

**GLIMPSES
OF
THE DIVINE MASTERS**

(GURU NANAK—GURU GOBIND SINGH)

1469—1708

RANBIR SINGH

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“Ever and ever, remembering, remember God thy Lord:
Thus thou shalt attain perfect peace,
And get over all thy ills, sorrow and suffering.
Bethink thyself of Him who sustains the whole universe,
Whose Name untold millions do e'er e'er chant.
The essence of the Vedas, Puranas and all other religious books
Is to contemplate the One—the Eternal, All-Pervading
DIVINE SPIRIT.

He who but treasureth a grain of the Lord's Love in his heart
Who can recount his enrichment or his exaltation ?
With those, O Lord, who yearn to have but a glimpse of Thee
Save me, Nanak prayeth, O Lord, with them save me!
Peace Celestial, lieth in naught else
But reposing in Divine Spirit
Which, like ambrosia, bestoweth eternal bliss,
It indwelleth in the hearts of the Lord's saints.”

(Guru Arjan: Sukhmani 1-1)

Translated

INTRODUCTORY

(a) Quest for Peace of Mind

Modern man is endowed with all the comforts—nay luxuries—of life, yet he is verily not happy. Instead, he lacks peace of mind. Emptiness and vacuum of spirit generally prevail. His inner self is bruised and he is bleeding. It appears that something vital is woefully wanting in him.

Today, man is living in an atmosphere of mutual distrust, hatred and illwill and there is burning unrest everywhere. It is a pity, indeed, that the world at present is torn asunder by selfishness, invidious distinctions, unhealthy prejudices and strifes.

Time and again, we are faced with the obstinate question: why is it that man today lacks inner happiness, mutual love and trust in an otherwise, rapidly advancing civilization? Man is seen drifting farther and farther away from God, his Creator. On the whole, mankind is, undoubtedly, in the fatal grip of materialism. A grave world-problem, as to how can man be rescued from its clutches to enable him to stage a comeback into the realm of peace and happiness—his heritage—is agitating all serious and sane minds.

Indeed, the life of the average man flows out in a deadly stream of monotony. The eternal treadmill of eating, sleeping and working for a living; and living for eating, sleeping and working goes on till a man ultimately finds himself physically spent up and spiritually bankrupt. Charmed by the fascination of

the materialistic world and lost in the wilderness of 'Sansara' he gives little or no thought to the eternal values of life. Is it not a tragedy that the precious span of man's earthly life is frittered away without achieving the purpose for which it is created?

The purpose of human life is to blossom like a flower with joy everlasting, by abiding in the True Source of its being, and to emit its fragrance and sweetness all around. He who keeps his soul in tune with the Infinite is like the flower which has its roots in the earth, but looks up to heaven.

Man, by nature, seeks happiness. But in his ignorance he is allured by passions and pleasures of senses. As the birds of the air fall upon the grain scattered underneath the hunter's net and they are caught and become helpless, even so with the man. In his ardent pursuit of sensual gratifications, he is easily entrapped by greed and is victimized by infatuation. Attachment to earthly possessions narrows his vision and his vanity accentuates his sense of 'Ego' which is undoubtedly the barrier between him and God.

Thus the ignorant man fails to grasp the meaning and purpose of his life. Without the right knowledge of his own true nature and that of the True Source of his being, man's life is barren and is void of the fertility of infinite peace and joy.

But some youngmen, of exuberant fancy, are apt to imagine that could a man possess all earthly desirables: health, wealth, beauty, talent, power and fame—with such other minor ingredients, he would have all that is required for a perfectly satisfied life.

But no, not so. The most important element of all is the Peace of Mind, lacking which, each possession

becomes a hideous torment, and the schedule of mortal goods as a whole, an intolerable burden.

Health is a commonplace. Wealth is with many. Talent and beauty God gives to not a few. Power and fame are not rare. But PEACE OF MIND—God's final gift of approval, the fondest sign of His Love, He bestows it charily. It descends upon those blessed souls that are imbued with the Love of God, the Creator. Peace of Mind is the characteristic mark of God Himself and it has always been the true goal of the considered life.

But modern man is devoid of the love of God. Stricken by psychic anxieties, cloven by emotional conflicts, beset by economic insecurities, assailed by political doubts and cynicism, man of today is a peculiarly plucked rooster as he struts along the path of civilization.

Those who are endowed with riches and appear to be happy, do none the less suffer from ailments of many kinds and have a life ever cankered with care and anxiety. They suffer for their very abundance, and more often than not, they indulge in luxuries and sensual enjoyments until they feel defeated by the demonic influence of their own powers and scorched in the fires of their baser passions.

When luxury and pleasure become a disease, pain and suffering may sometime come as a remedy from Heaven. Adversity may be a blessing in disguise, awakening the sleeping mind. Man may then try to get out of the wilderness of their sensual cravings. It is then that one begins his quest for Reality and Truth in right earnest and seeks happiness and peace. For no worldly man is really happy, however, rich he may be.

The life of the common man is invariably not one of tranquillity. It is full of wants and worries. He is very often sad and stricken with sorrow. His peace and poise of mind is frequently disturbed when misfortunes befall him. He is tormented by fits of melancholy and despair. He writhes in agony, awfully disappointed, not gaining the objects of his desire. Indeed, desires unsatisfied cause misery. Sometime the physical pangs of hunger and sickness smite him hard. Sometime he is to face the misery and worry of tangled interpersonal family relations. Sometime the loss of loved ones overwhelms him with profound grief. The infirmity and frustration of old age are unbearable and the fear of death is always haunting him. Is there any way of escape from these gnawing ills of the world? Is there any soothing remedy for the burning ills of life? These are the problems of the seeker of Truth.

To what then shall we turn to achieve the shock-proof balance of mind? Not to alcoholic drinks—though excessive drinking is being resorted to drown the sorrows of life, not to tablets for sedative repose though most of the people in the west frequently use them to get over their woes and worries. Certainly we shall not find solace in sensual indulgence and motion pictures. Neither shall we find peace in furious pursuit of wealth, which slips like quicksilver through our grasping fingers. Nor is tranquillity to be gained in the race for power and fame. Nor can even intellectualism and philosophy confer peace of mind.

Where then shall we look, at what bar shall we sue, what posture shall we take, what principles invoke, in this endless, basic and all important quest for Peace of Mind?

Worthy question, deserving of thoughtful sincere answer. The key to the problem is to be found in Guru Arjan's "Sukhmani"—PSALM OF PEACE—ETERNAL.

"My friends, O good people!
Aspiring to have peace of mind,
Abandoning all other ways, devote yourselves unto God,
Live, live ye in constant consciousness of His Divinity,
Thus peace-eternal shall be thine
Sing His praises yourselves,
And give earnest advice to others to do the same,
This love-lit devotion will take ye across the sea of life
Without the light of love, there is pain, suffering and a hell of it
Devotion means eternal life, bliss and union with the Beloved,
It upholds even those sinking in sin—nay even drowned ones,
All troubles, all sorrow cease, nay these are even rooted out,
If ye lovingly and consciously repeat, O Nanak,
The Name of the Lord,
Who is the Treasure-House of all excellences

(Guru Arjan Sukhmani 20-5)
Translated.

Thus speaks Guru Nanak:—

"If a man sings of God and hears of Him
And lets love of God sprout within him,
His all sorrow shall depart,
And in the soul, God will create abiding peace "

(Translation From Jappi)

At another place he says:

"Everyone seems worried and care-ridden;
He alone gets peace and becomes care-free
Who cherisheth the One God in his heart "

(Translated from Dakhu Onkar)

"If thou seekest perpetual peace
And everlasting joy, O Nanak,
Dwell thou ever on thy Lord "

(Guru Arjun : Rag Todi)

Translated

Guru Nank gives us a fundamental formula for peace, joy and bliss: rise at the ambrosial hours of the fragrant dawn and meditate upon:—

"There is but One God—Manifested & Unmanifested One,
The Eternal and All Pervading Divine Spirit,
The Creator, The Supreme Being (omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent)

Without fear, Without enmity,
 Immortal Reality,
 Unborn, Self-Existent,
 Realized through the Grace of the Guru—the

Divine Master"

In the Sikh scriptures, there are many other quotations, which, though differently worded, have the same bearing and lay stress on the same point.

Indeed, in every age poets, prophets, saints and mystics have humbly acknowledged that all peace proceeds from God, and that to find it, we must find Him. This has been the sum of man's wisdom from time immemorial that there is no rest till we find rest in Him.

But we are like stubborn, wilful invalids who know they are ill but will not accept the sharp prescription of cure. Yet until we do so there can be no hope for recovery.

Man gropes in darkness, and in pursuit of peace and happiness makes countless fitful efforts but all to no avail. If, however, by good fortune, a seeker of Truth comes in contact with a person who has the living experience of Spirit of God in man, he gets right guidance and faith comes to him.

There are, of course, a handful of men, who are perhaps as rare as oasis in a desert, who bloom with the joy of the Spirit that dwells in them and flourish like fragrant and beautiful roses. In this age of fierce turmoil and harrowing doubts, they live a calm and cool life, above baser passions such as lust, anger, greed, attachment and conceit. Such men as these possess the subjective control over their minds or the desireless contact with the objects of attraction; for they have taken refuge in the Supreme Soul that is inherently calm and tranquil and satisfied in its own delight.

Such God-blessed souls are always meek and sweet and free from the tentacles of egoism. They do not assert themselves. Nor do they seek self-glorification. They always sing the praises of the Lord and exhort others to do the same. He who has himself realized the Truth, he leads others to the same goal. He expects no remuneration for what he does. His activity is based on love and sympathy. The distinctive sign of such a saint is:

“He who never forgetteth God, even for a moment
And whose mind ever cherisheth the Lord’s Name
Blessed is he, Nanak;
For perfect saint is he alone.” (Translated)

When an aspirant comes into association of such a spirit-born person, he begins to practise the presence of God by consciously repeating His Name and singing His glories. He begins to live by ‘Gurbani’—the Divine Word, that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. For he comes to realise that the Word of God purifies the mind and nourishes the soul. Those who fail to live by ‘Gurbani’ suffer spiritual starvation.

By prayer, praise (singing of Guru’s hymns in praise of God) and by contemplation upon Nam—All-Pervading Divine Spirit, the mind is washed clean of the dirt of sins sticking to it. And love of God is awakened in the heart. Nam acts like a balm that heals the wounded soul, wounded by sin, grief or distress in life.

By constant loving remembrance of the Lord in the heart, ‘Nam-Ras’—Amritam or Elixer of Life wells up within us. When we once have a taste of this sweet savour of ‘Nam-Ras’, all other ‘rasas’—savours become insipid and tasteless. Not until this

Ambrosial Nam fills the heart, can the mind be subdued. It then no more flutters in passions' flame, but remains self-restrained and begins to look within; instead of running out after objects of temptations. The man then keeps wide awake in this world of illusion and lives a pure life by thought, word and deed. As the man continues to practise the presence of God and sings His praises, a day comes when the veil of 'Egoism' that blurs man's vision of Truth and Reality is rent asunder. And by the Grace of the Guru (Divine Master) the soul of man comes in blissful contact of the Supreme Soul—already within him. The man is then transformed and achieves perfect peace of mind, inner tranquillity, and everlasting joy.

“With the coming of spring,
The whole vegetation blossoms out,
In the same way
With the coming of inner devotion to God
All sentient creatures have an inner blossoming
And the mind becomes fresh and green,
Day and night repeating the Name of the Lord
They wash away all egoism by the Grace of the Guru ”

(Guru Amar Das Rag Basant)
Translated

“In his heart arise,
Millions of songs of rejoicing,
In whose soul and body
The Lord, the Primal Joy, indwelleth ”

(Guru Arjan Rag Bihagra)
Translated

“It is perpetual spring for those,
In whose heart dwelleth the Beloved Lord,
But those self-willed from whom the Beloved is away
Keep on burning day and night as if on pyre ”

(Guru Arjan Rag Basant)
Translated

Thus transformed and enlightened individual no longer wishes what he once wished for. The desires formerly irresistible to him, no longer torment him. His perception of life is now different from those of worldly people. His eyes see what those around him do not see. They see the world and its affinities as solid realities while he himself, with the depth of his vision comprehends that there are greater values than those of this earth. And before those, these facts of this world are, as though they were mere fictions, transitory and fleeting.

The enlightened man's values of life are derived from lofty spiritual ideals in which the love of God and the service of humanity are predominant. He is not idle and indolent. He works to promote wealth and plenty out of a spirit of fraternity but not out of selfishness or greed. It is the moral and spiritual perfection of life that he seeks and not material glory and greatness. Truly it is he, who deems work as worship.

But today have we not turned our faces away from God,—the Great Sun of Reality—and thoughtlessly mistaken the shadow for the substance and pursued it in an endless chase? If only we turn our faces towards Him, the Reality, the illusory shadow would follow us of itself. Doubt and delusion, what they call 'Maya' indeed beguiles man and misleads him; so that he gambles away his valuable life for a mere trifle and trash. The spiritually ignorant man, therefore, casts away the pearls of eternal values for the pebbles of temporal gain.

"Thou hast been given this human body,
Now this is thy opportunity to meet God, the Lord;
Of no avail would be thy other activities.

Seek the company of the holy and contemplate on Nam.
Swim across the sea of life and fulfil the life's purpose.
Thy life is being wasted away
In attachment to the world's illusion."

(Guru Arjan: Rag Asa)
Translated.

At some stage or other of our lives, the truth may dawn on us that the world that we live in, is not a mere playground purely for our amusement. God has created us for a definite purpose. And we have no right to lead a life of purely selfish ends. But while we decide to live for our own joy, apparently we suffer for it. We should understand that we are here as in a school. If we try to play in school, God, our Supreme Master, does not mind; for he loves His children like a father and likes to see them happy. But in our playing we neglect our lessons and do not see how much there is to learn. Furthermore we do not care. Like the school master who admonishes the children who neglect their studies at school, the Lord cares for us and in His own gentle way speaks to us. Sometimes a look is enough and it brings us back to our senses. Did not Peter repent and shed bitter tears of remorse when Jesus looked towards him, when he had three times disowned the Master? Do we respond to His gentle knock at the door of our hearts? Or do we wait for Him to startle us with a louder voice? Perhaps he has to speak to us louder when we do not heed. It could be like a thunder-clap startling the stillness of a summer night to set us right. It, therefore, behoves us to discipline ourselves. Discipline in life is an essential preparation for meeting the Lord, our Master.

'Maya' or illusion causes us to identify ourselves entirely with our bodies thereby drifting us into

a state of forgetfulness, where we fail to see that our own self is the spirit or soul within our physical frame. The body is the vehicle and the spirit is its rider. We irrationally attach greater importance to the vehicle than to the rider and place the vehicle above the rider. The soul suffers total neglect as we deceive ourselves, craving for and cherishing only our physical necessities. Indeed, the real cause of man's pain and sufferings is, that illusion had created wrong values of things and he had forgotten his real self.

In the dark wilderness of our ignorance, we have lost the path of righteousness and gone astray and, therefore, there is suffering and pain; even as a child going astray in a lovely garden finds himself amidst thorns and briars. God had created the world like a beautiful garden. There are in it, no doubt, some thorns along with roses. But those little children that tread the path in this world-garden holding on to the Finger of the Father, enjoy it and are happy. They do not ramble into the way-side thorny bushes and are not bruised by them.

On occasions little children accompany their mothers to a festival or fair. They make merry and thoroughly enjoy themselves. As long as the child is under the guidance of his mother, he delights in the show. If unfortunately the child leaves the guiding hand of his mother and misses in the fair, the child frets and cries in distress. The hitherto delightful world of the child now crumbles into a miserable one of loneliness and despair.

Similarly in this great world-fair we have somehow left the guiding-hand of our Father. Consequently we go astray and are lost and forlorn. Therefore, there is suffering and pain. The root cause of all

ills is our total negligence of God. We go into a state of oblivion where we totally lose sight of His Omnipresence and fall easy victims to evil.

Religion is the link that binds man with his Creator. A man that abides in Him, lives in a joyous and exalted state, where his spirit revels in the riches of Divine Love. All the wealth of the world cannot give him the peace and joy that spiritual wealth brings him. When the link between God and man snaps, man is helpless and of little worth, like a kite that floats for a short while without anchor and soon drops off. Religion being the bedrock of our living, we feel the supreme need to fall back on it for strength and support.

A school of thought exists which lays down that in the modern scientific age, there is no place for religion; for religious dogmas and traditions cannot face the challenge of Scientific truths. It is true that Christianity (the great religion of the West) has lost the inner meanings of some centuries-old biblical stories and fables, such as that of Garden of Eden, and it had taken these myths as plain statements of facts and so there began a great estrangement between science and religion. But now these fables that were coined long long ago to illustrate some useful truth are no more considered as having any basis in fact. When these, as well as Hindu Puranic myths are admitted as mere fictions and not facts, there can be no valid challenge of science to religion on the basis of these stories. Nor has religion anything to challenge in science.

In fact there can be no contradiction between the findings of science and religion; for they are both concerned with entirely different aspects of human

knowledge. Science deals with the objective world of the matter around us; while religion is concerned with the man himself or the subjective world of soul. There is now a growing realization in the West that science has not told the whole story. It cannot do so. For it gives exclusively the knowledge of the matter. But something more is needed for living a fuller and more satisfying life.

Unfortunately in India and elsewhere, today, the brilliant achievements of science have dazzled the eyes of youth and have not enabled them to appreciate the values of religion. Communist propaganda against religion also left its mark. The communists preached what they called militant atheism and coined an arsenal of abusive words against religion. It was, as it appeared, quite a deplorable state. But now the trend has changed. These attacks upon religion are now becoming out-dated. It cannot be denied, however, that religion has sometimes been abused by politicians and even by so called religious leaders who clamoured for power. But at no time in history, have any apostle of faith, or true seekers of God in any religion exploited their faith for selfish ends. All the great religious teachers championed the cause of truth and in them the weak and the down-trodden found their unflinching supporters.

There are many systems of faith in the world. But unfortunately what passes on for religion often appears to contain more of husk than kernel. For in some of the hoary religions, the Spirit of Truth is buried deep under heap of senseless dogmas, meaningless rituals and bundles of ceremonies. Ever so many absurd superstitions have been associated with religion. They are like the thick clouds in the sky

obscuring the Light of the Day. This darkness of ignorance and hypocrisy of the priestly class need to be cleared in order to understand the true religion in its pristine glory.

In this book I have tried to explain what is the true meaning of religion and why it is necessary and indispensable for the proper development of human character. Indeed, it is not worthwhile to live without religion, that is, without a knowledge of good and evil beyond the animal instinct, and without a knowledge of one's ownself and that of one's Creator. There can be no peace or abiding happiness unless we know ourselves and find God in our life. The purpose of human life is to seek Him and abide in Him.

In this book, I have attempted to portray glimpses of the Divine Masters, Guru Nanak to Guru Gobind Singh (1469-1708 A.D.). The God-illuminated hearts of the Gurus, in direct and constant touch with the Eternal Reality, have shown to mankind the true way of life. They enlightened us to the Path of Truth, Love and Service. Those who endeavour to follow this Path are known as Sikhs. Sikhism is a sovereign religion. It is a new, original and direct revelation. This faith is crystal—clear and is like the new dawn so pure, fresh and fragrant that the moment we have a glimpse of it, we voluntarily, and instinctly relinquish all existing time-rotten notions, such views that have been contaminated and polluted by self-seeking and spiritually blind priests, who are mainly responsible for all this degeneration. Fortunately we have no priest class in Sikh religion.

Sikhism is, in fact, divinity taught through Guru Nanak in the form of Ten Gurus and now

through Guru Granth Sahib, the Embodiment of the Divine Word. Sikhism is a Way of Life, and a practical one, leading man straight to his goal, and does not involve itself in verbose theorising.

The Gurus brought about a new consciousness, a new awakening in men, shaking the foundation of the time-worn society.

Religion, as taught by the Gurus, is thus the art of living a beautiful flower-like life, a life of fullness in all its aspects, a life of Light, Love and Service, a life filled with the fire and fervour of God, a life of vigour, vitality and valour in the midst of perils. This life of inspiration is the gift of the Master. Man achieves this illumination through His goodwill and grace.

In this book, I have also endeavoured to depict the Sikh Thought and Way of Life in simple and brief outline so as to acquaint the busy readers with them at once.

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to the authors I have consulted and upon some of whom I have drawn freely for exposition of the various aspects of this great religion, which has something of special value to say to the rest of the world. Finally, I offer my thanks to Mrs. Sulochana Balraj, towards her help rendered in editing this book.

NEW DELHI—5 }
Ist August, 1964 }

RANBIR SINGH

The best of religions ?
A thirst for the Divine !
And the goodness of action !

(Guru Arjan: Sukhmani)
Translated

(b) Religion and its Necessity

THE average young man of to-day is wholly indifferent to religion. He believes that religion has no place in modern life, and he is so convinced of the soundness of his own belief that he will openly confess it and argue about it.

In this age of materialism, men are face to face with the grim realities of life such as problems of unemployment, labour, wages etc. These are the thoughts that occupy the modern mind, and not God who feeds even the worms in the heart of a rock. People have no time nor taste for personal regeneration and culture, they have no desire to become good men, or to cultivate finer emotions. For no salary attaches to personal culture and a good life brings no cash.

Here I am reminded of an anecdote. A man was sitting in midday summer sun. A passerby said to him, "Please get up, and sit somewhere under the shade." The man replied: "What will you give if I go under the shade?" "Nothing!" said the passerby, "You may keep sitting where you are." "Then what will you pay if I remain where I am." Is it not the same attitude of the modern man towards life? He wants to value every thing he does in terms of money.

Materialistic Upsurge: People find themselves enmeshed in the deadly economic struggle. "God", they say, "if there be any, let Him be, we do not want Him." The question primarily is of the stomach—of hunger and thirst. What a tragedy that

the most enlightened and civilised age in the annals of mankind should degenerate man and drive him back to the primal instinct of the savage man! Man sells his soul for a mess of pottage.

Socialists claim that they have found the panacea. Of course, socialism is a popular doctrine of the present day. It has some good aspects. It aims at bringing about an approximate equality of fortunes between individuals and as such there is no incompatibility between the ideals of a true and untarnished religion and those of socialism. Both abhor and detest class and caste distinctions. But socialism is based on the mere equality of stomachs and therefore it cannot think beyond material needs; thus it lacks the essential virtues to make it a real success. It can only succeed if it creates the spirit of fraternity and willing renunciation. Selfish and greedy persons fail to do social justice. They tend to be corrupt and arrogant. Men must be actuated by high spiritual ideals, to willingly share the fruits of their honest labour with other labourers in a spirit of brotherliness. Selfishness and greed in men can only be overcome by love of God and service to humanity. We have to learn from religion how to make our lives pure, righteous and sublime.

True Renunciation: The true renunciation of the individual is dedication to society or state. It can only come when the state is identified with the Beloved, and man lives elevated above the sordid details of rights and might, and finds better occupation in his love. Like trees, he drives his struggle below the ground and his blossoms and fruits are up in the air. In spontaneous renunciation of his little self in the love of the Lord, he freely distributes the fruits of his

labour, almost subconsciously. The state needs to be organised on the rich love of man for man.

Material progress, with a higher standard of living and equality of status, should not lead us to neglect our mental and spiritual developments which are of greater significance and value; otherwise it will be one-sided advancement and unsatisfying achievement, and giving a free rein to selfish ambition and moral degradation. But modern Socialists and their extreme type, the Communists, through their miserably narrow view of human life, hold that man lives by 'Bread' alone. Of course, it must be admitted that 'Bread' is a grim reality and man the animal cannot live without it. But to glorify this physical necessity and totally forget and ignore the mind and the spirit, is the outcome of ignorance and blindness to higher values. Our bullocks and horses eat and eat all the day long. Miserable would man be, if he were to eat and drink all the time. The more we subordinate the physical life to the intellectual, the intellectual to the intuitional and spiritual, the higher we ascend towards reality and God.

Rise of Communism: Communism has been an upheaval in protest against despotic kings and ruthless capitalists. Of course the gross type of capitalism is reprehensible. It is disheartening when we contemplate how man neglects man and denies him the necessities of life. Where the spirit of God truly prevails, no one should be hungry. God's children must have a hospitable feasting with bread, love and faith. But communism in its savage struggle for 'Bread' has thrown to the winds all the moral and spiritual values. Man's hunger and greed shattered

the beautiful vision of the life of the spirit. And, without the life of the spirit, selfishness in man which is the root cause of all troubles, cannot be got rid of. Selfishness is transcended by love of God alone. By living in Him, in love of Him, man attains his manhood which is ever divine and unselfish. Without Him, there would be moral degradation and bankruptcy of spirit, bringing down man to the level of brutes ready to jump upon each other.

Religious Impostors: There are some people, who want to do away with religion because it leads to communal fights and retards progress. It is true that sometimes, politicians and other people with motives behind become custodians of religion. These impostors exploit religion for their own ends. Their followers become fanatical and fight, and thus, religion becomes instrumental in keeping the people in bondage and superstitions. These cunning and crafty people misuse religion. And, therefore, people sometimes become disgusted with religion. But there are always some wiser people in the world who cannot be misled by these impostors. They see through the game and realize that these human-wolves wearing the garb of lambs are out to deceive them. They become wary of them and warn others of the danger. They remove the moss from off the surface and discover that there is priceless treasure underneath.

There are still others who think religion to be a mere belief in myths and miracles, or in some such dogmas. They take religion for a mere formalism which consists of ringing of bells and cymbals in temples, and several other ceremonies, rites and rituals. The more sensible people consider all this an

absurd waste of time, and unfortunately they forsake religion altogether.

True Meaning of Religion: But religion, by which we mean 'Dharma' as distinguished from different systems of faith and worship, is the essential nature of a thing without which that thing can never exist. Thus the power of burning is the Dharma of fire. Man is essentially a divine being. God made the soul of man after his own image—

"O man, thou art a radiant being divine in essence,
Discover thyself and the source whence thou hast come."

(Guru Nanak)

Translated.

There is an eternal yearning for God lying dormant in the heart of man. Man's desire cannot be satiated and he can have no peace unless he discovers his antecedents. But divinity lies deep within our beings. We do not perceive it as long as our sense of self that is 'Ego' obstructs our vision. Just as light cannot be seen through smoky glass, so God's Light cannot be seen through the veil of 'Ego', though all the while God is within every one of us, One-in-All and All-in-One.

Lust, anger, greed, attachment and conceit all these impurities are the offshoots of Egoism. So long as these sway our minds, we behave, more often than not, like brutes. Our impurities not only fill the cup of our misery but also bring untold sufferings upon others. However, as human beings we are endowed with the power of removing all impurities from our minds and of becoming godly in all our bearings. On the other hand if we revel in these impurities, we continue to live in this mire and go astray from sin to sin.

Suffering & Sacrifice Involved: Now religion is a life of discipline and self-purification. Toilers after this life have to hammer out virtues in their dealings with other men through constant suffering and sacrifice. Thus by selfless service, by association with inspired souls and by singing God's praises, man's mind becomes purer, and he acquires greater strength till one day he rises above nature and is exuberant with joy, love and wisdom. Nothing can disturb the peace of his mind. He knows no misery, no grief, no fear. His face glows with divine joy, his conduct marks him out as a man of God. His selfless love flows alike to all. His contact brings strength, purity and solace to all who come near to him. He alone can be said to be a truly religious man.

So religion or Dharma is not mere creeds or a bundle of senseless dogmas and meaningless rituals and ceremonies as some people hold, though these may have a secondary place. Much of this crude stuff has been included in old religions by ignorant and spiritually dead priests. Guru Nanak separated the husk from the kernel and presented religion or Dharma in its essence—in pure crystal form. Religion as taught by Guru Nanak is the art of living a pure and a beautiful life—life in its fullness, in all its aspects. And, this is attained by keeping the Divine Light aflame, that is by constant abiding in Nam. It is the life of light, love and service. (*Gyan, Prem and Seva*). The goal of life is to meet God, not after death in some unknown region, but now and here, in this very life. Now religion teaches us how we can attain to this blessed goal. This is why religion is something immensely practical.

The Existence of God: But there are sceptics among men who deny God. For the non-believers in God a little reasoning helps; though our belief in God is not based on mere reason, but it is based on experience and realization.

Suppose you were standing on the sea-shore witnessing a big ship drawing along-side the harbour. If someone were to say to you, "A lot of people think that the ship is the result of someone's carefully designed plans, but I know better. There was really no intelligence at work on it at all. The iron, by some mysterious process, gradually came out of the earth and fashioned itself into plates. Slowly holes were formed at the edges of these plates and rivets appeared too, flattening themselves out on either side. After a long time, by the same process, the engines were in place until one fine day men on the sea-shore found her floating quietly in a sheltered cove."

You would definitely consider him a lunatic, and would move away to escape his senseless chatter. *Why, you know that where there is a design, there must be a designer*, and having seen other productions of the human mind, just like a steamer in question, you would refuse to believe that it was not planned by human intelligence and built by human skill.

Yet there are men not considered fools who tell us that the world and the whole solar system evolved from its nebulous state merely by chance, and there was really no higher intelligence at work on it. It is quite inconceivable that blind matter of its own accord could have set itself to form all the wonderful fauna and flora that we see in this world. Obviously all this orderly harmony in the universe would be

impossible without a co-ordinating power behind it to give impetus to this extraordinary development and direct its course to the common end and purpose.

The unbelievers, however, offer us the anomaly of design without a designer, of creation without a creator, of effect without cause; and to escape from this dilemma, they ask, if God be considered the 'First great cause', then account for Him! Who made God? Such a question contradicts itself; for it is evident that no cause could make the first cause, or the first cause would then become the second cause; while we are bound eventually by deduction to arrive at the First Cause. So God is Self-Existent, Self-Radiant and Ultimate Reality, Infinite and beyond comprehension of the finites. Behind the co-operating forces of nature, which aim at a purpose, we must admit a cause, inconceivable in its nature, of which we can only say one thing with certainty, and that is, it must be Divine. Because, there is a design, and orderly harmony in the universe and a purpose behind every creation and wisdom manifested in all nature, it is obvious that there is a Supreme Being, the Highest Intelligence.

But it is not by reason alone that we know and believe that there is God. The knowledge about God and His existence has been based on rational personal experience. It has not been based on mere conjecture. The Master-Spirits felt and realized the presence of God. It was not an idea or conception; but a Reality. With the philosophers, God might be abstract, a mere notion. but with the mystics, God is not an idea but a fact; not something abstract but a Reality, a presence and an entity that warms and uplifts. A mere philosopher cannot find God; for he lacks the inner eye and

grotes in the dark. He remains enmeshed in the knots of his thoughts, unable to extricate himself from the entanglements or find either end of the cord. The mystic on the other hand sees Reality like the sun at dawn, and is radiant under its rays.

Science & Religion: Some people hold that there is antagonism between science and religion. They think that religion has outlived its utility and that it cannot be appreciated in this scientific age. They forget that modern physical science is the objective science of the matter, the knowledge of which comes to us by our outer senses. But religion is a subjective science—science of the man himself. It is not for the physical scientists to pronounce opinions on ‘Soul’, ‘Existence of God’ or ‘What happens after death’. For this is beyond their sphere of knowledge. Their investigations concern the matter, its action and interaction. They can probe into nature or creation. But the Creator—the Master of Nature is beyond the limits of their field of knowledge and grasp. The physical laboratory and its apparatus are not applicable to the subjective realm of ‘Soul’ and ‘God’. In the inner realms, ‘the field of knowledge’, ‘the knower’ and that ‘to be known’ all become one when Truth dawns. Then the whole universe appears one continuous beam of light merging into the Supreme Light—The Reality Behind.

Human mind and intellect are all limited; while God, is Unlimited, Infinite and Absolute Truth and is, therefore, beyond the wings of intellect. The approach of religion, however, is subjective, beyond the five senses, above mind and intellect. It is by His Grace, by His Inspiration that

Divine Light dawns upon man in a state which is beyond the three modes of matter and transcends time, space and causality. As God's existence is on subjective plane, we cannot see Him with these physical eyes. The eyes that discern Him are different. It is with the 'Inner Eye' that we see the Divine Light. This Inner Eye is a rare gift. It invariably lies hidden, in a dormant state. We have to contemplate on Nam (The Divine Spirit) to awaken it. But as long as we do not acquire this vision, we do not understand what Divine Light means.

In a lecture on the "The Reality of the Unseen" Sir Oliver Lodge remarked, "The researches of science justified the view that there lay a higher Reality than anything in the ordinary daily life and if we could catch a glimpse of that Reality, we must have a kind of sense different from ordinary material sense, which has come down in the process of evolution. . . ." Some people are, however, gifted with intuition. Those who are gifted with this sense see what we ordinary people do not see and comprehend. Intuitive knowledge is different from deductive knowledge. Intuition is not reasoning, not feeling or the power of will alone, it is a combination of all three and, in its unity, it transcends all of them. It may be termed as Super-Consciousness.

A Transforming Experience: Religion is a transforming experience. It is not a theory of God, but a spiritual consciousness, an insight into Reality. Even those who are the children of science and reason must submit to the fact of spiritual experience, which is primary and positive. When a man gets the life of the spirit, he experiences that every aspect of his being

is raised to its zenith. All the senses fuse, the whole mind leaps forward and realises in one quivering instant such things as cannot be expressed. Though it is beyond the power of speech or concept of the mind or perception of the intellect, yet the longing and the love of the soul, its desire and anxiety, its search and experience are filled with the highest purpose. This is religion—not a mere discussion of the existence of God. Some of the mystics, who are advanced in spiritual life, feel as if they perceived, and tasted God and communed with Him. They have a sort of vision of the soul, the power by which spiritual things are apprehended, just as material things are apprehended by physical senses. Without these spiritual assets, mere scientific achievements would tend to destroy us.

For long, physical science groped in darkness and placed matter above spirit, formulating a mechanical explanation of the nature of cosmic energy. But during the last few years the concept has changed. In the words of Kirtley F. Mather: “.the nearest approach we have thus far made to the ultimate in our analysis of matter and of energy indicates that the universal reality is mind. The truth is, not matter, not force, not any physical thing but mind and personality is the eternal fact of the universe.”

This is now supported by J.B.S. Haldane as indeed by all advanced physicists. Albert Einstein said: “I believe in God of Spinoza, who reveals Himself in the orderly harmony of the universe. I believe that intelligence is manifested throughout all nature.”

However, knowledge of modern science or technology does not reduce human greed, lust or anger. Indeed scientific and technological knowledge has no-

thing to do with criminal stirrings in the mind. On the contrary, it finds fresh tools for evil and actually facilitates greater indulgence in all forms of greed, lust and anger.

Science tells nothing about any purpose in life. Nor did man, so powerful in his control of nature, has the power to control himself, and the monster he has created may run amuck and destroy the civilization he has built.

Formation of Character: The only thing that can prevent or restrain these evils is the religious sense, which is sustained by continuous remembrance of God. It is religion that fortifies man against temptations and gives him courage to live, work and die for noble causes.

A question can be rightly asked: Can't the ethical and moral teachings alone lead a man to evolve good conduct? Most of the intellectuals to-day would answer that they can. They hold the view that they can form good moral character while doing away with God and religion.

This view is utterly wrong, based on sheer ignorance of the root causes of evil, vice and sin. It is man's ignorance of Reality and of spiritual values that is the basis of all selfishness in him. It is selfishness that makes man desire and promote his own ends, at the expense of greater whole. What is wrong with us is, that our minds are attracted by earthly magnets—worldly temptations that encompass us and lead us astray.

How can Mind be Disciplined? As a first step, we must draw back our senses when they are

inclined to rush out to seize and enjoy an object, draw them away from their object, as the tortoise draws his limbs into the shell when attacked.

Our sense organs are like unto horses, the mind is the rein, the intellect the charioteer, the soul is the rider and the body is the chariot. If the horses are very strong and they do not obey the reins, and if the charioteer—the intellect—does not know how to control the horses, then the chariot and the rider will come to grief.

But the control of the intellect over the mind is never strong enough. The control is soon lost and the mind craves for the fulfilment of its desires. Even if one isolates oneself and keeps away from the objects of temptations, one cannot get rid of the base desires, the likes and dislikes. They continue to remain. Experience has shown that if a man gains all his ambitions and acquires great wealth and luxuries, still his mind is not contented. Nor is he at peace. No resolutions, no amount of will-power can alter his inner cravings and desires. No moral teachings, that seek to evolve good conduct without furnishing a sanction for it, can achieve the purpose.

Basis of Morality: Morality may run for some time on a previously acquired religious momentum, but when the momentum is spent, it stops dead. Morals cannot stand on their own feet, but to be effective, they must be based on religion or contemplation of the Supreme Being.

The morality of some takes its sanction from the fear of the police. There are others whose morality draws sanction from the requirements of social expediency. But the morality of a truly religious man

draws its sanction from a higher source. The religious man acts morally, not because it is expedient to do so, but because of his inner urge to do the right and eschew the wrong.

A salesman or a shop assistant will 'control' his temper merely to secure orders or keep his job. A society lady may 'school' herself in the same manner to remain 'sweet'. The modern educated man thus looks good merely because he is outwardly groomed and polished. But inwardly he is, more often than not, grossly dull and dark. For he desires to do the wrong but restrains himself for a while. This is not genuine goodness. The so called civilised man of today is hiding iron claws under soft gloves. Like a wolf, he is ready to pounce on others as he gets an opportunity to do so. In his egoism, materialism, and sensualism, man has turned his back upon God—the Sun of Reality and is running after the shadow, pining in anguish and mental suffering and heading towards moral bankruptcy.

The question is then how to control the mind; so that we can have desireless contact with the objects of attraction. The mind is fickle; greed and lust abide in it and hence it cannot remain stable. It wavers and craves for pleasures and revels in vicious desires. It has become dark with the sins of ages and, like the oilman's rag, hundreds of washings cannot make it clean. Recitations of holy books, penances, pilgrimages, religious rites and rituals, yogic exercises and all other mechanical contrivances fail and nothing avails.

A piece of charcoal
I tried to scratch off its blackness
I put it in curd,

Washed it with milk and soap in the hope
 That its blackness might turn white
 But no
 Lo ! when it was put back in fire
 It began to glow

(Dr Bhai Vir Singh)
Translated

When we thus come in contact with the Divine Spirit, the mirror of our heart is wiped bright and Nam (Divine Spirit) illumines our whole being, it is only then that we come to have a subjective control over our sense organs. And above all, the mind—the arch-rogue—is subdued. For the Master Spirit gives us the Bread of Life to eat, Nectar to drink that we shall not hunger and feel thirsty again. It is only then that our inner likes and dislikes are changed. The depraved desires and vices after which our mind used to hanker, now lose their glamour.

“O tongue, dry-parched, seared and withered
 Thou art infatuated with earthly savour
 The more thou tasteth these, the more thou art athirst,
 Thy thirst shall never be quenched by aught else,
 Not until thou obtaineth the Heavenly Elixir,
 Thou shalt then pant not, thirst not, ye, never never,
 But this Nectar is obtained only by those
 Who by good fortune come in contact with the Master Spirit”

(Guru Amar Dass Anand Sahib)
Translated

“He who drinketh the Lord’s Essence is forever intoxicated,
 All other intoxications wear off in a moment
 Imbued with the Lord’s Essence, the mind is ever in bloom and bliss,
 While intoxication of worldly savours bring one to woe and care
 He who drinketh the Lord’s Drink is for ever in Ecstasy
 But all other drinks are futile (Pause)
 The Heavenly Elixir is invaluable,
 And it is at the Saints’ stores that it is available
 It cannot be had even though one may spend millions upon millions
 He who attaineth to the company of the inspired persons, him the Lord
 giveth

Nanak is wonder-struck tasting the Lord's Essence,
 Yea, he, by the Guru's Grace, hath tasted its taste,
 And then it leaveth him not here, or hereafter,
 Nanak is so inebriated with the Lord's Essence.

(Guru Arjan : Rag Asa Tipadas)

Guru Tegh Bahadur thus speaks in the 1st person while describing the condition of the mind of a disciple as he gets the Divine Light embedded in his soul.

“Mother O! I have obtained the wealth of God's Name
 My mind no more flutters in passions' flame
 It has found peace in self-restraint.
 All attachments of the senses have ebbed and waned,
 The Light of Pure Wisdom now with me remains.
 From greed and low cravings the mind is detached
 To love of God it is deeply attached.
 When the precious pearl of Divine Name I availed
 The delusion that from many past lives prevailed
 Has now been unveiled.
 The flames of desires in the mind are no more
 I found in self, full comfort of the soul!
 He who is blessed by the merciful God
 Sings the songs of the glory of the Lord.
 Saith Nanak such precious wealth
 Some rare enlightened persons through Guru's Grace get.”

(Guru Tegh Bahadur)
Translated

The wonderful thing is that when we take refuge at the Lotus Feet of the Lord, He removes from our hearts, the very impulse to do wrong. Our minds then do not go astray, but remain stable. Our actions become automatically good and we then lead a highly moral life.

Cardinal Sin: But a mere moral life, consisting of principles of piety is not of much worth. The sin of sins is the very forgetfulness of God, the Lord. A plot of land may be ploughed, harrowed and manured but nothing will be produced in it until seed is sown in

it. Likewise a mere moral life is of no avail, if the Seed of Faith is not put in the soil of the heart and if Love for God has not yet sprung.

Similarly an uninspired life, whether virtuous or vicious is almost equally valueless. What really makes difference is the Glow of His Love when it dawns on man as a divine inspiration. A thousand sinners like Mary Magdelene, before meeting Jesus Christ, a thousand Marthas as pious house-wives, mean little, but Mary after having seen the Master is a changed individual, quite different from others. She had a vision which others had not. It is this inner Glow of Life which uplifts the spirit of man that matters.

O Saki, pour into my heart a drop of Thy Life-Giving Wine of Light, break our principles of piety and erase our names from the list of the 'Moralists' that drink not the 'Nectar of Life' and love not the Lord.

"O ignorant man! Realise, how wondrous is thy Maker!
 From what origin, He brought thee up and gave this beautiful existence,
 He made thee, fashioned thee like an artist,
 And gave it those subtle touches, that made thee look so charming,
 How in the mother's womb, He miraculously brought thee up.
 Milk was given unto you, while you were just a babe,
 And then the handsome youth!
 All comforts of life provided unto you,
 The old man! so many persons around you, your friends and relatives
 Well, you just sit there in your bed, you ask for a thing,
 And they bring it unto you,
 The blessings from the Lord, . . .
 . . .you realise not, the value of these blessings
 Ingratitude!
 Mercy of the Lord on you, O man!"

"Grace of the Lord unto you—you enjoy the comforts of heaven upon
 this earth,
 You have those moments of intense happiness,
 The blessed company of your friends,

Your brothers, wife and your sons,
 The cool, life-giving water you drink,
 The air, the fire, those priceless things,
 The countless other things of life,
 all of them for your comfort and peace,
 Just think, what precious things are:
 The hands, the feet, the ears, the eyes, the power of speech,
 These blessings from the Divine Lord !
 And your ingratitude !
 You receive the blessings and enjoy them !
 And forget the Blessor,
 What sin!
 Folly . . . blindness . . . I may say
 Mercy of the Lord on you, o man . . . !”

“Divine Lord saves you from harm,
 sustains you throughout life,
 You have never felt devoted unto Him, O ignorant man,
 By whose grace you have all these boons and rich treasures,
 It becomes a duty unto you, that you love Him.
 But like a blind person, you think that the Lord is away from you, as
 nowhere!
 That Lord is Omnipresent,
 His Grace will bring you honour here and hereafter,
 But you forget Him,
 That’s your folly and ignorance,
 You are always apt to go astray, O Man . . .
 But the mercy of the Lord is infinite, your hope in that”

“The man throws away the pearl!
 And thinks that empty shell is the precious thing,
 He forsakes the True One, and lives absorbed in falsehood,
 The transient things of passing value, he thinks them everlasting,
 The things that bring him immortality he keeps himself detached from
 them,
 An ass! What the sweet fragrance unto him!
 A roll in the dust—the pleasure of the animal,
 In the pitch darkness of ignorance!
 May the benevolence of the Lord help you, O man.

(Guru Arjan’s Sukhmani)

Ashatpadi 4

1—4

Translated.

The fact is, as long as man remains attached to his flesh, and hankers after objects of pleasure in utter forgetfulness of God, the Lord, he is a poor miserable

little creature buffeted helplessly by every turn of fortune.

Identifying himself wholly with the physical self and sense-organs, man appears during this stage to be a bond-slave of passions, swayed by anger, malice, lust, conceit and above all by selfishness. His soul or his ownself is clouded by his turbid mind and he is living in darkness. Unless the veil of egoism is rent by abiding in Nam or the Divine Spirit, man remains under the influence of Maya or illusion and is led away from sin to sin. He is still, so to say, almost at the animal stage of life.

Religion is meant for men and not for animals. Among sheep, cows and tigers, there can be no religion. To a materialist, life is like an arrow shot from darkness to darkness. In him, there is no urge to rise above animal life, no perfection to be achieved. To him, religion is indeed 'an opiate to the people' and 'a conspiracy of the rich'! This would indeed be the opinion of the animal world also if we could preach religion to them.

Religion is the balm to the agonised mind that remains perturbed; even when endowed with all the best in life. Man longs for happiness and peace which mere possession of wealth alone cannot bring. How, then can he seek happiness? This is an age-old question, the answer to which is sought from time immemorial.

Consider a flower—a rose. How it is blooming with joy. It radiates its joy all around. It spreads its fragrance on all sides without asking, without knowing. It is a symbol of the joy of life. A person is happy only if he carries out the function for which he was created.

Purpose of Life: You may well ask what is the purpose for which man is created? The Guru gives an answer to this great question:—

“Having gained a human body
A rare opportunity is thine
This is thy turn to meet the Lord
Other activities will bear no fruit
In the company of the saints
Learn to adore God
Set thy mind on crossing
The sea of life.
Life is wasted, in pursuits
Of pleasures of the world.”

(Guru Arjan: Asa)
Translated.

And Guru Nanak gives us a prescription for perpetual happiness. He says: “You may have palaces of pearls set with jewels, delightful expensive perfumes and a beautiful amorous woman. You may possess occult or supernatural powers, and command a great respect from the people, you may be a great king with mighty armies at your command, yet, you will not be happy unless you realize and abide in Him. And Nam is the Key to the Kingdom of God.” (*Excerpt from Guru Nanak: Sri Rag*)

The Guru has counted all the worldly pleasures and possessions one can wish for, and with all of them, he pointed out, that man cannot be happy if he forgets Him. It is only by abiding in God that we get peace of mind. And peace of mind may transform a cottage into a spacious manor hall; the want of it can make a regal park an imprisoning nutshell.

So to speed this glorious transformation and to realize God, is the very object of human life. Every thing else is to be considered as a means to this end. Scholarship, wealth, progeny all have only secondary

values in so far as they contribute towards the advancement of realization of God. If they cannot be made to serve this purpose they are mere trash.

Sooner or later all waters must flow down to sea whence they came and so all life must ultimately go back to God in whom it was. There is no staying here anywhere. All life is transient and moves on and on the whirling wheel of transmigration in accordance with its 'karmas' or actions good or bad. And so long as man denies God and chooses to go astray from Him, there is suffering and anguish and he has many times to be thrust into the red hell of the furnace and have many times to be reborn, reshaped, re-tempered until he learns this lesson to submit and accept God as his Lord.

"Far from you, O Lord, I stray, because of actions blind;
Embrace me back, my generous Lord, be merciful and kind.
I roamed about throughout the world, I saw its places best,
But tired I feel, and feel worn out, I come to Thee for rest.

A milkless cow of no use is, no price would it secure,
A plant unless with water fed, no fruit would ever bear
The house, the town, the village small, are burning pits of fire
And toiletries, scents and body white are full of dirt and mire;

IF THERE BE NOT WITH THEM THE LORD, shall shed they
burning tears
Without my Beloved, the Master of the house,
Like death are all other friends and dears.

I humbly pray then for this gift, grant me your love, O Lord,
Unite me unto thine own Grace, my own Eternal God."

Those who surrender and love God, the Lord, they meet Him, not after death in some unknown region but here and now in this very life. The Kingdom of God is within us, only a thin veil of our egoism separates us from our Lord. To those who constantly apply

their minds to the adoration of God, the doors of Heaven are opened and they obtain salvation in this very world. They become one with the Lord, wave into wave, light into light! What mortality! No more the painful wheel of coming and going. Peace unto those blessed souls. But the sleeping mind is awakened to Reality only when by some good fortune it comes in contact with the Guru—the Divine Master. This life of inspiration is the Master's gift, when we lay our egoism like a carpet under his feet. It is to be obtained and not attained.

We may study books all our lives, we may become very intellectuals, but when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, we shall find ourselves woefully deficient and wanting. Unless the Guru-Sun rises in the firmament of a man's soul, he remains spiritually blind. Guru, the Divine Master, is the Light of the World. He is the Tree of Life and we are His branches. Those who abide in Him, 'Amrita'—the Life-Sap flows through their veins and they bloom and blossom and their fragrance spreads far and wide. They bear much fruit—they are sweet and meek and bow down with their goodness. While those that are cut off from the life source, wither, dry and perish.

Let us, therefore, always live in His presence. By consciously living in Him, moving in Him, peace, grace, and truth would spring within us like a fountain. The water of gladness will flow out and flood the deserts of our barren lives. Joy will appear raining on all sides! And there will be everlasting bliss!

The Master-Spirit is that,
That takes its touch,
Direct from the Spirit Divine !
The soul of the common man,
Comes in touch with the Master-Spirit;
And realizes the Spirit Divine.

(Guru Arjan: Sukhmani)
canto 18th
Translated.

“There is no one at par with the Guru,
I have searched and seen the whole universe.”

(Guru Arjan: Sri Rag)
Translated.

(c) Concept of Guru in Sikhism

“All hail unto the Guru—the Light Eternal
That was in the beginning,
Even before time had its birth.
All hail to the Divine Spirit,
That existed in the past infinity of ages,
All hail unto the Master Spirit, who is,
And shall ever and ever be Truth Eternal.”

(Guru Arjan: Sukhmani 1-1)
Translated.

Guru—The Divine Master: When godliness suffered an eclipse in India, when evil prevailed and falsehood overshadowed the land like a thick veil of darkness, when the path of Truth and Righteousness was lost, and the masses steeped in ignorance groaned under the atrocities committed on them in the name of the religion, it was then, that the All-Pervading Divine Spirit, that lives for ever, unfolded and manifested its attributes in human form, in order to awaken in human mind the consciousness of God, the Creator. And through this awakening and illumination to inspire and lift up the erring humanity back to God.

“*Jot sarup har ap Guru Nanak kahyo.*”

(Swayas Bhatan)

Translation: “When the Impersonal God (Nirgun Brahm) manifested His attributes in person, He was called Guru Nanak”. It was a rare phenomenon intended to fulfil God’s own purpose on earth.

Guru Nanak came to show the True Way to humanity, out of darkness of superstition and formalism. He came to cure the sickness of the soul.

The Guru, impersonally (in spirit) resting in God and His Wisdom, was a perfect channel for the expression of the Divine Will for the understanding of human intellect and through him, God poured forth into the world, Divine Word (Shabad) pregnant with Sweet Love and Light (Prem and Gyan)—a veritable Elixir of Life.

The Spirit of God, they may say, is everywhere and in all beings. No doubt, it is. But in that love-lit, blessed soul, we call the Guru, the Divine Spirit finds special expression. In others it is hidden by the sense of "I-am-ness" or egoism. Egoism, which is due to Maya (cosmic illusion) keeps one ignorant of the Light within and leads one astray from sin to sin.

Guru Nanak was born free from self-centring instincts, had no traces of egoism in his mind and he was in perfect tune with the Divine Will and could see the things in their true perspective. He was rooted in Truth—nay he was Truth himself. He was radiantly innocent, sinless by nature, pure of thought, pure of word and pure of deed. He desired nothing and took naught from anyone, but gave Life, Love and Light to all those who came in contact with him.

The term Guru, according to the Sikh faith, is applicable only to the Ten Masters—Guru Nanak and his nine successors and to Guru Granth Sahib, the embodiment of the Divine Word. God showed forth His Divine Reality through the Ten Masters, in order to recall to humanity the purpose of life on earth and in such a way that their human minds could understand and be inspired by the Guru Personality.

There are some people, however, who believe that there is no need at all for guidance from any guru. Why not go direct to the Infinite Source itself? They

say that the conscience is the inner guide and light for all.

Such people as these have not got the right conception of the term Guru, as used in the Sikh scriptures. In Hinduism, the word 'guru' applies to a teacher, particularly to a religious teacher or to one who interprets the scriptures or to a learned Brahman, who gives religious instructions. Such gurus are human and not divine. Learned persons and scholars may not require any guidance from such human gurus or teachers and they can dispense with such gurus at one stage or the other.

But in Sikhism the term Guru has a special meaning. It is used for the Divine Master, the Spiritual Enlightener, in the sense of the Cosmic Personality-Impersonal. But when he reacts on an individual, and transforms him to a new life he becomes Personal God and the consequent inspiration and companionship of his presence becomes continuous. There is a great technical difference between the Brahmanical man-worship as guru-worship and the Guru Nanak's ideal of Guru. Guru Nanak always takes care to say Sat-Guru—True Guru—The Divine Spirit that lives for ever. That is Sikh ideal of Guru consciousness.

The purpose of human life is to seek God and this aim can only be realised through the Grace of the Guru.

The doctrine of Guruship is a cardinal principle of Sikh religion and therefore forms a part of the Basic Formula (Mul-Mantar). This significant phrase in Mul-Mantar is: "Gur-Prasad"—By Guru's Grace. This phrase refers to a cosmic phenomenon that takes place when the disciple gets embedded in his soul consciousness—a nucleus of the life of the spirit,

small as a mustard grain and bright as a point of fire. Thenceforward the disciple lives inspired of it and is sustained by it. Without this Spark of Life come from Heaven, it is all sorrow, misery, distress and death. And with it glowing within man's soul, it is all joy, prosperity, freedom and immortality. It is, therefore, that the Divine Word (Gurbani) declares again and again that to cross over the Ocean of Life, the Guru's guidance and Grace are the essential prerequisites.

"Let no one in the world remain in doubt
That it could ever be possible to be saved without the Guru."

(Guru Arjan: Gond)

This Favour makes manifest to the disciple, his Personal God Who thenceforward lives in his soul and works to free him from the bondages of 'Karmas' and leads him to the Realm of Love. All religions of man are stupors without this cosmic phenomenon taking place in the soul-consciousness of man. No spiritual regeneration is possible for anyone without the Guru's Grace. When a man is thus converted, the cocoon of illusion breaks and the butterfly of the soul wings away into the Infinite rapture of the Blue. True freedom is there in that realm of the spirit and nowhere else.

Many believe in the existence of God, but owing to the predominating influence of the ego-centric instinct, man is blind to the spiritual truth. The life of the passion of which we see so much around us is a direct result of our ignorance to the spiritual values and of the selfish attitude of our minds. With a mentality darkened with self-hood, it is impossible to realize or feel the presence of God. This feeling does not come to us naturally; for there is a veil of egoism

that blurs our vision. God is beyond the wings of thought. He is beyond the plumbing of silence. Vain are the ways of men. The movements of human mind, the thousand acts of wisdom of the world, leave him dark: nothing avails.

Impelled by egoism a man engages in selfish activity and that activity nourishes his individuality. This leads him to struggle for possession. Whatever thought a man thinks, whatever word he speaks, whatever deeds he does, leave an impression on his mind. When those thoughts, words and deeds are repeated, the impressions get deeper and deeper and ultimately change into habits. Actions thus performed under the spell of egoism become strong fetters. Misery is the result of man's own action. Guru Nanak has described the whole process in a nutshell as follows:

“Mind is the paper, actions the ink,
Good and evil, the two writings
Are being inscribed on it.
We move as our past actions direct us.

Forgetting Him, O man! thy good qualities decay
Why dost thou not think of God O foolish man!
There is no limit to His virtues.

Thy actions of both night and day
Weave nets and snares for thee
Thou fallest upon the grain scattered underneath,
How wilt thou free thyself,
O foolish man?

Thy body hath become the furnace,
Mind the iron,
And the fires of five passions are blazing in it.
The charcoal of sins are being heaped upon them.
The mind is burning gripped by the vice of anxiety.

Thus turned into dross thy mind,
However, can be re-transformed into gold
If it cometh into contact with the Guru—the philosopher's stone.
He gives the Nectar of NAM
That extinguishes the fire of passions blazing in the body.

To remove the filth of ages, the soul needs the help of the Guru. Guru is the intermediary between God and creation. It is so ordained by God, the Lord Almighty. The Guru is the Master-Piece of God's creativity. He is the peak of humanity and the bridge between God and man. The Guru forms the staircase to lift man to God. The Guru is the ship that carries man across the Ocean of Life. The Guru is the Lamp of the world, the light of his teachings banishes the darkness of the soul; his speech is faultless and sheds light for all times. The Grace of the Guru transforms the ego-centric tendencies into longings for Love of God. He makes men God-minded, and turns brutes into angels.

If a hundred moons appear and a thousand suns arise; with so many lights there would still be utter darkness without the Guru. They, who are smug in their own wisdom and do not cherish the Guru in their minds, can never have spiritual life. They may study books all their lives, they may become very intellectual but when it comes to action and the living of a truly spiritual life, they will find themselves woefully deficient and wanting. They search for it in vain in the shining sand of their intellect. They are deluded and are lost in mirage. Unless the Guru-Sun arises in the firmament of man's soul, he remains spiritually blind and his soul consciousness is petrified. None has ever realized Truth without the Divine Master, none without him. God has enshrined Himself in the Guru and has manifested and declared Himself through him.

"If thou wanderest through the world in search for the remedy
Thy fire of Maya is extinguished not.
Nor is washed thy inner dirt.
O cursed be the life and cursed the manner it lives.

Thou canst not worship thy Lord
 Except through the Guru's Word.
 O man! quench thy Fire of desire with the help of the Guru,
 And fill thy mind with the Word and rend asunder
 Thy veil of ego that hides the Truth from thee."

(Guru Nanak: Sri Rag)
Translated.

"Guru is like a river with waters always clean,
 When you meet him all dirt is washed out of the sickening heart.
 The True Guru gives us a perfect bath,
 He turns brutes and demons into angels and gods."

(Guru Nanak: Parbhati)
Translated.

"The Guru is like the philosopher's stone
 And we are like the iron ore;
 O God, grant that we may meet such a person
 That the iron of us may be turned into gold.
 The Guru gives us the Divine Light,
 The human life then becomes beautiful and godly."

(Guru Ram Das: Tukhari)
Translated.

"The Lord's Light that pervadeth all,
 Shines forth in one's mind through the Guru's Grace.
 Yea, the dirt of one's ego goeth through the Guru's Word,
 His mind becometh pure
 And day and night he is imbued with the Lord's worship;
 And by so doing he attaineth to the Lord."

(Guru Amar Das: Majh)
Translated.

Thus when a man comes in contact with the Impersonal-Personality of the Guru in the inner realm of his soul, then all of a sudden his innerself bursts forth into a new universe of white blossoms. Just as spring is to the trees, so is the advent of the Guru, an inspiration to the human race. And it is worthwhile to put up with a thousand winters for the sake of one day of blossoming as in spring! Guru is the highest and most perfect being who brings about this spring of inspiration to human beings.

Warning against Fake Gurus: While there are some self-conceited and spiritually ignorant people who think there is no need at all for the Guru, yet there are those others who are so charmed by this accepted doctrine of Guruship, that they would not feel restful unless they had someone whom they could call as their guru. They are mostly after human-guru of the Brahmanical type. This blind and unintelligent faith has led to gurudom finding free scope and flourishing at the expense of so many unsophisticated people who are being exploited by clever and unscrupulous self-seekers by posing themselves as gurus. They quote scriptures that there can be no 'gyan' without a guru and then they reason that the guru, like a doctor, should be present in person on spot; otherwise he can do no good. They ask their disciples to close their eyes, ears and shut their mouth and listen to the inner sound, which they call as 'ANHAD SHABAD' mentioned in the holy books. This inner sound one may listen in silence, is really the sound of heart-beating and ringing in of the closed ears. This gives no peace of mind. The ANHAD SHABAD referred to in Guru Granth Sahib is not heard by ears or sense organs. This Celestial Symphony is only realized by the soul within when NAM—the Heavenly Elixir upwelleth in the inner Tabernacle, and the Five Enemies of mankind are smitten and subdued. This is unconditioned state above time and space.

The fake gurus are thus amassing great wealth by deceiving the spiritually ignorant people.

But the Divine Guru, God-illuminated personality impersonally ever abiding in Him, flows out in charity towards Heaven and upon earth. He accepts no remuneration for the peace he gives. His activity is

based purely on love and sympathy. He is very sweet, quite meek and perfect in self-abnegation.

“The True Guru is one whose very presence provideth bliss
Mental doubt departeth and the Supreme State is attained.”

Humility and Piety of the Guru: The Guru, putting on God-given robe of humility and piety, moves about in the world under the guise of a simple man. The Lord’s ways are so mysterious. The Light shines in the darkness, but darkness comprehends it not. The worldly-wise eye is dazzled and sees not the ‘Noonday-Sun’, the wings of intellect are singed and it has no reach unto him. The Divine Spirit stooping down to earth takes up the form of a servant and draws humanity Godward through himself. Thus the Guru, saviour of humanity, in whose hands God has given all things, resting in deep humility considers himself the servant of the Lord and speaks of himself as such. Conceit can never approach where he walks in the clothes of the humble. Oh! who can find his way to where he keeps company with the companionless and among the poorest, the lowliest and the lost. He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the path maker is breaking the stones. He is with them in sun and shower, and his garment is covered with dust. God’s Light reaches down to the lowest orders of being, and there is no man too low to realize God. He toils and labours hard with such men as these and patiently bears all the hardships of life. He prays to Heaven through thick and thin and in so doing is fulfilling the perfect Will of God.

The Guru considers himself the servant of God, yet the servant of the Lord is like the Lord Himself. For he has the same attributes and he is at-one with

God and perfectly in tune with the Divine Will. Verily, Guru is God-like and there is no difference between the Blessed Soul and the Supreme Soul.

The question arises here, what is the Sikh belief? Does God descend on earth and assume human form to carry out some divine mission as the AVTARA theory in the Hindu literature portrays?

The answer is emphatic No. The Sikh conception of God is such, as cannot tolerate the idea that God can assume human form and be subject to birth and death. No birth can embody Him and no death can take Him away. He is Unborn, Immortal and Self-Radiant. Such ideas as God can be born as a human being would even raise the Guru's anger:—

“Burnt be the tongue that says that the Lord takes birth and undergoes death.”

(Guru Arjan: Bhairon)
Translated.

“God hath no mother nor father,
No son, nor friend,
No passion nor wife.
Self-Existing is He, Pure, Beyond conception,
Though all life and all light is from Him.”

(Guru Arjan: Sorath)
Translated.

The Gurus could not tolerate people calling them God, as has been the case with some of the religious teachers before and after them.

“Hell to those who call me God,
I am an humble servant of the Lord,
There is absolutely no doubt about it.”

(Guru Gobind Singh: Vichitar Natak)
Translated.

The Sikhs believe in the transcendence of God and also in His immanence, that is while He is Absolute,

beyond nature, beyond comprehension, He is also pervading in His creation and is Omnipresent. The Guru says:—

“Thou hast created the world;
Thou dost ever stand in the midst of Thy works;
But all the same, art ever aloof and away from them all.”
(Var Suhi, Slok)
Translated.

“This world is like His house, and He dwelleth in it.”
(Guru Angad: Asa di var)

“Whatever you see in the world, is the very form of Him.”
(Guru Amar Das: Ramkali Anad).
Translated.

Whatever we see in the world has emanated from Him. It is His Light that shineth in all. In this way He is Immanent but not exactly born. The physical conception of AVATARA as enunciated in the Gita, and as popularly interpreted, is foreign to the teachings of Sikhism. In the Avtar theory, God is supposed to descend on earth and is born as a man.

At places out of number the Gurus have stated that the Supreme Reality, Formless God, manifested Himself in His creation and it is His Potential Life Force which is working in everyone and everywhere, yet He is Formless, Perfect, Limitless, Fathomless, Abodeless and beyond comprehension.

Here the question may arise how do we explain the various verses from the holy Guru Granth Sahib which apparently refer to the Divine character of the Guru, such as:—

- (1) “*Partagh ridai Guru Arjan kai
Har puran Braham nivas io*”
Evidently God, the Supreme Lord, hath enshrined Himself in the heart of Guru Arjan.”

Translated.

- (2) "*Bhan Mathura kach bhed nahi
Guru Arjan partakh har*".

(Bhattan de Swayye V)

Mathra saith, there is no difference between Guru Arjan and God.
Guru Arjan is evidently God Himself.

Translated.

- (3) "*Ap Narain kala dhar jag main parvario
Nirankar akar jot jag mandal kario*"

(Bhattan de Swayye III)

The Potential Life Force or Light of Formless God is manifested in the form of Guru Amar Das, and this Light has illumined the whole of the world.

Translated.

And many other similar quotations can be cited from the Holy Book.

But all these verses have a bearing that the Guru's mind has been illumined by God and he has assumed all the attributes and virtues of God and so there is no difference in the character of God and that of the Guru. Guru is God-like in that sense. Guru is Divine because by the Grace of the Lord, he is illumined by the Spirit of God. There was a display of the Divine attributes through human personality when that personality was chosen and made completely free of ego-centric tendencies and was completely identified with the Divine purpose. Instead of ego-centric tendencies, the Guru was gifted by God-centric action from the very birth.

In the nature of the highest type of human life, we have access to the nature of God. We see something finite partaking in the life of the Infinite. Man is Divinity-incarnate in as muc has he reveals in his life the divine qualities or virtues of love, light, truth and goodness. The Guru is perfect in love and perfect in goodness and other godly qualities. In that perfection he is one with God and

in tune with the Divine Will:—

“The servant of the Lord is like the Lord Himself,
That he is in human body makes no difference.
Just as a wave rises in water
And then it merges into water, water mixing with water.”

(Guru Arjan Maru Solhe)
Translated.

Guru is also unlike those vedantic poets who exclaim ‘Soham’—‘I am God’, when under intoxication of sudden joy, their minds ascend to the astral plane and they get some transcendental vision or get a sip or two from Love’s Cup of Wine. They see their ownself in all forms and in all beings, and they love everyone. But they stop short at this, as if were befogged. They see not the Sunshine behind the clouds, and in unbecoming levity of mind the cry of ‘Soham’ goes out of them of itself.

