BABA JAIMAL SINGH

BY KIRPAL SINGH

A *Brief Life Sketch of Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj*
Man, Know Thyself
Simran: The Sweet Remembrance of God
Ruhani Satsang: Science of Spirituality
The Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak
Prayer: Its Nature & Technique
Spirituality: What It Is
Naam or Word
Baba Jaimal Singh: His Life & Teachings
The Crown of Life: A Study in Yoga
Seven Paths to Perfection
The Wheel of Life: The Law of Action & Reaction
God Power, Christ Power, Master Power
Godman
Spiritual Elixir
The Mystery of Death
How to Develop Receptivity
Morning Talks
The Night Is a Jungle
The Way of the Saints
The Light of Kirpal
The Coming Spiritual Revolution

SANT KIRPAL SINGH JI was born in Sayyad Kasran in the Punjab (now in Pakistan) on February 6, 1894. A lifelong search for God led him to investigate the claims of many yogis and mystics, culminating in his initiation at the hands of Baba Sawan Singh of Beas, the successor of Baba Jaimal Singh, in 1924. For twenty-four years he sat at the feet of his Master, under whose direction he completed his inner growth, while living the life of a householder and rising to a high position in the Indian Government. At his Master's death in 1948, he retired to the Himalayas and spent three months in almost continuous *samadhi* or absorption in God. On returning to the world in obedience to the instructions of his Master, he took up the role of *guru,* or spiritual guide, as had been commissioned by his Master before his death, and in the course of his lifetime initiated more than 100,000 souls into Surat Shabd Yoga, the science of constant communion with God. He served as President of the World Fellowship of Religions from 1957 to 1971, presided over the World Conference on Unity of Man in February 1974, and left the body on August 21, 1974, after conveying his spiritual power to his *gurumukh* successor, Sant Ajaib Singh Ji of Rajasthan.

A GREAT SAINT

BABA JAIMAL SINGH

His Life & Teachings

BY KIRPAL SINGH

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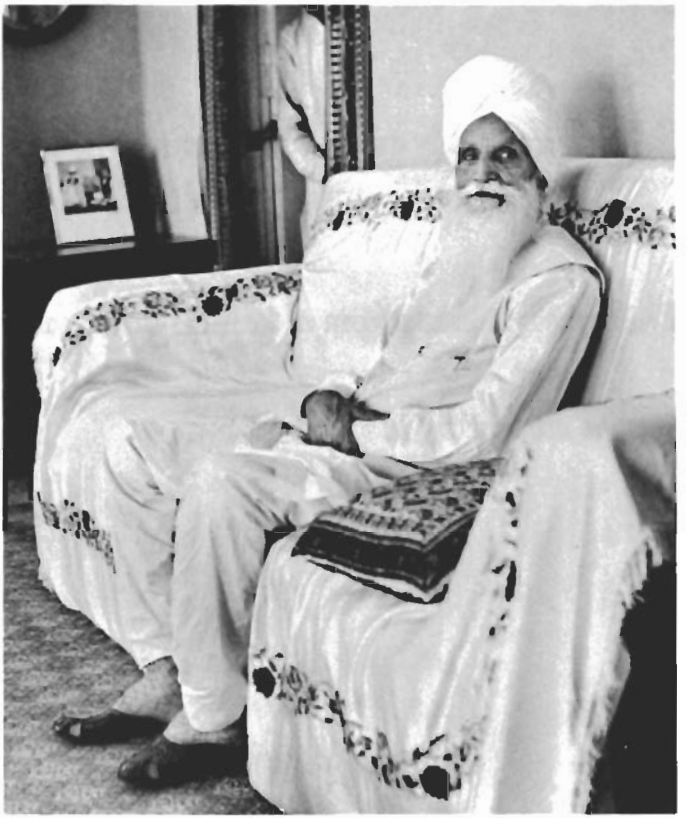
यह धुन है धुर लोक अधर की ।
कोई पकड़े सन्त सिपाही ।।

This music streams from a transcendent plane
within
And is caught by a soldier Saint.



HAZUR MAHARAJ
BABA SAWAN SINGH JI
(1858-1948)

Dedicated
to the Almighty God
working through all Masters who have come
and Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj
at whose lotus feet
the author imbibed sweet elixir of
Holy Naam– the Word

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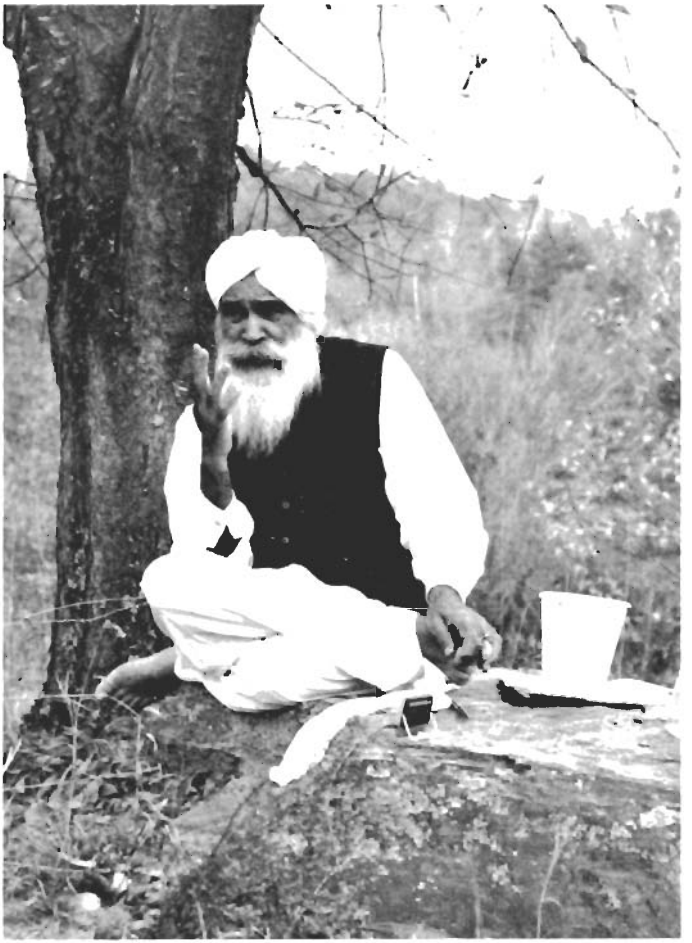
KIRPAL SINGH



Sant Satguru
Maharaj Kirpal Singh Ji
(1894 – 1974)

FOREWORD

SANT KIRPAL SINGH, the author of this book, needs no introduction. For the last decade and over he has been at Sawan Ashram, Delhi, and throughout the length and breadth of the country and abroad, carrying aloft the torch of pure spirituality for the uplift of humanity. The call comes to many; but few choose to be chosen. All of us are so absorbed in meeting the demands of mundane existence on physical and mental levels that we have little time and thought left for higher things of the spirit. Talk of self-realization and God-realization more often than not sounds as mere empty verbiage with no rational content and substance. The world is too much with us.

A book like this can be truly helpful in awakening in us the desire for treading the path that leads to enlightenment and liberation from the cycle of birth and death. It is not merely a brief life story of a great man, but of a Godman whose impeccable purity, deep humility and ceaseless devotion to the God-Path at the bidding of a great Master, which lifted him to peerless spiritual heights, can serve as an inspiring example for innumerable souls puffing and panting in the struggle of life, and wishing to be freed from the bondage of mind and body.

A truly great man needs no other tribute than an account of his life and work. An attempt has been made to collect in this volume the main events of Baba Ji's life history and an outline of his teachings as they have been recorded in his letters and in published and unpublished accounts left by his disciples and admirers, chief among them being Maharaj Sawan Singh Ji, his spiritual heir,

Baba Surain Singh, Gyani Partap Singh, etc. It is a story marked by an amazing intensity of spiritual yearning in its first movement, an equally amazing application and one-pointed concentration in the next, and a no less remarkable humility and selflessness allied to supreme spiritual exaltation in its last and concluding phase.

The author characterizes the Sant Mat practiced and preached by Baba Jaimal Singh Ji as a science, and well he might, because he himself is a distinguished exponent of it, who has been initiated into its mystique at the feet of a great Saint; and whose mastery of it is widely acknowledged and acclaimed, as demonstrated by his election as President of the World Fellowship of Religions on the crest of a wave of universal ovation and applause in which the sages, scholars and savants from several parts of the world lustily joined.

The book is an endeavor to present, for the first time in English, the biography of one of the most outstanding Saints of our times, one who deserves to be better known than he is. The story is a memorable one, and is of permanent value in the annals of man's spiritual history. It deserves to be read by every seeker after God. I am confident that those who read this book will not fail to be inspired and uplifted, and will begin to see that spirituality is not what it is generally supposed to be, but is a science whose Masters have appeared at all times and in all places, and which may be learned at the feet of an adept wherever he may be found, irrespective of sects and *gaddis;* the final touchstone of his competence being his ability to give direct inner experience to his disciples here and now, and not in some future life.

New Delhi RADHA KRISHNA KHANNA
August 8, 1960

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SWAMI JI MAHARAJ
SHIV DAYAL SINGH
(1818-1878)

THE GREAT TRADITION

I

The God-way

THE WAY back to God is not of man's making but of God's, and it is free from artifice and artificiality. God draws man back to Himself through His chosen elect, the Godman, to whom the secret of the Path (the God-way) is revealed directly or made manifest by some *Sant Satguru,* for the benefit of the people.

The Masters, the Messiahs, the teachers and prophets all the world over fall into two categories with a separate mission assigned to each. There are, on the one hand, those whose sole purpose is to keep the world going harmoniously; and on the other hand there are those who are commissioned to lead back souls who are ripe for home-going, and yearn for an early return to the Source Spiritual from which they parted long ago before drifting downward to the material plane. In the first category fall all the reformers, and in the second such *Sants* and *Sadhs* as are competent to reveal the knowledge of God and to make manifest the power of God in man.

The process of ascent back to the Source is just the reverse of that of descent down to the physical plane, and one has therefore to reintegrate himself, to gather all his wandering wits at the still point of the soul—in between and behind the two eyes—where time and Timelessness intersect, before the spirit comes to its own and launches upon the Sea of Life for an inner journey homeward. This,

in fact, has been the sole theme of all sages and seers everywhere. None of them, however, wanted to set up any new creed or institutionalized religion. While referring to the existence of so many religions and creeds in the world, all bristling with bewildering theories and conflicting dogmas, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj used to remark, "There are already so many wells all over, why should one dig any more pitfalls and make confusion worse confounded?"

God made man in His own image; and man made religions, each in his own image, and in his zeal made fetishes of them all. True religion in its inception is fresh and simple, like a newly-born babe bubbling over with vital life, but in course of time, like any other thing, it develops into an Institution; and with that it begins to deteriorate, tends to lose its native vital elasticity born of the living touch of the Master-spirit, and gradually comes to acquire a socio-economic appearance. Instead of serving as a silken bond of love between man and man, it becomes a source of constant strife, rancour and ill will, tearing class from class and nation from nation. When the cup of human misery is filled to the brim, then comes the Saviour with the message of hope, redemption and fulfillment for strife-torn humanity. He tries to dress the festering social wounds and preaches oneness and equality to man in order to restore the equilibrium in the scales of human values. Alongside this, his main objective is to save human souls for a higher purpose: a true life of the spirit as distinguished from that of the flesh. Such indeed has been the goal of great Masters like Zoroaster, Mahavira, Buddha, Christ, Mohammed, Kabir and Nanak, each in his own time, according to the then prevailing conditions and people's aspirations; for they always try to lead them from the

line of least resistance, and dole out the basic goodness in terms that may readily appeal to, and fit in with, their mental make-up for a step higher in the process of evolution or unfolding of the spirit. This is what Saints do for the general run of mankind, deriving their inspiration from the great reservoir of the spirit within, which is the same for all.

The rich heritage

In the religious thought of modern India the period from the middle of the fourteenth to the middle of the fifteenth century is one of outstanding importance. It is an era in which an attempt was made to reorient religion and present it in its simplest form: the form of true faith, universal love and single-minded devotion as against the rigors of priestly ritualism and fanaticism leading to intolerance and bigotry. Among the great teachers of the period we find figures like Ramananda, with his principal disciples drawn from various walks of life (Raja Pipa, Ravidas the cobbler, Saina the barber, Kabir the weaver, Dhanna the jat, Narhari, Sukha Padmavati, Sursura and his wife, etc.); Vallabhacharya, the famous exponent of the Krishna cult; Chaitanya Mahaprabhu of Nadia in Bengal, with his characteristic stress on *Hari-bhole* or chanting of the Lord's name; Namdev, the calico printer in Maharashtra; and the great Kabir and Nanak in the North. None of them laid much stress on idol worship and observance of outer religious forms and symbols. Self-purity, love and inner yearning were their constant themes. Namdev said:

Love for him who filleth my heart shall never be sundered;
Nama has applied his heart to the True Name.

As the love between a child and his mother,
So is my soul imbued in God.

Kabir likewise said:

It is needless to ask of a Saint the caste to which he belongs;
The barber has sought God, the washerman and the carpenter;
Even Ravidas was a seeker after God.
The Rishi Swapacha was a tanner by caste.
Hindus and Muslims alike have achieved that End, where remains no mark of distinction.

Again he proclaimed:

It is not by fasting and repeating the prayers and the creed
That one goeth to heaven;
The inner veil of the temple of Mecca
Is in man's heart, if the Truth be known.

So spoke Nanak:

Abide in the pure amidst the impurity of the world;
Thus shalt thou find the way to religion.

This movement, however, attained its greatest heights at the hands of Kabir (1398-1518) and his younger contemporary, Nanak (1469-1539). Both of them rose above the fetters of the world and transcended religious barriers and so were acclaimed alike by Hindus and Muslims both. Their teachings mainly centered around God and man and the relationship between the two. Both of them were exponents of the *Surat Shabd Yoga* (Yoga of the Sound Current or communion with the Holy Word), and their

writings extol this as the crown of life. If we study the essential core of any of the religious teachings in its pristine purity and truth as it appeared in the original sayings of the Masters—what they themselves actually practiced and what they gave to their chosen disciples (*Gurmukhs* or apostles)—we cannot fail to get an insight into the reality that they were, one and all, in one form or another, votaries of the transcendental seeing and hearing, no matter at what level; though to the laymen they gave their subtle thoughts in the form of parables only, as otherwise they would not hear and much less understand their teachings. Such world teachers serve as beacon lights in the stormy sea and try to save humanity from floundering in the quicksands of time. Children of Light as they are, they come to dispel the darkness of the soul and are naturally called *Guru,* the dispeller of darkness: darkness born of ignorance of the true values of life. They have unbounded love for all religions and religious heads and have equal respect for all scriptures. Theirs is a universal fold that takes in, in one long sweep, the entire humanity with all its variegated patterns and colors, and steeps them equally in the love of God. Kabir tells us in this context:

> *All our sages are worthy of veneration,*
> *But my devotion is for One who has mastered the Word.*

He further tells us that he, with his divine message, incarnated from age to age for the benefit of the people. He appeared in all the four *Yugas* or cycles of time: first as Sat Sukrat, then as Karna Mai, again as Maninder, and finally as Kabir in Kali Yuga, the present phase of time.

