JEHANGIR were hunting in the jungle near AGRA. They went into their respective tents for an afternoon siesta necessitated due to hot weather. A humble Sikh of the GURU, who used to earn his

living by selling grass was working nearby. He had not seen the GURU earlier and thus was very keen to have a glimpse of him. He was immensely pleased when he learnt that GURU JI is staying nearby in the jungle. He collected the finest grass as fodder for the GURU'S horse, pocketed two paise coin and set out to pay his respect to him. As he approached the camp, he asked a soldier where SACHA PATSHAH was resting. The soldier was surprised but he however indicated towards JEHANGIR's tent.

The devout Sikh wanted to enter the tent along with the bundle of grass. The soldier on duty was not permitting him to do so. The Sikh was trying to convince the soldier that the bundle of grass is his humble offering to the SACHA PATSHAH for his horse and without it he would have nothing to offer him. JEHANGIR was listening to the conversation. He ordered the soldier to let the Sikh in along with his offering. As the Sikh entered the tent, he placed the bundle of grass on one side put the two paise coin in front of the king, bowed his head before him and said, "OH TRUE EMPEROR (SACHE PATSHAH) I had a long standing desire of seeing you in person and you have been very kind to oblige me. Please be kind & relieve me of my birth-rebirth cycle."

As soon as he heard the word SACHA PATSHAH, JEHANGIR immediately understood that he had come to see GURU HARGOBIND SAHIB. He obviously had not seen him before and therefore has mistakenly come to him. He however was so much impressed by the love and devotion of the Sikh for his GURU that he asked him to demand whatever he desires which would be fulfilled by the king of INDIA – JEHANGIR. He tried to lure him into accepting land so that he can live happily. He even coaxed him to forget worthless talks of salvation from birth-death cycle and spend his present life in comfort.

When the Sikh realised that he was face to face with JEHANGIR, he apologised for the mistake and said, "I had come to see SACHA PATSHAH who only can provide salvation – being the lord of both worlds. What have I got to do with the worldly pleasures which would only enhance my miseries? The real solace is only in the name of GOD LORD." So saying the Sikh picked up two paise coin and his bundle of grass and came out of the tent. The soldier outside requested him repeatedly to give the grass for kings horse but the Sikh did not agree. He at once rushed to GURU's tent located just across the road. King JEHANGIR could not control himself. He followed the Sikh into GURU's tent to see how his SACHA PATSHAH would please him. The Sikh went inside the tent, kept the grass on one side and placing two paise coin in front of GURU JI bowed before him and said, "Oh my SACHE PATSHAH, forgive me my mistake and I am grateful to you for your indulgence to set things right. Otherwise I would have been tempted by the kings offer and would have missed for life to see you. I would also have missed on the eternal peace obtaining from your DARSHAN. Now that you have obliged, please grant me the boon of salvation too. Save me from the evils of LUST, ANGER, GREED, LOVE and False PRIDE."

The omniscient GURU knew that his Sikh had achieved a higher level of spiritual understanding though in the eyes of the world, he was a poor grass cutter. He knew that this Sikh was a staunch adherent of GURU's advice, lived a disciplined life, earned his living without indulging into decoit, theft and dishonesty. He kept his mind glued to LORD GOD's name while working, serving as well as helping other Sikh brothers. The GURU was highly pleased with him and blessed him that all his desires would be fulfilled by Guru Nanak, The True

King. King JEHANGIR realised the truth why GURU HARGOBIND ji was addressed as SACHE PATSHAH.

A devoted Sikh would bow before his GURU and no one else. He places no importance on worldly kings and emperors. For him the grace obtaining of his SATGURU is of supreme importance and incomparable with any material product meant for worldly comfort.

19. BHAI TILAKA JI

Bhai TILAKA was a knowledgeable and sweet tempered Sikh of Sri Guru Hargobind Ji's time. He was also well built physically, and had a determined disposition. He hailed from Garh Shanker in Hoshiarpur District. He was baptised into Sikhism by Guru Arjun Dev Ji. Guru Hargobind had appointed him as a missionary. People of the town were highly impressed by his simple life style.

An elderly Yogi resided very near Bhai Tilaka's living place. The missionary work of Bhai Tilaka had effectively reduced Yogi's followers. This had made him very envious and hateful of Bhai Tilaka. He would adopt many methods of deceit for luring the people towards him but none would work against the simple and attractive principles of Sikhism.

One day he adopted a new technique. He spread the rumour through his disciples that the Yogi has seen Lord Shiva during the night dream. Anyone who would appear before him in person would be blessed with one year stay in heaven. The news spread in the area. Illiterate and naive people thronged Yogi's camp but those who were conversant with Gurbani and its teachings kept themselves away.

Yogi sent a message through his stooges to Bhai Tilaka to come and see him and he would be blessed with a year's stay in heaven. Bhai Tilaka was a staunch Sikh and he did not listen

to the temptations. He never turned up to see the Yogi. At last the Yogi along with his disciples went to see Bhai Tilaka. When he learnt of his intended visit, Bhai Tilaka closed the door on him. The Yogi knocked at the door and shouted, "Look, I have come all the way to appear before you so that you can see me and be blessed with a stay in heaven. Bhai Sahib replied, "I am not going to open the door to have a glimpse of a hypocrite like you. You are deceiving the people. I am a Sikh who can sacrifice any number of heavens for my Guru."

The Yogi felt a deep hurt. He was visibly shaken "What sort of a Sikh he is who regards Guru's advice even higher than the life in heaven?, he thought. If this Sikh is so great, how great would his Guru be? How true and exact would his sermons be who make a Sikh see through my hypocrisy and not be deceived ever?" He begged Bhai Tilaka in the name of his Guru to open the door and lead him to the Guru who has given him so much knowledge. Bhai Tilaka then opened the door, escorted the Yogi and his followers to the Guru's audience who blessed them all with Sikh ideals. The Yogi then returned to Garh Shanker and started preaching Sikhism fervently.

Guru's Sikh does not crave for heaven nor is afraid of hell. To be near God Lord is heaven while getting into birth-rebirth cycle is hell for him. He succeeds in his mission by following his Guru's dictates implicitly.

20. SRI GURU HAR RAI JI

Sri Guru Har Rai Ji was born on 16 January 1630 at Kiratpur in the house of Baba Gurditta Ji who was the eldest son of Guru Hargobind Ji. Kiratpur township was developed by Baba Gurditta in 1627 on the order of his father. It was here

that Guru Nanak Dev Ji had met Sain Budhan Shah.

Guru Har Rai Ji's mother was known by the name of Mata Nihal Kaur Ji. In 1640, Guru Ji married Mata Kishan Kaur (Sulakhani Ji) daughter of Sri Daya Ram Ji a resident of Buland Shahr (in Uttar Pradesh). The Guru family was blessed with two sons - named Baba Ram Rai and (Guru) Har Krishan Ji.

