

Guru Nanak Dev

His Life and Teachings



THE LIFE & TEACHINGS OF

**GURU
NANAK**

AMRITA SHARMA

Singh Brothers

Publishers, Booksellers, Exporters

Sole distributors:

Singh Brothers

Publishers, Booksellers, Exporters

Head Office: Bazar Mai Sewan,

Near Harmandar Sahib, Amritsar-143006 Tele: 254 5787

Showroom: S.C.O. 223-24, City Centre,

Near Guru Nanak Bhawan, Amritsar-143 001,

Tele: 0183-255 0739 Telefax: 0183-254 3965

E-mail: singhbro@vsnl.com URL: www.singhbrothers.com

Originally published by

STERLING PRESS PRIVATE LIMITED

A-59, Okhla Indl. Area, Phase-II, New Delhi-110020

Tel: 26386165 Fax: 91-11-26383788

E-mail: sterlingpublishers@airtelbroadband.in

Website: www.sterlingpublishers.com

© 2006, Sterling Press (P) Ltd.

Reprint 2012

All rights are reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form or by any means, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written permission of the publisher.

Illustrations by Virendra

Printed at Sterling Publishers Private Limited, New Delhi-20.

CONTENTS

1. Birth	5
2. Childhood and Education	7
3. Miracles	12
4. Worldly Affairs	17
5. Divine Call	21
6. Divine Work Begins	23
7. Preaching the Gospel of God	26
8. Reforming the High and Mighty	48
9. Back Home	55
10. Attaining 'Samadhi'	61

*To my mother,
whose smile has always been
my sunshine*

BIRTH

In the month of April 1469, which happened to be the third day of the lunar month *baisakh*, a child was born to Mata Tripta and Kalian Das Bedi, in the village of Talwandi, in Lahore, Pakistan. Kalian Das Bedi, more popularly known as Mehta Kalu, summoned his family astrologer, Pandit Hardial, to draw up the baby's horoscope or *janampatri*.

When the *janampatri* was drawn, Pandit Hardial was so awestruck that he pleaded with Mehta Kalu to let him have a glimpse of the baby. After touching the feet of the infant he told the parents that they were fortunate to have a son like him, who had a very bright future, and who would rule over the people of the world by his supreme grace.

He also said that the child would be a great person and his name and fame would spread everywhere. The little baby was going to be a unique king of kings.

The parents were overjoyed to hear the predictions. He, in fact, was none other than the founder of the Sikh religion, who is known throughout the world as Guru Nanak. Everywhere people celebrate the birth of Guru Nanak on *kartik purnima*.

The child was named 'Nanak' after his sister, Bibi Nanaki, who was so named, because she was born in her maternal grandparents (*nana's*) house. The people who came to visit him were amazed to see a smiling child. Everyone was drawn to him by his soft, compassionate and humane eyes. As he lay quietly in his cradle, his face and eyes seemed to be lost in deep thought. The people admitted that there was a certain peace and calm on his face that attracted them. Baby Nanak had already begun its work of ruling over the hearts of people, and spreading the message of peace and compassion among others.

CHILDHOOD AND EDUCATION

The most unusual thing about Nanak was that he was not like other children of his age. He did not waste his time and energy on useless activities like playing pranks, troubling others or hurting animals. He was active, healthy and fond of playing with his friends. His friends loved him and enjoyed his company because he was friendly, just and always at hand when they needed him.

Nanak was very kind-hearted and generous. He would willingly give away all that he had to anyone who seemed to need it. His parents could not afford such generosity very often, but when they looked at his sparkling eyes and happy face after he had given his things, they did not have the heart to stop him.

When Nanak was seven years old, he was sent to school to learn Punjabi and Hindi under Pandit Gopal. The Pandit began teaching Nanakji and found the boy to be

quick in learning. Before long, he had learnt reading, writing, arithmetic and book-keeping.

One day, Pandit Gopal found Nanakji sitting apart from other boys and writing something on a wooden tablet. Curious to know what the boy was busy doing, he asked Nanakji to show it to him. However, when Nanakji went up with his *patti*, the teacher was more than amazed. Before him was a poem, written in acrostics (in which the lines follow alphabetical order). What really astonished Pandit Gopal was the content of the poem. It dwelt on the subject of God, universe and man, on man's duty towards God and towards his fellow-beings.

The pandit took the child to his father and told him that his son was no ordinary man, but an *avatar* (reincarnation of God), who was destined to be a teacher of mankind. When Mehta Kalu insisted on more education, the teacher humbly replied that the child knew enough to teach his own teachers. He bowed before Nanakji before leaving him that day.

So Nanakji stopped going to Pandit Gopal's school. But Mehta Kalu was not satisfied with Nanakji's education. He felt very uneasy seeing his young son spending his free time in the company of *sadhus* and



fakirs. He soon consulted his family priest and astrologer, Pandit Hardial, about his son. Pandit Hardial, who was well-aware of Nanakji's religious bent of mind, had long known that Nanakji was not interested in learning accounts and other things taught by Pandit Gopal. He, therefore, advised Mehta Kalu to send his son to a Sankrit scholar to learn Sanskrit, where he could also study the *vedas* and *shastras* which were the subjects closest to his heart.

Mehta Kalu readily agreed to the suggestion and accordingly, Nanakji was sent to a Sanskrit scholar named Brijnath. Here too, the child quietly learned all that his teacher had to offer and resumed his old ways of associating freely with the religious men in the forests, and meditating at home. He talked with them on religion and philosophy, and heard their learned discourses on the *vedas* and *shastras*. All this provided him with the latest teachings of Indian philosophers and reformers. He felt most fulfilled in the company of sadhus and fakirs. They were his earthly links with God. He also meditated for hours at home which brought him closer to his own soul, and to his creator.

Mehta Kalu, of course, did not like all this. He felt that his son's interests were a great hurdle to his worldly interests. Like all fathers, he also wanted his son to be a successful man. But he could see no signs of it in Nanakji. He then decided to consult Rai Bular, his employer, who was the zamindar of the village, regarding his son's future. Now, Rai Bular had often watched Nanakji engaged in divine meditation, and had come to love and cherish him. He advised Mehta Kalu to send Nanakji to learn Persian. Since Persian was the language in which all the state documents and accounts were written. He also promised to give Nanakji the charge of his office, when he completed his studies, and later even appoint him *patwari* in succession to his father.