But beside them there are also some philosophers, who while still bound in the cocoon of ‘MAYA’ (Illusion) and have never tasted even a drop of His Life-Giving Wine of Light and yet blindly imitating the poets of the vision, they echo and re-echo ‘Soham’ ‘Soham’ (I am God) under dome of their egoism. But the Guru drinking deep at the fountain of ‘NAM-AMRITAM’ and brimming with the Divine Spirit asks us to say ‘Wah-e-Guru’—Lord Thou art Wonderful (Subhan Allah). Thou! Thou! Thou, O Lord! I-am-ness has no place where the Guru abides. Even the capital ‘I’ which Shri Ved Vyas, the compiler of Gita, puts into the mouth of Lord Krishna is hushed into silence in the presence of the Divine Master. When ‘I’ transcends itself and is washed in the Infinitude, and becomes as beautiful as the white ‘I’ of the lotus abloom on its stem, then it ceases to be I

and becomes 'EYE' that looks at naught but the Lord and does see none but Him.

"Where petty-self exists, God is not,
Where God exists, there is no self.
Sages! Probe this mystery
Of the immanence of the Lord in all that *IS*
Without the Grace of the Guru
We could not know this essence of Truth."

In the charming presence of the Divine Incarnate none can expound wrangling philosophy or listen to that, which is mundane, dry and devoid of the Love of the Lord.

In the glorious presence of the Guru, every one wrapped in wonder and worship utters God's Name. The Master Spirit is so lovely and his face so fascinating that to be away from the sight of his face, our hearts know no rest nor respite, and our actions become an endless toil in a shoreless sea. Like Gopikas of Brindaban, we wish only that the Lord may ever remain before our eyes and he may stand in the middle of us and we may all hover round him in unending and glowing ring of sport, song and dance, sucking of the joy of his soul like bees poised on a dew-washed and dawn-lit honey rose. No greater joy!

The disciples thus used to cling to the outer appearance or the body of the Guru. This close, living and practical touch with the Guru was quite natural for the human heart, as it was attracted by the spiritual beauty and the matchless glory on the face of the Master. They saw in the Guru, the Eternal Spirit living before their very eyes in flesh and blood. In him they had dear, loveable, concrete world of shape and form, of individual and personal existence. So this clinging of the disciples to the outward is

easily intelligible, but it clearly had its own weakness. For the disciples, as they were to grow in the things of the spirit, it was necessary for them to pass on to a still higher stage. There was, so to say, a 'weaning' process whereby this clinging to the concrete evidence of the senses passed on into a realization of the Guru's inner presence through the practice of 'Gurbani' (Divine Word) and 'Simran' (Loving-remembrance).

The essential thing to be borne in mind is that God or His Divine Light (Braham Gyan) is the perfect Enlightener and Guru Nanak and his successors were the perfect channels for the expression of that Gyan—divine knowledge. It was God's revelation that became Guru's Word or Gurbani. Thus God, Guru Nanak and Guru's Words are all identical terms meaning the same thing, affirming that God, the True Guru, was speaking through Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak himself confirms it:—

"O Lalo! As comes the Divine Word to me, So do I preach."

(Guru Nanak: Rag Tilang)

Translated

At another place he says:—

"Nanak revealth the True Word"

(Guru Nanak: Rag Tilang)

Again in Suhi Chant:—

"I say what He commands me to say."

"This Word hath come from Him who hath created the world."

(Guru Ram Das: Gauri)

"O Sikhs of the Guru, recognise the Word of the True Guru as true; for the Creator Himself hath put it in the Guru's mouth."

(Guru Ram Das: Gauri)

Translated.

"True Guru's Word is the Guru and the Guru is the Word
It revealeth the path of salvation."

(Guru Ram Das: Kanra)

“Whosoever shall reflect upon Gurbani
 And practise it
 Verily, verily sayeth Nanak!
 He shall get salvation.
 No austerities or muttering of any charmed word
 Can equal Gurbani
 Gurbani is supreme.

(Guru Nanak: Dhanasri)

Guru resides in his Word. His Word is the Guru. As Guru Ram Das says:

“The Word is the Guru,
 And the Guru is the Word
 And the Guru’s Word is full of life-giving Elixer
 Whosoever shall obey, what Bani commands,
 Verily he shall get salvation.”

(Gauri Guru Ram Das)

Thus Guru Granth Sahib, the embodiment of the Divine Word becomes Gyan Guru that enlightens the human mind. Through Gurbani the disciples realize the ever abiding inner presence of the Guru—an Impersonal-Personality in the inner realm of the soul. The Guru thus becomes impersonal in character, above name, form, time and space and without any human limitations.

“My True Guru is for ever and ever,
 He is not born, Nor does he ever die.

(Guru Ram Das: Suhi)

“The Guru is everywhere and is now always with me.”

(Guru Arjan: Asa)

The disciples thus experienced the true meaning of the ‘Guru’s coming’ and how such an inward ‘coming’ to the soul, brought with it an abiding peace. But still the language used in Gurbani (Guru’s hymns) of ‘coming’ and ‘going’, ‘Charn Kanwal’ (the Lotus Feet), ‘Gur-Murat’ (Guru’s Being), and such other words as these, are mere metaphors and similies. The

Guru had to employ these figures and similies because the personal experience of a spiritual kind could not be imparted or transferred through human words that have their limitations. Yet all these symbolic expressions refer to the Divine Spirit in the inner realm of the soul.

Our relationship with the Guru is not confined to the body alone, but it is beyond the physical relationship. It is a communion of the soul with the soul, the spirit with the spirit. He is the life of our lives, ever abiding with us, our constant companion and comforter. He is the Impersonal-Personality (Nirgun-Sargun), luminous as the sun. The sun-rise and sun-set are relative expression on a lower plane. In reality the sun never rises, nor does it ever set. It is ever present. So is the Guru, being at-one with God, he is omnipresent, perpetual and immortal in spirit. The Guru—God's Light is eternal, everlasting, ever-shining, and all-pervading. True in the past, True at present and True for ever and anon.

All hail, All hail unto him—the Master Spirit, Wonderful Lord. Wahe-Guru, Wahe-Guru, Wahe-Jio!

You reap the same what you have sown
None else can be blamed for it;
All evils flock around a man
His Lord if he forgets.

Who turn their faces from God of Love
Are lost for evermore;
To meanness turn all things and men,
Bred in the earthly lore.

(Guru Arjan: Baramah)
Translated

Persuing worldly love and sensual pleasure
The Princes of Hindustan had lost their heads.
Desecration and desolation was the result.

....

So brutally have the people been slain
So heart-rending is their agony
And so groaning are their lamentation
Is it not all pain inflicted on Thy heart?

....

O God!
My Lord and my Master
Guardian of the people's destiny!
Save Thy people!
Behold!
The soul of the people is on fire!
Send down Thy mercy, Lord
Come out to them from any direction as it be Thy
pleasure
Save Thy people, My Lord!
Their soul is on Fire!
O Master Divine !

(d) The Condition of India at the advent of Guru Nanak

Centuries ago, India was full of happiness, beauty and prosperity. It was a country of compassion, peace and love. It was self-sufficient and strong. Its inhabitants had been pre-eminently a religious people. Even at a time, when the rest of the world still existed in ignorance, the Hindus of India could boast of a high stage of civilization, culture and system of religious philosophy. They also led the world in astronomy and mathematics.

Even about 200 B.C. India had been the dynamic centre from which radiated innumerable missions of Buddhism, lightening all Asia with the glory of teaching of the Truth. During those days India had come to be regarded as the treasure-house of wisdom. She was the holy land of a free and a soaring culture, purifying, ennobling and refining all those who came in contact with her.

But when Buddhism began to degenerate, image-making received a fillip among them. Statues of Buddha and Budhisattvas became very common. Innumerable temples were built for their installation and wealth was lavishly spent in the performance of the ceremonial worship of these stone-idols. As Buddhism declined, it also came under the influence of the Tantric Cult (of black magic) which dulled their mental life, and the masses lost all reverence for morality.

When Buddhism was almost driven out from India, the latter Hindu society, that was rebuilt on the ashes of Buddhism also took a wrong turn. In imitations to Buddhists, they set up their own gods and goddesses

and began to worship their stone-images. They strayed from the path of righteousness, of personal purity and social freedom and stooped down from the lofty ideals of their noble ancestors.

The priests who had been for centuries, the self-made custodians of 'religious knowledge' had reduced religion to a mockery, its spirit was well-nigh dead and, in its place, there had gradually sprung up a religion of forms, rituals, and ceremonies devoid of any sense or meaning.

"The popular religion about the time of Nanak's birth was confined to peculiar form of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the fore-head, and such other mechanical observances—the worship of idols... pilgrimages to the Ganges... The springs of true religion had been choked by weeds of unmeaning ceremonial, debasing superstition, the selfishness of the priests and the indifference of the people."

(Dr. Sir Gokal Chand Narang)

"The Hindu leaders neglected to teach the spiritual realities to the people at large who were sunk in superstition and materialism. Religion became confused with caste distinctions and taboos about eating and drinking...."

(Dr. Sir S. Radhakrishnan)

The Hindu caste system, having lost its original elasticity, had come to be extremely rigid and a source of a good deal of evil and misery as well as excuse for manifold tyranny. It was being abused mercilessly by the privileged classes. The great body of population were denied the solace of direct approach to God. The sacred books were inaccessible to them, both because they were in a language they did not understand, and because their study was forbidden to the lower classes. They were the untouchables—a touch of these lower caste people, even the shadow of these seemed to pollute the higher castes.

Religion, with the superstitions associated with it, had divided the Hindu community, into innumerable water-tight compartments. Instead of acting as a unifying principle and a source of moral and spiritual elevation, religion had come to be a curse and led to mental and intellectual slavery and moral degradation of the Hindu society. Thus when moral and spiritual decay had weakened and emasculated the soul of Indian people, when the Brahminical distinction of caste had disintegrated their social life, and when small states and principalities had divided and broken the integrity of India, the Muslim legions descended from the North-West like a storm that clears the atmosphere.

The Muslim invaders were ruthless beyond description, massacring men without mercy, plundering their homes, lifting women, desecrating and demolishing their temples and robbing the wealth of offerings of centuries that accumulated there. They converted the Hindus to Islam at the point of the sword.

So weak and demoralised had the Hindus become, that this inhuman treatment roused within them no thought of protest, much less of resistance. Amongst Buddhists the responsibility of safeguarding the faith rested entirely with the monks. Buddhism taught non-violence and so they offered no resistance. They expected that the recitation of Tantric Mantras before their gods would save them. But the Tantric practices were of no avail. They were powerless before the conquering legions. And while crowds of Tantric magicians were busy in their 'balis' and mumbling their mantras, the city of Taxilla, the biggest centre of Buddhism in the North West was razed to the ground. Statues of Budhisattavas, gods and goddesses were thrown down from their high alters and utterly

smashed. Thousands of monks were slain or converted to Islam.

Even the warlike Rajputs, except a few honourable exceptions, considered it a privilege to offer their daughters to Mohammedan rulers in wedlock.

Most of the Buddhist monks fled to Tibet to save their skins. And those of the Hindus who could not bear such a life of dishonour and servility had sought shelter from persecution and death in the loneliness of forests where they lived single-minded as individuals by themselves, or took to purposeless wandering.

To understand the characteristics of the Muslim rulers, prevailing at that time, it will be in fitness of things to give a little account of the rise of the Islam and its spread in India culled mostly from the writings of Mohammedan and British historians:

Syyad Mohammad Latif M.A. in his *History of the Punjab* (page 75-76) writes about the beliefs, of the Mohammedan:

“...A drop of blood shed in the cause of God, a night spent in arms, is of more avail to the faithful than two months of fasting and prayer. He who perished in holy war went straight to Heaven. In Paradise nymphs of fascinating beauty impatiently waited to greet his first approach. There the gallant martyrs lived for ever a life of happiness and bliss, free from sorrows and liable to no inconvenience from excess. They would possess thousands of beautiful slaves and get houses furnished with splendid gardens and with all the luxuries of life to live on. Such liberal promises of future happiness, added to an immediate prospect of riches and wealth, were enough to kindle the frenzy of the desert population of Arabia. Their martial spirit was roused and their sensual passions were enflamed.”

INDIA IN THE MOHAMMEDAN PERIOD—V.A. Smith (page 257)

“...their fierce fanaticism which regarded the destruction of Non-Muslims as a service eminently pleasing to God, made them absolutely pitiless.”

“Great jealousy and hatred existed those days between the Hindus and Mohammedans and the whole Non-Muslim population was subject to persecution by the Mohammedan rulers.”

(*History of the Punjab* by Syyd Mohd Latif page 240).

IBN ASIR in his **Kamilu-at-Twarikh** records that Shahab-ud-Din of Ghazni massacred thousand of the inhabitants of Ajmer and reserved the remainder for slavery. At Banaras, too, the slaughter of the Hindus men, women and children was immense.

Hasan Nizam-i-Naishapuri in his **TAJ-UL-MA'ASIR** states that Qutab-ud-Din Aibak (1194-1210 A.D.) when he conquered Meerut, he demolished 700 Hindu temples and erected mosques on their sites. In the city of Koil, now called Aligarh, he converted the Hindu inhabitants to Islam by the sword and beheaded all who adhered to their religion. In Kalinjar he destroyed one hundred and thirteen temples, built mosques on their sites, massacred over one Lac Hindus, and made slaves of about fifty thousand and more and sent them to Ghazni.

ABDULLA WASAF in his **Tazjiyat-ul-Amsar wa Tajriyat-ul-Asar** writes that when Ala-ud-Din Khilji (1295-1316 A.D.) captured the city of Cambay at the head of the gulf of Cambay, he killed the adult male Hindu inhabitants for the glory of Islam, set flowing seas of blood, and sent the women of the country to his home and made about twenty thousand maidens his private slaves.

"Alauddin once asked his Qazi what the Mohammedan Law prescribed for Hindus. The Qazi replied, "Hindus are like the earth, if silver is demanded from them, they ought, with the greatest humility, to offer gold. And if a Mohammedan desires to spit into a Hindu's mouth, the Hindu should open it wide for the purpose. God created Hindus to be slaves of Mohammedans. The Prophet hath ordained that, if the Hindus do not accept Islam, they should be imprisoned, tortured, and finally put to death, and their property confiscated."

In the **Tabaqat-Nasiri** by **Minha-j-ul-Sira**; it is stated that Mohammed Bkhtyar Khilji conquered Bihar with a band of 200 cavalry, he put to sword about one Lac Buddhist and burnt a valuable library of ancient Pali books and Sanskrit.

Here is a leaf from **Twarikh-i-Timuri** revealing that Amir Timur brutally put to sword 752,000 Hindus and burnt 29,000 alive. Timur wrote proudly in his auto-biography that he massacred 1,00,000 Hindus on one day.

AMIR KHUSRAU in his **TWARIKH ALAI** or **LHAZAIN UL FUTUH** writes that when the Emperor Feroz Shah Tughlak (1351-88) took the city of Bhilsa in Bhopal, he destroyed all its Hindu temples, took away their idols, placed them in front of his fort and had them daily bathed with the blood of a thousand Hindus."

INDIA IN MOHAMMEDAN PERIOD by **V.A. SMITH**: "After the Tughlaks came the Sayyids and the Lodis. All of them were fierce bigots. Their reigns too, offer little but scenes of bloodshed, tyranny and treachery."

ELPHINSTONE THE HISTORY OF INDIA (Page 410) Sikandar Lodi was one of those bigots who have sat on the throne of India. He destroyed the temples in towns and forts that he took from the Hindus, and he forbade the people performing pilgrimages, and bathing on certain festivals at places on the sacred streams within his own dominions. On one occasion he carried his zeal to cruelty and injustice for a Brahmin having been active in propagating the doctrine that "all religions, if sincerely practised, were equally acceptable to God", he summoned him to defend this opinion in his presence, against twelve Mohammedan divines, and on his refusing to renounce his tolerant maxim, put him to death." (See also History of Medieval India by Ishwari Pershad page 481.)

Thus, with Mohammedans, religion had come to mean but little more than an injunction for the persecution of the non-believer, a sanction for all sorts of licentiousness, vice and corruption, and a system requiring the performance of meaningless, very often Un-Islamic, rites and ceremonies. It no longer inspired its votaries to a life of devotion, morality and human-kindliness.

As day follows night so good follows evil, righteousness overtakes unrighteousness. It is this truth which Lord Krishna had declared long ago in Gita:

"When there is decay of righteousness, O Bharta,
and there is exaltation of unrighteousness, then I myself come forth.
For the protection of good, for the destruction of the evil doers,
for the sake of firmly establishing righteousness, I am born from age to
age."

In the Punjab, where darkness was thickest, there then appeared a Redeemer, who led mankind from darkness to light. With his coming, the darkness of unrighteousness was wiped out and sunshine of truth prevailed. He himself being the incarnation of Love, defeated the spirit of hate and led men to path of goodness by the divinity of his own personality. He kindled the Flame of Love and Life in the hearts and laid the foundation of a brotherhood of Warrior-

Saints who in due course of time, snatched the sword from the tyrant's hands and destroyed the evil-doers, root and branch. With unbreakable bonds of love, he united all sections of the Indian people. He founded the Holy Fellowship, where the lowest was to be equal with the highest in race, in social, political and religious rights. That great personality was GURU NANAK—The Divine Master, of whom we shall have the glimpses in the following pages.

Ye people, rise ! awake !
The season of spring hath come,
And the Beloved Friend hath also come
The promised moment hath come.
O tell the flowers to smile
As the sweet tongued nightingale
Hath come to delight and regale.

God, the Merciful Lord
Heard our bewailings and lamentations
And sent Guru Nanak, the Saviour of the world.
He comforted us,
Showed us the light out of the darkness of falsehood.
He awakened in human mind the consciousness of God
And brought the erring humanity back to the Lord
And cured the sickness of the soul.

GURU NANAK
(1469—1539 A.D.)

(1)

Manifestation : ‘Light’ looked down from Heaven and beheld darkness in the world below. ‘Love’ looked down and beheld hatred and bigotry. ‘Truth’ looked down and beheld falsehood. ‘Peace’ looked down and beheld burning unrest. “Thither will we go”, said they. So in a timeless hour of eternity, a gleam of perpetual Light broke through the darkness of ages and there came Light, Love, Truth and Peace all together personified in that wonderful person, whom we called Guru Nanak. He came without the shackles of time and age. He came and spoke the words of eternal truth to one and all, and for all times.

Fifty-five miles North West of Lahore, in a thick jungle, away from the hustle and bustle of the cities, there lay a small village called Talwandi of Rai Bhaun, subsequently known as Nanakana Sahib (now in Pakistan). It was here that the Divine Light dawned. In history’s counting, it was the year 1469 A.D. There blossomed that Flower of Humanity which appears once rarely in ages but, when it blooms, fills the world with the fragrance of Wisdom and sweetens with honey-drops of Love.

Guru Nanak came. It was a critical period of our Indian history. In that century and in the centuries that preceded it, we had experienced the march of invading armies ruthless beyond description, massacring men without mercy in the name of religion and plunder-

ing hearths and homes without distinction. We were helpless and could not defend ourselves. Hinduism, as it was then understood, taught non-resistance, and non-violence. Dharma had degenerated into mere formalism, endless rituals and worship of idols. The Spirit of Truth was stifled by bigotry, fanaticism and by the hypocrisy of renunciation. People had come to think that they would be saved by merely believing in this or that dogma. Falsehood overshadowed the land as a thick veil of darkness and the Moon of Truth could be seen no more. Thousands were longing for Life, searching for Light, hungering for Love but without any clear direction.

There appeared then, the Great Guru Nanak—the Sun of Reality. The clouds of darkness that overhung the world disappeared as the fleeting fog before the noonday-sun and there was light. Guru Nanak came to give Light and show the way. He was the Way and Light himself.

(2)

Nanak—the Child: All who beheld this infant felt drawn towards him. There was always a beaming smile on his face that those who saw him felt an unknown joy stealing into their hearts and elating their souls.

From his very infancy Nanak's sister saw in him the Light of God, but kept her discovery as a profound secret. To her he was a dream of God's beauty descended on earth—a miracle of God's Grace sent to mankind as the promise of ages. She was the first to be inspired by Heaven, to be his disciple. Rai Bular, the Muslim Governor of the state was the second; for in

Nanak he had seen a rare gleam of soul. In his old age, Rai Bular cried like a child for the holy sight of his saviour when the Guru was abroad on his divine mission.

(3)

Nanak—the Boy: When Nanak played with other boys, did they not feel that the light in his eyes was a strange light and that his words, so rich in music and melody, cast on them a spell they could not resist! Even as a boy, Nanak spoke of God, sang of God, and of his own longing for Him. Veiled and hidden was his life. Yet, when he spoke or sang, the very winds were filled with music, and the very deaf were drawn to him and the sightless beheld in their hearts a new beauty. And all those who were suffering were comforted in their loneliness and remembered that their home was not here, but in the Realm of Light.

Nanak, at the age of seven, was sent to school. He learnt the alphabet in no time as though he had known it already. Gopal, Panda (The school teacher), was astonished when Nanak wrote an acrostic on Punjabi Alphabet and at his eloquence in explaining the deeper truths about man and God and the way to realize the Divine in terms of the alphabet.

‘Teach me’ said he to his teacher, ‘Only the One large Letter of Life. And speak to me of the Creator and the wonder of His creation.’ “All learning is in vain, without the knowledge of Him and of the way to serve Him.” continued the boy. “To love Him is the end of knowledge and to forget Him is to forget the Truth, even though one may carry a cartload of books.” Nanak said to the teacher.

But the teacher still continued in his own way and asked the child to take to figures; so that he would be able to keep accounts.

The pupil smiled, he raised his eyes in glory and a limpid ray shot from his raven orbs, and from his lips rang notes of silver cadence:—

'Oh pitiful, mist-clouded souls of men,
Behold ye not the Light of Heaven,
Burn all thy attachment to the worldliness,
And their ashes rub and make thy ink,
Write on the clean paper of thy heart
With the faith as thy pen
Write the Name of the Lord and His praises as the Divine Master tells you
And ceaselessly praise Him who is without an end.
Your worldly figures will avail thee not,
When at the judgement throne your life book's balance,
Will give its own uninfluenced account.
.....
The mighty of the earth have I seen stricken,
Divorced from the Eternal and reduced to dust.
Tear not, therefore, that thread asunder
That binds you to the universal God."

*(Guru Nanak: Sri Rag)
Translated*

The school-master then stood abashed before this Divine Master and with folded hands bowed to his boy-pupil. He then took Nanak with him to his father.

Mehta Kalu, Guru Nanak's father, was surprised to see his son and his teacher coming back to him so early. Nanak must have played the truant and the Panda (teacher) must have brought him back to be reprimanded, he thought. "Mehtaji, this son of yours is an Avatara, a Divine Person and no ordinary mortal," said the Panda as he took his seat near Mehta Kalu. "He has come to redeem the victims of Kalyug. He is destined to be a World Teacher, there's nothing that I can teach him."

Mehta Kalu looked at the Panda with unbelieving eyes, but the Panda rose and prostrated himself at the feet of the Guru and departed repeating what he believed to be true.

(4)

Ceremony of Sacred Thread: The Guru reached the age when he must be, according to the custom among higher castes of Hindus, invested with the sacred thread.

Mehta Kalu made great preparations for the performance of the ceremony. He made elaborate arrangements for the entertainment of his guests—relatives, friends and others whom he invited. Hardyal, the family prohit (Priest) came in great form. He began by propitiating the stars by chanting mantras in Sanskrit, and then he blessed the boy and blessed the sacred thread. He was about to place it round Nanak's shoulder, when he stopped him, and refused to wear the thread.

The whole assembly was struck dumb. They all tried to persuade him but the Guru refused to be persuaded. With a loving thoughtful smile playing on his lips, the Guru said:

“What strange ceremony is this!
 The Brahman spins a thread out of cotton
 And twists it into shape.
 And then puts it on
 When it decays, it is cast away,
 And a new one has to be put on again
 If the thread had any virtue
 It would not decay or break.
 There is no thread to control the organs,
 No thread to restrain the senses.
 The Brahmin himself goes about without such a thread

Yet he twists threads for others
 And puts them round their necks,
 Hear, ye men, look at the wonder of it:
 The man with blind mind claims to be enlightened." (Guru Nanak)
Translated

To the Prohit he said, "With thousand evils lurking in the soul of man, what good can this sacrificial thread do to him?"

The Prohit in utter despair then asked "What kind of sacred thread, O Nanak, wouldst thou wear?"

The Guru thus spoke to the priest:

"Out of the cotton of compassion
 Spin the thread of contentment,
 Tie knots of chastity,
 Give it twist of truth.
 Put around me such a thread,
 If thou hast it, O Brahman,
 Such a thread once worn will never break
 Nor get soiled burnt or lost.
 The man who weareth such a thread is blessed."
 (Guru Nanak: Asa di Var)
Translated

(5)

Nanak as a Stock-Breeder: Mehta Kalu was anxious to lead his son to some profitable occupation. He had observed that he cared for cows and buffaloes, enjoyed feeding them and making friends with them. He also noticed that Nanak preferred to spend his days out in the fields, sitting under trees enjoying the nature. This gave him an idea that he could interest Nanak in becoming a stock-breeder.

So Nanak was asked to take out the family cows and buffaloes for grazing. The animals followed him as if they had been attached to him for a long time. He brought them home in the evening.

Sitting on green grass in solitude, Nanak heard the Voice of his Beloved! The cows looked at him,

with wonder in their mild eyes. They came near him, touched him and felt blessed.

Nanak used to take the herd out and then sit there under a tree. He let the animals out to graze by themselves and himself sat alone in deep meditation, unaware of things around him. One day his cattle strayed into a neighbouring field and feasted on the growing crop. The animals knew nothing of any man's ownership of meadows. For them, all belonged to God. The cows could make no difference between 'his' grass and 'my' grass.

Just as the cattle almost finished grazing, the owner of the field appeared. He turned from his field to Nanak and said, "Wake up, you sluggard, see what your cattle have done. They have ruined my crop."

The Guru looked up with eyes full of compassion, and said, "Have patience, my friend. Be not enraged. What if God's dumb creatures have taken a few bites from thy crop? The bountiful Lord will bless you with plenty. You will have no cause to grieve."

But the owner of the farm was not to be appeased. "You cannot deceive me by words", he said. "I am going to Rai Bular and I will make your father pay the full damage." Enraged beyond measure, shouting and complaining, he ran to the village, and in bitterness of heart reported his loss to Rai Bular.

Rai Bular sent for Nanak's father and asked him to compensate the loss. At the same time Rai Bular sent an appraiser with the owner to estimate the loss. They were astonished when they reached the field to find it lush with the growing crop.

The appraiser began to upbraid the owner of the field. The owner himself was surprised and could not believe his eyes.

The appraiser returned to Rai Bular and told him that all was well with the crop.

Rai Bular had heard of Nanak and his discourse to his teacher and his refusal to wear the sacred thread. He was confirmed in his belief that Nanak was a man of God.

A few days later, Rai Bular himself saw an astonishing scene. He was returning home from an adjoining village, when, from a distance, he saw Nanak sleeping in a field and a big cobra holding his hood over his head shading his face from the hot sun. Rai Bular thought the boy was bitten and was dead, as he was lying absolutely motionless. Rai Bular with his attendants hurriedly approached the spot. As they came near, the cobra disappeared and Nanak woke up and greeted them with a smile. Rai Bular was so much moved that he immediately jumped down from his horse, embraced Nanak and kissed him. From that day onward Rai Bular came to have an unflinching faith in the divinity of Nanak.

(6)

Attempts to put Nanak in some profession :

The story of the cattle grazing duly reached Mehta Kalu. He was deeply disturbed. He sent for Nanak and wanted to reprimand him, but on seeing him became mild.

Father: "They say you have been a failure as a cowherd. I am ashamed of it. If cattle grazing does not suit you, better be a farmer. I have a small tract of land, and you may start ploughing it."

Nanak: "Father, I am already engaged in real farming. Listen:

"This body is the field
 The mind is the ploughman
 Modesty the irrigating water.
 I sow the seed of Hari Nam
 And with the leveller of contentment
 I pulverise the crust of pride into true humility
 In it the crop of Love will prosper.
 Seated in the Abode of Truth,
 I behold its progress.
 Father, Mammon accompanieth not man
 The world is deluded by it.
 Only a few walk out of the delusion and attain discrimination."

(Guru Nanak)
Translated

His father refused to give any heed to the Guru's homily and continued: "If farming does not appeal to you, why not open a shop?" The Guru again answered: "Time and space are my shop, I stock it with Nam, I deal in song. I trade with dealers of His devotees, and thus accumulate the wealth of Truth."

Kalu persisted that Nanak must do something to earn. He made all attempts to bind our Master to some worldly career, but it was like trying to bind the light of the morning sun. After all, Kalu left him in despair saying, "You are a strange youth, Nanak!"

(7)

Nanak sits silent in seclusion: As Nanak grew in years, he studiously avoided company and sought seclusion. For days together, he would sit silent in solitude without food and without drink. His soaring spirit could not be restrained by closed walls of a house. He loved to live alone with God in the nature's wilderness. There the voice of the Eternal Silence roused his meditative soul from ecstasy to ecstasy. But in the loneliness of the forest, his

heart could also hear the tragic cry of the souls of the millions being crushed under their sins. For the miserable and wretched people of the world, Nanak sobbed in bitter anguish. Thus between ecstasy and woe divided, he silently drew his solace from the Divine Spirit within him.

His parents became anxious about his health. To them Nanak's unworldliness appeared insane. They sent for a physician. Hari Dass, a well-known Vaidya (physician) came and was conducted to Nanak's room and he began to feel his pulse. The Guru withdrew his arm and spoke with a thrilling voice unsurpassed in sweetness:

“They have called the physician to ‘me’!
 The poor doctor feels my pulse!
 What can a pulse disclose?
 The pang lies deep in the heart!
 Go back! Go back! physician, and heal thyself,
 Diagnose thy own disease,
 Then thou mayst diagnose the diseases of others
 And call thyself a physician.”

Hari Dass smiled sardonically. He was familiar with cases of deranged mind.

“So you think I too am sick and need a cure?” asked Hari Dass.

“Undoubtedly”, said the Guru, “You suffer from the sickness of the soul. “I-am-ness” is the disease. It separates us not only from our fellow-men, but from the source of life, God Himself.” The Guru then looked at Hari Dass with eyes full of compassion and further said:

“Man suffers because of his ego
 It has separated him from the Lord.
 Ego is the cause of all suffering and sin
 O physician, go back, go back and find a cure

If thou canst for all these human ills,
And then call thyself a physician."

(Translated)

Hari Dass was lost in wonder for what the Guru said was true. He felt a strange peace stealing over him filling his heart and soul.

"You speak of the things of the spirit. My concern is with the body alone." said Hari Dass.

The Guru turned his loving eyes on him, and said, "Is body worth anything without the spirit?"

"That is true," said the physician, "but how is it that this truth eludes mankind?"

"Listen," said the Guru:

"Man's mind blind with desire,
sows the seed of its own suffering,
In pursuit of the indulgence of the self,
O! Ignorant physician,
Thy physic is of no avail:
Suffering itself is the symptom of disease,
It also leads man to seek for cure."

"Is there no help? What is the remedy?," asked Hari Dass.

"Yes," said the Guru, "disease and its cause can be cured.

"When God sends saving Grace to man,
He begins to practise the Word of the Guru.
Says Nanak, hear ye all,
This is the way to cure the disease."

*(Guru Nanak)
Translated*

Hari Dass forgot all his professional ways and his task of curing Nanak. He sat spell-bound trying to draw into his soul the aroma of spirit which pervaded the Guru. He bowed to the Master and as he left, he told Mehta Kalu that his anxiety about his son

was useless, as he was born "A Healer of the Sickened Souls" and he was destined to follow the ways of all prophets.

(8)

Profitable Bargain: Mehta Kalu in spite of accumulating evidence about the spiritual greatness of the Guru saw in him only a wayward youth, self-willed and headstrong who was wasting his days in profitless contemplation.

One day, he again approached Guru Nanak, lovingly patted him on the back and said, "My son! when will you learn to make good and profitable bargains?"

"Any time you command me to, father." replied Guru Nanak with a smile.

Mehta Kalu was much pleased to hear this. He then gave some money to his son and instructed him to go to the nearest market, Chuharkana, and make some profitable bargain. Kalu asked his servant, Bala, to accompany Nanak.

On the way, Nanak met a party of ascetics who were without food for some days.

The Guru went to the bazar at Chuharkana and purchased provisions, which Bala thought were being purchased for a profitable transaction. Bala carried the purchases for him.

On their way home, however, they again came across the party of the ascetics sitting without food. The Guru stopped and without a moment's hesitation, laid all the provisions before them and without waiting for a word from them started homeward followed by Bala.

As they came near the village, Nanak stopped near a grove of trees in the neighbourhood and told Bala to go home.

Bala met Mehta Kalu, just as he entered the village, who asked him where his son was. Bala told him the whole story and said that he left Nanak in the yonder grove.

“Take me there,” commanded Mehta Kalu.

Nanak was sitting calmly in meditation. Kalu shook him angrily, and said, “What are you doing here? What have you done with the money?”

The Guru opened his eyes and looked him full in the face but made no answer.

Mehta Kalu grew still more angry and was about to slap him, when Rai Bular, the Governor of the place, appeared on the scene.

Mehta Kalu greeted him and related how his son had wasted all the money he gave him and returned empty handed.

“How has the money been wasted?” enquired Rai Bular, turning to Bala, who had accompanied Nanak.

“Forgive me, Sir,” said Bala. “Nanak bought some provisions with the money and, finding a party of ascetics who had gone without food for many days, and in spite of my protests he gave it to them.”

“Why did you do it?” asked Rai Bular from Nanak.

“I could think of no more profitable bargain.” said Nanak. Rai Bular was a man of real understanding. He turned to Mehta Kalu and said, “Your son is not meant for gaining this world; his gains are, gains of Heaven. Don’t grow angry with him but let him follow his own way; for his way is the right way.

Kalu could say nothing. He bowed his head to Rai Bular, though he remained entirely unconvinced.

(9)

Nanak to Sultanpur: Bibi Nanaki, the elder married sister of the Guru, came to visit her parents with her husband, Jai Ram, who was the Dewan of Nawab Daulat Khan Lodi of Sultanpur. She was devoted to her younger brother and noticed with concern her father's impatience at the boy's indifference towards all that he valued most: position, wealth and worldly property.

Bibi Nanaki decided to take her brother along with her to Sultanpur. Her father gave his consent. Nanak readily agreed to go with his sister. Rai Bular gave a banquet in his honour and the whole village came to see him off at his departure.

Nanak was now in his seventeenth year. Jai Ram brought him the offer of the post of officer-in-charge of Nawab's provision stores. Nanak raised no objection but took up his duty with a regularity which was an agreeable surprise to his sister. Nanak loved to distribute the provisions: nay here he distributed himself also. None begged at Nanak's store-house in vain, he lavished his goodness on every visitor. The village folk here saw him and marvelled at the wonder in his eyes.

The world thought the stores belonged to the Nawab of Sultanpur. But what mattered that to Nanak, the servant of the Nawab of Heaven and Earth. It is said of him in a Punjabi proverb that God gave him His stores and then forgot all about them; key, lock and all with Nanak.

Once weighing out wheat-flour, counting the weighings—"One, two, three....till he reached the number thirteen, 'Tera' which in Punjabi language also means 'Thine', he forgot all counting and went on weighing in ecstasy repeating Tera, Tera, Tera.... "Thine, Thine, Thine...."

And the poor customer knew not how to carry the bountiful gifts of this strange store holder.

After a time, Nanak was married, He led a family life. He had two children. It seemed as if it was the purpose of the Guru to demonstrate that the household was a school in which self-love is exalted into love for others and that to earn an honest living was pre-requisite of godliness.

(10)

Nanak as Guru—The Divine Master: One day they saw him going for a dip in the stream which ran past the town. Casting his garments upon the 'Shore of Life' Nanak plunged into the Infinite. He suddenly disappeared and was taken as drowned. "He must have misappropriated both provisions and proceeds, and being afraid of the consequence must have put an end to his life," the gossip-mongering tongues lashed out in support of their seemingly commendable prudence, which unfortunately for them, did not appeal to the Nawab's righteous mind.

The waters of the river were combed. Divers were pressed into service. Search parties were organised, but to no avail. In fact hope faded, dwindled and was lost altogether.

At the end of the third day, Nanak reappeared on the scene to the unending joy of the sorrowing

citizens of Sultanpur. But he was now a completely changed man with a divine glory on his face and luminous halo around the head. Crowds gathered around him. He was not Nanak now, but Guru Nanak—The Divine Master, the World-Teacher. The call had come, the much awaited call! Now he was to go forth into the world as the Divine Messenger to extirpate the agonies of a million furrowed brows and innumerable groping hearts lost in the wilderness of a dark, decadent world.

Nanak had, had a vision of the Infinite. The vision had thrilled him:

“I was a minstrel of the Lord out of work,
The Lord gave me His appointment.
Thus spake Great God unto me
Night and day, sing ye my praises!
The Lord did summon this minstrel
To His most Exalted Court.

On me He bestowed the robe of honour of those who sing His glory.
On me He bestowed the Nectar in a cup,
The Nectar of His Eternal Holy Nam.
Those who at the bidding of the Guru
Feast and take their fill
Of the Lord's Holiness
Attain Peace and Joy.

Thy minstrel spreadeth Thy glory
By singing Thy Word;
Nanak, by adoring the Truth
We attain to the All-Highest.”

(Guru Nanak: Majh ki var)
Translated

When Nanak came out of water, the words that were on his lips, were: “There is no Hindu, no Musalman”, meaning thereby that there is to be no distinction between man and man. ‘Hindu’ and ‘Muslim’ are our names for the ‘Mask’, behind the mask is ‘Man’. Nanak realized the unity of Hindus and Muslims in the Man universal. Nanak’s was the

religion of Man. The emphasis, in his message, was not on rituals, ceremonies and dogmas, but on life, on love of God and right action.

Nanak rose above philosophy and metaphysics, above rites and rituals, above creeds and conventions, above all nation-cults and all race-gospels to a vision of the deeds of love. "God will not ask man", said Nanak "Of what race and religion he belongs to. He will but ask him 'What have you done'? Deeds, not creeds, is what Nanak asked of his disciples. Nanak preached a religion for which men would live, a religion which would illuminate lives, a religion of love, service and sacrifice. Nanak's vision of life embraced all countries and all races and all times.

As Nanak had declared that there was no Hindu, no Musalman, the Qazi of Sultanpur was furious. He said, "The Hindus may not be the Hindus, but we Muslims say our prayers five times during the day and we are truly Muslims." He then called for an explanation from the Guru for his remarks. Thus spoke Guru Nanak:

"Five prayers thou sayest five times a day
 With five different names,
 But if Truth be thy first prayer.,
 The second to honestly earn your daily bread,
 The third to share thy bread with others in the name of God,
 Purity of mind be thy fourth prayer
 And adoration of God thy fifth;
 If thou practiseth these five virtues,
 And good deeds be thine Kalma—the article of faith,
 Then thou can't call thyself truly a Muslim.
 By mere hypocrisy Nanak,
 A man is deemed false through and through."

(Guru Nanak)
Translated

As Nanak had pronounced that all men were the same and there was to be no distinction between

man and man, thereupon the Qazi prevailed upon the Nawab to ask Nanak to participate in the Namaz in the mosque. Guru Nanak accepted the invitation, but he stood silent during their prayer and did not join the drill of the Namaz with the congregation. The Qazi was angry and asked the Nawab to call for an explanation.

Guru Nanak's reply, however, stunned the Qazi, the Nawab and the public alike.

"How could I follow the Qazi," said the Guru, "whose body was in prayer, but whose mind was anxiously looking after the new born filly that it might not jump into the well in his court-yard and Nawab's mind too was busy planning to buy horses in Kabul. Both of you were absent-minded all the while, when you were saying your prayer, so how could I follow you?"

"It is a wonder", the Nawab cried aloud to the Qazi, "thou seest not, Khuda (God) speaketh to us through Nanak?"

(11)

Guru Nanak on Divine Mission: Thus spoke God unto Guru Nanak:

"Thou My Son be a World-Teacher,
 Carry all over the world
 The Torch of My Light and Truth.
 I am in thee
 My spirit is in thy soul and being,
 My will is thy will.
 The world is sunk in sin and wickedness
 Without True Knowledge about Me and of My Love
 People are ignorant of higher joys and bliss
 They are all confused and perplexed
 Their faith in spiritual life is shaken
 Forgetting Me, the Creator

They seek happiness in the creation
Go, reveal the True Path to humanity."

Nanak meekly replied:

"Am I, O Lord, worthy of this great mission ?
I am but Thy humble servant, O Great God,
Could I carry such Light and Inspiration
As to change the outlook of the whole world?
Great is Thy mission Lord, so humble am I,
But I will obey Thy Command with all my heart,
Be Thou my Guide and my Voice, O Lord,
Be Thou my power and Light, O Eternal Father,
And may I ever abide in Thee O Lord."

Nanak then set out for the regeneration of all mankind on earth. He had to go out to the world on long journeys, into the trackless lands around, mostly on foot. His father Mehta Kalu came to counsel him, but with no effect. His elder sister then appealed to him to think of his family and not to leave them. She brought his two little children before him who clasped his legs. The Master replied, "My dear sister, humanity is my family and serving it, I serve my Lord. These children I leave in the care of Him who cares for all."

She approached the Guru again and said, "O divine one! What will be the condition of us disciples? How shall we bear thy separation? How shall the lotus-flowers (thy disciples) thou hast planted, live and bloom without thee?"

"Sister dear," said the brother, "there is a call from Heaven. I must go whither He directs me. Many will obtain the life of the spirit if you forgo for a while your own yearnings. I shall not be gone from you. Whenever you think of me, I shall be with you."

As he turned to go, his wife came and clung to his feet. She sobbed and shed tears.

The Master put his hand on her head and this changed her despair into calm content.

“Go, my Lord and Master,” she said, bowing
“The world is in flames, go and quench its fire.”

Guru Nanak then left his home.

He dedicated his life to the service of Love. And Love took him by the hand and led him on, from place to place, to preach, to teach, to bear witness to the Light Divine. Guru Nanak was filled to the brim with Divine Love. And in far off countries, as in the land of his birth, he revealed to prince and peasant, to Hindu and Muslim, the shining truth of life, full of love and light.

He undertook long journeys, mostly on foot to propagate the truth he had. He went on to Ceylon and other isles in the South, to Tibet in the North, upto Indo-China in the East. He went to Mecca, Baghdad, Bokhara and right up to Caucasian mountains in the West. He came back by way of Afghanistan. He travelled throughout the Northern Frontiers of India and Kashmir. He travelled more than Marco Polo. He thrilled the earth with his spirit, and wherever he went he awakened the spiritual consciousness of the ‘Religion of Man’.

Whosoever came to Guru Nanak, he was purged of his out-dated views and fallacies. His genial, heavenly smile overwhelmed all those who sought him. They were wonder-struck and became speechless and, in an instant, were immersed in the Ocean of Light.

Mere indulgence in high-brow philosophy, which had become a religious mania of the learned in India, was now considered of no merit. What was of supreme significance was living a good life. And the hypocrisy

of renunciation, the observances of fasts and vows of celibacy were denounced. And the so-called yoga and its feats were declared as far fetched and unbecoming. When Truth dawns upon one, the absurdities of all other systems no longer hold good.

(12)

Among the Lowliest and Lost: Guru Nanak left Sultanpur accompanied by Mardana, his muslim minstrel. He first halted at Saidpur, now known as Emenabad. Nanak loved to stay with the simple and the poor. There lived a poor carpenter of low caste, named Lalo, who earned his living by the sweat of his brow. Nanak called on him. Lalo was sitting in the courtyard of his house with his back towards the door and was busy with his work.

“Lalo”, the Guru Said, “What are you doing?”

“I am mending wooden pegs” said Lalo without raising his head. He thought one of his friends had asked him this question.

“What! Mending wooden pegs?” The Master asked, “Has life no better purpose, O man? Come, ye must learn how to mend the mind.”

This touched Lalo. He looked up and stood erect. He saw the Master, he bowed with great humility and reverence, and, realized that all these years he had been absorbed in mere trash. Surely life was meant for something better. The Master looked at him graciously and the simple unsophisticated mind of Lalo was dyed deep in the colours of Divine Love and he was a changed man.

Lalo’s love and devotion so overwhelmed the Master, that he chose to stay with him for sometime as

his guest. Here men gathered round him as moths gather round a light.

The news that a saint was staying at the house of a low caste carpenter reached Malik Bhago, the chief of the town and a fellow caste man. He was corrupt and wicked. He imposed many hardships on the poor and extracted money from them by unfair and foul means. Once, he was holding a sacrificial feast and had invited all holy men to partake of his repast. He also sent a servant to invite Guru Nanak. The Guru, however, refused to accept the invitation. This sorely pained Malik Bhago.

The Malik then sent his special representative to request Nanak to come, and when he came to his house, he placed before him the nicest bread and choicest dishes and said, "Wherefore, leaving such dishes, O holy man, you stay with a poor carpenter and eat with a low caste man! You are a strange man!"

"I have no caste", said the Guru. He then looked at those dishes, smiled and replied. I cannot partake of your food, because your bread is ill-begotten and has been made from blood sucked from the poor, O Malik, while Lalo's bread is made from milk, earned by honest and hard labour." This made the chief very angry and he asked the Guru to prove his point. At this the Guru sent for a loaf from Lalo's house. In one hand he held Bhago's bread and in the other that of Lalo's. When he squeezed both, from one oozed blood of the exploited poor and from the other the sweet milk of honest labour and human kindness.

At this Bhago was touched by a consciousness of his guilt and repented his past mis-deeds and prayed for mercy. The Guru asked him to distribute to the

poor his ill-gotton wealth and henceforth to live an honest life of love and service. Bhago was thus regenerated.

When Guru Nanak was about to start on his journey, Bhai Lalo wept like a child, clung to his feet and wished that the Guru should ever stay there with him. Separation was unbearable to him. But Guru wanted him to pass on to a higher spiritual stage. There was needed that weaning process whereby this clinging to the Guru in person, would pass on into a full realization of Guru's inner presence in the realm of the spirit by continuous 'Simran' leading to 'Dhyanam'.

(13)

Guru Nanak with Sajjan Thag: After a long and tiresome journey, the Guru happened to come to a place where lived Sajjan (meaning a good friend), a notorious assassin. The name of the man was as deceptive as his house. Sajjan always dressed himself in pure white and displayed his rosary. He posed himself as a religious man, but he was a wolf in a lamb's skin. He had built a Hindu temple and a Muslim mosque at his gate. He invited wayfarers to his mansion to take rest for the night. But at night the sleeping guests were Sajjan's victims and their goods, his property. Not one or two, but countless travellers went in and never returned. The more their wealth, the better love and care they got; and the softer robes and cosier beds, but death with them they brought.

Into such a knave's den the Guru was invited. Sajjan served the Guru with utmost devotion; for he took him for a very rich jeweller. He saw the sparkle

of a million jewels on the Guru's forehead. Sajjan greatly rejoiced thinking that a huge wealth would fall to his hands.

When night fell Sajjan began to get impatient; for the Guru tarried long before going to bed. He went in to see his guest. "A little sleep will soothe your limbs", he ventured to suggest.

But the Guru said, "The time to rest for us is not yet come, you may go and take rest if your limbs require it. God's minstrel does not go to sleep, till God sends word that he should retire."

The Guru then bade Mardana to play a tune on the rebec and he sang a haunting melody that took Sajjan on a novel trek.

"Bright sparkles the bronze,
 But Rub it thou and its black comes off:
 And a hundred washings cannot remove its inner blackness.
 They are sajjans, they are true comrades,
 Whose friendship bears the mark of sincerity,
 Who stand by, in a friend's hour of need.
 Temple attractive in outer appearance but hollow within,
 Deceitful disguises to cheat the world!
 Houses and mansions decorated and painted
 They will be of little use; they must crumble away.
 Men clad in white, like herons wait for their victims
 At places of pilgrimage and follow a nefarious trade.
 How can then their whiteness proclaim their purity?
 They are not Sajjan, they are not good friends.
 They are like the 'seemal' tree that attracts birds,
 By its brilliant flowers, but being without fruit,
 It sends them away hungry and unsatisfied.
 So men without virtue are like a tree without fruit
 They blindly load themselves with sin
 Knowing not that the road is long and dreary
 And those heavy-laden with sin
 Have to traverse the dreary road.
 Blinded and without sight; they cannot ascend the heights.
 Their service, and a hundred cunning crafts are of no avail
 Cherish thou, O Nanak, God's Name, that Thy bonds are snapped.

(Guru Nanak: Suhi 6-1-3)

Translated

Sajjan who was waiting to follow his nefarious calling listened and as he listened, he realised that the Guru's words were addressed to him. The song pierced through Sajjan's guile and invaded his heart straightaway, demanding repentance. Sajjan was overwhelmed with consciousness of his misdeeds, broken and crestfallen he fell at the Guru's feet. Tears flowed from his eyes and bathed the Master's feet. He repented from the depth of his heart and vowed to abstain from sin evermore.

Repentance is not a mere repeating of a formula, it is recognition of wrong and driving out the tendencies that lead to wrong doing. Being washed with heavenly music, a new consciousness welled up in Sajjan. He cried like a child: "Lord, I have sinned grievously. Save me, Even me, O Saviour."

"Be poor, Give away your ill-gotton wealth." said the Guru. "And abide in Nam—The Spirit of Truth, the Eternal and All-pervading Divine Light." The Spark of Life that the Guru imparted to him was embeded in his soul and henceforth he lived by it in Dhyanam.

(14)

Guru Nanak at Hardwar: The Guru by slow stages, after visiting many villages and towns on the way, and instructing all those who came in touch with him, atlast reached Hardwar.

Nanak discarded rotten traditions, fought against ignorance and superstitions, and showed new paths. So often, he came in conflict with orthodox opinion.

This time it happened to be with the learned priests of Hardwar. He saw a multitude of people

with priests throwing water towards the sun with the right hands while they bathed in the Ganges.

With a faint smile on his lips and in a tone, innocent of all pretence, Nanak asked them: "O wise men, what is it that you are doing?"

"We are offering water to our dead ancestors in the Region of Sun " said one of the priests, "to quench their thirst".

"Is it so?" Nanak pondered for a while and started throwing water to the West.

The pilgrims laughed and asked the meaning of the 'folly'. "I am watering my corn fields in my village in the Punjab", replied the Guru in a tone of simple conviction.

The listeners were thoroughly amused and the priest said triumphantly, "But how will the water reach your fields, so distant from this place, O strange of strangers?"

"How far are your ancestors from here?" asked the Guru, "Far above, in the other world." said one of them.

"If the water I throw cannot reach my land, which is on this earth, how can the water you throw reach your ancestors who are no more of this earth and no more troubled by the hunger and thirst of the body?"

This set the people really thinking and they looked at each other in dumb realization.

The crowd for a while stood spell-bound and the Guru enlightened them and showed them the path of truth. They all listened to him with rapt-attention.

(15)

Abolition of Slavery: In Rohelkhand, the Rohela clan of the Afghans had settled in mountain tracts. They were engaged in slave trade. Guru Nanak purposely went towards that side. A Rohela horseman captured Guru Nanak and offered him for sale in the market.

The Rohela chief purchased Nanak in exchange for two Iraqi horses. The chief was called Mir. He took Nanak with him to his place of residence and bade him to bring a pitcher-full of water from the well. But the well got dried up and water was to be found no where in the vicinity. And the whole populace was grieved and became panicky.

They soon realized that Nanak was no ordinary person, but a man of God. The light in his eyes, the radiance on his forehead, the fear-free peace and serenity that marked his mien and the ineffable joy that seemed to engulf his whole being, had a quick, strange effect on the proud, stony-hearted chief and his people.

The Mir said to Nanak, "Be merciful to me, O holy man. I have sinned against thee."

The Guru looked at the Rohela chief with eyes full of profound pity, and said to him, "Thou hast captured so many persons and reduced them to slavery. Thou hast tortured men and women. So hast thou forged chains for thee. Heavy is thy burden, O Mir!"

And the Mir said, "Forgive me, O holy man! How may I and my people be saved?"

Nanak said, "O Mir! Thou hast set, alas, thy house on fire and art asleep therein! Release all the slaves you have, give away all the money thou hast

gained by evil means, by exploiting the poor and robbing the wayfarers, and abolish slavery forever.”

The beaming smile on the glorious face of the Guru, reversed the whole position. Mir, the master, became the slave and the slave became the Master.

Mir, at the bidding of the Master, set free all the slave in the town and in the neighbourhood and then water was again available. Thenceforth, Mir and his people began to live a simple and honest life and adoring Nam by day and night.

(16)

At the Temple of Jagannath : Preaching his Gospel of Nam at Allahabad, Banaras, Kashi, Gaya and many other places, Guru Nanak reached one day, the famous temple of Jagannath at Puri.

It was evening, and the priests of the temple prepared to sing their hymns to gods. They brought a salver. In it were kindled many lamps and in the salver were also put flowers and incense and the pearls of the temple. And all stood to offer the same to their enshrined idol-god. The ceremony is called “Arati”. An Arati is a song of invocation and dedication, a hymn offering everything. The priests sang, but in their song, alas, there was no breath of love, no fragrance of faith.

The Guru paid no heed. After the ceremony, the priests were very angry with him.

Then came Guru Nanak’s voice and all stood listening in the stillness of the night. They listened to his song as listened cowherd Gopikas of Brindaban to Lord Krishna singing on the flute. The Guru sang as sings a lyre of silvery strings. He sang of that

deeper religion in which faith and reason meet each other and offer their gifts to the One Divine Spirit.

ARATI of GURU NANAK

“The Heaven is Thy Azure salver,
The sun and the moon thy lamps,
Millions of twinkling stars are pearls scattered thereon in thy worship.
The whole firmament goes round and round Thee Beloved
The woods of sandal are offering incense to Thee
The winds move the royal whisk on Thee,
The million flowers of the forests lie as offering at Thy Feet!

O Lord of Light, Beloved!
How wonderful is this worship
O Thou destroyer of sufferings!
The Divine music at Thy gate resounds!

A million eyes hath my Beloved!
And yet no mortal eye!
A million Lotus-Feet are His!
And yet no mortal feet!
A million forms hast Thou
And yet no mortal forms, Beloved!

I die with joy of the perfume of His presence!
From His Light shines everything
By the beam of His Face the stars shine bright
And He is the soul, the life and the light of all.
My Arati is my waiting for things to be as He willeth.
When the Master comes and stands by, the Divine Light is revealed!

O Lord, my mind yearns for Thy Lotus-Feet,
As the honey-bee for the nectar of the flowers.
Night and day, Lord I am athirst like ‘sarang’ for the rain-drop
Give water of Thy Grace to Nanak
And let him repose for ever and ever in Thy Holy, Holy Nam.”

(Guru Nanak: Rag Dhanasri)
Translated

The Guru’s song vibrated the deep recesses of their hearts and opened their eyes to Reality. After a momentary pause, the Guru addressed the congregation: “The Lord of the universe cannot be set up and worshipped in the forms of wooden statues or idols. He is Formless and All-Pervading Spirit that lives for

ever. It is He who creates, sustains and destroys. The earth, the sun and the moon, nay the whole universe and all the planets and millions of stars and other solar systems are of His creation and all move under His command and His control. It is His Light which is in the sun and the moon and in each one of us. Seek it within your hearts. It is by the Grace of the Guru—the Divine Master that this secret Light is revealed. This Divine Light is manifested in Shabd or All-Pervading Nam. Therefore, take refuge in the Lotus-Feet of the Lord. Salvation is attained by His Grace.”

They stood in mute admiration and then the Guru cast a sweet, loving look on them. It cleansed their mind and awoke their souls. A new life throbbed in them. They then began to live the life of active love, service and of devotion to the infinite Lord of the creation.

(17)

In the City of Kamroop: From Jagannath Puri the Guru crossed over to Assam and reached the city of Kamroop. This city was then ruled by a woman of black magic. She had assumed the name of Nurshah, the name of one from whom she had learnt this art. She herself and her woman companions practised black magic and exercised strange powers over all in that locality. She fascinated and subordinated many, by her spells, compelling them to dance to her tunes. She owned the whole country around, and many a mystic, and many a celebate and yogi had fallen into her snares.

The Guru made himself comfortable under a tree in the outskirt of the city, but Mardana, the Guru's

rebec player, who accompanied him in his missionary travels all over, went forth into the city to get some food for himself. He had not gone far when he encountered a party of three gaily dressed women. Mardana fell a victim to their machination. They served him with delicious food and worshipped him, but "made a lamb of him." He obeyed their signs and suggestions and began to bleat and behave like a lamb. They put him under their spell, he drank without water and ate without bread. Under mesmeric influence he did all that they commanded him to do.

Mardana was thus imprisoned by the witchcraft of Nurshah and could not return to the Guru.

In the meantime the Guru saw what had happened to his minstrel and he immediately started to save him from torments.

Nurshah, the bewitching beauty of Kamroop, saw him coming. She tried to captivate the Guru with her charms, but her art failed her. She was fascinated. She then brought all her silver, gold and jewels and laid them at the Master's feet and prayed, "O great magician, accept me as thy disciple, teach me thy magic."

The Guru told her to take away her gold. "The only treasure", he said, "is the Name of God which heals suffering hearts and gives perpetual peace of mind."

When she failed to tempt the Guru with her riches even, she broke down and fell at his feet and prayed for mercy and said, "Maharaj, we have been misled. We followed the traditions of Toda tribe, to which my master Nurshah belonged."

"That is why I have come to you to lead you to the right path" said the Guru. "Listen:

"The Light of the Lord shines
 When we turn our mind to Him
 When we discard evil doing,
 And do what is good,
 Misery vanishes,
 And is replaced by happiness,
 Nanak says serve Him
 By serving Him all suffering is destroyed
 He is the giver of all things."

(Translated)

She then repented and gave up practising magic and as a reformed woman became a disciple of the Guru. She released all her slaves and she herself obtained freedom from 'Self-hood' in the song of Nam.

After a short stay, the Guru departed leaving behind an aroma of peace and awakened souls to carry on his mission.

(19)

Kauda, the Cannibal: The Guru travelled many a weary mile in the wilderness of Assam. His companion, Mardana, felt very much tired, hungry and depressed. At his persistent request, the Master atlast stopped at a place and sat under a tree. After a little rest, Mardana exclaimed, "You, O Guru, are of God, neither hunger, nor thirst, nor fatigue affect you. I am a mere mortal man. I must have food." So saying, he started to find something to eat.

Mardana had not gone far, when he was noticed from a distance by a cannibal, who was on the look out to capture a man for eating. He was delighted at the prospect of a delicious flesh.

This cannibal was very notorious in that vicinity and was known as Kauda. He took Mardana by surprise and in an instant trussed him with rope that

he carried. Kauda bound him hand and foot and carried him to the spot where he had kept a big pan of oil for frying the flesh of his victims. Kauda began his preparation, lightening a fire under his pan and to boil the oil in it.

Mardana saw all that and was extremely terrified. He now prayed to the Guru to save him. The Guru already knew of his distress and was on his way to get him released.

Kauda was surprised when all of a sudden, the fire under his pan went out. He tried again and again to re-ignite it, but with the same result, and his pan of oil began to cool.

Kauda looked up and there stood Guru Nanak. This disconcerted Kauda. He was entirely bewildered.

The Master then looked at him compassionately and said, "Kauda! See-est thou not what thou dost. Wilt thou cast thyself in the burning hell?"

Kauda, whose conscience was dead with heinous crimes he had been committing, suddenly came to himself, as if, he had arisen from amongst the dead. All the sins he had committed, passed like a film before his mental eye. He was shocked to see the record, of his black deeds, that he carried. He was overwhelmed with remorse and repentance. Immediately releasing Mardana, he fell at the feet of the Master and prayed for mercy.

"God is All-Merciful", said the Guru, "He forgives all those who sincerely repeat and abstain from doing wrong."

"I will do as you bid me," said Kauda, "pray accept me as your disciple."

"From now onward resolve to harm no one, be merciful and kind and serve all those who need your

service. Rise early before dawn and meditate on All-Pervading and All-Merciful God, the Creator of us all. Learn to love Him with all your heart and let Hari-Nam sustain you in your life", the Guru instructed him thus.

Kauda's heart, which was on fire of sins, and boiling like oil in his frying pan, now became cool and calm with the Guru-given Nam.

Kauda was converted completely and to the end of his days acted as a devout disciple of the Master.

(20)

Renaissance of Bhai Mardana: Mardana was a Mohammedan minstrel. He was enamoured with the songs of Nanak, while he was still at Talwandi. When Nanak came to stay at Sultanpur, he also moved to that place.

At the time of Nanak's marriage, Mardana asked the bridegroom for a small wedding gift that may help to keep him ever close to the Master.

Nanak gave him a rebec and said, "Wait till I call you." Mardana was called, and he never left the presence of the "Divine Bridegroom".

Mardana, the Master's rebec player, ever stayed by his side through most of his travels, contributing his own little part by plucking on the strings of the rebec and diffusing haunting melodies that set to music Nanak's flood of spontaneous songs.

Mardana's music mingled with Nanak's enthralling songs, and they in turn plucked at the strings of many a human heart, creating a lasting impact on each.

Under the stars, under trees, on the roadside, in forests, and on the eternal snows of the highest

mountains in Central Asia, the Guru sang his hymns. In his discussions with the countless varieties of Indian and Eastern mystics and faqirs, the Hindus and the Muslims, the Yogis and the ascetics, the princes and the peasants, the rich and the poor in a thousand different studies of man and nature, in a deep association of silence with life, labour and love, the Guru sang his soul out, as the rebec of Mardana played trembling beyond itself.

The name of Mardana is so much associated with the Master that we cannot think of Guru Nanak apart from Mardana, playing by his side on the rebec. "Mardana, play the rebec, the music of Heaven cometh." These are the first words of Guru Nanak almost every time when he begins to sing a hymn.

Mardana is a blunt philosopher with all the wit and humour of the Punjabi minstrel. He has been often heard saying to the Guru: "O Guru, you live on Heaven's breath and whispers, but we men need food and raiment. Please leave these forests, and let us go to the haunts of men, where we may get something to cure hunger."

The Guru smiles and says: "Mardana! have faith. Keep calm. Wait and thou shalt see the wonderful works of the Beloved."

The daily accounts of his hunger and thirst, related with all the confidence of his supreme love for the Guru, are genuine items of prayer which a child of man can utter to his God.

But now as Mardana got released from the clutches of Kauda, he first thanked the Guru for saving him from the horrible death. But after some time, he insisted upon their going back home, and refused to go any further.

Like a child he became stubborn and he broke off with the Guru, so much so, that he even refused to speak to him, unless he agreed to return.

The Guru, however, treated him lovingly as to a child and tried to console him, but Mardana did not listen to him and refused to be appeased.

The Guru then gracefully looked at him and said, "Mardana! would you please speak and say if in any way or on any condition you could be reconciled."

Mardana: "If you be so gracious then favour me with Heaven's Manna that I may have hunger and thirst no more, and if you would forgive my wrongs and love me out of my short-comings, and if I go astray, you would set me right, and if I break off the ties with you, you would re-tie the broken ties."

The Guru said, "Mardana! Heaven's Grace be upon thee."

Mardana was thrilled, his mind became calm and tranquil and blossomed out with flowers of perpetual joy. In his heart arose millions of songs of rejoicing. He realized that to live in tune with the Divine Will was the greatest virtue and to be consenting to be His forever and ever was the life's fulfilment.

(21)

Home Coming: The Guru continued his journey up to Indo-China, halting in the way at several places and instructing all those who came in contact with him.

From Indo-China he wended his way back to the Punjab, passing through many villages and towns and kindling hearts ready to receive the Divine Light. By slow stages he made his way to Talwandi, after 12 long years of absence from home.

His aged parents, pining for him all the while, his wife languishing in separation from him, were all over-joyed to see him back home again, after such a long time.

The news of his home coming went all over, quick and fast. People came from far and near as moths gather round a light in the rainy season. They rejoiced in his company once again. For sometime Nanak stayed at home. His family members and all people over there were happy during his stay.

But before long Nanak again set out on his tour, this time, of the villages and cities of the Punjab. As he was about to depart, his father said to him, "My son, why not stay at home and enter into the Government service which is fairly easy?"

Nanak: "Father! I have already entered His service, I cannot serve another. I go whither He directs me to go and I do as He bids me."

Father: "Who is your Master, we have not seen him?"

Nanak: "Those who have seen Him have admired Him. He is so great, so benevolent, so gracious that He provides everything to me without my asking."

Upon this, the Guru's mother affectionately addressed him: "My dear Nanak, go not away from us. You need not do anything. You simply stay on with us, live in your house with your family as of old."

Nanak: "God is my home, His Grace is my family. His pleasure is my utmost riches. Mother! He blesses me and His blessings are boundless. He provides me with everything. I am forever happy in Him."

(22)

The Guru in Leper's Hut: The Guru was going from village to village enlightening people, bringing comfort to the sick, and hope to the hopeless.

It was a moon-lit night. The Guru called at the hut of a leper at Depalpur. The Master said he would be the leper's guest for the night. The leper was amazed to see such a glorious person coming to visit him, as it was, the leper was shunned by everybody. His own people had deserted him and had evicted him.

"Who are you?" said the leper.

The song flowed from the Guru as soft loving light from the moon:

"It is but for a night, as the birds rest on the tree!
 For, at the earliest dawn we go—no talk of me and thee!
 A night on the roadside—a night and a day
 It is but as the meeting of travellers on their way!
 Each noisy bird passing from its branch, its bearing takes:
 Then every bough is silent; we are flown as morning breaks!

How could the leper believe that he could have a guest! He came out of his hut and saw the Master with his own eyes. The song descended on the leper as the moonlight clothed him with affection. The leper was healed. The Guru blessed him and departed at dawn. The song of Nanak lingered long in the heart of the leper. Nanak sang:

"Sing ye the song of Divine Nam
 And ye will know that suffering comes
 When we forget Him, the Beloved!
 Forgetfulness is the seed of suffering;
 And suffering sets the heart on fire
 We pass through a hundred fires,
 Until we learn to sing the Nam,
 And fever dieth down
 And we are cool again!
 Sing, brother leper! Sing
 The song of holy Nam!

(23)

Bhai Buddha: Guru Nanak was going from village to village kindling those ready to receive the Light with the torch of Truth. One day, as he was sitting under the shade of a tree, people of the villages around began to pour in large numbers for his holy 'darshan'. A little boy who was tending his sheep in the field nearby, saw them coming and going and gleaming with joy after visiting the Guru. He thought that his mother would also come one day to see the Guru and he would accompany her.

