

Guru Amar Das

His Life and Teachings



THE LIFE & TEACHINGS OF

**GURU
AMARDAS**

ANJU KHOSLA

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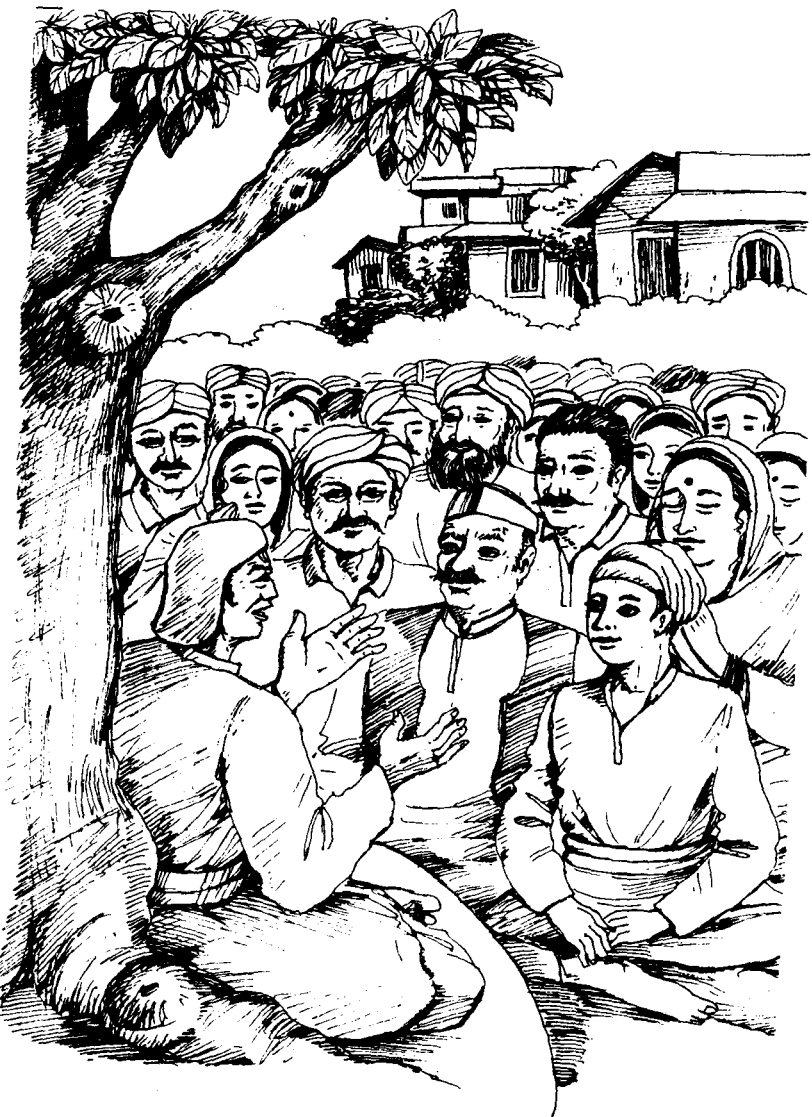
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EARLY YEARS

About 481 years ago, in the village of Basarkha about 8 miles from Amritsar, a son was born on May 5, 1479, to a trader, Baba Tej Bhan Bhalla and his wife, Rup Kaur. The child was named Amardas. He was the eldest in the family of four brother.

Amardas's parents had a religious bent of mind and spent a lot of time in religious and charitable activities. In this pious environment the child developed remarkable interest in holy activities. Encouraged by the kins he visited saints on the outskirts of the village, and served them with pleasure.

In due course, Amardas became familiar with the *Ramayana*, the *Mahabharata*, the Puranic literature and features of Hindu religion. He grew up to be a young man of religious temperament. Since he was a devotee of Mata Vaishno Devi he visited the pilgrimage places of all faith.



Schooling

During that time education was imparted by *maulvies* and *mullas*. Due to the predominant influence of Islam classes were held in the mosque. Urdu and Persian were the two languages which were taught, but *pandits* were engaged to teach Hindi to Hindu students. Even though there is no evidence to suggest that Amardas attended these classes, but traces of Urdu, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit expressions in *Bani* composed by the Guru show his acquaintances with these two languages.

Stress was laid on physical education in those days. These habits of childhood were evident even in old age when Bhai Amardas made a conscious effort to start *pathshalas* for teaching *Gurmukhi* and *Akharas* for the physical education.

Marriage

At the age of about twenty-four he was married to Ram Kaur, daughter of Shri Devi Chand, who belonged to the village of Sankhatra in Sialkot district. Ram Kaur was a God-fearing women who believed in carrying out religious duties. She proved an apt partner for the Guru. She helped her



husband in carrying out social work for the community and even in organizing festivals and ceremonies. The couple was blessed with two sons, Mohan and Mohri, and two daughters Dani and Bhani.

SEARCH FOR THE GURU

Once his sons grew up Amardas had ample time to pursue his religious activities. Although a man of profound knowledge of religious philosophy, his thirst to gain a better insight into life compelled him to search for a Guru. He adopted various paths in quest of one like fasting, living in the company of *sadhus*, etc. He even observed the penances performed by the *yogis* and hermits, attended the sermons and discourses delivered by pandits, and also visited holy men engaged in meditation in solitary caverns. Even though he held them in high esteem and valued their religious activities, they did not appeal to him as a Guru.

Meeting with Pandit

Bhai Amardas religiously visited Hardwar once a year for the holy dip in the river Ganges. On one such trip he came in contact with a monk called Brahmachari. Similar



interest in religion brought them together. On their return journey they stopped at the house of Durga Pandit, in the village of Mehre.

When Bhai Amardas was resting Durga Pandit, an astrologer by profession, noticed *Padam Rekha*, that is lines shaped in the form of a lotus on the palms and the soles of Bhai Amardas. The learned Pandit wondered at the interpretation of these lines, as the old man of sixty appeared to be a poor pilgrim while the lines indicated his fate to be that of a Chakravati king or a saint of supreme type. The Pandit spoke out loudly that the rekhas must bring their fruit. The sound woke Bhai Amardas. He smiled at the Pandit's prediction and offered some money as *dakshina*. Pandit promised to accept *dakshina* when his prediction would come true.

Next day, Bhai Amardas and the Brahmachari left for Basarke. They reached in a couple of weeks. Bhai Amardas's family welcomed them warmly. The Brahmachari stayed as a guest, and enjoyed the hospitality of Bhai Amardas.