Nanakji's father was very pleased at the suggestion, and immediately sent his son to Maulvi Kutbuddin of Talwandi to learn Persian. But there also, the teacher had imparted all that he knew and Nanakji seemed to know more than him. Then Nanakji stopped going to school, and once again began to seek the company of religious men who were his elders in age, and peers in knowledge.

MIRACLES

At the age of nine, Nanakji had to undergo the *yagyopavita* ceremony, where the sacred thread or *janeyu* was placed around the neck. It is an ancient custom that symbolises the spiritual birth of a Hindu. However, when Nanakji surprised everyone by refusing to wear an ordinary cotton thread, Pandit Hardial was shocked beyond words as were the others present at the ceremony. He explained to Nanakji that a Hindu had to purify his soul and that this was an age-old custom.

But Nanakji had something else on his mind. He argued that he could not wear something that his pure soul would not take along with it, and would instead, break, get soiled or be burnt. He said he wanted a thread made of truth, purity and virtues of day-to-day life. If all these things did not come with wearing this thread he did not want it.

Everyone present was silent as they marvelled at the opinions expressed by a child of nine years. Nanakji knew he had to begin his work and this was the right time. Finally, he did not wear the thread.

As a boy, Nanakji showed no interest in activities that could bring him money and fame. Pandit Hardial decided to engage Nanakji in a cattle-grazing job. Nanakji was very happy. Every morning he set out with the cattle, and while they grazed he meditated under a tree, and returned home with them in the evening.

One day, it so happened that Nanakji was deep in meditation and a cow entered the nearby field of a peasant and ate up the crops. Just then the peasant appeared, and on seeing the crops destroyed, screamed at Nanakji and rushed to report it to the zamindar of the village, Rai Bular. Nanakji was asked to pay for the loss.

Nanakji calmly replied that he would do so if there had actually been any loss. Hearing this, all those who were present there went up to the fields. The peasant got the shock of his life because his field was full of crops and no damage whatsoever, could be seen. He humbly asked for Nanakji's forgiveness.

Another day, in the peak of summer, Nanakji lay under a tree while his cattle grazed. Just then Rai Bular happened to pass by. He was amazed at what he saw. Before him lay Nanakji, and a cobra sat near him, shielding him from the sunlight with its hood. He tried to scare the snake away. Many peasants who were working there beheld the strange sight with open mouths. Rai Bular came up to him and Nanakji smiled. He quietly bowed down before Nanakji, in great respect. He knew that he was standing before the messenger of God.

Nanakji began devoting most of his time to the worship of God. There were times when he would even forget to eat his meals. Seeing his condition Mehta Kalu thought he was ill, and quickly summoned a physician. However, when Nanakji was being examined, he shocked the physician by telling him that this malady was given by Lord Almighty and only He could cure it. It was only then the physician realised that this extraordinary boy had no mortal malady.

Then one day, Nanakji happened to meet a beggar who was being treated with utter contempt by everyone. Nanakji could not tolerate such an attitude and he asked the



beggar to beg God alone for his needs, and not men. The poor beggar could not grasp the meaning of such divine words and Nanakji, realising his plight, gave his clothes to him and went home. When rebuked by his mother for this act, he coolly replied that he had received divine orders for giving them away to a needy person.

WORLDLY AFFAIRS

Nanakji's parents grew worried at his total aversion to worldly things. One day, they decided to make him do some business, hoping that it would interest him in worldly affairs and family life. Mehta Kalu gave him twenty rupees and asked him to do some business in the *mandi* (market). He was accompanied by Bala, a man of his village, on this trip. However, it so happened that on the way he passed a place where many saints were staying. Nanakji immediately paid his respects to them, and on finding that these ascetics had not eaten anything for many days, he arranged for their food with whatever money he had. They bought flour, pulses, rice and *ghee* from the *mandi* and Nanakji fed the holy men with true devotion. He was never so satisfied as at that moment, when he was serving God's men. For him this was the best and the most profitable bargain.



Incidentally, there is a gurudwara called *sachcha sauda* or good bargain at the very site where he had fed the saints.

Nanakji's parents, however, were very disappointed with this act of his. They decided to get him married and hoped that it would make him worldly and responsible. Nanakji was sixteen years old when he got married to Mata Sulakhani, daughter of Baba Mul Chand of Batala, in the present district of Gurdaspur.

One day, on the advice of Rai Bular, Mehta Kalu sent Nanakji to Sultanpur. There at the request of his brother-in-law, Diwan Jai Ram, who was a high official in the Sultanpur State Services, Nanakji was appointed as the store incharge by the Nawab of Sultanpur. This made his parents and wife very happy. Nanakji performed his duties efficiently and everyone was satisfied with his work. In course of time, two sons were born to Nanakji, Baba Siri Chand in August 1494, and Baba Lakhmi Das in March 1497.

Around this time, Nanakji's childhood friend, Bhai Mardana, also came to live with him. They were very close to each other. Whenever Nanakji sat down to sing hymns in praise of God, Mardana would play the rabab

(a musical instrument) so sweetly that listeners gathered around them were enchanted with the depth and devotion in the songs. The two friends spent almost all their free time singing hymns by the riverside, with spellbound listeners around them.

Thus, Nanakji did not neglect his religious duties due to his worldly involvement. He often used to donate free grains to the poor, though by the grace of God nothing ever fell short.

But there were a few jealous men who did not like the popularity and esteem enjoyed by Nanakji. They went to the nawab and complained to him that Nanakji was misusing the granary. Nawab Daulat Khan fell prey to their vicious reports and went to the store himself to inspect it. But when the provisions were checked they were found to be not only sufficient, but a little more than expected. The Nawab's respect for Nanakji grew from that day.

DIVINE CALL

Nanakji, however, realised that the time for his mission had come. He had fulfilled his worldly commitments and performed his household duties faithfully for twelve years. Now it was time for divine work, and so he quit the job after that incident.

