THREE

Guru Amardas

(1479-1574)

God put the soul into the cave of the body
And then blew life into it, like a musical instrument.
The nine doors of the body He disclosed
But the Tenth He concealed.
When, through the Guru, faith is given,
Then is the mystery of the Tenth Door resolved.

Many are the forms of God
The Treasures of Life stem from His Name
But never is His limit to be found

Saith Nanak, when the Beloved Lord put the soul into the cave of the body;
He blew life into it as a musical instrument.

RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND XXXVII)

AMARDAS was born in the district of what is now Amritsar and earned his livelihood as a farmer and trader. He worshiped God as a devoted Vaishnavite (devotee of Lord Vishnu) and his inner search was very long and hard. He would make a yearly pilgrimage to bathe in the holy waters of the Ganges River and observed regular and frequent fasts. With all this, however, he could not rise above the outer practices. He reaped the fruits of his good deeds but sorrow remained in his heart: in his actions, the "I-hood" was there and he was thus barred from the vision of God which he sought.

Without great good fortune, you cannot get the Naam.
I was so tired doing the outer practices.[1]

GURU AMARDAS

He was later to compare all actions at the level of the senses to the work of a man who labored from morn till night but received no payment and returned home tired and unhappy; but now he was still himself working as though such a laborer—unable to still the ceaseless wanderings of the mind and contact the Lord within. As he grew on in years, his search for Truth continued without rest; but the pain of it increased in its intensity and often left him without sleep. He appeared to live in an unbearable condition; yet when people came to him and told him to give up this search, he replied, "Do not utter such words, for even in this pain, there is a sweetness."

This cobra of separation has filled my mind and cannot
be controlled by any mantra;
Without seeing the Beloved, sleep does not come;
Without Naam there is only misery. [2]

From the depths of his heart, he knew that without seeing God, human life passed in vain; but this highest destiny was not possible except through the grace of a competent Guru —one who had himself known God.

The cry from the heart is not left unattended; God hears the prayers of those seeking Him—but His ways are strange and wondrous and incomprehensible to man. And so Amardas, having spent more than seventy years of his life in

1. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "It is a Noble Search," *Sat Sandesh,* Vol. 4, No. 1, Jan. 1971, p. 13.

2. *Ibid,* p. 12.

fervent prayer, became almost exhausted from the long, long quest before the Divine Mercy was to become manifest to him.

One day, on returning from a bath in the Ganges River, he met a young ascetic. Each was drawn to the other by a similar pious manner and very quickly a close friendship was formed. Together they went to Amardas' shelter where they partook of food and discussed the Path of God. Both spoke with love and inspiration until the ascetic asked Amardas which guru had implanted such wisdom and piety in him. "I have no guru," was the reply, and the ascetic was shocked. He cursed himself for he had taken food from the hands of one uninitiated. He believed such an evil destiny had caused him to lose the merit of his ablutions, and he promptly left the old man's company.

Like a terrible and long-standing sore that had finally burst, so was the pain stabbing Amardas to the deepest roots of his life. The night passed for him without sleep—the fire of his prayer became too great to allow him cares for his own body any more. He was old and might not live much longer. There could be no rest for him now, until this cry was answered in all its fullness.

> *O clouds, if you rain, then rain in torrents.*
> *Why rain at all when the season is past?*
>
> GURU AMARDAS

That night may have been to him like a thousand years of separation, but it did not end without tidings of the "greatest good fortune." Before the break of dawn, he heard a song which seemed to silence even the stillness of Nature: it was Guru Nanak's Jap Ji—which spoke of the greatness of God and of His chosen Servant; and it was sung by Guru Angad's daughter who had married into

Amardas' own family. Through her, Amardas met the Living Master.

The True One listens carefully
And from the abundance of His mercy, He grants consolation.
He gives the order to the Cloud and the rain falls in abundance.

GURU AMARDAS

In his quest for God and a Perfect Saint, Amardas had tirelessly searched almost all paths, and on coming to the feet of the Living Master, he gave himself to His service with the same enthusiasm. He spent the day doing physical work in the Guru's cause and he would pass the whole night in meditation, standing with his hair tied to a peg on the wall to ward off sleep. By the Guru's grace, the inner treasure of Divinity was revealed and his mind bathed in a perpetual calm, held silent by the unending Music of Naam.

II

When Guru Angad told Amardas to move to Goindwal, some miles away, he would walk the long distance daily to bring the Master fresh water from the Beas River and to have His darshan. Each step of his daily journey was like a prayer to him, of sweet remembrance of the Beloved Satguru.

We are but humble mendicants and beggars,
Thou art the Protector of our honor.
Be kind and give us the alms of Thy Naam, so that we may remain always intoxicated in Thy love.[3]

DHANASRI M. 3

3. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Prayer*, p. 82.

One stormy night when Amardas was with the Master, a situation arose which showed the world something of a devotee's great love. The wind was cold and the rain fell in torrents; and so dark was the sky that one could not see what was before him. It was late in this night that Guru Angad called out for water. Once, then twice he called but received no response. He awakened his two sons and told them his wish. When they refused, Amardas humbly begged that he might be allowed this service. Drenched in his devotion, he disregarded both his old age and the weather and felt his way through the dark woods till he reached the river. There he filled his pitcher with water. On making his return, he fell into a weaver's pit and struck his foot against a peg. Yet he wished only that the water should not spill, and ignored the pain of the fall. When this noise awakened a family, commotion began for fear of a thief. Only when a woman recognized Amardas was there reassurance: "It is only that poor homeless orphan Amru who behaves like a madman. When other people sleep he will not, but forever seeks to do the work of twenty men: carrying water from the river, wood from the forests—all to please his Master—and then, what a Guru it is that he serves!" Silently and without ill thoughts, he had learned to endure gossip and slander against himself; but to affront the Guru seemed to him no less than madness; and when he uttered his thoughts, the woman herself went mad (only to regain her sanity through the Guru's pardon). Amardas returned to Khadur and, with love-filled eyes, placed the water before his Master.

O my mother! I am filled with joy:
I have found the Satguru.
Very easily has He come unto me
—by no efforts of my own

And the Song of Rejoicing fills my heart.
When the Lord became Kirpal (merciful)
This joy was found, through the Guru.
RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND I & VII)

As the Gurumukh was pleased with the Master, so was the Master pleased with him. One who sees competence alone knows the fruits of full faith and surrender. When Amardas saw this competence in Angad, he put aside the opinions of the world and the waverings of the mind and plunged into the Master's endless ocean of love. Through such perfect devotion, he in turn was filled to the brim with the essence of the One to whom he had surrendered: "Amardas' service has been great and his labors have been crowned. What he utters shall prove true and the forces of Nature are now at his beck and call. Amardas will gain the fruits of his desires." Turning to Amardas, He said, "You are not homeless but shall be the giver of homes to many people. You shall be the strength of the weak; the protector of the unprotected; the redeemer of the lost and the Emancipator of the soul." Finishing these words, Guru Angad solemnly made it known that Amardas was to be the third Guru.

III

If you sing the Song of the Lord,
Forever will the virtue of tranquility reside in you.[4]
GURBANI, M. 3

Through the grace of Guru Angad and the human pole of Amardas, the holy work flourished. People flocked from all corners to bask in the light of the Guru's presence. Without wishing it, fame came to him; and with fame arose

4. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "The Destiny of a Gurumukh," *Sat Sandesh,* Vol. 1, No. 7, July 1971, p. 32.

jealousy. Sri Chand and Angad's son, Datu, both saw the Guru as a threat to their pride and power and did what they could to oppose Him. But wherever he went, whatever befell him, Amardas remained detached and forbearing and never left the bounds of his inherent humility.

With Amardas in Goindwal, Datu sat on his father's chair in Khadur. He had proclaimed himself the Guru—but found no following and so burned with rage: "Amru is an old man, my servant! Yesterday he was a water carrier in my house and today he sits as Guru." With these thoughts, he went to Goindwal. Seeing the Master, his anger burst and he kicked Him off His chair. From the floor, Amardas pressed the feet of his offender: "O great king, please forgive me. I am old with bones that are hard and dry. Your poor feet must have been hurt by them."