The boy went home. The next day he saw his mother kindling fire. He observed that the smaller twigs caught fire first and the bigger ones a little later. He wondered why the smaller twigs caught fire first. He thought, as such it was he who must first go to the Guru and catch the glow from him and burn with it. His mother then might follow a little later. Seeing Guru Nanak, is like touching the Fire of Heaven and to be kindled with it.

With this inward realization of wonder, the little boy did go to Guru Nanak. At his sight he was thrilled. His joy knew no bounds. The Guru called the young boy to him. He heard his story and gave him the title of Bhai Buddha—so young in age and so great in wisdom.

What happened to Bhai Buddha, who can tell? Common history gives corpses of events. It records dead facts of the objective world. Who can report the life of the spirit, the inner awakening?

The whole life of Bhai Buddha thenceforward was a marvel. He lived wrapped in the 'Dhyanam' of the Master. His lips ceaselessly repeated His Name. The

whole firmament with its myriad twinkling lights appeared to him going around in the worship of the Beloved. His bosom throbbed like that of a bird that thrilled a song. His hair stood in ecstasy. The bliss of Guru Nanak, sent him reverberating with joy, endless as the waves of a mighty ocean. He was content to live a beautiful life like that of a lotus; doing without knowing, the greatest service to life that pure beauty could render. His half-closed eyes were shedding joy all round.

Bhai Buddha lived wholly immersed in the Divine and continued to see Guru Nanak in the form of five Gurus succeeding him, up to the time of Guru Har Gobind.

(24)

Duni Chand enters the Path of Discipleship: The Guru once passed through Lahore. Duni Chand, a big banker, was performing his father's 'Sharaddha' ceremony. He invited the Guru to partake in the celebration, but the Guru took the occasion to discourage all such rites. He exposed the futility of the 'Sharaddha' ceremony dependent on the supposed intercession of a particular class, and showed there was no merit in it. Duni Chand then saw a vision, whereby he was convinced that what one sends to the manes of his forefathers via priests can never reach them. Such rites are mere customs performed under wrong notions and blind faith.

One day, Duni Chand and his wife came to pay their homage to Nanak, the Enlightened.

The Guru gave Duni Chand a needle saying, "Duni Chand, keep it with thee and give it back to me in the next world."

“Master! How can we carry a needle with us beyond death.” The couple asked in perplexity.

The Master then gracefully looked at the couple and said, “With what hope then art thou amassing all this wealth? Of what use then, Duni Chand, art thy millions to thee?”

Duni Chand and his wife were struck dumb.

Duni Chand became sad. His mind was so much attached to his wealth that he could think of nothing else, but of making money and money all the time. He got suddenly awakened to a new consciousness, as from a deep slumber of ages.

“Pray, then, tell us Master, what can we take with us!” said Duni Chand.

“The wealth of loving Him”, said the Guru, “Hari Nam will go with you.”

“How can we acquire that wealth?” asked Duni Chand.

“Just as you have this, if the Guru so pleaseth, if he giveth the Grain of Life, the initial capital, through His Grace.” said the Guru.

Duni Chand then humbly begged for that Spark of Life that enlightences the mind. Duni Chand and his wife both entered the path of discipleship. They were transformed.

After enlightenment they spent most of what they possessed for the service of the poor and needy and devoted themselves to remembrance of God, continuously and lovingly.

(25)

The Parents Enlightened : The Guru in his tour of the villages and cities of the Punjab spoke to Hindus and Muslims alike. Wherever he went,

people swarmed around him like bees round a honeycomb. They listened to him with rapt attention and received his Gospel of Nam in all sincerity.

After completing this tour, the Guru slowly made his way to Talwandi. Rai Bular, the Nawab of Talwandi was now too old and was eagerly longing for a glimpse of his Saviour before leaving this world.

The Guru's sister, at Sultanpur, saw Nanak's home-coming in her 'dhyanam' so she also started for Talwandi and reached there a couple of days before the arrival of her brother. Some other disciples of the Master had also intuitively perceived that he was moving towards his home and so they too set out for his holy 'darshan.'

It was late in the evening that Nanak reached home. The Guru's sister was the first to see him as he entered the court-yard of the house. She was going to rush out to meet him, but kept back; so that his father and mother might meet him first. She then ran into the house to give the happy news to her parents.

Mehta Kalu's joy knew no bounds. He hastily came out. Nanak respectfully bowed to his father, and he took him in his embrace with great affection. In the meanwhile Nanak's mother, Tripta, also came up. Nanak touched her feet and lovingly said, "Mother! I have come." She kissed him, hugged him. Tears rolled down from her eyes and fell on Nanak's cheek.

"Have you met the sister?" she asked.

Nanak: "She remains in touch with me always, but otherwise I have not met her yet."

"Come girl, meet your brother now." Tripta said.

Nanaki, who was standing by and delightfully watching the meeting of her parents with their son after

long separation, now stepped forward. She, who considered Nanak as the Guru, wanted to bow and pay her homage to him, but the Guru did not allow her to do so. He just held her up, while their mother affectionately took both of them in her embrace.

The news of Nanak's arrival went around quick and fast. Neighbours and all the people of the vicinity gathered there in no time and they joyously illuminated Mehta Kalu's house and showered flowers on the Guru to welcome him home.

Rai Bular, as soon as he heard the good news, hurriedly came for the 'darshan' and to pay his homage. The Guru out of regard for his age and position went forward to receive him. The Nawab tried to fall at the Guru's feet, but the Master held him in his arms. The Nawab said, "Let this pride of Nawabship be cast out of me, before I die."

In a few days, Bhai Lalo, Bhagirath and some other disciples also arrived from outside. Daily 'Satsang' (holy congregations), 'Kirtan' (Musical recitation of the hymns) were held and the Guru showered his blessings on one and all, but upon Rai Bular, he bestowed the gift of highest spiritual realization, the gift of Salvation and Eternal Bliss.

Mehat Kalu, in spite of his having seen and heard so much about the spiritual greatness of Nanak, still considered that his son was wasting his days in unprofitable engagements and in roaming about abroad. So one day, seeing Nanak sitting alone, he came and sat by him and said, "Nanak, my dear son, I am now old and may pass away any day to the other world. You have to take my place as the head of the family. Now, you have seen enough of the world, you should not anymore go away from home, but

should stay here from now on, and take care of the family.”

Nanak smiled and said, “My dear father, what you say is right, but I have been sent here by my Master and everything is in His Hands. I do what my Master commands me to do. I am not an ascetic, not a recluse, not a yogi and not a house-holder either. I am but a servant of the Supreme Lord. I go thither He directs me to go.”

Just at this time, Tripta, Nanak’s mother also came in and sat by the side of her son.

Mehta Kalu then said, “The parents have a right on their son and no one else can have a greater claim than them. Who is your Master, under whose command you leave us and your home and go abroad?”

Hearing this, the Guru kept quiet, his eyes spontaneously closed, he began to look inwardly at the Divine in the self. His face began to glow. A strange light was seen around his head. Kalu and Tripta were both amazed and became speechless.

After a good while, the Guru opened his eyes and looked towards his parents, as he had never looked at them before. And he uttered, “Dhan Nirankar’—Wonderful Lord! Lord Thou art Wonderful, Hail my Beloved Master! Waho! Waho!”

To-day was the first day that Kalu was moved. The veil of worldliness, that was hiding the Truth from him, was as if lifted. He now realized that under delusion of ‘Maya’ he had considered himself as the father and Nanak as his son. But in reality there was no father and no son. He now saw his real self as only a seeker of Truth, in quest of the path of devotion and love leading to salvation, and the one sitting before was

the Guru, the Giver who could bestow the life of the spirit. It is through his Grace that one sees the presence of God everywhere.

The Guru then spoke to Kalu: "There is but One Divine Spirit (we call Nam) pervading throughout the creation. This universe itself is the manifestation of the same Divinity. He is the One-in-All and All-in-One. He is the Creator and Eternal Reality. He is the Light of all hearts. By the Light, that is of God, is every soul illuminated and sustained.

Those facing towards Nam—the Divine Spirit, get peace and bliss, while those others who turn away from Him suffer torments. Just as those who are close to fire in winter remain warm and those that are away from it are exposed to cold.

It is the veil of egoism that does not allow us to see the Reality. In darkness of Maya our minds waver and blindly run after sense objects and evil desires and this in strain brings sufferings. Without Nam, this restive mind has nothing to rest upon and its hunger cannot be appeased. It is by loving remembrance of God, by thought, word and deed and by singing His praises, under conditions of complete surrender to His Will that will effectively demolish the wall of 'haumain' (ego) which forms an impregnable barrier between the soul and the Supreme Soul. As God is Formless, we do not see Him with these eyes. It is only when the True Guru comes and stand by, that the Divine Light is revealed."

The Guru again said, "Dhan Nirankar"—Hail Lord, Thou Formless Creator, Thou art Wonderful!

At this one utterance of 'Dhan Nirankar' by the Guru, Mehta Kalu and Tripta both realized as if the whole nature with its myriads tongues, the leaves of the

forest and blades of grass with countless voices were all uttering 'Dhan Nirankar' 'Dhan Nirankar' and every pore of their skin sentforth with it a strain with the music of His Nam.

After a good while remaining in that state of ecstasy Tripta said, "O Thou Master of Heaven and Earth! Why did you not reveal this vision to us the very first day. Under great delusion, all this while, we had with you the attachment of filial love, while you had come from Heaven above."

After a few days, there was again a call from Heaven. The Guru got ready to depart again on his divine mission. His father now understood full well that he was going on the work of Him, Who is the Father of all and his going will bring peace and comfort to many others, if we forego our yearnings. So they gladly submitted to the Divine Will.

(26)

The Guru in Sangladeep: In his second missionary expedition, the Guru travelled far to the South. He visited Rameshwar, Kanya Kumari and many other places on the way. He also went across the sea to Sangladeep and other isles.

Shiv Nabh was the Raja of Sangladeep. He was pining for the Master.

Bhai Mansukh, a trader from the Punjab, and a disciple of Guru Nanak, had been to Sangladeep in connection with his business and long before the Guru's visit. His personality had stirred the city. He had told the Raja all about Guru Nanak, his wonderful power of leading people to the true path and conferring salvation.

One day, he spontaneously uttered "Wahe-Guru" Hail Lord, Thou art Wonderful! Lord! in such a frame of mind, that it pierced the Raja's mind and awakened in him, love for the Guru.

The Raja asked Mansukh how he could meet the Guru. Mansukh replied, "Rise early before dawn and meditate upon:—

"There is but ONE God—Manifested and Unmanifested One,
The Eternal and All-Pervading Divine Spirit,
The Creator, the Supreme Being,
Without fear, Without enmity,
Immortal Reality,
Unborn, Sel-Existent,
He can be realized
Through the Grace of the Guru."

And he said, "If you earnestly pray for the Guru to reveal himself to you, he shall not fail to respond to your prayers."

Every morning Shiv Nabh meditated and prayed as instructed by Mansukh. Many a person came and claimed to be the Guru, but were found to be charlatons.

Days ran into months, months into years, but the Guru did not appear. But as the time went on, Raja's love and longing for the Guru became deeper and deeper. Sitting alone by himself on the sea-shore, the Raja would pour out his heartfelt feelings:

"I pant for thee, O Divine Master!
Passes not my night,
My eyes know no sleep
When shall I see the Lord,
Ages, not days have gone by
And the rain-bird has no drop of nectar
Blessed is the land,
Where thou dwellest!
Poignant is my sorrow
As that of the rain-bird that cries for the cloud
Always thirsty! Restless am I,
O Beloved Guru for the sight of thee."

Time rolled on.

One day news was brought to the Raja that a holy man, with a rare glory beaming on his face, had arrived and taken his seat in the old neglected garden, and that as soon as, he had set his feet therein, the withered trees sprouted into green foliage.

But some sadhus, who were unredeemed within, had previously posed themselves as the Guru, and had tried to deceive the Raja, so he had chalked out a plan of his own to test the visitors before he could bow his head to any one of them. Notwithstanding what had been reported about the holyman, he still ordered that two of the prettiest young dancing girls be sent to tempt and seduce the new comer with their wiles.

The girls, dressed in very light gay garments, full of laughter and mischief, carrying baskets of flowers and proud of their beauty and the magic of their passionate enchantments and sure of their conquest, entered the garden. But no sooner did they come in the garden, they lost all their charms and were robbed of their artful ways. An indescribable calmness possessed their minds and they walked humbly towards the place where the Guru had his seat. They bowed to him in all humility and sat respectfully at a distance from him. They sat for a while spell-bound like statues and with their minds freed of all evil thoughts.

The report was sent to the Raja that the girls not only failed to seduce the visitor, but they had been themselves transformed under his spell.

Hearing this, the Raja was overtaken by remorse and repentance for the disrespect and irreverence he had shown by putting the Divine Master to the test. But without a pause, he hurried to the Guru, as if he was a

piece of iron attracted by magnet or a rivulet speedily rushing on to the sea.

He saw the Master. His mind, instantaneously, became cool and calm. Spontaneously he fell at the feet of the Guru. The Guru placed his hand on his head and blessed him. For a while he remained in a trance. The Guru then lifted him and gracefully looked at him.

O! Who can describe the ecstatic joy that dawned upon him. Bliss! Bliss! Transcendent bliss, when the Lotus Feet of the Master he kissed. All his hunger was appeased, all fires quenched. No more sin, no more sorrow, no more suffering, no more sickness for him. Peace, Beatitude and Felicitations from Heaven filled his mind.

The whole city flocked to the garden to see the Guru. It was about sun-set now. The Raja begged the Guru to come to his palace and sanctify the same by his holy presence and stay over there. But the Guru said to the Raja that he would go only to a Dharamsala, which was then quickly built. The Guru held daily congregations in the Dharamsala and preached his divine mission there. Many persons were enlightened.

All the people of the town entered the path of discipleship.

(27)

Nanak in Kashmir : In his third missionary expedition, the Guru went through the beautiful valley of Kashmir. People flocked to him wherever he went.

There lived at Srinagar a very learned Pundit. His name was Brahm Dass. He always had three camels following him, loaded with volumes of ancient

wisdom. He learnt that a great Teacher had arrived and many a man that had gone to him were transformed. Brahm Dass at first decided to visit the Guru, but then his pride of learning kept him away.

One day, he went to see one of his friends, Kamal, a Mohammedan faqir, who lived in the forest near the great lake. Brahm Dass mentioned to him of the arrival of the strange visitor in the valley.

Kamal was a very pious Pathan with glowing eyes and a seeker of Truth. He was an old man now, and looked at himself as at the setting sun. Kamal, who has been yearning for the life of the Spirit and pining for that celestial goodness which comes to man only through the Grace of God, so he immediately sought the presence of Nanak, fell at his feet and fainted with joy.

As he rose, he found in his own heart the Light he had been seeking invain in the forests. Kamal followed the Master. Nanak asked him to settle in the Kurram valley. It was from there that the song of Nam spread to Kabul, Qaundhar and Tirah.

Brahm Dass came atlast, followed by his camels, loaded with books. He wanted to have a discussion in his lore with the Guru and boasted of his great learning. The Guru said:

“One may read cartloads of books,
 With caravan-loads of books to follow;
 One may study boatloads of books
 Or fill cellers with volumes of his study,
 One may read for years and years
 And spend every month in the year in study only;
 And one may read all one's life
 Right up to his last breath,
 Yet, Nanak, there is one Truth that matters
 All else is vanity and vexation of the egoistic mind.”

(Guru Nanak: Asa di Var)

Translated

“Knowledge which partakes of the darkness of self is of little avail”, said the Guru, “pride darkens man’s vision. This I-am-ness is the greatest barrier and unless the man gets rid of it, he cannot grasp the Truth and there can be no peace of mind.”

The Truth struck home. “Forgive me, O Teacher,” he exclaimed “I have read sacred books and have acquired academic knowledge of all the six schools of philosophy, but I must confess I have found no peace. Pray tell me how I can get it.”

You had made your mind a begging bowl and stuffed it with crumbs of bread of learning begged from door to door, and filled it with the pieces that fell to you from every house of learning; this made you heavy and feel proud that you were a Pundit—scholar. Unless this bowl of your mind is turned upside down and cleansed of the dirt of learning, the glow of life cannot come and there can be no celestial vision and no peace of mind.”

Brahm Dass then fell at the feet of the Master, leaving all pride, and exclaimed, “Save me O Lord! I was in darkness and a sinner. Give me Light and bestow on me the peace you bestowed on Kamal.”

“Mardana!” said the Guru, “Play the rebec, the music of Heaven cometh”:

“Blessed is the disciple that hath met the Master!

He is gay as the face of earth adorned with flowers and leaves,

He seeth this world, the garden of Beauty, in full bloom!

All lakes are brimful of nectar.

He is made divine and rich in colouring as a garment dyed with madder dye,

The Mystic body of the Master has melted into his silver limbs

And the Lotus of Life burst in full blossom in the heart-lake of the disciple.

The whole world cries as the antelope caught in a hunters trap,

Fear and pain and thirst and hunger crowd from all sides,

But blessed is the disciple that hath met the Master!”

The Guru gave him the celestial vision, Brahm Dass entered the path.

He was given the authority to distribute amongst the folk of the Kashmir Valley the Divine Riches given by God.

(29)

Guru Nanak to Kailash and Mansarowar: From Srinagar the Guru travelled into lower Tibet and met many a Buddhist monk in their monasteries, and they profited much by his teachings, and were enriched by his wisdom. The Lama said to the Guru, "Your words are like shafts of light, which illumine the darkness of the mind."

In due time the Guru reached the Lake of MANSAROWAR, high up in the mountains of Tibet, where Sidhas or master-yogis had their abode.

There he also met many yogis who being afraid of the political chaos in India had taken refuge in the mountains. The Guru condemned them because when they were needed to guide oppressed humanity, they were hiding there. The master yogis asked Guru Nanak about the conditions prevailing in India and how the people of the country were faring. Guru Nanak told them, that falsehood overshadowed the land and the Moon of Truth could be seen no where. The kings were like butchers, justice had taken wings and flown away. People were ignorant and groaning under political atrocities. And he said, "Nathji, who is there now to lead the people to better ways of life, if sidhas have concealed themselves in mountain retreats".

At Mansarowar Lake, and then again at Achal Batala, the Guru had long discussions with the Yogis.

He brought home to them that the life of indifference that they were leading was a sullen and disconsolate creed and a negative attitude towards life. These discussions known as "SIDH GOSHAT" were later recorded by the Guru himself, when he settled down at Kartarpur after his missionary expeditions. A few stanzas of 'Sidh Gosht' translated from the Holy-Book are given hereunder:

SIDH GOSHAT

Charpat Yogi aks: "The great sea of life is hard to cross, pray tell us how to get safely across it."

Nanak answers: "Good man, thou hast rightly put the question, hear then the answer that of:

"As the lotus flower floats in the lake
And is unaffected by waves,
As the swan swims in it
And is not drenched by water.
So with the mind
Intent upon the Divine Word
Repeating the Holy Name
One can safely cross the sea of life.
Living apart,
Keeping God alone in Mind
Remaining unattached and desireless
In the world of hopes and desires
One can know the unknowable,
Comprehend the incomprehensible
Such a one is self-realized
And can make others realize the Truth
Nanak is his servant."

(Stanzas 4 & 5th)

Yogi: "I beg to request thee
Master! If you don't mind,
Pray tell us how to find such a Guru
Who can make us realize the Truth."

Nanak: "To the true seeker God Himself brings in contact with
the Master-Spirit
The restive mind then gets peace in the song of Nam
And abide in Truth!"

(Stanza 6th)

Loharipa Yogi

Intervenes:

“No, I tell you the way of Yoga
 Keep off the towns and shun highways
 Live in forests under trees,
 Upon wild fruits, flowers and roots
 The yogi must live the contemplative life of a recluse;
 For purification of mind, he must go and bathe at the
 sacred places
 Know ye, this is the old established path of Yoga.”

(Stanza 7th)

Nanak:

“Even while living in towns and near highways
 Remain vigilant.
 Let your mind not waver,
 Nor covet another man’s wealth or wife;
 But O adept!
 Without Nam
 This restive mind has nothing to rest upon
 Its hunger cannot be satiated.
 As the Guru hath shown,
 The real life of the city,
 The real life of its markets
 Is a life within us
 Where we trade in Truth.
 And then as a matter of course
 We eat little and sleep little,
 This, saith Nanak,
 Is the essence of the whole thought.”

(Stanza 8th)

Loharipa

Expostulates:

“But Yoga is a system,
 Let you adopt the same;
 Wear the patched coat and jade earrings
 And have a beggar’s wallet
 And be called Yogindra.
 Out of the six systems,
 The system of Yoga is the best.
 Out of the twelve sects of Yogis,
 Join ours the leading one.
 Thou hath said, that
 Only those whom God enlightens comprehend Him;
 But I say control thy mind by my rules
 And thou canst attain Yoga.”

(Stanza 9th)

Nanak:

“To abide constantly on the Divine Word within
 Is my system that I have adopted;
 To discard ego and attachment

Is my way of wearing earings;
 To see God in everything
 Is my patched coat and wallet.
 To leave lust, anger and pride
 Is my path that I follow.
 Only God can make us free.
 The Lord is the Truth;
 Truth is His Name
 This the Lord hath made clear to me,
 He who will, may test it."

(Stanza 10th)

Another Yogi**Questions:**

"What is the source of thy system
 And when did it start?
 Who is the Guru, of whom thou art the disciple?
 What teachings keepeth thee detached?
 Speak out Nanak
 Explain to us, my child,
 How canst the Word ferry us across?"

(Stanza 43rd)

Nanak:

"My system began
 With the beginning of the breath of life.
 Its source is the Wisdom of the True Guru.
 The Primal Guru is the Word (Eternal All-Pervading
 Divine Spirit)
 And the intentive mind is the disciple.
 One remains unattached to worldliness
 By pondering over the One Divine Word,
 That lives forever from age to age.
 Meditating on Divine Spirit
 The 'Gurmukh' destroys the flame of egoism
 And crosses over the sea of life."

(Stanza 44th)

Another Yogi:

"How can the steel be chewed with waxen teeth?
 What is that food, by eating which pride is removed?
 How shall we dress a snow man in fire?
 In what cave mind can be set at rest?
 What is it that is everywhere,
 With whom every mind should be at-one?
 What object of concentration
 Can turn the mind to itself?"

(Stanza 45th)

Nanak:

"True the world is as hard as steel
 For the stubborn and self-willed folly,
 But, through the might of the Word

The steel can be digested.
 It is not the food, but the fear of God, that removes pride.
 If the True Word indwellesh in the heart
 The mind becomes cool and peaceful
 And is dyed in the colours of love.
 Destroy the inner fire of lust and anger
 Rather than acquire power to bear outer fire
 This fire is extinguished by the Grace of the Master.
 One who ponders over and over again
 "On the Guru's Word, he realizes the One,
 He lives in the "Cave of Peace", where mind is at rest.
 Outside thyself and within thyself feel His presence
 And from within, from within
 Make the self as naught as naught
 Remove all feelings of otherness
 And become at-one with God.
 But this stage is attained, O Yogi!
 By the Grace of the Guru."

Nanak :

"Without serving the True Guru,
 There can be no Yoga;
 Without meeting the True Master
 There can be no salvation.
 Without contacting the Divine Master,
 Nam cannot be realized;
 Without meeting the True Guru,
 The man suffers much (in transmigration),
 Without meeting the Divine Master,
 The man remains in egoism and darkness;
 Without the Guru,
 The man dies as one defeated in life."

(Stanza 70th)

Epilogue:
(Nanak)

"Lord Thou alone knowest Thyself,
 Who else can describe Thee?
 By Thy Will, Thou revealeth Thyself or remaineth unknown.
 Care-free, Thou enjoyest All-in-All
 These novices in Yoga, the Sidhas and the Master Yogis
 And many of their disciples had remained seeking Thy
 commandment during these periods.
 But now by Thy Will
 These mendicants beg of me, Thy servant,
 The alms of Thy Nam
 They beseech for this gift
 And they are a sacrifice to the Gospel of Thy Nam.
 The Everlasting Lord Himself
 Hath arranged this play,
 This the saints realized.

God Himself grants His dispensations from age to age
 He is All-in-All
 We know no other one."

(The last stanza 73rd).

(30)

Gorakhmata comes to be known as Nanakmata :
 The Guru travelled from Kailash and Mansarowar towards Almora and somewhere in the lap of the glaciers he met another party of Sidhas and Yogis. They received the Guru with great courtesy and invited him to adopt their cult, wear their garb and join in as a Yogi.

The Guru told them that the secluded life that was not in the service of their fellow beings was worthless. The Guru explained to them; and said:

"Yoga lieth not in wearing the Yogis' garb
 Not in the staff on which he leans
 Nor in the ashes the Yogi rubs on his body.

Yoga lieth not in earrings, the Yogi wears
 Not in the shaven head
 Nor in the blowing of conch shell.
 Live amidst the world pure and free of vice.
 You will then be on the path to wherein truth lies.

Not by discussion is Yoga done,
 It is life, which looks equal on all men
 Yoga is not by graves or glaciers to squat,
 Or to sit in contemplative postures on mats;
 To wander about in lands abroad is not Yoga
 Nor bathing at sacred places.
 Live midst the world, pure and free of vice,
 You will then be on the path to wherein truth lies.

Only True Guru's company can break
 All bonds and make man free,
 And it is then that blinds come to see,
 And in heart true yearning for God grows
 Within one's house then the truth one knows."

(Translated)

Guru Nanak in his missionary travels had to contend with yogis at several places. They predominated in the religious life of those days. The Yogis or Naths, as they were called, were ascetic nomads wearing mendicant garbs. Their creed was an amalgam of Shaivism, Yoga partly of Patanjli and partly Hath-Yog and Vedantism.

These recluses, by corporal mortifications, were supposed to have acquired certain powers. Some of them could bury themselves under ground and yet keep alive through breath control.

Exploiting their physical discipline and the religious garb, they performed such tricks which were taken for miracles by the onlookers. Naturally these tricks had a great fascination for the average mind. People from far and near heard of them and their popularity was therefore widespread. Their blessings were eagerly sought by the householders and their curses avoided at all costs.

The Guru then wended his way through Almora to the forests in the area, which is now included in the district of Pilibhit and reached another abode of Yogis, known as Gorakhmata. He sat at a little distance from their residence under a soapnut tree and preached his Gospel of Nam to them. The Guru taught them that the vesture of the body and the symbols of denominations were of no account, nor could the desire die with leaving household. The inner change, the true conversion, can take place anywhere, more likely under the strain and stress of the performance of ordinary duties of a householder, which constantly call for self-denial, and sacrifice, than by abandoning the 'school' of life and wandering into the desert lands and visiting places of pilgrimage. The

secret of Yoga—union with God, is to be discovered by remaining in the world without being effected by it. The Yogis said, “Master! The fire of desire is not quenched even by endless subjection of the body to discipline. Pray, tell us a simple way to quench it. The Guru said:—

“Destroy the feeling of ‘I-am-ness’
 And with it the sense of separation,
 Destroy the sense of duality and attain oneness.
 The path is hard for ignorant and egotistic
 But those who take shelter in the Word, are absorbed in it.
 He, who realizes that both within and without is He,
 His fire is quenched by the Grace of the Guru.
 O friend, sayeth Nanak destroy the poison of passion,
 And the fire of desire, and win the favour of the Beloved.”

All the Sidhas and Yogis at Gorakhmata were converted and entered the path of discipleship. Gorakhmata then came to be known as NANAKMATA.

The branch of the soapnut tree, under which Guru Nanak sat and preached his Gospital, came to have sweet fruits. And it is sweet up to this day, while the rest of the same tree bears bitter fruits. Soapnuts are always very bitter, but those of the branch under which Guru Nanak sat are sweet.

(31)

Guru Nanak Visits Mecca: The Guru after a fairly long sojourn at Kartarpur started on his fourth Missionary Expedition and this time he went to Mecca. The Guru, dressed in the blue costume of the Hajjis, with a staff in one hand, a Muslim ablution cup in the other and a book under his arm like the other pilgrims, went to Jeddah by sea, and thence to Mecca, the holy city of the Muslims.

At night he slept in the stone-paved premises of the shrine, with his feet inadvertently towards Kaaba—the House of God. A devotee from India, Jiwan by name, who had settled in Mecca; while on his nightly rounds to clean the precincts of the holy place, came and saw an elderly stranger sleeping with his feet towards the Kaaba. He informed the priest that a pilgrim was committing a great sacrilege by turning his feet towards the House of God. The priest in high dudgeon rushed to where the Guru was sleeping.

Jiwan, enraged, as he was, now gave a kick while the priest asked, "Who is this infidel, lying with his feet towards the House of God?"

Loud and harsh were his admonitions and he called down all the curses in fury.

But calm and quiet was the 'trespasser'. He said that he was very weary, and entreated them to turn his feet in the direction where the House of God was not.

Jiwan rudely dragged his legs towards another direction. To their utter bewilderment, to whichever direction they turned the Guru's feet, they saw Kaaba in the same direction. They stood spell-bound and this opened their eyes. They realized that God was not confined into any one place, however holy it might be. God is everywhere and not imprisoned in any temple or mosque.

The Guru then rose and with a radiant face and with eyes that beamed peace, he looked at them. They bowed to him and humbly begged his pardon.

Next morning, people flocked round Baba Nanak. On learning that Nanak had come from Hindustan, they questioned him whether he was a Hindu or a Muslim.

Guru Nanak's reply to this vexed question was that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but he was of Him, who is One without a second, who is the Master of all the creation and who pervades everywhere, whom no birth can envisage and no death can take away.

The Hajis from India, who were bent upon establishing the religion of the Man of God, then asked him, "Who is the Superior of the two, the Hindu or Muslim?"

Guru Nanak told the pilgrims that, without good deeds, both will repent. The superiority lies in deeds and not in mere formal creeds. Without love of God and purity of life mere creeds were like broken reeds. To live in tune with the Divine Will was the greatest virtue and consenting to be His forever and ever was the fulfilment of life.

The chief priest was a seeker of Truth. As he heard what had happened, he hastened to the Guru in the hope of getting some glimpses of the Eternal Light. The Guru gave him instructions in the art of true living—to practise to live in His presence day and night and to glorify the Lord and thereby to rub out from the tablet of the mind the dirt of sins and polish it into the brightness of a mirror. The Divine Light that is already there in every heart would be reflected then, and man would realize the presence of God.

(32)

Guru Nanak at Baghdad: From Mecca, the Guru proceeded to Medina and from Medina to Baghdad:

At Baghdad, Nanak discoursed with Bahlol, a renowned Muslim saint. Bahlol drank deep at Nanak's

perennial spring of spirituality. He asked him about Truth, the Path and Peace Eternal.

Bahlol was Nanak's forever.

At last, fascinating the saints of palmgroves, fakirs of rose gardens, the people of Arabia, Iraq and Persia, our Lord returned to the Land of Five Rivers.

They say that Bahlol passed sixty long years at the foot of the slab, where the sacred feet of Guru Nanak had rested during their discussions.

Bahlol, lonely and devoted, sat wholly absorbed in Nam when the Shah of Persia came and bowed down to the very feet of the disciple of Nanak and exclaimed: "If he is only the disciple, how will he be his Master, Nanak himself."

A shrine built in Guru Nanak's memory, still stands in the outskirts of Baghdad. On reading the Arabic inscription on the slab in the shrine and touching the holy slab, Shri Ananda Acharya of Sweeden went into an ecstasy and wrote the following poem, which appeared in his book: "Snow Birds" (published by Macmillan & Sons London.):

"Upon this simple slab of granite didst thou sit,
 discoursing of fraternal love and holy light,
 O Guru Nanak, prince among India's holy sons,
 What song from the source of the Seven Waters
 thou didst sing to charm the soul of Iraq!
 What peace from Himalaya's lonely caves and forests
 thou didst bring to the vine-groves and rose-gardens of Baghdad!
 What light from Badrinath's snowy peaks
 thou didst bear to illumine the heart of Bahlol the saintly Persian
 disciple!
 Eight fortnights Bahlol hearkened to thy
 words of Life and the Path and Springs Eternal,
 while the moon waxed and waned in the pomegranate
 grove beside the grassy desert of the dead.
 And after thou hadst left him to return to the
 the beloved Bharat's land, the Fakir, it is
 said would speak to none nor listen to the
 voice of man nor angel;

His fame spread far and wide and the Shah came to pay
 homage—but the holy man would take no earthly
 treasures nor hear the praise from kings and courtiers.
 Thus lived he—lonely, devoted, thoughtful—for sixty winters,
 sitting before the stone whereon thy sacred feet had rested;
 And ere he left this House of Ignorance he wrote these
 words upon the stone:
 Here spake the Hindi Guru Nanak to Fakir Bahlol, and
 for these sixty winters, since the Guru left Iraq,
 the soul of Bahlol has rested on the Master's Word,
 like a bee poised on a dawn lit honey rose."

Yet another shrine has been discovered in Iraq. It seems to have been re-erected by the king Murad. The inscription on the slab fixed there has been translated as under:

"When Murad saw that the monument of Hazrat Rab-i-majid, Baba Nanak, Auliya-i-Allah (The Prophet of God) has fallen, Murad, by the Grace of God Almighty, re-built the same with his own hands; so that this Fountain of Goodness may continue from generation to generation. (917 Era Hijri)"

Crossing the Iran plateau, Guru next went to Balkh and Bukhara in Central Asia. He worked his way round by Kabul to Peshawar, where again he had to contend with Yogis at Gorakh Hatri.

(33)

Guru Nanak and Vali-Qandhari: Guru Nanak while returning from Kabul came to a bleak dry hill near the ancient Buddhist city of Taxila. He sat at the foot of the hill. Mardana felt thirsty. There was no water to be found for miles around. At the top of the hill there lived a Mohammedan fakir known as Vali-Qandhari. He was maintaining a little reservoir of water.

Guru Nanak asked Mardana to go up and request water of him.

Mardana went up the hill.

“Who are you?” asked the Vali.

“My name is Mardana, I am the disciple of Nanak, who is sitting below the hill. I am thirsty. I asked my Master to tell me where to get water and he directed me to you.”

Vali was annoyed to hear of another holy man coming to the place and not paying him homage.

“There is no water here for such as you, go back and ask your Master for it. If your Master is a holy man, why does he not procure water for you instead of sending you to me.”

Poor Mardana returned disappointed and related to the Guru what had happened.

“Never mind what the Vali said; go again and request him for water very humbly,” commanded the Guru.

Mardana was tired and thirsty but he could not disobey his Master, so he made another attempt and climbed up the hill and begged humbly for water.

But the Fakir told him forcefully that there was no water for him because of his association with an infidel, as he called Guru Nanak, believing him a Hindu.

Mardana came back to the Guru tired and thirsty and almost fainting.

The Guru smiled and said, “Do not lose heart, Mardana! utter Sat Nam.” So saying the Master looked towards the hill.

Cool, crystal-clear water gushed out of it to kiss the feet of the Lord. Mardana quenched his thirst to his heart's content. The Vali was deeply concerned as his reservoir of water was getting drained and dried up. He got up and saw the water flowing at the feet of the Guru. He was furious and, while coming down,

the proud but shaken fakir rolled down a piece of rock so that it might fall on the Guru and crush him.

The Guru did not move. As the rock came rolling down, the Guru held out his hand and as it touched it, it came to a standstill. With the holy touch, the heart of the stone melted and softened like wax and left the mark of the Master's palm indelibly deep into it.

Vali-Qandhari was astonished at this and broke down. He fell at the feet of the Master. Guru Nanak spoke to him, "O friend, those who live so high, should not be hard like stone. Vali was enriched with the wisdom of the Master.

The imprint of Guru's hand (Panja) is still visible on the stone and the pool of crystal clear water still flows forth from there. A Gurdwara stands there in his memory. It is known as Panja Sahib (at Hasan Abdal) and is now in Pakistan.

(34)

The Massacre of Saidpur: Passing through Bhera and Dinga, the Guru hastened his way to Saidpur (now known as Eminabad and at present in Pakistan). The town was inhabited mostly by Pathans, who were the rulers of the place, and were leading a luxurious life and caring little for others. Guru Nanak came and fore-warned the people of Babar's invasion that was in the offing. Many people took the warning and removed themselves from the town to escape the calamity that was threatening the town.

Guru Nanak at his advent found the people of this country in a state of degradation. The Punjab, through successive raids of the foreigners, had become

utterly helpless and ruined and lay like a door-mat at the gate of India. Its people had become physically and morally bankrupt. They had lost all self-respect and fellow-feeling.

At present, the people of the Punjab are renowned for their bravery. They are social and charitable. The same people, before the birth of Sikhism, were content to see their wives and daughters being led away like cattle without attempting to protect and save them. They had no sense of unity or organisation left in them. Guru Nanak's heart grieved when he saw his own people helpless against invaders who wrought cruelty and havoc upon them.

Guru Nanak witnessed Babar's invasion of India. This was in 1521 A.D. When the invader sacked the town of Eminabad and subjected it to massacre, loot and rape, so outraged did the Master feel that he shed bitter tears. As Guru Nanak records, there lay in the dust, the fairy heads of the damsels and beautiful women, with their morning toilet still fresh with perfumed wax. He saw the vermillion at the parting of hair on their heads—the sign of wedded life amongst Hindus, with feeling of a wounded father.

Alas! Nanak had no nation at his back at that time. He and his successors were yet to create it. But still he did not sit down in impotent rage and utter idle jeremiads. However, depressing the state of affairs was, this did not make Guru Nanak pessimistic. Being a practical man, he set about doing as much as the circumstances would permit. He was unwilling to leave the people whom Babar's mad soldiers had taken captives. He came forward and he too was made a prisoner like the others. They were taken to the concentration camp and both men and women

were given hand-mills to grind the corn. The Guru was also required to do so. Nanak heard the cries of pain and anguish from the injured among the people. He let go the hand-mill and the grinding of corn to itself and asked Mardana to touch the strings of his rebec; for the song came from Heaven:

“O God!

My Lord and My Master
Guardian of the people's destiny!
Save Thy people!
Behold!

The soul of the people is on Fire!
Send down Thy mercy, Lord!
Come out to them from any direction as it be Thy pleasue
Save Thy people, my Lord!
Their soul is on Fire!

O Master Divine!

Thou hast saved Khurasan from Babar's ravages, as if it were Thy own
And Thou hast sent this great terror to Hindustan
Thou, O Creator of all things!
Takest to Thyself no blame.
Thou hast sent Death disguised as the great Mughal
So brutally have the people been slain,
So heart-rending is their agony
And so groaning are the lamentations!

Is it not all pain inflicted on Thy heart!

O Lord, Thou belongest all to,
Thou feelest for all.

If power strikes another power one need not feel much agrieved
But when blood-thirsty tigers and wolves are let loose as now, upon the
flocks of sheep

It is Thee, the Shepherd, on whom the responsibility lies.

O Beloved! Thou canst not endure the tyrant of a conqueror that wasteth
the jewels of life thus,

And prideth himself on his power, seeing not what cometh after death.

Praise, Praise be to God

Who bringeth us together and then severest us.

They call themselves kings, and power mad they do what they desire,
But Thou seest, my Lord!

In Thine eyes they are no better than crawling worms
Nibbling an ear of corn.

A hundred blows of death come and strike, and yet
Thy tyrant knoweth not Thy Will!

(Guru Nanak: Tilang Rag) (*Translated*)

The music burst forth as the shower of cooling rain to the thirsty people. The miserable crowd heard the celestial hymn, and every one forgot his distress.

Babar, the Mughal King, came and listened. He pressed Guru Nanak to ask for some favour from him. Boldly answered the Guru:

“Hear, O Babar Meer!
Foolish is the faqir
Who begs anything of thee
Whose own hunger has not appeased.”

“O holy man I see God in thy face” Said Babar, “I will do any thing you ask for.”

“Nanak is hungry for God, Nanak asks for nought,” said the Guru, “Set at liberty, if you please, these people, who have been wantonly oppressed and ruined by you.”

Babar was over taken by remorse. A new moral and spiritual consciousness was awakened in him. He forthwith released all of them and gave away the wealth he had plundered; so as to resettle those people as far as could be possible.

Babar took Nanak to his tent and offered him a glass of wine. “My cup is full,” said Nanak, “I have drunk the Wine of His love, which keeps me intoxicated day and night.” And these winged words of Nanak lifted Babar for a while to the Celestial Realms. The would-be-Emperor of India saw in Guru’s presence the true Empire of Pure Beauty.

(35)

Guru Nanak as a Farmer: On his return from distant travels, Guru Nanak settled down as a farmer. His people came from far and near and

worked with him in his fields, singing the hymns of Nam. A colony arose around him and soon grew into a town known as Kartarpur (the city of the Creator) on the banks of the River Ravi. The Guru took delight in sowing wheat and reaping the golden harvest. His stores were open to the people. The bread and water was the Lord's the Guru taught; and the bread which the Lord gave was a 'prasad' (God's Grace). "Bread and water belong to the Guru" said the Sikhs. Crowds of people came and freely partook of the Guru's gifts. What is spiritual life in the Temple of Flesh without a full meal first? The very first temple made by Guru Nanak, therefore, was the Temple of Bread or Guru's Langar. In the common Temple of Bread, the bread of God was made free to the children of Man. Let none be hungry where the spirit of God prevails.

In the trackless world of that time, Guru Nanak had travelled on foot to distant lands singing his Hymns of Nam and kindling the hearts of all those that were ready to receive the Divine Light. Now crowds of people flocked to the old Father from all places where he had been in his younger days. All comers were filled from the Guru's treasury of thought and love. His strong personal attractiveness, his lovable ways and playful sense of humour, his persuasive words and simplicity which came out of the heart of his own all-embracing love went straight to the heart of all his hearers; he seemed to draw the poor and sorrowing especially to his arms.

The diseased and distressed were healed and comforted by him. The disciples, both men and women, came from all directions, from distant Kabul and Central Asia, from Assam and Southern India,

and they laid their selfishness at his feet and felt one with the Master, their hearts and minds mingled with one another and with those of the Master by the magic of His presence.

Work and worship, love and labour, silence and song were blended together in the life of Kartarpur and from there spread the fire of a new love of God and man all over the Punjab. His radiated love and faith attracted men as light gathers moths.

Guru Nanak cultivated a triple silence. He merged himself in the Silence of God—Sat Nam or the Eternal Word, in the silence of the nature,—the silence that shines in the starry sky and dwells in the lonely hills and in the flowing river, and in the silence of Sangat—fellowship of the congregation of believers or worshippers of God, whom he called Bhais (brothers).

The community at Kartarpur, drinking in the inspiration of his song and his personal presence, learnt more and more to purify their hearts for the worship of One Infinite and for service of the humanity. The life of the blended prayer and service undermined all egoism and self-idolatry. This community of the disciples, began to shine with a radiance of the Light which God pours out upon his devoted and dedicated servants.

It was here, at Kartarpur, that the Guru also recorded the hymns that he had sung during his travels abroad and elsewhere in India.

(36)

Bhai Lehna Ji: 'Lehna' in Punjabi means 'the dues to be collected'. It happened to be also the name of a great man of the Punjab. Lehna

was the son of a rich trader. He used to go up every year to Kangra Hills to worship the volcano flame, which the orthodox Hindus considered as a goddess Durga.

One early morning in 1532, he chanced to hear Bhai Jodhe chanting hymns of Guru Nanak, and he was so charmed by their beauty that he made up his mind to see the renowned Saint as soon as possible. In fact the very name of Guru Nanak, as he heard it from Bhai Jodhe, awakened in him love for Nanak.

Bhai Lehna said to Jodhe that he felt as if Guru Nanak was his own, and he was already having a great affinity for him.

Soon after, as Bhai Lehna was leading a company of Durga worshippers to Kangra, he stopped on his way to see Guru Nanak, towards whom he was being pulled by strings of love. Lehna came to the city of the Master on horse-back. Nanak met him outside the village; perhaps he had purposely gone forward to receive him. Nanak asked him his name.

He said that his name was Lehna. The Guru said, "Welcome Lehna! You come atlast. I am to pay your 'Lehna'—dues!"

Bhai Lehna got down from the horse and apologised to the Master for not having got down earlier. Guru Nanak said, "Bhai Lehna, those who come to collect their dues from the debtors, you know, they come on horse back, as is customary."

Bhai Lehna was so much fascinated to see Guru Nanak that he decided not to go back to his companions and stayed on at Kartarpur. His companions, the worshippers of goddess Durga went on their way to Kangra, beating their cymbals and ringing their bells as usual.

The love that Bhai Lehna had for the Master had no parallel. Everything else that can be thought of or seen was insignificant for Lehna beside his love for the Guru. Dead to the world, Bhai Lehna lived in the spirit of Nanak. Dispelling all doubts and fears, he lived a life of humility, deep patience and faith. He did what the Master willed. He forgot all hunger and sleep in his love. He was always busy serving the people, comforting the weary and helping the needy. As a bee buzzing round the flower, Lehna went round about the Master all the time looking at him in wonder and worship.

Lehna was the son of a very rich man. Once, as he returned to Kartarpur after paying a brief visit to his home town, he went straight to the wheat farms where Guru Nanak worked. The Guru, not caring for the comfort of his disciple and the expensive silk dress that he was wearing at that time, made him carry a heavy bundle of wet grass that was weeded out from the fields. His silk garment was stained by the mud dripping off the wet grass. As they entered the house, the Guru's wife said with great concern, "Lord! How heavy the load and see how his fine clothes are stained with mud."

Guru Nanak looked back and said, "Mud! seest thou not, good lady! He bears the burden of suffering humanity. Those are not mud stains, they are the sacred saffron-anointing! The Heaven anoints, him, he is the Divine Bridegroom,"

(37)

Guru Nanak's Ascension: And now the day was come when Nanak was to depart. The disciples

and saints assembled. Nanak had chiselled Bhai Lehna into a Divine Statue of Love, and when he looked in the mirror of his heart, the Guru saw his transfigured-self, and he bowed down to him. Bhai Lehna was renamed Guru Angad—the Master's Ownself. And Guru Nanak said to him, "Thy 'lehna' (due) was from me, I had to pay thee. Wonder no more, brother! Now I call thee Angad. Thou art a limb of my body, a breath of my being, one with me in the spirit, blended with my soul."

Then one day in an open 'dewan' Nanak placed Angad on his own seat and bowed to him in acknowledgment.

When call came from Heaven for the Guru's departure, the Sikhs and saints flocked round him from all directions. The Guru sat serene and undisturbed and, as usual, spoke to the crowd telling them that his mission had been fulfilled and they would make him happy if they rejoiced with him on his return.

Bright was the day and beautiful the hour of Nanak's departure from this earth.

Guru Nanak sang a song of joy and asked all those around him to sing the wedding song:

"Sing ye, my comrades,
Sing now my wedding song!
Sing ye, the song of His praises
May I be a sacrifice
To Him the Beloved!
The blessed day hath dawned!
The hour of wedding is come.
Come! comrades, come!
Anoint the bride with your blessings
Behold! The bride doth meet her Lord!"

Many of the disciples shed tears, and asked him, "Master, you leave us in anguish." Some of them

asked him, "Shall we cremate your body?" And others said, "No, we shall bury the body."

The Guru replied, "Do not quarrel over this! Let you all bring flowers and place on my sides, and let them do what they please whose flowers remain fresh and fragrant.

Indifferent was the Guru to cremation or burial. He only asked that the flowers remained fresh and fragrant, the flowers of faith and love.

Nanak slept with a sheet of cloth over him and as they removed the sheet atlast, there was nothing to be found under it except the flowers on both sides as fresh and fragrant as before and they understood the Master. We, the disciples must ask ourselves to-day, are our flowers of faith and love still fresh and fragrant?

Guru Nanak left the earth amid a chorus of song:

"They search for the Master in vain who search him in the tomb,
The old father of his people is not to be found in the grave
Nor in the cremation ground either,
He lives in the heart of Guru Angad."

Bhai Gurdas, a Sikh apostle sang later on:

"Heaven at last heard the prayers of the people,
Guru Nanak was sent to the world.
The disciples met and drank the nectar of his Lotus Feet,
And realized the Divine in this age of materialism.

Guru Nanak re-established Dharma,
All castes he merged into one caste of man,
The rich and the poor he brought on one level,
From this Founder of Humanity a new race of love goes forth;
In humility they bow down to each other.
The Master and the disciple become one:
His song of Nam gives us a new life
He is the Saviour in this age of materialism.

Nanak came, the worlds were lighted.
The sun rises, the darkness disappears.
Wherever the Guru put his foot,
It became the temple of worship.

The far-famed seats of the Sidhas changed their names,
 The Yoga-houses became Guru-houses.
 Humanity resounded with his divine hymns;
 In every house of the disciple, the Lord was worshipped.
 The Guru went in all directions,
 Seeking his own all over the earth.
 A river of love and peace
 Flows in us singing his song."

(Translated)

"Nanak the Master, sowed the seed of Nam in the hearts of men;
 and the fields are ripe with the golden corn.
 The harvest shall come, and the harvest shall pass,
 But the seed is of God and is growing!
 He gave Angad his own love, his own face and name and soul.
 He gave him his own throne in the hearts of men,
 Called him "Born of my loins," and made another Nanak on this
 earth!
 This is Nanak the Master; the Spirit of God, that fashions Himself
 forever in the image of man!
 The harvest shall come, and the harvest shall pass,
 But the seed is of God and is growing."

(Prof: Puran Singh.)

GURU ANGAD (1539—1552)

When the luminous figure of Guru Nanak became invisible, Angad saw the Guru's spirit entering his own soul. He felt elated with joy and wonder. He quietly sought the lowly house of a humble disciple and confined himself to a room. He was unwilling to open his eyes to look at anything else. Angad, lost in himself, sat in a trance of 'Dhyanam', his soul fast asleep in the Master's soul. Months passed by and no one knew where Guru Angad was. They yearned to see him and to touch his lotus feet. Crowds surged everywhere in the country searching for him and longing to see him.

At last Bhai Budha intruded on the love-smadhi of the Master and implored him to come out and give 'darshan' to his people.

When Guru Angad came out of his seclusion, the disciples saw in him the same aura, the same face and the same speech, as of his Master, Nanak. Guru Angad—Nanak the second, was in reality from the self-same Flame; but the Divine Hand had kept him concealed in the garb of Bhai Lehna till Nanak lifted the veil off him and in the mirror of his heart saw his own image and bowed down to him and announced him as Guru Angad—Nanak's own-self.

From the nectar-laved glance of Guru Angad, a million eyes drew inspiration. By his blissful smile he destroyed sorrows and sufferings of the people and filled their hearts with felicity and joy. His transmuting touch turned the baser metal of the men's mind

into pure gold. A mass of people came to the new Master, some to be fed, some to be healed and blessed and others to be initiated in the Gospel of Nam. But whosoever came hovered round the magic personality of Guru Angad in love and wonder, as moths round a lamp in the darkness.

From Angad, the Master, spontaneously flew 'Sparks of Life', and the soul of the people caught fire from them. His creative power was observed in the raising of the dead by his presence. From him, the life of the spirit flowed in a thousand shining rivers to the soul of the people. He worked in the Unseen.

Guru Angad loved little children. They were also delighted to be round him. The Master took great interest in their education. He opened schools for their instruction and he simplified the old Punjabi characters (that had come down from the time of the Greeks) into a new alphabet; since then this script has come to be called Gurmukhi. Thus in addition to the Temple of Bread and Temple of Song built by Guru Nanak, Angad the Master gave a third, the Temple of Teaching.

Daya Nath Yogi meets Guru Angad: At Achal Batala, a group of Yogis under the leadership of Yogi Bhangar Nath, came into a violent ideological clash with Guru Nanak. Guru Nanak gave a convincing revelation of his 'Shabad' philosophy and won over the Sidhas to his ideology.

Now when Guru Angad came on the spiritual throne of Nanak, some of those yogis came to Khadur Sahib to test the spiritual greatness of Guru Angad. They had been defeated by Guru Nanak and so some of them perhaps wanted to pay off old scores. But on encounter with him, they found Guru Angad spiri-

tually as formidable as Guru Nanak was. The yogis got peace and cooling solace from him and after paying their homage and humble salutations, they went away fully satisfied.

Now Daya Nath was another Yogi of great renown and acquirements. He was not in the Punjab at the time of discussions that were held at Achal Batala between Guru Nanak and the Yogis. So he was curious to know, how Guru Nanak gave an ideological defeat to such a prominent Sidha, as Bhangar Nath, the Yogi Superior of Achal Batala Centre.

Daya Nath had learnt that Guru Nanak was no more in the world, and that he was succeeded by his disciple Angad, who was with him when Guru Nanak held his doctrinal discourse with the Sidhas at Achal Batala. So Daya Nath came to Guru Angad at Khadur in order to know directly from him what the Sikh view of life was, which had challenged and overpowered the leaders of all the Six system of philosophy at Achal Batala.

Daya Nath came to Khadur with about a hundred followers. Guru Angad was sitting in a garden outside the village and there were about 200 people sitting around him and listening to him.

Daya Nath came and sat near the Guru and after exchange of greetings he said that he had come with a definite purpose. So saying he asked the Guru to explain how 'Yoga' (union with God) can be attained. Guru Angad: "Listen please, Yoga cannot be attained by dialectics and wrangling controversies. When a man's mind lives and moves in the Divine Spirit—Pure and Spotless Being (Niranjan) and remains detached from the worldliness, only then he gets union and can be deemed a real yogi".

Daya Nath: “Guruji! But to me it appears only those people can attain Yoga, who join and take up the cult of yoga and wear the garb of yogis—ear-rings, begging bowl, staff and smear their bodies with ashes and carry a conch of horn, and live in forests away from cities, and sit in deep concentration, suspending their breath. What do you think of such practices of Yoga?”

Guru Angad: “Please listen, no Yoga (union with God) can be attained by merely wearing the garb of a Yogi. If an actor puts on the uniform of a king, can anyone consider him to be a real king? He is a mere actor who acts as a king but can never be deemed a real king.

By abandoning one’s home and going to forests, one does not become a yogi. Nor can yoga be attained by suspending breath and sitting for long in yogic postures, nor by bathing in places of pilgrimages and wandering from country to country. Nothing spiritual can be acquired through such practices.”

Daya Nath: “If yoga cannot be attained through such penance and ascetic practices, then tell me, sire, by what code of restraint and self control can real yoga be attained?”

Guru Angad: Guru Nanak points out:

If one meets the true Guru,
The mind stops wandering,
A stream of bliss flows in the being;
Spontaneous Divine Music pours forth,
And fearless spiritual state is attained.
One remains detached from worldliness
And in one’s ownself is God realized.

Daya Nath Yogi: “Revered Guru! I have practised all the severe disciplines and austerities prescribed for sanyasa and yoga. I have met yogis absorbed in the

most difficult practices of austerities and penances. But I have not found the peace of mind. Nor have I met a God-realized man. Please gracious Master, bless me with this gift of peace and enlightenment.”

So saying Yogi Daya Nath bowed in reverence and humble salutation and touched the feet of the Guru with his forehead. The touch of the holy feet of the Guru gave him peace and cooling solace. And Daya Nath was transmuted.

Emperor Humayun comes to Guru Angad: Emperor Humayun, who had succeeded his father Babar, was utterly defeated by Sher Shah. Dejected, wornout and in great distress he came to Guru Angad to seek his blessings for regaining the throne.

Guru Angad loved little children—simple, innocent and pure. Absorbed as he was in innocent sport with his little playmates, he did not notice the arrival of the Emperor, who kept standing near by.

The Emperor had thus to wait for some time. Although Humayun had been vanquished, his kingly pride was unsubdued.

He lost his patience and felt offended and, in a fit of anger put his hand on the hilt of his sword with the intention of striking the Guru with it. The sword, however, would not come out of the sheath. His strength failed him.

Meanwhile, the Guru looked up, smiled and calmly said, “Brave Humayun! Where was your sword when you were facing Sher Shah? You ought to have used it then, but being beaten by him, you can do no better than strike a faqir with it.”

Remorsefully, Humayun bowed and asked for the Guru’s forgiveness. The Guru blessed him but said

that he would have to spend some years in exile before he regained his throne. And that is what took place.

Guru Angad receives Amardas: Amardas was an old man of 70 and had been forty times on pilgrimages to the sacred Ganges at Hardwar and had met many saints. Although he was charitable, good and pure, but the Lamp in him had not been lighted. He always felt some void and emptiness in soul. It seemed to him that he lacked something vital in him, but he knew it not what.

Early one dawn, a sweet voice, surcharged with life-aroma fell into his ears. It was the angelic voice of Bibi Amro from the neighbouring house. She was his nephew's wife and daughter of Guru Angad. She was singing the Guru's hymns while she churned to make butter for the family. Amardas was so charmed by the lovely melody and thrilling words that he stood spell bound listening to her song. The hymn she sang ended thus:

"The sear and scarred soul, dry as dust becomes whole again, when
the Guru is met."
(Translated).

Do they, the dead ones rise? Do old rickety bones swing back into life? Where did this joy-laden news come from?

The old man ran to the hidden nightingale in the neighbouring house and said, "O daughter, dear, whose song is it that gives good news?"

"Our Father's", said the girl.

"My dear daughter! I am burnt from top to toe. I need the Living-Touch of the Master to burst forth again into life. Pray, take me, take me to the Fountain of Light."

Bibi Amro took this elderly man to her father, Guru Angad. He received him with great respect that was befitting of his age and position in society.

As soon as Amardas beheld the love-lit, glowing face of the Guru, his mind melted like snow in the golden sunshine.

Enraptured by his holy-darshan (sight) he could not bear leaving his presence. So deep and intense was his love for the Master that he would find pleasure in serving him in every way. He would bring him a pitcher of fresh water from the river Beas every morning before dawn for his bath, he would wash his clothes and would serve in his Temple of Bread—taking keen delight in the utter effacement of self in his labour of love.

Guru Angad had imparted the hidden Spark of Life to Amardas. This had flushed his soul, body and mind. The Holy Spring had sprung in him. Having ignited him with the Fire of Truth, the Master left the disciple alone to his ecstasies, to his labour of love, to his Smadhi, making response to him only in the unseen, as the Master chose to conceal his fine work of art beneath a thick veil, away from the vulgar gaze.

Amardas for ever abided by Nam and lived in the charming music of His sweet presence. Fond like a child, he would remain gazing at the Guru in a continual trance of wonder, joy and love.

While going every day with a brass vessel to the river to fetch water and returning with it, Amardas never turned his back to the Guru. To him it seemed he would die if he had turned his back on the Master, even in the physical sense.

At the early ambrosial hour of fragrant dawn every day, Amardas brought the water from the Beas,

for his Master's bath, irrespective of rain, lightning and thunder. The Master must bathe and the disciple must bring the Beas water and carry the love-load.

On a frightfully cold winter night, Amardas was carrying the vessel full of water through the dark streets. He struck against a wooden peg, which a weaver had driven into the ground, and he fell into the loom-pit.

The weaver's wife, still snugly sleeping in her comfortable bed, was disturbed by the thud of his fall. And she said to her husband beside her, "Ah, who could it be at this hour? It must be that homeless Amru, who sleeps not, who knows no rest and tires never."

The Master sitting at Khadur felt the twitch and he was deeply moved. He took the old Baba to his bosom. The two souls met, as never before, and in that meeting arose another Moon in our sky. A great veil had been lifted somewhere in the depth of his heart and the Fountain of Eternal Joy burst forth in Amardas.

"My Amardas! My Amardas! said the Master," "He is the home of the homeless, the refuge of the refugeless, the honour of the honourless, the strength of the strengthless, the Light of the world. My Amardas! My Amardas is the Divine Master, Nanak himself. He then bowed to Amardas and seated him on the spiritual throne of Guru Nank.

Guru Angad's hymns: We have 62 hymns of Guru Angad in Guru Granth Sahib (the Holy Book). They are as brief as they are intense:

I

Were a hundred moons to appear,
Were a thousand suns to arise.

With so many lights.
 There would still be utter darkness
 If there were no Guru.

II

For those, O Nanak, it is perpetual spring
 Who have their Beloved in their homes,
 But those whose Beloved is far off—
 Day and night they remain burning.

III

My sisters, it is the rainy month of 'Sawan'
 Clouds are gathering in the sky,
 Think of the Beloved and enjoy,
 If I think of another, I die!
 My sisters! it is the month of 'Sawan'
 It is raining love, it is raining joy!
 To awake now is sin;
 O let me lie in the embrace of my Beloved.
 Wake me not, take me not from here,
 It is the sleep of peace!
 O sisters! It is the month of 'Sawan'.

IV

He is not to be called a lover
 Who attaches himself to a person other than the Beloved.
 Nanak, only he can be called God's lover
 Who remains in constant communion with Him
 If he takes favourable things as good
 And unfavourable as bad
 He is no lover, who deals with Him
 In this calculating manner.

V

The Nectar of which we hear is the love of God.
 Immortality for which we long is the song of Nam.
 The secret of life is hidden in us,
 But it opens in the kind glance of the Guru.

GURU AMARDAS

(1552—1574 A.D.)

Nanak's spiritual self, his very presence passed into the mind and body of Amardas, a tall sturdy old man of love and labour, with a knot of silver hair on top and white beard flowing down like a river of light. Behold! Nanak is now in the form of Amardas.

For a while the Guru observed a retreat in lonely and silent prayer, and then assumed the responsibility of his high place; he was at this time 73 years old. Personally, he still lived in the greatest simplicity; save for two single suit of clothes he gave away all his other possessions.

Datu's Jealousy: Guru Angad's unworthy son, Datu grew jealous of Amardas. Being a son of Guru Angad, he thought, it was he who was entitled to Guruship. So he proclaimed himself as Guru at Khadur. But he was not accepted. At this he was enraged and went to Goindwal where Amardas had taken up his residence. He attacked the Master and kicked him off the seat. But Amardas in great humility and self-restraint began to rub Datu's feet and said, "Sir, pardon me, my old bones are hard and must have hurt your tender feet."

Temple of Bread: At Goindwal, a liberal and free common kitchen known as 'Guru-ka-Langar' was maintained and it was the injunction of the Master that none was to see him unless he had first partaken of the Bread of Grace at the Temple of the Bread.

Thereby Guru Amardas intended to remove the caste restrictions, caste prejudices and the curse of untouchability. In his 'Langar' Hindus, or Muslims, Brahmans or Sudras, rich or poor, all were to dine together without any distinction. When the Raja of Haripur or even Akbar, the Emperor of India, came to see the Guru, they had to sit with other common people and dine together with them before the Master would consent to see them. In this way, people were made to renounce their social prejudices and look upon one another as brothers and equals.

Sati abolished: The status of women in Hindu society at that time was very low. When the husband died, she either voluntarily burnt herself on the pyre of her husband or was thrown into the fire where the corpse of her husband was being cremated. Guru Amardas carried out a vigorous campaign against this practice of Sati, thereby he brought about the emancipation of women from this social oppression and religious cruelty.

Through the Guru's teachings, men began to see and realize the worth of women; and so the women began to receive the respect and honour they deserved. Thus Guru Amardas rooted out many evils prevalent then in the society.

A Society on the Anvil: Before the advent of Guru Nanak, the religious teachers in India usually impressed the people that the world was a mere empty dream and advocated renunciation. They did not at all concern themselves about the social, economic, and political conditions of the masses. Guru Nanak realized what they failed to see: that a religion, if it is

to be a living force, must be a practical religion, one that teaches mankind not how to escape from the world, but how to live worthily in it, making the best use of life, not how to avoid evil but how to meet and overcome all evil and live a victorious life.

So along with living a godly life as an individual, the Sikh was to form a part of a corporate life—be it a society, community or a nation; so a Sikh must tune himself to several strings. The development of this kind of life is most difficult and the teachers of the world have often ignored it. It is the glory of the Sikh history that the Gurus had in mind the duties of a society or a community or a nation as much as the duties of an individual. This was a task not to be achieved in a life or two. Hence it was that successive Gurus by their precept and example inspired to men, to cultivate human nature both in mundane and spiritual sense, in all its aspects and in all its bearings. So we shall see that while the principles of life remained the same, the Sikh community as a whole underwent transfiguration, assuming a great variety of forms according to the circumstances that arose from time to time.

How the Fragrance Spread: Guru Amardas, out of the abundance of his generosity, gave authority and power to 146 of his apostles to go to various parts of the country and spread the fragrance of Nam. And to preach the truth through the language of action in one uniform spirit of the Master. Out of these 146 persons, 94 were men and 52 women. They were all glowing with Nam and filled with the divine spirit. The Guru also appointed 22 dioceses (Manjian), each under a pious Sikh.

Wherever these itinerant preachers went, they poured out floods of love in utter effacement of self. The women acted as mothers to the orphans and protectors of many poor girls, deserted by their cruel husbands—gamblers, thieves and drunkards. These disciples of the Master brought solace to those in despair, nourished the sick and poor with milk of love. Every one in need and distress called upon them.

These disciples of the Master were akin to a secret river flowing in a thousand channels bringing the water of life to the dead and dying. Every act of the holy brothers was a prayer, every step a song and like full bloomed roses they spread their fragrance far and wide without knowing and without asking. Many would catch the gleam of their souls and following the same would come to the Fountain of Light at Goindwal and join the holy association of the Guru.

Prema, the Leper cured: Prema was a leper and had lost his limbs and had become crippled. He heard about the Guru and came all the way crawling to Goindwal, where Guru Amardas lived. He stayed at a little distance from the Guru's 'Darbar' but where he could listen the hymns sung by the congregation. Some of the disciples fed him and looked after him. One day he was called by the Guru and given a bath. Prema was cured not only of his leprosy, but he got his limbs also restored, as he uttered Sat-Nam Wahguru, as directed by the Master.

The Guru then looked at him gracefully, and Prema was transformed. He was renamed Murari and the Guru also got him married into a good family. He was then sent out as one of the itinerant preachers of the Guru's gospel.

Mystics Scholars visit the Guru: Some mystics and scholars of Uttar Pradesh came to Goindwal seeking the 'Hidden Light' that illumines the mind. They were genuine seekers of truth and had wandered all over India but had not found the peace anywhere. They had at last received this life of the spirit at the feet of the Guru and were wholly transformed. We have in record what they spoke about the Guru from their personal knowledge and experience of him.

Thus writes Bhikha, who was one of them:

"In vain I wandered about
 In search of a true saint.
 I met many a recluse.
 Many a 'sanyasis' I contacted
 Many hermits and adepts I came across
 And these scholars
 Who were outwardly good and sweet.
 For full one year in this search I wandered
 But no one could give the glow and solace to my mind.
 They talked a lot in high sounding words
 But their actions were most disappointing.
 Discarding the Name of God,
 They indulged in worldly pursuits
 No need to talk of them anymore.
 At last God by His Grace
 Brought me in touch with Guru Amardas
 The lotus in me, bloomed and my mind was set at rest
 I shall ever abide
 As be Thy will, O Guru Amardas."