One day, early in the morning, as usual, he went to the river for his bath. He plunged into the river and sat in meditation under the water. His attendant waited for him but Nanakji did not come up for quite a long time. People began to cry as they thought that he had drowned in the river.

But Nanakji had gone to a lonely spot in the forest, on the other side of the stream, where he received his orders from God regarding his work.

After three days, Nanakji returned to the other side of the stream after knowing what he was to do. The whole village was overjoyed to have him back. Bibi Nanaki was convinced

that Nanakji could not be dead because she believed that he was a great soul incarnate, who had come to the world for the welfare of the people. And when she looked at her brother she fell down at his feet in reverence, for before her sat Nanakji, with a serene and calm look on his face and an aura around him that told Bibi Nanaki that she was going to share her brother with the rest of humanity now.

DIVINE WORK BEGINS

Next day, Nanakji began meditating by the riverside. He did not talk to anyone throughout the day and night. Then he began speaking. The first words he uttered were, "There is no Hindu, no Mussalman."

Slowly people began gathering around him and Nanakji preached them. It gradually began to dawn upon them that Nanakji was giving them the divine message, and that he was the answer to their prayers. The more the people realised that he was sent for their good, to guide them from darkness to light, the louder they sang his praises. It was from this day that Nanakji was called 'Guru Nanak.'

Guru Nanak preached that all Hindus and Mussalmans were followers of the same God. He said that all those who worshipped God honestly became His favourites. However, this was soon heard by a few fanatic Muslims. They complained to the *qazi* (Muslim priest)

about it. The qazi quickly informed the nawab that Nanakji was spreading blasphemous messages among the people.

The nawab, however, was an admirer of the Guru. He invited Nanakji to his court and respectfully gave him a seat next to himself. When the qazi questioned Guru Nanak, he replied that he was neither a Hindu nor a Muslim, but a lover of God and a servant of man. To him, all religions were different paths leading to one God and His abode.

He also said that all Hindus and Muslims are children of the same father, and thus, are brothers, and they should live together like members of the same family. He also preached that a true Hindu or a true Muslim should follow all the teachings and principles of his religion, and never do anything that might displease God. He should only do things which might please him, such as being kind, just and merciful to others; to harbour no pride, greed, jealousy or anger in one's heart, to have no fear of birth or death; to have infinite faith in God, to live by honest labour, and to share one's possessions with the needy and the poor.

It so happened that while they were discussing the matter, it was time for the

namaz (Muslim prayer). The nawab asked Guru Nanak to join in the daily prayers, which Nanakji willingly did. But when all the Muslims knelt down, Nanakji kept standing. The qazi was furious and demanded that the nawab punish Nanakji severely for not taking their prayers seriously. At this, Nanakji replied that no one, except Nanakji himself, was truly saying the prayers. He said that the qazi was only physically present during the prayers, while his mind was busy thinking of the mare who had just delivered a foal, as he was afraid that it might fall into the well in the courtyard. As for Nawab Sahib, he too was thinking about his agents who were busy buying and selling horses in Kabul.

On hearing this, the heads of all men present hung with shame because Guru Nanak had correctly read their minds. The Guru then explained that all those people who do not say their prayers in true devotion to God are not praying at all. Saying this, he departed.

PREACHING THE GOSPEL OF GOD

After this incident at Sultanpur, Nanakji began his mission as a teacher of the world. He decided to go on long missionary tours called *udasis*. But before that, he wanted to go to Talwandi and inform his parents of his intended tours. He travelled from village to village conveying his message to people. He established *manjis* or missionary centres in all the places he visited on the way. In every place he stopped, he taught people how to live and act as the children of God. He sang to them his sacred songs and explained his views to them.

When he reached Talwandi, his parents were shocked to see their son dressed as a sadhu. They pleaded with him to cast away those clothes and support them in their old age by living with them and doing his duties as a son. But Nanakji explained to them that he had to obey God's call and serve the poor,

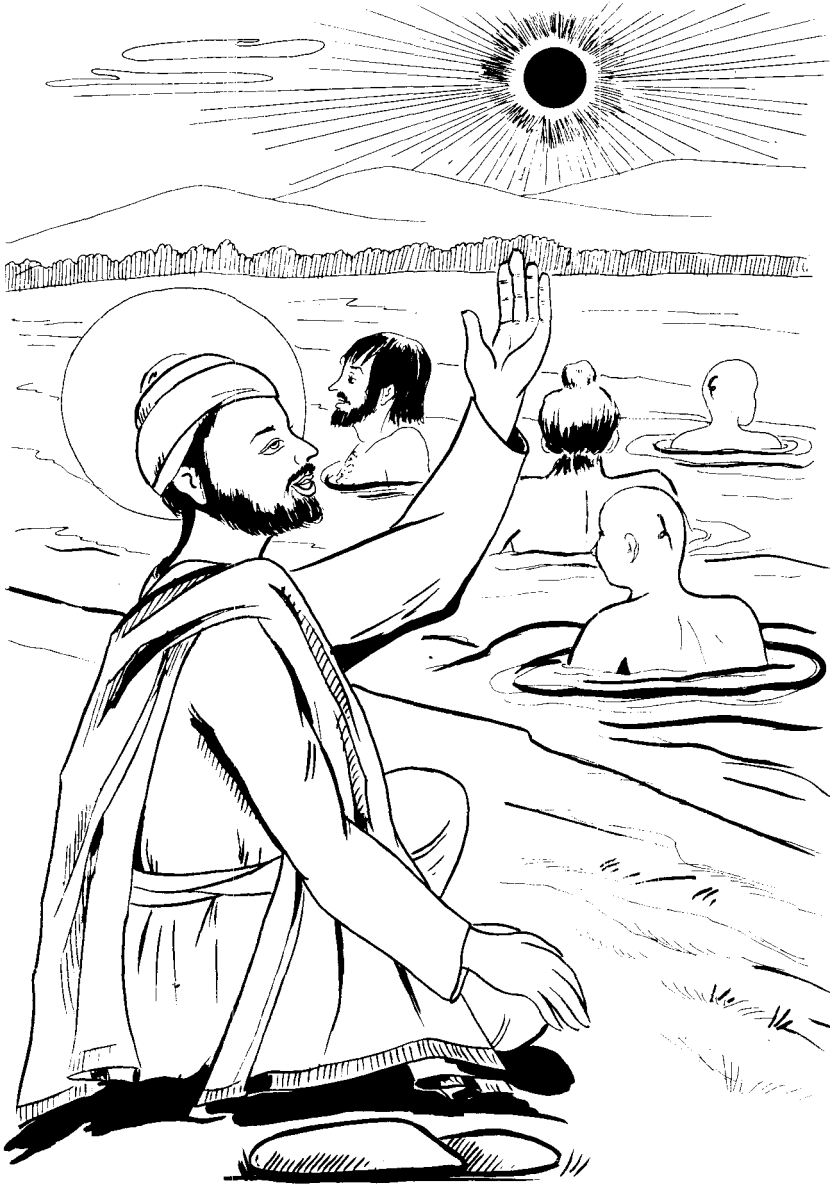
suffering and needy people. He bid farewell to his tearful parents and set out on udasi towards the east. He wanted to visit the holy places of the Hindus after having renounced his home.