Guru Nanak also ceaselessly tells us of the great impor-

tance and supreme efficacy of the method of Surat Shabd Yoga as the means of salvation:

Like a lotus standing aloft out of the muddy pool,
Or like a royal swan that flies high and dry out of water,
So does one by communion with the Word cross unscathed the fearsome sea of life.

This in brief is the grand message coming down to us from the dawn of creation, chanting out the path Godward. All the Indian Saints and many Christian mystics practiced the inner science and contacted individual souls with the saving lifeline within.[1] Time and again, as people forget the reality, God's grace materializes Itself in a human body, called a Saint, to guide erring humanity in the time-honored eternal way. It is the privilege and the prerogative that the Most High confers, and this authority is passed on according to His behests. "The wind bloweth where it listeth" and no one can lay down or predict any rules of succession, place or time. This rich heritage goes from eye to eye and refuses to be bound to traditional *gaddis* (so-called sanctified seats and sacred places), nor does it depend on human sanctions of temporal or clerical character. Guru Nanak, with his seat at Kartarpur, passed on his spiritual heritage to Bhai Lehna, who, as Guru Angad, shifted to Khadur Sahib; while his successor Guru Amar Das was obliged to transfer his seat to Goindwal. With Guru Ram Das, Amritsar came into being, and later

[1] For fuller details in this connection, the reader is referred to *Naam or Word* by the same author, a study that gives a full account of the teachings of the Masters in all ages.

on became the headquarters of Guru Arjan. Thus we see that there is nothing special about places as such. They owe their sanctity to the sanctifying influence of the Saints who pass their time at one place or another. "All is holy where devotion kneels." It is not the places that grace men but men the places.

Rediscovering lost strands

The stream of life rolls on ceaselessly in the endless course of time; the power of the Timeless appears and disappears in the realm of relativity.

Before proceeding with the life sketch of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, it would be worth our while to have a peep into the background that made him what he was. It was indeed the power of Swami Ji that flowed through him in whatever he did and wherever he worked, for he was wholly lost to himself and given over to the Divine in him.

In order to understand things in their proper perspective and link up the history of our spiritual heritage, we will have to go back to Guru Gobind Singh, the last of the ten Gurus in the line of succession to Guru Nanak.

The *Rani* (Queen) of one Ratan Rao Peshwa, accompanied by Bhai Nand Lal, came to the feet of Guru Gobind Singh for refuge.[2]

Guru Gobind Singh traveled widely, penetrating the Himalayas in the North and going to Deccan in the South. During his extensive travels, he met and lived with the ruling family of the Peshwas and initiated some of its members into the inner science. It is said that one Ratnagar Rao of the Peshwa family was initiated and author-

[2] Cf. Shri Des Raj, *Hindu Sikh Ithras.*

ized to carry on the work by Guru Gobind Singh. Sham Rao Peshwa, the elder brother of Baji Rao Peshwa, the then ruling chief, who must have contacted Ratnagar Rao, showed a remarkable aptitude for the spiritual path and made rapid headway. In course of time, this young scion of the royal family settled in Hathras, a town thirty-three miles away from Agra in the Uttar Pradesh, and came to be known as Tulsi Sahib (1763-1843), the famous author of *Ghat Ramayana,* the science of the inner life-principle pervading alike in man and nature. The *vita lampada* of Spirituality was passed on by Tulsi Sahib to Swami Shiv Dayal Singh Ji (1818-1878).

The link between Tulsi Sahib of Hathras and Swami Ji of Agra is likely to be overlooked, but there can be little doubt of it. From the manuscript account of Baba Surain Singh, the *Jivan Charitar Swamiji Maharaj* by Chacha Partap Singh, and the book entitled *Correspondence with Certain Americans* by Shri S. D. Maheshwari, we learn that Swami Ji's parents were the disciples of the Hathras Saint and frequently visited him at his home for darshan and attended his discourses whenever he visited Agra. It was he who named the sons of Lala Dilwali Singh Seth; that is, Shiv Dayal Singh, Brindaban and Partap Singh. Before the birth of the eldest child he prophesied that a great Saint was about to manifest himself in their home, and after his birth he told the parents that they need no longer come to Hathras for the Lord Almighty had come in their midst.[3]

The Hathras Saint took a keen and lively interest in casting the life of Swami Ji in his own mold. He initiated the young child at a very early age and Swami Ji, on the

[3] Chacha Partap Singh, *Jivan Charitar Swamiji Maharaj,* p. 6; S. D. Maheshwari, *Correspondence with Certain Americans,* p. 221.

last day of his life, told his disciples that he had been practicing the inner science from the age of six.[4]

Swami Ji's veneration for the Hathras Saint becomes abundantly clear from his life. He held Tulsi Sahib's disciples in great respect, honoring among them especially Sadhu Girdhari Dass, whom he supported during his last years. Once when the Sadhu fell ill at Lucknow, Swami Ji hurried there from Agra and helped him to contact the inner Sound Current, with which he had lost touch (owing presumably to some past karma), before his death.[5]

Again, Swami Ji very often gave to his followers instances from the life of his great predecessor, to teach them the importance of virtues like patience, forbearance, forgiveness and Godliness.[6]

Before his passing away in 1843, Tulsi Sahib bequeathed his spiritual heritage to Swami Ji. For six months Tulsi Sahib lay in a state of *samadhi* (spiritual trance) lost in Divine consciousness. It was only after Swami Ji had paid him a visit that Tulsi Sahib left his mortal frame. Baba Garib Das, one of the earliest disciples of Tulsi Sahib, confirmed that the spiritual mantle had been entrusted by his Master to Munshi Ji (as Swami Ji was then known on account of his great learning in Persian).[7] Swami Ji was to spend fifteen years of his life in almost incessant *abhyasa* (spiritual practice) in a small closet.

After the passing away of Tulsi Sahib, Swami Ji continued to visit Hathras to honor the memory of his preceptor. On one such occasion, we are told, when Swami Ji went to Hathras, the heat was so great that his disciples Rai Saligram and Baba Jiwan Lal had to carry him be-

[4] Chacha Partap Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 109.
[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 33-34 [6] *Ibid.*, pp. 93-96.
[7] *Jivan Charitar Babuji Maharaj*, Vol. III, p. 29.

tween themselves over the last lap of the journey where no transport was available and the ground was very uneven.[8]

The great respect that Swami Ji displayed for the Granth Sahib embodying the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors seems ultimately to have been derived from family tradition. The recitation of the Sikh scriptures was an article of faith in the family. His father, Lala Dilwali Singh (a *Sahejdhari khatri* Sikh, belonging to the order of Nanak Panthis), was devotedly attached to Jap Ji, Raho Ras and Sukhmani (Sikh scriptures), which he read from day to day with great religious fervor and deep reverence. A copy of Sukhmani in Persian script, in the hand of Swami Ji's grandfather, Seth Maluk Chand, at one time Diwan of Dholpur State, is still preserved in the archives of Soamibagh.[9] The essence of Sant Mat thus came to permeate the very being of Swami Ji. In later years, at least on one occasion, while discoursing on the Jap Ji at his home in Punni Gali, Swami Ji clearly acknowledged his spiritual debt to the Punjab, referring to Nanak and his successors as the fountainhead of Spirituality and to Paltu Sahib and Tulsi Sahib as great subsequent exponents of the inner science. We will deal with this incident while tracing the life of Baba Jaimal Singh Ji in the succeeding chapter.

His younger brother, Rai Brindaban Singh, a postmaster in Ajodhia, was a close disciple of Baba Madhodas of Mahant Dera Rano Pali in Ajodhia. He, like his elder brother Shiv Dayal Singh, had a firm faith in and a great regard for Gurbani. He was continually engaged in the sweet remembrance of the Lord (*Bishambar*) whose

[8] Ajodhya Parshad, *Jivan Charitar Hazur Maharaj*, p. 36.
[9] Chacha Partap Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 5.

praises he chanted with a beautiful refrain, as is evident from his compositions under the caption *Wah-e-Guru Nama* in his Urdu book *Bahar-i-Brindaban:* [10]

O Brindaban! Leave aside all else and do the Japa of the great name Wah-e-Guru.
It shall not only purify your body, mind and soul,
But give you salvation, peace and happiness besides.

Again, we learn that when the end of Lala Dilwali Singh drew near, his son Shiv Dayal Singh (Swami Ji), sitting near his bedstead, began reciting the Gurbani, so as to keep his father's attention steadily fixed therein at that crucial time.

Giani Partap Singh, basing himself on Baba Bhola Singh's *Radhasoami Mat Darpan,* tells us in his study of world religions[11] how Swami Ji in course of time became a frequent visitor to the holy Sikh shrine of Mai Than at Agra, commemorating the visit of the ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur; where Sant Mauj Parkash, originally known as Didar Singh of the Nirmala order and a great Sanskrit scholar, used to give lucid expositions of the Gurbani or Sikh scriptures. It was because of his close association with Sant Mauj Parkash that Swami Ji learned Gurbani and its significance in Surat Shabd Yoga, and he began using this very shrine for his discourses on Gurbani. Cha-cha Partap Singh in his life sketch has given in rapturous terms a graphic description of one such discourse:

It was about eight in the morning that the Maharaj one day went to the Gurdwara in Mai Than. After

[10] Lucknow: Nawalkishore Printing Press.
[11] *Sansar Da Dharmic Ithas.*

> reciting a shabd or two from the Granth Sahib, he began expounding the subject. In a rich and sonorous voice, the sublime thoughts seemed to flow from him like endless waves from an inexhaustible reservoir within. I was so overwhelmed by the sweep of his words that all at once I felt lifted above the body and bodily environments, lost to all that was of the world. From that very day I was a changed man altogether, with an intense longing for the Divine, fully convinced of the greatness of Swami Ji and of his holy mission.[12]

After some time Swami Ji shifted the venue of his teachings to his private apartments in Punni Gali and continued his discourses from the Granth Sahib (the copy he used was brought by Hazur Sawan Singh Ji from Agra and is still treasured in the archives of Dera Baba Jaimal Singh at Beas in the Punjab). This system of addressing private gatherings at his home continued for quite a long time; but on Basant Panchmi Day in the year 1861, the floodgates of Surat Shabd Yoga as revived in this age by Kabir and his contemporary Guru Nanak, and firmly entrenched by his successors in the Gurbani, were now thrown open by Swami Ji to the general public.

Lest there still be any doubt lingering in the minds of the skeptics, Swami Ji who till the last continued initiating people into the secret of the traditional five-melodied Melody (*Panch Shabd Dhunkar Dhun*), significantly enough on the last day of his departure from the earth-plane, cleared his position beyond the least shadow of doubt by declaring:

> My path was the path of Sat Naam and Anami

[12] Chacha Partap Singh, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

> Naam. The Radhasoami faith is of Saligram's making, but let it also continue. And let the Satsang flourish and prosper.

Among Swami Ji's trusted and devoted disciples was Rai Saligram Sahib Bahadur, popularly known in later times as Hazur Maharaj, after he came to occupy the spiritual headship. While Hazur Maharaj, after the passing away of Swami Ji, continued his discourses at Pipal Mandi in the heart of Agra city, Partap Singh, the younger brother of Swami Ji, generally called Chacha Sahib (respected uncle), carried on the work in Radhasoami Garden, three miles away from Agra city. Another disciple, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji, one of the earliest and most spiritually advanced disciples of Swami Ji, as directed by the great Master himself, settled down at Beas in the Punjab to revitalize the work of Spirituality and to repay in some measure the debt that the world owed to Guru Nanak. We will now examine in some detail the life and work of this distinguished spiritual son of Swami Ji.

BABA JI: A BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

II

Early years

IT WAS IN 1838 that Baba Jaimal Singh was born in the village of Ghuman in the Gurdaspur District of the Punjab, to a family of pious Sikh cultivators. Ghuman was as any other village in the region. If it was distinguished in any way, it was by its having a shrine known as Dera Baba Namdev, in memory of the great sage Namdev who, many centuries earlier, had spent his last days there. Legend holds that when the Saint arrived and wished to pray inside the local temple, he was refused admission because he was an outcaste. Undeterred he went and sat down behind the back wall and was soon lost in samadhi. The Lord, unhappy at the insult offered to His disciple, turned the face of the temple toward the place where Namdev sat, and all the priests and brahmins fell at his feet asking for forgiveness. It is from that day that the local village is said to have taken the name of *Ghuman,* a Punjabi word signifying "to turn around." The village folk visited the shrine to offer devotion, and many a wandering sadhu often came there to pay his homage to the great sage. Bhai Jodh Singh and Bibi Daya Kaur, the parents of Jaimal, were frequent visitors, and the latter, while there, would often pray for a saintly son. Great souls seldom come unannounced and one night Bibi Daya Kaur was visited by the great Namdev in a dream who told her that her prayers were granted; and ten months later Jaimal was born amidst domestic festivity and rejoicing.

The history of a Saint is the history of a soul's pilgrimage. It is a story which to be spiritually complete covers innumerable years and countless lives. The final enlightenment may seem sudden, but its preparatory stages are long and arduous. Like Buddha and Jesus, Jaimal showed remarkable spiritual precocity from a very early age. When visiting the shrine of Baba Namdev with his parents, unlike other children of his age, he would sit calm and attentive; and even as a child of three he could repeat many of the verses he heard at spiritual discourses. The villagers wondered at his prodigiousness. He was soon nicknamed *Bal-Sadhu* or "child-saint," and his rural admirers pressed his parents to give him an opportunity for education.

So when Jaimal was five, he was put in the charge of Bhai Khem Das, a learned vedantist who lived close by. In those times education in India did not concern itself with training for a vocation. It was pre-eminently a mental and spiritual discipline based on the study of the scriptures. The young child displayed keen aptitude for it and soon mastered the Gurmukhi script. Within a year he had already read carefully the *Punj Granthi* or five basic Sikh scriptures, including the Jap Ji, the Sukhmani Sahib, and Raho Ras. In another six months he had the key passages of these spiritual treasures by heart, and by the age of seven he had grown into an excellent *pathi* or one who could recite the scriptures in a melodious way with professional mastery. The next year was spent in studying the Dasam Granth—the scriptures compiled by the last of the Sikh Gurus.

Jaimal showed great respect for his teacher who was delighted with the boy's application and rapid progress. The two would spend long hours together, and the lad would hear Bhai Khem Das with great attention. His

hunger for knowledge was insatiable and the reading of scriptures only fired his imagination still further. One day, picking up the Jap Ji, he began reciting the twentieth stanza, and after finishing the recitation, turned to his teacher and asked: "Sir, what is the meaning of Naam, of which Nanak has said, *When one's mind is defiled by sin, it can be cleansed only by communion with Naam,* and of which all the other great ones have sung such praises in the rest of the Granth Sahib?" Khem Das was touched by his pupil's questioning spirit and discrimination, but was unable to enlighten him on the subject as he himself was not conversant with the mystery of Naam.

A day later, Bhai Jodh Singh, seeing that his son, now eight, was old enough to help him, went to his guru with an offering of a silver rupee and jaggery in traditional style. After laying it at his feet, he expressed his desire to have Jaimal released from his studies in order to tend his flock of goats. Khem Das raised no objection. "He is your son and you may dispose of him as you consider best." But his young ward could not wish him farewell so easily. "Sir," he assured him, "I shall work for my father all day, but in the evening I shall come to you and continue the studies."