Amardas then left Goindwal to go into seclusion, allowing Datu to sit upon the Guru's seat. When Datu still found no following, he took what wealth he could and headed back toward Khadur. On his way he was attacked by robbers and ironically (or otherwise) was wounded in the same foot with which he had kicked the aged Master. This wound vexed him with pain for years afterwards.

Meanwhile, Amardas had shut himself inside a simple dwelling where He spent all his time in samadhi. His disciples who had tasted the joys of His presence were now distressed and restless and begged Bhai Budha to help them find the Master. Finally he led them to His hut; but the door was bricked up and a sign read: "Whoever opens this door is no sikh of mine." In their distress, but not daring to disobey the order, they sought an alternative. Going to the other side of the house, they broke down the wall and entered the dwelling where the glorious form of God sat in meditation; but when the Guru arose from his meditation,

He frowned to see his disciples standing before Him in apparent disregard of His order. They explained what they had done and how their eyes yearned to behold Him, and then He could only stand silently and smile. How can the father turn his back to his children or the Master to his loving Sangat?

Despite his old age, Amardas worked constantly to carry on the services and message of his predecessors. He expanded the Langar and made Hindus and Muslims, kings and peasants, sit side by side. The following increased and the word of the Master's greatness spread even to the Emperor Akbar's court. In fact, the emperor was so impressed on hearing of His universal message and his selfless work, that he personally went and paid homage to the Master. On seeing Him, Akbar was still further moved. He offered a very large donation for the Langar. Despite the aura of greatness that naturally emanated from the Guru, He preferred a simple and unostentatious way of life and therefore declined the offering: "The Guru's kitchen depends upon the humble and voluntary offerings of the devotees and not upon imperial donations." Akbar however continued to press that the Master accept some favor till finally it was agreed that a tract of land could be set aside in the care of his disciples, which would be developed to serve the needy and the seekers after Truth. This was to be developed by the two succeeding Gurus—Ramdas and Arjan—and ultimately became the city of Amritsar.

IV

By the grace of God, one can meet a Master
Who puts him in the service of Surat Shabd Yoga.[5]

RAG MAGH M. 3

5. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Baba Jaimal Singh,* p. 38.

Once again, Amardas made pilgrimages to the various holy places; not now as one searching but as the world enlightener.

> *You have got the body of a man—the highest in all creation; just reap the true profit of life: know yourself and know God. (You) will get that . . . when you sit at the feet of some Master who gives you initiation to go ahead; how to leave the body and gives you a contact . . . with the Divine Word within.*
>
> *There is a precious, untold treasure of Divinity pervading all creation—that is in you and everywhere. If you just have contact with that and taste that sweet elixir, (your) mind will leave off all sensuous enjoyments. And that (Divinity) is called "Naam."*[6]

He approached the seekers after Truth with the understanding of one who had himself sincerely performed all the prescribed modes of worship and in every way encouraged them to seek out this Reality. If the goal seemed far off to those worshiping at an outer level, He let them know there was hope for everybody: "I was once just like you—at the mercy of the mind and out-going faculties—and now I am not. With His grace, I've risen above these things. God's grace descended through the Guru. He withdrew my self from the abyss of the poisons of the out-going faculties." Thus he let people know that what one man had done—what he had himself done—others could do as well, of course with the proper help and guidance.

Further, he said that it was a man's birthright to experience God; that if one learned to die while alive, he would see that Power controlling all the universe. But if one did not actually have this experience for himself, then all his

6. Guru Amardas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in a discourse, Washington, D.C., 1955.

learning and spiritual exercises would not bear forth the full fruit and one would still be left in darkness. "Without seeing, who praises God, he is a blindman . . . he is just like a blindman singing the praises of the sun."

When he met with a group of men with whom he had once worshiped, Amardas gave them a gourd and asked them to bathe it in each of the holy rivers. Returning from this long pilgrimage, they gave Amardas the gourd and he in turn cut it and gave them each a piece to eat. When they complained of its bitter taste, the Master pointed out that all of its bathings at holy places were of no use. So also was it with man's spirit: how could it become sweet by merely cleaning the body?

The Saints, who so patiently and lovingly guide the souls on the Way back to God, Themselves become helpless in the face of a truly loving disciple. Bibi Bani was the daughter of Guru Amardas and one of His great devotees. Once she upheld the Master's cot that He was meditating on for the whole night: one leg of the cot was broken and fearing that he might be disturbed, she held it up—without regard for a nail that was stabbing into her hand. On seeing what she had done, the Master offered her a boon but she said that she had all she wanted just in serving the Master. The Guru insisted that she should take some boon, and finally she requested that the Guruship should stay in her family. The Master told her that this would be so, but as He spoke, His face turned very grave. "You will give birth to a great savior (Guru Arjan) but the clear-flowing waters of the Guruship have been dammed and the results will be greatly troublesome." It is said that the results were the execution of the fifth and ninth Gurus and that the sixth and tenth Gurus had to become warriors.

When he thought it time to appoint a successor, Amardas put his disciples to the test. He asked that they should each build a small platform for him. This seemed a simple enough task and was done in little time. But when the Guru inspected them, they did not meet with His approval and He asked that they be rebuilt. As these were finished, He said that He wished them to be built in another site. Again and again, the platforms were built and then destroyed; and one by one the workers left until only one worker remained. The others jeered at him for following the requests of an old man, who to them appeared to be affected by His age. The sole worker, Jethaji, looked at them with tears in his eyes and replied: "The Master is all-wisdom, all-conscious. If I am ordered to build these platforms and break them all through life, my outlook is only to obey His orders." Amardas then embraced his beloved servant, Jethaji—now retitled Ramdas—and told him that he alone was fit to carry on the Master's work.

O My eyes, it is the Lord who gave you Light
Look on Him intently.
All this world that you behold
Is but His image
When, through the Guru's grace, I received understanding,
I saw that God was one, and there was none besides.
Saith Nanak, these eyes were blind,
But on meeting the Satguru they obtained Divine Light.

RAG RAMKALI M. 3 (ANAND XXXVI)

FOUR

Guru Ramdas

(1534-1581)

The Lord's arrow of love has pierced my heart.
My mind is in torment for a glimpse of the Lord,
Like a man athirst without water.
The pain of inner torment, only the Lord knows.
He is my true brother who will tell me something of my Lord, my Beloved. [1]

RAG GOND, M. 4

IN A SECTION of Lahore lived a pious and simple couple—Hari Das and Daya Kaur—who had long prayed for a great son. Their prayers were answered, and in the autumn of 1534 a child was born to them. He was named Ramdas—or God's servant—but was commonly called Jetha, or first born. Like Nanak before him and other Saints yet to come, he had little attraction for the world's sports and cares. His young mind was in search of an inner harmony, and his enjoyment was in meditation and the company of the holy. Also like the young Nanak, he enjoyed distributing his few possessions to the poor and the holy. His unworldly disposition made his parents regret their prayers.

O fulfill the yearning of Nanak's child:
Peace will descend in this body
With a glimpse of the Lord. [2]

1. Guru Ramdas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "The Heart's True Yearning," *Sat Sandesh,* Vol. 6, No. 4, April 1973, pp. 4-6.
2. Ibid, p. 8.

But when the prayer of Jetha's heart was answered, never again was another wish to enter his mind. For selflessly giving his goods to a group of holy men, Jethaji received their blessings—and these soon bore fruit. He met with a band of men who told him of the great living Master, Guru Amardas. Jethaji wasted no time in entering into the presence of Him to whom he was to devote his life, and when he beheld Him, heart spoke to heart and eyes to eyes, and he was soon put onto the Path of Naam.

Glory, glory to the Satguru,
O Nanak, a contact with Him destroys pain and suffering.

RAG GAURI, M. 4

Unto Him, I joyfully surrender myself in sacrifice.[3]

GURU RAMDAS

God, Who serves the whole world as the Lord of Justice—keeping men inexorably bound by their own actions—becomes the Lord of Mercy when He appears as the Satguru and rejoins the lost souls to that Power through which they can return to the Oneness of Life and thus bring to a halt the otherwise endless wheel of transmigration. Whosoever thinks of such a Master is transported with wonder. And while the Satguru's love may be as a sheer act of grace—in no way repayable—yet he whose heart is touched by It wishes only to serve and be absorbed in His presence. Even he who was destined to carry on this most holy work folded his hands and bowed in deepest gratitude: "Who but the Satguru could have saved a sinner like me?" and forever carried in his heart a silent prayer.