One day, the monk asked Bhai Amardas about his Guru who had taught him such wisdom and piety. Amardas was silent for a

while, and then said he had no guru but he was in search of one. Instead of guiding or sympathising with his friend the monk lamented that he had eaten from the hands of a man who had no Guru! Before Amardas could pacify the guest he left the house without his belongings. This incident greatly troubled Amardas, and it kindled a new desire to find a Guru.

The Search for the Guru ends

Amardas was troubled by this incident and was unable to find solace for a long time. Though he would carry out various religious rituals and ceremonies dutifully, he still felt dissatisfied and incomplete. His mind was always restless as if desperately seeking something. He felt lifeless. He wanted a Guru, a teacher who could guide him spiritually, and help him resolve the inner conflicts that plagued him. He was looking for peace of mind and he knew that only a true Guru could show him the right path.

One day, as he was lying on his bed, he heard a sweet and melodious voice rendering some beautiful hymns. He woke up with a start. He found himself being drawn to the hymns. He walked towards the voice singing those enchanting hymns. As he went closer

and closer, the voice became louder and louder. He had this feeling, this wonderful feeling that his search for solace was coming to an end. As he approached the lake, he found Guru Angad's daughter, Bibi Amro, singing those hymns. He asked her what she was singing and who had taught her such beautiful hymns. Bibi Amro, who used to sing hymns daily after her morning bath, was surprised at the question asked by her uncle-in-law. She informed him that they were devotional hymns that had been composed by Guru Nanak, and she had learnt them from her father, Guru Angad. She was made to recite these hymns everyday, after her morning bath, as it cleansed the mind and the soul.

Amardas knew that he had found his Guru. So deeply moved was he by the holy verses that he could feel that they were the words, the thoughts of the one who would become his spiritual guide for life. He requested Bibi Amro to take him to Guru Angad right away. Touched by his humble request, Bibi Amro arranged a meeting for him with her father.

The very next morning, she accompanied Amardas to Khadur, to visit her father. Khadur was a rural area in Amritsar. When

Guru Angad was made the second Guru of the Sikhs, he had been asked by Guru Nanak to stay there and establish a settlement in that small district.

When they reached the Guru's house, Guru Angad rose to greet the sixty-one year old man from his daughter-in-law's house. But Amardas immediately came forward, went down on his knees and touched Guru Angad's feet, even though he was twenty years his senior. Seeing this, Guru Angad was surprised as was everyone else. But Amardas humbly asked Guru Angad to accept him as his disciple and bless him. He requested the Guru not to think of him as a relative or even as a man older to him in years. Instead, he asked the Guru to take him under his wings and show him the right path.

One look at the saintly face of Guru Angad, and Amardas knew that this was the teacher he had been looking for. The angelic face of the Guru was so captivating that Amardas could not take his eyes off him. He felt very peaceful and serene in the Guru's presence. And now that he had found him, he was never going to let go. He pleaded with Guru Angad to accept him as his Sikh. Guru Angad smiled as he noticed his perseverance and keenness. Then he gently lifted him by



the shoulders and accepted him as his new disciple. So overjoyed and touched was Amardas that he began to cry, and thanked Guru Angad for giving him the honour of serving him.

Guru Angad then applied the tilak on Amardas's forehead and welcomed him to the Sikh community. From that day on, Amardas began living in Khadur, devoting himself completely to his Guru's service. He felt rejuvenated and alive as though he had been reborn. He derived great pleasure and satisfaction from serving the Guru in any way he could, and despite his age he never felt tired and weary. He began to look after Guru Angad's needs and requirements personally, and was involved in all the Guru's spiritual activities.

He worked all day in the Guru-ka-langar, helping out in cooking the food and serving it to the hundreds of people who came to eat. He served everyone with equal love and dedication, regardless of their background. This endeared him greatly to the poor who came there to be fed by him. He loved the daily prayers and would listen intently as the Guru preached to the whole Sikh community.

He would wake up very early in the morning to fetch water for the Guru's bath.

He never once shirked from his responsibilities, and did all his work with utmost dedication.

Life at Khadur

Bhai Amardas's day began before dawn each day. First, he would walk down to the river Beas, about 5 kms away, and fetch water for the Guru. No adverse weather conditions deterred his activities. Later he participated in reciting hymns in praise of God, served the langar, cleaned utensils, and took his simple meal. He stayed at Khadur doing odd services. His duties went on till late in the night. Only when the Guru was comfortably in bed would Bhai Amardas leave for Goindwal. This routine continued for twelve years.

SERVICE TO THE GURU

There were many occasions where Bhai Amardas proved his selflessness and devotion to his Guru. One such incident occurred when a very wealthy devotee of Guru Angad came to pay his respects. At the meeting, the visitor presented him with a dress which was made of a very fine material. At that time, Guru Angad had developed a sore in his foot, which was bleeding. While Guru Angad was admiring the dress, a drop of blood happened to stain the cloth. The Guru then asked Bhai Amardas to take it to the washerman and have it cleaned.

When the washerman saw the blood stain, he refused to wash it saying that washing would ruin the delicate cloth. When Bhai Amardas heard this he was really annoyed, as he knew that Guru Angad had indeed taken a liking to that dress. Not knowing any other way, he washed away the blood stain from the dress himself, without any sense of disgust.

When it was cleaned, he brought it back to Guru Angad. The Guru who had observed the whole incident was really touched by his humble and selfless act. At this, Bhai Amardas humbly folded his hands and said that by cleaning the cloth of its stain, his mind too had been washed clean of all the impurities. Hearing this, Guru Angad blessed Bhai Amardas.

Blessings of Guru Angad

In fact, there were many incidents like this that had helped Guru Angad make up his mind about who his real successor would be. He had often put his various disciples to test and each time Bhai Amardas surpassed everyone in his service, devotion and humility. Guru Angad became more and more convinced that Bhai Amardas was indeed the right choice for a Guru. However, the test that finally made the choice clear to all was conducted by the Guru, one stormy night.

It was a terrifying night since the wind was blowing wildly and the rain was pouring heavily. No one dared to venture out in such a weather, when thunder and lightening seemed to wreck havoc everywhere. Around this time, Guru Angad asked for some water. He called out to his sons, but none of them

heard him. He called out again but they pretended not to hear. The Guru then shook them and woke them up. He asked for either one of them to get him some water to drink.

After the sons got up grumbling about being woken up at an unseemly hour, they found that there was no water in the house. They informed their father about it and were about to get back to bed, when Guru Angad asked them to get the water from the river. The sons almost fell off the bed and expressed their horror at being asked to venture out on a night like this! But the Guru persisted, saying that his throat was dry. The sons refused and went back to bed.