After leaving his home he began roaming everywhere, preaching the message of God to His people. He was accompanied by his friend and disciple, Bhai Mardana. Guru Nanak used to give sermons, chant God's name with Bhai Mardana on the rabab and slowly their followers numbered in thousands.

During his first tour towards the east he visited all important centres of the Hindu religion, as he had intended. Since Nanakji wanted to preach to a large multitude of people, he often went to these holy places on festive occasions or fairs of any kind. Interestingly, to attract the huge crowd to himself he would often resort to dramatic actions. He would often do something that was sure to attract the attention of a large multitude. And very often, such actions were taken as an insult to their religion, which drew the angry pilgrims around him. Thereupon, he would proceed to convince them of their errors and convert them to his point of view, which was the right way to

worship and please God. He had a pair of shoes of different designs on his feet. He had a mark on his forehead in the style of the Hindus, and on his head he wore a conical cap of Muslim *qalandars*. This indicated his desire to find a new religion based on Hindus and Muslims, the principles of both which would be acceptable to both.

One day, Guru Nanak came to know that a Hindu religious fair was to be held at Kurukshetra on the occasion of a solar eclipse. Thousands of people were to bathe in the sacred tank that day. He immediately decided to visit that place with the object of preaching to the gathered pilgrims. On reaching there, he took his seat near the tank and began singing one of his hymns. However, not many people paid attention to his singing since they were all too busy washing their sins and praying to the Sun God. It so happened that around that time, a queen and her son came along to the fair. The young prince, who had killed a deer while hunting in the neighbouring forest presented his kill to the Guru. Nanakji accepted it before the shocked and dumbstruck eyes of the assembled pilgrims who ran to beat him up, yelling that he had dared to do something



that is forbidden by the Hindu religion, especially at a time when the Sun God was in danger. Thus the Guru successfully attracted all the attention of the crowd. After his short stay in Kurukshetra, the Guru resumed his tour. He halted for a day or two at every village and preached his religion to the people there.

During the course of his pilgrimage, Guru Nanak also visited Hardwar.

One morning, while he was bathing in the river Ganga he found people offering handfuls of water to the sun, to propitiate the spirits of their departed ancestors. He went up to a brahmin and asked him if the water would reach the departed ancestors. When the brahmin emphatically said it would, Guru Nanak began throwing water in the opposite direction. When one of the priests present there objected to it, Nanakji replied that he was sending water to his fields in Punjab, which was even nearer than the abode of their ancestors.

The people present there realised what the Guru was trying to say and felt that he was indeed right. They requested him to give them some good advice and guidance. Guru Nanak then asked them to live their lives as good,

honest, truthful and god-fearing men, and to share their belongings with others. He also told them that God was watching their actions all the time and perceiving their thoughts clearly. If they lived a pure and good life, they would not have to resort to vain ceremonies of any kind. He told them that the best way to have anything reach their ancestors is by giving to the poor and the needy, in the name of those ancestors. The people heard his golden words with awe and bowed their heads before him. They became his disciples and vowed to live and act as advised by the Guru.

The Guru took his seat and remained cool and smiling, and then began to sing about their false notions on flesh and its use. He told them that though they protested so strongly against the use of flesh they did just that, when they sucked people's blood by cruelty and injustice, when they snatched or stole other people's rights and belongings, or when they committed other evil deeds. He also said that while people hated those who ate meat, they accepted gifts and offerings from those very sinners. He argued that there was no way that givers went to hell and receivers to heaven. He also explained to them that solar

eclipse was a natural phenomenon and no demon had anything to do with it. He told them that God should be worshipped by meditation and service to His children. He said that if they earned their labour with hard work and shared their earnings with the poor and needy, they would win His approval and be His true children. When the gathered pilgrims heard all this, it had a strange effect on them. All those who had come to beat him, became his disciples. They established a *dharamsala* there to provide food and shelter for the poor and the weary, and to recite God's name.

Once, Guruji reached a village along with Bhai Mardana, where he was welcomed with great respect and reverence. In that village lived one of Nanakji's disciples named Bhai Lalo. He was a carpenter by profession and had a very humble house. He asked Nanakji to visit his house and bless it. Guru Nanak immediately consented to stay, and happily ate whatever was offered to him. He never made any distinction among men. To him, all men were equal and were children of God.

In the same village lived Malik Bhago, who was the manager in the employ of a Muslim *sardar*. He was a greedy, cruel and corrupt man.

One day, he arranged a *brahm-bhoj* (special feast) and invited all the religious and holy men of the village. Guru Nanak also went to the feast but refused to eat anything. When Malik Bhago asked for an explanation, Guru Nanak asked him to bring some food from his home and then he asked Bhai Lalo to get some from his house too. Then taking the latter's *chapatis* in his right hand and the rich food of Malik Bhago' in his left, he squeezed the two. All the people present there were shocked to see drops of blood coming out of Malik Bhago's food and drops of milk from Bhai Lalo's *rotis*. Guru Nanak then told a completely ashamed Malik Bhago that his food was made from money got by torturing and exploiting the poor and weak, while Bhai Lalo's food was made from hard-earned money. He advised Malik Bhago to earn money by hard work and to serve the needy with a true heart. The guilty man fell at the Guru's feet, and asked forgiveness.