(Translated)

Salh, another mystic and a poet, thus speaks of him;

"Wearing the armour of meditation,
 Mounting the steed of knowledge
 With the bow of righteousness in hand
 And arrow of peaceful devotion
 You O, Guru Amardas, thus fought the battle of life.
 Keeping the fearless Lord in your heart,
 Holding the lance of Guru's Word
 You have cut to pieces the demons
 Of lust, anger, avarice and of ego and attachmnet

O, thou son of Tejbhan, monarch of a honourable lineage,
 You had the blessings of Guru Nanak, the king of kings,
 Salh proclaimeth the truth.
 Guru Amardas fighting thus
 Defeated the satanic forces in the battle of life."

(Translated)

Jalap, another mystic of Uttar Pradesh speaks of him:

"Blessed are the feet
 Which lead on to Guru Amardas;
 Blessed are the hands
 That touch the holy feet of the Guru;
 Blessed is the tongue
 Which sings the glory of Guru Amardas;
 Blessed are the eyes
 Which have the opportunity to look at him;
 Blessed are the ears which listen to his words;
 Blessed is the heart
 In which dwelleth Guru Amardas,
 The Divine Father of the world.
 Blessed is the head, says Jalap
 That bows at the feet of the Guru."

(Translated)

Akbar visits Guru Amardas: Akbar, the then Emperor of India, travelled all the way from Delhi to visit Guru Amardas at Goindwal. But he could not be shown into the presence of the Master unless and until he had dined with others in the common kitchen or the Temple of Bread. The king partook of the simple food in the langar. The more he had it, the more he wanted it. "There must be something mystical in the Guru's food that it is so delicious that I like to eat more and more of it." remarked the Emperor.

The Emperor, having complied with these preliminaries, obtained the audience of the Guru. The Guru rose to receive the Emperor in his arms, but Akbar spontaneously bowed to touch the feet of the Master. The Guru lifted him up and seated him

nearby. The monarch, by the holy touch, felt a thrill of joy in him. Peace and comfort came to him. He was deeply moved and impressed by the few words that the Master spoke to him.

Having received the Guru's blessings, when the Emperor took leave, he offered a large estate for the service of the Temple of Bread. But the Master declined the offer saying, "I have already more than enough from my Creator. The people are my lands and estates. We receive our daily bread from God: we do not think of the morrow. We are content to be of the poor and think of the Beloved."

"But as a token of my love and in keeping with the lessons of unity and universal brotherhood that you have given here, from now on—I regard your daughter as my own—all the same, whether they be your daughters and sons or mine. Therefore, I present this little Jagir to Bibi Bhani (Guru's daughter). It is my sincere wish and promise that I treat all equally." Said the king.

"All right, all right, as thou wishes O King Akbr, the great. I do not want it either for me or for the Guru's kitchen, your contribution would be utilised for the widows and orphans and Bibi Bhani will be the trustee and treasurers," said the Guru.

This was the estate where later on Guru Ram das, Bhani's consort, built Amritsar, the City of Golden Temple. To this day, all the inhabitants of Amritsar approach Guru Ram Das in prayer in all their needs, troubles and distress.

Bibi Bhani: Bibi Bhani was the younger daughter of Guru Amardas. From her very childhood, she used to recite the Guru's hymns and sit alone in meditation.

Later on, she used to serve in the Guru's kitchen.

As Bhani came of age, one day her mother spoke to the Guru about her, "We must give away Bibi Bhani in marriage now."

"To whom shall we give her," said the father.

"To a young man like him," she said, pointing at the same time to a youngman passing by.

"Yes give her in marriage to him then; for no one else can be like him." said the father.

The youngman thus chosen was Ram Das. He was from Lahore.

When Ram Das was just a small boy, his father had died. Driven by circumstances, he used to sell boiled grams. Once he chanced to come to Goindwal along with other pilgrims from Lahore. When he saw Guru Amar Das, he was so much fascinated and charmed by his grace that while other pilgrims went back to their homes, he continued to stay at Goindwal and daily used to attend the holy congregation.

He was selfless, meek and sweet like hundred thousands of the Master's other disciples at Goindwal. He also did the service of love, digging the Guru's Baoli (a big wide well with masonry stairs leading down to the surface of the water). Ram Das like others carried baskets full of earth and mud on his head. He surrendered himself to the divine in his love and devotion, renouncing all cares of the past and all anxiety for the future. He lived in continuous remembrance of 'Nam'. He was thus discovered by the Guru's discerning eye and was chosen as the bridegroom and was married to Bibi Bhani.

At the time of marriage of the bridegroom was asked by the Guru to chose a gift for himself, as was customary.

“Sire, Give me the gift of Hari Nam, give me the Song of His praise.”

It was here that Ram Das realized the Noontide Influx of Light, the Sun of suns-golden, the Moon of moons! The Source of Illumination! The very Life and Soul of the universe! When Nam illumines human vision, all is drenched, enveloped with this Holy-Radiance Divine. It turns the Face—from our little self to the Universal-Self. Ram Das thus came in tune with the Infinite.

Bridegroom Crowned: What Nanak saw in Angad, what Angad saw in Amardas, Amardas saw in Ram Das. And in due course, one day.,

As Guru Amardas sat up
And of his own sweet will,
He sent for his family and disciples.
“I go, I go, O Disciples Dear.
This is the Will of the Lord
Let no one weep after me
That would not please me in the least.

“A friend who desires that his friend be esteemed
Must be pleased when his friend
Goes to the Lord to receive the robe of honour.
Reflect then my children and brothers
Is it good to weep and wail
When God adorns the Guru
With a robe of honour?

“No more barley rolls, nor bread on leaves
No more Puranas, no more dead obsequice of the dead.
—I live, I live, the Living Flame leaps,
Leaps up into the Flame Hidden,
The only obsequice that I order is holy, all holy song.”

As said the Master, so did they comply
And patiently surrendered to the Will Divine.
The Guru then made all his disciples, relations, sons and brothers
Bow to the feet of Ram Das.

(Sunder Sadd: Ramkali)
Translated.

Amardas then asked his younger son Mohri, how he would look upon Ram Das, "Sire, to me, he is Nanak, Angad and thyself in One." replied Mohri.

Song of Bliss: Guru Amardas contributed 907 hymns to Guru Granth Sahib, all of which were written between the age of 73 and 95. Translation of a few stanzas from his Song of Bliss is given below:

I

"Bliss, Bliss, O Mother, Transcendent Bliss!
The Eternal Master's lotus feet have I kissed!
The True Guru I have found with all ease,
And my mind is filled with felicitations indeed.
The heavenly muses, the be-jewelled ones,
All hover around to sing
In response to Celestial Music from above.
Sing ye the hymns of praise to Him
Who dwells in my heart.
Saith Nanak verily, this ecstatic joy dawned on me
When I discovered the True Hidden Lord in me."

II

"O my mind, abide thou ever with God,
If thou dost abide in His presence evermore,
No more sin, no more sorrow.
If He accepts thee
All thy affairs will be set right.
The Lord is Perfect and All Powerful in every way.
Why shouldst thou forget the Lord?
Saith Nanak, O my mind,
Abide thou ever with God."

III

"O my True Lord!
What is there that is not in Thy house?
Everything is in Thy house
But he alone getteth whom Thou givest.
He sings Thy glories forever,
And enshrines Thy Name in his heart.

Heavenly Music resoundeth
 In the heart where the Lord dwelleth.
 Saith Nanak, O my True Lord,
 What is there that is not in Thy house?"

IV

"Thy Name, O Lord is my only sustenance;
 It hath appeased all my hunger;
 It hath quenched all the fires.
 The True Name abiding in my heart
 Hath given me peace and joy
 And fulfilled all my desires.
 I am ever a sacrifice unto the Guru,
 Whose gifts these are,
 Saith Nanak, Listen O saints, Love the Word,
 Thy, Name, O lord, is my sustenance."

V

"Celestial Music is heard in that blessed house,
 The heart, where God dwelleth,
 Yea, It dwelleth in that happy house
 In whom God puts forth his spiritual power
 Therein the Lord subdueth the five evil passions
 And destroys the fear of death.
 They on whom descendeth Thy Grace from above,
 Only they discover Thy Nam hidden
 Saith Nanak, they obtain happiness,
 And in their heart Divine Music is heard."

... ..

XVIII

"The consummation state is not reached
 Through rituals and outward religious observances
 And without this state of Supreme Equilibrium being attained
 Doubt and illusion will not depart,
 No amount of outward observances
 Will remove doubt and illusions;
 The mind is filthy with falsehood
 How can it be made clean?
 Wash thy mind in the light of the Word
 And fix it upon the Lord,
 Saith Nanak, It is by the Grace of the Guru
 That knowledge of Transcendent dawns
 This way, this way alone the doubts and illusion depart."

XL

“Listen, O fortunate ones, this Song of Bliss!
 No more, no more, earthly yearning
 Peace! Beatitude! Fullest Fruition!

I have found, yea, I have realised
 The Lord in His uttermost Supremacy
 No more sorrow, no more suffering,
 My grief, my sickness and all torments departed
 When the True Word was heard.

The saints and all holy men
 By this, from good to better become and are filled with joy;
 When they hear the Word from the Perfect Master;
 The listeners of the Word become pure,
 The speaker is sanctified.
 The Master True pervadeth everywhere;
 Nanak humbly humbly proclaimeth,
 For him the Divine Music resoundeth—
 He who falleth at the feet of the Guru.”

GURU RAM DAS (1574-1581 A.D.)

Guru Nanak's torch was now taken up by RamDas.

“Thou Ram Das art Nanak—Fourth, Thou art Angad, Thou art Amar Das, so do I deem thee.”

As a result of the teachings of the Gurus, there had been set up a distinct community that differed from its neighbours in religious outlook, social customs and latent political ideals. They had a common object of worship of One and only God (no gods and goddesses), and a common source of knowledge divine—their Guru. The pride of caste on the one side and the sense of inferiority on the other had been replaced by a feeling of love and brotherliness.

Guru Ram Das, realising the needs of the growing community, founded a central place of worship and gathering, where all could meet from time to time and cultivate mutual love and understanding and draw inspiration from a common source.

He left Goindwal for this new colony of disciples. It was built on the part of the land which Emperor Akbar had presented to Bibi Bhani. Following the Guru, many Sikhs also settled there. A very big tank was excavated there and a temple was built in the centre of it. Hari Mandir, the temple as it was called, grew out of the waters and floated like a lotus on the crystal pool. The pool was known as Amritsar—the Lake of Immortality and the place itself came to be known after, it, as the city Amritsar.

The work of the tank and temple which was initiated by Guru Ram Das, was however completed by Guru

Arjan Dev, the Fifth Nanak. When the tank was under construction and was still a big pool, a leper took bath in its water and was cured of his disease. This miraculous healing led to its fame being spread far and wide.

The temple, now popularly called Darbar Sahib or Golden Temple is a symbol of the culture and conduct of the Sikh people. It enshrines a liberal religious tradition consecrated by noble deeds of piety, sacrifice and heroism. Unlike the old Indian temples of the Hindus with a single entrance and closed from all sides, it has a wide open atmosphere with four entrances in the four different directions, offering welcome to all people irrespective of class, colour or creed. It is accessible to men and women of all faiths, castes and nationalities. Where Hindu temples enshrined idols, no image found a place in the Golden Temple, it has no sectarian bias. Hari Kirtan—singing of the hymns to the glory of God, continues during all hours of day and night. And bread is served free to all.

Ramdass and Srichand: Baba Sri Chand, the eldest son of Guru Nanak had founded a religious sect of his own known as Udasis. Sri Chand himself roamed about in the country as a recluse and a mystic. He once visited Amritsar and happened to see Guru Ram Das. Seeing long flowing beard of Ram Das, Sri Chand asked him jocularly why he grew it.

“To wipe the dust from thy holy feet.” replied Ram Das.

“It is your sweet humility and enchanting speech that make you so great and me make feel so small,” said Baba Sri Chand.

Service of Love: "In the doctrines of Nanak," says C.H. Pyne, "Morality holds a higher place than in those of any other Hindu reformers. Few even of the world's greatest philosophers have laid down a more exalted moral code than is to be found in the pages of Granth Sahib (the Sikh sacred scripture). Purity of life is set forth as the highest object of human endeavour, chastity, honesty, justice, mercy and temperance are among the virtues on which vital stress is laid."

Through the teachings of the Gurus and constant communion with God, the disciples got rid of all kinds of superstitions and became fearless. All barriers of inequalities and differences between man and man were eliminated. The peoples' minds were enriched and nourished with the love of God, so that they did not entertain any class feelings or duality.

We are never selfish when we are in love. These spirit-born people loved and served everyone. 'For all those that are of God and knoweth God, loveth. He that loveth not, knoweth not God. For God is love.'

People came to Guru Ram Das from far and near and laid their selfishness at his feet and then begged a little of it for his service. To serve the people was to serve the Master. Here was a religion that made love and labour the common property of man. Religion is the inspiration of love. The Beloved is in His people, and the service of the people is the service of God. And it is through service that love is realized. "Bread and water all belong to the Lord." We are fortunate to be endowed with opportunities to serve mankind.

The greatest service, however, is to serve with 'Life' and one who is 'Alive' himself can give 'Life' to others:

So the Master says that the opportunity to serve God in humanity is His gift.

The disciples thus distinguished themselves by a character suitable for service to mankind. The Guru, required Sikhs to unwittingly offer their service to others. Therefore it became customary for Sikhs to meet the needs of their neighbours and other fellow beings. They not only fed the wearied travellers and hungry and quenched their thirst, but also nourished the sick, physically helped the disabled and needy. They enjoyed supreme bliss in helping others. It became customary for Sikhs to sacrifice their comforts and spends the fruits of thier savings on those in need. The Guru exhorted Sikhs to adopt fair and honest means of earning and share the fruits of their hard labour with their brethern.

Arjan Dev: Was the youngest son of Guru Ram Das. As a child he was sweet, loving, humble and dutiful and his parents doted on him. From his early years, he devoted himself to self-culture and grew to be a man of great scholarship and piety—While yet in his teens, he seems to have been transfigured by the Holy Light which he had realized and gleaned.

One day, Guru Ram Das, one by one, asked his two elder sons to proceed to Lahore to attend a marriage there. But they gave a pretext not to go; for they thought their interests would be best served by staying on the spot. But Arjan, the youngest boy, gladly obeyed. He was instructed to stay on in Lahore, even after the marriage, as a missionary till he should be recalled.

The pangs of separation for a long time were unbearable for Arjan, but he had to carry out the

behest of the Master. He wrote his epistles from Lahore to his father Guru Ram Das, two of which were intercepted by his jealous elder brother, Prithia, and were not handed over to the Guru. The third epistle however got through, and Prithia lied to hide his deceit. But the truth came to light. Arjan was at once recalled. On his home-coming from Lahore nearly after three years, Guru Ram Das embraced Arjan Dev and installed him as the Fifth Guru.

The three epistles which Arjan Dev wrote from Lahore and the fourth couplet which he sang on meeting the Master, we treasure as of great value. A translation of them is produced:—

I

“My soul is a-thirst, my mind is full of longing
O Holy Master, for Thee, O Father sublime,
It panteth and craveth, as the rain-bird doth for rain,
This thirst unquenchable,
No peace, no rest, without Thy sight Holy
A sacrifice, O loving sacrifice love-dipped sacrifice
Am I to Thee—O Master Eternal!”

II

“Lord, how beautiful is Thy face,
How pleasant and sweet the melody of Thy voice
Ages, not days, have gone by and the rain-bird has had no drop of the
nectar.
Blessed is the land where Thou dwellest, my Lord!”

III

‘One moment if I see Thee not,
Is like a dark age to me.
When shall I see Thee again, My Lord?
Passes not my night,
My eyes know no sleep,
Unless I see Thy Royal Court, O True King.”

IV

“Great good fortune, great beyond measure, fortune mine!
The Lord, the Divine Master, my Saint today I find!
All bliss is life, I have found my Beloved within my heart
No separation now, no pining, O Master, how can I now part

Tendril like I cling to Thee eternally, eternally
 I in Thee and Thou in me
 One, One, One, everlastingly."

The Hymns of Ram Das: The songs of Guru Ram Das thrill the soul and make every one pure. His lyrics flow like a stream of love whose refreshing melody yearns for the Beloved. These are compared to the yearnings and heart-throbs of the Bride of God (Human Soul) who pines for one more glimpse of Him and is never content with many more. We have 679 hymns of Guru Ram Das incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib.

Guru Ram Das has laid down the daily routine which a Sikh is to follow:

"He who deems himself a Sikh of the Guru
 Should rise at an early hour & meditate on Nam—All-Pervading
 Divine Spirit
 He should bathe & make an effort
 To cleanse his mind in the inner Tank of Nectar.
 He should repeat the Name of the Lord
 As taught by the Guru.
 This will wash away the stains of sins from his mind
 Then at day break he should sing the hymns of the Guru,
 And throughout the busy day
 He should practise to consciously live in presence of God.
 He who constantly remembers God, the Lord
 Such a Sikh is indeed dear to the Guru.
 The Seeker of Truth on Whom the Lord bestows His Grace
 Receives the gift of Nam from the Guru.
 Nanak seekest the dust under the feet of such a Sikh
 Who himself repeats God's Name & inspires others to do the same.

(Translated)

GURU ARJAN DEV

(1581-1606 A.D.)

His Unique Personality

Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, is the central most figure of the Sikh Theocracy and by virtue of his unique personality, he is the most brilliant star in the galaxy of seers, saints and sages.

Guru Arjan was born poet and composer of music. He was a saint and scholar of rare piety and literary attainments. His compositions bespeak the great depth of his mind and sublimity of his thought, full of Divine Love and human sympathy. But above all we find in him a paramount Saviour, carrying the Torch of Divine Light which sets the dead soul awake.

Guru Arjan Dev's hands were always full with matters spiritual which aimed at dispelling the forces of darkness, and ushering in Light into this Land of Five Rivers. Many-fold as were his activities in his busy life of about 40 years, yet there were three outstanding works connected with him, any one of which, by itself, would be sufficient to make his name immortal. They were: the compilation of the Holy Granth, the construction of the Golden Temple and above all his own sacrifice in up-holding Truth and righteousness.

Complication of Holy Granth: It was an Himalayan task which Guru Arjan Dev took on his shoulders and he carried it through, as he alone could. Mere words are inadequate to pay tribute to the extent of work put forth and of the labour involved in compiling this

sacred book. It was indeed an Herculean task accomplished and to which generations of seekers of Truth and devotees would continue to pay their homage.

Holy Granth is by no means a Sikh Bible alone, but it is the universal Bible of Man. For its spirit is so large and profound and there is nothing sectarian in it. It contains only universal Truth. It is the lyric of divine love, and all the people of the earth subsist on such glowing lyrical prayer.

Along with the hymns of the Gurus, we find Psalms of Kabir, Ravidas, Namdev, Jaidev and of Muslim divines like Sheikh Farid and Bhikam and of many others who were inspired by the Divine Spirit. Although the hymns of fifteen saints have been included in Granth Sahib yet it is a single great book in which there is a remarkable unity of outlook, sincerity of purpose and beauty of poetry and realism of vision. It has really one theme—man's search for God, his longing and yearning after God, his intense love for Him, and to feel His presence and live mentally and spiritually healthy life on earth. Guru Grantha is but One Song, One Idea and One Life.

Guru Arjan's personal contribution to Granth Sahib is by far the greatest of all the Bhagatas combined together. There are 2218 hymns contributed by Guru Arjan himself. The hymns are set to music. There is a wide range of mystical emotions, intimate expressions of the personal realizations of God and rapturous hymns of divine love.

To convey their message of love, light and life, the Gurus employed both music and poetry in the writings of Guru Granth. For you can speak Truth uncontradicted in verse, you cannot in prose. The hymns

of Guru Granth are set to measures of thirtyone classical Indian ragas. In this way each hymn acquires a specific emotinal evocation and a distinctive spiritual aura.

Guru Nanak's poetry displays a remarkable freedom of expression. The pastrol beauty, the ripening cornfields, the break of dawn and the awakening of birds; the comely leap of deer in the woodlands the awesome majesty of monsoon clouds and the music of rainfall aroused him to religious & poetic frenzy. The fifth Guru Arjan, expresses the same deep sentiments in his poetry as Guru Nanak. His verses abound with beautiful phrases and has an enchanting melody, produced by the use of alliteration & repetition of words. How beautifully worded hymns crave for union with God:

“O blissful night, long be thy hours,
O wretched sleep, be brief,
I have a tryst with the Lord I love,
I long to touch the Lotus Feet of the Lord.”

(Guru Arjan: Rag Behagri)
(*translated.*)

One who reads this Divine Book is undoubtedly stirred to the depth by the spirit which pervades the whole poetry. Each verse sparkles with divine refulgence, each line tingles us with rare joy. There is no human chord that is not struck, there is no depth that is not stirred. It imparts the Spark of Life that kindles the “Extinguished-Ones” and makes whole the ‘Broken-Ones’.

In the pages of holy Grantha, we do feel man comes into his own, developed to his full stature of manhood, when man is no longer a mere man, but one

with the Supreme Self. No longer are forces of nature, the object of worship, but only the Timeless Spirit. The arid desert of philosophy has been replaced by mountain-heights of love-lit meditation.

Guru Granth Sahib is not a book of cold wrangling philosophy, but it is pulsating with the warm blood of the heart. Sweet humility has taken the place of inflated egoism.

In Guru Granth Sahib, there is the first genuine attempt to completely take off the veil from the Spirit. Above all, Guru Granth is the only Bible which gives you complete information about NAM—the Word or Logos, which is the Key to the Kingdom of Heaven within us, and but for which all poetry is verbiage and all philosophy illusory. This Divine Poetry brings the man face to face with this Dazzling, Eternal and All-Pervading Reality, Golden State ultimate, reaching which all is one.

Each psalm of the Guru, is a beautiful piece which can well be termed the Gems of the Spirit. The following is one such inspired psalm which depicts the state of mind, when Truth dawns on man:

“The shell of the egg of illusion has burst,
My mind is illumined;
The Guru has broken the fetters
The captive soul is freed.

No more cycles of life and death,
No more fretting and fuming
The steaming cauldron of desires has cooled down
No sooner the Guru showered the blessings of NAM on me.

My enemies—the senses that assailed me,
Are under my control since I found the Saint’s company.
The Lord in His mercy has now removed
All the temptations that once stood in my way.

The load of 'Karma' is taken off my breast
 And I soar like a bird, free on its wings,
 No more restraint,
 I now act without any desire for reward.

I have crossed the sea of life
 And have reached the shore.
 The Guru hath done this act of mercy
 Now Truth is my Resting Ground,
 Truth is the Rock on which I stand, I dwell in Truth
 Truth is my Capital and Stock-in-Trade,
 Saith Nanak, Yea, I have found My House within me."

(Guru Arjan: Rag Maru)
 (translated).

Guru Arjan's Sukhmani (The Song of Eternal Peace): His Sukhmani is the most popular and widely chanted hymn. It is veritably the Kohi-Noor of the Spiritual Diamonds. It is joy infinite which is beyond the span of words; for words are volatile, but the joy which emanates from this Song of songs is eternal.

Sukhmani came out from the heart of Guru Arjan as a river flows out from a snow covered mountain. It is a great healer of all the ills of the mind. When worries seize you, and troubles burden you and outweigh your spirit, plunge into Sukhmani, the ever-flowing River of Peace and you will be soothed and comforted. It makes you fearless and joyous. You will feel refreshed, stimulated and anew.

The Golden Temple of Amritsar: (Darbar Sahib): It is said that Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion, during his missionary tours once halted by a natural pond in the midst of a thick jungle in the Punjab. This secluded spot afforded great peace and he stayed there for some time to enjoy the

crystal clear waters and to commune with God in the midst of this cool, quiet place.

Because Guru Nanak had been so fond of this spot, it naturally took on a hallowed significance to his disciples and followers. When Emperor Akbar visited Guru Amar Das and received spiritual satisfaction, he made a presentation of this land to Bibi Bhani, the daughter of Guru Amar Das. At any rate, Guru Ram Das established his residence in the area where Guru Nanak first halted and in 1577 the city was founded with the construction of the tank which was to be called Amrit-Sar. The construction of the tank and the temple was at first commenced by Guru Ram Das, but the subsequent modelling and finish was due entirely to the Fifth Guru. It was the task of Guru Arjan, to crystalize the spiritual aspect of the religion and its metropolis. He not only compiled the Guru Granth Sahib, the holy book, but he also established the Golden Temple as the religious centre of the Sikh community.

Blind ritualism had smothered the essence of the religion of the Hindus and the peculiar forms of eating and drinking had become the ultimate in ritualism. So Guru Nanak and his successors, to hit at the heart of artificiality, established a free kitchen and decreed that all who come to see them must first sit side by side with other pilgrims and eat food prepared by the devotees. Thus each man had to shed his ritualistic beliefs by sitting by the side of men and women of other castes. In this way the Guru abolished superficialities and showed the people that under the ritualism lay an inner sameness. Thus Sikhism opened its doors to all and gave men simple basic beliefs which all could follow.

The Golden Temple was designed as a symbol of such a faith and, to demonstrate its universality, Guru Arjan asked his dear Muslim friend, Mian Mir, to lay the foundation stone.

A marble synthesis of the arts and cultures that had passed through the Punjab, the Hari Mandir, as the temple was originally called, grew out of the waters and floated like a lotus on the crystal pool. The pool of water around the temple not only isolates it from a temporal environment but also adds considerably to its majesty and beauty. The temple's glimmering reflection in the myriad ripples of the holy water, dancing around it, is an unforgettable memory. By day, under the blue sky, dazzling in the sunlight, the temple looks like a garnished ornament. By night, when the temple and its causeway are lit with lights of different colours they resemble a miniature fairyland. Connected to the shores by a single bridge, its surrounding water bordered by a wide walk, this temple is accessible to men and women of all faiths, castes and nationalities.

Where Indian places of worship normally had one door opened towards the direction of that faith's conception of God's abode, the Golden Temple was built with four doors opening to the cardinal points to show that God is everywhere at all times. Where Hindu temples were open only to those of chosen castes, the Golden Temple opened its doors to all who would seek God. Where Muslim mosques were open only to men, the Golden Temple received also women, giving them dignity and equality with men and making them personally responsible to God. Where Hindu temples enshrined idols of gods for worship, no image found a place in Golden Temple and worship of only

one God was done. God who is formless all-pervading, who is the creator of the universe, who is not an abstraction but a reality, Immortal, unborn and Self-existent. And He is worshipped through love and righteousness by singing odes and hymns in praise of Him.

Thus the establishment of the Golden Temple was a revolutionary step in Indian history.

But those, who look on merely the alabaster and the gold of the temple, miss the inner spirit which pervades the whole building. The whole atmosphere is surcharged with Divine Light and no one who enters the sacred precincts of the Golden Temple would fail to perceive its sacred influence.

Everyday, Guru Arjan, chanted the life giving hymns, playing the Tambura exquisitely with his own deft fingers; his melodious voice, and with his disciples gathered round him listening to his divine lyrics in wonder and worship. The lovely music rose from under the dome of Hari Mandir and was absorbed and reabsorbed by the thirsty lake which surrounded it. His divine voice still lingers on and its reverberating echoes still awaken the sleeping souls. The mystics and the 'Living Ones' know and appreciate the sacred influence of the atmosphere there.

Akbar, the Emperor of India pays a visit: Akbar paid a visit to the Guru in order to see the Temple and its architectural beauty. He asked the Guru, as was his wont, the way to acceptance by God. The Guru said, "Through Service and Love." Akbar wished to make a contribution towards the maintenance of the Golden Temple. But the Guru declined the offer, saying that it was being well supported

by the people. But when the Emperor insisted, the Guru said, "There is an acute famine in the country; it would be best if the Imperial visit were to be marked by the remission of this year's land revenue to the poor farmers."

Akbar gave orders accordingly.

Social Reforms: Arjan felt that there could be no hope for the social and political regeneration of our people as long as they did not take interest in the development of arts and industries. Men of high castes kept aloof and left the hard work to be done by the so called lower classes. All those who were spiritually minded shunned work, as it was looked upon by them as mean, degrading and worldly. Guru Arjan said that every man must work. It is only those that work and earn and share their earnings with others that find the true path.

Renunciation of the world was against the teachings of the Gurus. He preached that retirement from the world was a confession of failure, like a run-away soldier from the battle field.

The Guru recognised that the reform of a nation meant the reform of its masses. A nation is as great as its rank and file. It is the common man that was of utmost significance and therefore the Guru left no stone unturned to care for him. All classes were declared equal. All occupations that were honest were glorified as sacred. There was to be no prejudice against any trade and profession. Worldly riches were no longer to be considered 'Maya'. These could be helpful in the conduct of human affairs.

For a religious man, it was not irreligious to acquire wealth, provided he makes use of his wealth

beneficially to give comfort and derive comfort.

So now the intelligentsia also began to take active part in all arts and industries. The Guru patronised and encouraged them, as this was one of the noblest ways of serving the country. At the same time, centres of commerce and industries like Amritsar and Tarn Tarn were founded by the Guru.

Centuries of Mohammedan rule had demoralised the Hindus so much so, that in desperation they had come to believe that all pain and suffering was meted out to them by God because of their sins and that virtuous men would never suffer. They said that king Dasrath, Rama's father, suffered agony in the exile of his son, because he had caused pain to the father of Sarwan. So all actions that involved pain and suffering began to be shunned. The concept of sacrifice and patriotism were thrown to the winds.

Guru Arjan Dev laid great stress on the service of love and self-sacrifice for a virtuous cause. His purpose was to show that whatever suffering one had to undergo in the cause of doing good to others, is not the outcome of one's sins, but a necessary co-relative of virtue. How can a conscientious man remain at ease as long as his fellow brethren are suffering before his eyes. Guru Arjan enjoined upon the Sikhs to voluntarily contribute atleast One Tenth of their income as a love-full offering for the advancement of the social, national and 'Dharmic' causes.

Contemporary Poets, Mystics and Scholars: Some contemporary poets, mystics and scholars who personally saw the Master and came in close contact with him wrote about him thus:

"Unfathomable, pure, serene and immortal is the spirit of Guru Arjan Dev. The light of his soul is brighter than the moon and more resplendent

than sun He is imbued with the love of God and in him burns the undying Flame of the Eternal Every-one acknowledges the spiritual greatness of Guru Arjan, and the wise and enlightened sing songs about his virtues and spiritual grandeur Guru Arjan personal life and his spiritual ideals attracted people of divergent faiths, men and women belonging to all the four different castes, those who were devout followers of Vedas and those belonging to the Six Schools of Philosophy

Guru Arjan's heart vibrates with Celestial Music His inner self is the abode of perennial joy and bliss, as he is deeply absorbed in the love of God His personality emanates Truth

From the North and South, from the East and West, seekers of Truth flock to Guru Arjan and accept the discipleship of his faith He maintains a free Kitchen giving bodily food as well as spiritual food to all those who seek it "

(Bhai Gurdas *Translated*)

"I relate from my personal experience, the virtues of Guru Arjan Dev He was born in the house of Guru Ram Das His birth fulfilled the great expectations of the house of the Guru He had the divine, illumination from his very birth He is a great seer who loveth God truly and liveth a detached life in this world He has given the widest expression to the Holy Word The Name of the Lord is ever on his lips His mind is ever at peace He has perfect realization of God

Ever since I have felt the moral and spiritual influence of Guru Arjan, my mind has experienced Truth through the Guru's Word My thirst for true knowledge of God has been appeased and my search has ended in this supreme realization

Immortal and invaluable is the inherent divinity in Guru Arjan His inner spirit is the very image of God and is everlasting The supreme Light of the Holy Word passed from Guru Nanak to Angad, then to Amardas and from him to Ram Das With the transmuting touch of Ram Das, Guru Arjan became the torch-bearer of Guru Nanak

Guru Arjan ever remains united with God So impressive and pure is his personality that whosoever comes in contact with him praises his virtues He has come to bear the burden of the world Through his moral and spiritual influence he dispells all fears and does everything to remove the sorrows and sufferings of others He is gracious and compassionate like God Himself

Guru Arjan is an embodiment of patience, tolerance and calm endurance He is also a profound scholar By his very touch all ego departs He is the perennial fountain of charity The greatest gift which he freely gives to others is the divine wisdom He preaches Truth, loves Truth and stands by Truth He is the King of kings and the most perfect living being Great is Guru Arjan indeed as he fills to the brim the empty, spiritless souls with the Light and Love of God "

(Kalya Sahar—a poet and scholar of Banaras)
translated

Mathura's observations about Guru Arjan: Mathura, a mystic and a scholar makes observations about Guru Arjan which are briefly as under:

"God is Supreme Light. The same Divine Light manifested itself in human form and was known as Guru Nanak. The Divine Spirit of Guru Nanak came to be passed on to Guru Arjan. Blessed am I to see the Light of the Perfect Guru shining in Arjan Dev with my own eyes. This Light radiates from his personality and spreads in all realms. In this dark age, Guru Arjan is a ship to save humanity from the tumultuous and the stormy waters of this dark ocean—our world.

Hear, ye people, I seek the Light that shines in Guru Arjan. His mind is imbibed with a genuine love for humanity and God. Ah! who can measure the spiritual greatness of Guru Arjan. He has come to enlighten the seekers of truth and to save suffering humanity. Ah! who else can bestow peace and light on mankind, plunged in darkness except the great Guru Arjan. Those who have drunk deep from the cup of nectar which he alone at present holds out to humanity, have overcome all sorrows and sufferings.

Pure is the life of Guru Arjan and pure are his principles, whoever treads his path becomes pure like him. On the earth and in sky and in worlds, the light of God pervades. That resplendent light of God can be visibly seen in Guru Arjan." *(Translated)*

The great sacrifice: Hundreds of thousands of people equally from amongst the Hindus and Muslims flocked to Guru Arjan, fascinated by the beauty of his spirit, his purity and saintliness. A great number of villages with hundreds of Muslim inhabitants bowed before the Guru and became his disciples.

Up to the time of Akbar, the Mughal Emperors had not greatly interfered with this peaceful movement. But the ever growing popularity and influence of Sikhism perturbed Jahangir, who had little of the mildness and tolerance of his father. As a Mohammedan, he thought it was his duty to bring the infidels to the fold of Islam.

Thus the bigotry of Emperor Jehangir was stirred up. He himself writes in his autobiography:

"On the banks of the river Beas, there stands a village Goindwal, where dwells a person Arjan by

name. He is known as Guru. He has taken into his folds quite a number of Hindus, as also simple Mohammedans by influence of his ways and manners. His purity and saintliness is being loudly proclaimed on all sides and worshippers from all parts of the country rally round him. They manifest complete faith in him and pay their homage to him. This movement has been going on for the past three to four generations. I have been contemplating for a long time either to end this movement or to convert the Guru to Islam.”

A pretext was soon created for hauling up the Guru on charge of sedition. Chandu, the Dewan, conspired with servile informers and invented the story that the Guru had helped Khusrau, the rebellious son of the Emperor Jahangir, while he was passing through Goindwal and that the Guru had applied a ‘tilk’ on his forehead as a token of his blessings. The Emperor grabbed this opportunity of giving vent to his pent-up feelings and rage.

Referring to these allegations, Jahangir writes in his autobiography: “I was already fully aware of his heresies and as I was now informed of him, I ordered that the Guru be brought into my presence and I conferred all his belongings to Murtza Hussain Khan and further ordered that he should be tortured to death under the Law of Yusa.” Power-mad Monarchs are often blind to truth and reason. The following day the Emperor left Lahore for Kashmir, with no effort to know or seek the truth behind all these allegations against the Guru; and even before the Guru could be brought to Lahore.*

*Jehangir’s son, Khusrau, had rebelled against him. He was fleeing towards Lahore and the Emperor was closely pursuing him. On the way he mercilessly

After the Emperor left for Kashmir, the Guru was brought to Lahore. Murtza Hussain Khan handed him over to Chandu, the dewan who devised the tortures inflicted upon the Guru. Guru Arjan was made to sit on red hot iron and burning sand was poured over his bare body. But the Guru remained calm and tranquil throughout, and his face flushed with divine glory.

When Hazrat Mian Mir, a Muslim saint, who had laid the foundation-stone of the Golden Temple, heard this tale of sorrow, he rushed to see the Guru. Tears trickled down the cheeks of the aged Mian Mir when he saw the ghastly scene. He cried like a child and

massacred all those who were reported to have helped Khusrau in any way. The Emperor's diary shows that on the 16th Zeeulhaj he was at Serai Qaziwali. On the 17th he reached Goindwal starting the same morning from Sultanpur. He knew that Guru Arjan lived at Goindwal. If the Guru had really helped Khusrau in any way, the Emperor would have surely dealt with him then and there. But there was no report against him.

From there, the Emperor marched on to Jaipal, a village seven miles from Lahore and stayed there till the 28th. He heard nothing against the Guru till then.

On the 3rd of Muharram, Khusrau was arrested and 700 of his companions were impaled alive on spikes pitched outside the Lahore gates. Some of them were sewn up in wet cowhides and ass-hides. The Emperor remained at Lahore till the 8th. It was not until the 7th that he was suddenly informed that Guru Arjan had applied a tilak on Khusrau's forehead in token of his blessings.

Now in the house of Guru Nanak, tilak was never applied to anyone except on the forehead of the succeeding Guru when he was installed on the spiritual throne. Even when the Emperor Akbar visited the Guru Amar Das and then also Guru Arjan himself, no tilak was applied to his forehead.

It was an utterly false charge that was brought against the Guru. Chandu, the Dewan had conspired with some fanatic Mohammedans and fabricated the whole story.

Chandu bore a grudge against the Guru. His malice was due to the Guru's refusal to accept his daughter in marriage to his son Har Gobind. Chandu had spoken contemptuously of the house of Guru Nanak and therefore the Guru refused his offer.

But Jehangir, who for reasons of his own, had long since been contemplating to take some strong action against the Guru, now found a good excuse to order that he should be arrested and tortured to death.

said: "Master! I cannot bear to see these horrors inflicted on you." But the Master comforted him and asked him to look up. When lo! the hosts of Heaven were seen hovering around the Guru and angels stood awaiting his commands. But the Guru was unruffled, quite calm and tranquil and full of ineffable peace.

He completely resigned himself to the Will of God, and submitted cheerfully to the most agonising physical torture, and said: "Sweet be Thy Will, My Lord, Thy Grace alone I beseecheth."

Mian Mir then bowed and left in silence.

At last, Chandu made up his mind to kill Guru Arjan by suffocating him in a fresh cowhide, in which he was to be sewn up. The Guru asked for a bath in Ravi River. He was permitted to bathe, as Chandu revelled in the thought that the Guru's body full of blisters would undergo greater pain when it would be dipped in cold water.

He was led out to the river which flowed embracing the walls of the Lahore fort. The Master's disciples saw him. He looked at them still forbidding any action. "Such is the Will of my God, submit to the Divine Will," said he, "move not, stand calm against all woes."

Crowds of people watched him, calm but deeply afflicted while the Master stood in water and had a dip and disappeared. The Light blended with Light and his body was to be found nowhere.

The testimony of Bhai Gurdas on Guru Arjan's martyrdom is of great importance. Particularly noteworthy are the comments of this saint-scholar who lived during that period. He does not brood over the horrors of torture, but elucidates the superhuman

endurance, equanimity and calmness of Guru Arjan under the severest torments and extreme agony. He writes:

“Profound indeed was Guru Arjan’s martyrdom. As a fish swims into the depth of flowing water, so Guru Arjan lived deep into the Eternal Stream of Lord’s presence. As the moth flings its body into flame sacrificing itself on it, so Guru Arjan submitted his body to the torture of fire and heat and blended his soul with the Undying Flame of God.

As a deer, cares not for the deadly arrows of the hunter but runs heedlessly towards the call of the drum, Guru Arjan cared not for the cruel hands of the murderer but marched on fearlessly to face a martyr’s death, keeping all the time his mind absorbed in the Celestial Music within his soul. Even at the severest torture and at the most tragic moment of his end, he thought not of anything else but the enchanting of Heaven’s symphony within his mind.

As a butterfly, when trapped in the petals of the lotus flower dies in the joy of its fragrance and honey, so Guru Arjan cared not for any physical torture but kept his mind unsullied in the fragrance of the Lord’s Love.

Like a rainbird, thirsting only for a drop of rain and no other water, Guru Arjan abandoned all worldly opportunities offered to him and desired but an abiding repose in the Love and Will of God. So deeply was he absorbed in the undisturbed and unbroken vision of the Lord, that his enlightened and elevated spirit conquered all sorrow and pain and his soul rested peacefully in the eternal embrace of God’s love. I am a sacrifice unto Guru Arjan, the Perfect One.”

(translated).

GURU HAR GOBIND

(1606-1644 A.D.)

The New Spirit and Life

The cruel and torturous execution of Guru Arjan Dev aroused a very strong wave of feeling among the masses. The enlightened, but not passive, sufferings of the Guru instilled a new spirit and life into the people and they resolved to exert and sacrifice themselves for the sake of righteousness. They were determined to resist and evict evil from the country. Resistance meant sorrow, suffering, hunger and death for themselves and for their children but so great was the love of the people for the Master that they were prepared to endure everything. Those who fight for a noble cause do not enter into calculations.

The devotion they bore to their Master was deep and selfless. Now that the Guru had been tortured to death of what use was the life? So great was their indignation that they were ready to sacrifice all that they held dear—their homes, wealth and families as a mark of their love and devotion to the Guru.

For centuries, countless Hindu men, women and children had fallen under the Muslim sword; but this had not softened the hard hearts of their oppressors; they had become even more brutal. On the other hand, the barbarous inhumanities committed on the Hindus had totally demoralised them. They had become so impotent and pessimistic that they could not contemplate any kind of resistance. It was for the very first time, now, during the long bondage of the

Hindus that resistance began to be organised. The Sikh community at that time was numerically small but spiritually great. It had acquired an intensity of character which steeled it against all tyranny and oppression.

When the sixth Guru Har Gobind, sat on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak, Bhai Buddha, the silvery-haired saint, as usual, placed before him the "Seli" or Ribbon of Renunciation that Nanak had worn and given to Angad, who had presented it in turn to Amardas and Amardas to Ramsad and then to Arjun. Guru Har Gobind said to Bhai Buddha: "No, give me a sword to wear instead." He saluted the Seli and put it aside. The sword was brought but Bhai Buddha who had never worn a sword, placed it on the wrong side of Har Gobind. The Guru said, "Bring another one, I will wear two swords." The two swords which the Master wore were emblems of spiritual and temporal authority—Piri and Miri—the combination of 'Bhakti' and 'Shakti'. The Master ordered all his men to carry swords, to keep horses, and to manufacture arms. He was determined to take his disciples through blood and fire. The house of Nanak, from its very foundation, stood for love, peace, truth, freedom and self respect. But now the fire that had come leaping from outside into the camp of peace needed to be extinguished.

Thus bands of warrior-saints came up who would not shun or fear danger but would dedicate their lives to the banishment of tyranny and oppression. Their sword was to strike not in a spirit of anger, hatred or aggression or for self-glorification. They were instead to wield the sword as a shield to defend and protect the weak and oppressed, to uphold truth and righteousness.

True Dharma—is to live rich victorious life.

In the past, as even today, most of the people think that Dharma or religion is to live humbly, in poverty and to pass on the one's days peacefully and quietly in renunciation and self-abnegation. A man, who lives a life of suffering, surrender and self-denial is considered a truly religious man. The so called religious men, therefore, abstained from the gratification of natural desires, though yet desiring them. This had led to forced celibacy, 'tyaga' (physical renunciation of the world) and mortification of flesh. Such has been the philosophy of latter Hinduism that was built on the ashes of Buddhism. Its natural conclusion is one of pessimism and defeatism.

But the true Dharma is a rich, victorious life of high spirit. Such a life of real Dharma, springs of 'Dhyanam' the inspiration alike of Lord Krishna, Christ, Buddha and Nanak, comes of art and not philosophy. Philosophy creeps in when inspiration leaves us. Philosophy is incapable of giving eyes to the spiritually blind. It cannot impart life to the dead souls. Living Dharma or true religion does not stand upon the crutches of philosophy.

Besides the Buddhists, the Hindus of medieval India also followed the path of self-denial; even Sufis and some school of Christians in the west chose this path. Men, endowed with the divine spirit are rare and it is these rare gifted men, who by their living examples lead humanity to the right path. Without such a man to guide, people often go astray. The Truth of Life has been repeatedly mistaken for a dead creed. The Mohammedans of middle ages and of modern times on the other hand have taken up just the opposite view of life. Unlike Christians and

Hindus who follow the way of self-denial, Muslims follow the philosophy of self-assertion.

Now self-assertion and self-denial, both these ways of thought and action take the world to the extremes and each one is one sided and incomplete by itself. The ideal way is SEHAJ-AVASTHA—The Balanced State, above the three modes (Three Gunas—Raj, Sat, Tam). Those who are inwardly awakened by Nam (The Divine Spirit) feel a certain elevation, a certain perception of inner beauty and bliss. In this life of the spirit, the dispute of self-denial and self-assertion, of violence and non-violence is settled and squared up once for all. One gets a steady vision of life, a life of 'Sehaj' or of equilibrium. It is neither passive, nor active, yet it is a combination of the two. This attitude of the spirit-born people towards the world is called in Sikh terminology "CHADI-KALA" or the Way of Exalted Spirits. A man of this supreme nature is fearless and does not create fears in others. He is victorious in spirit and has an indomitable personality and supreme spiritual grace. Assertion and Denial both work in him simultaneously and accommodate each other spontaneously, like the two wings of a flying bird. Yet he remains above both, neither concept affecting him. Such were the Saint-Soldiers that Guru Har Gobind had around him. They were all seasoned heroes, Knights of Honour, of the Divine Master.

News of the war-like preparations soon reached Emperor Jahangir; for Chandu, the arch enemy of the Nanak's House, still worked against it. There was now a good deal of evidence of a charge of rebellion against Guru Har Gobind. At last, the Guru was called by the Emperor at Delhi. He went, he saw and

conquered Delhviens, so to say, by his natural majesty. All real conquests in the field of life are mental and moral; physical conquests are no conquests. The highly intensified and illumined mind is over-powering that it is seemingly fascinating and attractive even physically. It gathers its own moths like the intense flame of a night lamp. The presence of a great spiritual man over-powers millions of people.

Guru Har Gobind began to live at Delhi as the Emperor's guest. Wherever Jehangir went out into a camp, there was a separate tent and camping ground for the Guru.

The True King—Jahangir encamped at Agra. Tents were pitched for Guru Har Gobind side by side with those of the Emperor. A humble grass-cutter, who was a Sikh belonging to Agra, got the news of Guru's visit. He went to have his holy 'Darshan'. He was, however, led to Jahangir's tent. The grass-cutter placed an offering of two copper pice out of his daily earnings before the Emperor, bowed down to him and prayed, "O True King: Save me thy humble servant, take me across this ocean of darkness, show me the Light and take me into thy refuge, that is All-Knowledge."

The Emperor was puzzled for a moment and then said, "I am not 'that True King' you seek. His tents are pitched yonder. I am unable to give what you ask for. If you want wealth, I can give you, but for the boon you ask for, go thither."

The grass-cutter hastily took back his two copper-coins and turning away said, "I want the holy Darshan of the True King. I do not want riches."

Bandi Chhor—The Great Deliverer: About this time Jehangir fell ill. He sent for his astrologers to find out which evil stars had wrought him ill-luck and what was the remedy. Chandu taking advantage of the situation, heavily bribed the astrologers in his anxiety to sever connections between the Emperor and the Guru. The astrologers accordingly suggested that a holy man of God should go to the Fort of Gwalior and pray for the Emperor's recovery there. Chandu on the other hand advised the Emperor that Guru Har Gobind was the holiest of the men and thus played the double role. Jehangir requested Har Gobind to go. The Guru saw through the game but he agreed to leave for Gwalior; for another Mission awaited him there. Great was the distress of the Sikhs of Delhi and Amritsar at this. They apprehended some foul play on the part of Chandu. In fact, Chandu did write to Hari Das, the Governor of the Gwalior Fort, urging him to poison Har Gobind and put an end to him. Hari Das, however, laid all these letters before the Master; for he had by that time become his devotee. The Guru smiled on seeing these letters but said nothing.

There were at that time fiftytwo Indian princes imprisoned in the Gwalior Fort, who were spending their days in lamentation and misery. Guru Har Gobind met them, comforted them, and gave them peace, making them feel happy even in adversity.

When Jehangir recovered from his illness, he forgot to recall the Guru. O, such is the world! When a person is in difficulty, one bows and prays, but as soon as one gets out of it, one forgets his benefactor and becomes quite indifferent. O ungrateful world!

However, through the good offices of Hazrat Mian Mir and Wazir Khan who evinced a disciple-like devotion to the Master, Jehangir was moved to recall the Guru.

Hazrat Mian Mir also brought home to the Emperor, the innocence of Guru Arjan and how under his cruel orders, the great divine had been tortured to death. The Emperor, however, washed his hands clean of this sin and held Chandu entirely responsible for this crime. Thereafter, Chandu was arrested by Emperor's order and taken to Lahore to be publically executed there. While Chandu was being paraded, by the Kotwal, through the streets of Lahore, people cursed him, threw filth on him and a grain parcher, struck him on the head with his ladle and the wretch died.

Guru Har Gobind, when recalled, would not leave the fort, unless all the prisoners were also released. The Emperor conceded to his wish and released all the fiftytwo prince prisoners. Since then the Guru was hailed at Gwalior as 'BANDI CHHOR'—The Great Deliverer, who snaps off the prisoners' fetters. There still stands a shrine 'Bandi Chhor' in the historic Fort of Gwalior, where a lamp is lit in the memory of the event. Guru Har Gobind is remembered as Bandi Chhor in the daily prayers of the Sikhs. He certainly bore this name from Gwalior to Amritsar.

While the Master was away at Gwalior, the Sikhs at Amritsar felt very keenly the pangs of separation from him. Headed by Bhai Buddha, they organised daily choirs. They lighted torches and went in procession around the Hari Mandir in the 'Dhyanam' of the Master, singing songs yearning for a glimpse of their Beloved. Their devotion had response from

the Guru and they realized his inner presence and felt blessed by him. The nightly choirs organised by Bhai Buddha have ever since been continued. Even today the Sikhs at the Golden Temple go around in choir in his hallowed memory every evening. The Devotees continue to feel thrilled while moving in his Dhyanam in these choir-processions at night.

Har Gobind and Shah Jehan: As long as Jehangir lived he did not do any harm to Guru Har Gobind. Jehangir died in Kashmir and after his death, Shah Jehan became the Emperor of India. His mind was poisoned against the Guru and soon he waged a war against the Sikhs.

Some people might be led to think that Guru Nanak's disciples' main concern was the contemplation of the Pure, the Absolute, the 'Braham' like the ancient Hindu devotees. But no, the type of man that the Guru created was quite different. The ineffable bliss of Guru Nanak waves in the heart of a Sikh like a vast ocean. It is ever in motion, yet wholly at rest in itself. The pang of Guru Nanak's love is manifested in the life of the disciples in different ways. It might take the shape of absolute forgiveness of a sinner, for in this acute pang, man is much too sweet for any revenge which, in many forms, is known on this earth as justice. Where love reigns and not hatred, the justice in the vision of the disciple is total forgiveness.

This bliss of remembrance of Him might take the form of total self-sacrifice in peace or in war, or it might live content, as beautiful as the lotus, a flower-like life, doing without knowing, the greatest service to life that Pure Beauty can render. Again it might

take the form of a political revolution against tyranny, as it did in time of Guru Har Gobind and Guru Gobind Singh. This bliss of the disciple is restless with the human pain, which moved Lord Buddha to compassion.

Now the order of Guru Har Gobind, the merciful Lord, had gone forth that no one should molest others. And the Sikhs understood what the Guru meant. The forces of good had been organised and were now to be put in action against the forces of evil. The weak must not be allowed to be trampled under the foot of the unjust and tyrant. Justice must be secured even to the lowliest and weak irrespective of cast, colour and creed.

At times, it might be possible to reform the evil doer by opposing untruth and injustice by non-violent methods. The silent resistance and suffering for a righteous cause might enable the tyrant to see the evil in his ways and he might be improved. But no amount of non-violence can succeed against tyrant who is hardened and steeped in criminal oppressive ways and who pays no heed to the basic values of moral and civilised conduct. Against such men non-violence is only another name of disgraceful cowardice. Such power drunk men must be faced bravely with a stick bigger than theirs.

The Guru's Sikhs never took offence against any one. But when the Imperial armies made a raid upon them, they stood firm against cruelty and oppression and fought with indomitable courage and routed the imperial armies in all the three affrays. Not only did the Sikhs accomplish the work of protecting the weak; but where possible they reformed the wrong doer by

breaking his haughtiness and awakening in him his better self.

Painde Khan: Painde Khan was a forlorn orphan child. He was brought up by Guru Har Gobind, educated and given all the necessary training in the use of all kinds of arms, as was required in those days. In the course of time the Guru's ward became a fine cavalier.

In the first battle, forced upon the Guru by an attack of Shah Jehan's army, a great and gruesome fight took place at Pipli Sahib, three miles from Amritsar. Victory kissed the feet of the Guru. Painde Khan showed great prowess and bravery in the battle. Pleased with this, the Guru bestowed upon him a rich robe and a military charger.

But Painde Khan soon became too proud of himself and after some time went over to Shah Jehan and re-appeared as a general of the Imperial Army. As the hostile army came marching on the Guru, the Sikhs came in hot haste to inform him that the enemy was at hand, and that Painde Khan was heading the Mughal forces. But Guru Har Gobind was never at a loss, never in haste, and never afraid of the consequences. He said to his men, "Be Calm. There is nothing to be afraid of. All comes as our Creator Wills."

Both armies met face to face. A few men were killed on either side. As the battle was becoming hot, Guru Har Gobind appeared before Painde Khan riding on his faithful charger. The ungrateful Painde Khan uttered profane words to the Master. In the words of Mohsan Fani, a muslim historian of the time, Guru Har Gobind spoke to Painde Khan as a

school master would do to his pupil, "Painde Khan, why use such words when the sword is in thy hand. Brave as you are my boy, come I give thee full leave to strike first. I have no grudge against you. But you are full of wrath. You can wreak your rage by striking the first blow."

The proud and over-confident Pathan was overjoyed on hearing this. With his horse prancing and his head held high, he aimed a heavy sword blow with all his might at the Master. But Har Gobind the great, calm and cool warrior parried off the blow. Painde Khan was allowed to strike again, but to no avail. Har Gobind was sportive with his dear old follower, thereby trying to awaken in him his original sense of fealty. But it only made the ungrateful Painde Khan mad with anger. Infuriated with his double failure, he gave the third blow with all the tact and force he could muster; but again the Guru was able to avoid it. The Master then said to him, "Come, my boy, I will teach you how to strike. Not your way but thus. . . ." So saying the Master gave him such a strong and dextrous blow that Panide Khan fell down from his horse, mortally wounded. From this blow he seems to have re-gained his old sense of discipleship. And as he lay dying, the Master came down from his horse, and took him in his arms, thereby re-admitting him to grace. The death of Painde Khan is one of the most pathetic scenes in the life of Har Gobind. As the Master sat shading Painde Khan's face from the hot sun with his shield, he addressed him lovingly, 'O Painde Khan, thou art a Muslim, recite thy Kalma, for thou art dying.'

The fully awakened Painde Khan, replied, "O Master ! from thy sword has already flowed the

Elixir of Immortality into my mouth. Master, thy sword-cut is my Kalma now.”

The Master and His Disciples: There lived in Kashmir, a poor old woman, Bhag Bhāri by name. She lived a life of dedication to the Guru by continuously abiding in Nam and reciting the holy hymns. At the time when Har Gobind was busy fighting a small skirmish near Amritsar, this old woman in her Dhynam made a shirt of coarse cloth with yarn spun with her own hands. She stitched it herself, singing all the while the songs of the Beloved and deluging the cloth with the Dhyanam of love, as it trickled from her eyes in tears of ecstasy.

“O God! Will my Beloved Master come and wear it? Will he honour his humble servant. O, How can he come this way? My Beloved come to me now before these eyes close for ever. May I once more behold thy divine face.”

Nameless feelings of love rose and sank in her veins. The garments was ready for the Master. The prayers of yearning heart, touched the tender cords of Master’s heart. Leaving the battle field he rode his charger in all haste to Kashmir, knocked at her door and said, “Give me my shirt, good lady! With tears in his eyes he donned the shirt of coarse cloth, knowing she had cried all these days for a glimpse of him.

The Service of Peoples is The Service of The Master: A devotee was carrying a jar of honey for presentation to the Master while he was staying at Baramula. On the way he met Bhai Katu, a Sikh of Kashmir. Bhai Katu asked the man what was in the jar he was carrying. Being told it was honey

that was being taken to the Guru. The poor Sikh asked him to give a little bit of it to him, for he very much longed to have a taste of it. However, much Bhai Katu entreated him, the man refused to give any to him, saying that it had been specially collected and purified for the sake of the Guru and was meant for him alone. He would not pollute it by giving it out to any one else.

When the man reached Baramula and presented the jar of honey to the Guru, the Master refused to accept it or even partake a little of it, saying it had become profane and polluted and was not fit for him. The man pleaded that its sanctity had not been violated in any way. The Master said that while he was on the way, he wanted it and asked for it but however much he had requested he was refused; now he would not take it.

The man was surprised to hear this and when he opened the jar, he found the honey had become foul and unfit for consumption.

A Maratha Saint meets Har Gobind: While Guru was at Srinagar (Kashmir), a Maratha saint Shri Samarath Ram Das, met him. The Guru, fully armed and riding a charger had just returned from a hunting excursion. "I have heard that you occupy the gaddi of Guru Nanak." said Ram Das. "Nanak was a Tyagi Sadhu—a saint who had renounced the world. But you are wearing arms and keeping an army of horsemen and you are addressed as Sacha Padsha—The True King. I wonder, what sort of a Sadhu are you?" asked the Maratha Saint.

Guru Har Gobind replied, "The ideal man is internally a saint and externally a prince. The

combination of Raj and Yog. Miri and Piri — Spiritual and Temporal powers put together. Arms mean protection of the weak and poor and destruction of the tyrant and cruel. Baba Nanak had not renounced the world, but had renounced Maya i.e. Self-Ego and Worldliness.” These words of Guru Har Gobind went deep into the heart of Ram Das and he said, “This quite appeals to my mind.”

He seems to have realised that the Marathas who had much in common with the people of the Punjab in their physical and spiritual make up, could well imbibe the spirit of the Guru and collaborate with the Sikhs in resisting and vanquishing the intolerant Mughals. Samarath Ram Das inspired Shivaji with the same spirit.

The vision of Har Gobind and Ram Das was fulfilled in the eighteenth century, when the disciples of these great teachers the Sikhs in the North and Marathas in the South smashed to pieces the tyrannous empire of the great Mughals.

Bhai Sain Das: Bhai Sain Das, a devout Sikh, built a new house in his village near Ferozepur and would not occupy it unless the Master came and graced the room first which had been prepared for him. “Why not write to the Guru to come to us.”, said his wife, who was the sister of the holy consort of the Guru. “Oh, why write him when he can hear the prayers of our hearts,” said Sain Das. Thereupon, Guru Har Gobind at Amritsar felt himself drawn by the love and Dhyanam of his disciple and went to him at his village Darauli.

On this very journey, the Master went right up to Pilibhit in response to the love of a Sikh Saint Almost

—a man intoxicated with the love of God.

Bhai Buddha: Bhai Buddha, who was near death lay waiting for the Master at his village Ramdas, near Amritsar when Guru Har Gobind hastened to his side. Bhai Buddha was beside himself with joy. The Guru said: "Bhai Buddha, thou hast seen the last five Gurus and lived with them, and thy realization is great. Please give me your wise counsel."

Buddha replied, "Thou art the Sun and I am only a fire-fly. Thou hast, out of thy infinite mercy, come to help me to swim across the sea of life. Touch me, touch me with thy hand and bless me, O Master mine, Sustain me and let me pass death's door without suffering. Help me, O Lord. O Saviour of the World." "Thou has already entered the realm of immortals, brother" said the Master and he placed his hand on his forehead and Bhai Bhuddha passed away.

The Guru similarly responded to the Dhyanam of his disciples. Where he could not go personally, he answered to their inmost prayers in the inner realm of the spirit and this was continued in the midst of battles even.

Guru Har Gobind found in Har Rai, the Divine Spirit of Nanak, and it was at Kiratpur that the Master gave his throne to him and left for his heavenly abode.

GURU HAR RAI (1645—1661)

Under the sixth Guru, the Sikhs learnt to fight for justice, but if the struggle were to continue for long there was danger of their becoming harsh in character. So the sternness of justice was tempered with Mercy. Therefore, the great Guru Har Rai insisted upon tenderness. One day as a child, while passing through a garden, his loose flowing robes broke away some flowers and scattered their petals on the ground. The sight was too much for his tender heart and this brought tears to his eyes. Thenceforward, he always walked with his skirts tucked up, and resolved ever after not to harm anything, in the world.

When he grew up, he carried the same heart with him. He was very fond of quoting Baba Farid: "Men's hearts are like valuable jewels. It is wicked to distress them. If you desire to see the Beloved, do not distress others' hearts."

Guru Har Rai was the most magnanimous of men and yet he was a great soldier and led a life of rigid discipline. He had 2,200 cavaliers in his retinue, but the Master's order was that they should not unsheath their swords and all problems were to be solved by peaceful negotiations.

The quality of mercy is most genuine and highlighted when it is preached by a strong man, who feels his strength and yet suppresses himself and is tender. It is most sublime when humility, gentleness and mercy is practiced by those who are strong enough and hold the power in their hands.

It was well in keeping with Sikhism that the teaching of mercy and compassion should come after the teaching of courage. For a coward is very often the cruelest of men.

Emperor Shah Jahan had seen during the life time of Har Gobind, that it served no good purpose to make the Sikhs his enemies. On the illness of his youngest and most beloved son Dara Shikoh, the Emperor sent a conciliatory letter to Guru Har Rai and asked for his blessings.

But not many years after, Shah Jahan was taken prisoner by his son Aurangzeb, who also killed his brothers and usurped the throne of Delhi.

Aurangzeb soon turned his attention to Har Rai, but instead of adopting strong measures, the Emperor sent him a polite invitation to visit Delhi. Har Rai refused to accept it. He, however, sent his eldest son Ram Rai. This young man worked miracles there to display his own greatness and even dared to distort a hymn of Guru Nanak, so as to render it more pleasing to the Muslim and thus flattered the Emperor. When the news of this moral weakness reached the Guru, he ordered that his son should never come back to see him. "Let him go whither he pleases." said the Guru.

Hunger for Love Song: One day during a ride, the Guru halted and knocked at the door of a cottage of a poor woman and said, "Good lady, I am very hungry, bring me the bread you have for me."

The woman, throbbing with joy, brought out some coarse bread, which he ate while still on his saddle and relished it very much. He then blessed the woman and marched onward with his retinue of the cavaliers.

The disciples were astonished at his departure from his iron discipline in such matters and asking for bread at these unusual hours.

The next day as they rode, they offered him the meal at the same hour. He laughed and said, "My friends, what caused me to beg for bread, was not the hunger of the stomach, but it was the hunger for the song of love and 'Dhyanam' of which this bread was made and which attracted me to go there and beg for it. It is seldom I get such bread. I am pulled by the strings of love that my disciples some times snatch away from the Hand of God. God is love."

Guru Har Rai peacefully transformed the lives of several people and so many good families entered the path of discipleship. He taught his disciples to seek happiness in pondering on the Guru's Words, which alone could lead them to the path of devotion, saintliness and liberation.

Having duly enthroned his younger son as Guru, bidding the Sikhs look on the child as his own image and put all faith in him, Guru Har Rai passed away on 6th October 1661, "Light blending with the Light."

SRI GURU HAR KRISHAN

(1661—1664)

Har Krishan was the youngest son of Guru Har Rai. He was a child of only five, but he had the gleam of the Divine Light which distinguished all great Masters. The very 'darshanam' of Sri Guru Har Krishan healed the sick and comforted the miserable. Guru Har Rai bowed down to this child as he would to Guru Nanak and left the earth. At this very early age he was called to lead and to teach the wide-spread and vigorous Sikh community. He taught the Gospel of Guru Nanak with full confidence and cleared the doubts of all those who came to him. He also sent over missionaries to the farthest outposts. But his elder brother, Ram Rai had proclaimed himself Guru in rivalry to him. As no one paid any heed to his claim, he went off to Aurangzeb to complain, against his father's injustice in disinheriting him, the elder son. In this quarrel the Emperor saw a good means of creating dissention and destroying the Sikhs.

The Emperor sent a polite message to the Guru, inviting him for a visit to Delhi. Raja Jai Singh of Amber was deputed to bring the Guru to Delhi.

Now Raja Jai Singh was, for sometime past, very much grieved and tormented for the blot that was coming down on his family. For his grand father Raja Bhagwan Das had given his daughter in wedlock to prince Saleem (afterwards Emperor Jahangir). This he felt was a great slur on his family.

He was told by some holy men that all his griefs, sickness and tormentation would depart from his

conscience by the very sight of Sri Guru Har Krishan—the holiest of the holies. And the black spot on his family would be washed off if the Guru blesses him by his visit.

So Raja Jai Singh who himself longed for Guru's darshan availed of this opportunity and went to see the Guru and to invite him for a visit to Delhi. At his request the Guru consented to visit the capital, on the condition that he would not be asked to see the Emperor. Raja Jai Singh agreed to these terms.

So the party set out for Delhi. The very sight of the Guru healed many sick folk who met him on the road while he was on his way to Delhi.

While on his way, the Guru encamped at a place known as Panjokhra. A learned Pandit came to see the Guru there. He was surprised to find a mere child of about seven years on the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak. He asked the Guru to explain to him certain Sanskrit Shlokas from Gita and he initiated a religious discussion.

At this time, there stood nearby a dumb and illiterate man called Chajju who hailed from the same village as the Pandit. He was serving water in the free-kitchen of the Guru where he encamped. The Guru beckoned to him to come nearer and looking at him asked him to reply the Pandit's questions, and explain the Shlokas to him. The amazement of the Pundit knew no bounds when he found the dumb and illiterate Chajju explaining the Shlokas and illustrating the same by quoting holy verses from Vedas and Upanishadas. At this the Pundit fell at the Guru's feet and apologised for his indiscreet behaviour.

When the Guru reached Delhi, Raja Jai Singh placed his bungalow at the disposal of the Guru and

made all the necessary arrangements for his comfortable stay. This is the place which is now known as Gurudwara Bangla Sahib.