3. Guru Ramdas, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in "Joyfully I Surrender," *Sat Sandesh,* Vol. 5, No. 2, Feb. 1972, p. 6.

O God, make us the servant of Thy Servants
Grant us the boon to bask in the Light of the Saints
So long as the breath of our life lasts.

KALYAN M. 4

Jethaji was married to Amardas' daughter, Bibi Bani; and to remain with the Master, he disregarded the custom of returning to his own family.

This gentle servant, whose love came to inspire many a disciple and was yet destined to be the source of refuge for many more, was to his own household a cause of shame. Learning of the menial tasks Jetha performed for Amardas, his brothers reprimanded him. Jetha was a Khatri and not a servant boy, they reminded him; especially not a servant to his father-in-law. But Jethaji could not take Amardas as his father-in-law. To him, He was God manifested. He had lifted him from a low position and accepted him as His own. "How can I do other than I do? What more could I wish than to be a slave to such a one?" But Jetha's replies only incensed his brothers all the more and they took their complaints to the Master Himself. He, however, welcomed them graciously and was unruffled by their animosity. "I have not given him unbecoming labor but have ended his labors in this world and sheltered him with the umbrella of true sovereignty. He is the very incarnation of devotion and righteousness; and if he had not been born in your family, you would all have been damned."

I am but a useless slave bought in a shop.
Even if Thou wert to seat me upon the Throne, I am still Thy slave.
By Thine own Power, help this lowly one to repeat Thy Name.

GAURI, M. 4

Under the Master's orders, Jetha left Goindwal and began the construction of a new city (first called Ramdaspur but later to become Amritsar) and several bathing tanks. He worked continuously in the Master's service with only the goal of self-surrender before him. Though he often received ridicule for his unrelenting services, he had discarded all thoughts for himself. If the world praised him or condemned him, his own mind remained unaffected, being lost to the constant prayer of the Lord's remembrance. It was for such an unwavering faith that the veil of separation was lifted and strange and bewitching wonders befell his inner sight. And when he beheld the Supreme Vision, he bowed his head in most humble reverence and awe before the Beloved Master—for he saw that He and God were one.

When I churned the sea of body,
A strange phenomenon came to light:
God was embedded in the Master and no difference could Nanak find.

GURBANI, M. 4

Jethaji—now renamed Ramdas—was transformed into the Master's own mold and commissioned to carry on the spiritual work. So that there would be no doubts, Amardas told his two sons, Mohan and Mohri, to bow before the fourth Guru. The elder was proud and refused to touch the feet of a servant, but Mohri saw the same Light within him as within his father and bowed low in obeisance. Ramdas himself was too humble for this and found it hard to bear. "O sir, I am but a poor disciple and wish only to remain as such. It would be far better should Mohri carry on the holy work." But the Divine Order was set and the servant was seated upon the Throne.

Ramdas continued to develop the city which his Master

had expressed desire of as well as the famous tank, Amritsar, after which the city was eventually to be named. In time it was to become a large trading center and a new provision of revenues for the Sikhs.

During Ramdas's life, the strings of grace began to pull Sri Chand—Guru Nanak's renunciate son—back to the Path. In his pride, he would not meet with Angad or Amardas; but reflection had humbled him and he left his jungle retreat to pay homage to the Living Master. But to Ramdas it seemed that homage was due to the son of the Great Guru Nanak. When they met, each bowed before the other; then for a moment pride struck Sri Chand: "Why is it that you grow your beard so long? Is it in imitation of my father?" "No," replied the Master. "I have grown it to wash the feet of Guru Nanak's son." Sri Chand was embarrassed and again bowed before the Great Master and now gave all credit to the one who reigned in his father's place.

Ramdas himself had three sons: Prithi Chand, Mahadev and Arjan; and when the time arose, their devotion was tested. A cousin of Ramdas' invited Him to his son's wedding. As the wedding was to be in Lahore and the Guru was very busy in Amritsar, he replied he would send one of his sons instead. First, the eldest, Prithi Chand, was approached. He was requested to attend the marriage and remain there for about fifteen days. Prithi was afraid that his absence could be detrimental to the spiritual succession which he jealously desired. Therefore with lame excuses he refused to go. Mahadev was usually in a state of spiritual intoxication and held worldly affairs in contempt. Finally Ramdas approached Arjan. To him the Master's presence was as precious as life itself—but still more dear were His wishes, and so he proceeded to Lahore. The marriage ended, the days passed, but Arjan received no message

from the Master. Out of yearning of his heart he wrote this poem, which he sent to the Master:

My mind is desiring Thy darshan
Like the rainbird in anguish
The thirst remains unquenched—there is no peace;
I am living like that without the Beloved's darshan.

Ramdas happened to be resting when the messenger arrived, and Prithi Chand said he would deliver it when He awoke. But when the messenger left, Prithi hid the note in his coat. Thus more time passed and Arjan was still without word from the Guru.

The Master knows the hearts of all—whether near or far. He hears the silent prayers of one and sees through the deceit of another. Yet mysterious are His ways and He may or may not choose to disclose His knowledge. Thus, still burning in the fire of separation, Arjan wrote another poem:

Glory to that place where You reside;
Your face is so beautiful,
Seeing this, the inner Sound easily vibrates.

Prithi again intercepted the poem and Arjan wrote a third one:

The separation of minutes was likened unto an age;
O Beloved, when will that time be when I may see You?
I cannot sleep and the nights cannot pass without Him who is my Lord.

This time, Arjan marked the letter with a '3' and ordered that it be delivered only to the Guru. When the Master read it, he asked his eldest son where the first two letters were. Prithi Chand swore three times he had no knowledge of them but Ramdas ordered his clothes to be searched and

they were found in his coat. Meanwhile Arjan had been summoned to return to Amritsar. Ramdas now said that whoever could write the fourth stanza to these poems would be the one fit for the spiritual succession. Arjan wrote the following:

With great destiny I met Him:
The Ever-Permanent Lord was found in the house;
I desire only to serve and never be separated for a moment.
I am thy servant, O Lord.[4]

Greatly pleased with his son's devotion, Ramdas filled him with his own Life impulse—so much so that the two were blended into One. While others sought their own gains, Arjan could not step beyond the bounds of the Guru's words. He had surrendered his mind to the Satguru, and for such perfect obedience and devotion Ramdas appointed him as his successor. Prithi Chand, however, became all the more spiteful. Not only was he publicly exposed for his fraudulence, but his younger brother was given the position he felt was rightfully his. He swore he would take the seat of the Guru and cursed his father and Arjan until he was ordered to leave the Master's presence.

Ramdas' earthly mission was at its close. He returned to Goindwal where he had spent his early days of service to his Master. He bade the Sangat live up to the message Guru Nanak had given them, told Arjan to complete the works at Amritsar, and left the scene to abide at the Lotus Feet of the Lord within.

4. Guru Arjan, as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle,* p. 284.

FIVE

Guru Arjan

(1563-1606)

Who knows God lives in the world but is untouched by it,
Like the lotus in the water.
Who knows God sees all with an equal eye
Like the wind that blows alike upon the king and the poor.
Who knows God, his purity is immaculate
Like the flow of water in which dust gathers not.

The mind of this God-realized man is filled with Light
And His glance of grace is like a shower of nectar.
He who knows the Lord lives ever in joy and peace—
beyond the reach of Death.
He is the highest of the high
And yet deems himself as the lowliest of the low.

This knowledge of God is gained only by the Lord's own favor.
O Nanak, He who knows God is Himself the supreme Lord.

RAG GAURI M.5 (From Sukhmani 1-6)

The promising signs of childhood had now become manifested in Arjan. The dearly beloved of two Masters (Amardas, his grandfather, and Ramdas) became awakened himself and competent to distribute their precious gift. He who was both an inspired poet and great builder and planner of cities was also the human pole where the Divinity became manifest.