Bhai Amardas, who had been watching the whole incident, came forward and sought permission from the Guru to fetch the water for him. But Guru Angad refused, saying that he was too old for such a work and he would not allow him to go. But Bhai Amardas would not hear of it, and begged permission to go. And then, touching Guru Angad's feet, he set out to fetch some water. He placed the pitcher on his head and walked towards the river.

It was a dark and rainy night and the wind was blowing furiously. Bhai Amardas kept reciting the holy hymns and quickly filled the pitcher on reaching the river. It was so dark

that night that Bhai Amardas could not find his way back to the Guru's house. And yet, he moved on while groping in the dark.

On the way, he happened to pass by a weaver's house. He could see nothing in the dark, and suddenly, his foot hit against a peg and he fell into the hole in the weaver's loom. He was hurt by the fall. On hearing the thud, the weaver's wife woke up and came out with a lamp to check what it was. When she saw Bhai Amardas, she immediately recognised him and in a grumbling tone remarked that only Guru Angad could be so insensitive as to send one of his very old disciples out for water on a night like this. This remark angered Bhai Amardas. He would have calmly heard any complaint made against him, but he could not bear to hear anything said against the Guru. He immediately retorted that she must really be out of her mind to speak ill of the Guru. Saying this, he went on his way with his pitcher full of water.

When Guru Angad came to know of this incident, he called Bhai Amardas to his side and embraced him. He then openly declared that he was nominating Amardas as his successor. He declared that nobody had all the virtues that were expected of a Guru,



except Amardas. He said that only this devotee possessed the qualities of devotion, humility and selfless service that made him worthy of becoming the next Guru. He praised the new Guru for the service he had rendered him, and acknowledged it by conferring the robe of honour, known as 'Saropa' on him. The Guru then blessed his disciple and proclaimed that henceforth, Bhai Amardas would be the home for the homeless, the strength for the weak. He would be the new spiritual leader of the Sikhs.

Non-Violence

Once there were no rains. The crops withered and the tanks went dry. The zamindars of Khadur approached a *bairagi* who claimed to have occult powers to bring rains. The bairagi took this opportunity to get rid of his rival, Guru Angad. He agreed to perform only on condition that the Guru should be asked to leave the village. Guru Angad left Khadur immediately.

The bairagi performed the rituals but it did not rain. At that time Bhai Amardas was not in Khadur. When Amardas came to know about the incident he was beyond himself with rage. He agreed to help the zamindar on the condition that if he was successful in his

mission then the bairagi should be treated with slaps, shoes, and buffets, and thrown out of the village. The villagers agreed. Bhai Amardas prayed to God, and rain fell cooling the heated earth. The zamindars carried out their promise.

Then they went to Guru Angad asking for forgiveness and begged him to return to Khadur. Guru Angad was very unhappy with Bhai Amardas for using his miraculous powers. Such powers according to him intervene in the will of God.

Bhai Amardas repented his deed and asked for pardon. He then promised not to use violent means henceforth. The Guru granted pardon, and returned to Khadur.

THE GURU'S CORONATION

Under Guru Angad, Amardas grasped the spirit of true religion. Once Bhai Amardas, during a course of talks, requested the Guru to reserve the Guru's *gaddi* for his eldest son little knowing that he himself was the first choice of the Guru. The Guru replied that only the most deserving would get it.

When Guru Angad, the second Guru, foresaw his death he appointed Bhai Amardas as his successor. He sent for five copper coins and a coconut, and washed Amardas with his own hands, put new clothes on him and installed him in the Guru's seat. He placed the five copper coins and the coconut before him and asked Bhai Budha to apply *tilak* on his forehead. Thus Bhai Amardas became the worthy successor of the throne of Guru Nanak.

Amardas was a tall, sturdy old man—a symbol of love and labour. He had a knot of silver hair on top and white beard flowing



down like a beam of moonlight. He was seventy-three years old at the time. He lived in great simplicity save for two single sets of clothes, he gave away all his other possessions.

The place where Guru Amardas's anointment took place is called Thara Sahib. A gurdwara has been built there.

THE EMERGENCE OF GOINDWAL

Goindwal Sahib is a town near the river Beas and is about 25 Kms from Taran Taraan, which is the Sikh headquarters in Amritsar district. The city owes its existence to three Gurus—Guru Amardas, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan. It was founded by a certain Gonda Marwaha during Guru Angad's time. Almost a decade later, Guru Amardas made Goindwal his permanent abode, after he took over as the new Guru of the Sikhs. He did so because Guru Angad had wished that he make Goindwal the headquarters of the Sikhs.

In fact, there is an interesting story about how Goindwal came into existence. It is believed that the place where the city stands today was at one time haunted by evil spirits. Visitors to the area would often get mobbed by dacoits. As a result of this, no one would come anywhere near that area and, so, it remained barren and uninhabited.

At that time, Gonda who had won a case against his relatives had promised that he would establish a new township for the Sikhs to commemorate his victory. But whenever he got some work done on that area, it was mysteriously demolished. The workers claimed that it was the work of the evil spirits. Gonda decided to approach Guru Angad and seek his help. On hearing all this, Guru Angad realised that it was the work of his enemies, who did not want to see this new township come up. He asked his disciple Bhai Amardas to stay there and personally supervise the construction work.

Amardas immediately got into action. He knew that it was important to build houses so that people could start settling there. He arranged for the construction work to begin. Before Guru Angad died, he asked Guru Amardas to make Goindwal a major centre of all Sikh activities. This is what Guru Amardas aspired to do.

As the third Guru of the Sikhs, he realised that it was important to have all the Sikhs come together as a united community. He brought them together spiritually by preaching to them daily and holding prayers for the whole community. He would sing devotional hymns and ask the Sikhs to join in.

He would also explain the teachings of Guru Nanak to them with great patience and in a simple manner. Soon his teachings spread far and wide and more and more people began to visit Goindwal to meet the Guru and hear his divine words. Most people who met him once, did not want to go back. They decided to stay in Goindwal. And, as a result, it became more and more difficult to accomodate them. Soon it was brought to the notice of Guru Amardas, who immediately granted more land for houses, and the construction work began. But the population of Goindwal had increased so much that there was a sudden shortage of timber for construction.

When the Guru was informed about it, he realised that they would have to get timber from some other town. For this purpose, he called his nephew, Sawan Mal, to get timber from Haripur, in Kangra district. He instructed him to take a few men along to Haripur, and seek the Raja of Haripur's permission to cut pine and cider trees. They were then to float the logs down the Beas river to Goindwal. Soon the men reached Haripur and obtained the Raja's permission to cut the trees. Within no time, the timber was on its way to Goindwal and the construction work went on in full speed.