To test the sagacity or spiritual power of the young Guru, the Rani of Raja Jai Singh disguised herself as a maid servant and mixed herself amongst similarly attired women. The Guru was asked to recognise the Chief Rani, which he did at once.

Thousands of people of Delhi and suburbs thronged at the palace of Raja Jai Singh to have the holy 'darshan' of the Guru. The sick were healed and those in distress were comforted by the very sight of the Master.

While he was at Delhi, the Guru was asked many times to see the Emperor, but he persistently refused to do so. Finally he fell ill at Delhi. The illness of Har Krishan is to us, his disciples, in the nature of a protest.

When Har Krishan, lay ill at Delhi, his august mother, at his bed side, realized that he was thinking of leaving this vesture of body.

"O son, why art thou turning thy thoughts away from this earth so soon?" she asked.

"Be not anxious, mother, for me." said the Guru, "My safety is in His Will. I am safe wherever He may take me. Mother, be not anxious; youth and age does not matter. He is the Reaper of His Crop; it is His pleasure, and sometimes He reaps it while it is still green and sometimes when it is golden ripe. Whatever God does is best. What pleaseth Him is good." Guru Har Krishan before he breathed his last, saw in his celestial vision the holiest of the holies, who was to be the next Nanak and bowed down to him saying, "Baba Bakale." Meaning thereby that they will find

Baba Nanak at the Bakala village. The Boy Master felt his spiritual responsibility for the people and named the place whence Guru Nanak would come to his disciples once again.

Think of Sri Guru Har Krishan and say, "Hail Master, Hail Holy One." Dhayanam of Sri Guru Har Krishan is the cure of all the ills of life.

GURU TEGH BAHADUR—OUR SAVIOUR AND DEFENDER OF THE FAITH

(1664-1675)

“BABA Bakale”! This was the only clue given by Guru Har Krishan about his successor to guruship. Soon after Guru Har Krishan’s Light had merged into the Infinite, twentytwo impostors, who were his distant blood relations, proclaimed themselves the next Guru and set themselves up in the same village. But thanks to the training imparted through nearly eight generations, the shrewed disciples knew well the fragrance of soul that comes from the true Guru. So, great was the joy, when a disciple Makhan Shah, a merchant-shipper, got on top of the house and cried in ecstasy to the heavens and earth “Guru Ladho”! “Guru Ladho”! “The Enlightener is found, the Enlightener is found.” The other claimants then faded at once from the picture.

Tegh Bahadur, youngest son of Guru Har Gobind was born on 1st April 1621; he was so named because the Guru foresaw he would be powerful to endure the sword (tegh). Even as a child he enjoyed ecstatic trance. He continued his quiet life of contemplative solitude, wholly absorbed in the meditation on the Beloved. For that reason he did not catch the notice of the common man.

But, caught in the magic net of God’s own effulgence, Tegh Bahadur was forced to come out of his life of calm meditation in order to save dharma and uphold righteousness in the difficult times that were ahead.

Guru Tegh Bahadur was so tender hearted that

he could not bear the sight of suffering humanity without a deep agitation of spirit. Spontaneous sympathy flowed from him. A person like him would even be ready to lay down his life to make them happy. His songs are as tears shed over the sorrows of the world in the silence of his heart. Soft as rain clouds his lyrics awakened the mind sleeping under the spell of 'Maya' and filled the dry hearts of men with honey drops of love.

Guru Tegh Bahadur's note is of renunciation, not of the world but of worldliness. His mind is ever awake and is free from the drowsiness that 'Maya' or illusion induces in every one.

"To forget the One and to feel enamoured of another is Maya or illusion.

"You shall sleep not, O bride. If you have chosen to wait for your Beloved tonight. O man! Thy supreme vocation is to live in the Beloved."

Guru Tegh Bahadur finds joy only by abiding in 'NAM' (Divine Spirit) and in singing His praises, and he exhorts every one to live in Him and convert the sorrows of his life into the vision of Heaven—a joy of self-realization.

"O brother, nothing in this world can be thine forever; therefore think of Him alone, and live aloof from the sorrows of life. Plunge thyself again and again into this thought, and see what little the world contains that can promise aught; the illusion of magic colours, bewitches you again without purpose, therefore, turn within and see the Truth within thyself."

"Forget yourselves, O people, but forget not the Beloved. Forget not in your joy of gifts, the great Giver."

(Translated)

Such is the message of Guru Tegh Bahadur, which sinking deep into the heart reveals the sadness of life and its delicacy. It makes men sleepless; but full of peace of the Infinite.

Tegh Bahadur visits Amritsar : When Guru Har Gobind, the sixth Guru had shifted his seat to Kiratpur, most of the disciples had also accompanied him. The Temple at Amritsar had passed into the hands of the impostors. On Guru Tegh Bahadur's visit to Amritsar, the priests shut the doors of the Temple against him. He turned his back on the temple of bricks and mortar and bore away the true Hari-Mandir in his heart as a holy vision. The Golden Temple would have gone for ever from Amritsar, but as the news spread, all the people of Amritsar came out to pour their soul at his feet. The women of the city took the lead, welcomed him with the Guru's songs and went singing all the way with him to the village Wadala where he stayed in the humble abode of a devout disciple. The Master blessed the women of Amritsar and blessed Amritsar itself. The Golden Temple was thus saved for this poor earth of ours by Sikh womanhood.

Guru on Missionary Tour : Guru Tegh Bahadur founded the city of Anandpur, but he did not stay there long. He soon started on an extensive missionary tour, visiting Kurkshetra, Agra, Prayag, Varanasi, Gaya and ultimately made his sojourn at Patna Sahib in Bihar. During these travels his mother and his wife accompanied him. He had to leave them at Patna when he went further to Dacca and Kamrup (now in East Pakistan). Wherever he went he resurrected the memory of Guru Nanak, who had been there long before him and had given his soul stirring message.

Raja Ram Singh, son of the late Raja Jai Singh, accompanied the Guru from Patna onward. He had

sought his blessings and spiritual help during an expedition to Bengal on which he was sent by the Emperor Aurangzeb. When the Guru reached the banks of the river Brahmaputra, the Raja of Kamrup came to pay homage to him. The Guru, on this occasion, brought about a peaceful settlement between the Raja of Kamrup and Raja Ram Singh. A battle was thus avoided. In token of this event and in the sacred memory of the Guru's visit, a high mound was raised at Dhubri by the soldiers of both sides. At this place the Raja of Assam, who also came to pay his homage to the Guru, invited the Master to his state, and became his disciple. In Assam the Guru illumined many a household with spiritual light and organised holy congregations.

Birth of Gobind : During these days news was conveyed to the Guru of the birth of his son at Patna. On returning from Assam he stayed for sometime at Patna and then returned to the Punjab. It was not considered advisable for the mother of the baby to undertake the long journey. So the Guru's family stayed at Patna where Gobind, the child, passed the first seven years of his life. Separation from Guru Tegh Bahadur for such a long time was telling on the patience of his mother and wife and now his child also. 'But such is the call of Heaven,' he had told them as he had left for the Punjab.

During his stay at Patna, the charming child Gobind bewitched many hearts. He became a new centre of Dhyanam for devotees to whom he revealed the Divine symbol that marked a spiritual genius. He appeared either as Rama or Krishna in vision, in response to the wishes of the devotees at Patna.

Early in the mornings, seated on the banks of the Ganges, the devotees saw Gobind through their closed eyes—Gobind, the Beloved, stood in the disc of the rising sun and shot Golden Arrows from the blue bow. He played tricks upon Patna house-wives and maidens and caused them laughter and mirth. Like Krishna, he played merry tricks, sometimes breaking the earthen vessels with arrowshafts to the delight of all. He conquered new hearts every day. The people were delighted and drank of the divine joy when Gobind spoke to them or touched them or played with them.

Guru Tegh Bahadur ultimately sent for his family at Anandpur. But the Master was to have only a brief sojourn at Anandpur after his family from Patna had joined him there.

Aurangzeb's Campaign of Religious Persecution : Aurangzeb who had ascended the throne of India after the cruel incarceration of his father and cold blooded murder of his brothers and their families, had earned for himself the disapprobation of the saner section of the whole Muslim world. To cover his sins, he decided to enlist the sympathies of the fanatical section of his co-religionists. Spurred in part by the bigotted and short-sighted mullas, but mostly by the promptings of his merciless heart and hardened conscience, he resolved to carry on a regular jihad.

His ideal was the extermination of the idolatrous Hindus and the conversion of the whole of India to Islam. His orders had gone round to all the deputies and provincial governors that no pains and efforts were to be spared in furthering this cause.

The proslytising zeal of the officials, with their

campaign of religious persecution and their conversion at the point of the sword, had sent a wave of terror all through the country. In a short span of six years, the wails of the Hindus were heard from all corners of the Mughal Empire. The Hindu shrines and temples were pulled down in cities like Banaras and Brindaban in broad daylight, and mosques were raised in the sites. The Mohammadan Law was interpreted to sanction the annihilation of the unbelievers.

Sher Afghan, the Subedar of Kashmir, had already converted more than half the people he governed, and was still busy as ever. A large section of the lower classes needed very little pressure to embrace the State religion. He now directed his main efforts against the high caste Hindus. He addressed the pandits and offered them the choice between Islam and death. They prayed for time to consult among themselves and invoke their gods. This was scornfully allowed, for the rulers were sure that the stone idols of Brahmins could not respond to prayer or offer help. The allotted time was about to end. They were verily between the devil and the deep sea and in this perplexity cried and groaned.

Pandits of Kashmir Approach Guru Tegh Bahadur :

The pandits of Kashmir at last flocked to Anandpur, the city of the Master, and a deputation representing them waited upon the Guru. They narrated their tale of woe and suffering, shedding tears of blood. This plunged the Guru into deep thought. Just at this moment, the child Gobind came in. He lovingly approached his father, but seeing him in an unusually grave mood, said, "Father dear, what makes you so sad and serious today?" He replied, "The sufferings

and lamentations of these people; they are in a very helpless condition; their rulers are as wolves and there is no end to their misery and shame."

"But what is the remedy father?" asked the child.

"This requires sacrifice—the sacrifice of the purest and holiest person, but the question is where to find such a person."

Gobind, still a child of nine years, listened and said, though impulsively, at once; "Father, who can be holier than you and who more pure? Offer thyself, father, and save the people."

The Man of God must sacrifice himself for the people, the Son of God must be bled to pour life into the dead bones of the fallen people—such is the ancient mystic law of spiritual life.

To the Pandits who had sought succour, the Guru said that they should convey to their Governor and through him to the Emperor Aurangzeb that the ruler should stop individual persecution, but if he could convert Tegh Bahadur to Islam, they would follow suit. This, of course, was a very pleasing proposition to the Governor of Kashmir and the Emperor.

Guru Summoned To Delhi : The emissaries of Aurangzeb came to Anandpur to summon the Master to Delhi. The Guru did not go with them, but he promised to follow. He had yet to go to see some of his disciples who were longing to see him and lived on his way to Delhi. He took his own time and his own road; it led through the midst of his disciples. At last at Agra, the Master with five chosen disciples delivered himself to the Emperor's men. From Agra he was taken to Delhi. At Delhi they explained to the Guru the

benefits he would derive himself and confer upon others by embracing Islam. He was offered all the worldly temptation, but the Master spurned them and abandoned all that the world could offer, desiring nothing but an abiding repose in the love and Will of God. He was then put to severe tortures. But Guru Tegh Bahadur felt no remorse but courageously faced a martyr's death, keeping all the time his mind absorbed in the only and eternal Reality. Neither sorrow at his own condition, nor illwill for his persecutors disturbed his soul. He was as calm as if he was still amidst his kith and kin at Anandpur and maintained his peace of mind. What was torture, wrath of king or death to one who stood in the loving embrace of the Lord?

When they found the Guru unmoved and indifferent to all they could do to him, they in order to strike terror in him, directed their attention to one of his disciples, Bhai Mati Das. They offered him the choice between Islam, with all the benefits of self and pleasure it would fetch, and a horrible death by being sawn alive like a log of wood. Glory to Bhai Mati Das, who preferred death, but did not abjure his faith and was sawn alive from head to foot into two as a beam of timber.

The other disciple that was with the Master, Bhai Dyala, was boiled alive like rice in a boiling cauldron before the Guru's eyes. But all this could not terrify the Guru. When they found him unshakable in his resolve, they sentenced him to be publically beheaded. The execution took place in Chandni Chowk, Delhi under the banyan tree where stands today the Gurudwara Sis-Ganj.

On the occurrence of this horrible catastrophe

a great dust storm swept Delhi that day, the sky became blood red. Under the cover of this storm, a daring sikh, Bhai Jaita, picked up the head of the Master and hurried away with it to Anandpur. The Guru's son Gobind, upon seeing this, was touched by the extreme devotion of Bhai Jaita, a Sikh from the so-called low caste. Gobind flung his arms around his neck and blessed him and his tribe. He cremated the head there with due honour and devotion. The body of the Guru was removed by another disciple, Bhai Lakhi, whose convoy of carts was moving out of the Delhi Fort towards Chandni Chowk after unloading supplies. He secretly lifted the body while the storm was still blowing and hastily drove his carts on towards his house at Rakab Ganj, and immediately cremated the body by setting fire to his house and all his belongings, to give an impression that the fire was an accident. On this spot stands today Gurudwara Rakab Ganj.

Tegh Bahadur is gone!
 The world says, 'Alas, Alas!
 The heaven rings with hallelujahs!
 Welcoming his return Home!
 The angels sing, 'The victor comes home!
 The victor comes Home."

Guru's Word : There are 115 hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur incorporated in Guru Granth Sahib including 57 Slokas. Translation of a few of them is given below:

"That man who in midst of grief is free from grieving
 And joy has got no attraction for him
 Who is free from fear and who deemeth gold as dust
 Who is above slander and remains unaffected by praise
 Who has got no greed, no vanity and no worldly attachment
 Who remains balanced at his centre unmoved by good or ill fortune

Who is indifferent to honour or dishonour
 Who hath renounced all cravings and desires
 And expecteth nothing from the world
 Whom lust and rath can touch not,
 In the heart of such a person dwelleth God.
 On whom the Guru bestoweth His Grace
 He alone knoweth the way to this conduct
 His soul, O Nanak, is blended with the Lord
 As water is blended with water."

(Guru Tegh Bahadur: Rag Sorath)
Translated

"Those who have never sung the praises of the Lord:
 They have wasted their life in vain
 Saith Nanak, O my mind, dive into the love of God
 As fish longs to dive into water."

(1st Slok)

"Why art thou steeped in vicious ways of life,
 And dost not for a moment feel disgusted of them?
 Saith Nanak, O man, devote thyself to Lord
 So as to escape the snares of Death."

(2nd Slok)

"The days of thy youth passed away uselessly
 Old age has now overtaken thee
 Saith Nanak, O man, devote thyself to God
 For the sun of thy life is about to set."

(3rd Slok)

"Thou hast grown old, yet thou dost not realize that death is at hand
 Saith Nanak, mad man, why dost thou not even now worship thy
 Creator and be saved.

(4th Slok)

"Wealth, wife and all worldly possessions
 Which thou deemest as thy own
 None of them will accompany thee at the end
 Saith Nanak, realize this to be a fact."

(5th Slok)

"God is the Saviour of the sinners
 He is the dispeller of fear,
 He alone is the helper of forlorn;
 Saith Nanak, hold this in thy mind
 He alone abideth with thee ever and anon."

(6th Slok)

“Not cast down by misery
 Nor over-elated in joy
 Unaffected by covetousness,
 Aloof from pride and attachment
 Such a man, saith Nanak
 Is the very image of God.”

(13th Slok)

“Who frighteneth none
 Nor himself feareth any
 Such a man saith Nanak
 Is to be known as enlightened one .”

(16th Slok)

“In happiness and prosperity there are many friends
 But in adversity and sorrow there is none
 Saith Nanak, ponder on the Beloved, O my soul
 Even in the bitterness of death, He will come to your rescue.”

(32nd Slok)

“The Word of God shall be everlasting;
 The saints shall also endure eternally
 So shall the Guru’s glory remain ever and anon
 In this world, saith Nanak,
 Those that have endeared themselves to God’s Name
 Truly, they are few and far between.”

(56th Slok)

“Keep the Lord’s Name ever in thy heart
 Nothing can equal it
 Loving remembrance of God removes all distress
 And the vision of the Beloved is obtained.”

(57th Slok)

“For this purpose have I come into the world :
To uphold and spread Righteousness
To protect and save the good and saintly persons
And to destroy and uproot the villainous tyrant
and evil doers.”

(Guru Gobind Singh)

Translated

GURU GOBIND SINGH (Tenth Master) (1675—1708)

“Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, is Guru Nanak at the climax of his spiritual glory. He wears the starry crest. He rides on his blue steed when a thousand swords rain their flashes. His pennon waves. His flags flutter high on the walls of Heaven. He defends the sacred cause and purpose of God on earth. The angels cry aloud to him: “ Hail Master ! Hail Holy One! Lord Thou art wonderful !”

(Prof. Puran Singh)

Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the Ten Masters, is a unique personality in the history of the world. Although his name is still not so widely known as that of Jesus of Jerusalem, Mohammed of Arabia and Buddha of India, yet he remains an unparalleled world figure. He could well rank the greatest among men, mankind had ever known. It would be no exaggeration to say that throughout the annals of history, there was no other individual who could be of more inspiring personality than Guru Gobind Singh. But mankind has to know, appreciate and understand the height of his spiritual ideals, his own practical adherence to their dictates and the way in which they sprouted and blossomed in the heart of his followers.

In Guru Gobind Singh we find culmination of all humane qualities. He combines in him all that is good, lofty and sweet. The honeyed humility of Nanak, the lamb-like virtues of Jesus Christ, the cloud rapt wisdom of Buddha, the bubbling energy of the prophet of Arabia, the sun-kissed glory of Krishna, the homely grandeur of wandering Rama—

all these and many more colours merged into one integral whole, even as the seven colours of a spectrum, are imbued in the rainbow on the sky. In his personality all phases of human life are combined, blended as in a rare diamond with its million facets radiating light and joy in every direction.

In him we have a poet, a prophet, and a patriot; Saviour, scholar, soldier and statesman. As Sayyad Mohd. Latif writes in the History of the Punjab:

“He is a king on his masnad, yet the poorest among poor labouring hard with them. He is a born statesman, yet a saint; for he knows no guile; a law-giver on the pulpit, and a champion in the field.”

Yet it is as a Divine Person that he shines the most. All other qualities that we find gorgeously arrayed around him, form but his outer garment as a whorl of ruby-petals around the inner heart of the lotus. So we must peep into his innerself, the interior, which sheds a radium-like lustre all around to produce the many hued rain-bow.

Gobind was barely nine years of age, when his father Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred at Delhi. Gobind assumed the reins of spiritual suzerainty and became the Guru. Anandpur, the city of his father, where he resided became a place of pilgrimage. Thousands flocked to him. Guru Gobind brought fresh delight to the people. He scattered joy and light in abundance hitherto unknown, even in the Sikh life of the past nine generations of this dispensation of divine grace. Around the Master assembled poets, painters and scholars, and he encouraged the development of art and learning among his people. Anandpur became a centre of the life of the people: spiritual, mental and physical.

(1) **Love Offerings from Kabul and Assam :** Surging crowds of people, their hearts filled with love, joy and song thronged to see Guru Gobind from many distant lands as if a million bees were hovering around his musk-scented black tresses, intoxicated with his love and each swarm was more glorious than the other. Like the encircling radiance of a halo of light, he was wrapped in layers of luminous glory. People from Kabul, Qandhar, Ghazni, Balkh and Bukhara flocked to him. They brought several priceless gifts and offerings of rugs, carpets, shawls and other valuables, when they came to pay their homage to the Master.

But the most magnificent and valuable of all the presents was a 'shamiana' or a Royal Canopy, on which was displayed a fine work of embroidery in gold and silver studded with pearls. It was a thing of great beauty and splendour. They say its splendour surpassed that of the Emperor's canopy.

(2) **Ram Rai**, the Raja of Assam had approached Guru Tegh Bahadur, when he was there on a politico-religious mission, and had made earnest supplication for the boon of a son. His wish was granted. The Raja wanted to take the child to Anandpur and place him at the feet of the Guru and offer him his thanks. But he died soon after and could not visit Anandpur.

The Raja's last injunction to his Rani was that the prince was to be brought up as a devout Sikh. The Rani faithfully carried out the behests of her husband. She imparted the knowledge of the lives and teachings of the Gurus to the growing child—she related to him innumerable interesting stories of the Great Gurus.

When Rattan Rai, the prince, was still a lad of twelve, his mother, one day, spoke of him about Guru Tegh Bahadur and to his blessings. The young prince came to have an intense desire for the Guru's 'darshan'. She then disclosed to him the tale of how Guru Tegh Bahadur was martyred by Emperor Aurangzeb and how the Guru had sacrificed his life in order to help the Hindus to uphold their religion. The anecdote overwhelmed the boy with grief and sorrow. However, his mother comforted the despairing boy by telling him that Guru never dies and that He lives for ever anon. It is His Will that he may manifest himself in human body or not, but he lives for ever in his Impersonal-self in Divine Spirit. And she added that although they could not then see Guru Tegh Bahadur in his body, his spirit was still there in Guru Gobind, his son, who sat on his spiritual throne at Anandpur.

"My dear son, you can go and see him there in person and be blessed" she said.

Rattan Rai was delighted at this prospect. It was resolved that they should go for his holy darshan.

The necessary preparations for this long journey began to be made. They started gathering some precious and novel gifts for offering to the Guru in token of their love for him. But owing to the outbreak of rains which, in Assam have the character of a deluge, the journey could not be undertaken for some time.

As the days passed on, the prince became more and more eager for the Guru's darshan. He felt as if some mysterious power was pulling him towards Anandpur. Waking or sleeping he was constantly thinking of the Guru in his mind. At last one day he

said, "Mother O, When will you start? I can wait no longer."

The Rani was pleased to find that Guru's love had awakened in the heart of the young prince. She kissed his forehead and made a prayer of thanks giving to the Guru for having blessed the boy with love for his lotus feet.

On the fixed day in early March, the royal cavalcade started. It consisted of the Prince, the Rani, the Prime Minister, and other officers of the state, a body of soldiers for protection, and the valuable presents they had collected for the Guru.

A rare elephant as black as ebony with only a white strip from the trunk to the tail, five splendid state horses with sumptuous trappings of gold and silver and velvet, bracelets of gold encased the tusks and a large number of other valuable presents had been chosen and were carried along.

The young prince was delighted and was filled with elation that he would be offering such gifts as these to the Guru. But his mother who had drunk deep of the cup of devotion, was meek and humble. She noticed a little vanity in her son and so said to him, "Darling! All that which we think belongs to us, is really what the Master has bestowed on us and we ought to be thankful to him, who gave us these blessings. It is absurd to feel proud and vain of our offering to the Guru, a little out of plenty which he has given us, even as it would seem ridiculous when a gardener offers to us with vanity, a few roses, from our own garden. The offerings are to be made in a spirit of humble devotion."

Upon this the young prince requested his mother to pray for him to the Guru that his mind may always

remain free from vanity and pride that imperceptibly enters into one's heart.

The Guru having been informed of the coming of the devoted and illustrious guests sent forward his uncle, Bhai Kirpal Chand, to receive them. It was late in the afternoon when the guests reached Anandpur. The Guru decided to give them his darshan in the following morning's Durbar.

Next day when the service was over, the guests were ushered into the Durbar. Ratan Rai who was about the age of Guru Gobind, laid his head at the Guru's feet at the very moment he was brought into his presence. With warm affection the Guru lifted him up to a seat near by him. The young prince was in tears which were the manifestation of his superb joy and devotion. The Guru inquired about their welfare. The Rani also was given audience and the ministers, too, saw Guru Tegh Bahadur's son and offered reverent salutations.

They, then humbly presented their offerings and prayed that these may be graciously accepted and may remain in the service of the Master alone. The Guru accepted the offering and was pleased with them and blessed them.

The prince and his mother stayed at Anandpur for full five months. During this long period of time they enjoyed the 'kirtan' and felt uplifted by the Guru's 'updes'—sermons. The practice of NAM during these days greatly elevated the prince's mind. The most important of his realization was that in every activity the sanction of the Divine Will must be sought.

Then came parting. The scene was an expression of profound human emotions blended with feelings of love and reverence. The Guru accompanied the

(3) **The Vision of a Rishi:** Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur, the chief of the neighbouring hill state, heard about the grandeur of the Guru's court. He became jealous and wanted to acquire all the valuable presents made to the Guru by hook or crook. Bhim Chand's tricks and threats failed to have any effect on the Guru. The Raja then decided to get the Guru's possessions by a show of arms, but postponed the showdown on account of the pending marriage of his son. Meanwhile, Raja Medani Parkash of Nahan sent an envoy to the Guru with an invitation to him to visit his state.

Raja Fateh Shah of Garhwal had forcibly occupied a territory of the ruler of Nahan state and also contemplated further annexation. Fateh Shah had Ram Rai as his friend who was known to possess great occult powers. He had an ally in Bhim Chand also. For his daughter was betrothed to the son of Bhim Chand. So the ruler of Nahan was anxious to find some such allies for his safety. The problem was wherefrom and how to find them.

One of his ministers informed him that there lived at Kalsi, on the banks of the river Jumna, just at the border of their state, a Rishi, who had spent all his life in penance and meditation. It was decided that they should go to him and seek his spiritual help.

The Rishi who was living in contemplative seclusion, on hearing the tramping of horses' hoofs, suddenly opened his eyes and was amazed to see strangers such as he had never seen before. He tried to rise, but his legs failed him, He ejaculated, "O Lord hast Thou come? Is it you?"

"He is the Raja of this state", said the minister, pointing towards the Raja.

“Hast not the Lord said in Gita: ‘I am the Raja (prince) among men. Let him come in the garb of a Raja, if it so pleaseth Him” said the Rishi.

The minister: “He has not come as a Raja, but he has come to you to seek your kind help.”

The Rishi when he heard their tale said, “Sire, I have lived and meditated in your territory and I am indebted to you for this privilege. But I have not the power to help you. However, I can guide you to one who can be of real help. In my meditation, I have been blessed with a vision of one who has appeared as an AVTAR (Saviour) in this age of ‘Kal-Yuga’.”

They asked his whereabouts and some description of him. Upon this the Rishi said, “He is a strong youngman with a tress-knot on his head and with his arms reaching down to his knees. He is called the Guru. Raja! Go and seek him, and pray to him for assistance. He is so benevolent and kind. If you seek him and find him, I implore you not to forget me. Do take me to him and let me rest at his feet. Weak and feeble as I am, my legs cannot carry my burden and I cannot reach him otherwise. But you, who have everything at your command, can seek him. I long to have his holy ‘darshan’ before these eyes of mine are closed for ever.”

The Raja and minister welcomed the suggestion and promised to take him to the Guru, if they found him. They had no difficulty in identifying the Guru, of whom the Rishi had the vision. They understood that Guru Gobind occupied the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak and was more than a match for Ram Rai. He had also an army of brave and devoted soldiers. They, therefore decided to approach him and invite him to their state.

An envoy was sent to the Guru with an invitation. The Guru accepted the invitation. He took care to take with him a band of his choicest soldiers. Five hundred Udasis also accompanied him. When Ram Rai heard that Guru had arrived at Nahan, he advised Fateh Shah to be on good terms with the chief of Nahan. For he realized the greatness of the Guru and knew that he himself, a humble devotee of the same house, dare not stand against the Master. The Raja heeded his advice, met the Guru, and made peace with the ruler of Nahan and returned to him the territory which he had forcibly annexed.

The Raja of Nahan in token of his love and gratitude urged the Guru to choose a place and make his abode in his territory. The Guru selected a beautiful elevated spot on the bank of the river Jumna—passing through hills and dales. He called this place Paunta.

The days of his life that he passed there, were of the greatest earthly happiness. Poets, artists, saints scholars gathered round him as at Anandpur. People from all sides rallied to him like bees buzzing around a lotus. Fiftytwo poets of renown, formed part of his majestic court. Very often the Guru held poetic symposium and distributed prizes among the winners.

A great literary seminar, unique of its kind, was held at the banks of the Jumna. The Guru himself wrote poetry prolifically, with quaint music, reminiscent of the torrential flow of the hill streams, of the swirl of the sounding cataracts, of the roar of thunder, of the blare of trumpets and the galloping sweep of marching cavalry. His writing inspired even the weakest to dare and die for a righteous cause. His literature makes one wonder at his marvellous

command of languages namely—Brij-Bhasha, Oudhi, Hindi, Persian, Sanskrit and Punjabi. He developed a style which, rich in martial cadence, variety of form, wealth of imagination and realistic illustrations and similies drawn from life, remained unsurpassed since his time.

While dictating AKAL-USTAT—Praises of the Immortal Lord, he losses himself in the word: "TUHI, TUHI"—'Thou, Thou...'which he kept repeating and remained absorbed in contemplation of the epithet for full sixteen hours.

The Raja and his minister, no more thought of the Rishi who had directed them to the Guru for the help they needed. Having met the Guru and accomplishing their task, they were now free of the fear and uneasiness of the peril to their state. Now that their object was achieved, they forgot all about the Rishi and their promise to him. Oh! the world is so selfish! When man is in need and in trouble, he meekly seeks help, but no sooner his need is fulfilled and he gets out of the difficulty; selfishness in him comes to predominate and he forgets his benefactor, and some time even denies the help he got from him.

The Raja has seen that the very presence of the Guru had solved all his problems of the state. He realized that the Guru was not only brave, chivalrous and benevolent, but was also in command of super-human powers and many a devotee bowed to him and sought spiritual life from him. Despite all this knowledge about the Guru, now that his state was out of danger, the Raja made no further attempt to seek the Guru for spiritual light. Only in times of stress and strain, men seek saints and sadhus, but when they are delivered of the earthly needs, they turn away and

go no further. Very few indeed are alive to the higher spiritual values, who seek the company of the saints for spiritual guidance and for realization of the Divine Truth.

Now the Rishi at Kalsi wondered what might have happened to the Raja that he had not given any information to him about the Guru. Sometime he thought that the Raja might not have succeeded and his search might still be continuing. At another time, he mused, that the Raja had forgotten all about him now that, he had achieved his object. In despair, even doubted the reality of his own vision. He thought, that it might be his own imagination or hallucination. But he resigned it all, to the Will of God.

The Rishi was conscious of his advancing age, he knew that his end was drawing near and, therefore yearned more than ever for a darshan of Guru-Avtar.

During the last days of his life, once, he was filled with sorrow. Therefore, he beckoned Chando, a simple orphan boy who took care of his cattle and said, "Chando, my son! The cup of my life is full. I may pass away any day. When I am dead, you may dispose of my body in the river and leave for your village with these cows. But if you ever hear that an Avtar—Saviour, has appeared, go to him, touch his lotus feet and give him my message:—

"A devotee, on the bank of the Jumna, who spent his life, longing for thy holy sight, has passed away. He was too old and feeble to go out to find thee. He had neither money nor men to send in search of thee. He was helpless with no one to give him news of thee. He had holy vision of Thee and was inspired with inward words and voices, but was of no avail. He groaned with delight and longing to see thy glorious

face, but was grieved that he was denied thy sight. Throughout his life, his eager and restless mind sought thee. His years were spent with the hope and joy of meeting thee. Too old, when he could wait no more, he passed away. Be gracious O Lord, and take care of him."

The Rishi's words plunged the shepherd boy into sorrow. Poor Chando—unsophisticated simpleton as he was, now offered to go and fetch the Guru, wherever he might be. He asked the Rishi for some description and sign by which Guru might be recognised. The Rishi said: "He is a tall, and smart young man with a knot of hair, high up on his head. He has grace and charm, and glory radiates from his face."

"Tell me something more definite by which I may easily distinguish him" said the boy.

The Rishi replied, "His arms are so long that his hands touch his knees."

Little Chando was pleased with this indication and lowering his own arms, found that they did not reach up to his knees. So did he find the Rishi's.

The boy asked the Rishi, if he might take the liberty to stretch and measure the Guru's arms. "No", said the Rishi for such a thought was not quite in keeping with Guru's greatness and dignity and therefore the Rishi implored the boy to wait till the Guru, lowered his arms, on his own accord.

Chando learnt by heart the message which the Rishi was to convey to the Guru. In his search for the Guru, the boy strolled along either bank of the stream, eagerly looking for the one with the given description. Many a time he had to follow people for a good distance until they lowered their arms but invariably he had to be disappointed. For none of

their arms touched their knees. Roaming over hills and dales, and making such strange enquiries at many a hut and hamlet, if any one had seen the Avtar, made the boy look almost insane and out of his mind.

Gradually the light of life in the Rishi became very dim. His breath was fading, his arms and legs were numb and lifeless. Young Chando knew that the Rishi's end had come, as he had witnessed his mother die similarly. He wept and wailed helpless as a child. In his despair, he rushed out exclaiming, "He has come, he has come!" He ran a good distance at a stretch till he came to a place where he saw a group of men, seated on a carpet playing chess. A little away from them, another group of men stood with their horses tied to the trees. The men who were playing chess were good looking and richly dressed. Chando had never seen such men before. But since their guard warded him off, he stood a little away, waiting to see if any one of them complied with the description of the Avtar.

At last, when they rose, Chando found that none of their arms reached up to their knees. Bitterly disappointed, Chando was about to return, imagining that the Rishi would have died by then. All of a sudden, Chando sighted a rider coming up at a great speed. Four other horsemen followed him.

To Chando's amazement, all those who stood there bowed in reverence to this man on the horseback. Soon, when he got down from his blue horse, Chando's heart leapt as he saw his arms reaching well down to his knees. He clapped his hand with sudden joy and cheered the man in wild delight and went closer to him. He knelt down beside this great man and took hold of his arm and carefully checked that it did quite

touch his knees. To be doubly sure, he then measured his other arm and thought surely he was the Guru, Rishi wanted me to find. But in his frenzy of excitement, Chando forgot the message of the Rishi.

While Chando like an innocent little child took the liberty of examining Guru's arms, the Guru stood thrilled, loosening his arms to the entire satisfaction of the young boy. The Guru was gentle and loving, smiling a genial smile while feeling the simple, pure and unsullied love that flowed from the heart of that unsophisticated boy. All of a sudden it dawned upon Chando that he was there to deliver the Rishi's message. He knelt down, touched the Lotus Feet of the Lord and said, "You are surely Guru—Avtar! Arn't you? Pray take your message:

"A devotee, on the bank of the Jumna, who spent his life, longing for thy holy sight, has passed away. He was too old and feeble to go out to find thee. He had neither money nor men to send in search of thee. He was helpless with no one to give him news of thee. He had holy vision of thee and was inspired with inward words and voices, but was of no avail. He groaned with delight and longing to see thy glorious face, but was grieved that he was denied thy sight. His years were spent with the hope and joy of meeting thee. Too old, when he could wait no more, he passed away. Be gracious O Lord, and take care of him."

The Guru was all peace and calm. He closed his eyes for a moment and said, "My good boy! Has the Rishi really died? Are you sure?"

"Certainly! He is dead by now. My mother took this much time in dying!" replied Chando.

"No ! My simple child, He is not dead."

Then turning aside, the Guru addressed the Raja and his minister, who had come on a hunting expedition and had just finished their game of chess, "Come, Raja ji, you owe a debt to someone. Come follow me on your horses."

With these words, the Guru jumped upon his steed. One of his men, lifted Chando upon his own horse. They all rode at full speed and within a short time, reached the Rishi's abode, a simple hut.

It was a winter day but the sun was warm. The Rishi lay unconscious and was on the verge of death. He lay on a raised wooden platform with a lion-skin spread underneath him and was smugly wrapped in blankets but his face remained uncovered.

The Guru sat beside him, lifted him to his lap, and comfortingly soothed his chest. His men massaged his hands and feet. Slowly warmth was restored to the cold body. Now the Rishi opened his eyes. Slowly and steadily, the Rishi gained strength like an earthen lamp whose flickering and dying wick lights up again to flame as it is nourished with more oil. The Rishi's fading body was restored and revived by the thrill he derived from the Guru's presence. Gradually he gained some strength. He now opened his eyes and looked up and uttered these words in sheer happiness: "My Lord! My Saviour!"

The Guru lowering his head to his face, lovingly kissed his forehead. The Rishi was overwhelmed with the touch of the divine love. He had never experienced such a joy before, in his life of penances and austerities. His heart leapt with delight, his body quivered as if to grasp and taste the Divine Being. The Rishi held the Master's hand, kissed it, pressing it to his eyes and chest, in an expression of human love for God. The Rishi's self bloomed out in flowers of joy. A fountain of Heavenly Nectar burst out within him, which washed clean the slate of his mind, and flooded with waters of gladness the soil of

his heart which had remained barren all these long years of his life. His soul was awakened and kindled with the Divine Flame. This realization was beyond words.

All those who stood witnessing the scene, partook this life of devotion and love. They rejoiced and felt as though every leaf of the trees, every blade of grass and the whole nature around was echoing with them in millions of tongues: "Wonderful ! Lord Thou art Wonderful."

Chando was standing by, patiently awaiting his turn to fall at the feet of the Lord. His soul was hungry, and looked for the Heavenly Manna. He was unable to express his hunger in words. But the Guru understood what his soul yearned for, while he stood in silence.

At last the Master cast his looks on him and filled his empty mind with the Love of God. His simple, pure and guileless mind was dyed deep in crimson colours of love that could neither fade, nor could ever be washed away. His whole-self was now as if one continuous song of the glory of the Lord. Chando leaped and clasped the hands of the Master, kissed them in token of his expressionless love. At the behest of the Guru, the Raja arranged that the Rishi should be carried in a 'Palki' to Paunta, where he lived at the feet of the Master till his death.

(4) Errant Sikh Recants : Baba Ram Rai, the eldest son of Guru Har Rai, won the displeasure of his father, who eventually disowned him. He was accused of distorting the holy words of Guru Nanak in the court of Emperor Aurangzeb in order to please the Monarch. Having been abrogated, Baba

Ram Rai went away and founded the town of Dehra Dun where he continued to live.

Now when he heard of the arrival of Guru Gobind, in the neighbourhood at Paunta, he wished to go and see the Guru. For he was aware of his greatness not only as his uncle but as the inheritor of Guru Nanak's spiritual throne. On both these accounts, the Guru was entitled to his homage. Yet Ram Rai quelled his desire in him to see the Guru because of his pride and ego.

Finally he gave in, and reluctantly set out to see the Guru. But when he actually came into his presence, Ram Rai felt himself a candle before the radiance of the Sun. He then discarded the garb of ego and pride and reverently bowed to the Divine Master. He sought the forgiveness of the Guru for his past conduct.

He was pardoned, redeemed and re-admitted to the Guru's Grace.

(5) Sayyad Buddha Shah Pir of Sadhaura enters the path of discipleship : Sayyad Buddha Shah was a Mohammedan saint who lived at Sadhaura about ten miles from Paunta. He was well known for his piety and had a large number of followers. He was leading a life of rigid austerity. He had read several religious books and was associated with many pious persons, faqirs and ascetics but yet he had not attained the stage of spiritual enlightenment where God stands revealed in His Glory. He had always felt a vacuum, a void in his spirit. And, in fact he was in search of one who could tear the veil and bring him face to face with the Divine Light.

He had heard of Guru Nanak and his mission and

of the work that his successors had done. He had also learnt that Guru Nanak's throne was now occupied by Guru Gobind, who stayed in the neighbourhood. Therefore, he decided to visit him. He took a band of his followers with him when he went to meet him. He felt that it was below his dignity to bow before the young Guru, especially since he had a train of his men. The Guru seated the Sayyad near him and soon the Sayyad addressed the Guru saying 'Pray! tell us how one meets God Almighty?'

Guru: "As night meets day!"

Sayyad. "I don't understand sir, when day appears night is no more "

Guru: "Yes, you have rightly understood When Truth dawns 'I-am-ness' (sense of Ego) disappears."

Sayyad: "Then what is this union, sir, Is there no soul in us, is it not true "

Guru. "Assertion of self is not true It is the false sense of Ego that is a barrier between God and man and makes him sin continuously It vanishes when Light comes. What remains is Truth. Truth merges in Truth "

Sayyad: "How shall the Light shine in us?"

Guru: "When we remove the veil of falsehood."

Sayyad. "Superficiality forms part of our lives, and falsehood does not leave us I have done my best to curb the flesh I have performed many ceremonies and rituals. I have read innumerable books. I have practised rigid austerities, but I have been unable to subdue the mind."

Guru "You need not smother the flesh The emphasis you lay on this or that outer ceremony is after all of little use These ceremonies often prove impediments and obstacles rather than a help. But God dwells in every heart. But we revel in ignorance and lack of foresight and get absorbed in our own world, we get lost in our worldly attachments such as love of one's own family, wealth, love for fame, popularity and prestige This wall of "my and mine" of vanity and self-conceit or what we call Ego is a barrier between God and man, and we fail to see Him

When the loss of our separation from Him, dawns on us, we in our effort to realize His presence, follow various methods. Our ignorance leads us to adopt different measures of penances: Some torture their bodies, others continuously sit in different postures, still other

worship this or that object or sit lost in their effort on concentration of mind but all this is of no avail. The wall of Ego becomes still thicker obstructing our vision to see the Reality.

Sayyad: How shall then the veil of falsehood be rent asunder and how shall we realize the Truth?

Guru: "Abide thou by the Divine Will and submit to Him gladly. It is only when we learn to bear ourselves in conformity with the Divine Will and attune ourselves to the Infinite, that the screen is torn asunder and Truth that we had vainly searched for outside in forests, is revealed enthroned in our own heart. We merge ourselves in Him and find Him in ourselves."

Sayyad: "Pray tell us what is the Divine Will! How shall we know His commandment following which the veil of Ego will be lifted and Truth realized?"

Guru: "In order to realize the concept of 'HUKUM' (Command), we must approach the Guru—The Divine Master, who is sinless by nature, pure of heart and clear of conscience and at-one with God, the Creator."

"So long as the man does not realize the commandment, he suffers but when after meeting the Guru, the commandment is realized, he acquires peace and comfort."

"Eko Nam Hukam hai Sat-Gur dia bujhai jio"

Translation: To contemplate upon One Nam is the Lord's Commandment. It has been made clear by the True Guru."

Thereupon, **Buddhu Shah** humbly submitted to the Master. There was a glow in the eyes of the Guru which radiated Divine Light which could not but inspire the Pir and he exclaimed with sudden joy: "Allah-hu-Akbar!"—Great is God Almighty. **Buddhu Shah** had now become a real Shah—Emperor of the World!

After a while **Shah** said, "Master, I was blind and thou hast given me sight."

But who can tell what happened to **Buddhu Shah**. Such things are beyond the perception of intellect. The awakening of one's soul is entirely the privilege of the one on whom the Grace is bestowed. The

divine life, for which all mortals aspire and which the Shah yearned to attain and worked too hard to achieve for all these years, but was denied to him, now was conferred upon him in a twinkling of an eye.

It is a life of sheer ecstasy, of perpetual peace and harmony. Such a glorious life of eternal joy, can be ours if we learn to swim in NAM—The Eternal All Pervading Divine Spirit—The Cosmic Soul. Shah attained this glory by the Grace of the Master when he submitted himself to him. Those who take these Wings of Nam, they soar to Celestial heights, fly through star-lit space, they become like the moon crescent which sails in the azure blue. Those who drink of the Cup of the Wine of Divine Love—the Nectar, they are redeemed, rejuvenated and regenerated souls. Ah the Glory! the Peace, the Bliss, the Awakening!

(6) **The Battle of Bhangani** : One day the Guru received an invitation from Raja Fateh Shah of Garhwal to attend the wedding ceremony of his daughter. The daughter was to be married to the son of Raja Bhim Chand of Kahlur who nursed enmity against the Guru. Guru sent his envoy with costly gifts for the princess. Bhim Chand, when he learnt, that Guru's envoy was there, he was enraged, and refused to accept Fateh Shah's daughter for his son, if he continued to keep friendship with the Guru. He asked Fateh Shah to choose between himself and the Guru. Fateh Shah was thus obliged to yield.

Before the hill chiefs could take hold of the valuables and do away with the envoy, the envoy managed to escape. Bhim Chand was indignant and mad with rage. He excited and moved all the hill chiefs

against the Guru and it was resolved to immediately march upon him, either to kill him or take captive and send him on to the Emperor.

The hill chiefs ordered their troops to march upon Paunta. The news of the impending attack came quick and fast to Paunta before the army could move, and so the Guru was not taken by surprise.

The 500 Pathans, who were enlisted in the Guru's army at the request of Pir Buddhu Shah, became apprehensive of the scanty resources of the Guru and they therefore deserted him. The Udasi Sadhus, except their chief Mahant Kripal, also took to their heels. On hearing all this, Pir Buddhu Shah hurried to Paunta with his two brothers, his four sons and 700 disciples.

The Guru stationed his men at an eminent place 8 miles North of Paunta, near the village Bhangani. A sever and bloody battle was raged. Many brave soldiers were killed on either side. Although the Raja's army far outnumbered the Guru's men, but they had not the same spirit of sacrifice. Nor did they have the same devotion to their leaders, as the Sikhs had.

The hill chiefs were astonished to see Guru's men fight like trained soldiers. The Guru, himself riding on his splendid steed, was in the van-guard of his army. The Guru in his autobiography described a scene of this battle as under:

"Hari Chand, one of the hill chiefs, in his rage drew forth the arrows. He struck my steed with one and then discharged another at me, but God preserved me and it only grazed my ears in its flight. His third arrow penetrated the buckle of my waist belt and touched my body, but wounded me not. It is only God who protected me, His servant. When I felt the touch of the arrow, my spirit was kindled. I took up my bow and taking aim killed the young chief Hari Chand with my very

first shot. I discharged arrows in abundance. Upon this my adversaries began to flee. The chief of Korari was also seized by death. Upon this the hill men fled in consternation and I, through the favour of God Almighty, gained the victory...." *(translated).*

Many precious lives were lost also on the side of the Guru. The two of the Guru's cousin brothers, Sango Shah and Jit mal, two sons of Pir Buddhu Shah and many other of his disciples were laid to rest in the battle field.

Buddhu Shah now came to the Guru to take leave of him. The Guru was at that time combing his hair. Buddhu Shah begged of him to give him the comb with his loose hair as a sacred souvenir. The Guru also blessed him with further gift of NAM, a gift which is far more precious than all the valuable earthly gifts. Besides these, the Guru gave him a robe of honour, a sword, and a turban. The Guru's comb with hair in it and the sword are still preserved as sacred relics.

When Pir Buddhu Shah returned home, his wife and other relatives began to mourn for his two sons, who had died in battle. Buddhu Shah bade them banish all woe and asked them not to grieve. He comforted his family saying that his sons were not dead but were immortal in Heaven.

But Nasiran, his consort, would not listen to his sermon. Her heart was torn with grief. It knew no peace. She mourned, grieved continuously, fainting each time when she wept bitterly. At last one day, as she lay in a swoon, Buddhu Shah prayed to the Master to bestow peace upon her. Nasiran, while still unconscious in the fainting fit, was blessed by the Guru. On regaining consciousness, Nasiran thus described the revelation to Pir Sahib:

yearned to have his holy 'darshan'. But her ministers advised her to give up her new faith on political grounds. For the main body of the adjoining hill chiefs were at war with the Guru and they would surely resent the Rani's inclinations towards him. They might invade her capital and annex her state. So caution was counselled.

But Rani's faith was firm and unshakeable. No political or material consideration could make any change in her mind. She had laid her heart at the feet of the Master. Although she realized that her advisors cared for her own safety and welfare, but she could not accept their advice. "What", she said, "if I lose my Raj! Had there not been millions of kings and queens in the world? Where were they now? They have all perished and became as dust.

What difference then would it make if I were to be deprived of my kingdom and be reduced to a beggar. The Raj was his gift, beggary would also be his gift and I should love them with equal acceptance. Why should I fear when God, the Lord is real and for ever true and everything is under His command."

So she did not waver in her faith and stood firm like a rock. She threw to the winds all wise counsel and declared: "I shall forego my kingdom and wealth, if it so pleaseth Him, but I shall live and my faith in the Master shall flourish."

One day, the people of Raipur observed clouds of dust rising and approaching their city from the direction of the adjoining state of Ram Garh. They were alarmed. They were certain that some of the hill chiefs were coming to invade and conquer Raipur.

The Rani was called out from her palace. The

soldiers were ordered to stand by. Arms and ammunition were kept ready. Fort guns were loaded and the generals were busy issuing orders and encouraging the men to prove their mettle. Children cried and women sobbed. The people prostrated before their stone gods and cried for help. But gods showed no sign of life, gave no assurance, and infused no confidence in their votaries.

The Rani, however, was not perturbed. She was calm all through. She had rather a kind of strange inner feelings and in her heart of hearts she was convinced that this was not a hostile invasion, which they should fear, but this would turn out to be an occasion of joy and mirth.

The 'invaders' were now not far off. The beat of their drum could now be heard. With every beat of the drum, the Rani's heart-throb increased with unknown joy. She told her soldiers to stand still until she gave them further orders.

Providence sent the old lady who had been the source of inspiration to the Rani. At this juncture she assured the Rani that the beating of the drum and clarions were those of the Great Guru, whom they adored.

Being thus doubly assured, the Rani said to her ministers and generals, "We shall surrender to the invader, body and soul. Let us all march out to receive him. He is our Master and not our enemy. Lay down the arms, they are no longer necessary."

Saying this, she moved forward in the direction of the approaching 'conqueror'. The ministers and generals were amazed at the Rani's action, but they all obeyed. Soon all doubts were removed. It was the Conqueror of Hearts, come to make fresh conquests

of love. She bowed to the Guru. The ministers bowed to him. The general and the soldiers followed suit and the whole city bowed to the Great Master.

The Guru's tents were set up in the ground in front of the fort. The Rani entertained the Guru and his men with her best. In the evening, she attending the 'Dewan'—holy congregation and listened to 'Hari Kirtan' and partook of the immortalising Word of the Master. She drank deep at the Fountain of Bliss. At the conclusion of the Diwan, the Rani begged the Guru to conduct the morning service within her palace.

Throughout the night the Rani's men were busy arranging and decorating the hall where the morning diwan was to be held. When the diwan was over, the honoured guests were treated to a sumptuous meal.

The Guru then expressed his wish to depart by the afternoon. The Rani presented him a beautiful horse with costly trappings, and a purse of eleven hundred Rupees. The Guru gave her young son a robe of honour, a sword and a shield. To the Rani he gave a book of the Divine Word. He blessed her and hers. The Guru departed from the city, but not from the citadel of her heart. By constant 'Simran', she for ever remained in contact with the impersonal personality of the Guru,—the Guru in spirit.

Having passed through several villages where he was lovingly received, he at last reached Anandpur. The whole populace turned out to receive him—every street, every lane and every house, presented a show of gaiety—All rejoiced at the Guru's return after an absence of nearly three years.

Raja Bhim Chand now thought it best to make

peace with the Guru; for he now feared to remain hostile to the Guru who had completely routed the combined hill forces. Therefore he sent a messenger to Anandpur and later he himself went to the Guru and craved his pardon. The Guru assured him that if the Raja really intended peace, he need have no fears about him. The Guru was ever ready to forgive those who repented and help and redeem those who were oppressed.

(8) Blossoms for the Guru's Birthday : Sohina was once a rich man of Raipur. There was no luxury of life that was not his for the asking. He was also an adept musician and a gifted poet. Happily married to a pretty girl, Mohina, who was also an accomplished singer and an artist and shared every interest of her husband. They both enjoyed a blissfully happy home life. But the couple constantly found something amiss. They felt some void and emptiness of spirit in them. In their quest for Truth, they came across a recluse who led them, to worship a deity-in-stone. Every morning at early dawn, they bathed at a well and fetched water to give bath to the deity. They then decorated it and worshipped it in the prescribed manner. Ever since the recluse had put them on this mode of worship, they never wavered once in their daily rituals.

One day, while they took water from the well for their deity, they saw a white turbaned-man with a silvery white beard, profusely bleeding and obviously in pain, rushing towards the well. He was fatally wounded and was dying of thirst. As he came near them, he fell down in utter exhaustion and cried out: 'water, water!'

Sohina and Mohina looked at him and then at their bucketful of water they were holding. But the couple did not like their sacred water to be so polluted. For it was meant for the worship of their idol.

With this thought, any intention that they had of doing a good turn, soon melted into nothingness. Alas! They turned away refusing to give water to the wounded thirsty man.

Little did they realize then, that to do one good turn a day, was more valuable than a whole lifetime of idol worship. Dear was the price they had to pay for ignoring the cry for water made in the name of God; for the old man in his anguish hurled a curse upon them thus:

“O you say, you have to worship Him, verily, verily I say unto you, He shall not show even a glimpse of His face to you. Mark my words.”

Back home, they tried to bathe the deity but their hands trembled and there was an uneasiness in their heart. The words which escaped from the lips of the turbaned-man, and his looks, made such a deep impression on their minds that they could not sit down to pray. Their conscience refused to conform with their supplications directed towards evoking God's mercy. They were all the while haunted by thoughts of thirsty turbaned-man. They then hurriedly returned from the sanctuary to the well to serve him water. The old man lay there just the same, the expression on his face unchanged. But his soul had left his body for eternal rest.

A lot of people had gathered around the corpse. They had come in search of him. Sohina and Mohina learnt from them the story of the deceased. He was a Sikh, a disciple of the Guru. He had been living in

the jungle nearby. Along with his rosary, he had a sword for self-protection. The old man encountered a party of gangsters who way-laid and attacked a group of men, women and children. The Sikh fought with the band of ruffians in order to save the wayfarers and in the scuffle that followed had been fatally wounded. In his plight, he grew very thirsty and therefore ran towards the well crying "Water, Water". Those who had been helped by the old man came in search of him and found him dead.

The couple was overtaken by remorse. They wept in sorrow and regret, but nothing could help them. His words still rang in their ears, his looks, reproaching them continuously stood before their eyes.

They tried to forget the event and in order to gain peace of mind, resorted to acts of charity, benevolence and prayer. But they were forever haunted by the pitiable face of the turbaned old man and their ears constantly heard his fateful words. They found no joy in their songs, no peace in their sleep and no comfort in their prayers to their gods.

Sohina and Mohina had learnt that the turbaned-man was a Sikh, a disciple of Guru Gobind, who was the guest of the Rani of Raipur. The heroic deeds of of the Sikh had created a lasting impression on them that they longed to meet the Guru when he visited Raipur. But every time they attempted to secure a fleeting glimpse of the Guru, some coincidence of events prevented them from doing so. And they remained deprived of Guru's 'darshan' and each time they were reminded of his words: "He shall not show even a glimpse of his face to you." And they wept in sorrow.

They disposed of most of their wealth and spent the money in digging wells wherever there was shortage of water. They had refused a cup of water to a man of God under the delusion that they were serving their god thereby, and, now their conscience allowed them no rest. The urgency for immediate atonement forever tugged at their heart. For the words of that Sikh continued to ring in their ears, reminding them of their merciless act.

Ultimately they migrated to Anandpur determined total self-immolation. They disguised themselves as poor people and begged the Guru's gardener, Bhai Kesra Singh, to give them a chance to serve the Guru. They were accomplished horticulturists and could make plants grow and flowers bloom irrespective of seasons and climatic conditions.

One day, the Guru visited the garden. Seeing such beautiful flowers blooming out of season, the Master asked Kesra Singh, if it was his skill and art.

He said, "No sir! This is the work of a couple who serve in the garden without any remuneration: the only reward they desire, is a holy 'darshan' of thee, Lord."

The Master looked up and said, "No, not yet." And then he said almost in a whisper the same words that had escaped from the lips of his dying disciple: "Verily, verily, he shall not show even a glimpse of his face to you."

Bhai Kesra Singh communicated these words of the Master to Sohina and his wife; and they were astonished but continued to serve with love and devotion.

Mata Jito ji, the Guru's consort, one day learnt from Bhai Kesra Singh that they were great artists,

musicians and horticulturist and that they were forbidden to seek the Master's darshan. Mata ji approached the Master on their behalf, but she was told that they had once a sentence pronounced against them by a Sikh, who was a man of Simran and realization that "the Guru shall not show them even a glimpse of his face." His words, the Master said were irrevocable. "A devotee can undo my bindings, but I cannot undo the Bhagata's binding. If they were ever to bind me, I would be helpless indeed." He further said that if that Sikh were alive he could revoke his words. But now if they themselves could cross the line and discard Egoism, then alone they can come under the Guru's Grace and have glimpses of the Cosmic-Soul, the Universal Atman—the Divine Spirit.

Mata ji, however, got the permission of the Master to visit them and help them to rise above "I-am-ness" and pave the way for "Atman-darshan", this being the highest service one can do to his fellow men to help them to realize the Eternal, All-Pervading Existence", said the Master.

Jito ji, paid them occasional visits, her words nourished their drooping hearts and encouraged them. Hope arose in their breast that the Master would one day agree to let them see him.

One morning, a faqir called Roda Jalali came and begged of the couple for some of their flowers which were a novelty at that time of the year. Mohina and Sohina had preserved them for the Guru's birth day which was approaching. They were sacred and so they could not part with them. Yet they were afraid lest this refusal might also land them into some trouble.

At night Roda Jalali stole like a cat into the garden

and plucked off all the flowers. Next morning, as the Guru was sitting amidst the congregation of disciples, Roda Jalali presented himself and made an offering of the basket of flowers.

The Master said, "Why did you pluck these blooming flowers, O fakir?"

"Because I had nothing else to offer", replied Roda Jalali. If that is so, you should have come empty handed. The empty hands of a faqir are praiseworthy. But you have come not with an empty hand but with an empty heart!"

As Roda bowed, his cap fell off and lo! Gold Mohars out of it tingled on the floor. The Guru said, "You are not Roda Jalali (Roda the Glorious), but Roda Palali (Roda the Impostor)! O Roda, You have not plucked the flowers from the bushes, but you have torn two hearts, two precious souls."

Saying this our Lord scurried down barefooted to the path that led to where the sensitive couple, feeling the loss of flowers, they had cherished so much, lay unconscious beside their ravaged flower-bed. He lifted them in his lap while Mata Jito ji poured water in their mouths. The gracious looks of the Master restored them.

Imagine the joy of those smitten souls, who on regaining consciousness, found their heads resting in the Guru's lap and the soothing touch of his hands upon their ruffled brows! As they opened their eyes, they saw the Guru gazing deep into theirs and the compassionate Master whispered to them: "Sohina, Mohina, I have come; your devotion has won."

The conqueror of hearts was thus conquered by these loving hearts.

The Guru in his benevolence said, "Sohina,

Mohina! You may please ask for a gift whatever you like! Guru Nanak is so gracious.”

They said, “Merciful Lord! If you be so kind, grant pardon to Roda and bless him too.” At this, the Guru was much pleased.

Roda was then redeemed and blessed by the Master and he became Roda Jalali—Roda the glorious in the true sense of the word.

(9) **Bhai Nand Lal's Renaissance:** Diwan Bhai Nand Lal Goya, the accomplished Persian scholar and poet, who is well known for his most endearing verses, composed in praise of God and Guru Gobind Singh, and who left a distinguished mark in Sikh History as a devoted writer, was born at Ghazni in Afghanistan in 1643.

His father, Diwan Chhaju Ram, a very capable writer and administrator, was employed as Mir-Munshi (revenue Officer) by the ruler of Ghazni, and enjoyed his confidence and patronage due to his honesty and integrity.

Even as a child, Nand Lal was gifted with an extraordinary intelligence and grasp. He soon achieved a high standard of efficiency in Arabic and Persian literature and started composing Persian verses at an early age. Bhai Nand Lal was hardly nineteen, when his father and mother, both passed away, leaving him without any support in those far off lands. Since the Nawab of Ghazni hesitated to entrust the young Nand Lal with the high office held by his esteemed father, Bhai Nand Lal said good-bye to Afghanistan, the land of his birth, and migrated to the city of Multan (now in West Pakistan), where he purchased some land and took his residence.

The Nawab of Multan being much impressed with the scholastic talents and personality of the youngman took him in his service and soon appointed him his "Mir-Munshi". At the age of 45 Nand Lal left his service and retired from the world and wandered from place to place in search of Truth and Peace. But he could find it no where. He felt sad and disappointed. At last he made his way to Anandpur where the young Guru lived.

Nand Lal reaching Anandpur decided to test the Guru before he could accept him. He took a small house and lived a quiet life there. He made up his mind that he would go to the Guru only if the Guru especially sent for him and called him by his name, which he did not disclose to any body there. The Guru did not call him for sometime. During this period Nand Lal remained as restless as a magnetic needle in the vicinity of a big magnet. He records:

"How long shall I patiently wait?
My heart is restless for a vision of thee,
My tearful eyes, says Goya,
Have become flooding streams of love
Flowing in a passionate affection towards thee."

(translated).

He further writes in his Persian Ghazals that he was all the while on fire, burning with pangs of separation from the Unseen Beloved who was drawing his heart towards him with strings of hidden love. Thus speaks Nand Lal:

"My heart burns in separation of the Beloved
My soul is aflame with a passion for Him.
I am so much enveloped in these flaming emotions
That whoever sees me in this plight
Burns like pinewood that catches fire.

I am not the only one burning in these flames
 The whole world around me is ablaze
 I am burning on the embers of separation
 Just as a chemist burns chemicals on a furnace
 Blessed be thou O heart of Goya
 For being burnt in passion flames of love."

(translated).

At last Nand Lal was called. His joy knew no bounds. When Nand Lal approached the Master for 'darshan', the Guru was sitting quiet in a super-conscious state amidst his holy congregation, and with his eyes closed, looking inwardly at God-in-Self.

Nand Lal saw the Master. He was wonder-struck. He forgot his self in the joy of his beauty. He exclaimed:

"O! The Prince of Heaven! The King of the Beautifuls! Pray do not become more beautiful, I have no more strength left in me. Allured, charmed and fascinated by thee, I sacrifice myself unto thee! Glory, Glory, O Beloved."

"My life and faith are held in bondage,
 By His sweet and angelic face;
 The glory of Heaven and earth,
 Is hardly worth,
 A hair of His golden locks.

O! how can I bear the light,
 Shed by the piercing glance of His love,
 To ennoble and enlighten life,
 A glimpse of the Beloved is enough."

Bhai Nand Lal: (Translated).

After a short while the Master opened his eyes and gently smiled as he looked towards Nand Lal. By mere opening of his own eyes, he enabled Nand Lal to see the Divine. His one glance of Grace was his whole knowledge. Nand Lal bows down saying:

“Lord! my doubts are dispelled, I know the Truth. The doors of my heart have opened. The lotus in me has bloomed, and I have attained peace.”

Thus sings Bhai Nand Lal in his beautiful Persian Ghazals:

“From the beautiful bow of His eye-brow
He shot the arrow of His Glance
The arrow of Love is through my heart,
There is no cure, no remedy.”

“The eyes that art half closed with joy
Caught from the beam of Thy face,
Look not at anything else
If in their way, a thousand thrones wait for them
The joy-sealed eyes have no time to cast
Even a passing glance on the jewelled crowns.”

(Nand Lal: *translated*).

Nand Lal thus lived on at Anandpur in service and love of the Master. One day, the Guru said to Bhai Nand Lal, “You left home and renounced the world; such a renunciation is not acceptable to me. Go back, live in the world, work for your living, serve humanity. But do not get involved in the mesh of worldliness; live pure among the impurities of the world, free from illusion of Maya. The lotus flower floats in the pond but remains above water, the swan swims in the lake but remains unwetted. Likewise you live in the world of hopes and desires, but remain unattached, keeping God alone in thy mind.”

“Master! Whither shall I go?” said Nand Lal.

“To whichever direction thy feet carry thee.” replied the Master. Nand Lal bowed and immediately started from Anandpur and at last he found himself in Agra, the City of the Taj, where Prince Bahadur Shah, son of Emperor Aurangzeb, was residing and holding his court.

On reaching Agra, Bhai Nand Lal found the atmosphere congenial to his taste and inborn faculties. At Agra there were some well known scholars, poets and artists patronised by Prince Bahadur Shah. Bhai Nand Lal was soon recognised at Agra as a great scholar and poet and his talents earned for him the office and emoluments of a Mir Munshi (Minister-in-Waiting).

During his employment with the Prince, Bhai Nand Lal distinguished himself as a man of an outstanding genius, loyal and devoted to the task entrusted to him. Emperor Aurangzeb and his ministers at Delhi, were deeply impressed with the highly academic qualities of the communications drafted by Bhai Nand Lal on behalf of Prince Bahadur Shah, as these revealed the extraordinary merit of the writer. No wonder, the Prince was so proud of his new 'find'.

Bhai Nand Lal, however, was not destined to enjoy the aura of peaceful life of honour and recognition for a long time, and an unexpected storm soon started brewing on the horizon of his prosperous and contented life.

Once Emperor Aurangzeb held a 'Darbar' in which learned men from far and wide participated and gave different versions of the exposition of a certain verse of the Qoran sought by the Emperor. Aurangzeb, however, was far from satisfied with the common interpretations rendered by the Muslim 'Ulemas' (scholars), he himself being a great scholar.

Prince Bahadur Shah, then, sought the help of Bhai Nand Lal, who gave his own interpretation to the prince in private. Aurangzeb greatly admired and appreciated the outstanding erudition of Bhai Nand

Lal and rewarded him with Royal Khillat and Rs. 500/- but he could not tolerate the fact that the recipient of such honour and public recognition, was a non-Muslim.

He told Prince Bahadur Shah to convert Bhai Nand Lal to Islam by persuasion if possible, and by force otherwise.

The news leaked out, and Bhai Nand Lal made a firm resolve to leave this glamorous world of honour and prosperity, which he had created for himself, and which now threatened to cost him the unbearable loss of his Faith.

With the help of Ghiasuddin, a Muslim admirer and follower of Bhai Nand Lal, he escaped from Agra one night, and fled to Anandpur, the only place where such refugees could find safe asylum.

On reaching Anandpur with his friend Ghiasuddin, Bhai Nand paid his homage to the Master, who received him with regard and affection, and blessed him and his friend.

After a while addressing Ghiasuddin, the Guru said, "Ghiasuddin whom do you own as your Master?" Ghiasuddin pointed to Bhai Nand Lal. At this, Bhai Alam Singh, one of the disciples hastened to correct him, but the Master promptly stopped him and said, "Alam Singh! Nand Lal belongs to me and he belongs to Nand Lal, therefore both belong to me. Bhai Nand Lal received the gift of Nam from the Guru. He himself contemplates on Nam and he has been empowered and authorised by the Guru to inspire others to do the same.