With Ramdas' death, Prithi Chand became intent on tak-

ing his revenge; but for all his brother's spite, Arjan returned only forgiveness.

My property and wealth may go to ruin
My treasure is in God's Feet.

GAURI M.5

On Prithia's demands, Arjan gave him the turban received as a symbol of his ascension to the spiritual throne as well as belongings inherited from his father. Whatever work was to be done in the Master's cause was now to be financed by the voluntary offerings of the disciples. Though Prithi often intercepted even these, the Lord does not turn His back on His devotee; and funds came from unexpected quarters so the works Ramdas had begun were able to be completed. Many sikhs worked long and hard hours in selfless devotion, and great was the Master's joy when he beheld them so engaged. Guru Arjan then began work on the great temple, *Har Mandir* (lit. the Temple of God, but more commonly known in the West as the Golden Temple of Amritsar). Rather than a towering building, it was to be a temple surrounded by a pool of water and which people must descend steps to enter.

It is said that Guru Arjan explained its reason for being below the ground level thus: "God takes His joy in what is humble. As a fruitful branch hangs low with the weight of its own fruit, so also does that which God exalts. Therefore, Har Mandir will be the lowest of all buildings. Men will have to descend steps to enter the temple—but it will be open to receive them from all four sides and from the four castes." Arjan gave the honor of laying the temple's foundation to a Muslim holy man, Mian Mir, and thence began its construction. Again the devotees' services seemed beyond human capacities and it was but a short while

before the temple was completed. Inspecting the building, Arjan noticed some workers bathing beside it. Tears came to his eyes when he saw their bodily suffering and knew how tirelessly they had worked, asking for nothing in return. On the occasion, he composed the following hymn:

He who hath bathed herein and meditated upon the Lord
Shall be restored to health.
He who hath bathed in the pool of the Saints[1]
Shall obtain salvation.
And he who meditateth upon the Holy Naam
Shall be free of death and the long wanderings of his soul
shall come to an end.

BILAWAL M.5

The temple doors were open to all who had a thirst for Truth —barring people neither by sex, status, or religion. And within its halls sat the blessed Guru Arjan—who held Satsangs daily: chanting hymns and discoursing on the way to God.

II

During his ministry, Guru Arjan saw the importance of gathering the holy words of different saints into one volume and traveled to Goindwal to obtain his predecessor's hymns from Mohan (Amardas' son). On his return, he stayed in Khadur where Angad's son, Datu, came to seek forgiveness for having been a jealous maligner of the third Guru. With humble thoughts, Datu confessed his earlier arrogance and selfish manner and mentioned also that the foot with which

1. As the temple represented a universal place of worship, so did the bathing tank which surrounds it symbolize a pool of heavenly nectar wherein men—having risen above mind and matter—were cleansed of all their deeds which bound them to the otherwise endless wheel of transmigration.

he had kicked the aged Master from His chair, still pained him. Arjan relieved the pain and blessed him for his repentance. He then proceeded back to Amritsar to compile the sacred writings. With the aid of a few disciples—most notably Bhai Gur Das—Guru Arjan arranged the hymns of his predecessors, his own hymns and also those of holy men from the time of Jaidev (1180-1202 A.D.) onward. The works were all written in the common language and put into the "Gurmukhi" script: the Punjabi alphabet which was invented by Guru Angad. The completed work contained the writings of men from all the castes and from different religions. At the end of the sacred writings (first called the Pothi Granth, but later known as the Adi Granth or Guru Granth Sahib), he left some pages blank. When asked about this, Arjan replied that the pages were left for the ninth Guru who was to follow him and one couplet for the tenth.

Aside from the scriptures, the Masters record their message of love and grace in the lives of those whose attention is always turned toward the Guru (God-in-man); in the one who is always absorbed in the higher consciousness and sees that the circumstances on earth are passing and are according to the reactions of one's own past actions. Those who have achieved this awareness are like an overflowing fountain of love—and yet ever conscious of the divinity, they remain calm and detached from all sense of personal gain or loss. To them the past and the future are like "an open book," and yet with all their inner knowledge they remain but humble servants to the Divine Will. Though such a disciple is a rare thing, Guru Arjan often spoke of the qualities of a true *Guru-sikh,* and at one time he was asked to show a living example of such a one. Thus he sent the questioning disciple to stay with another disciple in Gujarat. When the first disciple arrived, he noticed his host

preparing a funeral bier. Asking what it was for, the host replied, "Oh, it will be useful later." A few days passed and the host's son was to be married, but amid all the festivities and excitements, the host remained calm. When the ceremonies ended, the son suddenly died. The dead body was carried home and the host—still calm and unaffected—brought out the bier he had been working on. The visiting disciple was amazed: "You must have known your son was going to die, but why then did you allow him to marry?" "Yes, I did know," replied the host, "but I could not change what had to happen."

III

When one throws a handful of dust at the moon
The moon remains unaffected;
The dust recoils upon the thrower.

GURBANI: GURU ARJAN

The remaining events of Arjan's life are like a long sequence of persecutions. Amidst them, one finds the Guru as a living example of human qualities at their heights. He who while living in the world, had at heart renounced it: when his position or property were the cause of strife, he quietly and cheerfully left them behind and traveled about content in the Will of God. However, he was not a man to turn his back on the needs of others, and time and again one finds him ready to sacrifice his very life—as finally he did—for the good of others.

While at Amritsar, Arjan was approached by Birbal, a minister of the emperor. Birbal tried to impose a tax on the Guru and his disciples. Arjan refused to pay and encouraged his following to do likewise. He told the minister that he had no money to give but whatever food he and his

troops required would be freely offered to them from the langar. The reply made Birbal indignant and again he sent soldiers to advise the Guru of his military power and the consequences should Arjan not pay. But the Master was firm in his decision: "I will not pay. The minister may enter the city and do as he pleases. God is at my side and will protect me." Afraid of Birbal's anger, the soldiers told him that Arjan would come to him later, hoping the Guru would in the meantime change his mind. It happened that that night, Birbal received orders to hasten on on his expedition and so he was forced to delay his collecting. Later he joined forces with another commander and was soon to be killed in battle.

But no sooner was one intruder gone than did another come up. Prithi Chand again raised his head in vengeance, and to allay his brother's spitefulness, Arjan left Amritsar. He traveled through several villages, spreading his message of hope and bringing light to darkened homes. During his travels, he purchased land and planned the construction of the city of Tarn Taran (lit. The Raft Which Carries Men Over The World's Ocean). This city became a small colony to serve lepers as well as a place reserved for sacred meditations. Here lepers were given homes, food, clothing, medical aid and human care. And still above this, they were given spiritual and moral training to help them on the path Godwards. It was probably the first instance in the history of India that lepers were given such care and respect. Later, Guru Arjan began the city of Kartarpur. After his long period of self-imposed exile, Arjan decided to begin his return journey to Amritsar—stopping on the way to meet with Sri Chand.

By now Prithi Chand realized that he would not lord over his brother nor himself be revered as Guru. But as he could

not relinquish the desire, he made his son heir to his schemes. Arjan presently had no son and Prithia believed this to be to his advantage. But when a son, Har Gobind, was born to Arjan, Prithia was enraged. He devised ways to kill the child but the results were that the hired assassins suffered and Prithia was again exposed.