The Raja of Haripur too had heard a lot about Guru Amardas, and expressed his desire to meet the Guru. The Guru welcomed the king and all his queens to the langar.

Now it was known that the Guru was totally against the custom of veils for women, and it so happened that one of the queens insisted on wearing the veil before the Guru. When Guru Amardas saw this, he scolded her by saying that it was foolish of her to feel conscious in his presence. The minute he said this, the queen actually went insane and began tearing of her clothes. When the others tried to calm her down, she broke free from their hold and ran away into the nearby jungle.

A few days later, one of the Sikhs known as Sachansach went to the jungle to collect wood for the fire. He was busy chopping wood when he was attacked by the crazy queen. He was so terrified that he immediately ran to Guru Amardas, and informed him about the mad woman. At this, Guru Amardas handed him one of his slippers and asked him to protect himself with that.

The next day, Sachansach went again to the forest and this time, when the crazy woman attacked him he shielded himself with the slipper. When the woman's hand touched



that slipper, she immediately came back to her senses. She went up to Gurū Amardas to seek his blessings and forgiveness. From then on, she became one his most sincere devotees.

Construction of Bawli

The most famous and sacred spot of Goindwal even today is gurdwara Bawli Sahib. It is a well with eighty-four descending steps. It is believed that one can escape the eighty-four lakh incarnations by reciting *Japji* on each step.

During those days a wheel installed at the top of the well could draw the water up by means of buckets put on chains which revolved, as the wheel was worked by oxen. This water was used for domestic and irrigational purposes.

Even today artistic decorations can be seen at the entrance to the bawli. There is a row of frescoes depicting scenes from Sikh history. The pictures of ten Gurus and Baba Mohan has been designed in plaster. Crossing the gateway there is a big dome. The walls are marbled with coloured stones.

As the story goes, Guru Amardas decided to dig a bawli in Goindwal. Bawli is an open water reservoir with wide steps approaching the surface of water. The devotees decided to

dig the reservoir, but they found that there was a rock that hindered their progress. The Guru was informed about it. The Guru advised that the slab had to be blasted, but one who did it may not live. Knowing the risk factor involved Manak Chand of Vairawal volunteered to go down the bawli for the task. The moment the slab cracked Manak Chand was over-powered and drowned. His widowed mother and young wife began to weep in agony. The Guru assured them about the safe return of Manak Chand. His body was brought out of the Bawli, and to everyone's surprise he came back to life.

CONFRONTATION WITH DATU

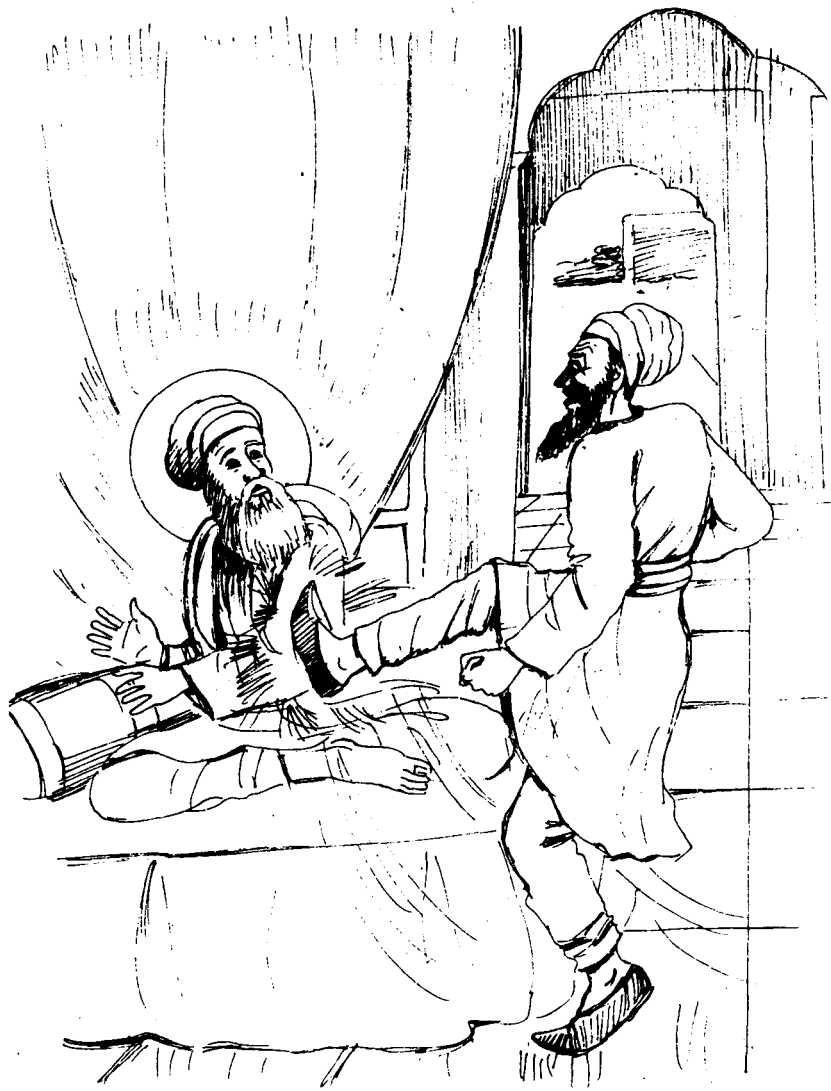
Guru Amardas had now firmly established himself in Goindwal, as his beloved Guru had wished. He devoted all his time and energy in doing the work entrusted to him, by Guru Angad. He had succeeded in bringing the Sikhs together as a unified whole. Under his leadership, they were stronger and more powerful as a group than ever before. He passed on Guru Angad's teachings, and guided his people along the right path.

Soon Sikhs from all over were drawn to him. His popularity began to grow day by day, with everyone singing his praises. People admired and respected his devotion and humility. All this made Guru Angad's elder son, Datu, very angry. He felt that he had been deprived of his birthright by Guru Amardas, and was very jealous of the Guru's glory and popularity which he believed was rightfully his.

One day, in a fit of rage, Datu decided to confront Guru Amardas. He reached Goindwal and walked straight into Guru Amardas's chamber. The Guru was at that time listening to divine hymns when suddenly, a raging Datu stood before him. He began yelling and abusing Guru Amardas, saying that a man who was till yesterday a mere servant of the house, could not become the Guru, and take what was rightfully his.