Jaimal proved true to his word and kept unbroken his association with his learned teacher. Proud of his perseverance and piety, Khem Das initiated him soon after into the Japa of *Sohang,* which he himself practiced. The boy would get up long before daybreak, have his bath, read the scriptures and sit for meditation. He would then lead his goats into the fields. His young friends soon observed that while the goats grazed over the meadows, he did not hang around, idly looking on, but kept reading and reciting holy texts and often sat down cross-legged for medita-

tion. At sundown he would return with his herd, have some milk and food, and then proceed to his guru. There he would sit attentively, learning how to read and interpret the scriptures. After he had mastered the Granth Sahib, he began, at the age of nine, the study of Hindi and the Hindu texts. Studies over, he would visit the shrine of Namdev and return home late at night. Often, while away in the evening, he would sit down and be lost in meditation, so much so that once he was away for the whole night while his parents searched frantically every part of the village in vain. This intense application did not go unrewarded, and the boy once told his teacher that he could see stars and moon within and glimpse inner Light —the first spiritual experience of the mystic soul.

Bhai Jodh Singh was far from satisfied with his eldest son's unworldly ways. However religious-minded a man may be, he is seldom happy to see his son turned a renunciate. Jaimal was growing up, but instead of showing any interest in family affairs, he was moving in the opposite direction. He not only spent a great deal of his time reading scriptures, practicing spiritual *sadhnas* and visiting his teacher, Bhai Khem Das, but also began passing long hours in the company of the sadhus and holy men who came to the village to pay homage to the shrine of Namdev. Wishing to curb his son's inordinate religious inclination, his father thought it best to send him away from Ghuman and its visiting sadhus. So at the age of eleven years and eight months Jaimal was sent off with his flock to the home of one of his two sisters, Bibi Tabo, who lived in the village of Sathyala.

At his sister's, Jaimal continued his old schedule of religious practices and goat-grazing. Many a month passed away in this uneventful manner. Then one day while fol-

lowing his herd he met a yogi who had just arrived at the village. Happy to find the company of the holy, he bowed in reverence, milked his goats and offered the yogi a drink of milk. The man in saffron was touched by the lad's piety and began to question him. Jaimal told him of the scriptures he had read and the intense desire for enlightenment they had sparked in him. The sadhu was very pleased by the account and offered to train him. He told him frankly that as regards the mystique of Naam he knew little, but whatever he himself practiced he would freely impart. So next morning as instructed, Jaimal proceeded, without having eaten anything, to his newly-discovered guide for initiation. The yogi was an adept in pranayama and instructed his young disciple into its secrets.

Having found a spiritual guide, Jaimal was once again lost to the world. His old holy indifference to family ties and worldly affairs returned, if anything with redoubled intensity. He would often sit for three hours at a stretch in meditation. The yogi, pleased by his devotion, stayed on in the village and Jaimal was more often than not to be found in his company. These developments caused his sister much concern, and anxiety finally drove her to send word to her father to take the boy away. Bhai Jodh Singh soon arrived on the scene and ordered his son back home. The two set out homeward early next morning, but while they were on the point of leaving the village, Jaimal, his eyes moist with tears, begged his father to permit him to see the yogi for the last time and bid hm farewell. His father agreed and the boy, with an offering of fresh milk, hurried to his preceptor. He sadly related how his father had arrived and of their intended departure that day. The yogi smiled, blessed him and bade him be of good cheer. "Continue your sadhnas at home as before,"

he said, "and all will be well. I myself shall see you there some day."

At Ghuman Jaimal revived his association with Bhai Khem Das and continued to greet visiting sadhus as of yore. He was now in his fourteenth year and continued with unmitigated zeal the practice of the sadhnas he had learned. But he soon began to hunger for more. The yogic practices he had mastered failed to satisfy him, and on reading the Granth Sahib he became convinced of a higher reality, to be attained by different means. As he progressed on the path, he became progressively more detached from the world. He noted all the esoteric hints and references to the five-worded Word, the *Panch Shabd,* to be found in the Sikh scriptures, and kept pondering over them, asking every new yogi or sadhu he met if he could explain them to him; but all in vain.

At this stage of his search, he and his family suffered a sad bereavement. He was not yet fourteen when his father fell ill and died. The family was grief-stricken but Jaimal's spiritual discipline worked as a protective shield. Quoting from the scriptures, he comforted his mother and his two younger brothers and discouraged any weeping or wailing. If the soul was deathless and if all was according to the Lord's Will, then why any mourning?

The great search

Had Jaimal's interest in Spirituality been only a seed cast on rock or sand or a sapling yet tender in its fiber, had it been no more than the mere curiosity or the spontaneous piety of a simple village lad, the passing away of his father would have rung the death-knell of his quest. As the eldest male member of the family, the burden of do-

mestic responsibilities fell on his shoulders; and perhaps more souls are lost to heaven by the sense of duty to earth than by downright sin and evil. But Jaimal's urge was a plant of tougher roots and stronger fiber. Undaunted and unmoved, he divided the outdoor duties among his brothers, kept up his old exacting routine, and in six months' time mastered the *Yoga Vashishta* and *Vichar Sangreh* (two standard works of Hindu theology).

There arrived in the village about this time a sadhu of the Udasi sect. As was his wont, Jaimal went to see him and inquired of him the meaning of the passages he had noted down from the Granth Sahib. The sadhu explained that he could initiate him into at least the mystery of the *Ghor Anhad* or deep reverberating sound referred to in the Sikh scriptures, if not into that of the Panch Shabd. Jaimal, keen to learn whatever he could, offered himself as a disciple. But the Diwali festival was at hand and his new teacher wanted to celebrate it at Amritsar. Reluctant to miss this opportunity, Jaimal went to his mother and begged her to allow him to join the sadhu and go forth on his quest for truth. But Bibi Daya had to see to the welfare of the family and would not hear of her eldest son going away. She reminded him of his duties. "Your father is no more," she said, "and you must carry on in his place. If you are gone, what will become of us?"

"I am not insensitive to what you say, my dear mother," replied her son, "but the Lord is above us, and he who sustains his creatures even on the rocks and in the sea will not forsake us in our need. Man's primary duty is to seek his Creator and all other duties are secondary. Be not afraid but be of good cheer; and let me proceed with your blessings."

Deeply religious herself, Bibi Daya was touched by

what Jaimal said with such conviction. Seeing his determination and being too fond of him to break his heart, she at last relented. "I know I cannot stop you. Nor do I wish to do so. But if you must go, promise to return home when your quest is over."

Giving his word of honor, Jaimal departed and his mother and brothers bade him a tearful farewell. He had hardly entered his fifteenth year and he was already embarked on a quest that was to carry him through many cities and was to involve him in great toil and travail. It was a time when the railroad was still unkown in India, let alone modern motorways and airways. The rich could, of course, ride on horses, but the humbler folk had to depend on the sturdiness of their own feet. Travel was difficult and arduous. The British had only recently conquered the Punjab and stability was still to be established. The Great Mutiny was only half a decade away, but the people were growing restive and the country was beginning to seethe with discontent.

It was in such conditions that Jaimal set forth for Amritsar. Three days after reaching there he was initiated by the Udasi sadhu in a local garden into the science of the Ghor Anhad. Like his contemporary Sri Ramakrishna (1836-1886), Jaimal Singh was destined to sit at the feet of many intermediary masters before meeting his True One. Like him he was destined to learn many a sadhna and make rapid headway in each. And like him he was destined not to be bound, like other yogis, to any of them, but to press ever forward toward a higher and still higher goal. His early mastery of the Granth Sahib stood him in good stead. It worked as an infallible touchstone with which to test every new attainment and to know that his real goal lay still further ahead.

Having practiced japa and pranayama, and having delved into the ecstacy of the Ghor Anhad, the quest for the secret of the five-worded Word became Jaimal's over-mastering passion. While at Amritsar, he did not fail to contact other yogis and sadhus, questioning them for the clues of that which he sought. Someone suggested that he might discover the object of his search at the feet of Baba Gulab Das, then residing at the village of Chatyala. The boy needed no further prompting and not long after was seeking permission of Gulab Das's disciples to see their master. The request was granted and he appeared before the revered sadhu. A lively discussion ensued which, because of the newcomer's tender age, irritated some of the older disciples standing around. But Gulab Das assured them that Jaimal, if young in years, was mature in mind and was a true seeker of God. He tried to satisfy the boy as best as he could, explaining that Naam was no more than the sound vibrating in the pranas, initiating him still further into the secrets of the *pranva* or the pranic yoga. Jaimal, though ready to learn whatever he could, was not convinced by the sadhu's interpretation which, as he pointed out to him, failed to explain (a) the number "five" used time and again in the Granth Sahib in connection with the inner Shabd; and (b) the fact that the Sikh Gurus repeatedly asserted that the path of Naam was distinct from other yogic forms which could not give the highest liberation.

From Chatyala, Jaimal's quest led him to Lahore. There were Hindu sadhus and Muslim fakirs of all descriptions there. The young Sikh lad sought their company at all hours and incessantly mingled with them. But try as he might, he could discover no clue. Finding himself in a great city, having trudged many a mile, with no money in

his pocket, hardly ever certain of his next meal, he was not a little discomfited with his predicament. He lived in the hope of solving the secret which none could unravel for him. Weary of foot and heavy of heart, he set out for Nankana Sahib, the birthplace of Guru Nanak and a place of holy pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

But at Nankana Sahib Jaimal failed once again to find what he wanted. The ways of Providence are mysterious. A seeker's way may be cluttered with countless obstacles which may almost seem to break his heart, yet at the very moment when the spirit is on the brink of collapse, it whispers a word of encouragement and flashes a ray of hope, saving him from the giant despair and putting him on the road to New Jerusalem. And so the boy, now fifteen, met at Nankana Sahib Bhai Jodha Singh of the Namdhari sect who directed him to Baba Balak Singh of Hazro, a village beyond Attock in what later came to be known as the Northwestern Frontier Province. With undeterred resolution, Jaimal set out on the long journey. He first halted at Aminabad whence he proceeded to Shah Daulah. From Shah Daulah his journey took him across the Jhelum river to Tila Balnath, and thence to Rawalpindi. He spent a few days in each of these towns and never failed to get in touch with the fakirs and sadhus to be found there. Being not very far from Panja Sahib, the famous shrine marking one of Guru Nanak's most memorable miracles,[1] he pro-

[1] It is related in Guru Nanak's life that the great sage was touring the region with his devoted disciples, Bala and Mardana. The party was feeling exceedingly thirsty and there seemed to be no trace of water around. The sage directed his followers to Wali Kandhari, a Muslim hermit who lived on the hillside by the side of a spring. The Wali, lost in his own pride, sent away the strangers empty-handed. When they returned again at their Master's bidding, he scoffed: "If your Guru is as great a man as you affirm, can't he even quench your thirst?"

ceeded there even if it lay somewhat off his route. There he sojourned for a while, enjoying the natural scenery and the clear water gushing from the sacred fount. He journeyed from there toward Attock and at last arrived at Hazro, his destination.

He was very happy to meet the venerable Baba Balak Singh who was impressed by the young visitor's keenness of mind and intensity of spiritual yearning. They passed some delightful days together reading, reciting and discussing the Granth Sahib. Balak Singh was a man of great wisdom and piety, but as far as Spirituality was concerned he, like Gulab Das, was only conversant with japa through prana, and knew little of the *Panch Shabdi Naam* spoken of by Kabir and the great Sikh Gurus. However he gave his young friend hope and directed him to Chikker to a householder Sikh of great spiritual eminence.

Jaimal arrived from Hazro in the village of Chikker and began inquiring for the man he sought. He seemed to find no clue till he met an old retired Sikh who asked the young stranger if he could assist him in any way. Jaimal related from where he had come and the object of his quest, and asked to be guided to the local saint. The old gentleman, who was himself the man he sought, kindly replied that no such saint lived in that village as far as he knew, but offered to do for him whatever little lay in his power.

When these words were related to Nanak, who stood at the foot of the hill below, he smiled and struck the rock with his open hand. Straightway a crystal jet burst forth and everyone drank his fill. The Wali was full of remorse, but it was too late now; and to his consternation he discovered that the spring that ran by his hut had suddenly dried up.

The rock where the Saint struck his hand still bears the imprint of his palm and fingers and a clear stream of water sprouts from beneath. It is a great center for Sikh pilgrimage.

Jaimal's long and exacting search now at last began to yield some fruit. The householder mahatma at whose home he now found himself gave him the first definite clues of what he sought and put him on the first rung of the spiritual ladder. Shortly after his arrival the God-intoxicated boy received initiation. His earlier assumptions were confirmed and he now knew it for certain that the path of Naam had little to do with other yogic practices. But after initiation he pointed out that the scriptures spoke of the "five-worded Word" and he had been imparted only two. On hearing this, his host and preceptor related to him the story of his own initiation:

"It was many years ago that I went to Peshawar. There I met a great mahatma and wished to be initiated by him. He accepted me as a disciple and unlocked to me the mystery of the first two Shabdas, bidding me to come back again as early as possible. I proceeded to my village and intended to return soon. But such are the traps of Maya that I was unable, due to some unexpected piece of business, to fulfill my wish. Two months went by in this way, and when I did at last reach Peshawar, my Master had passed away, taking with him the key to the remaining phases of the Divine Naam." [2]

[2] In the past it was a common practice with mystics to initiate their disciples by degrees into the inner science. After the sadhak had mastered one stage, he was acquainted with the mysteries of the next and so on to the end. The method was not in itself objectionable, but it often led to results of the kind we have just noted. Jaimal was to meet another case like that of the Chikker mahatma a few years later at Delhi after being initiated by Swami Ji at Agra, when he met a Muslim fakir who too had suffered by the early death of his pir. To avoid such mishaps, Masters of the Surat Shabd Yoga nowadays initiate their disciples directly into the mysteries of all the five inner planes that the soul has to traverse before it can merge with the Absolute.

Jaimal had no choice. He had to be content with what he got. He stayed on with the Sikh mahatma for some time, enjoying his hospitality and inspiring company, and sedulously cultivating the gift he had received. Then a day arrived when he bade his latest teacher a touching farewell and set forth for Peshawar to pursue his unfulfilled quest. He had the satisfaction of being put on the right road, but he was not the man to rest till he had attained his goal. At this ancient frontier city he once again, like a keen huntsman, began seeking the trail of some man of full God-realization. But Peshawar was not the place where his quest was to be crowned with success and his thirst satiated. While wandering among Pathans through its many streets, a *mastana* Sikh, lost to the everyday world of rational behavior by divine intoxication, stopped him and accosted him with the words: "Why do you expend your labors in the North when your day is to dawn from the East?" Though he could extract nothing more from the strange counsellor, his advice drove home and soon after Jaimal began retracing his steps to the Punjab. On reaching Rawalpindi he decided to visit the famous Kashmir Valley and the popular hill resort of Murree. A lover of Nature's beauties, he greatly enjoyed his hilly tour and in Kashmir met many a sadhu. His sightseeing over, he finally turned homeward. With tatters on his back and barely any shoes on his feet or money in his pocket, he at last reached Ghuman to the great joy of his fond mother and his affectionate brothers.