Guru Nanak visited a lot of holy places of different religions. He also went to Mecca which was the holy seat of Muslim faith. There, one day, Guru Nanak felt very tired and decided to lie down for some time, under a tree. After a while, two qazis happened to



pass by. They saw Nanakji lying with his feet pointing towards the Holy *Kaaba*. They shook him up angrily and demanded that he change the position of his feet. Nanakji politely asked them to do it themselves if they were so bothered. The qazis held Nanakji's feet and turned them towards the other side. But they were more than shocked, when they saw that the Holy *Kaaba*'s direction had changed accordingly. It was enough to show them that this man was sent by God to test their faith. He told the two religious men that it was a folly to think that God resided in few places, since God existed everywhere and in everyone.

The other *hajis* who had gathered round the Guru also saw the strange sight, and heard his words with awe. They realised the truth of his words and quickly left the place for the Guru to rest peacefully. By morning, everyone in the city was talking of him. The qazis, *pirs*, mullahs and fakirs of different lands, who were there then, crowded around him to have a discussion on religions. When Guru Nanak was asked if he was a Hindu or a Muslim, he replied that he was neither, but a servant of God and a lover of man. The discussion went on for long and all those

present tried their best to defeat the Guru, but in vain. In the end they were forced to accept his views. Soon the whole city was talking only of the 'Hindu pir' (as he was called) who was humble and spoke of all embracing love of God.

From Mecca the Guru moved on to Medina. There too he held long discussions with the Muhammedan priests. They too had to bow to him. All who heard the Guru's talk and his sacred songs became his disciples. From there he travelled northwards and visited Egypt and other places in Africa. He also travelled northwards to a place which is now called Nanak Wara. There he preached to the people who thronged in thousands to hear him speak. The brahmins and the sadhus who watched the Guru were deeply shocked to see that he did not observe the rules that were prescribed in the sacred religious books for all religious men. He prepared and ate his food without a proper cooking square. He also took the food offered to him by the common people, without asking the caste to which he belonged. When the brahmins expressed their annoyance at this, he argued that his body was dearer and purer than theirs. He asked them to give up their false ideas about purity,

and to purify their minds and hearts of all evils and sins. He also argued that only if their bodies are not sufficiently clean and neat, how can a human being's touch pollute their body or food? Hearing this, the brahmins bowed to him and asked for more guidance. He then told them that the best life for them was the life of a spirit, a life spent in constant worship of God and in the care and service of His children. Having completed his work there, the Guru started on his journey once again to Turkey, in Europe where he met the greedy and cruel Sultan. However, his talk had a great effect on him too, and he became Nanakji's disciple. He also gave away his wealth to the needy and gave up his cruel and evil ways, and became a good ruler.

In course of his wanderings, Guru Nanak reached Lahore. There he sat on the banks of the river Ravi, and began singing sacred songs with Bhai Mardana on the rabab. Slowly a crowd gathered to hear him sing and preach. Among the listeners was a rich man called Duni Chand.

One day, he invited Guru Nanak to visit and bless his house on the occasion of the *shradh* ceremony of his father. Guru Nanak agreed and went to his house on that day.

However, on reaching there he asked Duni Chand if he was sure that his father's hunger had been satisfied. When a puzzled Duni Chand failed to understand, Guru Nanak informed him that his father had been reborn as a wolf and was dying of hunger. He instructed a completely astonished Duni Chand that the wolf could be found near a bush six miles away. Duni Chand hurried to that place and found the wolf, just as Guru Nanak had said. He gave it all the food he had carried and the wolf ate it hungrily. Immediately after eating the wolf died. Duni Chand was amazed.

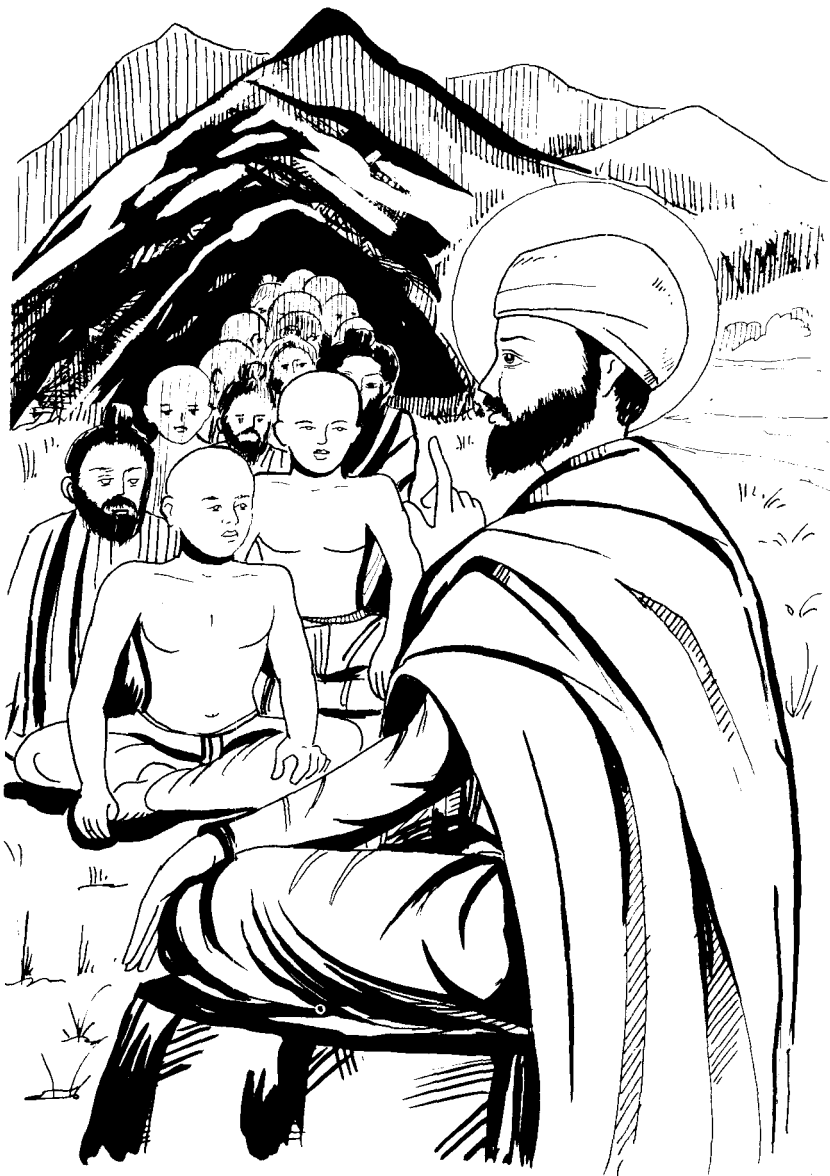
He returned home and fell at the Guru's feet asking for guidance in life. Hearing this, Guru Nanak handed him a needle asking him to keep it safely since he would ask for it back in the next world. An already confused Duni Chand could not grasp the meaning of this action and took it to his wife. The pious woman understood and explained to Duni Chand that Nanakji meant to show him that a man can carry nothing with him, not even a needle, to the next world. Duni Chand was suddenly enlightened. He had found the correct path of life. He and his wife distributed all their wealth to the poor and needy.