He even told Guru Amardas that since he was his father's servant, he would henceforth become his servant. He then kicked the chair that the Guru was sitting on. The Guru lost his balance and fell on the ground. Datu then immediately pulled the chair up and seated himself on it, claiming that from then onwards he was to be the Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Amardas who had been hurt by the fall, got up and instead of getting angry, he went over to Datu. He caressed his foot softly. Then he apologised for the hurt that his stiff old bones must have caused his foot. Then saying goodbye to Data, he left Goindwal and went away to the small village of Basarke, which was also his ancestral village. There, he locked himself in the house and placed a sign outside with a warning that whoever



opened this door would not be his Sikh anymore, nor he his Guru. In this manner, the Guru shut himself away from the world completely.

RETURN OF THE GURU

While the Guru was away, Datu ceased the opportunity and began to publicise to all that he was their Guru. He even demanded that all Sikhs pay their respects and offer their gifts to him, as they did to Guru Amardas before. But the Sikhs were not to be misled. They had respected and loved their Guru for too long and knew that he was their real Guru. Someone like Datu could come nowhere close to him.

The people began to miss Guru Amardas, and as the days passed they grew restless. Seeing Datu seated on the throne of Guru Angad, they began to hold him in contempt, and no one bothered showing him any respect. They were determined to get their beloved Guru back. They searched far and wide and prayed for him, but there was no clue about where he was. In utter desperation they decided to go to Bhai Budha and seek his help.

Bhai Budha understood the feelings of the Sikhs for Guru Amardas, and decided to help them find him. He sat down in deep meditation and concentrated hard to find out the whereabouts of the Guru, while all the Sikhs waited hopefully before him. When he finally opened his eyes, he suggested that the mare, which was one of Guru Amardas's favourite possessions be released, and he asked the Sikhs to follow her. He said that only she could lead them to their Guru. The Sikhs bowed to him and thanked him for his help. They then begged him to accompany them, since they knew they would need his help getting the Guru back after such a long time. Seeing their determination and their impatience, Bhai Budha agreed to go with them.

The Sikhs then let the mare loose and began following her for days. Finally, the mare stopped before a small hut in the village of Basarke. When the Sikhs read the instruction on the door, they were glad that they had found the Guru, but were also hesitant to enter.

They again turned to Bhai Budha and pleaded with him to show them the way. Bhai Budha then suggested that they break in from the back of the hut since that way they would



not be disobeying the instruction in any way. The Sikhs did as they were told and entered from the back. And before the Guru could say anything, Bhai Budha came forward and, on behalf of their Sikhs, reasoned with the Guru. He told Guru Amardas that Guru Angad had left the Sikh community to his care and now it was wrong to turn his back on them. He rebuked the Guru for punishing them for Datu's misbehaviour. The Sikhs then begged him to return to Goindwal and take over as the Guru of the Sikhs.

Bhai Budha also described how Datu was ill-treating the Sikhs and setting a bad example. By shirking from his responsibility, he had allowed Datu to undo all that Guru Nanak and Guru Angad had so laboriously done for the Sikhs. The Guru then realised that the Sikhs needed him, and he would rather lay down his life than let his Sikhs down. He returned to Goindwal.

Even today, the broken wall at the back of the house in Basarke stands just as it was. No attempt has been made to repair it. Today it is a pilgrimage site for the Sikhs.

Datu's Fate

Meanwhile, Datu who was being ignored by the whole Sikh community also heard of the

return of Guru Amardas. He knew that the Guru's return meant that there was no future for him at Goindwal. So he decided to return to Khadur. Since he was the one to accept defeat graciously, he collected all the valuables that belonged to the Guru, loaded them on to his mule and left for Khadur.

He had barely left Goindwal, when he was attacked by a band of robbers. They looted him and beat him up badly. One of the robbers hit his leg so hard that his foot was badly injured. It was the same foot with which he had hit Guru Amardas. Within no time, the foot swelled up so badly that Datu could not walk without feeling pain. It is believed that he had to put up with the pain for the rest of his life.

Back in Goindwal, the news of Guru's return had spread and people thronged the streets to welcome him back. Guru Amardas was indeed glad to be back, and realised how much he had missed his Sikhs. Within no time he resumed his duties by attending to the various needs of the Sikhs. He looked after their emotional, spiritual and social needs helped them integrate, once more, as a community under his spiritual leadership.



Faith in God

Gradually, Goindwal became a flourishing town. People from other communities also settled here including the Muslims. The Muslim youth harassed the non-Muslims on some pretext or the other. They pelted stones on the Sikhs who went to fetch water for the Guru's household, by breaking their earthen pots. The matter was brought to the Guru's notice. He asked the complainants to replace the earthen pots with skin receptacles or metal pots. This did not discourage the Muslim youths. They damaged the pots with arrows. The Guru had taken a vow never to adopt means of violence as a retaliatory measure. So he advised patience and faith in God.

A group of *sanyasis* happened to pass through Goindwal one day, and some Muslim youths misbehaved with them. A scuffle followed resulting in many casualties. There was peace in town for sometimes, but again the Muslim started the same practice. Every incident was brought to the knowledge of the Guru and he advised his disciples not to take law into their hands. Sooner or later God will give justice.

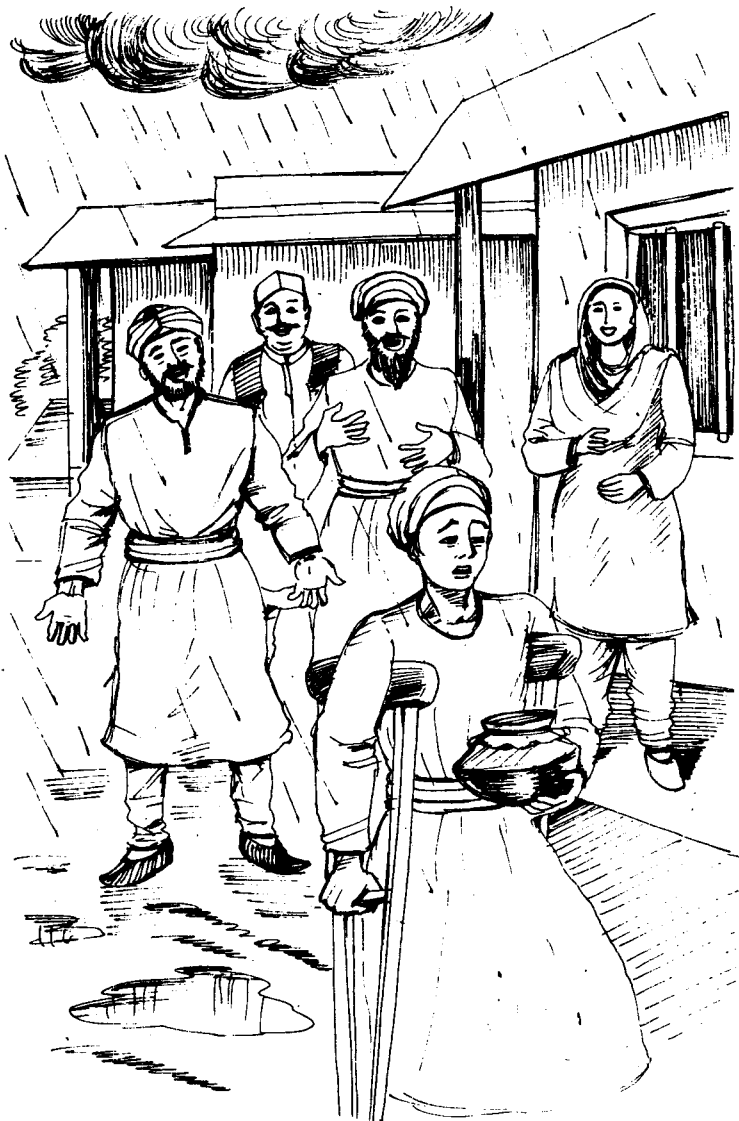
A Mughal force was carrying treasure from Lahore to Delhi. While passing through