The family celebrated the homecoming in traditional style, offering thanksgiving to the Almighty, arranging scriptural recitations and the singing of hymns, distributing sweets among the neighbors and offering food to the poor. Jaimal Singh, now sixteen, took up the family duties once

more and gave himself up to the consolidation of what he had learned in his recent itinerary. Soon after his return, the Sathyala yogi who had initiated him into Pranayam three years earlier arrived, true to his parting promise, at Ghuman to see his young disciple. Jaimal Singh received him with reverence and humility and his former teacher offered to instruct him in the other practices of traditional yoga. But the youth was no longer a child. His wide travels and the varied accompanying experience had given him a new maturity. What had seemed desirable once no longer seemed of much value, for his contact with many a yogi had convinced him of one thing at least: the *kriyas* of Hatha Yoga might give strange physical and occult powers, but they could not bestow full inner peace and freedom. Every fresh day only strengthened his old conviction that the path of complete *mukti* or emancipation lay some other way, and all that he now sought was initiation into the mystique of the Panch Shabd.

Time rolled on its mercury wheels, but Jaimal Singh was not the man to sit idle or be content with only the second best. "Awake, arise and stop not until the goal is reached," enjoined an ancient Vedic text, and his life was a living embodiment of this precept. Barely eight months had elapsed since his return when the urge to resume his quest for the holy Naam became too powerful to be resisted, and he began pressing his mother for permission to set out once more.

"How can you expect me to let you go again? You were a child then, but now you are a grown up man and understand your responsibilities."

"Ah, mother, at my birth you prayed for a saintly son. Then why stop me now?"

"How can you talk this way? Have I ever checked you

in your religious inclinations? Surely you can pursue your devotional practices and spiritual disciplines while living at home?"

"How can godliness and worldliness go together?"

"But you yourself have seen how others have encroached upon our lands after your father's death. We barely get enough to eat; and when you are gone, your brothers being so young, what will prevent them from forcibly occupying the rest?"

"Let them take whatever they will. This world is not ours, and even if these lands are not taken away from us we will have to leave them some day when our life span is over. We have only to sustain ourselves. What matters if all our property is lost? The Lord has given us sinewy arms, and with his grace we shall earn a respectable living."

He whom nothing could dissuade while yet a child could not be deterred now, and Bibi Daya had no choice but to let him go. Thus at the age of sixteen years and nine months Jaimal Singh once again set out on his spiritual explorations. Having well nigh exhausted the Punjab and the Northwest, with the words of the Peshawar Sikh still reverberating in his ears, he bent his footsteps eastward. The times were insecure and the British had not yet fully entrenched themselves in their new northern conquests. Night travel was therefore prohibited, and sentries were stationed at night on the chief highways to prevent any stray travelers. But Jaimal Singh was too eager to be thus restricted. He would spend the first half of the night resting and sleeping and in the second, while the sentries were drowsing and dozing, continue his journey as quickly as possible.

At Vairach, a village on the banks of the Beas not far

from home, he met a sadhu named Kahan who was engaged in collecting bricks. "Good day, holy one," said the youth. "What is it that keeps you so busy?"

"Nothing, my son, nothing; I am only collecting material for your future dwelling," smiled Kahan, and once more got lost in his work. When others of the village would question him in like manner, he would reply with characteristic brevity, "A temple will rise here one day," and relapse into his usual silence.

Jaimal Singh, not knowing where to go, directed his steps toward Hardwar on the banks of the sacred Ganges, a favorite haunt of the holy. Traveling by night and by day, he footed the distance with commendable speed and in twelve days reached the Ganges. He explored the ghats of Hardwar, then a small town almost entirely populated by pandits and sadhus, hearing learned yogis, questioning them and discussing his problems with them. From the main town he traveled alongside the river, visiting all the sacred spots in the neighborhood. At Tappo Ban he heard of a very old sadhu of about a hundred and fifty years who dwelt not far away in the heart of a thick jungle and possessed great powers but seldom spoke to those who came to see him.

Undaunted by the yogi's reported silence, Jaimal Singh wended his way into the forest and at last found the hermit's dwelling. The sadhu was busy with his spiritual practices and paid no heed to those that came to see him in order to be blessed by his sight. The evening drew near and the sky and the branches overhead burst into life with the twitter of homing birds. All the visitors departed: the forest would soon be dark and who could tell what wild creature might be prowling in the thick foliage awaiting its chance. Jaimal Singh alone stayed on. Night fell and

yet the yogi took no notice of him. He at last got up, walked to a swing hung from a nearby branch and took his stand, resting his arms on its wooden seat. Hour after hour slipped by but the ascetic stood on motionless, displaying no signs of fatigue. At last darkness began to break and brought an end to his nightly feat of endurance. He left the swing, disappeared into the jungle and returned after bathing. Jaimal had been keeping night long vigil and had kept watching the unusual behavior of the strange man before him. When the sadhu came back after his bath, he at last showed some signs of being aware of his visitor's presence. He asked him who he was and what he wanted. The youth told his name, the place from whence he came and added: "Holy one! For many years I have been in search of true spiritual enlightenment. I heard of your fame and your great powers and have come as a supplicant to your door. I have watched with interest your strange practices and if indeed they grant full liberation from inner restlessness, then pray instruct me into their secrets."

The sadhu made no reply. He sat silent and closed his eyes. After a while he opened them and answered: "My son, my discipline is difficult and bestows many powers. But as for inner spiritual freedom, I am afraid it has not secured me that."

Jaimal Singh wished to question the yogi still further, but the latter became silent and receded from the world of outer consciousness into that of meditation. The sun ascended the heavens and the day passed by. Some devotees came to have a glimpse of the famous yogi, bowed reverently at his feet and, leaving some food for Jaimal Singh and some offerings for the ascetic, departed as on the previous day. Once again the night fell and once again

the youth from Ghuman sat on. The yogi at last rose from his seat and spent the second night in the same manner as the first. When day broke, he went for his bath, and on returning beckoned Jaimal to his side. "My son, I cannot tell you much," he said. "But in my meditation I saw that the Guru you seek dwells with his wife in Agra. He is indeed a great soul and discourses from the Granth Sahib. He shall unlock to you the treasures of the Panch Shabd. Proceed there and I myself will follow as soon as I can to partake of his bounty."

What a burden fell off Jaimal Singh's back! How many nights had he spent tossing and praying, wondering if God would ever grant his wishes! The stranger at Peshawar had given him hope, but his words were vague, and nothing was certain. Now at last a definite clue had been given to him and success appeared within sight. The Lord was indeed kind and did not ignore his humble servant's supplication. Refreshed in spirit and confident in mind, the youth, with a heart overflowing with inexpressible gratitude, bowed before the yogi now wrapped in silence and humbly took his leave.

The consummation

Barely ten days had elapsed before Jaimal Singh, passing through Hapur and the holy town of Mathura, arrived at the gates of Agra. It is a city famous since the days of the great Moghuls; and many a tourist from far and near, from beyond the Atlantic and the Pacific, has had glimpses of its magnificent Taj and other historic monuments as well as its sultry heat and dusty streets. But the youth from the Punjab had not come to view its historic splendor; he had no flair for its gorgeous and massive mausoleums, forts and palaces built by Akbar and his illustrious

successors. What he sought was not the reminiscences of time but the enlivening breath of the Eternal. Instead of visiting the Taj he explored the local shrines and temples in search of the boon that had been promised him.

But try as he might, his explorations seemed to lead nowhere. He could find no clue to the man he sought. Were his hopes baseless? Was the promise given him at Peshawar and confirmed in the heart of a forest on the banks of the sacred Ganges only a hoax and a delusion? Perhaps there had been error? Perhaps he was not yet ripe for the gift? Many thoughts crowded Jaimal Singh's mind as he sat contemplating on the banks of the Jamuna one morning after having bathed in its waters. While he sat this morning, two men approached him, discussing personal matters. At first he took scant notice of them for many came daily for a dip in the sacred river. But then a word shot through his ears and he was all attention. Yes, they were talking of a "Swami Ji," a great sage, who often discoursed on the Sikh scriptures at his home to a small audience. Jaimal Singh was on his feet. He accosted the strangers, inquired of them about the great man of whom they spoke and begged to be conducted to his dwelling.

As soon as the two devotees had finished bathing, they set out with Jaimal Singh for Punni Gali where lived the great Swami Ji. When the three reached their destination, the Master was speaking on the Jap Ji, expounding its profound meaning and unearthing the spiritual treasures hidden in its lyrical ecstacy. There were only a few listeners and Jaimal Singh slipped quietly into a corner. He heard the discourse with rapt attention, drinking in every word that fell from the lips of the Saint.

When the morning assembly was over, Swami Ji welcomed his new visitor and asked him what he wanted.

"I am in search of the gift of Naam and a Saint who can bestow its blessing upon me," replied Jaimal Singh. "I heard of your greatness and have hastened to your door."

"I am afraid you will find no Saint here," smiled the radiant Swami Ji. "I am only a mere servant of the Saints. Even the great Nanak regarded himself as no Saint; then how can a mere nothing like myself be of any consequence?" He then welcomed Jaimal once more, assuring him that he could stay there as long as he pleased, for all were free to share the bounty of the *Sahib,* the Lord above.

Later that day Swami Ji spoke to Jaimal Singh again. Pleased with his deep immersion in the Granth Sahib, he asked him to recite one of his favorite hymns. The youth began melodiously to chant the piece beginning:

Karam hovae Satguru milae
Sewa Surat Shabd chit lae

By the grace of God one can meet a Master who puts him on the service of Surat Shabd Yoga.

RAG MAGH M. 3

The recitation was moving. It was clear that the speaker had himself felt with deep intensity what he chanted. When it was over, Swami Ji asked him if he understood the full meaning of the verses he had just rendered.

"O Holy One!" came the answer, "if I had understood their true import, why then should I wander lost in this fashion?" And as he spoke these words and recalled his long journeys and the many vicissitudes he had, Jaimal Singh's eyes brimmed with tears and silently overflowed.

Swami Ji placed his hand lovingly on the youth's back and reassured him. "Be of good cheer," he said. "We are

old comrades and there is no cause for worry." Then taking up the hymn that had been just recited, he expounded its spiritual meaning at length, weaving with subtlety the threads of personal effort and divine grace essential for the salvation of the human soul.

Next morning Swami Ji resumed his discourse on the Jap Ji. When it was over, he turned toward Jaimal Singh and suggested, "If you have any doubts or questions, why not clarify them now? Speak your mind fully. I am only a humble servant of the Lord, and one may say anything to a servant—anything—high or low; don't be afraid, but speak frankly. I would be only too happy to be of some assistance to you for I regard this as my service to my Guru."

Later that afternoon Swami Ji once again requested Jaimal to recite a hymn from the Sikh scriptures, and the Sikh youth began chanting:

Utpat, Parlae, Shabde hovae
Shabde he phir opat hovae

Creation and dissolution is caused by Shabd and the creation again comes into being by Shabd.

RAG MAGH M. 3

The afternoon talk centered around this hymn, and the Master took up at length the theme of Shabd or Naam, answering one after another Jaimal Singh's as yet unvoiced questions on the subject. He showed how the Word was the primal cause of creation as well as of its dissolution; how it was at once the agent of the Almighty Absolute and itself the Absolute. Without its power nothing was created, and only through contacting it could one reach back to one's heavenly home.

When all had departed and Jaimal Singh was left alone with Swami Ji, he drew closer and began to question the Saint on the way to salvation. He was convinced that the Agra sage was a true Master, but the fact that he was not a Sikh and smoked the hookah caused him some uneasiness. But as Swami Ji took up the subject of salvation and began revealing how Shabd was the only means of *mukti,* how its contact could be given only by a *Puran Sant,* a perfect Master, how man without it could never fully escape the meshes of Maya, and how its practice and mastery lay within the reach of all regardless of their differences of sect and custom, Jaimal's doubts were dissipated and he begged to be initiated. Swami Ji then began to instruct him into the theory and practice of Surat Shabd Yoga, and when the instructions were over, asking the youth of seventeen to sit down for meditation, he left the room.

As soon as Jaimal Singh sat down for meditation, he got lost in samadhi. The night came and passed away, the day broke, but he continued motionless, lost in the inner bliss he had discovered. Another day saw itself swallowed by the night, and the night saw itself replaced by another day, and yet the youth sat lost to the world around him. When some forty-eight hours had thus gone by, Swami Ji asked some of the disciples if they knew where the visitor from the Punjab had disappeared. "We saw him two days ago at the Satsang," they said, "but we have not seen him since." Swami Ji smiled and proceeded straight to the little room where he had left his latest disciple and which none had entered for two days. He placed his hand on Jaimal Singh's head, and when the later's soul returned to normal physical consciousness and he opened his eyes, he saw his Guru beaming at him."Do you, my boy, still doubt if your

Master be a true Sikh or not?" he asked with a twinkle in his eye. The lad wished to fall at his feet but the long spell of samadhi had left his joints numb and still. Swami Ji suggested that he rub his legs, and when Jaimal could move, he conducted him outside. There he gave him a drink of milk with his own hands, and gazing at him fondly, he said: "You too shall do one day the work I carry on now. Our path is not concerned with outer forms and rituals and each of us must live by the best traditions of the community in which the Lord has been pleased to place us." He then began commending the teachings of Nanak and the Sikh Gurus and said that those who were their followers needed little instruction. "Always abide by the injunctions of the Granth Sahib," he continued. "Abstain from meat and drink. Never depend for your sustenance on others but live by the labor of your own hands. Whatever you earn share freely with the needy and remember to serve the holy and the poor. And above all never be proud of your own good deeds or critical of the actions of others, but know yourself to be in error, and never step outside the virtue of inner humility."

Jaimal Singh heard with reverent attention his Master's advice and ever afterward tried to model himself on the same. He devotedly attended the daily Satsang and assisted in whatever manner lay within his reach. His past training had disciplined him well for his spiritual sadhna, and he would devote himself untiringly to Bhajan. Under Swami Ji's guidance and with his phenomenal inner progress, new mysteries were daily revealed to him, the mysteries of which Nanak, Kabir and Tulsi had so ecstatically sung.

In those days during the mid-fifties, Swami Ji did not have a large following. He had not yet begun giving public discourses, and confined his meetings to small private

audiences at his home in Punni Gali after having discontinued his talks at the Mai Than Gurdwara. Seven or eight of his disciples were especially devoted to him and constantly sought his company and there was great affection and harmony. Every morning the Master gave an inspiring talk, displaying before his listeners' eyes the spiritual treasures hidden in the Granth Sahib or the writings of Kabir and other great Saints. After the morning Satsang those present sat down for their meals. The food was cooked by Swami Ji's wife, Srimati Narain Devi, who came subsequently to be addressed as Radha Ji as a mark of public respect and adoration; while Swami Ji personally served the food to all with loving attention to each. In the afternoons and evenings there would often be informal conversations and discussions and at times regular discourses.

A month and a half passed by in this way. Jaimal Singh was happy to live at the feet of his benevolent Master. It was the year 1856, and a regiment of Indian sepoys, including several Sikhs, was about this time stationed at Agra. At the instance of Swami Ji, Jaimal Singh joined up as a recruit. He would attend his morning parade and, duties over, hasten to his Guru's door. There he would attend the Satsang, hear Swami Ji, sit for meditation and return to his quarters in the cantonment at night. His army colleagues would often ask him where he spent so much of his time. When he told them of the greatness of Swami Ji, some of his Sikh friends wished to meet the illustrious Saint, and one day accompanied by six of them Jaimal Singh set forth for Punni Gali.