These words were enough for Bhai Nand Lal. He burst out into a beautiful Persian Ghazal:

"O Lord! Grant that my eyes may ever feast
 On the beauty of thy vision,
 Make my mind the treasure-house of divine wisdom.
 Pray, dye my heart in rich crimson colour of thy love.
 O Beloved! Grant that this slave of thine
 Be ever passionately devoted to Thy Lotus Feet.
 To my physical separation bestow the longing for union,
 And in the autum of my life confer on me the joy of perennial spring,
 And through thy Grace, give tongue to every hair on my body;
 So that with millions of these tongues
 I may sing Thy glory ever anon.

(Translated)

Enjoying the blissful life at the Master's feet at Anandpur, Bhai Nand Lal, now settled down to a routine of a devoted disciple, regularly attending the morning and evening congregations. The presence of many renowned poets and scholars there, provided further inspiration to him, to write poetry in praise of God and the Guru. Bhai Nand Lal, one day, presented Guru Gobind Singh his book of verses, to which he gave the title of Bandgi Nama (The Book of Meditation). In appreciation of this valuable present, the Guru composed the following verse and changed the title of the Book to Zindgi Nama (Book of Life).

"abe haivan pur shud chun jam-i-o
 Zindgi Nama shud jan nam-i-o"

When this goblet was filled with the immortalizing nectar from heaven,

Its name then became Zindgi Nama—(The Book of life).

(Translated)

Bhai Nand Lal verses reflect his deep realization of Divinity, which can only sprout from a sublimate soul who is enjoying a blissful aura of spiritual ecstasy; and has reached the final stage of a 'Brahm Giani'. To such an emancipated soul, God is manifested in the entire creation.

(10) **The call of the Master :** The Guru called for a big gathering at Anandpur on the Baisakhi day of Sammat 1756 (1699 A.D.). The disciples heard the call of the Master. They rushed forth with great zeal and devotion. The whole of the Punjab was on the march. It appeared as if the waters of the five rivers were rushing forth to meet and mingle with the ocean. They came from all parts of the country. After the morning 'Hari-kirtan', the Guru in all his glory and superhuman splendour stood up on his platform; his eyes shone like fire, his face was flushed with the might of his resolve and his whole body was transformed like that of warrior stepping forth into the battle field. In a voice as of a thunder, with a naked sword in his hand, he called upon his disciples: "Is there anyone here who would lay down his life under my steel? I need the head of a Sikh, who will offer it." O what a trial!

This caused some terror in the assembly and people were stunned. There was dead silence. He called forth again. At this, Bhai Dya Ram, a Khatri of Lahore aged thirty stood up and came forward. With his head bent in deep reverence he said, "Master! This head is thine for ever." The Guru took him by the arm to the tent that was pitched yonder in an enclosure. A blow and thud were heard and a stream of blood gushed out.

The Guru, with his sword dripping with blood, came again and called for another head. After a pause another stood up. He was Dharm Das a Jat of Haryana, now in Rohtak district. He was thirty-three years of age. He said, "Lord, chop off my head in punishment for not rising at thy first call." He was also led to the tent. Another blow, another thud,

and a fresh stream of blood, convinced the horror-stricken people that the second Sikh, too, had been sacrificed.

Then the Guru again came out with the blood dripping sword and asked for another head. In this manner, three other man stood, one after the other, and offered themselves for the sacrifice. One was Mohkam Chand, who hailed from Dwarka (West Coast of India), another was Himmat Chand a resident of Jagan Nath Puri, in Orissa and the third was Sahib Chand, from Bidar (In Central India).

The last time the Guru stayed longer in the tent. People began to breath with relief. Perhaps he had finished and would not repeat the dreadful call.

At last, he came out. But! O heavenly Bliss, What a change! His sword was sheathed, his face was beaming with joy and satisfaction and his eyes were drunk with cheer that filled his heart. And Good Lord! Who were they that followed him, looking strangely like him? They were the Beloved Five. They had been sacrificed. Had they come back to life? Were they in mortal frame or in celestial ones?

To the extreme wonderment and joy of those assembled and still sitting there, the Guru brought out his Five Beloved Ones, 'Punj Pyare', in their new robes, radiant with a new vitality of dedication to God. They had offered their heads to the Guru, and the Guru had given them himself and his glory.

There were exclamations of wonder and sighs of regret on all sides. Every one was sorry that he had not offered his head. One came up to the Master with tears in his eyes and said, "Master! I failed in the trial and deserve punishment. The heads of these my brethern, thou hast accepted and made thine own,

Throw this one of mine into the gutter; for it is unworthy to stand on these shoulders.”

Another got up and said, “My Lord! I was all the while making up my mind. I thought you would call for a sixth head. But, it was my ill-luck, Master, thou didst never call for another. I took too long to decide, but I did decide. So be kind, and let me die for this tardiness in responding to the call. It was a grievous fault, Master, so strike this unworthy head off these ugly shoulders.’

The Guru then addressed the assembly saying, “My dear Sikhs! Be ye of good cheer. The power of prompt response to the call of the hour is not given to all. Yet blessed are they who rise equal to the occasion. All hail! All hail! to the FIVE BELOVED ONES who have proved their firm and fast devotion to the Guru, and have stood the ordeal successfully. This is a matter of joy for us all. Now I feel certain that true religion will flourish and my Sikhs will ever be foremost among the winners of country’s freedom. They would be defenders of faith and protectors of the weak and the oppressed ones. Be ye all of good cheers. This is yet the beginning. I shall need the heads of all of you in the course of time to come. So wait. They also serve who wait and get ready for the call. Beware, lest you should fail again.”

The Guru had thus tested the fidelity and courage of his followers. The divine path on which the devotees have to tread is narrow and sharp like the edge of a sword. It is indeed difficult to step on it. It demands self-sacrifice, unflinching and unquestionable obedience to the Divine Master, which pauses not to question and lingers not to receive an answer and which only demands ‘to do and die.’

(11) **The Great Miracle of Creation :** On the day following, the Guru proceeded to dissolve the steel of the double-edged dagger and the Divine Song in water in a steel urn; and he prepared the Nectar of Knowledge Absolute. In the Immortal Draught he resolved to give himself away to the children of Guru Nanak. When the Nectar (AMRIT) was ready, the god-mother of his disciples, Mata Sahib Devan, came with sugar crystals or 'Patasas' and stood waiting before the Master.

"Welcome, Sweet Lady!" said the Guru, "Thou hast come in, at a very opportune moment when thy gift is needed most. Valour and courage, without the sweetness of soul means little. Pour thy sweetness into the Nectar; so that the Khalsa may be blessed not only with Valour and courage, but also with the grace of a woman's sweet-soul." And the Mother thereupon poured down the sugar crystals in the steel and vessel sweetened the Amrit Life-giving Elixir.

The Guru then stood up, with the sacred Amrit contained in the steel vessel, to give the blessed abundance of God-in-Man away. Each of the Five Beloved Ones, by turn, kneeling upon his left knee, looked up to the Master to receive his Eternal Light. The Master gazed into the eyes of the disciple, and showered Amrit on his face, calling him aloud with each shower to sing: "Waheguru ji ka khalsa, Waheguru ji ki fateh." — "The Liberated Ones, Pure Ones belong to the Glorious Master, They are of the Lord's own. He is Truth, and Truth triumphs now; All triumph be to His Name."

The 'Keshas' (hair) of each disciple was then anointed by him with showers of Amrit. Thence forward every hair of the disciple's head became

sacred for all times. The Beloved Five were thus baptized by the Guru. He then asked them to take deep draughts of the Amrit from the same steel cup; so that they may be totally transformed into the Guru's pattern and be knit together in unbreakable bonds of brotherly love.

In those days of strict caste barriers, they took Amrit from the same vessel, people of the all castes and classes. This caused a great stir and furore in the orthodox society. The Master then addressed them to the following effect:

“Ye the liberated ones, pure ones, I name ye the KHALSA, and give ye the surname of Singh. Ye shall keep the Divine Spark of Life lit in ye, ever pure, bright and unflickering. Ye shall never worship stock or stones, idols or tombs, gods and goddesses or their statues and pictures. Believe not anyone to be the Creator except God Eternal, not subject to birth and death. Know Him to be God. Eternal, Immortal, All-Pervading Reality He only to be meditated upon. And ye to keep Him alone in thy ‘dhyanam’.

Ye shall not believe in fasts, mortification of body and penances. Ye shall not pay heed to places of pilgrimages. Ye shall love man as man, making no distinction of caste, colour, creed or country.

Ye shall earn living by fair and honest means and by the sweat of thy brows, setting apart atleast one tenth of your hard earned income for the Guru's cause or for service to humanity. Ye shall not beg alms or live upon charity. Ye must henceforth be Saint-Soldiers, worshipping God, serving the weak, needy and oppressed ones. Ye shall be saviour of men and defenders of faith.

Each one of you shall love your wedded wife and

shall not covet another woman even in thought or dream.

Ye must not smoke or take other intoxicants. Nor shall ye take the flesh of an animal killed by slow degrees, as they do in the Mohammedan way.

Ye must not cut your Keshas. Keshas must be be your first token of Sikh faith.

You are to keep discipline and always wear the uniform that I, from today, prescribe for my Khalsa.

They are to wear five Ks:

- (1) KESHAS—they were to grow unshorn hair and untrimmed beards
- (2) KARA or steel bracelet on the wrist
- (3) KACHHA or breeches reaching up to knees.
- (4) KANGA or Comb
- (5) KIRPAN (dagger or sword).

Guru Gobind Singh gathered the waves of Ocean of Consciousness as he gathered the long tresses of the Five Beloved, like the mother of the children. The Master lovingly tied them in knot on top of their heads, as a vow of future man-hood which shall know no caste, no distinction between man and man. The Master concealed the Spark of Life under a sheaf of hair. The Keshas are the holy woods on which the honeyed-monsoon of Nam settles. He touched our hair and blessed us, we nestle the fragrance of his touch in our tresses. So every hair of the Sikh is thus sacred for all times. The Master enjoined the baptised ones (who take Guru's Amrit) to observe the 5-Ks, as mentioned above.

Every Sikh is to wear Kirpan—His sword. It is a gift from the Guru. It is not a mere instrument of

offence and defence. It is an outer symbol of the inner spirit that knows no defeat, no disappointment; the personality that is unconquerable in its hope, in its spiritual radiance. Guru Gobind Singh says, "I will make my one, stand against a million." The presence of a great spiritual man fascinates and overpowers millions.

Similarly KARA (Iron Ring) comes to us as a gift from the Master, our personal God, who is dearer to us than our dear and near ones. He gave all these 5-Ks as gifts to us and they are sacred. We carry them lovingly as signs of His remembrance, as souvenir.

Woe upon us, if we to-day argue and discuss the usefulness of 5-Ks or their justification. Dazzled by the glamour of fashion and worldliness and of mammon and sex, some youngmen become oblivious of the values of the spirit and fall a prey to their carnal urges. They ask for justification of these symbols merely to find justification for discarding them, impelled, no doubt, by fashion and considerations of convenience.

It may be said that the principal justification for the Sikhs' adherence to the Keshas and other Ks must be their loving regard for the Gurus—their craving to be accepted at the feet of the Master.

Yes, the absolute truth of the matter is that there is no substitute for love and devotion in the realm of spirituality. Divested of these two essentials, the relation between the Sikh and the Guru is reduced to a naught.

These very ties of love and devotion binding the Sikh to the Guru, stood by the martyr Bhai Taru Singh through his ordeal, and made him accept the tearing of his scalp in preference to the shaving of his hair.

It may be observed that behind these 5-Ks, now lie our noble tradition and inspiring history that carried us triumphantly through many a crisis. They gave us a sense of unity, moral prestige and religious zeal that resulted in many shining deeds of heroism and sacrifice. They have enabled us to up-hold and keep aloft the Guru's ideal as distinct from the old Brahmanism, but for them we would be extinguished, absorbed and lost like Buddhism that was lost in the mass-herd of Hinduism.

Apart from their value, as a discipline for promoting spirituality, the symbols have another socio-religious purpose. For the spread and subsistence of all religions, the existence of strong nuclei of the brother-hood is indispensable. If Guru Nanak had not founded a community and a church, his religion would have met the fate of the ideologies propounded by Kabir, Ravidas and other saints. And a community strongly consolidated by a common discipline and uniform can be much stronger force than a loosely-knit group of individual co-thinkers. This is the reason why a microscopic minority, such as the Sikhs, has enjoyed so great an importance in the country's affairs.

Religion being an ideology meant to mould our lives it is to be lived not in isolation by an individual, but collectively in a society. Religion must mould our lives in its fullness, in its social and all other aspects. Hence the importance of 'Sadh Sangat' or to say that religion has to be lived collectively to inspire individuals.

Admitted that Sikhism claims no exclusiveness for its Keshas, as for any of its secular institutions. But do the Keshas not represent the colours of our regiment? Do they not form the rule of the game? You cannot,

at one and the same time, fiddle outside the boundary line and also participate in the play as one of the eleven. How can you?

Those who do not understand the Law of Love and devotion may not wear the Master's knot of the sacred tresses and those who do must wear it as a token of their craving to be accepted at the feet of the Master. For this is Guru Gobind Singh's command. And obedience to Him is life. There is no life of the spirit or regeneration outside that Great Love.

But let it be clearly understood that symbols by themselves do not constitute religion. Mere outer form means but little without the inner qualities and the ideal that it signifies.

The outer shell protects and preserves the inner kernel, but what if the latter is already rotten? A fenceless crop is always in the danger of being damaged, but what could be the value of the hedge that surrounds a barren unproductive piece of land?

Those who do not care to observe the outer discipline of Keshas and other symbols are guilty of breaking the door and laying inside open to pilferage and pillage; while those who infringe the inner discipline are eating up the marrow.

(12) The Khalsa Brotherhood—Global Fraternity :
The Khalsa had sprung from the Spirit of the Great Guru Gobind Singh, as Minerva from the head of the Jupiter—fully awakened to a new and inspired life, blending the undaunted courage of the soldier with the enthusiasm of an enlightened devotee. The Guru by a flash of his sword filled the dying soul of India with the life giving light of Truth, and lo! it shone in all its glory again, in the life of the new

born Khalsa! The Light of Reality had kindled the Spark of Life again in the dying soul of the nation.

The Khalsa Brotherhood inaugurated by Guru Gobind Singh is the brotherhood of Knights of Honour who live the inward life of NAM and Simran. This was a kind of chivalry unlike anything that had appeared in Europe or in Rajasthan. The Sikh became a knight who had no personal motive, no passion of worldly love to inspire him in the performance of his duty. The sight of wronged innocence or oppressed weakness was sufficient to move him to action. The inspired personality of this brotherhood is love-strung, song-strung, gentle and fearless, seeking no reward for incessant self-sacrifice in the name of the Master. Brothers, dying like moths round the lamp, living-like heroes, elevated above the sad sordid facts of life, caring for the welfare of the whole universe and desiring nothing in return, except that they may deserve His love.

“He who keeps the Light of the Divine Life,
The Torch of Truth,
Burning for all the twenty-four hours
In the Shrine of his heart,
He alone is to be deemed
As the pure Khalsa.”

So defined the Master. If the Lamp of Simran burns out, if the Torch of Truth is extinguished, the Sikh would spiritually die. His name would be struck off the rolls. Those of us, who have not yet realized NAM—All Pervading Divine Spirit, are those still on the waiting list.

“Master! Thy touch alchemical turns
Dross into nobler metals.
Thy Glance uplifts beings
From lower depths to heights unknown,

For Thy Grace, O Lord, I wait,
 Teach me Thy Name,
 Let me breath in Thy Love
 And make of me Thy Khalsa."

"O what am I?
 Hundreds of thousand of good people
 Deeply drunk with Azure Wine of Thy Love,
 Are standing in Thy way
 For a glimpse of Thee O Love!
 They are offering in exchange their lives,
 Which they hold on the palms of their hands."

The creation of Khalsa is the culmination of Guru Nanak's genius. "The harvest which ripened in the time of Guru Gobind Singh was sown by Guru Nanak and watered by his successors. The sword which carved the Khalsa's way to glory was, undoubtedly forged by Gobind, but the steel had been provided by Nanak."

(Sir Dr. Gokal Chand Narang).

The Amrit of the Tenth Master, completely transmuted and transformed the man irrespective of caste, creed or religion. After taking Amrit, the Khalsa resembles no parent type of his own. Just as lime, betelnut, catechu and betel-leaf, which are the ingredients of 'Pan'—betel-leaf, they turn into one and same red-blood colour when well chewed, similarly in the Khalsa there is the blending of the whole spiritual character of man of the past, present and future, as if it were a new creation, a universal man of God, belonging to one class, caste, colour or creed. Khalsa is the Super-Man saturated with the glories and powers of the Infinite, yet exuberating sweetness, innocence, and brotherliness. He strikes no fear in others, nor does he fear any.

(13) The Disciples initiate the Master: The most moving scene of the ceremony was when the Guru seated the Beloved Five on his throne and requested them to initiate him as a member of the "KHALSA BROTHERHOOD".

The Five sat in a group. and, inspired by the Divine spirit, prepared Amrit in the same way, as Master had done. When the Amrit was ready the Master himself stood before them with clasped hands, and begged for the Immortalizing Draught from his Beloved Five. They hesitated a little, but the Guru said, "Why do you hesitate? I have given you my form, my glory, and my spirit. I have named ye the Khalsa, the Pure and Liberated Ones, the King's Own. The Khalsa is the Guru, and the Guru is the Khalsa. Ye and I are one for ever."

Bhai Dya Singh smiled and said, "What price do you offer for this Amrit? We offered ye our heads for it!"

The Master said, "I offer my mind, my body, my family and all that I have, as a sacrifice at your altar."

The Five Beloved then administered Amrit to the Guru and conformed upon him the same Rehat (discipline) exactly in the way as he had done. His name was thenceforth changed from Gobind Rai to Gobind Singh. Never has any prophet or Avatar thus implored his own disciples for grant of spiritual gift and submitted himself to the discipline to be enjoined upon him.

Thereupon the whole heavens resounded with ejaculation: "Sat Sri Akal—All Glory to the Eternal and Immortal Lord! Hurrah for the Guru! Wonderful is Guru Gobind Singh, himself the Master and

himself the disciple. The Master and the disciples become One."

After giving Amrit, the Beloved Ones said, "O Lord now that you have blessed us thus, may we also ask for a boon?"

"Yes", said the Guru.

And said the Beloved Ones, "O Lord of the Khalsa, Father of the Khalsa, give us your word to abide with Thy Khalsa, the whole body of the Khalsa and its individual members—and always help and guide them."

"So shall it be," said the Guru.

The Guru said, "I am the first Khalsa to take Amrit from the Khalsa. I have tasted and tested the Khalsa's Amrit myself. I have seen and felt its efficacy. Administer this Amrit to one and all."

About 80,000 men and women were Amritized in a few days. For days and days, the city of Anandpur presented a unique appearance. A contagious spirit of independence arose and spread, and the face of the country changed. Where love is supreme, the heart in which it resides must be clothed in splendour of steel; the flashing sword must be the expression, in this dark world, of the light of soul.

(14) How the Fragrance Spread: Gulaba stood trembling before the Head-Qazi at Delhi. He was not free of the fear and panic that seized him in the past, whenever he was summoned by the Muslim officers at his native town. Now he stood in obeisance, with folded arms—a Muslim in garb and appearance, but a Hindu at heart.

Doubtless he, now, found favour in the eyes of the Qazi. The Qazi was pleased with this new con-

vert; for with him the Kambhoh community at Hoshiarpur embraced Islam en-block. "Gulaba! We are pleased with you," said the Head-Qazi, "In token of your conversion, we hereby appoint you Supervisor of the gardens and Jagir of Hakim Abu Trab Bahmni at Delhi."

Gulaba bowed low in acceptance, and turned—tears welled up in his eyes—his conscience smote him—a traitor to his own faith—he had yielded, at last, to the irony of fate—a devout Hindu—now a Muslim by circumstances—a victim of relentless fate. His brethren, the whole of Kambhoh community of Hoshiarpur were now Muslim—the fact that he, Gulaba, resisted with all his might, only to succumb to the inevitable at last, was, but a meagre comfort to him now.

Such was Aurangzeb's policy of intolerance and religious persecution that thousands of Hindus were forced to relinquish their faith for fear of oppression. The Muslim rulers' additional weapon was that they showered on converts, rare privileges and benefits—the non-believers, no doubt, were dealt with intolerable, political and economic impediments—therefore the masses, the poorer and lower classes of Hindus could ill-afford resistance of any kind, however unsullied and strong their faith in their religion might be.

Now Gulaba found himself at the gates of the palatial residence of Hakim Abu Trab—the favourite chief of Aurangzeb. The gates were barred against all common folk. Within these high walls, lived Hakim Abu Trab, a life of luxury and indolence—enough wealth and more kept flowing from the monarch—the vast Jagir in the vicinity of Delhi was a prized gift from the Emperor—was there, anyone, to match Hakim

in providing secret and vital information about the Bahamni rulers of Deccan, against whom Aurangzeb was carrying on, a long campaign of conquest? Did not Hakim hail from the Bahamni clan and was he not the most confidential adviser and spy of the Emperor?

The gatesman, led Gulaba to the chief. Hakim surveyed him from head to foot and commanded, "Take care of my Jagir. You will have ample reward. Be loyal and honour your sovereign Aurangzeb."

The charge was humbly accepted. Gulaba's responsibilities grew day by day—money and material came his way. But deep in his heart, the restlessness and remorse continued and nagged his conscience. He looked up to his wife, Sherifan, for comfort, but both of them, grieved. Their material gain gave them no consolation.

At last, word came, one day from Aurangzeb, commanding Hakim to proceed to Anandpur in the Punjab and spy on the activities of Guru Gobind Singh. Aurangzeb's wrath, at the news he received about the Guru, knew no bounds. So, for this purpose, he selected Hakim Abu Trab to watch over the Guru's activities and advise suitable action. Hakim, therefore, deputed Gulaba to go and make the necessary arrangements at Anandpur for his visit and also spy over the Guru's activities.

For Gulaba, this task seemed gruesome—he pondered over it the whole night—the next morning he would don the robes of a Hindu and travel to Anandpur—those were the orders he received. If Hakim termed it, a disguise, it was to Gulaba, a mockery—an ordeal to be set against his own brethren to whose world, he now, no longer belonged. Yet he quelled the tumult, that rose in his heart with a

strong will—an inner strength he possessed—a strong sense of duty. So with this seuse of duty only to uphold him, Gulaba set forth on a journey, not knowing what lay ahead.

After miles of treading, Gulaba and his wife looked upon a clear blue sky, valley fresh and green and a softly rustling river, the Sutlej. Here was the beautiful city, Anandpur, where they were destined to come with little friendliness to offer and yet to receive so much warmth from its inhabitants. They stayed on for days and weeks and felt refreshed. The followers of Guru Gobind Singh had a message of peace and comfort for all. The city reflected this peace and calm. Here Gulaba found a life without pretence, simple and honest as against the hypocrisy and pomposness of the mighty rulers at Delhi; peace and tranquility, instead of conflict and turbulence, love and mercy instead of hatred and tyranny. Here were seen bands of young men to uphold love and service and no merceneries—the stooges of Aurangzeb's regime. The weak and poor resorted here for protection when tyrannized by their cruel rulers.

Gulaba and his wife were struck with wonder and admiration at everything that they saw. The very first glimpse of Guru Gobind Singh's saintly face left on them, a lasting impression. The divine glow and serenity of his face inspired them to lofty, pure and clear thoughts. They spontaneously bowed in reverence to the Great Master and forgot the mission on which they came. So they lived and learnt—each day a revelation, of what was good and true—a people loving, and lovable, brave and sacrificing.

On one such day, Gulaba beheld a funeral pro-

cession moving along the silent streets—all was mournful peace—the chanting of soft hymns by thousands of mourners lent poignancy to the whole scene—guns boomed in salute against this stillness in honour of the departed. Guru himself came, walked along the bier for some distance, touched the bier and blessed the departed soul—the procession moved on calmly, serenely—Gulaba stood a silent witness to this tragic spectacle.

Later, he learnt the story of the deceased. The episode had a soul-stirring message for Gulaba. The man had died a martyr to his faith. During his life time, he devoted himself to the service of disabled and needy. One day, he had found a person badly wounded and lying in the jungle near by. He carried him on his back and while bringing him to the asylum, he was way-laid and kidnapped by the soldiers of the adjoining state of Bilaspur. There, they asked him to denounce his faith and deny the Guru. On his refusing to do so, he was administered poison, and consequently he died. His body was abandoned in the jungle nearby. The search parties were sent out as the news reached Anandpur and they picked him up. This story stung Gulaba and filled him with remorse. "Did I not value my life greater than my faith? Where is my hope and my salvation for this, my great sin." He moaned to himself. Soon he found an answer.

Kesra Singh, the Guru's gardener, was an embodiment of virtue, a true disciple of the Master. His simple life and genial principles made Gulaba love and esteem him. Kesra Singh's eventful life of love and service, greatly inspired Gulaba. Following his footsteps, Gulaba turned a new leaf—he began to live a life of prayer and meditation—of right thought,

right word and right action—a consummation of love and service to humanity. Gulaba learnt to recite Gurbani—the Divine Word and it purified his mind. The service of love which Kesra Singh rendered to the deserving people, was now fully shared by Gulaba. He was consoled with the thought, that atonement of his sins, was after all well within his reach.

Time and again, Kesra Singh and his wife sought to help those devotees who came there to seek shelter. One, such woman that came there in despair, was the wife of Pandit Raghuba of Kanshi, who was put to sword by the order of Aurangzeb; for he had resented when the Emperor ordered to turn the temple of Bashesharnath into a mosque. The family of Raghuba was also ordered to be persecuted. Thereupon, his learned wife Triyumbka Bai disguised herself as a man and fled from Kashi, taking the only little child she had with her. She wandered from place to place, but O how tragic it was that in the whole of India, she could find no place of refuge, where she could be safe from the treacherous hands of Emperor Aurangzeb. She was greatly distressed and confused and could find no solution to her plight. She could not tell her tale to anyone. Nor could she reveal her identity.

At last, she recalled that her husband's friend Kanshi Nath, when he was oppressed, took refuge with Guru Gobind Singh in the Punjab. Therefore, she was encouraged to seek him. With all the hardships and perils of travelling those days, the poor woman was put to immense suffering. It took her months to traverse those several hundred miles till at last she reached Anandpur. At the end of the tedious journey, she was weary and wasted. High fever raged on her tired body. In such a weak and pre-

carious state of health she lay in the garden outside the town, when Kesra Singh's wife, Karam Kaur, found her. Kesra Singh's wife attended upon her, nursed her in her illness and when she was restored to good health, presented her to the Guru.

Gulaba thus passed his days very happily at Anandpur but his peaceful life was disturbed when Hakim Abu Trab arrived. Gulaba had long ceased to think of spying and now Hakim's arrival was a cruel reminder to him. Yet, Gulaba, in his heart, was determined not to do spying. The perils of disobeying Abu Trab's orders, did not frighten him now. He was now morally fortified and could face him without fear. Addressing Abu Trab, he boldly said, "The mission on which I came here, makes me detest myself. I am determined not to continue it. I consider the Guru the holiest of the holies. It is a sin to spy on such a godly person. I, therefore, relinquish this loathsome job."

Abu Trab was indignant to hear Gulaba speak, but he controlled himself and calmly said, "Gulaba! I myself attach little importance to religion. You are free to follow any faith you like, I do not mind, but you have only to take care of the Qazis at Delhi."

Gulaba was distressed but was firm in his resolve. So was his wife. They said that they would face death if needed but would not do the odious job. It was now so repugnant to them.

By a strange turn of fate, Abu Trab fell ill, the very next day. What seemed at first, mere fever, developed into a serious malady. His condition deteriorated day by day. Finding him in a very serious condition with a little hope of his survival his nephew and a servant who came with him deserted

him and went away. Abu Trab now lay unconscious and in a state of delirium. He had fits of wild excitement and he passed through extreme pain and agony. Throughout his illness, Kesra Singh and his wife nursed him. The tenderness with which they cared for this stranger, who came to them with no love but with animosity, taught a great lesson to Gulaba—who, but the noblest, could show such sympathy and love to their enemies? Gulaba's regard and respect for Kesra Singh took the shape of service to Abu Trab. The new religion of the Guru awakened in him a new spirit of human sympathy and service of love.

Abu Trab's recovery did not gladden his own heart—instead, he sadly reflected—that while his own nephew had deserted him, the very people upon whom he came to spy, had shown him, love and tenderness. He owed his life to them. Through his physical pain and suffering, he learnt what torture meant to all human beings. It dawned on him that wealth and luxuries could not replace love and sacrifice—all his wealth could not have given him his life, which was to him, the most precious. Why, then, man in his short span of life, did so much harm to mankind? Why, then, his Emperor Aurangzeb revelled in vain glory? Was it not gruesome cruelty of the Emperor to imprison his own aged father? Was it not ruthlessness to murder his own brothers? Was it not injustice and tyrannous to plot against the lives of innumerable innocent men? Indeed, Guru Gobind Singh's erudite wisdom and his faith were a challenge to the wickedness that gripped the Aurangzeb's regime. The humanity and love that Sikhs showed overwhelmed Abu Trab. Reverence for the Guru and love for him gradually welled up in his mind.

During one of his solitary walks, Abu Trab happened to come across in the jungle, a decoit who lay grievously wounded and was dying. He was helplessly crying for water. A Sikh chanced to pass that way. Hearing the cries of the dying man, he came to his rescue, brought him water and then proceeded to make arrangements to take care of him and tend him.

Abu Trab's astonishment made him call out to the Sikh, "Do you know that he is a dacoit? Why do you help him to live?"

The Sikh replied, "Even a sinner and criminal in distress needs our mercy and sympathy. It is cowardice to strike a man who is already mortally wounded."

These were the truths alien to Abu Trabs who had known only the cruel hands of tyranny.

As he came to know these people more closely and the faith they followed, Hakim Abu Trab Bahamni came to have a new outlook of life. He was now a changed man. He was not the same opportunist and demagogue strategist of Aurangzeb. He detached himself on seeing the virtues of the Sikhs at Anandpur. He gave up spying, as the meanest act against these—the noblest of men. Along with Gulaba, Hakim Abu Trab embraced the new faith and sat at the feet of Guru Gobind Singh as one of his devout disciples. He was blessed with the life of the spirit. The splendour of Aurangzeb's court and the power he wielded, on account of the confidence that the Emperor placed in him, could not give him peace and happiness which he now enjoyed. The Guru in his purity and nobility of heart, was greater than the most powerful monarch on earth. Abu Trab Bahamni, now lead a life of righteousness and devoted himself to the service of mankind and love of God.

(15) **The Hill Rajas, The Tools of the Mughal Empire :** Guru Gobind Singh had come to know of the evil intentions of Aurangzeb and how he was pitting the Hill Rajas against him. The Hill Chiefs were, therefore, again active in their mischievous designs. They became more vindictive to the Guru as his teachings of equality, worship of One Formless God and his administering Amrit to the Khalsa were against their creed and established customs. They sent an ultimatum to the Guru either to vacate Anandpur or to pay tribute to them. When they found the Guru would not surrender, they attacked upon him.

The men belonging to the Guru were but few and not so well trained and equipped, yet they defeated the enemy in all these skirmishes. The Sikhs had something which was totally lacking in their opponents—a firm faith in the Omnipotent God, whose soldiers they thought themselves to be. And at their head was a Divine Person, who was a host in himself.

So it became evident to the hill chiefs that even their armies of over a score of Hill Chiefs could not withstand the Guru's might. Therefore, they decided to call in, the help of the Imperial armies through the Governor of Sirhind.

The Governor of Sirhind, lost no time in getting the Emperor's sanction. An army of ten thousand was despatched under Dina Beg and Painde Khan. The forces of hill chiefs joined them at Rupar and the allied forces made a forceable attack on Anandpur. A bloody battle ensued. Painde Khan came forward and challenged the Guru to a single combat which should decide the issue of the day's action. He first attacked the Guru with sword and then shot two arrows

at him in succession, but he failed to hurt the Guru. The whole of Painsde Khan's body was protected with an armour of steel, except his ears. The Guru then shot his gold-tipped arrow through Painsde Khan's ear and he fell dead on the ground.

Having witnessed the fall of Painsde Khan, the hill chiefs and their soldiers lost their nerves and began to fly from the field. Dina Beg was also severely injured. Dina Beg, finding himself deserted by the very people for whom he had come to help, he too, had to beat the retreat.

The news that the Guru was attacked spread like wild fire and it brought thousands of armed Sikhs on horses from all over the country to Anandpur. As was expected, the hill chiefs soon after reinforced their army by a large number of Ranghars and Gujars and again advanced upon Anandpur. They were determined to extirpate the Guru. A severe fighting took place. The Sikhs under prince Ajit Singh, Bhai Daya Singh, Alim Singh and Udhe Singh fell upon the enemy. Such was the dash and vigour displayed by them that although the army of the hill chiefs was far greater in number, they were reduced to a sore plight towards the close of the day. The next day's fighting yielded the same results.

The hill chiefs were now convinced that they could not defeat the Sikhs in open warfare, and so they decided upon a blockade. For over two months they besieged the city, but with no great success.

Thereupon, Raja Kesri Chand got an elephant intoxicated with liquor and with its body protected by steel and equipped with spears on his forehead, was directed to charge the gate of the Guru's fort. The beast was followed by the army and they were con-

fident of breaking in the fort through the gate. The Guru on hearing this, called upon Bhai Bichittar Singh to repel the animal from causing any harm to the gate. Bichittar Singh beseeched the Guru's blessings in the discharge of this mighty task and then dashed out on a steed to face the animal. While his steed jumped up and stood on his hind legs, Bichittar Singh fell upon the beast like a lion and thrust his lance through the elephant's head armour. The furious animal turned round causing a stampede, wounding and treading upon soldiers, who had relied on it for their victory.

Meanwhile Udhe Singh dashed out and pounced upon Raja Kesri Chand who was seated on an elephant's back and beheaded him with a lightning stroke of his sword. The allied army of the hill chiefs was routed.

Notwithstanding the disastrous defeat of the hill chiefs, they again approached for assistance to the Governor of Sirhind. The Governor had also received the orders from the Emperor to march against the Guru in conjunction with the hill chiefs. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, along with the hill chiefs made a furious assault on Anandpur in October 1702. The Sikhs, although they were over-numbered, yet they fought with their usual pluck and courage. Wazir Khan, the Governor of Sirhind, was amazed at the heroic and persistent resistance offered by the Sikhs. The allied army was falling rapidly. Wazir Khan lost all hopes of victory. At last they held a council as to what they should do to save themselves of the shame and humiliation of a retreat. The Raja of Basali came to their rescue. He had a faith in the Guru's divinity, offered to invite the Guru to his state, if they undertook not to attack him from the

rear. This was agreed to as a convenient manner of escape from the embarrassing position.

On receipt of invitation from the Raja of Basali, the Guru directed his troops towards Basali. He placed himself with the pick of the army at the rear of the columns. As the Guru had expected, the allied armies broke their promise and were soon upon him. But they could not do him much harm. The hill chiefs were over-joyed at having, as they thought, got rid of the Guru and went home rejoicing. After a short stay at Basali and then at Bhabaur, the Guru returned to Anandpur. None offered any resistance on his return.

(16) The Strange Prayer of an Old Lady: One day, an old lady came weeping and lamenting to the Guru's Darbar. The Guru enquired of her as to what had happened to her.

“Great is my grief O Lord”! she said, “My husband entered the path of discipleship and since dedicated himself to thee. He lead a life of devotion like a saint and as the occasion arose, he fell fighting bravely like a soldier for thy righteous cause. As I heard of his martyrdom, I thanked the Lord above for His acceptance of him.”

“My two elder sons”, she continued, “By thy grace followed in the footsteps of their father and while repeating God Name in their heart, they also died fighting under thy banners. I again thanked God that they laid their lives for a noble cause as saint-warriors. But now, Master, my third son is sore ill and is on his death bed, and I am, therefore, woe-begone. My grief is not that he is dying, but that he is passing away without serving for thy righteous and noble cause.

What pains me is, that his youth, valour and strength are being wasted in sickness disease and death.”

“Cure him Lord,” she prayed, “And grant that he may also die a death of a saint-soldier like his father and elder brothers, with God in heart and sword in hand, fighting to up-hold righteousness and destroy the villainous tyrants. Such are my woes and so I appeal to you, my Lord.”

“Go Lady”, said the Guru, “Thy son will get well and will be a hero in my army.”

The woman went home rejoicing.

(17) Bhai Joga Singh: From early youth Joga Singh was living at the Guru's Darbar and was greatly devoted to him. Once he went home to Peshawar for his marriage, which his parents said could not be postponed any further. But when the marriage ceremony was half-way through, a man arrived with an urgent message from the Guru. It was a a 'Hukam-Nama'—a command to him from the Guru to proceed to Anandpur without delay. Under no circumstances should Joga Singh defer his departure or tarry.

Joga Singh read the command, bowed to Granth Sahib and instantly left for Anandpur even without waiting to see his marriage through. His parents, his in-laws and all his relatives were surprised and shocked. Their entreaties were of no avail. Joga Singh would not delay a single instant even to heed their words.

Indeed, the path of devotees is sharper than the edge of a sword, and it is narrower than the hair-breadth on which they have to tread. After Joga Singh had thus departed in a hurry, his brothers sent behind

him a horse, some clothes, money and provision for his journey.

Joga Singh continued his journey as fast as he could. After he had passed through Lahore and Amritsar, it occurred to him that he had done a sacrifice and so he thought "Who could have acted like me? Certainly very few Sikhs would carry out the Guru's behest like me." When he reached Jullunder he imagined that when he would appear before the Guru, he would be greatly pleased with him and would say, "Thou art really a perfect Sikh."

As he progressed towards Anandpur, he mused and mused and believed in his mind that he was great. He was thus puffed up with pride and self-conceit. When man gives way to Egoism, he loses perception of God's Name. For Egoism and 'Nam' cannot subsist together. They are poles asunder. As vanity possessed Joga Singh's mind, he lost the inner contact with the Guru's Spirit and only superfluous thoughts occupied his mind.

At Hoshiarpur, he halted for the night. Late in the evening he went for a stroll in the bazaar and while passing through a street, he saw a beautiful and charming young prostitute seated in the balcony of her house. She was looking down on the passersby with her bewitching eyes. Joga Singh saw her. He stood entranced by her charm and continued gazing at her. He lost his head and fell a prey to her charms. His feet, almost unknowingly carried him towards the woman. At this juncture, something mysterious happened. A nebulous speck appeared and circled high above and in front of Joga Singh. Within that misty spot, he saw, as in a vision, a magnificent and splendid person, dignified but annoyed, frowning

upon him. He had a sword in his belt, and his angry looks seemed as though he shot arrows from his eyebrows. The impact of this splendid vision was more than what Joga Singh could stand. Joga Singh shook from head to foot. The sleeping Yogi was given a sudden jerk and was awakened from the slumber of 'Maya' into which he had fallen. He retraced his steps. He was overtaken by repentance. He realized that his faith was put to test and that he had failed—he was weighed and was found wanting.

'Oh! I was on the brink of disaster', he said to himself, "My mind is still impure. My real self has now been revealed to me which had so far remained concealed when I was basking in Guru's favour. Pride overcame me and I began to feel, who could be better celebrate than I, when I was willing to forgo my marriage at the call of the Guru, I thought I had conquered the mammon and subdued passions. But no, there was pride in me and lust still lurking within me. My self-conceit dulled my conscience and snapped my link with the Guru and I forgot God and His Name. "O my mind," he continued, "If thou were pure in thy ownself, where had thy purity gone? The purity which thou felt in thyself was due to Guru in thee. But when I-am-ness asserted itself, the Guru left thee because Egoism was both incompatible and disagreeable for him to be in thee. Thy self-conceit showed its colours and made thee sink into a deep mire. But thanks to the benign Guru who still redeemed thee from evil and saved thee from sin."

"Master," he said, "Thou art a wonderful Saviour. Thou helpest us in all our difficulties and makest us fearless. O how I wish I could ever remain attached to thy Lotus Feet." "O man is foolish when

he thinks himself great revels in pride. What are his resolves, his ideas and efforts, labour and pain? Are not his deeds as fate combined against him?

“O Lord! throw me not on myself;
 Of my will I can neither speak nor observe silence.
 Throw me not on my own strength;
 Of my will I can neither pray nor give myself to Thee.
 Nor can I follow life nor even death!
 Not be my own power can I a beggar be, or a king;
 Throw me not on myself;
 For by myself, I can neither gain my soul nor a knowledge of Thee.
 Throw me not on myself;
 For I am unable to cross the Sea of Change.
 I cannot O Lord!”

By thus praying, the mirror of his conscience became clearer and clearer and his first thought was with what face could he present himself to the Guru. O what a shame!

But at the second thought, he said to himself, “Oh ungrateful! Look thou, how the mother loves its child. The little child runs to catch the flame and the mother keeps him off. Similarly the Guru like the mother has saved thee from the fire of hell. It is no good to turn away from his Door of Mercy. Go and fall at his feet. Sin is bad but worse than sin is the faithlessness that keeps man away from the cool shade of the Divine Master.”

Bhai Joga Singh was passing through a spiritual stage which was almost like a steep cliff's edge, surmounting which, man enters the Infallible Region. If at this critical juncture, man faces a trial, momentary slipping might cause disaster but before such a peril happens, the Master extends his helping hand. The Master, as he loves his disciples, he helps them to overcome the difficulty and saves them from

falling into the sin. While climbing up a mountain we find many ups and downs—the path is not straight and easy—every down slope has to be followed by an uphill—an elevation—till we reach the peak of the hill. So in the Spiritual Path, there are ups and downs, and the difficult elevations one has to climb up till one reaches the Infallible stage, by the Grace of the Guru.

Bhai Joga Singh now continued his journey with his mind wholly intent upon the Guru with no other thought to distract him. When at last he reached Anandpur, he stood at the farthest end of the congregation and bowed from there to the Guru and dared not go near the Master. But the Guru called him and said, "Welcome, my good disciple! Thou hast well carried out my behest."

Bhai Joga Singh wept and cried like a child and fell at the feet of the Master and washed them with his tears, and said, "Master, I am a fallen man, unworthy to be called thy Sikh. I am a sinner, my Lord. I crave your forgiveness, though I do not merit to be condoned; yet I look up to thee, Lord! save me, not because I pray but because thou art merciful and great."

The Guru lifted him up and said, "My dear Joga Singh, the Guru was with you throughout, but you, in your self-conceit broke the link and forgot him. Egoism is the barrier that blinds the mind's eye. You went astray, slipped and suffered. The Guru had to suffer with you, he appeared to you in the vision to save you from the sin."

The Master through his grace further bestowed upon him the gift of fearlessness and continuity of 'Dhyanam' and thus brought him closer to himself in an Infallible and Inseparable divine union. Such are

the ways of the Lord that he does not forsake us, when once we give ourselves up to him.

(18) A Jain Monk embraces Sikhism: A Jain monk known as Hans came to the court of Guru Gobind Singh seeking the 'hidden Light' that illumines the mind. He was a great scholar, philosopher and artist. He took a very fine painting of sunrise as an offering to the Guru. But the orders were that he should not have an audience of the Master.

After a few days, the disciples that took interest in him displayed his painting in a prominent place so as to bring it to the notice of the Guru. The Master saw it and remarked: "The painting is full of light but the painter's heart is dark. He is merciless and cruel." Saying this he passed on further, indicating thereby to his disciples that he could not grant audience to Hans.

These remarks from the Master amazed the disciples who held Hans in esteem. One day, however, Senapat, one of the poets of the Guru's Darbar, summoned up courage and began to plead for him, but the Master interrupted him saying, "Senapat please, don't mention his name to me. The dry and barren deeds are not acceptable. Purification, contentment, austerities and other traits of discipline may all be good and commendable in themselves, but there is no room in God's Kingdom of Love for one, who is hard hearted and has little compassion for others."

When Hans heard about the Guru's comment he said to Senapat, "In my life, I have strictly followed the principles of 'Yama' consisting of abstinence (self-

restraint), integrity, honesty, self-denial, and non-acceptance of gifts and non-voilence (Ahinsa) to all living beings. This is my faith, and I would not hurt even a mosquito or a worm. I have been careful enough to watch out that while walking I do not even tread on an insect lest it be killed. How can I be cruel and merciless, I, who am an exponent of non-violence?" This outburst led to an exchange of views on certain philosophical points between the two:

SENAPAT: "It is very good that you have followed these high principles of morality. Of course, we should not inflict pain to any living creature, but you seem to have stretched 'Ahinsa' to an extent which is not quite practicable. For instance, if a cow, or one of our domestic animals, is injured, and the wound is infested with worms and if we do not destroy them the cow suffers, and may even die. And if the worms are destroyed, injury is done to them. So in either case, we cannot avoid doing injury."

HANS: "There is truth in what you say. Since I myself am not fully content, I feel sad and have, therefore, come here in search of truth. I would have left this place also because here I find some of the affairs are such as behoves kings. But by careful observation, I have discovered the following truths:

1. The followers of the Guru are honest.
2. As married men and heads of the households, they do not covet other women. All other women are considered as mothers, sisters and daughters.
3. They earn their living with the sweat of their brow and do not covet the wealth belonging to others.
4. In spite of a happy family life, they do not attach undue importance to earthly possessions.

5. Unlike the Jains and Buddhists, Ahinsa or non-voilence is not followed to the same extent by the Sikhs, but I have seen that genuine sympathy spontaneously overflows them for the suffering humanity and they lovingly serve all those in need and distress.
6. To save the people from the oppression of their present rulers, they do fight and violence is committed no doubt, but it is not for the personal glory or greed that the Sikhs fight.
7. The lofty ideals of the path of renunciation and self-denial called the 'Navirti Marg' and those of 'Association and Self-Assertion' called 'Parvirti Marg' work hand in hand in Sikh-life. Both are well balanced and equitable—such a marvellous achievement is unique."

SENAPAT: "The five 'Yamas' of Ashtang Yoga which you referred, may well come under the codes of morality. They are conducive to a good social life and are valuable assets. But goodness or morality is not the end or the objective. It is the life of the spirit and realization of God that is the goal."

HANS: "What do you mean by the life of the spirit? When one gives up evil and upholds good, he attains purification. There is no more sin. The human soul that had become rusty with evil deeds, shines once again, man realizes his true self and it is perfect self-realization. What more is needed?"

SENAPAT: "Something more, something higher is needed."

HANS: "What is that? Is it 'Gyan' (Knowledge of the Real) or 'Yoga' (unruffled state of mind)?"

SENAPAT: "Patanjali in his system of 'Ashtang Yoga' prescribes a graded course of morality and mental concentration. When the mind becomes perfectly tranquil and is self-centred, they say, 'Kewal' has been attained. This "Kewal' is a kind of liberation from the state of mind involved in deeds

that cause pain or pleasure. They say when the rust and dirt of our deeds has been removed from the mind, the self stands revealed in its glory, apart from 'prakriti' or matter and there is liberation of the soul from the bondages of 'Maya'.

Kapal, the author of the Sankhya school of philosophy maintains that liberation from three kinds of pains is 'Kewal' and the means to it is the sense of discrimination between good and evil which enables the man to distinguish the self or soul from prakirti—matter.

The essence of Jainism is that when partnership between 'Atman'—the soul and 'Pudgal'—the cosmic energy is dissolved the soul acquires 'self-realization' and attains 'Kewal', it is liberated from the bondages.

According to Buddhism, desire is the cause of suffering. When 'Atman'—soul—become desireless, it attains 'Nirvan' and is liberated from the bondages of matter and it is not affected by the cycle of birth and death.

Now, according to all these schools of philosophy salvation means the liberation of the soul from the bondages of 'Maya'; and this may be by means of either 'Smadhi' (Concentration of mind) or by 'Vivek' (Sense of discrimination) or by 'Gyan' (knowledge) or by 'Sanjam' (austerities or moral discipline).

Obviously, the soul that has been in bondage and is liberated now, must have been free, sometime before it became enmeshed in the snares of 'Maya', and after release, it again comes to its primal state.

Now what brought the soul into bondage? It could not be the result of any of its deeds; for the deeds could not be possible without body. If ignorance was the cause of bringing it into captivity, cannot the same

cause be responsible for a second spell of captivity.”

HANS: “Yes, it is quite possible. The cycle of bondages and liberation has no beginning and no end. It is eternal.”

SENAPAT: “If this cycle is to continue, we shall be forced to go through it sometimes in a state of liberation and sometime in bondages. This will be an endless affair. Its other words, there would be no salvation perpetually and no peace everlasting.”

HANS: “No, I am sorry. I was wrong. When ‘Kewal’ is attained man does not return to the state of bondage, but he achieves liberation for ever.”

SENAPAT: “If it is so, the inference is that the soul is not pure and self-conscious in its innate state and is wanting in knowledge. How could it attain this state permanently by mere loosening of the bondages and removal of the superficialities? The moon is luminous. An eclipse or a cloud darkens it. But when clouds disappear or when the eclipse is over, the moon is as bright as before. If the moon did not possess luminosity, it could not keep shining, even after the disappearance of cloud. The clouds neither bind nor liberate it, yet when they appear they darken it momentarily. When the clouds clear off the moon, how can we be sure that they would not appear again?”

HANS: “But the doctrine of Advaitism popularised by Shri Shankaracharya, postulates that the Jiva (soul) is never an individual being, but in its primal state it is All-Pervading Conscious-Self. It is Maya (Illusion) and Avidya (Ignorance) that isolated it in individualistic. And if Jiva were to acquire ‘Gyan’ (Knowledge of the Real) and suppressed the impressions of desires (Vasna) by giving up all worldly activity, then it would cease to be individual soul or

Jiva, but an Atman or All-Pervading Conscious-Self.”

SENAPAT: “It comes to the same thing whether the cause of soul’s bondages was Maya (Illusion) or Avidya (Ignorance) or Prakirti (primal matter) or Pudgal (Cosmic Energy), call it what you will. It is assumed that at one time there was no illusion or ignorance in the conscious-self. But it did fall prey to illusion, and got into snares and then somehow it became liberated. The inference is that there is always a possibility of its again falling to illusion and being entrapped.”

HANS: “Once bitten twice shy.”

SENAPAT: “You mean to say that the soul will be wiser by experience. If once liberated, it will be wise enough not to fall into a trap again. It means the soul was ignorant in its primal state when it fell into bondage. Therefore, the doctrine that the soul was self-conscious and pure and wise in the primal state does not hold good.

And, furthermore if this cycle of liberation and bondage has no beginning, as you say, it has no end either. Therefore, it is obvious that ‘Kewal’ is not perpetual salvation but only a stage in the cycle.

Now when we say that after liberation, the soul will be wiser by experience and will not fall into a trap again, the inference is that the soul was wanting in knowledge in its primal state and therefore could not be All-Pervading Conscious-Self.

These are the obvious deductions from the principles and postulates established by all the six schools of Hindu philosophy. The proponents are great scholars no doubt, and each one of them offers some solution from his own point of view, and we appreciate all of them, but what is desired is perpetual salvation

from where there can be no fall, no coming back and no more bondages.

But the 'Kewal', which we have discussed so far offers only temporary liberation from the snares of 'Karma' that is to say, consequences of our deeds in the shape of pain and pleasure."

HANS: "And what more do we want?"

SENAPAT: "There is something lacking in us all—we feel the void, the emptiness of our soul. I was wandering from place to place in search of this truth for a long time before I discerned it. I think, it is the pursuit of the same thing that makes you wander. This emptiness of our soul—the spiritual hunger, unless satisfied, will never bring us happiness and peace. Intensive learning and rigid moral discipline are not competent to bring peace to the soul—because despite them the emptiness persists, the hunger is not appeased. There is an eternal yearning of the soul to find itself and merge in the Cosmic Soul, but in the average man, this yearning is suppressed by man's egoistic activities."

HANS: "You have used wise words. I do really feel this void. I perceive some thing is lacking in me and for this very reason, I have been wandering from place to place.

As long as Pride and Vanity dominated my life—the pride arising out of my own learning and attainments, the conceit derived out of the praise and admiration from others—I was smug and satisfied. I did not feel the spiritual hunger. Lately, ever since sobriety dominates my life and action, I have been restless and fervently in need of the something for the lack of which my life has

a void. Unless and until I seek it and find it, there can be no peace of mind.”

SENAPAT: “Blessed are those who are athirst for Him. And most blessed are those who enter into the holy association of the True Guru, who bestows the Light of Nam. With the gift of His Name, this thirst is satiated. Neither Yoga, nor philosophy can give eyes to the blind or appease the hunger of the soul. The monastic tendency of Hindu philosophy has well-nigh killed the spirit of true religion. We have to attain that unflickering Flame of Life, unruffled and supremely felicitous. The Guru-God is the way and no other way. Guru Nanak says:-

“Six are the systems (schools of Hindu thought)
Six their teachers,
And six kinds of different ways they teach,
But the Teacher of the teachers is He, the One Lord alone,
Though various His aspects are;
Yea, in whichever way are His praises sung,
O brother, that way alone is worthy of the praise,
There thy true glory lies.

Seconds, minutes, hours, quarters of a day,
Lunar and solar days make up a month,
And there are many times and many seasons;
But all are due to the same single sun,
Nanak, the Lord is likewise One
However various His aspects are.”

(Guru Nanak: Sohila)

The fine and subtle thoughts of the ‘Shastras’ (the various schools of philosophy) are likened to the seasons, months, days and hours. By acquiring knowledge of the seasons and calculating days and years, we make out the time and period in which the various events of the world took place, but by mere counting of the time, we do not come into

direct contact with sun, which is the cause of all these different aspects of the time. If we have to enjoy the warmth, the light and energy, we ought to be directly in the sunshine. Just as through sunshine we come into contact with the benign sun, so we come into contact with the Infinite through His Love. Let us, therefore, come to the Teacher of all teachers, God, the one Supreme Lord.

Guru Arjan, our Fifth Master, in the 3rd Shloka of Sukhmani says:-

“Many Shastras and Simrities
 Have I searched through
 Yea, none dost come near the Divine Nam,
 Priceless, O Nanak is the NAM, I exclaim.
Ashatpadi:—
 “Mechanical muttering, penances, and all learnings and fixing of mind
 on any object,
 The discourses on the Six Shastras and the Simrities
 The practice of Yoga, the religious rites and rituals,
 Renunciation of the world and wandering about in the woods as an
 ascetic
 And all kinds of efforts made,
 Giving jewels in charity and oblations to the sacred fires
 And mutilation of the body into shreds and offering each bit as a sacri-
 fice to the deities
 And observation of fasts and vows and other deeds of merit
 Yet these, O all these, equal not Divine Nam and its contemplation
 O Nanak, through the Guru dwell thou then on Nam, if but once, this
 wonderful revelation.”

HANS: “What are you aiming at?”

SENAPAT: “I am trying to bring you to that state of mind in which men sing the glory of the Lord and meditate upon Him, the One Supreme Being, the Creator of the world. It is only through realizing His presence and taking refuge in Him, that we earn perpetual liberation from the bondages of ‘Maya.’”

HANS: “I do not believe in One and only Creator the Supreme-Being. My faith is that souls

(beings) when they are purified from the impurities of superficialities are then liberated from the bondages of 'pudgal' (the primal matter). It is then that they attain self-consciousness and possess infinite knowledge, infinite peace and power. It is then that they are free of desire and care. Kapil, the compiler of the Sankhya school of thought also proves the existence of such souls or gods. He dispenses with the necessity of God, because the existence of the universe can be explained without God."

SENAPAT: "The Prakirti or Pudgal (the primal matter) is blind and consciousnessless and is subject to the three 'Gunas'—(three dynamic modes). Every soul, according to Sankhya philosophy is believed to be conscious or is a living being, absolute and eternal. It goes to say that all beings are equal with one another or identical in their primal state or in the ultimate liberated state. When there is absolutely no difference between them, there is no need to presume so many of them instead of one. For, it is only the difference, if there be any between them, that gives the sense of many, and without this difference, they will make one single unit.

Matter is consciousnessless or lifeless and the soul is said to have independent existence and is self-conscious. Now, who conceived the idea that matter and soul by uniting together will form a wonderful world? For instance, if there is a man strong but blind, and another lame but gifted with eyes, they could both work together for a common purpose. The strong man, though deprived of vision, could lift the lame whose vision could help him pluck fruits of a tree. The fruits of their united labour could be shared by both of them. But how could this

happen in the case of soul and matter? Soul being independent and disinterested, and matter, being blind and lifeless, could equally be disinterested.

Obviously there is a design and a plan in the making of the universe and wisdom is manifested in all nature. So there must be a designer behind, who must be omnipotent and omniscient. It is inconceivable, that blind matter of its own accord or with union of individual souls could have set itself to form all this wonderful fauna and flora that we see in this world. All this orderly harmony in the universe would be impossible without a co-ordinating power behind to give impetus to this extraordinary development and direct its course to the common end and purpose.

But it is not by reason alone that we know and believe that there is but one God—the supreme Being who is the creator of the universe, but it is based on personal experience. With the philosopher, God may be an idea, a notion but with saints mystics it is a fact, a reality. The Master-Spirits see this Reality and make other feel and realize His presence.

It may be remembered that according to Sankhya, matter is not mere illusion, but it has a real existence and the soul is also real and the union of both is also real and genuine. The pain and suffering in the world are also real and genuine, and it is because of the union of soul with matter.

The remedy suggested is Gyan (knowledge) of the fact that the soul is independent and conscious whereas matter is unconscious and blind. But if matter is not a mere illusion but genuine and real, how can the bondage be loosened by mere knowledge of this fact. Knowledge (Gyan) can remove deception

or illusion; it can remove ignorance and misunderstanding, but not the bondage. If there is no genuine union, then prakirti (matter) is not matter but (maya) illusion. But the Sankhya school of thought does not hold it as such.

When we consider the School of Yoga, Patanjali, the compiler of this philosophy, had gone a step further than Kapil, the atheist. He says that there is also a Supreme Being, who is the Lord and the Maker of Universe. But this God of Patanjali remains aside throughout his system. After passing through the eight successive courses of moral discipline and rigours of mental concentration, it brings man to the same state. The first five steps are only preparation for mental concentration and the last three, namely 'Dharna' 'Dhyan' and 'Samadhi' constitute the courses of concentration proper. In the final stage, the mind itself is the object of concentration and when it is said to become perfectly still, the self is said to be realized, and the goal is alleged to be reached. Yoga literally means union, the union of being with the Supreme Being. But Yoga of Patanjali ends with concentration and unruffled state of mind. God is no where reached or realized."

HANS: "If there is but One God who creates the world, as you say, then God has a desire to create. One who has a desire, cannot be perfect and free of evil."

SENAPAT: "When you impute desire to the Supreme Being, you credit him with characteristics of a normal human being. You are measuring the Infinite, Unlimited and Measureless with your own yard-stick. One who is above time and space, cannot be compared or appraised as other things

of the world that are the objects of our senses. As He Himself is endless and unfathomable, so is His Will or Cosmic Order:—

“Through His Will, He creates all the forms of things,
Through His Will, the stream of life doth flow,
But what His Will is, who can express or know.”

No limits can be imposed on Him, who is boundless and Infinite. You cannot lay the limits of Time and Space upon Him, or His Will. For, all human thoughts and actions are conditioned under the three Gunas or psychic modes, while He is transcendent beyond and above human mind, and nature also. As all rivers must flow down to sea, so all spirits must go in the Universal Spirit, the self in Cosmic Self, the beings in Supreme Being. If we really wish for salvation, we ought to take refuge in the Lord of the creation. It is only there that Prakirti or Pudgal or Maya or by whatever name you call it, is powerless and inaccessible.”

HANS: “So far we have been discussing the Shastras (the different schools of Hindu philosophy). But please let me know the Sikh Thought. How can the mind be purified and how can we get the knowledge of the Transcendent of which you speak.”

SENAPAT: “The Guru, unlike the Hindus of mediaeval ages, does not lay much stress on the metaphysical philosophy of life, which could be only intellectually grasped and comprehended. Instead, he emphasizes the practical way of life which must be lived and experienced. It is true, there can be no practice without the doctrine. Sikhism, therefore, has for its doctrine, its view of Reality, its view of nature, of man and his behaviour and his inter-relation-

ship. But it lays primary stress on the practice, the discipline and the way of life which is based not upon rules and laws but on self-surrender to the Guru who moulds and shapes his life to the divine ends. This life of the spirit is the gift of the Master. Thus speaks Guru Amar Das, the Third Nanak:—

1. "Knowledge of the Transcendent is not obtained,
Through outward religious observances,
Without true Divine Knowledge
Doubt and delusion will not depart,
No amount of outward observances
Will remove doubt and delusion.
When the mind is filthy with ignorance
How can it be made clean?
Wash thy mind, O man, in the Light of the Word,
And fix thy heart and thy soul upon the Lord.
Saith Nanak: It is by the Grace of the Guru,
That knowledge of the Transcendent is obtained.
It is the only way for doubt and delusion to depart."

(Guru Amar Das: Anand Sahib)
Translated

2. "The world is smeared with the dirt of ego and duality
If one tries to cleanse it off at the holy places, the impurity goes not.
If thou practisest the Way of Action (Karam Marg),
Thy impurity sticks to thee even more,
By learning, these impurities leave thee not,
Ask yea thou, any man of letters.
O my mind seek Refuge in the Guru that thou becomest pure.
The egoists even though they repeat the Name of the Lord **endlessly**,
But their dirt sticks to them,—(1-Pause)
The impure minds devote not to the Word and receive not the **Nam**,
Impure they live, impure they die and lose honour as they depart.
If, through the Guru's Grace, the Lord cometh into us
Our vanity leaves us off.
As the light dispels darkness, so does the Divine knowledge
dispel ignorance.
"I did it, I'll do it" saith the uncouth fool,
But he forgetteth the (real) Doer; for he is in duality.
Wander thou mayest the whole world through;
Thou findest no pain greater than that of Maya;
Yea, thou findest Peace only in the Divine Word;
Take then the Name of the Lord in thy heart.

I am a sacrifice to them whom the Lord unites with Himself
 When the mind is imbued with devotion,
 Through the True Word it findeth itself.
 In thy mind then is the Lord, on thy tongue is the Lord
 And thou singest the praises of the Lord, the God,
 Saith Nanak, "Forget not the Nam, and merge thyself in Him."

(Guru Amar Das: Sri Rag)

Thus the way to perpetual salvation and Eternal Bliss lies in abiding in the Lord.

HANS: "Please tell me some fundamental practical steps for spiritual practice."

SENAPAT: "Enlightened by God, the Guru has unravelled one mystery:—

There is but One Benefactor of all beings; may I never forget Him."

(Guru Nanak: Japji)

The Sikh religion draws the seeker of Truth to the Feet of God, without weaving a cob-web of intricate philosophical thought. A single saying of the Guru shows the path of salvation. We have only to surrender ourselves wholly to the Guru—The Master Spirit, and he makes us holy.

No spiritual regeneration is possible unless the Guru Sun rises in the firmament of our soul. Without him only darkness reigns in our mind. With all our sins and misdeeds, our shortcomings and failures, we cannot unaided reach the Transcendent and Formless, God Absolute. We cannot go through the difficulties and trials of life without a Helper, a Comforter, a Strengthened, who will abide with us in all our daily temptations and help us each day to purify our hearts and rent the veil of our egoism that we may truly see God face to face.

The Guru is the perfect embodiment of the Lord's Love to sinful men. He also gives back man's love to God, as he brings us to the Father's Arms after cleansing our mud-smear'd hands and washing our face darkened with sin. Thus he completes the way, backward and forward, which leads to God. Guru is a Cosmic Personality, Impersonal-Person who being atone with God is above Time and Space. All power is given unto him.

“Worship thou the Guru, thy personal God, with all thy mind;
The True Guru is the bestower of bliss; He is the mainstay of all.
Practice thou the Word of the True Guru—this indeed is the true
philosophy.

Without His holy association, all this attachment to worldly possessions
is as dust.

O my friend, gather-in the Nam of the Lord.
Thy mind will rest in peace in the Assembly of the Holy,
And all thy desires shall be fulfilled.
All-Powerful and Infinite is the Guru;
Fortunate is the one who seeketh His holy Sight;
Incomprehensible, Immaculate & Pure is He;
O, no one can equal the Guru.

Yea, He is the Creator and the Cause; through Him is all glory.
Without the Guru, there is no one; and all that happens is in His Will
The Guru is the Place of Pilgrimage; the Guru the Kalpā-tree
The Guru is the fulfiller of our minds' desires.
The Guru is the Giver of Nam wherewith the whole world is saved.
Yea, He is All-Powerful, the Formless, the High, Unknowable and vast;
Ineffable is His praise; what can a sayer say?
All the rewards our mind seeks are in the Guru's Hands;
If it were so writ in thy eternal Destiny, He blesseth thee with the
Treasure of True Nam

If thou seekest the Refuge of the True Guru, thou shalt not die again.
Nanak forgets not the Lord, who hath blest him with a soul and life, yea.

(Guru Arjan: Sri-Rag 4-29-99)

HANS: “Yea! I see this life of inspiration is the Guru's gift. Senapat please, I pray, beseach the Mercy of the Master on me that I may also

experience this inner life of the spirit, and earn peace that you seem to enjoy.”

Next day, Senapat, as usual, went to the Guru's Darbar. He wanted to say something, but the Master stopped him and said, “Well, good poet! your friend is stone-hearted and has no compassion.”

SENAPAT: “Lord what you say must be right, but.”

GURU SAHIB: “Please wait for a day and you will see for yourself!” With these words, the Guru beckoned to Bhai Daya Singh, and asked him to go to a certain place at a little distance. Daya Singh would find a hill there on the right of which was a cave. Within this cave would be an ascetic whose weak and feeble condition required compassion. He would be borne lightly in a palanquin by Daya Singh and brought before the Guru.

Before Daya Singh arrived with the ascetic in the palanquin, the Guru asked Senapat to go and bring his friend Hans, to the Darbar. Hans arrived and bowing reverently to the Guru, seated himself. Meanwhile, the weak and famished looking ascetic with sunken eyes and cheeks, was brought by Daya Singh. The Master descending from his throne and lifting the ascetic up in his embrace seated him by the side of his throne.

Tears welled up in the Master's eyes and with maternal love and affection he caressed the man whose frame had no flesh but bones.

“Lord touch me not, throw me down, I am a sinner,” quivered his famished lips.

“No my son, thou art not a sinner. Thou art innocent,” said the Guru. The Guru then offered him hot milk to refresh him and cheered him up.