Before breathing his last, on 3 March 1644, Guru Hargobind Ji entrusted the responsibility of leading the Sikhs to Guru Har Rai Ji who at that time was 14 years old. The Punjab was hit by a famine in 1646 starving people for three long years during which period many people died. Guru Har Rai followed his ancestors footsteps and provided relief to the people out of Dasvandh amount. The population of Sikhs had increased manifold. Those living in other provinces who had enough for themselves and also to spare, contributed generously for the relief of the people in Punjab.

Shah Jehan had ordered to bring down all new temple buildings and not to repair old ones. The order jolted the Hindu masses. The order did not apply to Sikh shrines since Sikhs did not worship idols. Guru Ji however did not approve of the high handedness of the king and soon set out to share the grievances of the Hindu masses.

From Kiratpur, Guruji reached Mehraj village via Kartarpur, Noormahal, Drauli & Bhai Rupa Chaudhary Kaala the village head man of Mehraj hosted Guruji for several days. One day Chaudhary Kaala brought Phula and Sandal his two orphan nephews to the audience of the Great Guru and related their woeful tale. Guru Ji blessed them with prosperity and said that they will reign the area between rivers Satluj and Yamuna. Subsequently, the princely states of Patiala, Nabha and Jind came into existence. These states are commonly known as

Phulkian states.

Whereas he would promote meditation on His Nam to relieve one of worldly tensions and a potent medicine for all ailments, Guruji also established a hospital and equipped it with best medicines of the time. Medicines were distributed free. Once Prince Dara Shikoh son of Shahjehan fell ill. The royal Hakims (Doctors) prescribed some rare herbs and salts which could only be obtained from his Medicine Store. The required medicine was sent for him. Prince Dara recovered and came to Kiratpur to express his thanks to the Guru. As per Guru Hargobind Ji's order, Guru Har Rai Ji maintained a strong cavalry of 2200 to be used in case of emergency. When the war of accession between King Shahjehan's son took place, this force had to be brought into action. Prince Dara Shikoh suffered a defeat at the hands of his younger brother Aurangzeb and escaped towards Lahore. Aurangzeb chased him. Prince Dara Shikoh met Guru Ji at Goindwal and requested him for help. In the true tradition of Guru Nanak's philosophy, Guru Ji advised him to have courage and patience and after serving him meals, asked him to depart towards his destination. Guru Ji then deployed his 2200 soldiers on the bank of River Beas and captured all boats in order to delay crossing of river by the Royal Army by a day. By then, Dara Shikoh had reached his desired place.

Aurangzeb came to know of the development. After assassinating his brothers and imprisoning his father, he became the king. He immediately summoned Guru Ji to Delhi. Guru Ji did not go himself but sent Baba Ram Rai his elder son instead. He was advised to have full faith in God and consider him by his side at all times. Baba Ram Rai was an expert and quick to react in all situations. He created a sound impression of his knowledge and intelligence on Aurangzeb.

He asked him why Guru Ji had assisted Dara Shikoh, Baba Ram Rai replied that the great Guru had assisted him considering him a needy person who should be helped. It was not because he had any malice or enmity with the king. The king then asked many questions relating to Sikh religion. Baba Ram Rai replied all strictly according to Guru Nanak's teaching. Aurangzeb was a staunch Muslim and wanted to win over Baba Ram Rai with love and respect in order to ensure his conversation into Islam. On the coaxing of Qazi, the Emperor asked Baba Ram Rai Ji, "What are the meanings of the verse—

Mittee Musalman Ki Perhe Pei Kumihar.

Gharh Bhande Ittan Kiyen Jaldi Kare Pukar.

written in your Granth. Isn't it an effort to look down upon our religion? In order to remain in the good books of the king, he slipped in his mission and replied, "No it isn't 'Mittee Musalman Ki' but 'Mittee Beimaan Ki' hearing this, the king felt pleased and allotted Doon area to Baba Ram Rai as a Jagir.

When Guru Har Rai Ji learnt about the episode of falsifying the true Bani of Guru Nanak, he sent a message to Baba Ram Rai not to show his face to him for ever. Guru Ji left him for good and bestowed Guruship on his younger son Harkrishan Ji. Guru Har Rai left this mortal world for divine abode on 6 October 1661 at Kiratpur.

For the spread of Sikhism, he established three major centres. Each centre was under the over all control of a Udasi Sikh. They were (1) Suthrey Shah Ji (2) Bhagat Bhagwan (3) Bhai Pheru Ji. His father Baba Gurditta Ji too had established a number of organisations called Dhuein (Smokes) or Dhunian for the spread of Sikhism. These organisations were also under the control of holy and pious men of Udasi sect.

21. SRI GURU HARKRISHAN JI

On 7 July 1656, Mata Krishan Kaur wife of Sri Guru Har Rai Ji gave birth to a son at Kiratpur. He was named (Guru) Harkrishan Ji. Baba Ram Rai the elder son of Guru Har Rai Ji had dared change a word of the holy Gurbani of Guru Nanak under the influence of Aurangzeb just to please him. This blasphemous act was condemned so much by Guru Har Rai Ji that he passed on the Guruship to (Guru) Har Krishan Ji who was only five years and three month old then.

Baba Ram Rai was very much perturbed by this decision. He took his father's elder brother Baba Dhirmal into confidence, brought some Masands into his fold and declared himself a Guru. Since the Sikhs were fully aware of Guru Har Rai's decision, no one accepted Ram Rai as his successor. On failure of his effort, he requested Aurangzeb to intervene and help him to get Guruship since he was the eldest son and therefore heir to it. Aurangzeb asked Raja Jai Singh to call Guru Harkrishan Ji to Delhi. Raja Jai Singh sent his Dewan Paras Ram along with fifty horsemen to go to Kiratpur and request Guru Ji on his behalf to come to Delhi. He also instructed him to ensure that he was given due respect enroute. For Guru's travel, a palanquin was also provided. All those who heard that the king had called Guru Ji over to Delhi were very uneasy at the development. By the time of his departure, a good crowd of his followers had gathered. Guru Ji advised all to have patience and full faith in God Lord who would ensure his safety. Still, many Sikhs decided to accompany him. On reaching Panjokhara in Ambala District, Guru Ji sent back most of the Sikhs barring a few. A Brahmin of Panjokhara named Lal Chand was very sarcastic on Sikhs. He would often comment that if their Guru named after Lord Krishana has some spiritual powers, he should be able to explain the

meaning of any sloka of Bhagvat Geeta. Guru Ji said, "If you must see the greatness of Guru Nanak, then bring any body from your village. With God's grace, your curiosity will be satiated." The Pandit brought an illiterate street urchin by the name of Chhajju. The Guru looked at him benevolently and Chhajju started reciting and explaining Geeta's Slokas like a well read and intelligent Brahmin. This was like a slap on Pandit Lal Chand's face. It however resulted in spreading Guru Ji's respect all around. On reaching Delhi, Guru Ji was put up in Raja Jai Singh palace where Gurdwara Bangla Sahib is located now. The queen of Raja Jai Singh had some different notions about the child Guru created by the false propaganda of Brahmins. So she decided to test his exalted status. She summoned many other noble ladies to her palace. She thought in her mind that if he was really a true Guru, then he would recognise her amongst all other noble ladies (although she dressed herself up as just another one of them, and not as a queen would normally be dressed) and come and sit in her lap. The child Guru Harkrishan Ji walked across all the ladies and sat down in the lap of Rani Jai Singh. She was immensely pleased at it.