Swami Ji was discoursing on some hymn from the Granth Sahib when the group from the cantonment arrived. Chacha Partap Singh good-humoredly remarked that the

Punjab seemed to dominate the Satsang that day. Swami Ji turned to him and said: "The people of that land above all others have a right to the spiritual riches of which I speak. Who can ever do justice to the glory of Punjab that bore a soul like Nanak? He above all taught us that freedom does not lie in idol-worship or in rituals, and while we in these parts are still lost in ceremony and idolatry, insensitive to the message of Kabir and Nanak, the souls of Punjab are free from such evils and need only a spark to set them ablaze. Mark my words for they are worth remembering: the gift bestowed upon me by the Lord shall flower one day on the plains of the Punjab." Then turning to his visitors, he welcomed them, entertained them as best as he could, bade their leader Jaimal Singh to be regular in his army duties, and when the time came for their departure, wished them farewell.

The light army duties left Jaimal Singh ample time for meditation. If he had no night duty, he would get up at 2 A.M., bathe, and sit down for meditation. During the day, as soon as the parade and other normal duties were over, he would engage himself in like manner or hasten to the home of Swami Ji. He was known for not wasting a single moment on pastimes popular among his fellow soldiers. He visited Punni Gali with great regularity, and often acted there as Swami Ji's *pathi* or reciter; and many of his friends, because of his impact, became his Master's disciples. Life was peaceful and happy and was bearing steady fruit. But a day arrived when the regiment was ordered to move from Agra. Heavy of heart, Jaimal Singh met his Master and sadly related the news. "Oh Sir!" he said, "how I yearn to enjoy the blessings of Satsang a little longer." Swami Ji smiled and replied, "Well, let us wait and watch for the Will of the Sahib." Next day fresh

orders arrived canceling the departure of the regiment.

Jaimal Singh was making speedy inner headway. He often told Swami Ji of his various spiritual experiences and his Guru was pleased with his progress. Once when he told him of his ready access to Dasam Dwar (the Tenth Gate—the third major stage of the mystic soul) but his inability to penetrate beyond it, Swami Ji exclaimed: "Ah! That is quite understandable. We have worked at this spiritual exploration together before, and in your last life you mastered up to the third stage. Hence your ease in progressing thus far and your subsequent difficulty." He however reassured his young disciple and encouraged him to keep up his effort.

When the latter one day reported still higher ascent, Swami Ji was mightily pleased and declared enthusiastically: "Continue in this fashion and you will soon be ready to help other souls to salvation. You have been born to help mankind, and between you and me is no real difference."

"I am not worthy of such honor. Oh, let me be humbly at your feet, far from the fangs of pride."

"Fear not, a true Saint can never be proud."

"Oh Sir, keep me at your feet, the servant of the servants of Saints. That is all I ask."

"You shall indeed have a Saint's service: saving humanity, bringing it to truth and spiritual liberation. What is the giving away of a million cows to the saving of a single soul?"

"You may do as you judge best, but as for myself I know only too well my worthlessness and limitations."

The six months for which the regiment's departure was postponed were over and Jaimal Singh had to go. He took leave for the last three days and spent them in the com-

pany of his Master. When at last the time for bidding farewell drew near, Jaimal Singh could bear it no longer.

"My heart breaks at the thought of parting. If you so will, I can have my name struck from the army rolls."

But Swami Ji would not hear of such a thing: "Build your love on the Shabd within. That is your real Guru and is ever at your side. All else is transient and must be left behind. You must earn your living for if you depend on the labor of others, you must pay for it with your mental peace, and your understanding will be clouded. If you have to work, then why leave the army?"

Jaimal Singh had no choice but to bow before the superior wisdom of his Master. At parting, Swami Ji spoke of the nature of Sainthood and the conduct of Saints. He related anecdotes of their great humility and, when bidding farewell, said: "Your regiment is now leaving. If you ever meet a true seeker, put him on the inner path, but remember always that you are only a humble instrument of the Saints." Tears filled the young soldier's eyes as he fell at the feet of his Guru and bade him adieu.

The Soldier Saint

From Agra the regiment moved to Delhi. Jaimal Singh, deprived of his Master's company, began looking for some spiritual seeker with whom he could associate. He soon discovered one Baba Karam Singh, also in the army, who was a great devotee of the Lord. He began visiting him frequently and would sit at his quarters enjoying the elder's company. When one day Baba Karam Singh asked Jaimal Singh what attracted him to his place, he very simply replied, "I come here because since my childhood I have loved sitting at the feet of the lovers of the Lord."

Baba Karam Singh was delighted to find a fellow spirit so young in years, and a lively discussion on Spirituality ensued. It turned out that Baba Karam Singh, like Baba Balak Singh of Hazro, mistook the pranic rhythm for the principle of Naam sung of in the Granth Sahib. The young soldier, who had not yet attained his majority, began with great humility to correct his error. He quoted relevant passages from the Sikh scriptures to show that the Divine Shabda was the prime energy activating everything, even prana, but was not to be identified with prana. He dwelt on the fact that all great exponents of Sant Mat or the Path of the Masters had clearly and unequivocally declared that in our time pranayama and other such practices could not bring inner emancipation. He then spoke of his great teacher at Agra and of his inspiring teachings, and helped Baba Karam Singh to get on to the right path to God.

After the great Rebellion of 1857, the regiment in which Jaimal Singh was employed was disbanded. He had not met his family for a long time and proceeded straight home. His mother's joy at seeing him again knew no bounds. But he was not destined to be with her for long. On receiving the news that a 24th Sikh Regiment had been formed at Peshawar, he bade his family farewell and proceeded to join it. After some time in the Northwest Frontier Province the regiment was transferred in January 1858 to Ambala. In September of the following year it was transferred to Sagar, a city on the banks of a large lake in central India. By now Jaimal Singh's fellow soldiers had got used to his rigorous spiritual discipline; but during the days the regiment would be marching, they were surprised to find him excavate a small dugout in which he would then sit in a reclining posture, his back

resting against the earthy embankment, and pass the entire night in meditation.

While stationed at Sagar, Jaimal Singh one night requested Swami Ji in meditation that the regiment be transferred next to Agra so that he could have the benefit of sitting at his holy feet. A man of God-realization can work strange miracles, being at one with the Will of God; and a Guru's love for a true disciple is so great that he denies him nothing.[3] Jaimal Singh's prayer was granted; and next morning he casually observed to Bhagwan Singh, his mate and a devoted admirer, that as and when the regiment would be transferred it would be moved to Agra. On that occasion Bhagwan Singh took little notice of what was said, but when the news of its next stationing was received, the story of the prophetic soldier spread through the regiment like wildfire.

The orders for moving to Agra had not yet been received when Jaimal Singh applied for annual leave. The leave was granted but when he reported before departure, his superior informed him that he had to rejoin, not at Sagar, but at Agra. The sepoy was so overcome with the news that instead of going home he went straight to Agra. Swami Ji received him with great affection and Radha Ji especially prepared halwa to mark the occasion. The great Guru regarded him as a *puran Gurmukh,* a true disciple,

[3] What we cannot explain in terms of what we know, we normally term as a "miracle." Thus the first witnesses of locomotion looked upon what they saw as a wonder; yet today hardly anyone would take it as such. In like manner, he who has mastered the inner Science knows that what people take as miracles are not miracles as such, but are based on the higher laws of creation, accessible only to the scientists of the Spirit who have explored the mysteries of the inner Path. See in this connection the chapter, "The Law of Miracles," in *The Autobiography of a Yogi* by Paramhansa Yogananda.

and recited to him some of the mystical poems he had composed during Jaimal Singh's absence from Agra and which were later collected by Rai Saligram Ji, another noted and distingushed disciple, along with many of his own compositions, in the volume entitled *Sar Bachan.* One of the verses he read referred directly to his disciple:

Yeh dhun hai dhur lok adhur ki
Koyi pukre Sant sipahi

This music streams from a transcendent plane within and is caught by a soldier Saint.
SAR BACHAN, SHABD 9 (p. 94)

Jaimal Singh made the most of his time with the Master. He attended the Satsang regularly and often chanted the verses on which Swami Ji later discoursed. Meanwhile the 24th Sikh Regiment moved into town, but he continued to stay at Punni Gali for he still had some leave to his credit. One night Swami Ji asked him to carry a number of sheets and clothes and accompany him to a poor locality. There he personally distributed to the needy according to their wants the gifts he had brought for them. The recipients were full of gratitude and enthusiastically thanked and blessed the magnanimous stranger. But Swami Ji was not the man to draw praise for himself even when it was his rightful due. "Oh," he exclaimed to those who flocked around him, "do not thus burden me with thanks. I am only an agent of my generous Master. It is to him that all credit is due."

When the nocturnal mission was over, the great teacher turned to his disciple and said, "Jaimal, my son, always serve the poor in this way, never claiming anything as your due."

Jaimal Singh went back to duty when his annual holiday was over. But he made it a point not to miss any opportunity of visiting his Master. He would often arrive at Punni Gali at noon and stay on till late in the evening. One day, lost in Satsang and Bhajan, he forgot completely that he was on duty at night. It was early in the morning that he reached the army quarters and went straight to his mate.

"Have you completed your duty?" asked Bhagwan Singh.

"Why, was I on duty last night?" ventured Jaimal Singh.

"Are you being funny? As if I didn't see you going out dressed for duty last night!"

Jaimal Singh made no further reply. He was musing on the unfailing care of his Master and wondering what exactly had happened. If he still had any doubts about the miracle, they were soon dispelled. The Havildar above him, on meeting him shortly after, also referred to his night duty and that his attendance had been duly marked in the night register. As soon as he could get away, he hastened to Punni Gali and fell at his Master's feet. "How little we erring mortals deserve the grace you shower on us!" he exclaimed, and related the strange happenings of the preceding night.

"I hope you have not spoken of them to any of your army friends."

"Sir, I was too dumbfounded to utter a word."

"Excellent! Excellent! Now keep it to yourself. And mark if any such thing ever happens in the future, remember to restrain yourself and not make a public fuss about it."

This miracle was to be repeated when a similar situation arose not long after.

The year and a half that the 24th Sikh Regiment spent at Agra passed on like a happy dream. Before the regiment departed, Jaimal Singh spent three days with Swami Ji. On the last day when he had to bid farewell, he humbly fell at his Master's feet. Swami Ji raised him from his feet, pressed him fondly to himself, and observed, "There is no difference between us whatsoever for we are alike permeated with the power of Naam."

From Agra the regiment proceeded to Peshawar as is the wont in army life. The 24th Sikh Regiment kept moving from one cantonment to another every two or three years. Among various places at which it was stationed, the most important were Rawalpindi, Abbotabad, Mianmir near Lahore, and Jhansi. While at the last mentioned station, Jaimal Singh was promoted to the rank of a Naik.

In October, two years later, he was once again on his way to Agra to spend the annual leave with his Guru. Who can describe the beatitude to be experienced at the feet of a Divine Teacher! The time slipped by and before he could even realize it, Jaimal Singh's day of parting arrived. He went to Swami Ji for blessings and to bid him farewell. "This is going to be our last meeting," observed the Master. "My mission on earth is almost over. I need hardly repeat that I have cast you in my own mold and you are of my very essence." When Chanda Singh, who was also at Punni Gali at that time, heard that Swami Ji intended to leave the world in a short while, he exclaimed, "What will become of us?" and begged him to leave someone behind to carry on his work in the Punjab. Swami Ji smiled and replied, "Your prayers have already been granted by the Almighty, and Jaimal, whom I have already given authority for Initiation, has been deputed for the task." Then turning back to Jaimal, he said, "Put all

seekers that come to you on the path of Naam; but see that you steer clear of sects and creeds. Ours is the path of Nanak and Kabir. Whosoever is fired by spiritual zeal, whether of this faith or of that, has a right to it. Carry on in all humility, and whatever you do, do it as a servant of the Saints." He then turned to Radha Ji and placing his hand on Jaimal's back declared, "He is indeed our Gurmukh son," and taking a *saropa* or headdress he lovingly bestowed it as a parting gift to his apt and faithful disciple. This great love and honor was too much for the humble Gurmukh and, overwhelmed, his eyes were filled with tears. His heart was heavy as he left, thinking of the approaching end of his Master's earthly sojourn and the difficult burden that was being placed on his shoulders.

From Agra, Jaimal Singh returned to his regiment at Jhansi. The rest of his story as a soldier is simply told. It is unnecessary to enumerate the many places at which the 24th Sikh Regiment was stationed from time to time. Whatever happened, wherever he went, Jaimal Singh let nothing interrupt the routine of his spiritual sadhnas. Like a lover in the frenzy of love, he was forever centered in the joy of the inner life. Even when his regiment was in action in the Northwestern Frontier during the Anglo-Afghan War in 1879, he would leave his quarters at night, go into the wilderness, dig a pit and, with his rifle tucked under his knees, get lost in meditation. Enemy snipers would often spot him, but seeing his Radiant figure make out that he was no ordinary soldier but some great fakir, and leave him untouched. At times when he arose from his sadhna, they would even bow before him in reverence.

As Jaimal Singh, who had been 18 when he had first entered the army at Agra, grew into a mature man and passed from youth to middle age, he slowly but steadily

won the hearts of all around him. At first some of his companions might have sportively dismissed him as an orthodox nonentity who did not know the art of enjoying life, but was lost in the reading of scriptures and tedious spiritual sadhnas. But as the years passed by, they realized that they had among them no ordinary mortal. His prediction to Bhagwan Singh at Sagar of their regiment's next posting got wide currency and won him many admirers. While stationed at Jamrud during the Afghan War, his mate Bhagwan Singh, who had gone with a convoy, suddenly fell ill and died. At the very moment his spirit was leaving its physical frame, Jaimal Singh, many miles away, abruptly exclaimed, *"Wah wah nipat gaye,"* i.e. "Well, well, it is at last over."

Inder Singh, who had joined the regiment at Jhansi, and had developed an intimate attachment for his revered senior, becoming his first initiate, was sitting with him. He was not a little surprised by this dramatic outburst, and asked his teacher what it meant. Jaimal Singh was reluctant to declare himself. "Why bother about that which does not concern you?" he said, but when Inder Singh persisted he told him that Bhagwan Singh had passed away. The young soldier noted the time and date and when the news of his colleague's death arrived, he found it to be correct.

Such strange happenings were not infrequent where Jaimal Singh was concerned, and with the passage of time he became an institution in the regiment. Everyone respected him, and even the English officers held him in great veneration, calling him "Lord Bishop." All those spiritually inclined sought his company, and no less than those who suffered from some worldly affliction. Thus, Subedar Kharak Singh, who had been married for many

years without issue, begged him for the blessing of a child. Jaimal Singh observed that he was not destined to have a child, but when Kharak Singh continued to press him, his prayer was granted. The child was born, but the happy father failed to give away in charity the sum of Rs. 500 which Jaimal Singh had strictly enjoined him to distribute. Not long after, the Subedar fell seriously ill. Jaimal Singh was called, but he said that it was too late now and the evil was past any remedy. A few days later, Kharak Singh passed away.