Goindwal one of their mules was lost. It was carrying the state treasure. The soldiers searched everywhere, but could not find the missing creature. An announcement in this regard was made in town. But no one came forward with any worthwhile information. The mule which had been hidden in the Muslim quarters started braying in captivity. A search was conducted in the Muslim locality by the soldiers who even demolished many houses and took some muslims to prison. This is how God helped by giving justice.

ACTS OF MIRACLE

One such incident occurred in a village not far from Goindwal. In that village lived a devout young Sikh named Prema, who was lame in one leg and walked with great difficulty. And yet, he was such a staunch devotee of Guru Amardas that, every morning, he would religiously carry a pot of milk for the Guru's langar. He would use a crutch and walk all the way to Goindwal and back everyday, to serve the Guru. He would feel most satisfied and content after the daily routine.

One day, it had rained very heavily, and the road was slushy and slippery. Though it was dangerous for a person like him to go out in such a state, he still went without any hesitation. Picking up his pot, he began walking on his crutches towards Goindwal. He slipped a few times but that did not deter him. Some of the villagers, who saw him slip, laughed at him and advised him to stay home that day. When he paid no heed to them, they



began taunting him saying that if his Guru really had any divine power, he would have at least cured his devoted disciple of his disability. Though Prema was really hurt by their snide remarks on his beloved Guru, he remained silent and continued his journey.

Finally, he reached Goindwal and when he had deposited his pot at the langar, Guru Amardas called him to his side. He was aware of what the villagers had told Prema, and was pleased to see that the devotee had lived up to his teachings by not reacting angrily. He then asked Prema to go to a Muslim dervish known as Husain, who lived on the banks of the river Beas. He told him that Husain could cure his leg completely.

When Prema reached the dervish, the Muslim saint got very angry. He said that he had no such power, and thought that this lame man was trying to make fun of him. In his anger, he picked up a stick and rose to hit Prema with it. Seeing his anger, the lame man immediately got up and ran for his life. He had covered a good distance when he suddenly realised that he had left his crutches behind and was running on his own. He was amazed at the miracle. He could not believe his eyes! He ran back to the dervish and, falling at his feet, told him everything.

When the Muslim saint saw the miracle with his own eyes, he realised the power of the Guru for the first time. Lifting Prema up by the shoulders, he told him that it was all Guru Amardas's doing, and that his leg had been cured the minute the Guru sent him over to him.

The miracle was all the Guru's work, but he had wanted the dervish to take the credit for it. From that day on, Husain became a devotee of Guru Amardas, while Prema dedicated his life to the service of his beloved Guru.

There is yet another incident in which Guru Amardas cured a leper named Mohan. Mohan was born to a rich family but his parents suddenly died, leaving him in the care of his maternal uncle. He was taken good care of by his guardian but, unfortunately, his uncle too died within a short span of time.

Mohan was then put under the care of his paternal uncles who were very greedy and selfish. They took advantage of Mohan's young age, and divided the vast property amongst themselves. They completely neglected Mohan and finally, one day, threw him out of the house. Mohan had no choice but to beg on the streets to survive. In no time, the situation got so bad that he was struck

with leprosy. Most of the time, he was in extreme pain and would often cry out in agony. He was frustrated with his life and wanted to end it.

Then, one day, he heard about Guru Amardas. He was told that the Guru could cure all sorts of diseases, including leprosy, by bathing them in the holy tank at Goindwal. When Mohan heard this, he badly wanted to meet the Guru and get cured by him. But because of his disease, no one was ready to take him to Goindwal.

One day, a cartman who was travelling in the same direction, took pity on him and agreed to take him along. When they reached the city, the cartman dropped the boy at the gate of the Guru's house and left.

On the day of the healing bath, so many people had gathered around the Guru that it became impossible for Mohan to drag himself up to the tank. The crowd was so huge that he was sure that the Guru had not seen him at all. However, he did not lose hope and stood by the gates of the gurdwara, waiting for the moment when he could take a dip in the tank himself. In the meantime, he sat down to listen to the devotional hymns being sung during the prayers. He found them so beautiful that he started singing along in his

sweet and melodious voice. When the Guru heard him sing, he sent for him. Seeing the boy afflicted with leprosy he bent down, and wrapped him in his own blanket. Then he gave him a bath with his own hands, cleaning him with the water from the holy tank. After a while, he ordered his disciples to remove the blanket from Mohan's body. And when they did, they were as amazed as Mohan to see a clean and healthy body instead of the diseased one. Mohan fell at the Guru's feet and began crying. The Guru lifted him gently and gave him his blessings.

In yet another incident, Guru Amardas used his miraculous powers to teach a proud brahmin a lesson in humility. The brahmin had come to Goindwal on a visit. When he saw the reverence and sanctity with which the people viewed the holy tank, he was very critical. He scoffed at their naivety and said that there was nothing as pure as their holy river Ganga.