On reaching Delhi, Satguru Ji refused to meet Aurangzeb. Guru's devout Sikhs would assemble at Raja Jai Singh's palace everyday. The audience would enjoy Guru's discourses, Kirtan and mere sight of him would provide them with bliss and happiness. Aurangzeb sent his son Prince Muazam to meet Guru Ji. He was given appropriate spiritual sermons which provided him eternal happiness. Guru Ji sent a clarification to the king regarding Baba Ram Rai's claim of Gurgaddi stating that it is not an institution that is inherited but one had to prove worthy of it. Baba Ram Rai had changed the content of Guru Nanak's Bani for which he was forsaken by his father. No

injustice had been done to him. Hearing this, the king was convinced that the Guruship had been passed on to rightful person. The king had fathomed the greatness of Guru Harkrishan Ji.

In 1664, while Guru Ji was still at Delhi, small pox epidemic had spread. Guru Ji started relief work. The Dasvandh money collected by the Guru was used liberally for relief work. Whichever locality had serious effect of the epidemic, Guruji visited it and organised relief work personally. As a result of the exposure to the virus, Guruji fell sick. The signs of small pox started appearing on his body. Sensing his end near, he proclaimed to the Sikh congregation that Baba is now in Bakala. This obviously meant that the holy and pious person who would lead the destiny of Sikh Sangat as Guru is now living at Bakala. So saying he passed away on 30 March 1664. He was cremated on the bank of River Yamuna. The place has a Gurdwara constructed to commemorate the event, and it is known by the name of Gurdwara Bala Sahib.

22. SRI GURU TEGH BAHADUR JI

Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur was born on 1st April 1621 at Guru Ke Mahal, Amritsar. He was the youngest son of Sri Guru Hargobind Sahib. His mother's name was Mata Nanaki. For the first nine years of his childhood, he enjoyed the company of his father at Amritsar. Right from the beginning, he had a saintly disposition, fearless attitude, bravery in actions, deep insight on all subjects & a mind detached from worldly affairs. His initial education progressed under the watchful eyes of Guru Hargobind Sahib. Besides the religious and spiritual philosophy, he was trained in the use of weapons and also became an adept horseman.

In 1630, (Guru) Teg Bahadur accompanied his father from

Amritsar to Kartarpur. In 1634, he married (Mata) Gujri, a noble daughter of Sri Lal Chand, resident of Kartarpur (Jalandhar). He participated in the fourth battle fought at Kartarpur and showed great valour & skill with the sword. After the battle, his father left for Kiratpur Sahib, directing his young son to go over to his maternal grand parents at Bakala along with his wife and mother and reside there.

At Bakala, he started meditating on NAM wholeheartedly besides fulfilling all his obligations of a family man. His family life was very simple and peaceful.

On 30 March 1664, Guru Harkrishan Ji expired at Delhi leaving explicit instructions that the rightful owner of the Gurgaddi was residing at Bakala. (Baba Base Gram Bakale). Since no specific person was named Guru, this prompted many fraudulent claimants of Guruship to head for Bakala and establish their camps to deceive people. Dhir Mal was most vociferous of all of them. Many people were getting duped. Finally a devout Sikh of the Guru named Makhan Shah Lubana, a resident of Jhelum district came to Bakala along with five hundred gold coins of Dasvandh. He saw many claimants. He visited all and placed two gold coins before each of them, one by one and realised that all of them were cheaters and deceivers. At last he went to the residence of Guru Teg Bahadur and placed two gold coins in front of him. Seeing this, the Guru reminded him that he owed five hundred gold coins to his Guru and not just two. Makhan Shah Lubana was so much pleased that he climbed up the roof of the house and started shouting – “Guru Ladho Re, Guru Ladho Re” – meaning – “I have found the true Guru”.

When the devout Sikhs heard it, they at once discarded the company of all fraudulent claimants and came to the protection of the True Guru. Baba Dhir Mal could not bear with this

revelation. He bribed Sheehan Masand and instigated him to fire at Guru Sahib. Guru Ji however escaped the attack. Sheehan ransacked Guru's house and escaped with the booty to Kartarpur.

When Makhan Shah learnt about the incident, he collected a few Sikhs and followed Dhir Mal's caravan. They soon managed to overtake it and repossessed all that belonged to Guru. They even brought back "Adi Bir", (The holy compilation of Bani carried out by Bhai Gurdas under the aegis of the fifth master). The holy book and other valuables were promptly sent back by the kind hearted Guru. The Guru took no cognisance of Dhir Mal's high handedness.

In 1665, the respected Guru accompanied by Makhan Shah came to Amritsar to visit the holy shrine of Harmandir Sahib. The priest incharge thought that Guru's prolonged stay there would cause substantial monetary loss to them. So they locked up the precincts of Harimandir Sahib and left. Guruji kept waiting outside on a platform but after a long wait when no one turned up, he paid his obeisance from outside and left for village 'Wallah'. The people of 'Wallah' village served him well. When the priests returned, they were admonished by Makhan Shah who took them to village Wallah before the honourable Guru. Guru Ji categorically stated that their conduct was not-worthy of appreciation. They had been living off the offerings of Sikh devotees for the last 34 years and therefore had developed traits of greed and discontentment. This was unbecoming of a true Sikh and a religious head. The Guru then reached Kiratpur via Bakala and Kartarpur. He purchased the land of village Makhowal from Raja Deep Chand of Kehloor and founded the city of Anandpur Sahib.

Aurangzeb's attitude towards Hindus was becoming very harsh and tyrannical. Guruji left for eastern part of the country

to spread Sikhism as well as advise Hindus to have patience and courage to fight the king's orders.

From Anandpur Sahib, he reached Sabo Ki Talwandi via Ghanauli, Ropar, Moolewal. He spent Dasvandh offerings money on digging of wells and providing other facilities to the people enroute. He also visited the village of Bhai Ram Dev who was named Bhai Meehan for his services of providing water to the people to meet their daily requirements. He visited Kurukshetra, Mathura, Kanpur, Allahabad, Prayag, Kashi and a few other Hindu pilgrimage centres and educated people with Guru Nanak's philosophy. He instilled in them that the true pilgrimage is the company of holy and pious men who assemble to sing the praises of God.