Was it mere chance or was it because of Jaimal Singh that the members of the 24th Sikhs showed an extraordinary interest in spiritual matters? It is not an unusual phenomenon that the true holy men spread an aura of peace wherever they are, drawing the devotees of the Lord toward themselves and influencing those around them. This regiment became known for its religious inclinations and many a sadhu would pay it a visit wherever it was stationed. Jaimal Singh was always invited whenever any sadhu paid a visit to the regimental center or when any of its members went forth to meet them. When once some of the young Sikh soldiers had to be baptized as adults into their faith, he was unhesitatingly chosen to conduct the ceremony and gave an illuminating discourse on the inner spiritual significance of the ritual. His recitations from scriptures began gradually to be attended by more and more people, and in later years Jaimal Singh, who by then had come to be popularly addressed as "Baba Ji," "Bhai Ji," or "Sant Sepahi," often discoursed briefly on their true import. His magnetic personality, his impeccable character, his spiritual mastery and his growing fame gradually drew around him a small circle of very devoted followers from the regiment, men like Inder Singh, Bagga

Singh, Bhagwan Singh, etc., who became his earliest initiates.

But Baba Jaimal Singh's military career was conspicuous not only for its rigid adherence to a high spiritual ideal, but also for its equally remarkable performance in the field of army duties. True to his Master's behest, Jaimal Singh was extremely regular in his official routine. Nothing could keep him away from his work except, perhaps, his absorption in the Divine, on which occasions Swami Ji miraculously filled up the gap. He was known for his honesty and impartiality and, though a strict vegetarian himself, did not hesitate to have meat distributed to his fellows as duty bound when once he was called upon to do so. Once an officer asserted that his vegetarianism was in all probability undermining his capacities as a soldier and suggested that he should take to non-vegetarian food to develop more stamina and muscle. Jaimal Singh was unconvinced and challenged any "meat-eating toughs" to surpass him on the field. He was later requested to explain the grounds for his abstinence, and gave a full discourse to the entire regiment developing at length the reasons why meat should be avoided and exploding the popular myth that vegetarian food is in any way deficient in vitality. His service roll, covering 34 years of active service, proves the truth of his assertion. It records not a single instance of hospitalization.

Like his great Guru, Jaimal Singh was unassailable both in *swartha* and *parmartha*—worldliness and godliness. His exemplary regularity, sobriety and courage, his readiness to shoulder responsibilities, and his honest discharge of all his duties, for all his quietness and unobtrusiveness, did not go unnoticed. In January 1869 he was awarded a medal for the rank of a Naik while at Jhansi.

In Mianmir on the same day, three years later, he became a Havildar; and when the 24th Sikhs were at Multan from 1880 onward for three years, he received a second medal for loyal and meritorious service. He retired on 15th August, 1889, after full 34 years of faithful and creditable service; and when he bade his regiment farewell, the hearts of all were heavy—juniors, colleagues and seniors —for they lost in him not just a steady, hard-working comrade, but a friend, a teacher (he taught Gurmukhi to the officers) and what is far rarer, an unfailing and inspiring moral and spiritual guide.

The accounts of Baba Ji left by his army colleagues and others are of a piece with the rest of his life and character. Reading through them we learn of a man who, while lost in the Divine mysteries, was yet not lost to the world. A fellow soldier who happened to be placed under him while he was a Havildar was surprised that in all the three years they were together, he did not once notice or hear of his being out of temper. He was always sweet-spoken and refrained from harshness and vulgarity. All his life he remained a strict vegetarian and an equally strict teetotaler. And to these we may add his rigid *brahmcharya,* for he remained a celibate all his years. Wedded to devotion to God, he never experienced the urge to marry, and stoutly resisted any attempt to cajole him into matrimony. When his youngest brother Jiwan Singh also entered the army and expressed his desire to marry, Jaimal Singh did not object, but only said, "Why enter into this web when our family is not destined to continue?" Jiwan Singh was married and a year later a son was born who died shortly, followed by his mother. Dan Singh, the second brother, who managed the farm, also had no issue, and Jaimal's prediction was thus fulfilled.

Other qualities that marked Jaimal Singh out of the general run of men included an inexhaustible capacity for service, charity and generosity. Like Swami Ji, he often distributed clothes and other necessities to the needy and the wretched. He had no enemies and looked upon all as his friends. His love however was especially directed to the poor, and even more so to sadhus and devotees of the Lord. While others were idling or busy with sport, he sought out the company of such devotees, ministering to their needs or discussing spiritual problems. Neither in his army life nor even afterward did he distinguish between creed and creed, but treated all—Muslims, Christians, Sikhs or Hindus—on an equal footing. While ever ready to help materially or spiritually, he always avoided the limelight. Even as a child he had been known for his modesty; his shyness being sometimes made a subject of ridicule. If he met sadhus, he contented himself with listening to what they said; he rarely contradicted or criticized. If he met a genuine seeker, he was ready enough to discuss and explain, but he attributed whatever he knew not to any virtue in himself, but to the grace of his peerless Master.

His dress and appearance were as simple yet elegant as the man himself. Of medium height, some five feet and six inches, he was sturdily built. He had a knotty protrusion on his forehead above the right eye and a lotus mark, symbolic of true spirituality, on the sole of his right foot. He had fine features, wheatish complexion and a glowing face whose ruddy color was set off by a rich freely flowing beard which retained its lustrous blackness to the very end, except for a few straggling streaks of white. When not in army uniform, he wore a white turban in Jat style, a white muslin *kurta* (loose shirt), and tight-fitting pyja-

mas of the same color. While in his quarter informally among his fellows, he would usually wrap a khadi sheet about himself tucking it on the left side, cover his hair (which when unloosed fell to his waist) with a towel, and move about in *kharaon* (wooden sandals) or *jooti* (Indian shoes. He was simple in his habits and frugal in his needs. Milk was his favorite item of food and he was particularly fond of goat's milk. He spent little upon himself and his earnings were mostly spent in charity or in sending allowances to his brother.

The Torch Bearer

Baba Jaimal Singh, on retiring as a Government pensioner from the army, decided to visit the home of his incomparable Master. Swami Ji had passed away in 1878 as he had himself foretold, but Baba Ji was greatly attached to his family and his disciples. So, in 1890, he took train for the old Mughal capital, and on reaching there proceeded straight to Punni Gali. Radha Ji was overjoyed to see Swami Ji's beloved disciple once more while Chacha Partap Singh, his youngest brother, was delighted and gave him a cordial welcome. Word was sent to Baba Gharib Das, then apparently at Agra, and he hastened to meet the great soul from the Punjab. Who can describe the deep joy that was theirs as they greeted and embraced each other and remembered the great Master, who, no longer in this physical plane, was yet spiritually ever with them? Who can fathom the feelings of such Master spirits? The old spiritual comrades radiated love as they greeted each other and to see them meet was itself a lesson in the truth that God is love. Radha Ji brought forth a red turban and an *aasan* or prayer carpet which Swami Ji had left with her before his passing away as a last gift to his

gurmukh disciple. Chacha Partap Singh then brought a gaddi and begged Baba Ji to be seated. But he would not hear of it and commenting, "I am only a dog of this house blessed to be admitted within its walls," kept standing. Chacha Partap Singh protested and persisted, but to no avail. At last Radha Ji intervened and ended the controversy by saying, "Jaimal Singh is indeed a *khatau* (worthy) son of Swami Ji, who has made the most of the capital entrusted to him. He has bestowed him with the Lordship of Sat Lok. So why should he care for earthly gaddis?" When meals were over, Baba Ji insisted on washing the utensils. "This home for me is a temple, for it was here that I got enlightenment. My only ambition is to serve this house." But Radha Ji would not hear of it. "You may do as you please some other day," she declared, "but today you must abide by what I say."

Next day, accompanied by Chacha Partap Singh and Baba Gharib Das, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji proceeded to Rai Saligram—a beloved disciple of Swami Ji—who had been entrusted after him with the work at Agra and carried on his discourses at Pipal Mandi, where he was popularly known as Hazur Maharaj. He rejoiced at the visit and received the honored guest from Ghuman with respect and affection. The two embraced after which Hazur Maharaj drew Baba Ji toward the gaddi on which he had been sitting in order to seat him next to himself. But with characteristic humility, he declined the honor and seated himself on the floor.

The third day Hazur Maharaj presented Baba Ji with a rich silken robe embroidered with gold. He, however, would not hear of it. "What has a simple farmer like me to do with such precious fabrics? Khadi suits me better." "How can you say such things," protested the host, "when

Swami Ji has made you a king of Spirituality and entrusted you with his mission in the Punjab?" Seeing that Baba Ji would not give way, he finally suggested: "Very well, if you will not accept this robe, at least do me the honor of putting it on once, after which I would keep it as a prized souvenir." On hearing this, Chacha Partap Singh declared that he had a prior right and should be allowed to have the dress after Baba Jaimal Singh had donned it. At last Radha Ji stepped in and interceded. How could Jaimal Singh resist any longer? Such love! Such honor! What mortal could deserve it? It was all the grace of his Master. With tears in his eyes, he took the robe from Radha Ji's hands and placed it reverently on his head, reciting the verses from the Granth Sahib, beginning:

Maen av-ghun, gun nahin koi . . .
I am unworthy; and no virtue is in me . . .

A week passed by in this fashion and, having paid his homage to the place where he had received spiritual illumination, Baba Jaimal Singh prepared to depart. He invited Baba Gharib Das to join him, and the latter graciously accepted the invitation. The party set forth for the Punjab and when they arrived at Ghuman, scriptural recitations and discourses were arranged in their honor. Jiwan Singh's marriage was at hand, and there was feasting and rejoicing. The villagers keenly enjoyed the talks given by the two spiritual friends and the days rolled by till Baba Gharib Das had to leave. Jaimal Singh accompanied him to the Beas Railway Station and bade him a touching farewell as he left by train.

Baba Ji continued to be on very friendly terms with Swami Ji's disciples and with the members of his family. There was great mutual respect and esteem and Baba Ji's

visit to Murree in 1894 was made at the invitation of some Agra satsangis. But after the passing away of Hazur Maharaj Rai Saligram Ji, things began to undergo a change. A move was made to bring all activities under the control of Pandit Brahm Shankar Misra (alias Maharaj Sahib) through the creation of a Central Administrative Council at Soamibagh. Baba Ji was nominated along with nine others for the first panel of the Council. The letter sent to Baba Jaimal Singh by Chacha Partap Singh from Allahabad on the occasion, dated 4th August, 1902, nominating him as such, is on record.[4]

[4] Chacha Partap Singh Ji's letter dated August 4, 1902:

"Beloved of the Satguru, purified by Shabd, pure of face and intellect, Baba Jaimal Singh Ji.

I have received your letter and was very glad to read its contents. And the stone which you suggested will be put in the building. You may be assured about that. My son, Suchet Singh, has come back on pension. I am, however, sorry to note that there is a tendency of forming different sects and cliques in our Satsang, and that all satsangis are not in harmony with each other. For this purpose I have come here (to Allahabad).

We have decided that a Radha Swami Satsang Central Association should be started. Pandit Ji (Brahm Shankar Misra) has insisted that I should be its President and he will be the Vice-President; that Lala Ajodhia Prashad, son of Hazur Sahib Maharaj (Rai Bahadur Saligram) and eight others, as well as yourself, should be members. Or, in whatever manner any ten members can be selected by the Satsangis by a vote of majority. I am, therefore, sending you a pamphlet containing a complete description about this Central Association, and can send you any number of copies as may be required. Please send instructions to all your satsangis that they should sanction the following ten names and endorse these pamphlets in token of their nomination. If you have Satsangis in far-off places, they should also be asked to act accordingly. I am giving below the names of the ten members referred to above:

1. Lala Ajodhia Prashad (son of Rai Saligram).
2. Pandit Brahm Shankar Misra Sahib.
3. Lala Baleshwar Parshad.

Baba Ji, however, was reluctant to join the Council as he felt the changes that were taking place about this time among the Agra satsangis were not in consonance with Swami Ji's teachings. He also objected to and opposed Maharaj Sahib's plan for building a magnificent samadh in memory of Swami Ji, because he felt that so humble a spirit as his Master would never have countenanced such a project. When he went to Agra about this time, he openly explained his point of view but Maharaj Sahib was not to be dissuaded. Finding himself no longer well received and his words of no avail, he returned to Beas and decided to remain aloof from the activities of the Council at Soamibagh.

During his military career Baba Jaimal Singh, whenever he had any leave, spent part of it at Ghuman. Though detached from worldly ties, he was yet very fond of his mother. On one occasion he was to tell a devoted disciple that in their past three lives, he and his mother had enjoyed the same relationship. On such occasions when he came to his ancestral home, it was his wont not to waste time in needless gossip and idling, but to proceed to the banks of the Beas and sit hidden in the gullies that the wayward river had created by its freakish changes of

4. Lala Madho Parshad.
5. Rai Ishwar Sahai, alias Raja Sahib.
6. Lala Suchet Singh (son of Chacha Partap Singh).
7. Baba Jaimal Singh Ji Sahib.
8. Lala Sudershan Singh (another son of Pratap Singh).
9. Munshi Hargobind Daya Sahib.
10. Mr. Bool Chand Sahib.

It is expected that by the constitution of this Society, different groups and cliques will disappear and satsangis will love each other as brothers.

Kindly send this letter to Babu Sawan Singh also for his information."

course, and continue lost in spiritual devotion for days, subsisting only on a few dry chapatis that he brought from home and hung on a kikar tree. At other times when he was at home he would walk down to Dera Baba Namdev and carry on his meditations there or in a dugout in the courtyard of the family house. This house and dugout were preserved long after Baba Ji's death, and his successor, Hazur Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj, would sometimes take his closest disciples to Ghuman and show them the spot where his great Guru used to sit for meditation. In particular he would point out the peg on the wall behind the dugout where Baba Ji would tie up his hair in order to ward off sleep during *abhyasa.*

Just as his fellow soldiers learned in time to respect and revere Baba Jaimal Singh, in like manner the inhabitants of Ghuman came gradually to recognize his great spiritual stature. His early childhood devotion had already become a local legend; and whenever the Sant Sipahi came, the local folk flocked to see him and his company was sought by young and old, whosoever was spiritually inclined. Mistri Elahi Baksh and Bhai Lehna, who had been his boyhood friends, were the first to seek his spiritual guidance. He commended their zeal, but said that the time was not yet ripe for their instruction. Many years later when he felt that the hour had come, he put them on the inner path and they were among his earliest Ghuman disciples.

After his retirement Baba Ji, on coming to his native village, continued his old habit of going to Beas river-side for his sadhnas. The years immediately following the close of his army life were largely spent in this manner. Once while at Amritsar with Hakim Nand Lal, he mentioned that he was in search of a quiet place in the wilderness where he could settle down and carry on his meditation.

Lala Khazana Mal, a money-lender who was also present, suggested that such a place could be found between the villages of Vairach and Balsarai on the banks of Beas where he carried on his business. Baba Ji, who had already been attached to the area, accepted the suggestion. This was the place where Kahan, a God-intoxicated man, met Baba Ji in his early life saying he was preparing a place for him in the days to come.