With the affectionate care and nursing, he was gradually restored and regaining strength, he rose and humbly bowed to the Master and sat down. He thus related his story in a weak and feeble voice:—

“I hail from Surat. When I was a lad of barely twelve, a group of Jain Sadhus and nuns visited our city. They tried to impart their faith to us and arranged to preach a sermon. The nuns preached to the women and the Sadhus to the men. Under the influence of their preaching, I took a vow and offered myself to be converted as a Jain Sadhu. About the time of my conversion, a little girl who was my childhood playmate and who belonged to my home-town was also presented to the nuns by her parents. We were taken together to a hilly tract in northern India, where we parted, she to the convent of nuns, and I to the monastery. My life at the temple under Hans was totally different. I entered the rigid life of a Jain sadhu observing the various fasts for self-purification. Long afterwards, one such day, while I had gone to fetch flowers for Puja (worship) of deity in the wild forest nearby, I met the girl who was my playmate in the childhood and had joined the nunnery. Old memories brought tears to our eyes and we sat together conversing for a short while. We were not aware that we were being watched by the matron, the head of the nunnery, nor did we realize that what we did was objectionable. Despite our plea of innocence, both of us were accused of an unpardonable crime. Punishment was meted out. The girl was punished according to the rules of the convent;—she was deprived of both of her eyes; I was put to a number of hard and prolonged penances. I was being ridiculed by the others and proclaimed a

sinner; for I had violated the rule in talking to a girl. In despair, I asked Hans ji if I could do something to atone for my sin. He replied that the most appropriate punishment would be for me either to be deprived of my eyes or to enter into continuous penances for a further period of twelve years. Here, I stand before you a bare skeleton after being subjugated to untold suffering for the crime I committed.”

THE GURU: “Senapat, this is the living picture of your friend Hans ji. He was responsible for all this. Now you can see for yourself.”

At this Hans rose, and trembling, fell at the feet of the Guru and said, “It is true Lord, I am stonehearted and merciless.” Hans then turned to the young ascetic and said, “You are not a sinner, I alone am the sinner. I beseech your pardon and crave that I should be forgiven”.

The Guru made over the youngman to two Sikhs bidding them to carefully nurse and look after him. To Hans he said,

“Hear thou, the instructions of the perfect Guru,
And see thou, near thee, thy transcendent Lord,
And with every breath, utter thou, the Name of God
Thus the affliction of thy mind will depart.”

(Translated)

The Master further asked him to search for the girl and to bring her to Anandpur.

After a long search, Hans found the blind girl and took her to the Guru’s Darbar. Meanwhile, the young man, enjoying the warmth of Guru’s great love, and care of his disciples, was restored to complete health. He was initiated into the Raj-Yog of Nam. While he was seated in the holy congregation

and Hari-Kirtan (singing of hymns in praise of the Lord) was in full swing, the blind girl entered. As the Master looked at her and blessed her, she regained her eyesight and her face shone with celestial bliss. The Master's joy was great, and he ordered that the nuptial of the young man and the girl should be celebrated instantly. Great was the rejoicing of the disciples. Hans was also taken the same day into the fold of discipleship.

(19) The Guru's Gift: Devotees from far and near, with a varied outlook came seeking the Guru. The hearts of some of them blossomed at the very sight of the Master, just as the lotus blossoms at the sunrise. There were others whose doubts and delusions vanished the moment they saw and heard the Guru's Words. Instantaneously, they sought the Ocean of Light. There was yet another class who came to the Guru, searched him with questions, went into contemplation, and thereafter pinned their faith on Nam and were transformed. A fourth class of people remained floating in illusion for some time. Having experienced the turns of fortune and the bitterness that life had in store for them, they fell back on the Master for peace and solace of mind. Their sleeping minds awoke to the consciousness of Reality after having undergone bitter experiences. These variations in the transformation of people, who flocked to the Guru, were due to the variations in their inner state of mind, as also to their degree of intellect. Their education, environment and associations had their impact on their regeneration. Much depends on our powers of thinking, reasoning and actions, past and present.

A man, named Har Gopal, came from Ujjain, to see the Guru. But he was of wavering mind and uncertain in belief. Although a worldly wise man, he lacked in faith.

Har Gopal's father, Bishamber Das, was a disciple of the Guru. Bishamber Das wished that his son should also enter the path of discipleship, become cultured, and lead a godly life, but Har Gopal's mind moved in different channels. His father, however, insisted that he should visit the Guru at Anandpur in order that he might receive the Glow of life from him.

Har Gopal Disillusioned: After considerable hesitation, Har Gopal came to Anandpur. He was astonished to see the Guru living like a king. He had formed a different picture of the Guru in his mind. He thought that the Guru, would be an ascetic sitting in a cave in meditation, his body a mere skeleton, worn away by austerities.

When Har Gopal encountered a stately man, with all the magnificence and splendour of Royalty, doubts arose in his mind as to the spirituality of the Guru. His faith was shaken and he was disappointed. He regretted his mistake in undertaking such a long journey, especially because of the expenditure involved. In vain, he thought, he came seeking this man, the Guru. But he decided to spend a few days at Anandpur now that he had taken the trouble of coming over there.

The people of Anandpur were in the habit of rising early before dawn and beginning the day with prayer's and meditation. Har Gopal too had to rise early and join the Guru's congregations. The singing of the Asa-di-Var by the Guru's musicians was

melodious and sweet. One such morning, as Har Gopal, listened to the singing of the sacred lyric, the music moved him to ecstasy. He was thrilled and was absorbed in the sacred song—his mind was in a state of oblivion and on recovering from it he felt comforted. He realized that he had never felt the peace and tranquility such as he now experienced, although his ears and eyes had feasted on lavish music and dancing many a time before. Such a joyous peace his mind had never known. The innermost recesses of his heart were touched and his mind was now calm, quiet and still. It was perhaps the joy of the mind being self-centred.

After congregation, he went up to the Guru and fell at his feet and in a low voice apologized, saying, "True King! Save me, I am a sinner. Until yesterday I had not realized your greatness and your glory. I was awfully mistaken and my mind was clouded with a wrong conception of thee, my Lord. Master! have compassion on me."

The Guru lifting him up said, "Har Gopal, you have my forgiveness even without asking for it."

Har Gopal was delighted. He decided to spend another month at Anandpur. Everyday he listened to the divine music, met many Sikhs, discussed many religious problems, and cleared the doubts that clouded his mind. But his love of riches, his engrossment in temporal pursuits and superficiality of his mind would repeatedly swing him back to the same whirlpool of thought. At last, he decided to return home.

Offering for the Guru: He went to the Guru to bid him farewell. The Guru sat at the bank of the river for his evening prayer. Har Gopal, always proud of his

wealth, came and bowed before the Guru, "Sire, I have brought a trifling present in token of my love. May be, it is unworthy of your acceptance, yet here it is. Since I am leaving tomorrow morning, let me offer it to you." So saying, he laid the two gold bracelets studded with precious stones at the feet of the great Master.

The Guru accepted the offering and as though to display his pleasure, began playing with one of the bracelets, tossing it up in the air and then catching it up in his palm, while talking to Har Gopal. Suddenly, the bracelet slipped and rolled into the river.

Har Gopal, who had been watching the Guru intently, immediately jumped into the river in order to find the jewel. The Master smiled, but remained silent.

After a long search, Har Gopal came out of the river, his eyes down-cast and his clothes drenched. "Master, I have hopes of recovering the bracelet if you could only point out the exact place where it fell. Inadvertantly I have lost my bearings and cannot recollect the place where it fell." So panted, Har Gopal had his eyes turned more to the river than to the Master.

Bracelets Discarded: The Guru, who knew and understood all the feelings that arose in Har Gopal's mind, threw the other bracelet into the river and said, "Lo, Har Gopal, it is there."

Har Gopal stood aghast, and could not believe his eyes. He was still more shocked and bewildered. Thereupon, the Master walked towards him, took him in his arms, flooded him with kisses and said, "Har Gopal, I got rid of the bracelets on purpose,

as I felt they were a barrier between you and me.” At this Har Gopal fell at the Master’s feet and during those brief moments, felt as though he had been lifted to celestial heights.

The Guru’s Gift: The Guru then sent for some “PERSAD” which he gave to Har Gopal. The Master also gave him an iron ring as a parting gift and said, “This I give you as a souvenir. Please keep it with regard and with it, I give you my blessings. Please convey these words to your father and my good wishes to him.”

Har Gopal reverently bowed with all the faith of a devoted disciple and departed. But as Har Gopal went farther and farther from Anandpur, his faith began to waver and weaken. He began to doubt and ponder and said to himself, “Ah ! What have I done? I made an offering, nay gave away valuable bracelet of gold studded with jewels, but what did I get in return. This ring of iron!” The Guru said, “With it I give my blessings!” “What blessings can this piece of iron bring? Of what use can this ring be to me?”

Conflicting Thoughts : And yet the next moment, he would say to himself, “No. I should not let my mind think like that. The Guru is the Guru of my father. O, what glory there was on his face. I saw it with my own eyes. The Guru also knew and understood my innermost thoughts. I had evidence of it on many occasions. Nearness to him brought peace and joy to my mind, and there was no room for doubts and misgivings. I experienced it myself. Saints, yogis and

devotees of many faiths day and night come and pay their homage to him. My own father is his devoted disciple and he did not send me to him for nothing. The Guru must be divine. It might be true, but of what worth is this iron ring! Good wishes yield no reward. My doubts and delusions still haunt me. I have not seen any Light. Nor have I seen any vision. Above all, I have not seen any miracle performed by the Guru.”

With thoughts such as these in his mind, he continued his journey. By evening, he reached Chamkaur.

At Chamkaur, there lived a Sikh, Bhai Dhyan Singh. He saw Har Gopal, a stranger passing that way in sad and pensive mood. He met him, and affectionately invited him to spend the night at his house. It was rather late in the evening and a stranger needed shelter, and it was customary for Dhyan Singh to show hospitality to strangers. At Dhyan Singh's house, his wife received Har Gopal with affection and smile. They made him comfortable and feel at home.

Loss worries Har Gopal: At night, as they conversed, Har Gopal spoke to his host of the doubts in his mind. Dhyan Singh was perturbed and sad to know that the young man's faith was shaken. He explained to him the worth of the iron-ring—“It was a gift from the Guru, it was the symbol of Divine Love and spiritual well being. When the Master gave his blessings his words were pregnant with Love and Grace. Pricelessly precious were the Master's gifts and invaluable his Words. The keeping of the sacred ring and the Master's counsel would lead you into

the realms of Divine Wisdom and self-realization. He advised Har Gopal not to falter or waver in his faith. Despite such wise counsel from Bhai Dhyan Singh, Har Gopal, the calculating type of man that he was, measured the worth of Guru's gift in terms of Rupees. The monetary worth of Rs. 500 seemed to be of considerable importance to him and so he felt the loss of his gold bracelets more than ever.

Thereupon, Dhyan Singh conferred with his wife, who was a devotee of the Great Guru. She learnt with sorrow, the misgivings and lack of faith in Har Gopal. The fact that the young man held his gold jewels more precious than the priceless gift of the iron ring from the Guru, made her shed tears. She urged her husband to dispose of some of her valuable ornaments or arrange to mortgage the property to raise the sum of Rs. 500. This amount, she insisted, should be paid to Har Gopal and in return the Guru's iron ring recovered; for she argued, that the priceless gift of the Great Master should not remain with a man who had no faith or regard for the Guru's Words.

Har Gopal sells Guru's Ring: Bhai Dhyan Singh, a poor farmer as he was, raised Rs. 600 instead of the Rs. 500. He told Har Gopal next morning, "If you have faith in Guru's word and his souvenir which is priceless beyond word and thought, do keep it with you with all the love and reverence it deserves. But if you have no faith and value money more than the Divine Word, do let us have the honour of keeping the iron ring with us, while you can have Rs. 600 from us, instead of

Rs. 500. But be assured that I do not wish to deceive you by depriving you of the priceless gift of the Guru. I implore you still, to realize that pricelessly precious [is the Guru's gift and invaluable his command.]”

Har Gopal's face began to glow with joy as he pocketed the money. Bhai Dhyan Singh and his wife stood before him reverently and with great humility to receive the invaluable gift.

Har Gopal thought Dhyan Singh was a fool, for paying Rs. 600 for an iron ring which was of no intrinsic value. So he gave them the ring without any hesitation and with it the Guru's Word.

Dhyan Singh's Insight: Very few among men, are gifted like Bhai Dhyan Singh—few, indeed, who have the insight to see and value the priceless gifts of the Guru. Bhai Dhyan Singh could realize that the Word of the Guru was more valuable than gems, jewels and rubies.

When, at last, Har Gopal reached home, he related the entire episode to his father. He described at length, how he had felt close to the Guru and divinity for a short while during his stay at Anandpur and how the spell had been unable to withstand his own misbeliefs and faithlessness. He justified his action in parting with the Guru's gift of the iron ring saying that it was but a worthless piece of iron as compared to the precious gold bracelets which he had presented to the Guru. He was proud of his timely wisdom, and told his father as to how he had recovered the lost fortune, taking advantage of the ignorance of the foolish farmer. His father heard the story and was full of grief at what his son

had done. He rebuked him but could not reconcile himself to the tragedy of the situation. He moaned, "Son, I sent you to trade in Truth; but you have traded in falsehood."

"Kabir saith what can the True Guru do
If the disciples are wanting in themselves,
The blind can see not the light
The bamboo hollow within can retain nothing,
However hard one may blow in it."

(Translated.)

Fortune's ebb & flow: The avaricious and self-willed Har Gopal would not heed his father's wise counsel. It was time when fortune favoured him. His business prospered and his wealth increased day by day. Money and material turned his head. His pride and arrogance increased. He was full of conceit and gloated over his intelligence that brought him prosperity.

After some time, however, his luck deserted him. His business began to dwindle. He lost all the wealth that he had accumulated. All that he undertook by way of improving and prospering his business brought him further loss and resulted into failure. He wondered at his own skill and intelligence which now failed to bring him the success he had hitherto enjoyed. He was reduced to extreme poverty. In adversity, he turned to his father and sought his advice.

Father's Counsel: His father enlightened him with truth saying: "My son, if man's intelligence were perfection in itself, man would be all-knowing—there would be no higher realms of knowledge and creation beyond his perception, and all the intelligent persons would have been always successful. But there is a background of the

nature which is beyond the grasp of intellect. So there remains the fact, that man's actions—however intelligent and skilled, are always governed by God's Will. Even our intellect is a gift of God. We can see because of His having given us the eyes. We can work because of His having given us the hands and feet. Our bodies and all that we have are given by Him when He is the ultimate source of all power and energy in us, there can be nothing that we can boast of. No doubt, He has given free will to the man and man thinks, reasons, labours and makes ceaseless efforts to achieve his end, but there is a Divine Factor also that counts. If it is favourable, man's efforts are crowned with success but if it is unfavourable, there is failure. Man must work consistently and diligently and use all his faculties to achieve his objective, but the ultimate result is in the hands of God. Every thing is under His Command, and His Command is based on our deeds, present and past. He meets out justice and rewards for all our actions, past and present.

When in comfort, we forget God, but when in distress we seek Him. Therefore, God in His mercy administers the medicine of adversity to those ailing in the comfort of prosperity. The misery that has befallen you, my son, is therefore a blessing in disguise. I thank the Guru for sending you a timely awakening that you may begin to seek God."

HAR GOPAL: "Kindly tell me how I may be rid of poverty and affliction so that I may make a living again."

FATHER. Our fifth Guru Arjan says:

" . If one is weak and is afflicted by hunger and nudity
And hath no money on him and none is there to give him comfort

No desire of his is fulfilled; no work of his accomplished
 If he, even he, in his heart, bethinketh the Lord, he rolleth in abundance
 for ever."

(Guru Arjan: Sri Rag)

Translated

Further, in another hymn he says:

"Dwell on Him alone, O mind, who is the King of kings,
 Rest thy hope on Him alone, who is the hope of all.
 Shed all thy cleverness, and take to the Feet of the Guru.
 Meditate O my mind, On the Divine Name, in peace and joy.
 Day and night call thou on thy God and utter his praises for ever.
 Seek His refuge, O my mind, whom no one equals;
 Meditating on whom thou gatherest peace, and pain and woe touch
 thee not;
 Yea, serve thou thy Lord, thy True Master, ever and for ever more,
 If we join the society of the holy, we become pure and the Noose of the
 Yama is loosed

Pray thou to the Lord, the Giver of Joy, the Destroyer of fear.
 On whomsoever God looketh with Mercy, all his deeds come right
 For, He is the Greatest of the great, His place is the Highest of high,
 He is beyond colour, beyond sign, beyond value.
 Have Mercy on Nanak, O Lord, bless him with Thy True Name."

(Guru Arjan: Sri Rag)

Translated

Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Har Gopal begged his father to take him to the Guru and obtain forgiveness for his sins. Atlast, Bishamber Dass set forth with his family for Anandpur—they stopped at Chamkaur in order to meet Bhai Dhyhan Singh. Har Gopal's father entreated Dhyhan Singh to accompany them on their journey to Anandpur.

The Master, when he saw them all coming, he smiled. As usual, they were received very cordially. One day, finding a suitable opportunity, Bishamber Dass narrated the story of his son's faithlessness and craved for the Guru's pardon. So did Dhyhan Singh. Har Gopal, whose mind was now free from all impurities of doubts and misgivings, prostrated in utter

humility at the feet of the Master. Guru Gobind Singh blessed him with all happiness and prosperity. He also bestowed Nam upon him. Har Gopal now a transformed man, was filled with perpetual bliss, and lived as a devoted disciple of the Master throughout his life. Bhai Dhyan Singh was privileged to receive the Guru's highest pleasure and added blessings. The Master blessed Bishamber Dass also with everlasting joy and happiness.

(20) **PADMA—Princess of Nahan:** The air was thick with rumours that the hill Rajas were being compelled by Aurangzeb to wage war on the Guru and to vanquish him. The hill Rajas decided to gather at Rawalsar and they sent an invitation to the Guru requesting him to come over there for friendly and reconciliatory talks between them for the establishment of better relations. The Guru, a lover of peace, accepted the invitation and joined them along with a few of his choicest and brave disciples.

The Rajas who were accompanied by their consorts, stayed at Rawalsar for several days. During this period, all the Ranis sought audience of the Guru and paid their homage and all of them were greatly impressed by the Guru's divinity. Among the Ranis was the young daughter of the Raja of Nahan. She was learned besides being a true seeker of Truth. But she had some doubts about the Reality. Before she could decide to have holy darshan of the Guru, she wished to be rid of all the doubts that marred her faith. Therefore, she wrote letters to the Guru to explain certain religious enigmas which her mind failed to comprehend.

In the assembly, where all the Ranis gathered, she

asked them what they thought of the Guru and what were their impressions about him. Each one of them told her that they had visions of the Guru, each according to her faith. Some saw him as Rama, others as Shiva, a few as Lord Krishna and Vishnu and so on. Princess Padma's quest about the Guru did not stop with this. She further queried them if any one of them had examined and found proof of Guru's true greatness. At this, the Rani of Dadwal answered and put the princess wise thus: "Listen, Oh my dear princess. There are two kinds among moths. Those that truly love the light, fly straight towards the lamp and falling on it sacrifice themselves. There are the other class—those that doubt if the light is genuine or otherwise and in an effort to find the truth, all the same have their wings charred and drop to the ground. Their plight is helpless; they can neither reach the light nor stay away from it, having been convinced of its genuineness. Have you not seen moths writhing beneath the lamps in the agony of separation, wistfully longing and yearning to reach their beloved but cannot?"

But Princess Padma's wisdom provoked her to reply, "Of course, there may be some, who, while descending on the light in an effort to make sure if it is genuine, blend and merge in its flame."

When at last, Padma went to see the Master, her devotion had reached its peak. Her tender soul eagerly beheld the Divine Light and refused to part from its radiance. Separation from the Divinity meant death to her. Yet she had to return to Nahan.

Padma learnt that there was impending war between the treacherous hosts and the glorious guest at Rawalsar. She entreated her father to avert the

threatening war. None of the Rajas could dare stand against Emperor Aurangzeb, and least of all, of Nahan, a very small state. Therefore, war was inevitable. Padma's grief knew no bounds. Before leaving Rawalsar, she implored the Guru to grant that her eyes might not see the day when the bloody war is waged against him. The Master said, "It shall be so." So it happened. Padma's days were numbered. Soon after leaving Rawalsar, she flew to the Realms of Heaven cherishing His Perpetual Image winking her eyes.

(21) General Saiyed Khan bows before the Guru :
The hill chiefs expressed their inability to suppress the Guru unless the Emperor's own army took up the field.

So General Saiyed Khan, who was holding the command of the Imperial forces at Ghazni, was ordered by the Emperor to proceed to Anandpur and extirpate the Guru. A large army was placed at his command. He was to be joined by the hill chiefs with their forces.

Now, Saiyed Khan's sister was Pir Budhu Shah's wife. Therefore, before marching to Anandpur, Saiyed Khan first went to Saddhora to see and console his sister Nasiran on her bereavement. She had lost two of her sons fighting for Guru Gobind Singh. Having learnt that the young ones had died fighting for the opposite cause, Saiyed Khan began a little altercation with Buddhu Shah for his faith in the infidel. Buddhu Shah tried to convince him of the Master's divine mission, his high ideals and lofty principles, but Saiyed Khan was incredulous. He could not understand how a soldier could be a saint. Their discussion came to an end when Nasiran told

her brother, how in her deep sorrow she had fallen into a swoon and when she had regained consciousness, she had become calm and peaceful; because she had seen that her sons were not dead but they were alive. She said she had seen them with her own eyes. She continued that in her trance, she had found herself in a celestial realm. There she had the vision of Guru Gobind Singh, whom she had never seen before. He was wearing a starry crest. She saw him on his blue steed riding past her. He blessed her saying, "Daughter fear not, do not mourn, thy sons live in this higher spiritual realm." He then called out his sons. They came running, in full angelic effulgence of perfected souls. She said, they met her and said, "Mother grieve not, we live here in Heaven in perfect peace, joy and eternal bliss."

Since her vision, continued Nasirn, she had lived in an intense Dhyanam of the Guru. She had been in fact initiated into the path of the discipleship and the Master had indeed bestowed upon her a very high spiritual status. Her mind, she said, continuously remained intent upon the Lotus Feet of the Lord.

Saiyed Khan was thus struck with the holy transformation of his sister. But having received orders to lead the army against the Guru, Saiyed Khan left Saddhora for Anandpur after a few days. With a very huge army at his command, Saiyed Khan was certain of a complete and speedy victory.

The Guru's soldiers though far too few to oppose the mighty host, fought more valiantly and with greater skill and endurance than Saiyed Khan had imagined they would. He marvelled at their heroism. He wondered at the miraculous power behind the Guru's words which inspired them with such strength, daunt-

less courage, pluck and endurance. He was amazed and struck with wonder when he saw General Sayyad Beg and Maimun Khan and many other Mohammedian soldiers on the side of the Guru and fighting for him.

The sight of these brave men and the words of Pir Buddhu Shah that echoed in his ears: "We breathe and live for the Beloved, we shall willingly die a thousand times to have but one glimpse of Him," were beating against the citadel of his heart. But he was not the man to give in so easily. He, as a reputed General, had come to conquer. But amidst his war passions, he was also anxious to meet the Guru face to face.

A day came, when General Saiyed Khan, all of sudden, saw the Master riding on his blue steed into the enemy's camp amidst a thousand swords raining their flashes upon him. Yet he came galloping right up to him.

Saiyed Khan aimed a shot at the Guru but it was missed. He had never missed his shot before. There was a tremor in his heart. The Master allowed him to take another chance, he shot a bullet but this was also a misfire.

The episode appeared to Nasiran, clear as day light, in her Dhyanam at Saddhora. She saw Saiyed Khan lifting his gun and aiming it at the Guru. She instantly shook it making the shot miss its mark. Saiyed Khan saw her standing near him, as in a vision.

Saiyed Khan was bewildered and rubbed his eyes. The Master smiled and came still closer to him and said, "Come, Saiyed Khan, will you measure swords? You may avail the first chance." Saiyed Khan was fresh from Saddhora, and Nasiran's face flashed before his eyes as he beheld the Guru. "Sire, do explain the

mystery to me. What can I do, my Lord, to have a glimpse of that Fairyland, of which Nasiran, my sister, mentioned to me the other day, when I went to condole her, on the death of her sons in the battle field?"

"That promised land is, no doubt, real—truer than this solid earth—but thou must seek and get the key to its hidden portals." said the Guru.

Enraptured, he bows his head on the Master's stirrups and implores him to confer upon him the Secrets of Immortality. "All this life—these weary years, have I spent in vain in sun and shade," says the General, "Confer on me, O Lord, the bliss of ineffable union that thou didst confer on Saiyed Buddhu Shah."

"Saiyed Khan ! Go and gather ye the treasures of Allah's Nam." said the Master.

Saiyed Khan entered the path of discipleship and obtained the spark of Life or the Seed of Simran.

The battle is still raging, the trumpets are blowing, the cannons thundering, but General Saiyed Khan is nowhere to be found in the battle field. He retired forthwith into the secluded hills of Kangra to accumulate the inexhaustible riches of God's Name. Several years hence, when Saiyed Khan rose from meditation, he saw in his Dhyanam Anandpur deserted and the Master far away in Deccan. He followed him thither and remained with him to the last.

(22) **Bhai Kanhaiya :** In the thick of the battle Bhai Kanhaiya had gone forth serving water and giving aid to the wounded. A complaint was brought against him by a new comer that he served the friends and foes alike. The Guru called him to his presence and enquired about the charge. Bhai Kanhaiya bowed to the Master and said: "Lord! Ever since I touched

thy Lotus Feet, I do not differentiate between man and man. All men are equal in the sight of God. Thou hast so enlightened my eyes that I see no other but Thy All-Pervading Divine Spirit everywhere and in all. I serve no other but thee. I gave water to none but Thee, O Master.”

“O Guru! 'tis through Thy Grace that my eyes got the Divine Light
 Now these eyes look not on aught else but Thee
 This world, this world which of late appeared gall and sore
 Now all this, all this is changed, transfigured.
 This earth is to-day, Thy Image, O Beloved, Thy Rain-bow-vision
 When Thy Grace, O Master, dwelleth in me within,
 Then all is One, Yea, All is Thou, O Beloved emanating into all, that is.
 Without Thee, without Thee, O Nanak, these eyes lacked Light
 But on meeting the Guru, the veil is lifted
 And lo! 'tis now Eye-Divine
 Yea, all is One, One-in-All, and All-in-One, none but Thee alone.”

(Guru Amar Das: Anand Sahib)

Translated.

The Guru was greatly pleased with this spirit of all embracing love and service exhibited by Bhai Kanhaiya. He blessed him further with the gift of Nam and Service, and up to this day these gifts of Nam and service-of-love are preserved by his people called Sevapanthis.

(23) The Master besieged : When General Saiyed Khan left the field, the command of the Imperial army was taken up by General Ramzan Khan. He led the charge with renewed vigour and fury. The Emperor further sent urgent orders to the Viceroy of Sirhind and Lahore to despatch all available troops against the Guru. This was in 1701 A.D. The orders were that the Guru himself was to be captured alive and brought before the Emperor.

The Master was thus faced with heavy odds. The battle raged long and fierce. The Sikhs could not withstand the furious onslaught of the overwhelming forces of the army. So the Guru had to slowly retire to the fort. A prolonged blockade followed. The Guru's supplies were failing. During the siege, the Master and his disciples starved and with them Master's family including his wife, his four sons, his aged mother, and the Mother of the Khalsa. The Persadi elephant, the blue steed of the Master, and many other useful animals died a lingering death for want of food.

The disciples patiently bore hunger and hardships for a long time. But they could not endure to see him starve, much less his little ones. So they pleaded the Guru for vacation of Anandpur, but the Master was adamant and persisted to stay within the fort till the end.

The hill chiefs and the Emperor sent feelers to the Guru through their envoys assuring on oath of cow and the Qoran respectively, a safe passage, in case the Guru vacated Anandpur. The Guru doubted their motives. But when the Sikhs again represented for vacation of the fort, the Guru told the envoy that his property would be first sent out the next day. The Guru got litter, rubbish and other waste collected and loaded it on bullocks. A covering of beautiful brocade was put on each bullock. No sooner did the bullocks reach near the invaders, they began to plunder the property, but were greatly disappointed and humiliated.

The Guru thus proved to the Sikhs the malafide intentions of the invaders.

The physical pangs of hunger and the innumerable

untold sufferings over the long period of war began to tell on the Sikhs. Exasperated, some of the Sikhs still urged the Guru to vacate the fort forthwith failing which they would part company with him. The Guru, therefore, told the Sikhs that those who wanted to leave Anandpur should make a declaration in writing that they sever their connections with the Guru. Alas, forty of the disciples gave the disclaimer and escaped from Anandpur. But when they reached their homes, the Sikh mothers and Sikh wives likewise disclaimed them and they received no welcome wherever they went. They were filled with remorse and wished to return to the Master. But they could not reach Anandpur; for by then, the Guru had left Anandpur.

It so happened that a few days after these disclaimers had deserted, an envoy brought a message from the Emperor, signed by the Emperor himself under his seal. It urged the Guru to hasten to him for an intimate talk and to cease warfare and evacuate the long besieged fort. The Emperor swore by the Qoran not to harm the Master and his men, if they complied with the request to leave the fort and endeavour to come towards meeting him.

The Guru could hardly believe this sudden turn of the Emperor's mind. However, some of the Sikhs again represented to the Guru for vacation and the Guru's mother interceded on their behalf. The Guru could not refuse his mother but said, "Mother, thou shalt have to pay heavily for it." And he decided finally to vacate the fort which was besieged, for well-over a period of three years. The Guru destroyed or threw into the River Sutlej, all the valuable possessions. The only treasure they carried with them were

piles of manuscripts, which were the results of years of literary work.

The party left the fort on the night of 15th of Maghar 1761 Bikrmi (20/21 December 1704 A.D.). They had gone for some miles when some of them realized that it was the time of their daily meditation. They exclaimed, "At the time of our Asa-di-var (the musical recitation of the sacred hymns), it is sad that we are marching to save our lives."

The Guru immediately called for a halt. The party squatted on the ground around the Master. They sang whole-heartedly the divine hymns in praise of God. They were so absorbed in the divine music and meditation that all sense of danger left them during those peaceful hours. They felt refreshed and soothed after meditation.

When the enemy learnt that the Guru and his men had escaped from the fort, they made haste to chase them. The Emperor's solemn promises not to harm the Sikhs, were simply thrown to the winds. They fell upon these Sikhs who had hardly finished their morning prayers. Severe fighting took place between them on the banks of the Sarsa Nadi.

A band of Guru's choicest men, stoutly held up the enemy and would not let the treacherous soldiers advance any further near the Guru. Each one of them fought with a valour and resolve that astonished their opponents. While these brave Sikhs were overpowered and fell in the fight, the Guru and members of his family managed to cross the stream and had gone fairly far away. Bhai Udhe Singh, the commander of the Guru's forces, and three out of the Five Beloved along with many other Sikhs lost their lives while fighting at Sarsa Nadi.

The stream was in spate and while the Guru crossed the swelling waters, the disciples stood on his either side and at his back forming a thick wall to protect him from the enemy's arrows. Hundreds of the disciples thus sacrificed their lives falling around him like moths round a lamp.

Mata Gujri, the aged mother of Gobind Singh with her two little grand children escaped in one direction. Mata Sundri and the Mother of the Khalsa went towards another direction.

The Guru, accompanied by two of his elder sons and a group of forty survivors, marched towards Ropar. Most of the manuscripts were either lost in the affray or washed away by the stream. A few scattered hymns and some literary translations from Sanskrit books, that could be saved, were long after compiled to and form what was known as "Dasam Granth".

(24) The Sweetness of Death : News reached the Master that a large army of the Emperor lay in wait, a few miles ahead of him. The situation in which the Guru found himself, sandwiched by armies to the front and rear, would have unnerved the mightiest of Generals and made them surrender to the enemy, but the Guru remained unruffled, and in the height of his spirits. Gauging the situation, the Guru hastened to Chamkaur (now in Tehsil Ropar, Punjab) and occupied there a small fortress which stood on a mound. He had but forty brave disciples along with his two elder sons. Soon, the Imperial army, which was in hot pursuit, besieged the fortress.

The disciples held the fortress for a long time against heavy odds, while the Master from the upper

storey kept up an incessant shower of arrows. Nahar Khan and Ghairat Khan tried to scale the wall but were shot down by the Guru. The arrows and bullets shot in succession kept the mercenary soldiers at a distance.

At last, the enemies tried to force open the gate of the fortress. The Guru's disciples in a desperate effort to defend fortress, sallied out in batches fighting bravely to arrest the advance of the enemy. They fought valiantly killing many of their adversaries. The enemy was kept in dismay at a distance but they far outnumbered this small group of brave men who at last being overpowered fell victims to their merciless swords.

The Guru watched the battle with the composure of his divine self and was not perturbed throughout the whole fighting. It was to him a melodrama where each one of them had to play his part but effectively.

The Guru's eldest son, Prince Ajit Singh, eighteen years old, sought permission of the Guru to go out of the fortress and fight the enemy. "Dear Father," said he, "Thou hast named me Ajit Singh or unconquerable Lion. So I shall not be conquered, but if overpowered, I shall die fighting like my brother Sikhs."

"Go, my son! Immortal Lord so Wills it."

The Sikhs heard this and with anguish they said, "Master! We cannot bear to see the prince die before our eyes, while we are in flesh and bone."

The Master replied: "All of you are my sons. Your tender eyes should get accustomed to seeing sorrow and bear the burden of grief with equanimity and forbearance. If He Wills, it should be sweet to suffer."

So saying the Guru bade his son to go. He watched him from the balcony and to him it was joy and satisfaction to see his son fight like a hero. When he saw him fall, after killing scores of enemy soldiers, he thanked God that his son proved worthy of the righteous cause of the Lord.

Prince Jujhar Singh, the Guru's second son, who was hardly fourteen, now stood before his father and made the same request, as his elder brother had done.

"Go my child," said the Guru, "We do not belong to this earth, we are here for a while and shall return to our Eternal Home. Go and wait for me there."

This lad of mere fourteen had gone but a few paces, when he turned back and said that he felt thirsty and asked for water. Gobind Singh said, "No, go my child! There is no more water for you on this earth. See yonder, Ajit Singh is holding the cup of nectar for you which will forever quench your thirst."

The prince did not wait for another hint. He rode the way his elder brother had gone. The Guru's face was jubilant and his countenance breathed divine satisfaction when he watched with great interest and zeal his young son fighting valiantly the holy war and meeting his end bravely.

All Hail! All Hail! The Guru Glorious! As a father he was unrivalled, as he had proved as a son. At the age of nine, he sent his father to die a martyr to defend the faith of the Hindus against the bigotry and oppression of the rulers and now he decked his tiny sons for the wedlock of steel and they died as the sons of Guru Gobind Singh ought to have died to uphold righteousness and Dharma.

When the brave boys had shed their blue blood, the Guru then himself got ready to go out, and fight.

The remaining few Sikhs fell on their knees before the Guru and entreated him not to go. For at that critical moment their victory lay in saving the Guru. If the Guru lived, he would create millions like them. But the Guru would not listen to any one of them.

Thereupon, the Sikhs formed a congregation and passed a "gurmatta" (Resolution unanimously passed by at least five Khalsas, fully enlightened by Nam) which embodied a mandate for Guru Gobind Singh to quit the fortress at night. The Guru had to bow before the mandate of the Supreme Authority of the Khalsa Brotherhood, as he had himself at the time of taking Amrit from the Five Beloved voluntarily reduced himself to the status of a common member of the great Brotherhood of Khalsa. Thereafter the commands of the Khalsa (At least five Persons fully enlightened by Nam and constantly abiding in Him) were to be supreme and even binding on the Guru.

So under the thick dark cover of the night, the Guru left the fortress with three of his disciples,—Bhai Dya Singh, Dharm Singh and Man Singh.

The Guru, while going away discharged arrows from his bow in different directions. This caused a great confusion in the ranks of the invading forces in the darkness of the night. The Sikhs who remained in the fortress continued to fight against the enemy till they were killed one and all.

(25) In the Jungles of Machhiwara : It was pitch dark at night. The winter wind was biting cold. The three disciples who were with the Guru could not keep pace with him. They lost their way in the darkness and were separated. The Guru,

lonely, barefoot and with his clothes in tatters, trudged along the thorny wilds of Machhiwara. For days he found neither food nor shelter. His feet were blistered and bleeding. He slept in the wide open on chilly winter nights. Thirst, hunger and fatigue overtook him. One day, as he lay on the ground resting his head on a clod of earth, Bhai Dya Singh, Dharm Singh and Man Singh, who had separated from him in the darkness of the night by sheer fortunate coincidence arrived at the place where the Guru was asleep. Although weak and feeble, Guru's hands clasped the naked sword while he was asleep.

Throughout this period of agony and distress, his noble resolve, and patriotic determination did not flicker in the least. He did not waver in his purpose. In weal and woe he was the same. Without a morsel of food, weary, and in physical pain and suffering, yet in ecstasy of spirit, he burst forth into a song—the song that was symbolic of his true spirit:—

The Message of we, the disciples, to the Beloved:

O give Him, the Beloved, the news of we, the disciples!
 Without Thee, the luxury of soft beds and rich coverings in anguish rack
 Pleasures of palaces are like living among snakes, if Thou art away.
 The flask of drinks are like unto a Cross
 The lips of the cup cut us like a sharp dagger
 Yea, without Thee all these articles of joy and comfort kill us like a
 butcher'sk nife.
 The straw of bed of the Beloved is Heaven for us, if Thou art there!
 Burnt be, the rich dwellings, which are like burning hell to us, if Thou
 art away, O Beloved.

(Guru Gobind Singh)
Translated.

The disciples found, the Master's feet sore with blisters and thorns and that he could not move. So Bhai Man Singh carried him on his back to a well,

nearby. There the Master bathed after a lapse of several days and felt very refreshed. Gulaba, the owner of the well, supplied them with fresh milk and gave them shelter in his house. Although he longed to serve the Guru, but he was afraid of being discovered. So the Guru soon departed.

The Guru had to undergo innumerable hardships during his journey till at last he reached Jatpura, where a Muslim chief, Rai Kalha, heartily entertained him. Kalha heard the tragic tale of Guru's sufferings and shed tears of sorrow, and condemned the oppressors. The Guru asked his host to send a messenger to Sirhind to inquire the fate of his aged mother and his two younger sons. Mahi, the messenger, soon came back from Sirhind with the fatal news. Mahi, woebegone, related the tragic story of the innocent children martyred.

(26) Innocent Children Martyred : In the confusion that followed in crossing the flooded stream Sarsa, the companions of the Guru and his family were scattered in different directions. The Guru's aged mother, Gujri, and her two little grandsons, happened to separate from the rest of the party. Lost and forlorn, they travelled in the direction where Providence took them, through the thick jungles and biting cold morning winds. On their way, they were met by a man called Gangu Brahmin, who had for sometime worked as a domestic servant in their household. They trusted their one time loyal servant, when he offered to provide them shelter in his house in a nearby village Saheri on the Ropar-Morinda Road.

But he betrayed them, overcome by his greed and avarice. He made them over to the officer at Morinda

who in turn handed them over to Nawab Wazir Khan at Sirhind.

They were imprisoned in a Cold Tower, at Sirhind. The young princes Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh aged about nine years and seven years were produced before the Nawab, the following day. The Governor's court was stunned to see the tall and unusually handsome, remarkably bright and strikingly fearless young boys. Their countenances sparkled with the divine grace and brilliance of their benign father.

The children were produced in the court on December 24th, 1704 A.D. and were tempted with fabulous rewards if only they would abjure their faith. Persuasions and temptations failed, threats and tortures were devised but all in vain. The princes remained unwavering in their faith. The Nawab tried to hand them over to two Pathan youths whose father was lost in the battle against the Guru. They could revenge themselves on these boys, since the Guru's arrow had killed their father. The Pathans true to their blood, refused to obey to the Nawab, with these words: "It is cowardice to slay these innocent children. But we shall only fight the enemy in an open battle."

The children and their grandmother passed the cold winter nights in their imprisonment in the cold, airy Tower without any bedding or cloth to wrap themselves. On the fourth day of their captivity, a council of ministers was called upon to consider ways and means of bringing the princes in the folds of Islam. The princes were brought to the court and the inevitable choice of death or acceptance of Islam was offered to them. The princes, true to their faith,

preferred death and disdainfully rejected the offer of conversion.

The Nawab was enraged and looked towards his councillors for advice. Sucha Nand (also called Kuljas) the Hindu minister said, "Sire, this progeny of a cobra had better be smothered in time". Thereupon the Nawab ordered that the children be bricked alive and buried to death.

He then looked around for someone in the council to approve and appreciate his command and thereby confirm what his Hindu minister had proposed. But everyone of them sat silent with heads bent low and their eyes downcast. At last, the one, lone, brave voice of Nawab Sher Mohammed Khan of Malerkotla rose in protest and said, "The holy Qoran did not allow the slaughter of innocent and helpless children." But the Qazi confirmed that the holy law gives the infidels the choice between Islam and death. "Let them choose what they like," he said.

A very cruel form of execution was devised. The wall of Sirhind was knocked down for a length of three yards. These young ones of the Master were made to stand a yard apart from each other and the wall was to be built step by step on their tender limbs until the brick wall came up to the height of their shoulders. Finally at the behest of the Nawab, the executioner cut off the throats of the boys with the butchers' knives. This treacherous event took place on the 13th of Poh sambat 1762 (27th December 1705 A.D.) and is significant in Sikh history as another day of martyrdom. Grand mother Gujri expired in prison on hearing the tragic end of her two beloved little grandsons.

As the messenger Mahi, related his tale of woe,

Rai Kalha and the other listeners were torn with grief and wept bitterly. But the Guru was unruffled and listened to the whole episode with perfect composure and equanimity. He was above mundane shocks. When Mahi ended the distressing story, he closed his eyes and thanked God for the glorious and triumphant end of his four sons.

After perfect communion with his Heavenly Father, he said, "No, my sons are not dead. They have returned to their Eternal Home. It is Sirhind that shall die." So saying he spontaneously knocked out a shrub with his arrow and added, "The enemy shall be uprooted likewise." The Master foresaw the entire destruction of Sirhind and as he saw it in his vision, a tear rolled down his eyes.*

(27) The Epistle of Nawab of Malerkotla Addressed to the Emperor Aurangzeb Nawab Sher Mohd. Khan of Malerkotla was a man of faith, he was a man of conscience, who stood for chivalry, justice and fairplay, and protested against the cruel order of the Governor of Sirhind. He left his court in disgust and wrote an historic epistle to the Emperor Aurangzeb: Translated into English from Persian, it reads as follows:—

"O Mighty king of the world, who on account of justice has placed thy throne on the azure vault, may the dappled horse of the skies be ever under thy control, because thou hast eclipsed the brilliance of the sun and Moon by the splendour of innumerable victories.

The humble and devoted petitioner, with all respect due to the grandeur of the shadow of God and the might of the saviour of the world, most respectfully begs to lay his humble appeal before your Most Gracious Majesty and hopes from your Imperial Majesty's unfathomable kindness and unlimited magnanimity that the august person of the shadow of God, Viceregent of the holy Prophet (peace be on him) in this world, the incarnation of God's mercy over his

*Three years after this atrocity, Banda Singh Bahadur razed the whole of Sirhind to the ground and destroyed the enemy root and branch.

creatures by sheer munificence, be pleased to bestow his compassion and forgiveness on the young sons of Gobind Singh, Tenth Guru of the Sikh nation.

The Viceroy of Sirhind Province with a view to avenge the disobedience and disloyal activities of the Guru which may have been committed by him, has, without any fault or crime of the guiltless and innocent children, simply on the basis of their being sons of Gobind Singh, condemned those minor sons liable to execution and has proposed to wall them up alive till they die.

Although no one dares to raise an objection against the order of the Viceroy, whose order is as inevitable as death, yet the faithful servant and well-wisher of thy august Majesty's Empire deems it most advisable to humbly appeal and to bring this to Your Majesty's benign notice.

May it be said that in view of certain important political considerations Your Majesty is disposed to inflict suitable punishment on the Sikh nation for their undesirable activities in the past. It would be quite compatible with justice, but Your Majesty's humble and devoted servant thinks, it would be no way consistent with the principles of sovereignty and supreme power, to wreak vengeance of the misdeeds of a whole nation on two innocent children, who on account of their tender age are quite innocent and unable to take a stand against the all-powerful Viceroy.

This sort of action obviously appears to be absolutely against the dictates of Islam and the laws propounded by the founder of Islam (may God's blessings be showered on him) and Your Majesty's humble servant is afraid that the enactment of such an atrocious act would perpetually remain an ugly blot on the face of Your Majesty's renowned justice and righteousness. It may graciously be considered that the mode of inflicting the punishment and tortures as contemplated by the Viceroy of Sirhind can by no means be considered compatible with the principles of Supreme Rule, Equity and Justice.

In view of the above consideration Your Majesty's humble and devoted servant most respectfully takes the liberty of suggesting that if Your Majesty consider it expedient that the sons of Guru Gobind Singh may be kept under restraint from indulging in disloyal activities, it would be more appropriate if they could be interned in the Royal Capital Delhi, till they are duly reformed so as willingly to acknowledge allegiance and loyalty to the throne.

As an alternative both the boys may be placed under my care so as to keep a check on their actions and movements and not to allow them to entertain any kind of ideas of sedition or disloyalty in their minds. Although the humble petitioner fears that the humble appeal which is prompted exclusively by the sense of veracity and loyalty to the throne may be deemed as transgressing the limits of propriety, yet the fear of God and urge of truth does not allow undue suppression of truth.

If this humble appeal has the honour of meeting the Royal acceptance, it shall be most fortunate. If, however, it is unfortunately deprived of the honour of acceptance, still Your Majesty's humble and devoted servant shall have the consolation of having performed the sacred duty of expressing what was right and just and having allowed his pen not to deviate in the expression of truth."

(28) Zafarnama—The Epistle of Victory: The Guru then took leave of Rai Kalha and moved onward to Dina, where he was welcomed and entertained by three brothers, Shamira, Lakhmira and Takht Mal. These brothers did not care for the threats of Nawab Wazir Khan, but however, they kept vigil over the movement of enemy troops, if any.

It was a period of the Master's life when distress and despondency could have destroyed the spontaneity of his spirit and his gait. Yet, it was at this painful period that he was found in his most exalted spirits and liveliness of disposition. The sacrifice of his dearly loved sons, his revered parents, and thousands of his faithful followers together with the privations from his wife and his own endless sufferings, had not daunted his spirits. But it was during this period, in the year 1706 A.D. that he wrote from this village Dina, the Memorable letter called ZAFAR-NAMA—the Epistle of Victory—to Emperor Aurangzeb. It was in fact, an exquisite reply to the letters of invitation he had received from the Emperor.

The epistle, written in perfect persian verse is a beautiful piece, the tone of the whole is quite in-keeping with the title of the theme. The letter is characteristic of the sublimity of the Saint-General. Every line is pregnant with stimulating truths and righteous indignation. The letter bore the loftiness of a superior being addressing an individual of a lower, baser metal.

The Guru told the Emperor, in no uncertain terms that he had no faith in his solemn promises in the name of God and oaths on holy Qoran. The fact remained that he, the Emperor on all occasions violated his sacred promises and proved false, mean and treacherous. No doubt, he was a mighty Monarch and capable General but he lacked the depth of a true religion.

Referring to the murder of his sons, the Guru remarked: "What, though my four sons were killed, when lives the whole people — the Khalsa, all my sons! What bravery is it to quench a few sparks of life. Thou art merely exciting the big raging fire all the more....."

Apart from its literary worth, the letter had a greater significance because of its candid manifestation of naked truths which the Emperor, living as he was, in a superficial world of sly-flatterers, would fain had heard. Such was Guru's fearless exposition of the Emperor's merciless acts of tyranny and grotesque atrocities that even the relentless heart of Aurangzeb was touched. Its soul stirring strain could not but move the stone-hearted monarch. The letter was entrusted to Bhai Dya Singh, who delivered it to Aurangzeb in Deccan. This letter indeed, awakened the Emperor's sleeping conscience and

evoked in him a mood of true repentance. It had such a miraculous effect on him that from the very day he read the letter, he began to pine and was soon confined to bed. Seized with a sudden trembling, he called for his scribe and dictated a letter to his son. And this was the last letter he dictated when death was at hand and he acknowledged his defeat in the life that he lead:-

“.....Whatever good or bad I have done,
 I am taking it as a load upon my head to the Great
 Unseen. How strange it is to contemplate that
 I came to this earth all alone, but now I am leaving with a caravan of
 my doings.....
 My heart is anguished by the thoughts of armies and military resources,
 which I am leaving. But it is more bitterly torn by the pain of
 death which is around the corner.
 I am totally in the dark about the destiny that awaits me. But what
 I know is that I have committed enormous sins. Canst tell what
 grim punishment is in store for me?.....”

Guru Gobind Singh, the Sovereign Redeemer of humanity, at such a crucial hour made him repent for his sins and further offered therein words of solace. He advised him to humbly implore for forgiveness of his iniquities and to pray for mercy to God, the Almighty.

(29) Tie The Broken Ties : The Guru left Dina after despatching the Zafarnama to the Emperor through Bhai Dya Singh, who stayed then in Deccan. After a short sojourn at Kot-Kapura and Jaito, he moved further, collecting men and material; for the air was thick with rumours that the forces of Sirhind were on the move and were closing in on the Guru.

Some of the Sikhs, who had deserted the Guru at Anandpur and had given a disclaimer to him,

were put to shame by their women folk. One brave lady, Mai Bhago, gathered 40 such men and brought them to the aid of the Guru along with a large contingent of other Majha Sikhs.

The Guru had taken up his position on a sandy hillock at Khidrana in the District of Ferozepore. The Mughal army was advancing towards the Guru's camp, but before they could attack the Guru, they had to encounter enroute this contingent under the command of Mai Bhago of Jhabal and Bhai Mahan Singh of Rataul. They had encamped in the vicinity of a small pond fringed by a wild growth of shrubs. To mislead and make the enemy wonder at their great numerical strength, this small but brave group of men, spread white sheets on the shrubs.

A fierce fighting ensued. The Sikhs fought with their inherent courage and strength. They fought not so much for victory but for resisting and delaying the enemy's advance towards their Master thereby trying to retrieve the Guru's Grace and Mercy upon them. The tenacity and fearlessness of the saint-soldiers struck terror in the heart of the mercenary soldiers of the Mughals. The Guru from his position of high altitude, about two miles further, from the place of the battle, showered arrows on the leading commanders of the enemy.

Wazir Khan, the Commander of Imperial forces soon lost heart. He called forth a council of officers, for there was no drinking water available for the men. Kapura, the intelligence officer, informed him that there was no water to be found in the vicinity. The men were thirsty and so the commander decided that it was not worth risking their lives where there was not a drop of water to drink. Besides they feared the

enemy's numerical strength. They were in the dark about the exact number of the Sikhs who opposed them. The men refused to fight without water to quench their thirst. So the Imperial army began to retreat. They abandoned their dead and wounded and began to flee.

As soon as the enemy disappeared from the place of action, the Guru descended from his place of observation, to the battle field. He, who had watched the battle scene, now, with paternal care went about lifting the heads of the martyrs to his lap, wiping their faces and blessing each one of them. And among them, he found the forty who had disclaimed him and deserted him at Anandpur.

These forty men had left the Master in despair during the prolonged siege at Anandpur. But when they reached their homes, they found the doors closed against them. Their near and dear ones at home refused to receive them with love; for they condemned their actions. But a noble Sikh lady, Mai Bhago, aroused in their hearts the fire of love and faith that was nearly extinguished. So it was, they formed a contingent of troops and a host of other Sikhs joined them and they all hurried forward to reinforce the Guru's small army. They all died fighting for the Guru. Among the dead was one who was still alive and was on his last breath of life. The Guru lovingly lifted him to his lap and said, "Are you not Mahan Singh, my son? You have all died as martyrs. Look into my face and ask for anything you desire—have you any prayer for life or Immortality?"

Mahan Singh, opening his eyes, was delighted to see the Guru. His countenance glowed and his

eyes were wet with tears. And he mumbled: "No, Master! Far from being martyrs, we have sinned against thee, deserting you at a time of need, we are sinners, and we died as sinners. Therefore, the Doors of Heaven—the Region of Grace is closed against those of us, who have gone ahead of me. This secret has been revealed to me. Lord! If you could forgive us out of compassion and grant us thy Grace, it is the only prayer that I seek. Let the sacred ties that were broken, be tied again and let us for ever live at Thy Lotus Feet."

The Master, taking out the Disclaiming Document, which he carried on his vest during all these viccitudes, tore off the same and blessed the forty martyrs. Mahan Singh saw this with his own eyes and breathed his last, happy and content, that they were forgiven.

The souls of forty were thus saved. The Forty Mukte—the Saved Ones are remembered in our daily prayers.

"*Tie again the broken ties*" is one of the most stirring of our religious songs.

Then he sought the place where the noble lady, Mai Bhago, who inspired these Forties, lay wounded in an unconscious state. A little aid revived her. The Guru was greatly pleased with her and blessed her. She was a Brahm Gyani and henceforth she remained with the Guru to the last.

The Guru then gathered the bodies of the martyrs and cremated them.

(30) Love Gatherings again: The Guru then continued his march. Wherever he went, he spread wings of love, conquered hearts and emancipated the

people's minds from fear, desire and passion and instilled in them a longing to deliver their motherland from the bondage of its tyrannical rulers.

During these vicissitudes, the Master stayed for a time in the Lakhi Jungle, so called by the Khalsa. The disciples flocked to him in hundreds and thousands, even as swarms of bees hover around him fascinated by his spiritual beauty and maddened by his inner fragrance. Each swarm brought greater glory than the other. Like a halo of light the Master was encircled by the luminous rays of glory. How the disciples were overwhelmed with joy on meeting the Master again, is evident from the following soul-stirring effusion of the Master, which even now brings tears to our eyes, his poor disciples:

“O! When they heard the call of the Beloved,
 They came running to him
 Even as the buffaloes let drop the half-chew grass from their mouths,
 And lifted in hurry their half slaked lips from the pool,
 None lingered to wait for the other,
 Each came running all alone,
 Such was the over-powering force of the Beloved's fascination to them.
 (Guru Gobind Singh)
Translated

Upon this the poets and songsters gathered on the sandy plane around the Master, burst forth extempore, passionate and love inspired poems one after the other. These spontaneous out-pourings of love, from their aching hearts, show how the disciples were attached to the Guru by ties of love and sacrifice and what yearnings they had for reunion with the Master.

Whenever the Guru had a little time to rest, Nam-Congregations were held, religious discourses were delivered, and Asa-di-Var was sung in the morning. Suffice it to say that the blissful atmosphere of Anandpur was reproduced in Lakhi Jungle. Those

who saw him there among the disciples would hardly believe that he had gone through so much suffering and distress. The radiance of his eyes was not dulled, the majestic glory of his countenance was undiminished.

In a remote part of the jungle, in the village called Chattaina, there lived an aged hermit named Sayyad Ibrahim. He had spent the greater part of his life in meditation and such meditations which bore no fruit.

Dana Singh, an old friend of Sayyad Ibrahim, had been influenced by Guru's benign teachings and had become a Sikh. Since they were friends, it was habitual for them to get together and discuss religion; for they were both desirous of attaining the higher life of the spirit. Now, Sayyad Ibrahim saw the change in Dana Singh. His eyes gleamed with spiritual light and his countenance reflected an extraordinary glow of divinity. When Sayyad questioned him about this change, Dana Singh admitted that it was the gift of the Guru. So Sayyad Ibrahim, implored his friend to take him over to the Guru.

The chanting of Asa-di-Var was over and great poets like Nandlal were offering their inspired new poems at the feet of the Master, when Ibrahim came in the company of Dana Singh to the Master's presence. Ibrahim inhaled the spiritual aroma instantly even as a bumble-bee sucks honey from a flower. The more he heard, the greater was the transcendence of his spirit till at last there was but one step between the finite and Infinite. It was indeed a tremendous step towards divinity. Just as a little baby, crawling towards the Queen-Mother on the throne cannot reach her unless the Mother picks him up in her arms, so

with the finite beings, none can soar up into the realms of Infinity except through Divine Grace.

When 'Kavi-Darbar' was over, Sayyad took up the opportunity to unlock his heart to the Guru.

"Master, I have grown grey in meditation yet I remain far from the goal. My friend, Dana Singh who was initiated in the divine ways only the other day is already soaring up in the realms of Infinity. Bless me, O Lord, with the same Spark of Life." beseeched the aged anchorite.

The Master then blessed him with Nam-Amrit. He was baptized as Ajmer Singh by the Master. He grew into a towering personality and lived and died a true Sikh, the very embodiment of Guru's ideal of the Khalsa.

(31) At Dam-Dama Sahib: Passing through several villages and hamlets, showering bliss and happiness on the crowds of people who thronged from every nook and corner to have a glimpse of his holiness, the Guru at last reached Talwandi Sabo (now called Dam-Dama Sahib).

Dalla, the chief of the locality was a man of eminence. He had the command and love of the inhabitants of that area. At his call, the people would gladly lay aside their plough and take up the sword for any honourable cause.

When Dalla heard of the Master's arrival, he led four hundred stalwart men to meet and welcome the Guru. He, who had heard with sorrow the poignant story of Guru's privations and sad loss of his sons, said to the Master, "I am sad, my Lord, that you did not inform me, thy servant. If only you had informed

me, I would have sent my brave soldiers and they would have quite vanquished the enemy. The world would have marvelled at their great courage and the dear princes would not have died.”

“Do not grieve my friend,” said the Master, “The princes are not dead. They have returned to their Eternal Home.”

Just then a visitor entered and presented a gun to the Master. It was a token of his love to the Guru for he had spent several days and nights making it with his own hands. The Guru accepted the offer and said to Dalla, “Dalla, here is an opportunity, bring me one of your men, I just want to try this gun.”

Dalla was confounded, yet he returned to his camp in order to prove his bravado and tried to persuade one of his men to come, but in vain. Therefore, he returned to the Lord’s presence with a long face, hanging his head in shame.

The Master then said, “Let some one go and announce to those two Sikhs, whom I see over there tying their turbans that one is needed by the Guru as a target for this new musket.” No sooner had the Sikhs heard the call of the Guru, they came running with their half tied turbans in hand.

The Guru selected the one who arrived first. The disciple stood steady and firm with his breast thrust forward ready to receive the bullet.

At this juncture, the other Sikh rushed forward and said, “Sir, I request you for a little favour. The target for your aim is my own brother. If he were to inherit my father’s property, I stand to share half of it, by virtue of his being, his brother. Now that you are conferring upon him the cup of immortality, I beg to claim half of it.”

It amused the Lord, and he said, "I grant, come and take your stand behind your brother; so that my bullet may deal with both of you squarely."

They both stood straight, and vied with each other, too eager to receive the shot.

The Guru shouldered the gun, aimed at them and clicked the gun. But the Lord took care to pass the bullet over their heads. But the Sikhs did not swerve even a hair-breadth. Even as the rays of the sun touch the soul of the earth, a million flowers and leaves spring forth with arms spread out to meet the lyrical soul, similarly at the call of the Master's musket, disciples came running to him holding their heads on the palms of their hands. Is not this loving response akin to the mute yet spontaneous response of the Gopikas of Bindraban to the call of the Krishna's flute?

Dalla, witnessed the scene. He was astonished. This stirred his spirits, and he requested the Master to administer him and his men his life-giving Amrit. Thousands of people took Amrit here. The Guru's Darbar here was now as splendid as it used to be at Anandpur. Poets and scholars who had gathered around him at Lakhi Jungle had accompanied him to Dam-Dama Sahib.

By this time, all restrictions against the Guru had been removed. For on receipt of the Zafar-Nama, the governors had been ordered by Aurangzeb to cease molesting the Guru. It was here that the Guru's consort and the Mother of the Khalsa joined the Lord. When they arrived, the Guru was seated in a big gathering of the disciples numbering about 125,000*

*According to Dr. Trump.

who were singing the immortal songs. Addressing the Lord, the mother of the Children said:

“Where are my Four, Sire? Where are my Four?.

He replied :

“What of thy Four,
O Mother of the Children!
What of thy Four
When lives the whole people, the Khalsa here and all over.
Gone, gone are thy Four
As sacrifice for the life of these millions and more, all thy sons!
O Mother of the Children!
What if thy Four are no more?”

At Dam Dama Sahib, the Master sent for the original copy of the Granth Sahib from Kartarpur, at the river Beas, in order to incorporate Guru Tegh Bahadur’s hymns in it, but the foolish Mahants would not part with it. So the Guru from his intense ‘Dhyanam’ of the Word dictated the whole of Granth Sahib, comprising 1430 pages, to Bhai Mani Singh. Granth Sahib had a second birth from Guru Gobind Singh, and it came out of his soul, as came his Khalsa.

(32) Bahadur Shah approaches The Guru for help : Meanwhile, Aurangzeb died in Deccan in February 1707. His death was followed by a war of succession between his sons. Bahadur Shah, who was the eldest son, hurried down from Peshawar to oppose his younger brother, Azam, who had proclaimed himself Emperor.

Now Bahadur Shah sent Bhai Nandlal, to the Guru and requested him to help him in obtaining the throne. It has already been stated that Bhai Nand Lal had been a secretary to the prince, but for a long time had taken shelter at the Guru’s Darbar. Bahadur Shah promised the Guru, to be fair and just to the

Hindus and Muslims alike, and to undo all that his father had done against them and to atone for the injustice and oppression committed by his father—the late Emperor. So the Guru helped him with a detachment of his men in the battle of Jaju and Bahadur Shah came out victorious.

In grateful regards for the Guru's timely help, Bahadur Shah invited him to Agra where he was being crowned. Bahadur Shah presented to the Guru a rich Robe of honour and jewelled scarf (worth sixty thousand Rupees).

After coronation, the Emperor had to go to the South. He invited the Guru to accompany him, if he so desired. The Guru had his own mission in Deccan, he therefore, decided to go in his company. For his object was also to impress upon the Emperor's mind the utter folly of the bigotry, animosity and narrow mindedness with which the Hindu subject was being treated. During this journey to the South he brought home to the Emperor the atrocities and monstrous cruelties with which the Muslim rulers tried to spread their faith and convert Hindus to Islam.

While marching to the South, the Guru occasionally separated from the Emperor in order to preach his Gospel. Once the Guru, followed by his disciples was passing by the 'Smadhi' of saint Dadu. In order to test the faith of his disciples, he lowered his arrow before the Smadhi as a token of salutation and waited to see how the Sikhs would react to it.

It is recorded that the Sikhs at once surrounded the Master and asked him to come down from his horse and explain himself. They accused him of having broken one of the principal tenets of his faith and therefore should be tried by a regular Commission

of the Five. He was obliged to confess and exculpate himself by paying a fine of Rs. 125/-. But he was much pleased with their alertness and in following the principles laid down and not personalities. Verily, the Light of the Perfect One had come to shine in them, when they could detect a flaw even in the most honoured of the personalities in the world.

The Guru finally parted company with the Emperor when they reached Nander (near Hyderabad, Deccan) on the banks of the river Godavri. He settled there and began to preach his Gospel of Nam. Thousands flocked round him to listen to him and be thrilled by his holy words.

(33) **Banda Singh Bahadur** : A secluded hut stood in a beautiful spot on the bank of the river Godavri. It belonged to a Bairagi or a monk named Madho Das. The Guru had journeyed a long way to Deccan, perhaps, to retrieve the soul of this ascetic and convert him to his faith and ignite him with Promethean Fire; so that he might continue to fight the Mughal oppressors and thus deliver the country from their cruel hands. It was as though ordained by Heaven that the Guru selected him. When the Guru came, the Bairagi was not in his hut. The Guru entered the hut and suddenly occupied the Bairagi's couch, which no one dared to touch. For Bairagi was known to possess some occult powers, and he mused himself in working miracles on whosoever visited him.

Now his men hastened to inform him about the strange intruder. The Guru's followers had also killed two wild goats and had cooked their meat in the forbidden square of the Bairagi.

Madho Das was an orthodox vegetarian and so he thought this was adding insult to injury. Therefore, he was mad with anger and rushed back to his hut ready to take revenge.

He violently moved headlong towards the Guru, in his fury without waiting to ask for an explanation. But all his powers failed him. When he found himself helpless, he then asked the Guru as to who he was and what was the purpose of his visit. The Guru answered that he was Gobind Singh and he had come to take him out of the evil deeds and to convert him, and retrieve his soul.

He had hardly caught the eye of the Guru, when he was pacified and his anger transformed into active worship. The divine light from the Guru's eyes dispelled the flickering darkness from the mind of the Bairagi, who immediately knelt before the Master and surrendered himself heart and soul and said that he was his Banda—slave.

The Master then instructed him in the tenets of Sikh religion and then and there, administered Amrit to him and initiated into the folds of his faith, and named him Banda Singh.*

Syed Mohd Latif M. A. in his History of the Punjab writes:-

“Gobind Singh by his persuasive eloquence and religious zeal made such a deep impression on the mind of Banda that he was initiated into the ‘Pahul’ (Amrit Ceremony) and became disciple of the Guru.”

*(Foot Note) : Refer: (1) Tarikh-i-Hind by Ahmed Shah of Batala
(completed in 1817 A.D.)

(2) Bakhat Mal's book “Mukhtisar Hal-i-Ibtida-i-Firqa-Sikhan.
(completed in 1811 A.D.)

(3) Ibrat Nama of Ali-uf-Din Mufti and Mohd Ali Khan Ansari
(1810 A.D.)

Banda Singh, as he heard from the Sikhs, the events in the Punjab which had preceded the Master's journey to the South, especially the episode of martyrdom of the princes at Chamkaur and those of younger ones, bricked alive in the wall at Sirhind, his blood boiled with rage. Anger lit his heart and aroused in him righteous indignation. He, therefore, yearned with all his heart to wage war against the tyrants and vindicate himself and punish the evil doers and subdue the cruel rulers.

The Guru, sometime before he left this world, granted his wish, at last. The Guru equipped him with his own bow and quiver containing five arrows, a standard (flag) of Saffron colour and a battle drum. He deputed five of the khalsas to accompany him and help him with their counsel and advice.

Banda Singh was to be the secular leader of the Sikhs. He was enjoined to adhere to Truth at all costs and to abide to the counsel of the Five and never to ignore them. He was assured that as long as he was true and faithfully obeyed the word and spirit of Guru's parting instructions, victory would ever abide with him. He was also warned that the Divine Grace was highly volatile and that it evaporated the moment it was warmed by the flame of self-seeking and Egotism. He was, therefore, instructed to follow the Master's Will and not his own, and thereby save himself from dangers and pitfalls. The counsel of the Five Khalsas (who were fully enlightened spiritually) would guide and advise him. Banda Singh took the oath, bowed and departed.