As Har Gobind became older, Chandu Savai Divan of Akbar's court requested Arjan to marry Har Gobind to his daughter. But because of Chandu's arrogance, Arjan refused the offer and engaged his son to the daughter of humble village sikhs. Chandu felt insulted and allied himself with Prithi Chand. Together they brought a case against Arjan before the emperor, stating that he had compiled a book that ridiculed both Hindus and Muslims. Akbar ordered that the Granth be brought before him, but upon examination, he found that the charges made were unwarranted. In fact, he was very impressed with the scripture and made arrangements to meet with the Guru. The monarch—who delighted in the words and company of the wise and who had earlier met Guru Amardas and Ramdas—now beheld the holy Arjan and in sincere devotion prostrated himself before Him. He sought the Guru's advice and offered Him a large donation. But the Guru never accepted personal donations and made no exception to the emperor's. He advised Akbar to serve his subjects and regard their well-being and happiness even before his own. Akbar ruled his people by such counsel; but with his death, a less enlightened son, Jahangir, seized the throne.[2] Chandu

2. Once Jahangir was established in power and Guru Arjan's increasing influence had come to his notice, he resolved to take actions against him. Thus he writes in his memoirs:

> In Goindwal, on the banks on the River Beas, there is a Hindu called Arjan. He poses as a saint and pious man, so much so that

and Prithia again brought false charges against Arjan. But when Prithi Chand was summoned to the emperor's court, he died on his way. With his death, Prithia's son began to carry on his spiteful work, and brought the charges of theft, blasphemy and treason (Arjan was said to have earlier aided Akbar's son, Khurso, in his flight from Jahangir) against the Master. Guru Arjan was summoned to the emperor's court and knowing the awaiting consequences, let it be known that Har Gobind would carry on the spiritual work. He consoled his wife and followers and bade them not to mourn his approaching death: "Whoever is born in this world, must also die. This is nature's law. Therefore do not love the body but the Power within it."

When he arrived in the imperial court, Arjan was ordered to pay a large fine and told to remove the hymns from his scripture which were disrespectful to Hindu and Muslim writings. Arjan did not meet either of the demands: he did not have the money to pay the fine and he testified that there were no hymns disrespectful either to the Hindu incarnations or to the Muslim prophets. Jahangir ordered Arjan to be imprisoned and left him in the care of Chandu. The emperor's orders to his minister were that he should get from him whatever information he could regarding Khurso. However, when the case was in his own hands, Chandu transcended these orders, first threatening the Master and then giving the order that He should be tortured. Arjan was dipped into boiling waters, seated on red-hot plates and had

> he has captivated the hearts of simple Hindus and even foolish, ignorant Muslims . . . They call him "Guru" and throng about him to worship him and give their faith to him. This has been so for three or four generations (of spiritual succession) and it has many times occurred to me to put a stop to this vanity or else to bring him into the folds of Islam.

burning sands poured on him. Throughout his tortures, he showed no signs of pain but remained calm.

The earth, the skies and the stars are under the shadow of Fear; over their heads reigns the unchanging law.
Wind, Water and Fire are under that shadow; so too is poor Indra.
All things know fear; only the Creator is free from it.
Saith Nanak, God is the companion of the Saints; they adorn His court and therefore they too are without fear.

MARU M. 5

Men came to the Guru for his final blessings and none could help but admire his undaunted courage. One Muslim holy man, Mian Mir, also came. Seeing the pain that the Master bore, tears filled his eyes and he begged to be allowed to take vengeance. He said that by his powers, he could raze the entire city to the ground. Arjan replied by uplifting his soul and the holy man saw heavenly powers all bowing before the Master's feet, each one begging the same favor. In wonder, Mian Mir looked into Arjan's eyes while the Master spoke: "Faith is truly tested at the time of suffering. My one joy in this life has been as a humble servant of God. How can I now care to turn my face elsewhere? By my example will courage be lent to weaker men in the hour of their trials."

The days passed and the tortures became more severe. After some time, however, Arjan was permitted, upon request, to bathe in the Ravi River's cool water. People collected around him as he walked toward the river. His body was emaciated and worn with scars but his face was illuminated by the Light within and the strength of his faith made him unaware of the body below. Thus he bathed and af-

forded a final darshan to his disciples. He advised them that his earthly life was soon to end and Har Gobind would continue the work begun by Nanak. He was to be instructed to act as did his predecessors, save that he wear weapons at his side and command an army. With these words, the Master returned to the tortures until his death on May 30, 1606.

The egg of illusion has burst
Divine Light pours in upon the mind.
The Master has snapped the chains of the captive soul
And the Cycle of transmigration has come to its end.
Cooled in the Guru's Naam,
The world's cauldron boils no more.
In the company of the Sant, Death's friends do not come near;
The Lord of Judgement himself cannot now call me to his court.
Freed from the weight of my karmas
I act now with no desire.
From the sea's depths have I reached the shore;
Such is the mercy of the Guru.
Truth is my place, Truth is my seat and Truth is my purpose.
Saith Nanak, within myself have I gathered this Truth.[3]

RAG MARU M. 5

3. This hymn is said to have been written during the time of Arjan's tortures. It gives an indication of a Master's outlook on afflictions: that our enemies and tortures are not those people or circumstances that inflict pain to our lower selves or to our bodies; rather, they are those things which keep us separated from God (i.e. desires and attachment to the sense organs).

Similarly, one should note the extreme cheerfulness and optimistic outlook of the Masters despite what we would take as great travails and sufferings. When compiling the *Granth*, Arjan included the following hymn of the Sufi Master, Baba Farid:

O Farid, I thought I alone had sorrow.
Sorrow is spread across the wide world.
From my housetop I saw every home burning
in the flame of sorrow.

But underneath it, Arjan wrote a reply to the Baba's verse:

O Farid, the world is beautiful
But in it there is a thorny garden.
Those to whom the Master is kind
They remain sound even in the midst of troubles.

In another place, he adds, "Whatever Thou givest, O Lord, I take as my joy. Wherever Thou placeth me, there is my heaven."

SIX

Guru Har Gobind

(1595-1644)

Whose soul is attuned to the Lord
Whatever his actions, they are pleasing unto Him

GURJI M. 4 (Guru Ramdas)

AT THE AGE of eleven, Har Gobind was given the spiritual mantle that his father had worn. At his father's last behests—and fulfilling a prophecy made by Bhai Budha—the young saint appeared with two swords[1] girded around his hips and called his followers to arms. He had earlier received instruction in both the holy books and the martial arts. What he so rapidly absorbed and made a part of his own life, Har Gobind began giving to others. No longer were donations of food or money of prime concern, but he requested offerings to be made in the form of horses and arms. Opposite the Golden Temple he built a congregation hall called the *Akal Takht* (i.e. The Throne of the Timeless One) where not only spiritual matters were discussed but political and community concerns as well. He also built a great fortification called *Loh Garh* (Fort of Iron).

The rapid and radical change that Har Gobind brought

1. It is said that Bhai Budha was given the duty of placing the swords on the young Guru, but being innocent of the art of warfare, he put the sword on the wrong side. He realized his mistake and went to gird the sword on the correct side but Har Gobind would not let the sage undo an action. Thus Har Gobind simply ordered him to give him two swords.

about caused confusion and doubts among the following. Some feared for themselves, knowing that the emperor would not turn his back on an uprising army. Others questioned the apparent change from the ways of the earlier Gurus. Har Gobind remained unmoved by their doubts and stood fast in the Guru's wishes:

The Lord who sees all hearts
Is my protector

BHANO M.5

he quoted and then added, "In the Guru's house, religion and service shall be combined—food for the poor and needy and the sword to protect the weak." From his own words—and more significantly, from his actions—Har Gobind showed that he had not transgressed any sacred lines of behavior nor left the path of his predecessors. As a warrior, his wishes were only for the good of the people "to restore the balance between good and evil." Moreover, Guru Arjan himself had had many soldier disciples whom he brought into his service. While he never engaged them in active battle, he prepared them for his successor. The advice he repeatedly gave them was brought into practice under Guru Har Gobind: "When fighting, think only of God and fight only for the sake of righteousness: protecting the weak and the oppressed and overthrowing the tyrants."

As Har Gobind began to rise in power, Chandu became increasingly fearful of him. When he was unable to reconcile himself with the Guru, he petitioned the emperor to have him imprisoned. When the emperor came down with a fever, Chandu took advantage of it. He bribed a priest to tell Jahangir that when a holy man went into the emperor's prison to perform penances, then the emperor's disease

would go away. Hearing this, the emperor ordered for this to be carried out and Chandu thus summoned Har Gobind to fulfill this end.

As God had descended in the form of the Guru to a world of misery so that men could be freed from the bondage of mind and matter; similarly, at the level of man, He allowed Himself to be imprisoned within the prison walls to bring relief to those suffering there. Here he found men who, though emaciated and weak, were overjoyed to behold the living Master. Har Gobind, at different levels, took upon himself the burdens of others so their sufferings might be less. What few comforts he might have had, he gave up for those in need, at times even giving away his meals to feed others. Yet his prison life was not only to relieve physical sufferings but also to fulfill the yearning of a searching soul. The prison's governor, Hari Das, had long wished for the Guru's darshan and now at last his heart-felt desire was granted, and he gave himself to the path of devotion.