From Gaya he reached Patna. He left his wife in the care of Bhai Jaita Halwai. Mata Gujri Ji gave birth to a son on 22 December 1666. He was named Gobind Rai, who later became known as Guru Gobind Singh. He himself reached Dhaka via Rajmahal, Malda, Murshidabad. He settled a long outstanding dispute between Raja Ram Singh and Raja Chakar Dhavaj, the head of Ahom tribe. The accord took place in 1670. From Assam, he returned to Anandpur Sahib hastily when he learnt that Aurangzeb had commenced fresh atrocities on Hindus by demolishing their temples and schools. Guruji came to Patna. After meeting his son he stayed there for a short time and returned to Anandpur Sahib after two and a half months travelling through Baksar, Banaras, and Ajudhya. His family and child joined him at Anandpur Sahib after about three months.

Sher Khan a moghul chief started converting Hindus of Kashmir by force and use of coercive measures. Some Pandits escaped and reached Anandpur Sahib to complain to the Guru. They sought his indulgence to protect their faith. The Guru

offered all conceivable help to the helpless people and even decided to put his life at stake for the honourable cause.

Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Kiratpur, Faizabad, Samana, Kaithal, Lakhan Majra, Rohtak and finally reached Agra. His visit to these places provided solace to the petrified population. He preached the axiom of "Have No Fear and Impose No Fear" on anyone. Trust in one God and do the right. His personal contacts with the masses imbued the people with a new spirit to face the impending danger at the hands of Aurangzeb. The king received the news at Hasan Abdal. He immediately ordered Guru's arrest at Agra. The Guru had only five of his devout Sikhs accompanying him at that time. They were (1) Bhai Mati Das (2) Bhai Dayala (3) Bhai Gurditta (4) Bhai Jaita and (5) Bhai Sati Das. Guru Tegh Bahadur was brought to Delhi from Agra after his arrest for further action by the king.

Guru Ji deputed Bhai Jaita Ji and Bhai Gurditta Ji to remain outside in the town and whatever happens there, should report to Guru Gobind Singh at Anandpur Sahib. The other three Sikhs stayed with the Guru. The Guru was ordered that :

(a) He should convert to Islam and accept it as his faith;

or

(b) Display some miracle if he is a Godly person as the people claim him to be;

or

(c) Be prepared to be beheaded.

The Guru replied that question of dispensing with his faith did not arise at all. Showing miracles was an act of defiance of God's will and did not behove his humble servants. He also said that he was ready to sacrifice his head for. It was for this reason that he had come to Delhi.

In order to create a fear of death in Guru's mind, the royal executioners sawed Bhai Mati Das into two halves right in front of Guru Ji. Thereafter Bhai Dayala was put into a boiling cauldron while Bhai Sati Das was set on fire alive after wrapping him around with cotton wool. After all these events, Guru Ji was beheaded on 11 November 1675 at Chandani Chowk, Delhi. The executioner was Jalaludin from Samana who cut off the head of the reverend Guru with the blow of his sword.

Bhai Jaita Ji had worked out a plan to dispose off the Guru's body. He had Bhai Udho and Bhai Lakhi Shah to help him. At a prearranged time, Bhai Lakhi Shah passed through Chandani Chowk with his bullock carts loaded with lime and clay. Bhai Udho was in the disguise of a muslim and waiting nearby. He picked up the body of the Guru and loaded it into one of the cart. Lakhi Shah took the body to his house in village Rakab Ganj about three miles from the execution site. He placed the body in the middle and arranged all his furniture & wood articles around it and set the house on fire. Gurdwara Rakab Ganj is now located there.

In the confusion at Chandani Chowk, Bhai Jaita picked up Guru's head, wrapped it in a blanket and set out hurriedly towards Anandpur Sahib. Bhai Udho joined him enroute. Both reached the camp of Guru Gobind Singh Ji and placed the head of Guru Tegh Bahadur before him. Guru was so pleased with both of them that he took them into his embrace and bestowed the title of "Rangrette Guru Ke Bete". The place where Guru Tegh Bahadur was beheaded at Delhi, had Gurdwara Sis Ganj constructed in his memorial. The head was cremated by Guru Gobind Singh Ji at Anandpur Sahib where there is a Gurdwara named Sis Ganj.

23. SRI GURU GOBIND SINGH JI

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born to Mata Gujri at Patna Sahib on 22 December 1666. At the time of his birth, his father was at Dhaka on a preaching mission. He saw his son on his return to Patna in 1670, when he had grown to be a three and a half year old lad. After a short stay at Patna, Guru Tegh Bahadur went over to Anandpur Sahib.

During his childhood at Patna (Guru) Gobind (Rai) Singh was the accepted leader of his friends. He was very fond of games where he could practice military maneuvers and strategies. Pandit Shiv became a devout follower of the child Guru while the queen of Raja Fateh Chand enjoyed the love and respect of a son through him. He did many other unbelievable acts during his stay at Patna. He had virtually removed the fear of muslims from the minds of his friends and even elders.

Shortly after reaching Anandpur Sahib, Guru Teg Bahadur summoned his family over to Anandpur Sahib. The pangs of separation were unbearable for the people of Patna who had enjoyed the company of brave, fearless, ever-smiling and courageous Gobind Rai (Singh) for over five years. On reaching Anandpur Sahib, he was taught Persian, Hindi, Sanskrit and Brij Bhasha. He was further trained in the use of weapons and horse riding. He was being groomed by his father to shoulder the future responsibilities of Sikhism in particular and the country in general.

Before setting out for Delhi to meet his martyrdom, Guru Teg Bahadur coronated his son as the tenth master of Sikhs. He immediately took up the task of generating self confidence and valour in the Sikhs with a view to face any challenge of Moghul Raj which had become evident after the martyrdom of Guru Teg Bahadur Ji. Training in the use of weapons was intensified. Fifty two poets were engaged to write ballads and

poetry capable of infusing people with bravery and valour. In 1682, he got a big drum made for him which was named as 'Ranjit Nagara'. A strike on Ranjit Nagara would often enthuse the Sikhs with bravery and confidence. Beside the weapon training, Sikhs were also trained in classical singing based on Ragas. Guru Ji was very fond of singing devotional compositions and could play Taos (Peacock shaped string musical instrument). He also commenced tradition of Langar (Free Kitchen) for all. This was a stiff blow to the casteist Brahmins.

From 1684 to 1687, he stayed in Nahan state. During this period, he managed to bring about an accord between Raja Medani Prakash of Nahan and Raja Fateh Shah of Srinagar. In 1685, he established a Gurdwara at Paonta on the bank of River Jamuna. He composed many Banies namely Jaap Sahib, Sawaiyas and Akal Ustat here. Poetry recitations were regularly held. Pir Sayyed Budhu Shah of Sadaora (a village located 25 miles from Paonta Sahib) became one of his disciples and offered the services of 500 pathans in the army of Guru Ji.