When the Sikhs heard this, they were annoyed. They wished someone would teach the proud man a lesson. They finally, went up to Guru Amardas and requested him to do something about the arrogant brahmin. The Guru then invited the brahmin to take a bath in the holy tank and the man agreed. When

he came to the tank, the Guru noticed that he had no jug of his own to take a bath with. When he asked him about it, the brahmin casually remarked that he had lost his jug while bathing in the river Ganga. At this, Guru Amardas put his hand inside the water and pulled out his jug from inside the tank. Seeing this, the brahmin was rendered speechless. He could not believe that the jug he had lost in such a far-off place could end up here. He knew that it was only the Guru's power that had made this possible. He fell at the Guru's feet and asked his forgiveness. The Guru forgave him and told him that a man's body can become pure by bathing in holy water, but his mind can be purified only when he shakes off his vices. He asked the brahmin to be humble towards other men. He also told him that pride was the biggest vice of all, and if he truly wanted to serve God, he should shake away all pride and vanity from his being. The brahmin sought the Guru's blessings, and left Goindwal a new man.

In another case, Guru Amardas resorted to miracles to teach a conceited devotee a lesson. In the city of Lahore, there lived a rich merchant named Ganga Das or Gangu, as he was popularly known. It so happened that due to some mistake his business suffered,

and he lost all his money in no time. Even his so-called friends deserted him. He was now poor and lonely. He was miserable and very depressed, and lost all interest in life. Then he heard about Guru Amardas and decided to go to Guru to seek peace, since his misfortune had affected him very badly. He reached Goindwal and headed towards his house. When he stopped to ask the way to Guru's house, he was told that anyone who wished to meet the Guru would have to first stop by the *langar* and eat food with the others. Gangu decided to stop there and eat. But when he went inside, he was surprised to see people from all castes and religion eating there together, on the same table. Being from a rich family Gangu hesitated, at first, to eat the same food as the low caste people. But he recalled the Guru's instructions and realised that if he had to meet the Guru, he would have to cast his prejudices aside and go by the rules of the Guru's *langar*. He sat down and ate with all the others.

Soon after, the Guru called him inside and asked him the purpose of his visit. At this, Gangu fell at the Guru's feet and narrated all the misfortune that had befallen him. He pleaded with the Guru to help him stand on his feet again. The Guru, after patiently



listening to him, asked him to go back to Lahore, and start his business afresh. He assured him that he would succeed in his business yet again, and also regain his former prosperity. But the Guru also added that he should never let pride and conceit affect him in any way. He also suggested that as a thanksgiving to God, he should make it a point to help the poor and needy. Gangu took the Guru's leave with renewed hope and went back to Delhi to start all over again. Soon his business started flourishing, and he was richer than ever.

One day, a poor brahmin came from Delhi to meet the Guru. After paying his respects to the Guru, he related his problem. He had a daughter whom he wanted to get married off. But he had no money, and thus needed help. The Guru then recalled the merchant from Lahore and immediately wrote a letter to him, asking him to help the poor man. He gave the letter to the poor man, and asked him to go and meet Gangu.

But Gangu had earned so much that he had become really proud and conceited. He had begun to feel that his success was because of his own hardwork and business sense, and not because of the Guru. And so, when the poor brahmin came to him with the letter, he

refused to part with any money, and sent the poor man away with nothing.

When Guru Amardas heard of it, he gave the required amount of money to the poor man and gave his blessings for the marriage of his daughter. The brahmin touched the Guru's feet and took his leave. On the other hand, Gangu's business suddenly took a turn for the worse. Once again misfortunes fell upon him, and he was back on the streets with not a friend in the world. When he thought about where he had gone wrong, he recalled the Guru's words and his recent behaviour with the poor brahmin. He immediately decided to go and apologise to the Guru for his behaviour.

But when he finally reached Goindwal, he felt so ashamed of himself that he could not go upto the Guru. So, he spent his days working hard at the Guru's langar and serving the Guru's Sikhs as best as he could. He also kept reciting the Guru's hymns which gave him strength and peace of mind.

A few days later, he was taken by surprise when one of the Sikhs came up to him and said that the Guru had sent for him. Unable to believe his good fortune, he presented himself to the Guru in all humility. He fell at the Guru's feet and begged his forgiveness.

Guru Amardas then told him that he had forgiven him the moment he had realised his mistake and repented for his sins. He, then, presented Gangu with a dress and instructed him to go back to Lahore and live according to the rules of the Sikh traditions, sincerely and honestly.

Gangu then returned to his town and remained a devoted Sikh till his dying day.

The conducting of miracles not looked upon favourably in Sikhism. Guru Amardas refrained from such acts, but incidence of supernatural happenings throw a light on the powers held by the Guru.

EMPEROR AKBAR AND THE GURU

Akbar, the Mughal emperor, visited Goindwal to meet Guru Amardas after the victory over the Rajputs at Chittore. Akbar met Guru Amardas at Chaubara Sahib. Even today Chaubara Sahib is a double storeyed building in an enclosed courtyard. The room, which the Guru had occupied, has its walls and ceiling artistically made with glass and stones of different colour set in multi-coloured plastic designs.

When Emperor Akbar reached Goindwal he was told of the Guru's instructions that nobody could see him unless he had taken his food in Guru-ka-langar. The king partook of the simple food in the langar. The more he had it the more he wanted it.

Later, he had an audience with the Guru. Emperor Akbar was impressed by the equal treatment given to one and all at the langar. The king wished to make a contribution to the Guru by granting *jagirs* for the maintenance

of free kitchen. The Guru declined the offer. Emperor Akbar, however, presented the jagir to Bibi Bhani, the Guru's daughter. The Guru accepted it saying that the emperor's contribution would be utilised for the widows and orphans, with Bibi Bhani as the trustee and treasurer. Those villages later on formed the nucleus for building the Golden Temple in Amritsar.

Jetha

One day, a group of devotees from Lahore arrived at Goindwal and expressed their wish to see the Guru. They had walked all the way from Lahore to have a glimpse of Guru Amardas and pay their respects to him. After they had eaten at the langar, the Guru granted them an audience. He met his devotees, and blessed them all.

In the group, Guru Amardas noticed a handsome young man, who had been introduced to him as Bhai Jetha. He could not help staring at Jetha as he saw a strange sparkle in his eyes and a certain glow in his face. He was also struck by the sincere devotion he had for him.

All the while that he stayed there in Goindwal he was never still and idle. He

would always be busy doing some work or the other. What pleased Guru Amardas most was that he did all the work with equal joy, dedication and satisfaction, no matter how demeaning the job was. He would always be busy cleaning utensils in the kitchen or serving food in the langar or helping in the construction of the bawli. He would look after his Guru's personal needs, and soon, Guru Amardas developed a deep affection for Bhai Jetha. He also learnt that the boy was from a poor but hardworking family, who were also very religious by nature. He had joined the group of devotees only because he wanted to see the Guru he had heard so much about.