When Jahangir recovered from his fever, he forgot about the holy man he had imprisoned and the years began to pass. A group of disciples arranged for his escape but when they notified him of it, he would not leave: "These walls have become my shelter from the petty demands of the world and here I can give my time to meditation."

When many years had passed and his disciples could bear the separation no longer, a plan was made that led to his being released. Two disciples, using their supernatural powers, changed their forms into those of wild beasts. Then late at night they prowled around the emperor's room, haunting him and leaving him without sleep. When morning came, they disappeared and Jahangir, terrified, sought help. One of these same disciples, Bhai Jetha, now came

back, posing as an astrologer. Jetha told the emperor that he had the power to see past, present and future and could help him with any of his troubles. When the emperor was convinced of Jetha's abilities, he brought him into his private chambers to hear his council. "You have imprisoned one innocent holy man," the disciple told him. "His name is Har Gobind and these visions of terror will continue until he is set free." At once orders for his release were issued, but still the Master would not agree to leave until all the other prisoners were also set free.[2] Jahangir considered and offered an alternative: "However many men can hold on to your shirt, that many may be released with you." Har Gobind agreed and then made such a long shirt that a hand of each prisoner found a place on it. Thus he brought another happiness to the lot of prisoners, finally able to return to their families. But to one—to Hari Das—heaviness weighed upon his heart as the Beloved Master prepared to leave. His tears fell profusely but Har Gobind gave him a fatherly caress and reassured him that the Power was not limited by time or space. "The physical presence of the Master—though a great blessing—is yet a passing affair. But to be spiritually connected is something to be treasured forever. I am never away from you, and when you turn your face within, there will you behold me."

II

Who slanders a saint, meets confusion at every step.
He becomes like one helplessly lost in a wilderness
—wandering here, then there.
Empty is his life; living yet like a corpse.
Who shall support such a man?

2. These prisoners were prisoners of war—mostly princes and kings—and not outlaws.

Only the saint, who may in His mercy save even his slanderer.

ASTAPADI M.5 (Sukhmani)

When he realized something of what he had done, Jahangir wished to reconcile himself with Har Gobind. He brought Chandu's vile actions to his attention and added that Chandu had exceeded his orders concerning Arjan's treatment. He told him how Chandu was truly his enemy and that he (Jahangir) would see that the Master had his vengeance. Har Gobind replied that neither he nor his father bore enmity nor did they seek revenge. If an emperor must inflict punishment, it should be for justice, and not for the sake of personal desires. Chandu was turned over to the Master and He in turn gave him to the keeping of His disciples. A disciple can forgive all things but not abuse to his Guru. Thus after Har Gobind left, Chandu was punished: he was beaten and pelted with rocks as he was dragged through the streets. Finally he met his death as a heavy blow was struck to his head by the same man whom Chandu had ordered to execute Guru Arjan's tortures. But if at the level of man justice may be necessary, at the level of the Saints it becomes tempered with mercy. When Chandu Savai left the body, the Angel of Death came to take him; but from the time his tortures began, his mind had been on Guru Arjan whom he had executed and the Gurus preceeding Him, and on Guru Har Gobind whom he had persecuted. Now he began weeping and praying: "Guru Har Gobind! Please save me from the Angel of Death." The line of Masters from Nanak to Har Gobind then appeared to him and, freeing his soul from death, took him into the realms of grace and forgiveness.[3] Jahangir now met with the Guru and

3. This story was related to Daya Singh by Gobind Singh, when the

found his presence to be of great satisfaction. He listened attentively to Har Gobind's advice concerning both spiritual matters and the responsibilities of an emperor. He was told that it was his duty to bear the pain of his subjects who suffered and to make every effort to relieve their miseries. He should give to those in need and provide work for the poor. The relation between the two strengthened. Jahangir could find nothing wrong with the Master's pious but fearless behavior; with the man who—though a king in his own right—saw only God as his emperor and took no credit for his own immaculate deeds.

The time passed and Jahangir kept the Guru with him as an honored guest. When he traveled, he also enjoyed the company of the Master, establishing a separate camp for him nearby his own. Thus the temporal king and the spiritual king had, for the time, formed an alliance. But the two have no comparison for one who knows even a little about the ocean of spirituality. In Agra, a humble grass-cutter set out to behold his beloved Satguru. He was carrying on his head a heavy load of hay which he wanted to give as an offering for the Master's horses. As he walked toward the camp, he kept his eyes cast down; having vowed that he would not look up until he was before the Guru; and with each step he prayed, "O True King, I am at the mercy of the senses and have forgotten. Please show Thy mercy and take me into Thy refuge." But as he spoke of the "King" a man mistook his words and led him to Jahangir's tent. Without

former asked if Chandu was now suffering in the pits of hell. Gobind Singh told him how Masters were all-forgiveness and then told of these inner happenings concerning Chandu's last moments. The story was recorded in a book by Bhai Mani Singh—and this book in time came into the hands of Bishan Das. He gave the book to Sant Ajaib Singh to read and Sant Ji in turn related the story to me.

yet looking up, the simple disciple bowed down and offered his heartfelt prayer. At this point Jahangir knew the man had been led to the wrong tent. "O Brother, you have come to the wrong king. I can give you wealth and worldly goods, but for the blessings of God, you must go to Guru Har Gobind." Immediately the grasscutter jumped up with his offering of hay and hastened toward the Guru's tent. "I don't want your wealth or worldly goods. I only want the darshan of my Satguru."

With Jahangir's death, his son, Shah Jahan, ascended the throne. The intolerance of human rights and dignity which had steadily increased since the death of Akbar, became still more severe under Shah Jahan's rule. When he heard the news of the new emperor's ascension to the throne, Har Gobind knew that the time of battle was approaching. No more were the people to live under the tyranny of the Moghuls—but as God willed, they should be met squarely and defeated. Shah Jahan's own mind was poisoned against the Guru and soon he waged war against him. Imperial troops numbering in the thousands were sent with the order to quell the Guru's party and bring Har Gobind to him, regardless of the means. But the sikhs were well-prepared for the attack, and to safeguard the innocent people, the city was evacuated. An intense battle ensued and brave men from both sides were killed, but within only nine hours the Muslims had suffered too heavy a loss and were forced into retreat. Under the counsel of Wazir Khan, the emperor decided to abandon thoughts of retaliation. Har Gobind did not seek power or lands for himself or his people. Moreover, the emperor wondered how such a small band of men could so readily annihilate his own massive and well-trained army, except through Divine intervention. The Guru, also hoping to avoid further bloodshed, went to

Kartarpur. His fame as both a spiritual and a worldly king had spread, and many came to join his ranks and seek his refuge. From Kartarpur, he moved to further seclusion along the River Beas. Here he founded a city which came to be known as Sri Hargobindpur. As many of his followers were Muslims, he had a mosque built for them—letting it be known that he had not sided against any sect of people but against the oppression and religious intolerance which had become prevalent. Men were to remain within their own social bodies and all modes of worship were to be respected.

For a short time, Har Gobind left Sri Hargobindpur, traveling through the Punjab and Kashmir, to meet with disciples and other men in need. In Kashmir, he met a holy man, Samrath Ram Das of Maratha. The Guru was fully armed and mounted on a horse when they met. Ram Das was somewhat taken aback by his appearance: "I understand that you follow the line of Guru Nanak; but Nanak was a renunciate and you wear arms and keep an army of horsemen. What sort of sadhu are you?" To this Har Gobind replied: "The ideal man is a saint within and outwardly a prince: spiritual and temporal powers combined. Arms are for the protection of the weak and the poor and to overthrow tyranny and cruelty. Moreover Baba Nanak did not renounce the world but simply renounced Maya." The profound impact Har Gobind's words had upon Ram Das influenced the course of Indian history. Ram Das became the Guru of Shivaji (1627-1680) in whom he not only instilled a keen sense of virtue but also the idea that it was his duty to free his people from the onslaughts of the Muslim Rule. Shivaji became a great soldier—as well as a man of rare integrity and selflessness. He greatly raised the morale of his people and eventually formed an Indian state independent of Muslim rule. The climax of this meeting was

more than a hundred years later, when the Sikhs in the north and the Marathas in the south played a prominent role in destroying the Moghul empire.