The battle of Bhangani was fought on 15 April 1687. Raja Bhim Chand of Kehloor attacked Guruji with the help of a few other hill chieftains. The town of Bhangani is located seven miles from the town of Paonta on the confluence of River Jamuna and River Giri. Five sons of his aunt Bibi Veero Ji and his maternal uncle Kirpal Chand took part in the battle. Pir Budhu Shah also joined Guruji along with his four sons, two brothers and 700 disciples. Sikhs displayed acts of great valour. Mahant Kirpal Das Udasi crushed the head of Hayat Khan with a fat staff. The hill chieftains lost the battle. Sango Shah and Jeet Mal two sons of Bibi Veero Ji achieved martyrdom and so did two sons and a brother of Pir Budhu Shah. Many other Sikhs died in the battle. Three hill chiefs

including Raja Hari Chand were killed. Satguru Ji honoured Pir Budhu Shah with a small dagger, a beautiful robe and a dictate written in his own hand. Pir Budhu Shah requested Guru Ji to allow him to keep the comb that the Guru had just used and which still had a few of his hair stuck in it. The Guru Ji obliged him and also gave one half of his turban to Pir Budhu Shah and the other half to Mahant Kirpal Das.

After the battle of Bhangani, Guruji returned to Anandpur Sahib in 1687 and stayed there till December 1704.

In 1688 he fought a battle with Nawab Alf Khan of Jammu at a place called Nadaun.

The battle of Hussaini was fought in 1689. The hill chiefs had sought the help of Hussain Khan. Both the battles were won by Guru Ji.

In 1697 Bhai Nand Lal became a devout Sikh of Guru Gobind Singh Ji. In 1699, on the first day of Baisakh (March 31, 1699) Guru Ji selected the Five Beloved Ones at Kesgarh, baptised them by administering Amrit and created the Order of the Khalsa. He had to fight four more battles with the hill chiefs at Anandpur and he emerged victorious in all of them. On a request from the hill chiefs, Aurangzeb sent his Mogul army to arrest Guru Gobind Singh Ji. In May 1704, the last battle of Anandpur commenced. The Subedar of Sirhind, Wazir Khan also joined the Mogul forces. They laid a siege of Anandpur for six long months. The rations & other supplies were all exhausted inside the fort. At last Guru Ji along with the remaining Sikhs left the fort on the night of December 20th 1704.

Guru's Army had just crossed Kiratpur when the enemy attacked them. The River Sarsa was in spate and a fierce battle was fought there. Mata Gujri Ji and the two youngest sons of Guru Gobind Singh got separated from the main body of the

Sikh force. On 22 December 1704, Guruji and his party reached Chamkaur Sahib where a pitched battle was fought. Only 40 Sikhs faced and fought 10 lakhs moguls, with untold bravery and valour. The two elder sons Baba Ajit Singh and Baba Jhujjar Singh fought bravely and attained martyrdom. On orders of the five beloved one's, Guruji left the fortress of Chamkaur and headed towards Machhiwara. He escaped from there in the guise of Uch Da Pir and reached Hehran. The youngest sons of the Guru were captured and buried alive in a wall at Sirhind on 27 December 1704.

On reaching village Deena, Guruji wrote a letter to Aurangzeb in Persian language. This is known as Zafarnamah (Letter of Victory). Bhai Daya Singh Ji took this letter to Aurangzeb. In May 1705, a fierce battle took place at Mukatsar between Sikhs and Mughal army. Mai Bhago and Bhai Mahan Singh along with other Sikhs fought bravely. Bhai Mahan Singh did a martyr's death. The enemy fled after defeat. The place at which the martyred Sikhs were cremated, a Gurdwara by the name of Shahid Ganj in Mukatsar now commemorates the event.

From Mukatsar, Guruji reached Sabo Ki Talwandi where he stayed for a year or so. Bhai Dallah was put to test and after baptism became Bhai Dallah Singh. Guru Ji got the holy Guru Granth Sahib rewritten by Bhai Mani Singh ji. This compilation also had the composition of Guru Teg Bahadur included in it.

In October 1706, he set out to visit the southern states of India. On 3 March 1707, Aurangzeb breathed his last. Bahadur Shah sought help from Guru ji in order to become the king. Guruji sent a body of troops under the command of Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Dharam Singh. Bahadur Shah won the battle of accession. His brother Azam was killed. On becoming the king, Bahadur Shah offered expensive gifts to Guru Gobind

Singh Ji to show his reverence. Guruji was then located at Agra. From August 1707 to early September 1708, Guru Ji remained with Bahadur Shah. Thereafter he reached Nanded by end of September 1708. He met Lachman Dass Bairagi at Nanded and brought him into Sikh fold. He was named Baba Banda Singh and was sent to Punjab on a specific mission.

Two Pathans deputed by Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind deceitfully attacked Guru Ji with a dagger when he was resting in his place at Nanded. Guruji killed one of them on the spot with his sword while the other was killed by the Singhs. A Hakim surgeon was summoned who stitched and dressed the wound of Guruji and administered necessary medication. The wound started healing gradually.

On 6 October 1708, while trying to fix the string on his bow, the stitches of the wound broke open causing profuse bleeding and discomfort. Another attempt to set the wound right was made. However Guruji declared that his end was virtually near. He summoned a congregation of his Sikhs and proclaimed end of the long tradition of Living & Personal Guru and declared (Guru) Granth and Panth as the joint form of Guru. He reverentially bowed before Guru Granth Sahib and said that the spirit and soul of the Guru would be in Sri Guru Granth Sahib while The 'Panth' (the whole Sikh Community) would be the body of the Guru. Thus he forever passed on the Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib ending personal Gurudoms.

On 07 October 1708, he breathed his last in the ambrosial hours of the morning and merged with light eternal.

24. VASAKHI

Vasakhi is a very beloved festival of Sikhs. It is the foundation day of Khalsa order. Guru Nanak had prohibited

his disciples to cut their hair, drink wine and not to indulge in use of any other form of intoxicants. Sikhs were advised not to worship any gods or goddesses but meditate only on one God Waheguru, the supreme God. Sikhs do not indulge in ritualistic pilgrimages for so called holy bathing at places of worship. They do not fast nor do they bow before so called living saints or holymen. Sikhs only obey Gurbani and abide by the directions given therein. Whosoever abided by these dictates was brought into the fold of Sikhism by the Guru. The ceremony of baptism at that time implied sipping of water which had been prepared by dipping Right Feet thumb of Guruji. This was called "Charan Pahul" it was also called 'Charan Amrit'. To become a Sikh, this ceremony was essential.