The outstanding example of Guru Gobind Singh's power to make the sparrow to hunt the hawk and one man fight a legion (sava Lakh) was Banda Singh

Bahadur, a hermit wedded to the creed of non-violence, whom the Guru made into the greatest general of the age.

He planted the Guru's flag in a village thirtyfive miles of Delhi. The Sikhs from all over the Punjab gathered under his banner and made such powerful and devastating attacks that within a few months of his arrival, they erased the Mughal administration from all over the Cis-Sutlej territories.

Samana, Shahabad and Sadhaura were among the first important places to fall in Banda Singh's hands. He next moved in the direction of Sirhind, whose governor, Wazir Khan, came out to meet him with a large force and an innumerable host of Muslim crusaders. The battle was fought on the plain of Chappar Chiri on May 12, 1710. The cold-blooded murder of the young sons of Guru Gobind Singh associated with the town and its governor was still fresh in the memory of the Sikhs. They made so strong and sweeping attack that the enemy could not stand against them. Wazir Khan was killed in the battle. His minister, Sucha Nand, who had supported the order of the governor of bricking alive of the infant sons of Guru Gobind Singh was put to sword. Sirhind was razed to the ground.

In the next few years Banda Singh fought the Mughal Subedars in several pitched battles. His raids extended from the Himalayan foothills where he set up his headquarters to the Jumna-Gangetic Doab. Lahore and Delhi were two islands in a surging sea of Banda's soldiers. Emperor Bahadur Shah failed to crush him and died in delusion of victory over the Sikhs.

In the whole of the world history, there is no figure

so remarkable, and mighty who without any equipment and without resources could have challenged the mightiest empire, as that of the Mughals and in so short a time brought it to its knees as did Banda. Even the mightiest of Monarchs and the greatest of the world generals had not performed the wonders that Banda Singh achieved during a brief span of a few years. Banda need only to be touched to be stirred into great action—the gentle touch of the Master was enough to inspire him to intense vigour and activity—that he became a hawk from a sparrow.

Guru Gobind Singh, never wielded arms except to save a soul. Whoever died under his bow, died on earth only to live eternally in Heaven. Guru was God-Sent. He was all love. He was the saviour come to earth. He created an ideal man—Khalsa. He struggled to establish, the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, but not to wreak vengeance or build an Empire. Where love abides there is no room for revenge. It was not for him to take up arms against those who slew his sons. When he took to arms, it was to save the stricken Punjab or down-trodden Kashmir, where Islam was being forced upon people at the point of the sword. The Guru raised his sword not for personal ends but for righteousness—for saving and up-holding Hindu Dharma from the bigotry and oppression of the Muslim rule.

But Banda Singh was born retribution, he was the shadow or the reverse of Guru Gobind Singh. The sword of Banda Singh Bahadur struck, but he had no balm, he fought only to punish and kill and not to save. Aurangzeb reaped what he had sown. Banda Singh was a personification of all that were vindictive.

He recoiled with greater and increased strength of revenge on the tyrant.

Banda Singh Bahadur overran the whole of the area from Lahore to Delhi and destroyed root and branch all those oppressors and cruel administrators and meted out punishment to one and all for their past misdeeds.

Ultimately in the winter of 1715 A.D., Banda Singh was surrounded at Gurdaspur Nangal and starved to surrender.

Banda Singh along with his family and over 700 companions were brought in irons to Delhi for execution. The scene is described by Mirza Mohd: Harisi who was an eye-witness:

“Those unfortunate Sikhs, who had been reduced to this last extremity, were quite happy and contented with their fate; not the slightest sign of dejection or humility was to be seen on their faces.—And if any one said: “Now you will be killed,” they shouted back: “Kill us then. When were we afraid of death?”

The execution began on the 5th March, 1716, A.D. and continued for a week. They were watched by thousands of citizens. The scene, graphically described by British envoys, was perhaps the first glimpse of Sikhism given to the West. They record that not even one Sikh bought his bodily safety at the price of his faith.

After 700 men had been executed (including a young newly married boy who refused to accept pardon) came the turn of Banda Singh on 19th June, 1716. He was taken to Mehrauli, eleven miles south of Delhi. He was offered pardon if he accepted Islam. On his refusal to do so, his son, Ajai Singh, was hacked to bits before his eyes and the boy's heart was thrust into Banda's mouth.

Before Banda Singh was executed, a Mughal noble-man, Mohammed Amin Khan, said to him: 'It is surprising that one, who shows so much acuteness in his features and so much of nobility in his conduct, should have been guilty of such horrors.'

Banda Singh replied :—

"Whenever men become so corrupt and wicked and the tyranny of the despotic rulers passeth all bounds, then Providence never fails to raise up a scourge like me to chastise a race so depraved; but when the measure of punishment is full then he raises up men like you to bring him to punishment. As you and I can see."

Translated

Banda Singh's flesh was torn from his frame by red-hot pincers and he was put to death in a most brutal manner.

Banda Singh Bahadur lived like a meteor, blazing a life of transient splendour and yet his name will sparkle, when true national history of India would be written, for his wondrous achievements which were no less than miracles.

(34) Life at Nander : At Nander, the Guru selected a charming and a lovely spot on the bank of the river Godavri, and he pitched his camp there. Crowds of people seeking spiritual light, love and life flocked to him.

He spent the last days of his earthly life wrapped in the wondrous glow of 'Nam' which was similar to the life he lead at Anandpur. The same divine songs, and the soul stirring Words spontaneously flowed as from a fountain renewing life and vigour to the lost and forlorn, sad and dry hearts. It was indeed a model of 'Anandpur' reproduced in Deccan.

Saiyad Khan, the former general of Imperial forces, who was so much touched with the divineness of the Guru in the battle field that he chose to fall at his lotus feet, now travelled all the way from Kangra hills to see the Master at Nander. One day, when Saiyad Khan, was seated in the assembly with the Master and his disciples, a messenger brought him a letter from the Punjab. The letter, was a sort of short song from his sister, Nasiran, telling in brief the story of heroic death of Sayyed Buddhu Shah of Sadhura. The Emperor's armies had ransacked Sadhura and treated Pir Buddhu Shah as a rebel for having faith in Guru Gobind Singh whom they considered as a 'Kafir'—infidel. The letter read:-

"Shah Sahib is gone to the Abode of Truth and now it is my turn. Though I have not seen the Master with these eyes, but I have drunk of His Beauty in my 'Dhyanam'. I have tied a white 'Kafin' on my head and have slung a Kirpan in my belt.

Thy Sister Nasiran, the Guru's Nasiran, is blossoming in joy to meet death as a soldier of the Master. Lo, brother! Farewell. Now I am going out to fight and die a glorious death."

The lady, Nasiran, who was born and bred up as a Muslim, was enlightened by the Master's divinity and her devotion led her to sacrifice her two sons, her husband and then her own life at the alter of righteousness.

After a long and weary journey, the messenger had found Saiyad Khan seated in the assembly sharing the joy and radiance imparted by the Master's glowing face.

As the letter was read, the Master closed his eyes and blessed his daughter, Nasiran.

(35) **Guru Gobind Singh's Ascension :** The close connections between Bahadur Shah and Guru Gobind Singh for sometime past alarmed Wazir Khan, the Nawab of Sirhind. For he had ordered the infant sons of Guru to be briked alive in the wall and it was he, who was responsible for inflicting most of the sufferings on the Guru. He feared that his life would be in danger if the new Emperor and the Guru should come to a compromise. He, therefore, conspired a plot to kill the Guru and he sent two young pathans to assassinate him.

One day, the Guru was having a nap after the evening prayers, the two pathans stole into his tent room. The Master's sole attendant was also feeling drowsy at the time and this afforded the pathans an opportunity to accomplish their mission. One of them thrust a dagger into his side, fatally wounding the Master. Before he could deal another blow, he fell a prey to the Guru's sabre. His fleeing companion was stabbed to death by a Sikh who rushed this side hearing the noise,

The Guru's wound was immediately stiched up by the Emperor's European surgeon and within a few days it appeared to have been healed. Soon after, when the Master tugged at a hard strong bow, the imperfectly healed wound burst open and caused profuse bleeding. But the Guru maintained his usual cheerfulness and so nobody could guess that his end was drawing near.

But to the Guru, however, it was crystal clear that the call of the Father from Heaven had come; therefore, one day in the sacred assembly of the Khalsa he gave the last and enduring message of his mission. Having placed five pice and a cocoanut before the Granth Sahib, he said:—

"So had the Eternal Father ordained,
 And therefore I set up the Panth,—The holy Way of Life,
 Hear ye all my Sikhs,
 This is the final commandment;
 The Word is Master now—
 Guru Granth, the Brahm Gyan, the Song of Nam.
 Let all disciples seek the Master in the Divine Word
 The Spirit of all the Ten Gurus
 Is enshrined in Guru Granth
 The Embodiment of the Divine Word."

(A free translation)

Having spoken the memorable words, the Guru bowed before Guru Granth, Brahm Gyan (Divine Knowledge) and so did all the Sikhs after him. As for his personality, the Guru had already merged the same in the Five Beloved Ones—The Khalsa. The Sikh history had been moving towards this divine end. There was to be no personal Guru in future for the Sikhs. Gurbani, the Divine Word would inspire and bring about the inner realization of the Impersonal Guru. The Guru—God's Light is eternal, ever-lasting, ever shining and all-pervading. His presence can be realized in the firmament of our soul, through Gurbani, and Sangat (Association of the Khalsa).

Thus fulfilling and completing his mission he retired for the night. About an hour and a half after midnight, he arose and began to recite the Divine Word. He, then called his Sikhs around him and bade them the last farewell.

WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA
 WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH

(The Khalsa is of God, the Lord
 And to God is the Victory)

(Translated)

The Sikhs were shocked at what had so unexpectedly happened. Deep was their grief that they had not the opportunity of talking to the Master at the last moment before his departure.

The Master returned to his Eternal Home. This happened on the 5th of the bright half of Katik, Sambat 1765 (7th October 1708 A.D.). The Guru was then 42 years of age. His stay at Nander was less than a year.

Come out, O Saki ! once again
 And manifest Thyself in our inner spiritual realms
 And dye our minds in the fast crimson colour of Thy Love
 That this may never get soiled
 And ever remain spotlessly clean and bright.

Pray, stay on Thy Door of Mercy
 A little while more,
 And pour out of Thy Flask the Ruby Wine
 On our broken bowls
 That the very pieces may combine with joy of Thy presence,
 And may still hold on Thy Wine,

Till the dead rise, the dumb sing and the blind see
 And all the three drunk with Nam-Ras
 May dance round Thy Throne
 In pristine glory of the manifestation of Man again !
 And welcome a new sun rise in a new sky
 Incarnadined by the splash of Thy Ruby Wine.

(The Author)

THE EVER LIVING PRESENCE OF THE GURU

Guru, the Divine Master is a prolific Being,
With all powers endowed.
Being Supreme, Infinite Spirit,
Nanak, Guru, is for ever and ever in presence.

(Guru Arjan: Bilwal)
Translated.

Our Father Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, before he physically left this planet and hid himself in the Eternal Realms of the fathomless Spiritual Infinity, said to his disciples: "I give you now these Divine Songs. The incorporated sacred hymns will be the voice of the Guru to his disciples. The Word is the Master, now I name this Embodiment of the Word, as Guru Granth Sahib."

The Guru thus promised his own presence for all times to come, in the mystic person of "Guru Granth". Guru Granth Sahib is Man with Divine appointment. Guru Nanak is still with us, a Song, a Book—nay Braham Gyan. We bow to Braham Gyan—Divinity incarnated. Guru Grantha is in every home. And the Father still sings so sweet, his voice still rings in our ears. Gurbani is surcharged with the Guru's Spirit. The Divine Word enlightens and inspires the seekers of Truth.

The Master is still before us in his Khalsa. Khalsa is he, who day and night constantly abides in Ever-Awake Divine Light of Consciousness and in whose mind the Full Moon of the Divine Light shines forth. The Man is still the centre of life. The

saint reminds us of the Father's love, he speaks with confidence: "Look, the Father-of-All is still standing behind, who sees ye, but whom ye see not. Be full of reverence every moment of your life. Beware! let not the Guru-given fire within die out! Keep up the Flame of Nam, let not the Flame die out." Love for the Man of God is very love of God. This common thing is precious beyond value. This is what Jewelers know. My soul! Rise, awake and say Hail Master, Hail Holy One, Lord Thou art Wonderful."

The disciples of the Master live not by bread alone, but by every Word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord. The Guru's Word is the voice of God arousing the soul to spiritual effort.

When the Guru appeared to a person, drawn by his child-like consciousness, he was wonderstruck to see the Master. He simply blushed and was speechless. He did not know what to say and how to welcome the Lord and sing his glory. The first gift of the Guru was the gift of the song of praise in the name of Himself.

The inspired disciple then praised the Lord by those songs put into his soul. These flowers of songs were showered on the Divine Bridegroom. The poet in person stands in the back-ground of the Guru Granth. The Guru portion is absolutely silent. It is Eternity.

The Master also made prayers for the humanity in the name of himself in the first person and said, "Come ye little children, let thou thus pray to the Lord."

All divine poetry is thus disciple poetry. Words have been put in the mouth of the disciples for prayer and praise.

The Guru's hymns are sung to fill the disciples with the peace of God when they are faint and exhausted. Gurbani is the living fountain from which hundreds quench their thirst. It is like a snow-fed river in which we can dip our soul. This cools down all fire of passions and we feel refreshed.

Guru's songs give us joy, they vitalize the whole of our spiritual being, elevate it and ennoble it. We meet the Master in his hymns and kiss his Lotus Feet. Nanak pours the infinite of his soul in his lyrics, which is then poured into the hearts of the disciples who then participate in the Infinite.

We love to repeat his songs and recite them over and over again. So profound has been the influence of the constant repetition of the divine lyric that its pure cadence has dissolved in the very blood and bones of our people.

Of course, mere mechanical repetition, like the Namaz of the Qazi of Sultanpur, will not be a graceful act. We must learn to live, move and have our being in the rhythm of the divine songs and gather experience of love sensation and the thrill of life.

A Sikh is enjoined to rise early in the morning, bathe and say the Japji* of Guru Nanak, Jap Sahib and ten Swayas of Guru Gobind Singh. He may also repeat 'Sukhmani' and listen to 'Asa-di-Var'. In the evening he is to recite 'Reheras' and at bed-time, the 'Sohila-Arti'. And he is to remember and consciously repeat the Name of God at all times.

The Japji is a revelation, which springs from the God-illumined heart of Guru Nanak, in direct and

*Readings from the Japji & translation of a few hymns of Guru Gobind Singh are given in the next chapter.

constant touch with the Eternal Reality, the One-in-all and All-in-One. Japji is the burden of the whole Guru Grantha.

The day of the disciples begins with Japji. Whenever the worldly troubles encompass us, we go to Japji. . And as we rise in the rhythm of Japji, there is no more distress or dust. The sore melancholy of our heart and mind is made whole by Japji. It imparts the Spark of Life and the soots on our faces burn up and they begin to glow like roses. It is a charmed hymn. In its repetition is life.

Guru Granth Sahib is for ever calling us. It is the call of the Heavenly Father to his children reminding them that it is time to cease play and come home—offering to wash and cleanse their dusty faces and mud-smearred hands and feet with the Soap of Sabad. Those who heed this call, are purified in mind and body, receive and drink Nam Ras—the Honey of Life which the Divine Master gives them. Henceforth they are brought under the loving care of the Father, their faces glowing with the bliss of innocence and love.

Meeting the Guru, the personification of God, in the subjective realm within us, is a whole spiritual enlightenment in a glance. Without his Grace we grope in darkness. When Guru—the Impersonal manifests himself in our soul consciousness, he merges out as our personal God, thereby inspiring us with his continuous and enduring companionship.

Behold! He tarries at the door and gently knocks, if any man hears his voice and open the doors of his heart, he will come unto him and reveal himself. And fill the devotee's heart with wonderous strange new feelings, which will quicken every fibre of his

being with the creative instinct, and a veritable Elixir of Life. Man's whole soul will leap with joy, enlightenment and perfect peace, that human words and human mind cannot possibly picture. The man comes to realize, that after all these weary years of wandering, he has at last returned to 'his home' and entered into the Kingdom of God within him.

The more complete our faith, sincerity and surrender, the more will be the Guru's Grace and protection upon us. When he is our strength and shield, our rock and fortress, whom should we fear? The realization of his presence will carry us through all difficulties, obstacles and danger and we can go our way careless of all menaces, unaffected by any hostility however, powerful. Such are his loving care and tender mercies.

We should, therefore, take all our problems and difficulties to Him. His touch can turn difficulties into opportunities, failures into success and weakness into unfaltering strength. For the Grace of the Guru is the sanction of the Supreme. Let us, therefore submit the realm of our mind to him. Guru Arjan thus speaks in the 1st person while describing the condition of the mind of a disciple, when he is touched by the Grace of the Guru:-

"Happiness I have found in the child-like temperament.

I met the Master, he touched me.

Since then joy or grief, pain or pleasure,

Profit or loss or even life and death are same to me.

My mind remains undisturbed.

So long as I remained entangled in my own thoughts, desires and expectations

There were worries, sorrow and suffering.

But since I am touched by the Grace of the Guru,

There is constant peace and joy.

Before meeting the Master,

The more clever and skilful I tried to become
 The more were the bondages and chains around me.
 But since the Divine Master blessed me by placing his hand on my head,
 I became free of all cares, worries and anxieties.
 So long as I was engrossed in 'My' and 'Mine'
 I remained, as if, encompassed by poisonous snakes.
 But leaving all my cleverness.,
 I gave myself up in his hands,
 Like a child in the arms of the mother,
 Since then, I have slept comfortably without any worry.
 So long as I carried the bundles of responsibilities on my head,
 I paid the penalties and remained helplessly servile.
 I threw all these bundles at the feet of the Master
 And took refuge in Him,
 Since then have I become fearless,
 No more worry, no fear, no sorrow.

(Guru Arjan: Rag Majh)

So we must not leave our hearts cold and bare,
 but prepare in them a Royal Throne for the True
 King. Girding our loins in readiness, we ought to
 keep our lamps burning, as of those who wait and
 watch for their Lord. The Master of the House
 might appear any moment and delight us saying:
 'I still am here, My little children! Awake and
 say: Hail Master! Hail Holy One. Lord Thou art
 Wonderful.'

READINGS FROM GURU NANAK'S JAPJI

(Translated)

PROLOGUE

There is but One God—Manifested and Unmanifested One,
The Eternal All-pervading Divine Spirit,
The Creator, the Supreme Being,
 (omnipresent, omniscient, omnipotent)
Without fear, without enmity,
Immortal Reality,
Unborn, Self-Existent,
Realized through the Grace of the Guru.

JAPJI

True in the timeless beginning,
True in the past infinity of ages,
Even now, He is the Truth,
Sayeth Nanak, for ever & ever He shall be Truth Eternal.

I

Not by thought can He be comprehended
Tho' one thinketh a hundred thousand times,
Nor by silence can He be grasped
Even if, it were possible at all, to have continuous silence.
Without Him, the desire satiates not,
Even with the world-loads of wealth.
And of the countless clever devices,
Not even one availeth.
How then to attain the Truth?
How can the veil of falsehood be rent asunder?
Abiding by the Divine Will only,
Which is ingrained in our being.

.. ..

IV

The Lord is Truth Absolute
 And is manifested in Truth.
 Infinite are the ways in which He is described.
 His creatures pray to Him for all kinds of gifts,
 The Bounteous One gives unwearingly
 Naught is our own, all is His that we possess,
 What then should we offer
 That we might see His Kingdom?
 What sweet words shall we utter to win His Love?
 In the ambrosial hours of the fragrant dawn
 Meditate on True Nam and His glory.
 Our actions determine this vesture of body
 But salvation comes through Grace alone.
 Thus know, O Nanak,
 That the True One is all-in-all Himself.

V

He cannot be installed (in temples)
 Nor can He be created
 He is of Himself, devoid of material conditions
 Great are they and honoured of Heaven
 Who serve His Will,
 He is the Treasure House of all Goodness and Beauty.

Sing ye men, His greatness,
 Praise the Lord, and hear of Him
 Fill thy heart with His Love & greatness
 Thus ye shalt go free of pain & suffering
 And thy heart shalt be filled with joy & peace.

The Guru's Word confers the Celestial Music,
 The Guru's Word is the source of divine illumination,
 For the Guru's Word is inspired by the spirit of God.
 This life of holy inspiration is the Master's gift,
 Through His Good Will & Love one sees the presence of God
 everywhere.
 (we recognise no other gods & goddesses)

The Guru's glory is so exalted
 that even if I knew,
 It would be impossible to express in human language,
 But the Guru has unvelled one mystery:
 That there is but One Benefactor of all creatures;
 May I never forget Him
 (This is repetition of Nam, this is simran)

VI

I would bathe at the sacred places
 If by so doing I could please Him,
 But what use is this bathing
 If it pleaseth Him not that way?

How can mere bathing help,
 When in the whole wide world that I see around
 Nothing can be gained without right action
 In thy own mind, lie buried
 Gems, jewels and rubies
 Of thought, goodness & virtue
 But only if ye hearken to the one counsel of the Guru
 That there is but One Benefactor of all creatures;
 May I never forget Him.

VII

Were a man to live ages four,
 Or even ten times more,
 Were he be known all over the nine continents
 And were all men to follow him
 And he to win a name & fame
 And to get praise & renown of the whole world,
 Yet without the Light of His glance beaming on him
 He would be of no account whatever,
 Such a man would be a worm among vermins,
 A sinner amongst sinners,
 But wonderous are the ways of the Lord,
 He bestoweth virtue on the non-virtuous who repent
 And increasing blessedness to the virtuous

But I can think of none
 Who in turn could do Him any good.
 (He is the Infinite Supreme, above all!)

XX

If the hands, feet or body become dirty
 They can be washed clean with water
 When the clothes are soiled with dirt,
 Soap is applied and they are washed clean
 But when mind is defiled by sin
 Naught else availeth
 It needs to be washed
 With the Love of Thy Name, O Lord
 Thy Name can restore to its fair transparency.

'Virtuous' and 'Vicious' are not mere words
 Whatever one does,
 One carries its record along
 Just as men sow, so shall they reap
 O Nanak, they come and go
 As ordained by the Divine Law.

XXI

Small indeed is the merit of making
 Pilgrimages, penances, compassion and alms giving
 If one has not been within oneself
 And bathed in Ambrosial River within.
 If one has not felt holy inspiration within,
 If the seed of Nam is not put in the soil of the heart,
 If love has not yet sprung.

All kinds of Beauty are Thine, O Lord!
 No beauty whatever I have,
 How can I aspire to love thee
 If Thou makest me not to see Thy Beauty everywhere!

All hail to Thee!
 O Self-existent, Thou art the Word

Thou art the Primal Truth, Thou art the Eternal Beauty!

..

XXII

There are millions and millions of worlds below and above ours,
 Man's mind is tired of this great search.
 It cannot reach the end of His vastness.
 All knowledge of man and thousands of books of East and West
 Proclaim with one voice that He is boundless.
 How can the Infinite be reduced to finite?
 All attempts to describe Him are lost.
 O Nanak, He Himself knows how great He is.

XXIII

Ours is to lose ourselves in praise and worship
 Nor need we know His greatness
 No need to fathom the unfathomable.
 As the rivers and streams flow into the sea with their song
 Let us flow on to the Infinite
 Not knowing how vast is the ocean's flood
 Like an Ocean is the Lord Almighty.
 The devotees merge themselves in Him
 But cannot describe the greatness of the Lord
 On the other hand, kings who possess dominion as vast as the sea
 With heaps of wealth as high as mountain
 Are not equal to the little ant
 The ant that forgetteth not God in its heart.

XXVII

..

The same and the same and the Eternally True is my Master!
 He forever, subsists His Name is True.
 He is; He shall be; He cannot be thought away
 Nor doth He depart.
 He made this world of diverse shapes and colours,
 Fold on fold, embryo within embryo,

That new to new grows
 And my Lord watches His own Handiwork
 And enjoys its greatness and glory
 All moves by His will.
 He wills as He wills.
 None can undo His will.
 My Lord is the King of Kings, the Absolute!
 Nanak, it behoves us to remain resigned to Him.

XXVIII

Of what avail are thy ear-rings O Yogi?
 To be a true Yogi,
 Put on the ear-rings of Contentment,
 Make 'Spiritual Effort' thy begging bowl and pouch
 'Mind intent on God', the ashes ye rub on thy body
 'The thought of the death' thy patched coat
 'Virgin-like chastity' thy way, and Faith thy staff
 Make 'Universal Brotherhood' thy sect.
 To subdue the mind is to conquer the world
 Hail to Him who is the beginning of all.
 And who Himself is without a beginning
 The Primal, Pure, Eternal and Immortal
 Who is the same through ages & ages.

XXXII

Let my tongue become a hundred thousand tongues
 Let the hundred thousand be multiplied twenty folds
 With each tongue I would repeat the Name of the Lord
 Many hundred thousand of time
 For this is the path leading to the house of Bridegroom
 There are steps which we have to mount
 And become one with Him.

By hearing the news of Heavens High
 The self-conceited persons
 Who are like worms crawling begin to vie
 With those whose souls are lit by the glances of God,
 who beam with Beatitude Eternal.

XXXIII

O Lord! Throw me not on myself,
 Of my power I can nor speak nor observe silence
 Throw me not on my own strength;
 Of my will I can
 Nor pray nor give myself to Thee!
 Nor I can follow life nor even death!
 Nor by my own power can I a begger be or a king.
 Throw me not on myself;
 For by myself I can
 Nor gain my soul nor the knowledge of Thyself.
 Throw me not on myself.
 For I am unable to cross the Sea of change.
 I cannot, O Lord!
 All Power belong to Thee;
 Thou alone can do and undo all things
 Verily, Verily, Sayeth Nanak, no one can of himself be high or low.

XXXVIII

They, on whom God looks with favour
 Toil hard with patience as smiths
 Chastity of thought and speech and deed is their Furnace,
 On the anvil of understanding
 They hammer with the Hammer of Divine Word
 With the blast of Suffering and the Bellows of God's Fear.
 In the Crucible of heart full of love, they melt the Gold of Nam
 True is this mint where man is cast and recasts in the image of God,
 Where Man is the Word and the Word is Man;
 On such as these, He showers His grace and Glance and Bliss of Life
 Eternal.

(EPILOGUE)

Air like the Guru's Word gives us the breath of life,
 Water sires us, earth is our mother,
 Day and Night are the two nurses
 The whole world is playing in their lap
 Before the Great judge will be read out our actions good or bad;

According to our actions
Some of us shall be nearer to Him,
Some of us farther off.
But those who have fixed their Dhyan on Nam,
They shall pass above the pain of labour;
Their task is done.
The faces of those victors reflect glory
Nanak, many more, in their company, shall be saved.

TRANSLATION OF A FEW HYMNS OF GURU GOBIND SINGH

BY THY GRACE

Thou art O Lord formless, colourless, markless,
Thou art casteless, classless, creedless,
Thy form, hue, shape and garb
Cannot be described by anyone.
Thou art the Spirit of Eternity.
Self-Radiant Thou shineth in Thy splendour.
Limitless is Thy power.
Thou art the Lord of countless rulers
The King of kings,
The Supreme sovereign of the whole universe
Highest of the high,
Men, gods and demons,
They all sing of Thee
Nay, even the grass blades of the forest
Speak of Thee in myriad of voices:
"Thou art Infinite, Thou art Infinite,
O Lord, who can tell the count of Thy Names?
Thy names relating to Thy deeds I will state
Through Thy wisdom and grace.

(Jap Sahib—1)

.. .. .
Thou art O Lord;
Formless, Peerless, Beginningless, Birthless.
Bodiless, Colourless, Desireless, Dauntless.
Beyond thought, Beyond praise, Beyond apprehension, Beyond
knowledge,
Beyond time, Beyond action, Beyond fear, Beyond defeat.
Immovable, Invincible, Unassailable, Unconquerable,
Immeasurable, Unknowable, Unfathomable, Incalculable.
Above creation, above praise, above name, above definition,

Above work, above support, above bondage, above birth.
My obeisance to Thee.

(Jap-Sahib—29)

.. .. .

Thou hast neither sons nor grandsons
Thou hast neither friends, no foes,
Thou hast neither father nor mother
Thou hast neither caste nor lineage

(Jap-Sahib—148)

.. .. .

Thou art O Lord;
Eternal Existence, Consciousness and Bliss,
Destroyer of enemies of righteousness
Merciful creator, Indweller of all, Marvellous, and with Wonderful
powers,

A Terror to the tyrants,
Destroyer and Preserver,
Compassionate and Merciful.

(Jap-Sahib—198)

Thou art O Lord;
Pervading Spirit in all the fourquarter,
Dominant in all the four directions
Self-Existent and abiding in glory
Controlling everything for its good.
Pilot at two crossings, birth and death,
Embodiment of Grace and Compassion
Ever so near to everyone, Protector of all
Everlasting is Thy Treasure and Glory.

(Jap Sahib 199)

.. .. .

Those bathing at sacred places,
Generous, Charitable,
Those subduing the senses and practising physical restraint,
Performing multitude of religious rituals,
Those studying Vedas, Puranas, and Quran,

Of all climes and of all times,
 Those said to be living only on air,
 Celebrates, restraining their passions
 Thousands of them have I seen,
 But without the worship and love of God,
 All their deeds are of no account.

(Sudha Swaya 4)

..

Trained armies accoutred with coats of mail,
 Powerful, irresistible, unconquerable,
 Filled with high martial spirit,
 With indomitable determination
 Unshaken even if mountains on wings they encounter,
 Shattering the ranks of their enemies,
 Ready to humble the pride of mad war-mongers,
 They pass on leaving this world.
 But without the Grace of Almighty God
 They are of no account.

(Sudha Swaya 5)

..

The temple and mosque are the same;
 The Hindu worship and the Muslim prayer are the same;
 All men are the same; it is only through error
 That we see them different.
 All men are endowed with the same eyes, the same body
 And are a compound of the same elements.

Thus the Abhek of the Hindus and Allah of Muslim
 Mean the same Supreme One;
 The Puranas and the Quran sing of the same Lord.
 They are all of one form,
 The One Lord made them all.

(Akal Ustat 86, 16)

..

O Great God!
 Grant me this boon
 May I never waver
 From doing righteous acts;

May I never fear
 To fight evil in the battle of life
 Instead let confidence and courage
 Bring forth my victory.
 May my highest ambition be
 To sing Thy praises
 And may Thy Glory
 Be engrained in my mind.
 And when this mortal
 Reaches its limit
 May I die fighting
 With unbounded courage.

(From Chandi-Ki-Var)

He who constantly keeps his mind
 Intent upon Ever Awake Light of Consciousness,
 And never swerves from the thought of One God;
 And he who is adorned with full faith in Him;
 And is wholly steeped in the Love of the Lord,
 And even by mistake never puts his faith in fasting,
 Or in the worship of tombs, sepulchre or crematoriums,
 Or in anything else but devotion to One God;
 Caring not even for pilgrimages, alms-giving,
 Penances or austerities
 And in whose heart and soul the Divine Light
 Shines forth as the full moon
 Such a one is worthy to be deemed as pure Khalsa

(1st of 33 Swayas)

THE SIKH THOUGHT AND WAY OF LIFE

(a) Sikh Belief

Through countless ages, complete darkness brooded over utter vacancy. There were no worlds, no firmaments. The Will of the Lord was alone pervasive. There was neither night, nor day nor sun nor moon, but only God in ceaseless trance. When there was no creation at all, Nirankar (Formless), the Unmanifested Lord, was centred in Himself, Formless and Self-Absorbed. When He so willed, He became manifest as also unmanifest—He, the back-ground of all things. But just before the world of form was shaped and all was still in a single unit, in a state of oneness—all in Divine Light, we call Him Ik-Onkar—the IK—1—denotes His unity and uniqueness, He is one without any equal, in whom Nirgun (Absolute,) and ‘Sargun’ (One Being with attributes) both were reconciled; in whom subject and object were still one.

Ik-Onkar first formed Himself into Sat Nam. Sat Nam (The Word)—the Eternal and All Pervading Divine Spirit is the first manifestation of the unmanifest, and in Him all that *is*, has its being.

The whole universe flowed out of Sat-Nam. He made all things and unto Himself He shall again absorb. It is Nam that ultimately leads back the manifest into unmanifest One.

“For millions and millions of ages and for uncountable aeons,
There was nothing but nebulous density in the beginning
Neither planets nor sky was there;
Only the Divine Will was pervasive.

There was neither night nor day; neither solar system, nor satellites
but only God self-absorbed.

No atmosphere, no gases no sound,

No water or imprimis water

There was no time either.

When God willed, He created the universe

The expanse was caused without a formal cause,

None knoweth the Lord's beginning nor His end.

The Perfect Guru revealth this secret.

Nanak, those whom the knowledge of the Lord

Maketh to wonder,

Are caught into His Truth,

Since singing His glory,

They become aware of His wonder.

..
Guru Nanak:

(Maru Sohile 1-3-16)

"When Thou wilt, forthwith streams out wonderous cosmoses many
Pervaded all by Thy Hallo-Multicoloured, yea! by the Modes Three

Good and Evil then begin to be spoken of,

So did the fear of Hell and hope of Heaven.

There the entangling-net of Maya is cast, and all earthly snares,

Then follow Egotism; Illusion, fear, error and doubt,

Weal and woe, honour and dishonour; these in endless confusion.

A plethora of these verily! difficult, too difficult to explain.

This is all God's play and God Himself is the spectator,

But when He lets the curtain fall, then lo! all is One! The only One God.

(Guru Arjan's Sukhmani Sahib 21-6)

Translated.

"Through His Will He created all the forms of things,

But His Will cannot be expressed.

It is through His Will the streams of life do flow

Some are exalted and are in higher life, others are born low."

(From Guru Nanak's Japji)

Translated.

"From the One are all forms, all colours,

Yea, all contain the same air, water and fire;

And He the Lord seeth all in different forms

But rare are the God-wards, who reflect on this.

The Lord pervades all, at all places,

Yea, He the Manifest, Unmanifest.

He, of Himself, awaken one out of Slumber."

(Guru Amar Das, Gauri Gaareri)

Translated.

The Sikh thought is strictly monistic. There is nothing Eternal or Self-Existent except God. Both matter and soul are His creation: "From One, the many emanate and finally they all merge in One."

God is not detached from His creation. But while He is transcendent, He is also immanent. He is Sat-Nam—Eternal All Pervading Supreme Spirit, Which sustains the whole creation. He is One-in-All and All-in-One. He is thus described in a single sentence:—

"One Supreme Being-Becoming, All-Pervading Eternal-Spirit, Being that creates, Without fear, Without hate, Time-less-Form, Unborn, Self-Radiant, Known by the Grace of the Guru.

(Japji)

In the Sikh scriptures, God is described as the greatest moral being Whose justice is truest, who hears our complaints whether expressed or unexpressed, Who understands all our intention, and Who is the perfect Master of His Will.

God expresses Himself in His creation. By this very act, the Limitless is limited in the form of an individual which comes into existence. The individual exists as a separate entity so long as awareness of 'I-am-ness' persists.

"I-am-ness" or egoism is the limiting factor which limits the Limitless, Universal Consciousness into individual consciousness, separating Jiv-Atma from Param-Atma and creates the separated-asserting-self. It is because of this egoism that we are born, live, suffer and die.

The Root of Evil

Thus self-hood, or ego is the deep-rooted disease from which man suffers and is, therefore, the root of

evil, sin and the cause of pain. This self-hood, or individuality, appearing in the shadow of Maya, under interplay of three GUNAS (Raj, Sat, Tam) creates 'Karma' (action) and binds the individual to the wheel of birth and death. As long as the asserting of self persists, the Jiv-Atma or the individual soul, must reap the fruits of its own action or karma and remain subject to transmigration.

"The Jiva is bound by his own action.

(Guru Ram Das : Bhairon)

As long as he knows himself as the doer
He is subject to re-birth."

(Guru Arjan: Gauri Sukhmani)

Translated

Maya

We see neither God, nor His creation, in its true light, because we are enveloped by Maya (The Great Illusion) which individualizes our personality and gives the feelings of 'I-am-ness'. But from where has Maya descended?

It, too, is the creation of the Self-Same Supreme God; for darkness is nothing but the other side of the light, and yet how could we distinguish between light and darkness without knowing and coming to grip with either?

Maya, according to Sikhism has no positive existence. As the individual limited consciousness perceives the Reality only in the form of partial knowledge, which is a necessary corollary on account of the process of involution. Just as darkness is merely a negative aspect of the light so is Maya or ignorance, which causes illusion and doubt, an absence of knowledge.

The World is described in the Sikh scriptures not as an illusion or a source of sin, but as the very house of God in which he lives. The earth, therefore, becomes sanctified, being the "Abode of the True One."; for how could that who is Eternally True, create some thing which is eternally false?" True this world is transient and is subject to change and there are greater realities than this; but this does not mean that the world does not exist at all and is a mere dream, though it may be short-lived like a dream. But it does exist in reality.

The Evil: Good and evil are stern facts, and by no Vedantic hocus-pocus can we get rid of our individual responsibility for what we do. We carry the impressions of our deeds wherever we go, thereby determining our future accordingly:

"Good and Evil are not mere verbosity

Whatever one does, one carries its records along

Man reaps what he sows

God so wills it, O Nanak,

That consequently man must be subject to the cycle of births and deaths.

(Translated Japji: 20)

The question arises if God is good, why should there be evil at all in God's creation. From where has it come? Was it God who created evil or whether evil was due to the misuse of the gift of Free Will? A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit. The whole creation emanates from God, according to Sikhism. And because God is the embodiment of all that is good, nothing that emanates from Him could be real evil, all that is from God is good.

Evil is only something which is a partial view of the whole, something that gives that impression when not seen from the correct perspective. It is

an essential aspect of creation. Evil and good appear at one stage of this involution-cum-evolution and they disappear when the process of evolution culminates into the unitive experience of God, just as the white ray of light splits into its variegated spectrum while passing through a prism, and again gathers these multi-chromatic hues into its all-absorbing whiteness, when it becomes itself again.

*“Bura Bhala Tichar Akhda jichar hai du mahain”
Gurmukh eko bujhia ekas mahain samain.”*

Translation:

(Rag Sui Mohalla Guru Amar Dass)

“As long as man remains in duality, he talks of good and evil:
But the Gurmukh, who has realized Oneness of God, to him both are the same as they merge in One.”

The whole of creation is God’s Lila—a play of love, a sportive delight, whose significance and meaning is beyond the comprehension of human mind. Lila is motiveless. It is the delight of the Supreme Soul that all existence is born, by His delight it remains in being, to His delight, it departs. Creation is God’s play, His joy, perpetually inexhaustive, creating and re-creating Himself for the sheer bliss of that self-creation, of that Self-expression. By this very act the limitless is limited and the individual comes into existence as a separate entity. The individual-limited-consciousness perceives the reality only in the form of partial knowledge. So this brings in illusion, self-hood and struggle for existence starts. This Maya of ignorance brings in its train passions, anger, greed, attachment and self-conceit and these entangle one in the world. But the glory of light is enhanced by the presence of darkness in the world. Lust, greed and anger are there as human sentiments because God desires

to mould souls into noble ones, which can conquer passions and evils. Sufferings, struggle, trials and tribulations help one develop one's personality and character. Although, evil or sin is a fact, yet it is not a final and all-pervading fact inherent in the nature of creation.

Evidently, evil is not present on the purely material plane; for material nature is neutral, it is neither good nor evil. It is only when evolution reaches the plane of consciousness that evil originates; for it is only on this vital plane that self-assertiveness finds its expression and becomes forcible enough to preserve itself against all obstacles and hostile forces.

Evil arises under certain conditions and disappears when these conditions vanish. Evil is certainly a product of plurality and diversity, and consequent limitations combined with self-assertive, or egoism. In the final stage, when the veil of egoism is rent asunder and man is in tune with the Universal Will, then all become one; then there is neither good nor evil.

Free Will & Fate

As I have mentioned, the Sikh belief is that there was a timeless time when there was nothing but God absorbed in Himself, in a passive state; but yet He remained potential and endowed with His Will. When God willed, He created the Universe. That being so, there was no original sin or past 'Karma' at the beginning of the creation for which man could be condemned for ever:

"O when the world of form was not shaped
Where was sin and where was virtue then?"

(Guru Arjan : Sukhmani V 15)
Translated

“When there was nothing but void,
 Who then acted and for what acts
 Could one come to take birth?
 It is the Creator who sets the game going
 And views it in bliss
 It is the Lord who has created the creation

(Guru Arjan: Suhi)
Translated

When once, man goes through a cycle of birth and death, his character is no longer free of the past. By virtue of having lived a life once before he was born anew, he inherits characteristics of his past as well as that of his family and race. These characteristics undoubtedly contribute to his personality and being, and inescapably influence the moulding of his future. Further, the environment in which he lives, plays a part in shaping his character.

Apart from these factors that influence his character, man is fortunate to be endowed with the free will. This helps him modify those inherited and acquired tendencies which form his character. In doing so, he can reform his conduct and behaviour.

Freedom of action

If this were not so, he would not be responsible for his actions. True, under the circumstances man is free to choose and act to a certain extent and to that extent alone, he is morally responsible for his action.

1. “Good or bad that we do, we reap the reward thereof accordingly”
 (Guru Nanak: Var Asa)
2. “Why blamest thou others, blame thy deeds
 For thou receivest the fruit of what thou sowest.”
 (Guru Nanak: Patti Asa)
3. “You sow poison, but desire to gather ambrosia,
 Strange is the standard of justice you want to set up thus.
 (Guru Angad: Var Asa)
Translated

4. The Lord driveth thee by His command,
But His Pen move according to thy deeds
(Var Sarang Guru Ram Das: Shlok M. 1)
5. That what thou doest is writ upon thy forehead
From whom wouldst thou hide thy shame
When the Lord see-eth all.”
(Guru Arjan: Asa, Chant)
6. “The man reaps what he sows in the field of Karma
Ever remember the Lord, devotion to Him brings happiness.
If we are to gather the fruits of our actions,
Why should we then act in an evil manner?
Do absolutely nothing wrong,
Look always at what is to happen at the end.
We should play the game in such a manner
As not to be loser before the Lord;
We should work so as to make profit in the end.

(Guru Nanak: Asa di Var)

Translated

Thus our mode of existence in the present life is determined by our deeds of previous births. The destiny cannot be changed in the ordinary course. However, Sikhism does not postulate a belief in the indestructibility of ‘karma’. By constant efforts for good actions, by ceaseless remembrance and contemplation on Nam, we can counteract the effect of our past sins. By prayer and invoking grace the destiny can be changed or effaced. There is an interesting blending of effort and Grace in Sikhism. Grace follows honest effort, truthful living and loving remembrance of God. These are intertwined:

- (a) *Lekh na mithi he sakhi jo likhia Kartar
Ape Karan jin Kia Kar Kirpa pag dhar”*

Translation: Destiny cannot be effaced O friend, what has been ordained by God. But the Almighty who is the cause of everything may bless mercy.”

- (b) *“likhia pher na Saki jion bhavai Tio Sar, nadar teri
Sukh paiya nanak Sabad vichar*

Translation: “Destiny cannot be changed, as He wills, it takes place.

But happiness is obtained by thy Grace, Saith Nanak by meditating on the Divine Word.”

- (c) *“Janam Janam ke kil vikh naseh kot majan ishnane
nam nidhan gavat gun gobind lage Sehaj dhiana.”*

Translation: The sins of several birth are removed and man gets purified,

By singing praises of Lord in true awareness,

And further the man thus attains the balanced, inborn state of mind.”

- (d) *“Kirat karm na mitai
Nanak Nam dhan Nahin Khatia”*

Translation: Destiny cannot be effaced if a man has not earned the wealth of Nam. Nam can counter act the effects of past Karma.”

Again, the will of the man is not left helpless or isolated, but if through the Guru's Word, it is attuned to the Supreme Will, it acquires a force with which he can transcend all his past and acquire a new character. For the Law of Karma is objective and is at play in the objective world of three 'Gunas'. But when man becomes truly spiritual by imbibing Nam in the spirit, then Karma is of no consequence. The spirituals reap crops, they had never sown. It is the Realm above three 'Gunas' and beyond the poor 'Karma' and its deadly reckonings.

The common man may be susceptible about the outward incongruities in the thought of the sacred scriptures. There may appear to him contractions and inflicting views on men and things, crossing their

lines and planes of thought, cutting each other at infinite number of little points, now holding out the law of 'Karma' then dashing it down like a fragile snowball. Now saying this is Truth and then enunciating a still higher Truth, one sweet mood is contradicted by another still more fresh and still more new revealed. All this gives to the thought in Guru Granth Sahib the cosmic colour, which baffles all attempts at analysis, unlike the sphere restricted by man-imposed division and limitation. Beyond language, beyond meaning, the whole design of Guru Granth Sahib goes and fascinates the soul by an endless repetition and by taking the man from within. This artful blending of variety of notes goes on to compose an inner harmony. A chequer-board has black and white squares, but the design and pattern of the game depends on both. The contrast, despite its contradiction, is essentially complementary in mirroring the Designer through the compactness of His design. In depicting such design lies the real beauty of the sacred scriptures.

Life is not sinful in its origin, as we have seen. Having emanated from a Pure Source it remains pure in its essence. Impurities, however, pollute its state—such impurities as actions under Maya, or delusion. But sinful acts that have tarnished the brightness of our souls could always be expiated by Nam and thenceforth the soul sparkles with its original gleam and lustre.

Object of Life

The object of human life is to seek God and to be re-united with Him, from where life issued forth. Just as all waters must flow down to sea whence they

came, so all life must ultimately go back to God in Whom it was. All life is transient and moves on and on, on the whirling wheel of transmigration in accordance with its Karmas, or actions good and bad. Having gained a human body, this is our only opportunity to meet our Lord. God, whom we seek, is not merely a God of mercy or even a distant ruler to be prayed to and supplicated before, but an all too human God, like a bridegroom yearning to receive his youthful bride in His restful Arms. The analogy of the bridegroom employed over and over again in the holy Granth to explain and express the idea of the individual soul and that of the Supreme Soul is pregnant with a great meaning.

Process of Purification

We have already seen that it is the veil of "Haun-Main" or 'I-am-ness' which separates the Jiv-Atma (individual soul) from Parm-Atma, (Supreme Soul.) The Guru says:

- (i) "Haun haun bhit bhio hai bicho"
It is the veil of man's self-hood that stands in between.
(Guru Arjan: Sorath)
Translation.
- (ii) "Antar Alakh nah jai lakhia which parda haumna pai"
God is within us but unrealized, for there is screen of egoism in between.
Translation.
- (iii) "Nanak Hukme je bujhe tan haumne kahe na koi" (Japji)
He who realizes the Divine Will shall not assert his self-hood.
Translation.
- (iv) "Kiv sachiaran howie kiv kure tute pal
Hukam razain chalna Nanak likhia nal." (Japji)
How then shall we become truthful
How shall the veil of falsehood be rent?
Abide thou by His Command and submit to His Will with pleasure;
His Will, that is ingrained in our heart.
Translation.

Now the seeker or truth is likely to ask: What is the Divine Will, or His Commandment following which the veil of Ego will be rent and Truth realized?

Curtain of Sin

Because our conscience has been blackened with sin, or by the filth of our past deeds, in this life and previous lives, we, therefore, cannot directly pick up and conceive the Divine Command. Our minds have gone out of tune with the Infinite. So in order to realize the concept of Hukam (Command), we must approach the Guru or the Divine Master, who is pure of heart, sinless by nature, clear of conscience and at one with God, the Lord:

- (v) "Jab lag Hukam nah bujhta tab lag dukhia
Gur mil Hukam pachania tab hi ta sukhia."

So long as the man does not realize the commandment, he suffers;
But when after meeting the Guru,
The Commandment is realized, he acquires peace and comfort.

Translation.

There lies hidden an eternal yearning in the heart of the man for the Supreme Being and there can be no peace unless we seek Him and find Him out. This is the purpose of life. But under delusion of Maya, we are running after the shadow with our back to the Sun of Reality, and, therefore, we do not get peace in our pursuits of the worldly objects. Our hunger is never appeased.

- (vi) "Eh man essa Sat-Gur khoj lao jit sewie janam maran dukh jai
Sansa mul han howai haumen Sabad jalai
Kure ki pal wichon nikle sach wase man aie
Nanak pure karam sat Gur mile
Har jio kirpa kare razae."

(Shlok M. 3 War Wadhans M4.)

O my mind seek ye the True Guru
 By serving whom the pain of death and birth would end.
 There should be no scope left for any doubt
 And the ego may be burnt up with the Guru's Word
 The veil of falsehood in-between be removed
 And Truth may abide in the mind
 Nanak saith the True Guru is met by good fortune
 May the Lord's Grace be upon man.

Translation.

The Guru gives us the concept of the Commandment as under:—

(vii) "Eko Nam Hukam hai Sat-Guru dia bujhai jio."

To contemplate upon One Nam is the Lord's Commandment. It has been made clear to me by the True Guru.

Translation.

(viii) "Simir Gobind man tan dhur likhia."

Lovingly remember the Lord, this is the Commandment.
 It is embedded in the very core of human personality.

Translation.

(ix) "Mal kuri Nam utarian, Jap Nam hoia sachiar."

(Guru Amar Das: Var Ram Kali)

It is the love of Nam that removes the dirt of falsehood
 By repeating His Name, man becomes truthful.

Translation.

(x) "Sift salahan tera Hukam rajain."

To praise and eulogize the Lord is the commandment.

Translation.

(xi) "Tis ka Hukam bujh sukh hoi, Tis ka Nam rakh kanth proie"

Realize the Divine Commandment and be happy
 Lovingly remember Him always in thy mind.

Translation.

(xii) "Hukam mano Guru kera gawo sachi Bani."

(Guru Amar Das: Anad Sahib)

Obey the command of the Guru
 Sing ye the True Word.

Translation.

(xiii) "Bin Sabde bharam na chukai na wichon haume jai."

Without the Divine Word, the illusion cannot be removed
 Nor can the ego go from within.

Translation.

(xiv) "Ahanbud bandan pare, Nanak Nam chhutar."

Egoism lays the snares that bind the man

Nanak, it is the Nam that liberates the man from bondages.

(Guru Arjan: Gauri Bawan Akhri)

Translation.

(xv) "Har ki bhagat bina nah sansa chuke Gur eh bheth batawe."

Without devotion to the Lord, the doubts and delusion of Maya cannot
be removed

This mystery has been revealed by the Guru.

Translation.

As we have seen, ego gives man his individuality and leads him to action. It also ties him down to the world and sends him on a cycle of births and deaths. From where does come this ego and how can it be suppressed. It is caused by delusion or Maya which brings in its train ignorance or darkness by the very fact of Limitless creating a limited individual. And this is God's Will. Thus ego comes to man because of God's Will. It is a deep-rooted disease, but it is not without a remedy. The evil can be cured when by practice of Guru's Word and contemplation on Nam one gets his tiny little will tuned to the Supreme Will of the Lord.

Reunion

The mere singing or mechanical uttering of the Word, however, does not lead to the spiritual realization, so long as one's actions are not in accordance to the Divine Commandment. It is, therefore, essential for one treading this path to control, but not to suppress the five desires. Sikhism being a Way of Life, one has to grapple with life in all its aspects and manifold activities.

By conscious and loving repetition of the sacred

Name, and its constant association with the life breath purifies the mind. Says the Guru:

“Intellect clouded by sin is washed by the love of NAM.”

(Japji)

Nam endows the mind with Light, and, therefore, the power to turn from unreality to reality. It disperses the mist of self and enable man to surrender himself to the Divine Will. And by complete surrender, a man, even when performing action, becomes actionless. Inspired by true devotion, with a passionate longing for God, a man holds himself as naught, the Beloved becomes the heart and focus of life, and no thought or action can be performed except in relation to Him. They who take refuge in Him, are freed from the bondages of Maya. What others seek by mental and physical efforts, by mastery over the senses, the devotee receives by consecration of his soul to the Beloved.

When through loving worship of God, our tiny ego is merged in the Super Ego, our passions and cravings like lust, anger, greed, attachment and pride vanish. In the pure and stainless Divine Light, all darkening shadows disappear. There is no more delusion, no more sin. The sense of duality is lost and we work and move in the Lord's Being and accept joyously His Will in whatever happens. We become instruments in His hands. The spark of fire merges in fire, the wave merges in the expanse of sea. The drop of water goes back to the Ocean, whence it was. We may say the man flows out of one self into the Supreme Being.

It is by the Grace of God that such a devotion

fills the heart of the disciple and he becomes one with God. Such a devotee:

“Is not aware of grief
 Even when afflicted with grief
 He is not aware of comfort, attachment or fear
 To him a lump of gold and clod of earth are the same
 He talks evil of none,
 Nor is he afflicted by praise
 Freed from greed, attachment, conceit
 Pleasure and pain, honour or dishonour,
 Hope and fear, desiring nothing from the world
 No more affected by passion and anger;
 On whom the Guru bestows His Grace,
 He alone knoweth the way to this conduct.
 Nanak, He becomes one with God
 As water with water.”

(Guru Tegh Bahadur: Rag Sorath)

Translated

The Sikh religion draws the seeker of Truth to the Feet of God, without weaving a cobweb of intricate philosophical thoughts. A single saying of the Guru shows the path of salvation. If we move one step, taking refuge in the Lotus Feet of the Lord, the Lord comes forward to receive us with millions of steps. A sincere self-giving needs no spiritual or philosophical learning. Knowledge imports itself to him who gives himself up to the Lord.

THE SIKH WAY OF LIFE

GURU NANAK, upon his advent, found the masses steeped in the darkness of ignorance with no soul-consciousness whatsoever. The tyranny and oppression of the rulers of the day and domination of the people by the priestly class had led to their demoralisation and degeneration. What passed for religion contained more of husk than kernal. The Spirit of Turth was buried under heaps of senseless dogmas, meaningless rituals and blind superstitions.

“The popular religion about the time of Nanak’s birth was confined to peculiar ways of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the fore-head and such other mechanical observances. The worship of idols—pilgrimages to the Ganges... The springs of true religion had been choked by weeds of unmeaning ceremonials, debasing superstition, the selfishness of the priests and the indifference of the people.”

(Sir Dr. Gokal Chand Narang)

The need of the hour was to restore the faith of the people in One God and to extricate all that hindered man’s relation with God.

First Thing First

Nanak placed first thing first. He exhorted the people to forget all supposed agencies of creation, sustenance and death. And he restored their faith and undivided loyalty to One God, as source of all creation. The religion, that Guru Nanak preached was strictly monotheistic, requiring belief in none other than the One Supreme Being only. Guru Nanak described God as Absolute yet Personal, the Eternal,

All-Pervading Divine Spirit, the Creator, the Cause of causes, without enmity, without hate, both immanent in His creation and transcendent. He is not jealous or merely a just God, but God of Love and Grace. That being so, He creates man not to punish him for his sins or to reward him for his good actions, but for realization of his true purpose in the cosmos and to merge-in from where he issued forth.

Way to Reality

Guru Nanak affirmed God as Transcendent "NIRGUN" as also Immanent "SURGUN" in whom personal and impersonal are reconciled. As such, he taught, there is a way to Reality, in and through the human soul. We can move and have our being in Him who is ONE-in-ALL and ALL-in-ONE. We can have constant communion with him through prayer. God being the Supreme Spirit, He is to be worshipped in spirit and not in stones, idols or pictures.

But there can be no true worship as long as man's mind is dark with sin. Without virtues, real devotion is not possible. So then, how can we purify the mind?

"Dirty hands, feet and body
 Can be washed clean with water;
 Soiled clothes washed clean with soap.
 But when the mind becomes dark with sin
 Naught else but the Love of the Divine Name
 Can restore it to purity.

"Righteousness and sinfulness are not mere words to talk
 Men's actions have retribution.
 Even as they sow, they reap,
 So saith Nanak, they come and go under His Divine Law."

(Guru Nanak: Japji)
Translated

“Bethinking the Lord, the mirror of mind is wiped bright,
 Bethinking Him, Nectrine-Nam illuminest self, like sunlight.”
 “By singing His praises, O man, thy filth of mind shall be removed,
 Thy inflated-egotism and seed of wickedness shall also be destroyed;
 Care-free ever! thou shalt in this blissful eternal dwell,
 Remember ever the Holy Presence, with every breath, with every morsel,
 Give up all cleverness, O crafty mind,
 In the company of the saints, this true wealth shalt thou find.”

(Guru Arjan : Sukhmani Sahib)

Translated.

So, we should humbly pray to the Lord, as for instance:

“All kinds of Beauty are Thine
 O, Lord, no virtue whatever have I,
 How can I aspire to love Thee, if
 Thou makest me not beautiful of heart and wakest me not
 To see Thy beauty everywhere.”

(Guru Nanak: Japji)

Translated.

The continuous daily prayers go on cleaning our minds and a day comes when the evil cloud of selfishness is removed and the Divine Light within the human heart shines forth in its full effulgence, rendering all our thoughts and actions pure and in unison with His eternal Laws.

Religion—Inspiration of Love

Guru Nanak preached that religion is inspiration of Love. The Beloved is in His people, and the service of the people is the service of God. His followers were to utilize all their energies in the service of God and humanity. So a Sikh—the Seeker of Truth, is a householder. He works and toils hard and earns his living by the sweat of his brow and then lovingly shares the fruits of his labour with his brethren.

Guru Nanak, thus, brought about a new consciousness, a new awakening, shaking all the old foundation

of time-worn society. There was a new creation, a new life. There is no parallel in the Indian history to the awakening that took its birth in the mind of Guru Nanak. He spoke with the voice of a deliverer, up-braided the rulers of the day and condemned the imposition on the people of the priest class and their hypocrisy. He thus delivered the people's mind from blind superstitions, empty rituals, mechanical ways of worship and dry formulae, which were so contrived as to make no demand upon the conscience of man, and in fact sapped the spirit of faith.

Renunciation Denounced

The hypocrisy of renunciation, the dogmatic systems of asceticism, the observances of fasts, vows of celibacy meaningless penances, and mortification of the body in several ways were all denounced. The practice of the physical Yogic feats acquired through mental and physical exercises were declared to be irrelevant. For, even if the mind could be stilled by Yogic practices, the man remains still remote from the love of God in this meaningless state of blankness, even as he was when disquietening thoughts filled his mind.

All those who sought Guru Nanak were blessed by his genial smile—this smile of the Infinite, together with his teachings inspired those who met him, and they soon forgot the fanatic time-worn views. Instead, overwhelmed by the Guru, they were wonder-struck and speechless and became immersed in the Ocean of Light. What took place is a most remarkable phenomenon of soul-consciousness. The disciple's soul was kindled by a Spark of Life. Henceforth, the disciples lived by its inspiration. They struggled to

keep this Flame burning in their soul day and night. This is what we call 'Nam-Simran'. His body thenceforward is a temple, his life a wholly dedicated in memoriam. His eyes see what those around him do not see. The man not so awakened sees the world as a solid reality; the man converted realizes that there are greater values of life than these and before those the facts of this world are mere illusions, as transitory as a passing show. His attitude undergoes a complete transformation.

Journey to Divinity

The life of the spirit really begins when the rain of His Mercy falls on man. It is the Guru's favour that helps man's soul on its journey towards the divine. This attainment could be likened to a man climbing up a mountain in order to get a full and perfect view of the valley down below, so the man realizes 'THAT' by seeing the Guru. Guru himself is the religion of the disciple. He is the Way and the Light. When Bhai Nandlal saw the Master, his eyes were unwilling to open and see any one else.

No spiritual regeneration is possible unless the Guru Sun rises in the firmament of our soul. Without him only darkness reigns our minds. His physical presence or absence from us is immaterial. For Guru is the impersonal personality above time and space. All worship in temples, churches and mosques is but futile without aspiring for this Glow of Life. It is a phenomenon in a spiritual world, as cosmic as the revolution of the solar system. If this Jewel-of-Nam is not embedded in one's consciousness, life is but one of sorrow, misery, distress and death. But

when it glows within man's soul, life is one of joy, prosperity freedom and immortality.

Religion purified

When sleep overcomes man, he is not conscious of his arms that might relax and fall to the sides by themselves—even so, when the Light of Truth dawns on man he undergoes a natural phenomena where all superficial beliefs and notions drop off. So all the way-side views and view points have been discarded in the hymns of Guru Grantha. The prejudices of ethics created by man are thus overcome. All gods and goddesses are eliminated and dispensed with. All the so called religious systems of philosophy are rooted out. The indulgence in pedantic philosophy, which had become a religious practice of the learned of those days, was no longer considered to be of any merit without living a good life. The so called creeds became broken reeds. All the chaff that was mixed up with the pure corn of religion was thus separated from it and discarded. Guru Nanak thus presented religion in a crystal clear and pure form in all its pristine glory.

Guru Nanak, unlike the Hindus of mediaeval ages, does not lay much stress on the meta-physical philosophy of life, which could be intellectually grasped and comprehended. Instead, he emphasizes the practical way of life which must be lived and experienced. It is true, there can be no practice without the doctrine. Sikhism, therefore, has for its doctrine, its view of Reality, its view of the nature, of man and his behaviour and his inter-relationship. But it lays primary stress on the practice, the discipline and the Way of Life, which is based not upon rules and laws but on disci-

pleiship and following the pattern or model of life set before him. In the career of the disciple, the Guru's personality is all along operative, commanding his whole being and shaping his life to the divine ends.

“They on whom Master casts his Glance of Grace
 Toil with patience at their crafts as smiths
 Chastity of thought, speech and deed is their furnace,
 Understanding is the anvil on which they hammer it out,
 Divine Wisdom serves as tools for those toilers at life,
 With the fire of sufferings and the bellows of God's fear
 They make the heart of Love the vessel in which melts the Gold of Nam
 True is this mint where man casts and recasts his being in the Image of
 God.”

(Guru Nanak: Japji)
Translated

We find Guru Nanak never preached but only planted with his own hand the seedlings of spiritual life in the soul of the seeker of Truth, and watched it steadily grow into a beautiful flower, as the gardener watches the flower plants.

Surrender essential

Religion to the Sikhs, is thus the art of living a beautiful flower-like life, a life of fullness, in all its aspects, a life filled with the fire and the fervour of God, a life of light, love and service; a life of vigour, vitality and valour in the midst of perils. This life of inspiration is the Master's gift. Man achieves this illumination through his goodwill and love. The enlightened one sees God's presence in all things and all places.

But this Spark of Life is the reward for those who lay down their egoism as a carpet under the feet of the Divine Master and surrender themselves head and heart unto him.

The world had laid down a number of valuable commandments; but they were all negative and one sided such as: "Thou shalt not kill, thou shalt not steal, thou shalt not lie etc." This emphasis on the negative side of virtue, lead to the adaption in the East of asceticism as the highest ideal of life, which ultimately meant the negation of all manly duties. Indeed, the monastic tendency of Hindu philosophy and Hindu life had well-nigh killed the spirit of true religion in India. Most of the holy men called the world "Maya" or deception, and shunned it. The result was that the so called religious leadership of India sat idle in slumbering meditation while the masses groaned under the heel of the Mohammedan invaders. Unlike many other saints and religious leaders of India, the Gurus did not allow their followers to confine themselves exclusively to a life of prayer and devotion. But they awakened in them a new political consciousness. Guru Nanak had felt outraged at the invasion of Babar when the town of Eminabad was subjected to massacre, loot and rape. Like a wounded father he shed tears of great sorrow. He did not sit idle in impotent rage but came forward and offered himself to be taken captive. Later he up-braided Babar when he appeared before him and made him repent for his deeds.

Sikh Chivalry

During the foreign invasions and days of oppression by the rulers, it was the women who suffered most. But it is sadder still that the Indian men failed to protect their own womenfolk. But with the advent of Sikhism however, the dignity and respect were restored to the noble Indian women. It resulted in a

magnificent role of chivalry. The Sikhs pledged their lives for the honour of Indian women. Such chivalry was even unknown in Europe or Rajasthan in India. The Sikhs were the knights who performed deeds of valour with no personal motives of attaining glory, no passions of worldly love to inspire them in the performance of their duty. The mere sight of wronged innocence or exploitation of weakness goaded them to action. The Sikh chivalry rose to such heights of greatness that there is no parallel to it in Indian history or even that of the world.

The ideal of life, which the Guru taught is not happiness, or a life of comfort devoid from sufferings. He exhorted the Sikhs to love God and serve humanity, which in itself provides greater bliss than the so called happiness and peace of a deadened soul, though in serving mankind one undergoes the trials and tribulations of life. The disciples were to suffer rejoicingly that they were counted worthy to suffer for His sake.

By far the most starting and revolutionary fact of Sikhism is the emergence of a race of God-conscious men, who operates in the mundane world of the phenomena, with the object of transforming and spiritualizing the life of earth into a higher and more abundant plane of existence. The God-conscious man is animated with an intense desire to do good in this world.

What is the discipline, the practice which Sikhism recommends as necessary and efficacious for attaining this God-consciousness and for yoking it to the urge for transformation of life, and humanity on this earth and on plane of mundane existence? It is the doctrine and practice of Nam.

“At the present age of living no other practice but that of Nam is efficacious, therefore, practice the discipline of Nam”, says the Master. Throughout the voluminous pages of the Sacred scripture of the Skihs, this fact is stressed again and again with a wealth of metaphors and imagery, illustrative material and exposition, that, at the present stage of mankind the discipline of Nam is the only suitable and efficacious practice that will lead to the vision of God. The limitation and sickness in the soul of man can be removed only by mercerising it with the chemical of Nam. Nam heals the wounded soul, wounded by sin, or by grief or by distress in life.

But it is the Divine Master, the Guru who sows the Grain of Faith in the soil of the heart. And this, Little Grain thus inplanted fills the disciple with inner radiance and blesses him so much that he falls on his knees and closing his eyes in rapture says: “Hail Master! Hail Holy One! Lord Thou art Wonderful—Wahe-Guru, Wahe-Guru!”

The chosen, thus blessed by Nam, while living and acting in this world, remain unaffected by its worldliness. The Swan swims across a lake, yet its wings remain dry in water. The Lotus blooms in a pond, but remains above and unaffected by its ripples. Even, so, the enlightened men of God, pass through the vicissitude of life with perfect calmness and confidence like that of a child walking beside his father. Life to such a man is joyous, beatific, and a wonderous venture. Goodness and peace radiate from such a person. He is called a Khalsa or a Singh who has reached the goal of life.

THE END