As time went on, more battles were waged against the Guru, some by the emperor and one by men who sought revenge against Him. But each time, His assailants met a rapid defeat by a small but intrepid band of sikhs. The final battle was prompted by the betrayal of a certain disciple, Painda Khan. Painda Khan was an orphaned child whom the Guru had brought up as though a favorite son. His strength, skill and bravery made him, as a soldier, unequaled by all save the Guru himself. For many years, his devotion was like his strength, and he whose might made him a fearful sight upon the battlefield, was also of tender heart and could be brought to tears out of his love. But torn by strifes within his own family and having become inflated with pride, he one day lied to the Master. Three times the Master asked him to tell the truth so that he could be forgiven, but three times Painda Khan lied. Evidence was brought against the disciple and he was told to leave the Master's presence. Still the Master would have pardoned him; but now, rather than humble himself, Painda Khan sought vengeance. Painda Khan gained the emperor's audience and brought false charges against Har Gobind. He further attested—as a former sikh—to their present weakness: he claimed that whatever battles Har Gobind had won earlier were due solely to his own (Painda Khan's) military power. Assuring the emperor that together victory and vengeance would be theirs, he was given an army numbering in the thousands and set forth on a campaign to destroy Har Gobind and his following. One night as the soldiers prepared for battle, a voice was heard: "One of thee hath been untrue to his salt. With him shall thousands perish."

An immediate search was made but the speaker could not be found and the incident was for the time forgotten. Fierce battles began and the mysterious voice proved true: Har Gobind's army of less than two thousand men was victorious. The Guru and His ungrateful disciple met in private combat. Painda Khan cursed Har Gobind to His face but the Master's love for the disciple remained undiminished. Like a father teaching his son some stern lesson, so did Har Gobind now treat Painda Khan: "Brave soldier that you are, Painda Khan, draw your sword that you may strike first." The mighty Pathan rode up to Har Gobind and swung his sword with all his might. The blow was parried. Then again Painda Khan struck and then again, each time unsuccessfully. Painda Khan was filled with rage when finally Har Gobind claimed his opportunity to strike—and with one deftly powerful blow, the Pathan was felled from his horse. Sitting upon his horse, the Master looked down at the fallen soldier and spoke as though to Himself: "I loved you as my own son and made you a hero. Men spoke ill of you but my love for you remained and I forgave your shortcomings. Ill fate misled you and you brought an army against me. Without serving the Saints and worshiping God, one's good fortune turns to ruin; one's mind becomes clouded by pride, and the body poisoned till one meets his destruction. Though you have been ungrateful and untrue, may the Almighty Lord forgive you." He then dismounted and walked to Painda Khan's side. With a look of compassion on His face, He took him in His arms. The Guru's blow and then His final touch of mercy rebestowed Divine grace in Painda Khan's heart, and he once again felt the joy of humbly being before the Master. Har Gobind shielded Painda Khan's face from the sun and spoke to him thus: "Painda Khan, recite thy

Kalma, for thou art a dying Muslim." Looking into the Master's eyes, Painda Khan replied: "With the strike of Thy sword, my heart has tasted the Nectar of Life. Thy sword cut has become my Kalma." And thus speaking, the disciple left his body.

III

Refuge at the feet of the Master has a merit that is inconceivable.
I wish and long for the dust of his feet—the dust that has created the Universe.
His lotus feet are the true wealth and a true haven of peace.
They grant ineffable vision and lead to the Path Godward;
His lotus feet have a glory that is indescribable and incomprehensible,
Not this, not this, I bow to thee again and again, O Lord.[4]

BHAI GURDAS KABIT 72,219

During times of fighting, Har Gobind never overlooked the needs of his disciples but rewarded all—both from without and within—according to the yearnings of their hearts.

One day Har Gobind was sitting with his feet pulled up in front of him when a disciple came in to see Him. Har Gobind sent him away. Later his meal was brought to him, but without moving, he refused it. Several hours passed but Har Gobind neither ate nor moved, and spoke but little, asking to be left undisturbed. Finally, he stretched out his legs, rubbed the blood back into them and then began going about his usual routine. Many disciples questioned him about this incident but he remained silent. Only after persistent questioning did he reply: "A certain disciple sat for

4. As translated by Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word*, p. 306.

meditation and as he gave his heart, the Master appeared to him in His Radiant Form. So overwhelmed with joy and gratitude was he that tears flowed freely from his eyes. Then he grasped my feet within in devout and humble reverence; and for several hours remained bowed down, holding onto my feet. Was I to pull them away from him?"[5]

The more the disciple goes within and surrenders his heart to the Guru, the more all differences and all dualities are removed. Like his predecessors and his successors yet to come, Har Gobind emphasized this point of complete surrender to the Guru as the necessary means to at-onement with God.

And thus along with any other divinely ordered functions that they may perform—such as the restoration of morality —they yet remain Saints and delight in the role of raising those that come to them up to their own level: they are God-in-man and wish to make others God-in-man as well. But if the disciple wishes for worldly things, then what can the Master do? Once Har Gobind called a gathering of his disciples and said that whosoever could recite the Jap Ji with single-minded attention could ask for his heart's desire and it would be given. One man came forward and with no intervening thought, began reciting the Jap Ji. As he came to the end of the prayer, he thought: "Master has received a beautiful Arabian horse this morning. I would like to have

5. A somewhat similar story occurs in the life of Hazur Baba Sawan Singh. It is said that one day an attendant brought him his morning meal but he refused it. Some hours passed and again she brought him some food, but again he refused it. Several times she came in to serve him his meal, but each time he signaled her out. Finally when evening came, she remonstrated with him. He then got up and took her to the window—from where a gathering of devotees could be seen, all sitting in prayer. "All those souls are feeding me," the Great Master told her. "How then can I be hungry?"

received that." When the recitation was finished, Guru Har Gobind had the horse brought to him and told him, "Well, look here, I had a mind to give you my own place and you wanted only a horse."[6]

IV

After the many years of warfare, the Guru was finally able to guide his following within a peaceful reign. He happily put aside his weapons and armor and retired to simple and natural ways of life which allowed him to devote long unbroken hours to meditation. These last days passed quietly, and when his wife lay on her deathbed he consoled her: he too soon would end his earthly life. He appointed his grandson, Hari Rai, to carry on the spiritual mission and withdrew his spirit into the heavenly abode. As his body was placed upon the funeral pyre, one devoted sikh walked into the fire and clasped His feet; and held to them unflinchingly till he died. Then another man cast himself into the fire and died; and others might also have done the same, but Guru Hari Rai now stepped forward and forbade it.

V

Praised be the one who while living in this world
Ever repeats the Lord's Name and contemplates the War within his heart.
He knows that the body is fleeting—it does not remain—and has embarked upon the ship of the Lord's Name to carry him across the Ocean of Life.
Detachment is his fortress. The Light of Knowledge, his lamp. And with the broom of Wisdom, he has swept away timidity and falsehood.

GURU GOBIND SINGH "Krishna Avatara"

6. Kirpal Singh, *Morning Talks.*

The grandeur or disdain that war often attracts may bring one to an inadequate judgment of this great being. Har Gobind was brave, adventurous and of steady bearing regardless of circumstances. But his intrepid character was blended with a loving and compassionate heart, and as has been shown, he wished only good for others, even those who betrayed him, slandered him and attempted to kill him.

Since it was a time of great oppression, and since dharma is destroyed when there is unchecked tyranny on the one hand and cowardice on the other, he took on the role of a warrior and cast aside all thoughts of personal gain—be they for wealth, land or worldly respect and admiration—and fought for the good of humanity and the re-establishment of the higher values of life.