All Gurus baptised Sikhs by administering Charan Pahul to them. However the tenth master changed the tradition of initiation into Sikh order. Charan Pahul was no more served. It was changed into the Amrit of Khanda (A two edged straight sword). To become a Sikh, it is essential to partake Amrit of Khanda-Bata (An iron shallow container).

On the Vasakhi day of 1699, Guruji put his Sikhs to test. He demanded their heads. Bhai Daya Ram was the first to make his offering. Thereafter Bhai Dharam Chand came. He was followed by Bhai Himmat Rai, Bhai Mohkam Chand and Bhai Sahib Chand. All of them offered their heads. Guruji did not demand more heads. His Sikhs had passed the test successfully. These five were baptised with Amrit of Khanda-Bata and declared as the five beloved ones, Panj Pyaray. Their names were changed to

1. Bhai Daya Singh Ji
2. Bhai Dharam Singh Ji
3. Bhai Himmat Singh Ji

4. Bhai Mohkam Singh Ji

5. Bhai Sahib Singh Ji

Thereafter, Guru ji received Amrit from the hands of these five beloved ones and changed his name from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh. He then passed on the authority of imparting Amrit to the Sikhs in set bound principals and procedures. Any five Sikhs who are staunch followers of the laid down order can prepare and administer Amrit in accordance with the laid down procedure in the presence of the holy Guru Granth Sahib. We become Sikhs only after partaking Amrit. Sikhs are only then entitled to add Singh as suffix to their names while the ladies add the title of 'Kaur' to their names. Singh means Lion who is a very brave and courageous animal. A Sikh after partaking Amrit also becomes brave like a Lion. Kaur is the title given to the princesses of kings and emperors. So Guruji gave the title of Kaur to all Sikh females who had been baptised with Amrit of Khanda-Bata.

We must remember VASAKHI as it was the day of judgement for the Sikhs, which was successfully passed by them. Sikhs became Khalsa after partaking 'Amrit'.

We must become Guru's Sikhs for which taking of Amrit is mandatory. Amrit makes us brave and fearless. We can't call ourselves Sikhs without having taken Amrit.

25. BHAI BACHITAR SINGH

When the Lohgarh fort at Anandpur Sahib was put under seige by the Hill Rajas to stop inflow of ration and water to the inmates, thus forcing them to surrender, the Sikhs faced tremendous hardships for over twenty days. Even the enemy forces were put to incessant problems and an air of uncertainty prevailed. They found themselves helpless. At last they decided to force open the gate of the fort, engage the inmates

into a pitched battle one way or the other. A strong was made to drink large quantity of alcohol. Its forehead was loaded with strong armoured plates. Under intoxication of liquor, the elephant proceeded towards the gate of the fort in a fit of rage. The hill kings army followed on its heels.

To face the onslaught of this elephant, Guru Gobind Singh Ji ordered and prepared Bhai Bachitar Singh. He was a true Sikh who had partaken Amrit. He was one who would sacrifice his life for his Guru. Guru Ji gave him a sharp pointed lance called 'Nagini Barchha' (This Lance is still kept at Anandpur Sahib).

Bhai Sahib unlocked the gate of Lohgarh and stood in front challenging the elephant. He showed no sign of panic. With utter swiftness, he stood in the stirrups of his horse and attacked with his Lance with such force that it pierced the thick iron plate and entered deep into the elephant's forehead. The injured elephant panicked, turned about and fled stampeding its own army which was following it. The move cost dearly to hill chieftains which caused a substantial loss of life to them.

It was the power of Amrit that had made Bhai Bachitar Singh so brave, fearless and valourous.

It is evident that death is no deterrent for a Sikh as Amrit infuses bravery and courage in a Sikh. So all Sikhs must take Amrit of Khanda Bata from Five beloved ones in presence of Guru Granth Sahib.

26. BHAI DALLAH SINGH JI

After the battle at Mukatsar, Guru Gobind Singh Ji reached Talwandi Saboki. The head man of this place named Chaudhary Dallah was the owner of about 15-20 villages. He had kept a few soldiers as his personal army for the protection and security of his assets and himself.

Chaudhary Dallah had heard about all that had transpired with Guru Ji since leaving the fort of Anandpur Sahib. Expressing much concern he said to Guruji, "Oh true Emperor, I have many young and brave soldiers in my Army." Had you remembered me then, I would have sent them to impose crushing defeat on the Moghul Army. It would have saved you so much loss and agony of giving up Anandpur Sahib besides the untimely martyrdom of the princes (Sahibzada).

Guruji sensed that Chaudhary Dallah has acquired false pride of his personal army. Guruji told him that his Sikhs had fought bravely during the Anandpur Sahib battle. "No body had withdrawn even by one step. I am proud of all my beloved one's who had laid their lives for protection of Dharam and achieved martyrdom." The Guru said.

A devout Sikh of the Guru made an offering of a new gun to the Guru. He stated many good points of the gun beside claiming that its effective range is very long. To put Bhai Dallah's doubt at rest, the Guru said, "Bhai Dallah ! depute one of your soldiers for us to prove the aim of the gun on him." Hearing this demand both Chaudhary Dalla and his soldiers were taken aback. He looked towards his soldiers but all of them turned their face away. Chaudhary Dallah said, "My lord, why kill a man when you can test the gun on an animal?"

The true Guru said, "This gun can only be proved on a warrior." When no one came forward, the Guru directed one of his Sikh to go and announce his wish to the Sikhs. As soon as the order of the Satguru was conveyed, a father and his son named Bhai Veer Singh and Bhai Dheer Singh who were busy tying their turbans came running and stood before the Guru with half tied turbans in their hands. Each one of them displayed enthusiasm and keenness surpassing the other, so much so that a virtual scuffle resulted between the two. The Guru then ordered both of them to stand behind each other.

When Guruji would raise the gun, they both would raise their heels and when he would lower it, both would stoop down so that the aim would not go waste. Bhai Dallah was watching it with amazement. At last Guruji fired the shot over the heads of both men, who had offered themselves as the target. Both of them stood still and without any remorse. Guruji lovingly told them, "Dear ones, That is all there was to it. Both of you can go. Both of you have passed the test honourably."

By now the false pride of Chaudhary Dallah in the ability of his soldiers had been shattered. He was silent with shame. Guruji said, "Listen Bhai Dallah, the bravery is not confined to the physical force and beautiful bodies that your soldiers possess. They may also be very brave and fearsome. But unless they have fearlessness, determination, will to win, self confidence & desire to succeed against all odds, no man is brave." Such determination results from the sermons of the Guru and associating oneself forever with him. And to achieve it, partaking of Amrit is a must.