Bhai Jetha had decided that he wanted to stay on at Goindwal and serve the Guru. He asked his Guru's permission to stay. Guru Amardas was only too happy. Even the Guru's family was pleased that he was staying back since he had endeared to them through his devotion and selfless service. One day, when Guru Amardas's wife was pestering him to look for a suitable match for their daughter, Bibi Bhani, Guru Amardas immediately decided on Bhai Jetha, and soon they were married.

On the wedding day, Guru Amardas, while blessing his son-in-law, Bhai Jetha,

asked him to choose a gift for himself, as was the tradition in those times. At this, Jetha humbly asked to be able to serve mankind as God to the best of his ability. Immensely pleased with his answer, Guru Amardas blessed him and also realised then that Bhai Jetha had all the qualities and virtues that were needed in a Guru. He found him worthy of the seat of the Guru because of his devotion and dedication to God and man. Even after his marriage, Jetha continued to stay in his Guru's house, and serve him with the same dedication as before.

Pilgrimage by Guru

It is said that the Guru undertook pilgrimage to the sacred Hindu places on the advice of Emperor Akbar, so that the Guru's detractors would have no cause to complain. He travelled through Ambala, Pipli, Kurukshetra and Karnal. When they were crossing the Yamuna bridge in Panipat the collector demanded tax. Guru strongly felt that there should be no tax on God's worship. So the Guru brought the matter to the notice of Emperor Akbar. Akbar was a just king and on Guru Amardas's advise he abolished the religious tax.

THE GURU'S REFORMS

Once Akbar camped at Lahore. He stayed there for more than a year. He had a large army with him which had to be fed. As a result, the prices of foodgrains and eatables went up. When he decided to leave Lahore for Agra, Guru Amardas feared that the prices of foodgrains will crash and peasants will suffer greatly. To pay land tax would be difficult for them. When Emperor Akbar met the Guru, he pointed out the difficulties of the farmers. Akbar immediately decided not to levy land tax that year. That good deed helped many peasants.

Temple Bread

Guru's idea of serving food in the community kitchen had a very deep meaning. It was a great leveller between rich and poor, high caste and low caste. All dined together without any distinction.

Guru did not encourage the idea of hoarding. The food was cooked for each meal, utensils emptied completely at the end and cleaned before cooking began for the next meal. Community welfare was commended not hoarding.

If food was left over then cows, horses, bulls and the buffaloes were fed. If anything still remained the disciples took it to the river, and feasted the fish with it.

Through actions Guru conveyed that food should be eaten for nutrition and health. It should be clean, health promoting and obtained through just and fair means.

Equality to Women

Guru Amardas preached against superstitions and social evils. He advocated that no women should come to the *sangat* with her face veiled. When the king of Haripur visited the Guru, his queens were all veiled. He discouraged this custom openly in the presence of the king. This way he made an effort to remove *purdah* system among women.

Sati Abolished

In those days, sati was a common practice. Women used to burn themselves in the pyres

of their husbands. Guru chalked out a vigorous campaign against this practise. He said sati is an insult to human dignity, and should be condemned.

Through Guru's efforts women began to receive the respect and honour they deserved.

Some more reforms

During his tenure as Guru, Amardas made many reforms for the community. They were as follows: one must avoid evil company, one should not be conceited and should not glorify oneself. One should eat and work according to one's capacity. One must give a little of one's earnings in charity. One should associate with virtuous people. Thus, Guru advised clean living, and serving people in a spirit of humility and devotion to God.

TEST OF JETHA

Guru called his two sons-in-law and asked each of them to build a platform for his morning and evening assembly. Rama and Jetha set to work and finished it. The Guru told Rama, the elder one, that his platform was not well built, and that he must break it down and build a new one. Rama built it a second and a third time with no better results. The Guru continued to give the same orders to him till in disgust he refused to rebuilt it any more.

Jetha was treated by the Guru in exactly the same manner. He built and rebuilt the platform seven times and each time with an increased joy and greater fervour, always falling on the Guru's feet imploring forgiveness and pleading ignorance of the Guru's exact requirements. When the platform was made ready for the seventh time the Guru blessed him. Jetha had passed the test.

Successor to the Spiritual Throne

When Guru Amardas was ninety-five years old he felt his end was drawing near. He sent for Bhai Budha and his two sons, Mohan and Mohri, and announced, "According to the tradition established by Guru Nanak the leadership of the Sikhs must go to the most deserving. I, therefore, bestow this honour on Ram Das known as Jetha."

In presence of all the disciples Amardas got down from his seat and placed Jetha there. Bhai Budha applied the tilak on his forehead. The spiritual sovereignty was passed on to the fourth Guru in 1574. There was rejoicing everywhere, but Mohan resented it as he felt he was denied his rightful place.

Amardas and His People

One day, Bhai Budha felt bad seeing the Guru eat coarse bread, while the people were always feasting on the langar. The Guru replied, "Bhai Budha there is no difference between me and my people. I eat with their mouth whatever you give them. That is my sustenance and not this coarse bread only."

Amardas loved his people and tried very hard to look after them.

Spreading of Fragrance

Guru Amardas had given authority and power to one hundred and forty-six of his apostles to go to various parts of the country, and spread the message of the Gurus. Out of the which ninety-four were men and fifty-two were women. The women acted as mothers to the orphans and protectors of many poor girls deserted by cruel husbands. Everyone in need and distress called upon them.

Bibi Bhani

Bibi Bhani was the youngest daughter of Guru Amardas. From her early childhood she used to recite the Guru's hymns and sit alone in meditation. Later on she helped in the Guru's kitchen. Even after marriage she looked after the comforts of her father.

One day, Guru Amardas was seated on a rickety wooden platform, and was praying to God. Bibi Bhani noticed the loosened peg of one of the legs of the seat. She immediately thrust her toe and balanced the stool. After a while the toe began to bleed. Suddenly the Guru saw blood. He soon realised that it was oozing out of Bibi Bhani's toe. When Bibi Bhani explained the matter to her father, he was so touched that he immediately asked her

all over India, but had not found peace anywhere. They had at last, received this life of peace at the feet of Guru Amardas.

Songs for the Lord

Guru Amardas contributed nine hundred and seven hymns to the *Guru Granth Sahib*—all of which were written between the age of seventy-three and ninety-five.

Guru Amardas's achievements during his tenure are considerable. By this time the Sikhs had emerged as a distinctive community. The Guru's teachings were as simple as his way of life. The community was delighted to see Guru Nanak's umbrella over Amardas's head.