After his short stay at Lahore, Guru Nanak reached Batala, and choosing a particular spot busied himself with God's work there. The owner of that area, Karorimal, did not approve of someone occupying his land. He decided to turn Guru Nanak away. He had just started from his house when his horse stumbled, and Karorimal had to return, slightly hurt.

After a few days, he set out again and lost his eyesight. A shocked Karorimal was then told by his men that it was his evil decision to drive a holy man away that had caused the trouble. The third time, Karorimal decided to pay his respects to Guru Nanak, but as he proceeded he was blinded again. Then finally, he decided to go on foot and this time he reached Guru Nanak safely. He found him surrounded by devotees, singing hymns of God. He fell at the Guru's feet and asked permission to dedicate his life to the service of God. Guru Nanak blessed him and proposed to call the village 'Kartarpur' which meant 'the seat of God, the Creator.' Soon the village became the seat of Guru Nanak and all his disciples. It was here that Guru Nanak started ploughing a piece of land and taught the people that each man should live on one's own labour and produce.

During his tour of the north, Guru Nanak travelled through the hilly tracts of the lower Himalayas and reached Gorakhmata. This place was the centre for the yogis of the Gorakh order who were known to live an idle, inactive and retired life. Guru Nanak taught them to lead a life of work, devotion and service. He inspired them to be saviours of men and to give their lives some meaning. The yogis were so influenced by Guru Nanak and his teachings that they decided to make it a centre of Sikh mission. This place later came to be called 'Nanakmata'.

After that he travelled further north, up to the Kailash mountains and Mansarovar lake. There he met many hermits who asked him about the world below. Nanakji informed them about the sad spiritual condition of the people and reproached them for neglecting their foremost duties, that of guiding humanity. He reminded them that their religious purpose was to bring men closer to God and for that they would have to live among people instead of isolating themselves. The words of Guru Nanak were held in such great esteem by the people there, that his image was worshipped in the four cave temples around the Mansarovar lake.



Guru Nanak also travelled to Baghdad, which was a powerful centre of Islam. So much so, that the mere presence of a Hindu there could be taken as a blot on Islam. Guru Nanak was aware of this attitude, but he was not at all afraid. On arriving there, he chose a graveyard for his stay. Early next morning, he asked Bhai Mardana to play the rabab, while he sang a sacred song. In that centre of Islam, music had never been heard before, since it was forbidden by the Holy law of Islam. All who heard it were amazed at who had the courage to break the Islamic law in that city. Slowly, they were drawn towards him, and gathering around him they listened spellbound to his sacred songs. He then began to recite the *Japji* to the multitudes gathered around him. He spoke of the millions of upper and lower regions that existed in the universe, and how men grew tired looking for them. This was yet another offence since the Holy *Quran* declared that there were only seven lower and upper regions. Soon the pir or the religious head of the place was informed about the Guru. He ordered the offender to be brought in his presence immediately. The Guru refused to obey, and asked the pir to come to him and hear him

sing. The pir was furious and he ordered his men to stone the culprit to death. But as the angry crowd moved forward, they heard the soothing words of God being sung by the Guru and his disciples, and all their anger seemed to vanish. They threw away the stones and heard him sing of God's greatness and glory with rapt attention.

When the pir heard this he decided to see the Guru. He took his young son with him to the graveyard to see him. The pir questioned him about his offence and Guru Nanak calmly convinced him that he had done nothing to hurt the spirit of Islam. The pir asked him to prove that what he said of the innumerable upper and lower regions was right, and what the *Quran* said was wrong. Guru Nanak explained that if the heart and mind are pure and the thoughts and feelings be fixed on the Supreme Lord, the truth of his words can be realised. Hearing this, the young son of the pir expressed a wish to see the various regions. Guru Nanak then took his hand and asked him to think of God alone. The boy did as asked and felt himself flying at great speed to limitless space. He was convinced of the Guru's words. After a while he opened his eyes and found himself in the graveyard next

to his father. The pir found a change in his son's face which told him that what the boy believed was true indeed. He fell at the Guru's feet and felt that he was a changed man. All those present there also bowed before the Guru and he blessed them all.

On the spot, where the Guru sat at Baghdad, a platform was later erected by one of the Guru's disciples. On the wall behind it is an inscription in a language which is a mixture of Arabic, Persian and Turkish, in the memory of his visit.

The Guru stayed there for about four months. During this period, he converted all the pirs and fakirs to his faith and preached to the common people who came to see him. He also met the king, who, under the guidance of the Guru, became a just and a kind ruler.

One interesting incident occurred when Guru Nanak reached Hasan Abdul, now in Pakistan. There was a Muslim fakir named Baba Hasan Abdul Wali Qandhari, who owned a house and a temple by the side of a spring, the water from which flowed into a tank and from there to the plains below.