Meanwhile Baba Chanda Singh, who too had received instructions at the feet of Swami Ji, passed away. In his last moments Bibi Rukko, a very devoted disciple, asked him what was to become of her. "Fear not, my child," replied the sage, "another greater than myself shall take care of you." "Where shall I find him, Sir?" asked Rukko. "Find him? No, you shall have no need, for he himself will seek you out."

Shortly before Baba Ji came to settle down on the banks of the Beas, Bibi Rukko, who was then living at Vairach and was fairly well advanced spiritually, told the villagers that her protector was coming to live there. When Baba Jaimal Singh arrived, he found a small hut built out of straw and branches for him, a bare eight feet by eight feet, and he began living there. Soon after Khazana Mal arrived, and hearing that Baba Ji had come, came to see him. He had the hut plastered with mud and a cave dug out. It was the year 1891 and Baba Ji gave himself up with redoubled zeal to his spiritual sadhnas. He would enter the cave and stay in it for days on end, sometimes as long as a fortnight without any thought for food, rapt in inner samadhi.

Though Baba Ji shunned the public gaze, yet musk cannot be hidden in the dark. He might have no care for earthly name and fame but name and fame fell to his share

in spite of this. Fame of his spiritual greatness had already spread from Ghuman to the neighboring villages; and going for darshan to a holy man is an ancient institution in this land of the sages. Where there had been wilderness, people began appearing in ever growing numbers and regular Satsangs began to take place. How could Baba Ji turn away those who had come to his door? In all simplicity and humility he taught them the spiritual message that he had received at the feet of Swami Ji. Many a money-eyed man begged him to be permitted to build pucca quarters for him, but he, rich in his own humility, continued in his simple austere ways.

To undertake to write the biography of a Saint is to attempt the impossible. If it is to do real justice to its subject, it must follow the inner movements that defy observation, analysis and formulation. You may take up the life of a great artist, writer, soldier or statesman, and if you are a man of deep understanding and imagination, you may reincarnate it in words giving a vivid picture of the psychological conflicts and resolutions involved. But the Saints at one leap have passed from this world to another and have cast their tents in inaccessible realms. Few men have reached there; and those that have entered have been wrapped in silence.

When the pen set to picturing this station
It broke in pieces and the page was torn.

The study of the progress of the mystic soul is beyond the reach of ordinary mortals, and those that have been on the inner journey can only speak in metaphor and parable, for how else can the language of common humanity be compelled to express experiences for which it was never fashioned? The history then of a Master Soul, as fired by

a restless zeal, which moves from plane to plane, must remain an unwritten one; at best it can only give the husk of outer events and happenings to suggest the unusual nature of the spiritual experiences they unfold. And once such a soul has attained full enlightenment and become one with the Infinite, its history is no longer its own, but is the history of those that came under its spell and were liberated from worldly bondage.

The story of Baba Ji's life after his great search had been crowned with success is the story not so much of his own development as of the many souls that benefited from him. Thus Mian Chirag Din relates the story of his maternal grandfather, Mistri Elahi Baksh, of whom we have already spoken.

Elahi, a childhood friend of Baba Ji, showed great interest in spiritual matters and would discuss them with him when he (Baba Ji) would come home on leave from his regiment. Once when Baba Ji, known in his village as "Bhai," was in Ghuman, Elahi saw him approaching in the company of a sadhu. A lively discussion was in progress and when Elahi wished to know its theme, he was told that the sadhu insisted that Brahmand was the highest of all heavens in spite of the fact that Baba Ji assured him that there were higher realms. On hearing this, Elahi turned to the sadhu and with solemn conviction said: "Revered sir, Bhai Ji is absolutely right. There are indeed regions higher than those of which you know."

This silenced the sadhu and he went away. When the friends were left alone, Baba Ji thanked Elahi for his friendly intervention and added, "But it is strange that you never told me of your access to the inner spiritual realms."

"Whoever said I had access to them?"

"But then how could you speak with such conviction?"

"Oh, Bhai, I only know that a man of realization can never utter a falsehood. So how could I doubt what you said?"

Baba Ji was so moved by his friend's spontaneous and deep-rooted faith that he told him, "I shall unlock to you treasures of which few ever dream and which fewer attain." He took him straight to a nearby pond and initiated him into the Surat Shabd Yoga on its bank. However, Elahi had yet to learn the value of the gift he had received. Greatly interested in spiritual questions, he continued the practices taught to him by Muslim fakirs and failed to attend to his friend's instructions.

When Baba Ji came to Ghuman again, he sent for Elahi and asked him what he had done with the inner key that had been given to him. When Elahi told him that he had done nothing and even forgotten what he had been told, Baba Ji was displeased. "I give you the greatest riches that man can ever hope to have and you treat them with such scant regard," he scolded, and slapped him thrice on the face. As soon as his hands fell upon the repentant Elahi's face, his inner eye was opened and his spirit rose to higher worlds. From that day onward Elahi Baksh began devoting himself exclusively to the Surat Shabd Yoga and would daily visit his Pir or Guru and bow in reverence before him.

When a Great One takes a wandering soul under his wing, his grace is not confined only to his immediate disciple, but radiates to those near and dear to him. Such a powerful spiritual influence fell upon Elahi Baksh's family that in spite of their Muslim relations' and brothers' taunts and scorn, many of its members sought instruction at Baba Ji's feet. Elahi's son-in-law, Hussain Baksh, was among the first to take to the Path. He was very devoted

to Baba Ji and displayed great love and reverence. His Guru was pleased with him and treated him and his sons, Ghulam Qadir and Chirag Din, with affection. Mian Chirag Din, in his manuscript account, relates how the Great One would joke with them and receive them at all hours when they were youngsters. Once when he had gone to Ghuman and was resting, the boys sought him out there. Bibi Daya received them at the door and when she learned that they had come for her son, she got a little irritated. "Ah, when you grow up," she exclaimed, "and have children of your own, never make the mistake of educating them. I am a mother and I know too well from my experience how difficult it is to cope with when a son becomes a God." Baba Ji at this juncture called out from within and the boys went in. He patted them fondly and remarked, "You are always welcome. Do not mind what mother says."

A true Master is ever with his disciple and protects him not only in life but equally in death:

O Nanak: free yourself from worldly companions,
And seek the friendship of a true Saint.
They shall forsake you even in life,
But he shall not leave you even after death.

NANAK

Take hold, O soul! of one who knows all inner planes,
For he shall befriend thee in life as well as in death.

MAULANA RUMI

To witness the last moments of a disciple of Baba Ji was

to be convinced of his genuine greatness. Countless stories are told of the strange happenings marking the end of those initiated by the Beas Saint. We may quote the eye-witness account left by Chirag Din of his father's death as an outstanding example. We translate from his Urdu manuscript recording his family's contact with Baba Ji and some anecdotes he heard from the great Master about his own early life:

Once Baba Ji had gone to Ghuman after collecting his pension. Our father, meanwhile, had passed away. We went to the Great One and related to him the sad news. He consoled us and straightway proceeded to the spot where the dead body lay. On reaching there he said, "O Hussain Baksh, why have you been in such haste? I would have come and you could have had my darshan." As these words were uttered, our dead father opened his eyes and sat up. Our mother, frightened, inquired if anything was the matter. "Nothing," he said. "The Master has come and I am going." He then lay down and was gone.

Another very interesting anecdote relates how, while Baba Ji was visiting the village of Dhaliwal, Attar Singh, a local inhabitant, carried him across a nearby seasonal stream swollen with recent rains and back again. The sage was so pleased with the Jat's selfless service that he declared, "O Attar, you have taken me across this little streamlet. I, in return, shall take you across the sea of life." He then initiated him into the Divine Science and from that day the latter was a changed man. He would take his cattle for grazing as of yore, but on reaching the meadows he would let them go and himself got busy with his spiritual sadhnas. He no longer used a stick to control his herd, but would manage it with a piece of cloth and soon became known for his extraordinarily kind treatment

of his animals. One day he returned rather early. On reaching home, he told his daughter-in-law, who was there: "Child, get everything done quickly; storm will soon be here."

He then went to take his bath and on returning spread a bed on the floor and called all those in the house to his side. He bade them goodbye, explaining: "My time is drawing to a close and I must soon be gone." Everyone was taken aback at these strange words. How could the speaker talk of dying when he was apparently in good health? At last his daughter-in-law, collecting herself, asked leave to send for his son. "There is no need," he answered. "My Master has come and I cannot keep him waiting." Saying these words, he lay down, closed his eyes and his spirit left for its heavenly Home.

Baba Ji was not only chary himself of revealing his spiritual riches, but strictly enjoined his disciples to exercise the same restraint. When they transgressed his instructions they never escaped chastisement. Thus Chirag Din relates the story of a blind Hafiz (learned man) of Dhariwal. He once attended a discourse of Baba Ji at the town of Kapurthala, and when it was over and they were talking to each other, the Hafiz remarked: "The wise have said that he who has read the Holy Book thrice attains heaven."

"Heaven is very far, my dear fellow," replied Baba Ji. "Those that have entered it alone can tell."

The assurance of the sage's voice moved the Hafiz to request instruction. His wish was granted and he sedulously cultivated the lesson that had been given to him till it bore fruit. He then proceeded to Mian Sahib at Batala, his former teacher, and told him that all he had taught him was a hoax and a lie. He would often visit the mosque and, intolerant of the pious sham practiced there,

he would secretly break the earthen pots and burn the prayer mats. His fellows soon discovered the miscreant and complained to his Guru.

The blind man was called and Baba Ji rebuked him. "Sir," replied his disciple, "I cannot stand hypocrisy and besides I am in the right." His Master, however, told him that in the future he must learn to contain himself and exercise restraint. But the advice went unheeded and the Hafiz soon began indulging his whim once again. A group of Muslims came to wait upon the sage and bitterly protested, complaining that he had taught his disciple to turn heathen. At this Baba Ji answered, "Does the man still persist in his foolishness? Well, if he will not stop troubling you, do not be angry for you will soon be rid of him." Sure enough, a few days later the Hafiz passed away.

Similar stories are told about other advanced disciples. A sadhu who came to live at Beas made rapid headway and his soul would soar at will to Daswan Dwar. He could not restrain himself, however, and would begin talking of the inner glories to whoever would pass his way. Baba Ji was upset and told him that he must learn to discipline his tongue. But the sadhu, confident of himself, continued unheeding. The inner curtain was rung down and for full sixteen years he was denied inner access until his very last days when Baba Ji's illustrious successor, Baba Sawan Singh, gave him his blessings. Baba Nizam-ud-din in a like situation was to experience a similar check. His son, in a beautifully written Urdu account, narrates how his father, who was the sixteenth initiate of Baba Ji according to the records at Beas, made very speedy inner progress. In a few months he had gained great powers and had developed a remarkable clairvoyance. But instead of locking his gifts within himself as taught by his teacher, he

began displaying his spiritual wares and would freely tell those around of future happenings or of what was taking place at distant towns. When Baba Ji was told of this, he turned to Bibi Rukko and said, "This man has ascended very rapidly indeed, but has not been able to digest what he has got."

From that day on Nizam-ud-din, who had failed to shutter his lips, found that his inner eye had been curtained. His sorrow was great, but trusting the grace of his Master, he took to his spiritual practices with redoubled energy. His wife too got initiated and with the passage of time great blessings were bestowed upon them, and it was evident to those that came into contact with them that they were no ordinary mortals. But never again did Nizam-ud-din flaunt his spiritual powers.

The entire life of Baba Nizam-ud-din and his family as written by his son is one long saga of the blessings of having a true Master. But society is not kind to a living Saint nor to those that are lost in their love. Nizam-ud-din's devotion to his Sikh Pir soon won him the animosity of his relatives and Muslim brethren. "He has turned *kafir,*" they said, and lost no opportunity of abusing and persecuting him. He himself was not to be deterred and whenever there was any talk of "Muslim" and "non-Muslim," he would recite the Persian couplets:

Ishk ra ba kafir-o-moman, na bashad imtyaj
Ein Sukhan bar mamber-o-mehrab mae bayad nivisht.

Love makes no distinction between the infidel and the faithful;
Let these words be written on every pulpit and arch.

Mard-e-hujji Mard-e-hajji ra talab
Khah Hindu, Khah Turk-o-Khah Arab.

If you wish to go on the inner pilgrimage, then seek an inner guide,
Be he a Hindu, a Turk or an Arab.

But for all his patience, matters grew only worse and when things were not to be borne any longer, Baba Ji advised his beloved disciple to shift his hearth and home to Multan. It was there that he spent the rest of his long life and would often go to Beas to meet his Master. When after 1903 he was no more, he would visit Baba Sawan Singh, his spiritual successor, who held him in great esteem. It is not for us to dwell at length on the many blessings bestowed upon him, his sons, grandsons and great-grandsons; suffice it to say that the whole family held Baba Ji in great reverence and, as enjoined by him, kept up all the traditions of their faith while practicing the discipline he had taught. When his wife passed away, she foretold her approaching end a month before the date, at which time she was in good health. When her hour drew near, she took touching leave of her husband: "I have served you to the best of my ability for sixty years. Now grant me leave for going away. My Master and Maharaj Sawan Singh are waiting for me." Nizam-ud-din asked her to hold his arm and focused his attention inward. The whole family was looking on as the old couple sat wrapt in meditation. Twenty minutes later the husband opened his eyes. "Now you may go," he said, and his wife peacefully passed away. Next morning when her hearse had to be carried to the burial grounds, some of the relations refused to lift the bier on the ground that the lady was a kafir. But the neighbors knew her to be kind and generous

and a true daughter of God, and helped to carry the coffin to the graveyard.

Baba Nizam-ud-din did not tarry long after. His end was similarly known before it came and when his bier was to be carried, his brethren's hearts had been softened and they joined the procession. Many a fakir and sadhu witnessed his burial and as his remains were being lowered, the verse was chanted:

Hum nashini saat-e ba aulia
Behter az sad-sala taat be-ria.

A moment's contact with a Saint is worth more than a million austerities.

Even to this day, in spite of the division of the country that came with independence and in spite of the communal hatreds unleashed in its wake, the descendants of Baba Nizam-ud-din have kept up the faith and often visit Sawan Ashram at Delhi to keep alive their association with the Path of the Masters or the *Sultan-ul-Azkar,* as their enlightened forefather called it in the terminology of the Sufi fakirs.

Baba Ji's grace flowed to all! It was not only his disciples who benefited from him, but many others who merely happened to catch his eye by their simplicity, purity and selfless service. He had read many a scripture in his childhood and youth, but he spoke not from learning but from direct inner experience. There was inexplicable sweetness and charm in what he said and an irresistible sense of conviction and assurance. Once four great pundits who dabbled in various yogic practices began wrangling and debating about the nature of the inner planes. They based themselves on their spiritual study and the controversy

they waged was lively indeed. Hearing of a Jat Saint of great attainment, they came to Baba Ji's door. He heard what they had to say and then lucidly explained to them the nature of the spiritual regions, reconciling what had appeared to be contradictory viewpoints and resolving all their doubts to their satisfaction. The pundits went away, but one of them, a true seeker who had caught the Saint's bait, returned and begged for initiation. The boon was granted; he practiced his sadhnas with regularity but to little avail.