Bhai Dallah fell on Guru's feet. All his pride had vanished. He said, "You are great oh Guru and so are your Sikhs who are brave in the true sense. Please be kind to me and bless me with the boon of Amrit so that my association with you also becomes a lasting one." He, his family and all members of his personal army were baptised into Sikh order and he was then named Bhai Dallah Singh. He became so courageous that when Nawab Wazir Khan of Sirhind asked him to hand over Guruji to him failing which he would have to face dire consequences; he replied that if the Nawab of Sirhind ever contemplated action against Guruji, he would be dealt with severely and with serious consequences.

It was all due to power of Amrit which had dispensed all his fear from his mind and filled it with determination.

Partaking of Amrit coupled with implicit obedience of

Guru's dictates puts a man's mind on optimistic pedestal. All his fears disappear. Such Amritdhari Sikh is not afraid of taking up cudgels with any powerful king. So, it is very important for us to take Amrit because we can not become Singhs (Lions) without it.

27. DISAPPROVAL OF WORSHIP OF GOD SHANI (SATURN)

Once Guru Gobind Singh Ji put his Sikhs to an unusual test. He sent for a brahmin to come and take alms in the name of god Shani. Guruji wanted to see to what extent do the Sikhs abide by the tenets and philosophy of Sikhism, and how much have they understood the teachings of Gurbani.

The brahmin was pleased and expected a substantial quantity of items in alm since the Guru Darbar had a unique and rich reputation. So, he reached Guru Darbar early morning of Saturday along with a few donkeys for transporting whatever he would receive from there.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji's court (Darbar) was in progress. Many Sikhs had come from far and wide places for his audience. Guruji asked Dewan Nand Chand Ji to give out alms to the brahmin in the name of god Shani (Saturn). It is the tradition of Hindu religion that each god feels pleased with a different item of alm. So in each case, alm has to be different. Some god feels pleased with Churma (powdered roasted cereals mixed with Sugar), some on meat and wine while some goddess demands Kheer (Rice cooked in Milk) and the other puffed rice and sugar puffs (Patashe). But to please god Shani, offerings of iron, mustard oil and Dal URD (Cereals black in colour) has to be made. All these items were given to the brahmin in good quantity by the order of Guruji. Panditji was pleased beyond himself. He loaded these items on the donkeys

and set out to return home.

Among the congregation were present a few Sikhs who had well understood the teachings of Gurbani and Sikh philosophy. They left the audience of the Guru and ran after the brahmin. He was soon overtaken and asked where he was taking all that stuff. Panditji replied that Guru Gobind Singh Ji had made offerings in the name of god Shani which can only be used by brahmins alone. All his troubles and ills will get dispensed with. The Sikhs took charge of all the items and said to the brahmin, "We know how to use and digest all these items. So please run away and don't you ever look back this way. We well understand these gimmicks."

The brahmin ran away. Sikhs brought all items to the cook house. They ground the Dal and had them fried in Mustard Oil and served them to all the Sikhs. The iron was cast and converted into iron (bracelets) Karha and worn in the arms by the Sikhs. As the Sikhs were adept in making weapons at Anandpur Sahib so casting the iron created in to bracelets was no problem for them.

When the Guru saw display of such determination by the Sikhs, he was very much pleased and said, "You all have well understood and grasped the principles of Sikhism. A Sikh has no concern with any god or goddess since all of them are imaginary. You all have emerged successful from the test."

In 1699 when Guruji administered Amrit to his Sikhs, he included Karha made of iron as one of the mandatory symbol to be worn on person by all Sikhs. It is a symbol of the understanding and awakening amongst the Sikhs that they have no faith and belief in the imaginary gods and goddesses as professed in Hindu religion.

We must only worship one God and do not place our belief and trust in any god or goddess. We do not have to make any

offerings on the name of Shani nor have to take 'Prashad' to the Gurdwara specially on Saturdays. All days are good and alike and are the blessed ones if the name of God dwells in your heart.

28. A DONKEY IN LION'S HIDE

Once Guru Gobind Singh Ji was holding his audience where melodious singing of Gurbani was in progress and everyone was lost in its ecstasy. Thereafter some scholars spoke about the Sikh religious philosophy and spelt out a few sermons for them to abide by. In the meantime, a group of ten-fifteen Sikhs entered the congregation who were followed by a laughing crowd of a few children, young and old men. These Sikhs had a donkey which had been tied outside before they came into the presence of the Guru. A young Sikh walking in front had a hide of a lion on his shoulder.

When all the Sikhs had paid their obeisance to the Guru, he asked the leading Sikh to narrate the whole story. He narrated, "For the last three days, it has been reported by the people that a lion had been spotted in the western part of the town. No one dared go that side. The news about the lion had spread in the whole town. Today a potter was going out of the town with his donkeys. As soon as he came near the lion, he heard it braying like a donkey. He found that it was not a lion but a donkey in lion's hide who started braying on sight of other donkeys. The potter came to know of the reality of the lion. Some body had cleverly put lion's hide on a donkey so that it was taken for a lion. The potter removed the hide from the donkey which has now been brought by us before you. The donkey was tied outside."

All present burst out in laughter. The Guru addressed all presents, "My beloved Sikhs, you all are laughing at the

episode. Please look within yourself and see how many of you are akin to the imposter lion. There are many amongst us who have donned the guise of a 'Singh' but they are far from maintaining discipline imposed by Gurmat that leads them to become true Singhs. No one can attain spiritual and religious heights by outward display of symbols and image. Creating of ideal traits befitting of Lions' is also a must and most essential. Without these, the outward guise is a mere display of fallacy. The qualities of humility, bravery, valour, kindness and service are inseparable in the life of a true Sikh. Our character should be above board and true in all our actions. Without these we have no difference than the donkey in a lions' hide."

The Guru also disclosed that he himself had let out the donkey outside the town after putting lion's hide on it. The aim was to bring home the essentials of character viz-a-viz donning of outward symbols.

We must not become spurious 'Sikhs' but be real and true 'Singhs'. Our outward sight and uniform must be in consonance with inner qualities essential of a 'Singh'. Service to humanity with devotion, humility, sweet temper, truth and true living, bravery & valour, kindness and love are essential inner qualities that a Sikh must imbibe in himself. We must maintain on our body the five essential symbols of Sikh order and learn to spend our life according to the dictates of Gurbani. We must discard all other religious practices, customs, traditions, beliefs and rituals and never ever adopt them.

29. SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI

Whatever divine revelations were received by Guru Nanak, he would record it in a book in the form of poetic composition. He had also recorded all divine utterances of all saints (Bhagats) including Sheikh Farid that he had managed to

collect during his Udasis. As far as Sheikh Farid's Bani is concerned, he received it from Sheikh Brahm who was the eleventh occupant of the honourable high seat of the sect. Guru Nanak always kept this book with him. When the Guru had gone to Mecca, the Muslim priests asked him to read out from this very book and tell them who among the Muslims and Hindus was praiseworthy.