When Qandhari heard of Guru Nanak he was filled with jealousy and so he cut off the

water supply to punish the people who spoke so highly of the Guru. The people begged Nanakji to do something. Guru Nanak lifted a small stone nearby and water began to flow from there. The people rejoiced while Qandhari, in anger, rolled down a big stone on Guru Nanak. This, however, was stopped by his hand. An imprint of Guru's open hand or *panja* was made on the stone. It exists to this day and is called as *Panja Sahib* or the Holy Hand-print. Qandhari was awestruck on seeing this and he bowed at the Guru's feet, begging forgiveness. He vowed to serve people from then on.

Around that time, Guru Nanak heard that in Multan, some Muslim fakirs were exploiting and misleading the poor and ignorant people in the name of religion. He hurried to Multan and began spreading his message there. Soon people began to have faith in God once again. The native fakirs threatened him and decided to drive him away. To convey this, they sent him a cup full to the brim with milk, symbolising that the place was full of religious men already and there was no need of him. Guru Nanak put a jasmine flower over it and sent it back, meaning that there was always a special



place for him and that he was there to spread the Lord's message of love, peace and devotion. Thus defeated the fakirs never again questioned Guru Nanak's powers.

REFORMING THE HIGH AND MIGHTY

During his travels Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana arrived at a place called Tulamba, in the district of Multan, Pakistan. Around this place lived a notorious robber named Sajjan, who used to welcome travellers in his *serai* (lodging), treat them generously and then kill them after robbing them of their wealth. Guru Nanak had heard of his disguised 'hospitality' and decided to teach him a lesson.

Guru Nanak and his companions stopped at the serai. They seemed convincingly rich to Sajjan and his men. At night, however, Guru Nanak began singing songs, while Mardana played the rabab. Sajjan also heard them sing of the evil deeds of criminals like him who betrayed the faith and trust of people to achieve their purpose. He was shocked at Guru Nanak's insight. He felt ashamed and guilty and flung himself at the Guru's feet

asking forgiveness. Guru Nanak advised him to distribute all his wealth amongst the poor people and to live like an honest man. He asked Sajjan to live up to his name and be a true gentleman and a good human being. Sajjan thanked him and made a dharamshala, which was the first Sikh gurudwara established by the Guru.

In the course of his travels, Guru Nanak reached Delhi. Sikander Lodi was the emperor there at that time. He was a cruel man and a tyrant to his subjects. He asked people to choose between Islam and death. All religious people were subjected to the utmost torture in his rule, and Guru Nanak and Mardana were also arrested and put in prison.

Guru Nanak was so touched by the plight of the people that he began singing a song in his intense and heart-rending voice. All the listeners, including the jailers and the emperor, were enraptured by the songs on the supreme Lord and His mercy. He sang of the omniscient Lord who saw everything and paid likewise. Sikander Lodi was so touched by the song that he freed all the prisoners and begged forgiveness from Guru Nanak. After that Sikander Lodi ruled wisely, always keeping the Guru's advice in mind.

During his westward travels when Guru Nanak stopped at Saidpur (Eminabad), he was called to Sialkot to solve a local problem. It so happened that there was a Muslim fakir called Hamza Gaus to whom a Hindu Khatri had come asking for a son. He promised to offer his first son in the fakir's service, if he got more than one son.

Three sons were born to him and he asked Hamza Gaus to let him buy his child back. The fakir refused, threatening to destroy the whole city and its inhabitants if the Hindu did not abide by his promise. He then went inside a dome and announced that he would come out only when the child was returned or when the city was destroyed.

Guru Nanak tried to persuade the fakir to relent and having failed, he told everyone that the fakir's penance or *chila* would break at noon that very day, without any damage done.

Exactly at noon, while Guru Nanak and Mardana sang songs outside the dome, a loud sound was heard near it and people found that the dome had cracked. Hamza Gaus became very scared and ran for his life, thus breaking his penance.

Guru Nanak told him that it was wrong to punish the whole city for one person. And no

man should and can destroy another, if he is really a devotee of God. Hamza Gaus realised his mistake and went on to preach the gospel of Guru Nanak to men.

Guru Nanak went to Maharashtra also, where he had heard of a tribe called Bheels, known for their fierce and wild nature. He went straight to Kauda, who was their head. Kauda, meanwhile, was getting the cauldron ready to cook the visitors. But he found that the oil would not heat at all. He still put Nanakji in the pot but nothing happened.

Guru Nanak told him that he did not find Kauda any different from other children of God. He told him to prove by his deeds that he could also care for other men. Kauda suddenly felt his divine influence and fell at his feet. Guru Nanak had succeeded in reforming a cannibal into a loyal friend and servant.

Thus spreading the message of love, peace and brotherhood, Guru Nanak reached Baghdad, whose ruler was a tyrant Khalifa, notorious for looting his subjects and exploiting them. Guru Nanak set out for the place and reaching the main road, he began to gather pebbles and stones in a big heap. After a while, the Khalifa's pageant passed by and



seeing Guru Nanak collecting pebbles, the Khalifa asked why he was heaping up the stones. Guru Nanak calmly replied that he was going to carry all this with him when he died. When the Khalifa expressed surprise at this folly, Guru Nanak replied that if the king was going to take all his wealth with him, he could also take his pebbles. The Khalifa understood what the Guru was trying to explain by example. Guru Nanak told him that all that a man needs is some clothes to cover himself and some bread to feed himself. Everything else can be used to help the poor and needy.

The Khalifa soon distributed his wealth amongst his people and respectfully presented a robe to Guru Nanak with Aayats of the Holy *Quran* inscribed on it. The robe is still preserved in the gurudwara at Dera Baba Nanak.

It was in the year 1521 A.D. that Guru Nanak's prophecy of Babar's invasion of India came true. Guru Nanak immediately reached Saidpur and was terribly shaken when he saw the plight of the city and its inhabitants. He and Mardana were also taken prisoners and made to work. But when Guru Nanak began singing the holy songs all the people

gathered around him, and their work began to be done by itself. The commander, Mir Khan, was amazed and he quickly informed Babar about it. The conqueror soon came to see the supernatural phenomenon and heard the soothing songs sung by the holy man. When he asked Guru Nanak its meaning, he replied that he was asking God to see how Babar had misused his power. He reminded Babar that God had made him powerful and a leader, so that he could use that power to help and protect his people rather than to hurt them so.