"Ah Sir! Bless me with some inner vision," he begged.

"Do you think I do not wish you well?" came the reply. "I wish to the Lord that you reach Sat Lok this day, but you are not yet ripe and would not be able to bear the strain."

The prayer was repeated many a time but Baba Ji always gave the same answer. One day while he was going alone to collect his pension, the pundit met him at a lonely spot. "Sir, this is wilderness and no one is by. Bless me now, at least give me a glimpse of the realms within—no more—that I may rest in certainty."

"You will not be able to stand it and the strain will be too much for you."

"What does it matter even if I lose my life if only I may see what is within!"

Baba Ji could refuse no longer. He asked the pundit to sit down in meditation and focused his gaze upon him. The pundit's soul was forcibly drawn up into the higher realms. When Baba Ji, by his own will, brought it down to physical consciousness, the pundit fell sobbing at his feet. "I thought my life was being wrenched out of me and a million lightnings fell upon my head. Oh, Sir, forgive me my foolishness. We mortals are indeed unworthy."

"What have I to forgive?" replied the sage. "It is you who must forgive yourself for it is not I who suffered. Now go and make the most of your time, for you have only three more years to live."

From that day onward the pundit concentrated on his meditations and three years later, as predicted, passed away.

Such tales are, however, legion, and whole volumes would not suffice to sing the glory and grace of a true Saint. So passing them by, we will concern ourselves with the most important single event in the annals of Baba Ji's divine ministry: the initiation of Sawan Singh Ji who was later to carry on his mission. The story is told by the great disciple himself and we quote from his letters which have been published in *Spiritual Gems* (Beas, 1959):

"I was fond of Satsang and Parmarth (spirituality) from my very childhood. I often associated with sadhus and religious people, and this in part was because my father was fond of *Sadhu seva.* Then while in service I studied Vedanta and discussed Vedanta with people, specially with the sadhus who, on their way to Kashmir, stayed at a *dharamsala* (rest-house) near my house.

"Later I was transferred to Murree Hills. One day as I was supervising my work, I saw an old Sikh going up a hill along with a middle-aged lady. When I noticed him, I thought he had probably come in connection with some case in the Commissioner's Court. Little did I think that he was to be my Master. He was no other than Baba Ji himself and the lady was Bibi Rukko. This I did not know at the time, but found out later that Baba Ji said to Bibi Rukko, referring to me, 'It is for his sake that we have come here,' to which Bibi Rukko replied, 'But he has not even greeted you.' Baba Ji said to her, 'What does the

poor fellow know yet? On the fourth day from this he will come to us.'

"On the fourth day I went to attend Satsang. Baba Ji was at that time explaining the meaning of Jap Ji Sahib. Well, I started my volley of questions—so much so that the audience got tired and began to feel restless at the large number of questions I had put. The sacred book, *Sar Bachan,* was lying there and I objected to the name of 'Radhasoami,' and Baba Ji explained from the book itself what 'Radhasoami' meant.

Radha ad surat ka nam
Soami ad Shabd nij dham.

Radha is the name of the first or primal ray of surat (consciousness);
Soami is the original source of the stream of Shabd.

"Now he wanted to point out the way, but I had read Vedanta. When I read Gurbani, my opinion was different; when I read Gita my opinion was again different, and I was unable to come to a decision. At last I applied for eight days leave to enable me to study the teachings of Baba Ji. He advised me to read Kabir Sahib's *Anurag Sagar.* I immediately ordered eight copies of this book from Bombay so that I could also give some to my friends, Baba Hari Ram, Gulab Singh, etc., to read and comment on it.

"After several conferences with Baba Ji, I was thoroughly convinced and received initiation from him on the 15th day of October in 1894."

What follows is a moving tale of devotion and obedience on the one hand and ineffable love and grace on the other. The letters exchanged between the Master and the

disciple catch something of the esoteric beauty of this tale; and Baba Ji's epistles are reproduced in the already mentioned volume of *Spiritual Gems.* In these we learn of the step-by-step guidance afforded by the Guru to the disciple who has surrendered himself completely to his Will, and the bizarre and miraculous way in which his protective hand helps him at every turn. There were two particular incidents that Baba Sawan Singh was particularly fond of relating to his audiences to exemplify the greatness of Baba Ji and the blessing of having a *Pooran Guru* or True Master. We quote again from his letters:

(1) "It was my habit to catch hold of the mane of my horse and jump upon it while it was going by. But my servant, in my absence and without my knowledge, had cut the horse's mane. I did not notice that and as I grabbed for the mane, my hand slipped and I fell down and broke my leg. The fracture was painful, no doubt, but much more painful was the fact that I could neither defecate nor urinate. The doctors even thought it might be difficult for me to survive.

"A Mohammedan overseer, belonging to my district, coming to know of this accident, came to me and said: 'I am your own man, a sort of family member. I belong to your place. Tell me please, how can I help you?' I said, 'My children are studying as boarders in a school about eight miles from this place. I do not want them to know of this accident. But I should like you to send a telegram to Maharaj Ji (Baba Ji).' He sent the telegram. And when Baba Ji received the telegram, he said: 'Well, if the Master wants to take him away, he may, for at least he has got Naam.' But my sister in faith, Bibi Rukko, pleaded for me with Baba Ji.

"It was Baba Ji's practice to sit in meditation or to go

into meditation when there was expectation of anything important happening, and then to give out whatever information he received within. He sat in meditaton at 8 p.m. or earlier (whenever the information was received by telegram). At about 3 a.m. he called Bibi Rukko and she asked, 'Shall I bring your food now?' (He had not taken his evening meal.) Baba Ji replied: 'No, but you asked something about Bhai Sawan Singh. Now you can inform Sawan Singh that he is not going, but the karmas were very heavy. It was ordained that he had to suffer for five years but now we will settle the karmas in five months. Is it not something? We shall not go to him just now, but after he has been discharged from the hospital. In the meantime you may acknowledge receipt of his telegram.' And the moment Baba Ji's telegram was received, I could pass stools and urine. . . .

"Saints show their mercy but they never talk about it. Now, while I was reduced to this condition, I had to suffer from the monetary point of view also. I lost my sub-divisional allowance, my horse allowance and half my pay also. The Chief Engineer was very kind to me. He said: 'If only you could come to office every day in a *dandi* (a sedan chair), I would consider you on duty.' But I was very doubtful and feared that my leg being still weak, I might slip and have another accident. The Chief Engineer thereupon allowed me one month's leave. I wondered if I would be fit to work after one month. The next morning I saw the Commanding Engineer and he said: 'Now you are going for only one month.' Prior to this Baba Ji came to see me and told me that I would be absent from duty for only one more month, but it was hard for me to believe it.

"At last the month passed and a letter was received

from Baba Ji stating: 'We people have not come into this world to do our own work; we have come here by the orders of Maharaj Ji (Swami Ji). If he likes, he will get the work out of us.' It is impossible to describe the reach or the power of the Saints. I am sure, if the Guru wants, he can make even the stones carry out his work."

(2) "Baba Ji used to be very kind to me and whenever I came to visit him, he would give me a place in his own room. Once I got down from the Beas station at twelve o'clock at noon. It was very hot and I sat down under a tree for a while. Then I felt that I had come for Baba Ji's darshan, yet here I was seeking comfort and delaying that meeting with the Beloved. Even worldly lovers have done much better. The thought troubled me. So I started on foot from the station to the Dera. At the Dera, Baba Ji Maharaj, who was very sensitive to heat, came out and began to pace the open courtyard before his room. Bibi Rukko remonstrated and requested him to go inside his room, out of the hot sun, but he would not. A few minutes before I reached the Dera, he went in and then Bibi Rukko, seeing me coming, exclaimed: 'Oh, now I see why Baba Ji was walking in the hot sun.' (He had himself absorbed some of that extreme heat so that I would not be overcome by it on the way). There are so many wonderful things about Baba Ji that if I go on relating them for one hundred years, it would not be possible to finish them all."

Indeed "a hundred years" would not suffice and we will cover as swiftly as possible the rest of the story of Baba Ji's earthly sojourn. An ever-increasing number of visitors flocked to his hut at Beas, and his words to Bibi Rukko—"Here shall rise one day an ever-growing city and many a house and bungalow shall be built"—and no less the words of God-intoxicated Kahan at whom the people had

laughed—"I collect these bricks for the town that shall here be built"—began at last to seem meaningful. Baba Ji spent the greater part of his time at Beas but often went on tour to neighboring areas or to to towns farther off, to minister to the spiritual needs of his votaries.

Once when he was at Ambala, at the behest of some disciples, Hukam Singh, a friend of his devoted disciple Moti Ram, a tailor who worked for the British regiment stationed there, applied for initiation. Baba Ji refused to grant his request. Hukam Singh approached his friend, who in turn approached Baba Ji, but to no avail. "He is not yet fit for the Path," the sage observed, but Moti Ram was not to be put off. He pleaded again and again for the case of his friend.

"I have told you before, his karmas don't permit it. So what can I do in the matter?"

"Holy one, all the more reason you should take pity on him, for if you don't, who will?"

"Moti Ram, do not press me further. I would rather initiate four hundred others than this friend of yours."

A Saint cannot refuse a devoted disciple for long and would even pass through fire for his sake. When Moti Ram repeatedly pressed, he gave way, adding: "But as soon as I have initiated your friend, I shall not spend another moment here, but proceed straight home." True to his word, Baba Ji, as soon as the instructions were over, packed his scanty belongings and entrained for Beas. Whoever expressed a desire to follow him there was told to come two weeks later. On reaching his hut he lay down in bed and when local visitors came to see him, they were in consternation for they found him in the grip of a deadly fever. Doctors and medicines were sent for but Baba Ji would

take nothing. About a fortnight later the fever subsided and when Moti Ram received the news, he hastened to see him and begged forgiveness: "Sir, if only I had known what it was to mean for you, I would not, for the kingdom of three worlds, have pressed to initiate my friend."

Baba Ji was in a communicative mood and revealed: "So heavy were the karmas of Hukam Singh that but for the intercession he would, for the next seven lives, have passed through the most trying sufferings and ordeals."

Moti Ram humbly thanked him for his unfathomable grace but Baba Ji, true to his innate humility, simply replied: "Such was the Will of the Lord."

The grace of Baba Ji radiated like the life-giving sun to those that came in touch with him. Baba Sawan Singh, however, as we have already seen, was the object of his special adoration. The years from 1894 to 1903 were marked by regular visits to Beas by Baba Sawan Singh Ji Maharaj which were occasionally returned by Baba Ji. The sage called his favorite disciple by the name of "Babu Ji." He had told Bibi Rukko that the handsome government officer would one day be his successor. On one occasion, while in an extraordinarily gracious mood, he turned to his gurumukh and remarked: "You and I have come for the good of mankind." Sawan Singh replied, "You, of course, have come for humanity's uplift, but I myself am only an erring mortal." Baba Ji repeated what he had said and Sawan Singh made the same reply. Baba Ji then, raising his eyebrows, said in a louder tone: "Babu Ji, I am speaking to you. We both have come for the good of mankind." Sawan Singh sat mute and silent. At another time the Beas Saint told his disciples: "I have had to toil very hard for my attainment, yet have kept my treasures locked and have never displayed them. But my labors shall

bear fruit and he who shall inherit my mantle shall be known far and wide."

The days passed and Beas became a luminous center on the spiritual map of the world. He who had never agreed to the building of halls and houses, at the instance of his beloved Babu Ji finally relented, and a well was sunk and a Satsang hall built during his last years. "Why erect any buildings here when the river may wash them off?" he had protested, but Sawan Singh was not to be dissuaded. "Even if you can deliver a single discourse, and the structure collapses immediately after, I will consider my labors richly rewarded." Meanwhile, the last days of the Jat-guru, as he humorously styled himself, were drawing to a close. Six months before his death, he had told his disciples of the approaching end. On hearing of the passing away of Karam Singh of Attock, he had remarked: "I used to meet him at Delhi. A great soul indeed! But he will have to be born once again for full liberation, not having practiced Naam in this life. Well, well, my work is also drawing to a close and I too shall soon be gone."

The last days saw many pilgrims at Beas. The sage who once had passed both night and day lost in meditation was now day and night in the service of his devotees. He would hardly rest for three or four hours, spending the rest of the day in meeting those who sought him out, attending to their problems and goading them to greater and even greater spiritual effort. The gates of divine grace were flung open and those that sat by him in his room during the days immediately preceding his departure would be inwardly buoyed up and wrapped in samadhi.

The construction of the Satsang hall had by now been completed, and everyone pressed Baba Ji to deliver a discourse. He, however, remonstrated: "No, no; the Will of

God is otherwise. He who is to succeed me shall address you there." Bibi Rukko was equally adamant: "We shall of course hear him when his time comes, but now while you are here, let us have the benefit of your presence." But Baba Ji insisted: "The Will of God is otherwise. Besides, I wish Babu Ji to discourse to all present during my own lifetime so that there should be no disputes later." But the audience had gathered and pleaded that he himself should speak. Bibi Rukko begged and implored and he at last moved forward. But after climbing a step or two, he once again stopped and repeated what he had said. To the amazement of all who entered the Satsang hall, Baba Ji's gurumukh son, Hazur Sawan Singh Ji, was seen sitting at the dais.

The last day finally arrived. All the close disciples stood by in anxious expectation. It was the 29th of December, 1903, and a cold and piercing breeze blew over from the waters of the Beas. Baba Ji seemed to be waiting, and cast restless glances at the door. At last a police officer arrived and sought for initiation. "It is for you I have been waiting," replied the great Saint, and without further ado began explaining the theory and practice of the Surat Shabd Yoga. Soon after the instructions were over, he lay down and, closing his eyes, cast off this muddy vesture of decay.

Thus passed away one of the greatest of modern Saints, whose life was a lesson in humility and love. He had studied at no schools or universities, but had delved deep into the book of life. He had read as a child the scriptures of many a faith and had early practiced many sadhnas or spiritual exercises. By the age of eighteen, when other men have hardly attained mental maturity, he had already won the crown of life denied to the most rigorous of yogis and the most industrious of learned men. And yet the rest of

his years were passed in the most perfect humility, his only ambition being to serve his Master and carry his message as best as he could. In his last recorded words he is reported to have said: "All my life I have sought only to serve my Master and now whatever work he had to accomplish through this poor physical frame is over," and his very last hour was spent in this service. He more than exemplified what he had once written to his future successor, "Saints are born not for themselves, but for the liberation of mankind." He spoke from inner experience and not from books, and he initiated about three thousand souls; while the number of those who unconsciously benefited by his influence is beyond enumeration. Could one discover another so selfless, so ready to suffer vicariously for the sins of others, so boundless in his love, and so unconcerned with outer differences of sects and creeds? If one searched one's memory, there was perhaps one name that came most readily to mind: that of Nanak. And was it a mere coincidence that the Soldier Saint of Beas was born in the very district (Gurdaspur) in which the great medieval Saint, according to his constant companion and biographer Bhai Bala, had prophesied he would reappear in some future age in a Jat home? Baba Ji's disciples did not fail to note the resemblance even during his lifetime and once questioned him on the subject. The sage smiled mysteriously and dismissed the question. But a few minutes later, he casually remarked: "If we spirits were to speak our minds, who would allow us a moment's rest and who would spare our skins?"