The true Guru had answered that without righteous and honourable actions both will face insults and repentance in the court of God the Lord. Bhai Gurdas a noted scholar of the time had described the episode in one of his ballads as :

**Baba Phir Macce Gaiya Neel Bastar Dhare Banwari
Asa Hath, Kitab Kutchh, Kooja Baung Musalla Dhari.
and :**

**Puchhan Gal Iman Di Qazi Mulan Ikathae Hoi,
Wada Sang Vartaiya Lakh Na Sakey Kudrat Koi.**

Puchhan Khol Kitab Noon

Hindu Vada Ke Musalmanoi.

Baba Akhaiy Hajian

Shubh Amlaan Bajhon Dono Roi.

(VAR-1, PAUDI-33)

When Guru Nanak appointed Bhai Lehna (Guru Angad) in his own place as Guru, he also handed over the book to him. This evidence is found recorded in 'Puratan Janam Sakhi' as under :

**TIT MAHAL JO SHABAD HOA
SO POTHI GURU ANGAD JOG MILLI.**

Guru Angad also recorded 63 verses of his own in this book and then passed it on to Guru Amar Das Ji at the time of passing on the Guruship to him. Thereafter, Guru Amar Das recorded his own compositions in the book and handed it over

to Guru Ram Das Ji at the time of his coronation. Subsequently the book reached Guru Arjun Devji with Guru Ram Das Ji's Bani included therein. Thus all the writings of first four Guru's had reached safely in the hands of Guru Arjun Dev Ji at the time of his taking over the reins of Sikhs as Guru. Guru Arjun Dev Ji also composed lot of verses. He also had with him the compositions of Baba Sundar Ji's 'Sad', Sawaiyas of the Bhattas and a Ballad written by Bhai Satta and Bhai Balwand. Thus Guru Arjun Dev Ji had a treasure of Bani which had the compositions of the following writers :

(a) **5 Guru's** : Guru Nanak Devji, Guru Angad Devji, Guru Amar Dasji, Guru Ram Dasji and Guru Arjun Devji.

(b) **15 Bhagats** : Bhagat Kabirji, Namdevji, Ravidas ji Trilochanji Faridji, Beniji, Dhannaji, Jaidevji, Peepaji, Bhikhanji, Parmanandji, Sainji, Sadhnaji, Ramanandji and Surdasji.

(c) **11 Bhattas (Bards)** : Kalsahar, Jalap, Keerat, Bhikha, Salh, Bhalh, Nalh, Gaindh, Mathura and Harbansji.

(d) **3 Gursikh (Noble/Honourable Sikhs)** : Bhai Satta, Bhai Balwand and Baba Sunderji.

Guru Arjun Devji decided to put the whole Gurbani into the formats of Ragas. Uniformity in the spellings of various words too had to be brought about. Gurbani had to be re-written in accordance with well defined rules. From the poetic point of view the Bani was available in various kinds of Shabads, Eight line compositions, Ballads and so on. All these had to be given a definite order. It was a tedious work and only within the reach of a laureate who would have full grasp of language and knowledge of poetry. Guru Arjun Devji felt that Bhai Gurdasji was the most appropriate scholar capable of completing the task satisfactorily. He briefed Bhai Gurdas accordingly and deputed him to commence editing and com-

pilation work immediately.

For the arduous task a calm and peaceful place outside the city of Amritsar was selected. The place has a Gurdwara and a Sarovar by the name of 'Ramsar' to commemorate the event.

At the time of re-arranging the Gurbani into The Ragas, another change was affected. Earlier, Slokas of all the Gurus was kept at one place and the 'Vars' (Ballads) had only 'Pauries'. Guru Arjun Devji brought 'Slokas' before the Pauries wherever these had identical philosophy of thought. What ever 'Slokas' remained unused with Pauries, these were compiled and put at the end of this holy Granth under the title of "Slok Varan Tey Vadheek". Slokas of all the Gurus are found recorded according to their sequence.

There are 22 'Vars' (Ballads) in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. 21 of these are the composition of Gurus while one is the composition of Bhai Satta and Bhai Balwand.

The entire Bani was recorded in 30 Ragas. Later, Guru Tegh Bahadurji composed and recited Bani in another Raag called "Jaijawanti". Bani of this Raag and all his earlier compositions in other Ragas was recorded at appropriate place and order by the tenth Guru at the time of re-compilation of Sri (Guru) Granth Sahib. So the ultimate Sri Guru Granth Sahib has Bani recorded in 31 Ragas which are as follows :

1. SRI RAAG
2. MAJH
3. GAURHI
4. ASA
5. GOOJRI
6. DEV GANDHARI
7. BIHAGRHA
8. WADHANS
9. SORATH
10. DHANASRI
11. JAITSRI
12. TODI
13. BAIRARI
14. TILANG
15. SOOHI
16. BILAWAL
17. GAUND
18. RAMKALI
19. NAT NARAIN
20. MALI GAURA
21. MAROO
22. TUKHARI
23. KEDARA
24. BHAIRAV
25. BASANT
26. SARANG
27. MALLHAR
28. KANRHA
29. KALYAN
30. PARBHATI
31. JAIJAWANTI.

According to Prof. Sahib Singh, Bhai Gurdas Ji completed

the task of editing and compilation of Sri Adi Granth in a period of a year and a half.

Bhai Gurdas ji completed the task of recording Gurbani on the first day after the full moon day of Bhadra in 1661 (CE 1604). There after he started writing the index of the Gurbani, Bhai Gurdas has recorded this fact in the beginning of the index in the following manner. "Soochi - Patar, Pothi Ka, Tatkara Raagan Ka, Samvat 1661 Miti Bhadoan Vadhi Ekam 1, Pothi Likh Pahunchey". It means that after completing the writing of the Granth, Bhai Gurdas ji commenced writing of index on first day after the full moon day of Bhadra in Samvat 1661.

The Granth written by Bhai Gurdas had a total of 974 leaves. He had to record the page number of all the verses in the index and it was a tedious job. Then the Granth had to be bound to secure its leaves. Its drying would have taken some time. So all this task was completed before the fifteenth of the full moon day of the same month.

Next day of the New moon day, (16 August 1604) the first compilation of the holy Gurbani was brought from Ramsar to Harmandir Sahib in a palanquin and installed there. Baba Buddha Ji was appointed the head priest of the Harmandir Sahib to do the necessary service.

Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji had another Granth written by Bhai Mani Singh Ji at Talwandi Sabo (Damdama Sahib). He had Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib's Gurbani placed at appropriate place in each Raag. This Granth is called "Damdami Bir". Guru Gobind Singh Ji bestowed Guruship to this Damdami Bir on 6 October 1708 at Nanded (Maharashtra) - a day before his own departure from this world for merging with eternal light – the Supreme God.