Guru Nanak's words went deep into Babar's heart, and he not only ordered the release of all the prisoners but also returned their properties.

Guru Nanak blessed Babar with a long rule in India with his descendants ruling over it. He also advised Babar to treat India as his own as this would make his rule a long lasting and peaceful one.

Babar followed the Guru's advice and became a just ruler. Guru Nanak had succeeded in reforming one of the most terrible man on earth into a just and wise ruler.

BACK HOME

After leaving Saidpur, the Guru went back to his home in Kartarpur. He stayed with his family for eight years. Here he proved that a man can serve both God and man, even as a householder; he showed people that one did not have to renounce the world to be a religious man. He even went against the conventional traditions, by wearing ordinary clothes instead of the usual saffron dress. Guru Nanak did this to show to the world that once a man had given up his family life for a religious one, it did not mean he could not re-adopt his family life. He also wanted to show that truly religious men were free to choose any kind of life or dress as they liked, as long as he was true to the principles of his religions.

He gave his village people three golden rules to live by. First, that a man should earn his living by honest labour. Secondly, he should always share whatever he has with

those who are needy. Thirdly, he should never forget God and see that no one else forgets Him either.

In his life, Guru Nanak practised what he preached. He worked in his fields as he used to do earlier and did all kinds of manual labour. He raised crops for his family and offered free kitchen or langar to all who needed food. In his langar, there was no discrimination among people. All lived and worked like a family with Guru Nanak as the head of that family. At the same time, he devoted himself to the work of God. His disciples named 'Sikhs' always gathered around him at Kartarpur, while he sang sacred hymns and talked to them about life and religion.

It was during his stay at Kartarpur, that Guru Nanak visited the nearby Amritsar district. There he met a boy who was grazing a herd of cows. Guru Nanak saw in him the makings of a respected and devoted disciple. Calling the boy over to him, he found that his name was Bura and he was a Jat living in Ramdas.

Bura was deeply influenced by the Guru and began living with him, asking questions about life and death and of ways of serving



God. Guru Nanak told him to live in God and let God live in him. It was enough to make Bura his most devoted disciple. He became Bhai Budha, and served the Guru in every possible way. Guru Nanak made him perform the sacred ceremony of applying saffron mark or *tilak* on the forehead of five of his successors. He was made the first *granthi* of the Golden Temple (Sri Darbar Sahib) at Amritsar. He taught *Gurmukhi* to Guru Hargobind.

It was during his stay at Kartarpur that Guru Nanak's companion, friend, disciple and rabab-player, Bhai Mardana, left for his heavenly abode in 1591 A.D. Guru Nanak had his body cremated and took his son Shahzade to be his rabab player.

His stay at Kartarpur, in the last part of his life, was important in more than one aspect. It was here that he found the second Guru of the Sikhs, whom the world knows as Guru Angad.

Guru Angad's real name was Baba Lehna. He was born on March 31 in 1504 A.D. He was the son of Pheru Mal, a trader at Ferozepur. Baba Lehna first heard of Guru Nanak from Bhai Jodha who always sang hymns of the Guru. He was so touched by the songs that he

decided to go to Kartarpur and meet the holy man. Guru Nanak invited him to live with them at Kartarpur. Baba Lehna arrived the very next day, and spent the entire night doing all odd jobs in complete acceptance, silence and devotion.

Guru Nanak, however, made all his disciples undertake a test and the most worthy of them was to be made his successor. And so one day he put on dirty clothes, took an open knife in his hand and went to the forest. His puzzled disciples followed him and found silver coins on the way. Some left him after collecting them; a few others followed him further and found gold coins scattered on the way. They picked them up and rejoicingly returned home.

Only two Sikhs besides Baba Lehna followed him still further. There they saw a funeral pyre with a dead body beside it. Guru Nanak asked his disciples to eat the corpse if they wished to accompany him. Those present flinched at the terrible idea and only Baba Lehna came forward, asking which part he should begin with.

Guru Nanak was very pleased with Baba Lehna and blessed him saying that only he had understood and believed that he was a

part or *ang* of his Guru's body. He named Baba Lehna 'Guru Angad' from then on, since he had proved that he was a part and image of the Guru's own body. He was appointed the next Guru by Bhai Budha on June 4, 1539. Guru Nanak had bequeathed his seat to its rightful owner.

ATTAINING 'SAMADHI'

On September 22, 1539, Guru Nanak decided that his work as a mortal was complete after he had left a guiding light behind in the radiant person of Guru Angad Devji. And so he left for his eternal home, back to the Supreme Being, from where he had come to save the world. He died at the age of seventy, having fulfilled his mission in this world.

When he died, his Hindu and Muslim disciples were engaged in a baffling dispute about the manner in which the last rites were to be performed. The Hindus wanted their Guru's body to be cremated in the Hindu tradition. But the Muslims, who had been equally devoted to him and were his faithful followers, wanted a burial for him. A whole day passed and still they could not come to a mutual decision.

But next day, when they looked beneath the shroud, they could not believe their eyes! What they saw, to their astonishment, was



that instead of the body, there was only a big mound of beautiful white flowers.

There was no doubt that it was the final message that Guru Nanak gave to his Hindu and Muslim disciples. It was a symbolic representation and message of harmony, peace and brotherhood of man that Guru Nanak had taught all his life. All the disciples present there hung their heads in shame at their ignorance and folly. They decided to follow the Guru's advice and adopt it as a golden rule for life. Then they peacefully divided the flowers into halves, burying and cremating their share.

Guru Nanak, who had come into a world of disharmony, jealousy and eternal problems, left the world a better place than he found it. He had stayed among men for seventy years, five months and three days, teaching them to value life and love one another. He was the symbol of peace, love and brotherhood of man. He was a believer of humanity, and brotherhood, and his aim to cleanse the world of sin and evil was fulfilled.

Titles in this series:

Guru Nanak Dev

Guru Angad Dev

Guru Amardas

Guru Ram Das

Guru Arjan Dev

Guru Hargobind

Guru Har Rai

Guru Harkrishan

Guru Tegh Bahadur

Guru Gobind Singh