But as has already been noted, Har Gobind was a Saint first and then a warrior, and Guru Arjan's reply to an accusation of having lawless men among his followers—"They were once thieves and outlaws but now they are great souls (Mahatmas)"—holds equally true with much of Har Gobind's following. Whoever entered into His presence felt his mind come to rest, and whoever followed His behests was rapidly transformed for the better. And whoever came to Him for refuge was taken into His fold, without the least of selfish motives on the Guru's part, as He offered of Himself according to that man's pleas. Those who wished protection from the cruelties of the world felt a strong and able hand over their head, one which fed and clothed the needy and lent strength to the weak. But those rare souls fortunate enough to seek a spiritual shelter, found in Him the Light of Divinity, which led to an unceasing and joyous peace, and finally to at-onement with God.

SEVEN

Guru Hari Rai

(1630-1661)

One who repeateth His Naam day and night
Consider him as the form of God.
There is no difference between the beloved of God and God.
Nanak says, Know this as true.

SLOK M.9 (trans. Sant Bani Mag. staff)

HARI RAI was an embodiment of courage, compassion and devotion. Once as he rushed to meet his Master, a loose flap of his coat knocked several flowers from a bush. Seeing the harm he had done, he was heavy with remorse. When the Master came to him, he was consoled but also warned that, as a servant of God, it was his duty to be merciful to all life. Therefore, he should wear his coat fastened while walking—an injunction he never broke. As a disciple, he allowed himself no rest but did his utmost to escape sleep, in favor of prayer and meditation. He showed no signs of pride concerning his birth as a grandson to the Guru—but on the contrary, was humble and eager to serve. Rather than wishing the Guru's position—as did his elder brother, Dhir Mal—he sought only the spiritual solace afforded at His feet. Thus it was that Har Gobind kept the boy always at his side and found him alone prepared for the onerous responsibilities entrusted to the Guru.

"Have no fear. None shall prevail against you. God will

forever be with you and assist you. Keep with you always two thousand, two hundred fully armed soldiers, but do not provoke fighting nor involve thyself in the quarreling and fighting around you. To protect the poor, the helpless and the oppressed, do not hesitate to call upon your army." These were Har Gobind's final words to his spiritual son. And then, by His grace, were His people sheltered by a reign of peace.

Nonetheless, the army was kept in training—as Guru Har Gobind had wished—and would patrol surrounding areas. On one such excursion, the Guru with His retinue passed the house of a very poor devotee. Suddenly, Hari Rai stopped and asked her to feed him some bread. With tearful eyes, she placed a loaf of coarse bread before her Guru. The Master himself showed great delight in having received this bread, then blessed the woman and proceeded onward. All who were with him were surprised by this: it was neither the Guru's usual meal time nor was it ever his practice to accept anything which he did not himself pay for. And yet none dared to ask him the meaning behind what had happened. However, the next day when these disciples offered Hari Rai some food at the same time he had taken the bread the day before, he refused. Understanding their intent, he explained what had happened: "Brothers, I did not ask for bread out of hunger, but asked due to the devotion with which it was cooked. Very rarely do I get such food."

Not long after he had taken up the role of a Master, Hari Rai received a desperate plea from the emperor: Shah Jahan's son was dying; could Hari Rai save him? When he received the emperor's petition, Hari Rai smiled: "With one hand a man breaks the flower and with the other, he makes an offering of it. But the flower scents both hands

alike." He paused a moment and became more serious: "Thus, the Guru returns good for evil." Hari Rai sent certain herbs which saved the emperor's son and a bond of friendship was established. But as Shah Jahan grew old and sick, another son, Aurangzeb, rose in rebellion. He imprisoned his father and a brother (Murad)—who had assisted him in battle against yet another brother (Dara Shikoh). Dara Shikoh, who had been the heir apparent to the imperial throne, was badly defeated but escaped death by roaming the country in exile. This same man whose life the Master had earlier saved, again sought his refuge. He dispatched a letter to the Master in which he humbly requested shelter—no longer for his body but for his soul: "The desire to meet God has taken hold of my heart. I now seek an empire from which I needn't depart." Hari Rai replied by blessing him for his wisdom and devotional attitude. When they were able to meet, the exiled son was graced with the gift of Naam. Having spent a short time with Hari Rai and gaining the path to that which he sought, he turned his faith within and went to meet his destiny. His flight was brief; he was captured and put to death. But even as he approached his execution, it is said, he emitted a radiation of calm and showed no signs of pain when death was inflicted upon him.

When Aurangzeb firmly established his power, he felt it to be his God-given duty to destroy all "heathen" religions— either by conversion or by force. Hindu temples and places of worship were razed and often mosques were built in their place. As soon as he heard of Hari Rai, he felt both troubled and angered: not only did this Guru preach a religion distinct from the prophet's, but also he had given aid to Dara Shikoh. However Aurangzeb decided there might be a certain risk in directly confronting the Guru, as

He had a large following and was held in high respect. And yet on the other hand, if the matter were handled carefully, things could work to the emperor's advantage: he need only convert the Guru to Islam and thousands would follow. The emperor toyed with this idea and then set it firmly in his mind: he would take all measures to convert Him but would pardon Him if he performed a miracle. Accordingly, the emperor sent Hari Rai an invitation to the imperial court. However when Hari Rai received it, he declined to go. Their meeting would be of no value, as far as the Master felt, since Aurangzeb had no spiritual longings and Hari Rai desired nothing from him. But not all disciples had the Master's courage; many feared that refusing the emperor would bring his wrath upon them. Counsel was held and it was decided that Hari Rai's eldest son, Ram Rai, could go on the Master's behalf. Aurangzeb was disappointed that the Guru himself did not show up but nonetheless wished to put Ram Rai to the test. It is said that to the emperor's amazement, Ram Rai performed miracles and represented himself well as an authority on religion. The emperor was quickly pleased with both him and his Master's sacred writings. However he one day found a passage in the holy Granth which aroused his anger:

> The Muslim's ashes fall into the kiln.
> Bricks and pitchers are formed from them;
> they scream as they burn.[1]
>
> ASA KI VAR M. I

Aurangzeb summoned Ram Rai and demanded an explanation. Fearing to lose the emperor's favor, Ram Rai told him

1. This hymn as originally written should not be taken as slanderous to Muslims. It simply implies that all—the rich and the poor; the persecuting and the persecuted—must suffer the same fate of death.

that the hymn as he read it was actually a corruption of the Guru's words. He thereupon altered the hymn to make it more pleasing to the emperor, and posed his version as the original. Delhi sikhs reported Ram Rai's disloyalty back to the Master. Saddened but unwilling to compromise the truth, he replied, "Tell my son, he may go where he likes but he is not again to enter within the Guru's presence." His father's words stung deep into Ram Rai's heart—not only for whatever personal affections he felt toward him, but also because he knew the verdict had stolen from him his cherished desire to be respected as the succeeding Guru. Hoping to regain his position, Ram Rai wrote his father requesting a pardon, but his pleas were denied. With this failure, he ironically sought the aid of Dhir Mal—who himself had earlier betrayed Har Gobind and was yet to be the source of antagonism to the ninth Guru. Dhir Mal spoke vehemently on Ram Rai's behalf but the Master's pleasure could not be won through fraudulence and demands and the sole outcome was that Hari Rai quietly moved to another town to avoid further conflict.

Not long afterward, Hari Rai saw his worldly departure approaching. He summoned his younger son to his side and passed the spiritual powers on to him so that the mission of truth and service could continue.

EIGHT

Guru Hari Krishan

(1656-1664)

AT THE AGE of five, Hari Krishan began his divine mission, under the grace of his Master, Hari Rai. Ram Rai received the news with a jealous heart yet hoped that his brother's tender age would provide him an opportunity to usurp the title of Guru. Accordingly, he petitioned the emperor to call his brother to the imperial court. Hari Krishan, however, was admonished by his Master not to be in the emperor's presence and therefore refused to go. Though he was firm in his resolve, several disciples—as had happened with his father—feared the consequences of rejecting the emperor's invitation and pleaded that he reconsider. He stood firm in his decision until someone mentioned that many devout followers lived in Delhi and had a great yearning for the Guru's darshan. While the force of an imperial army left the young Master undaunted, a small amount of love was like a powerful magnet which drew his presence. So with his heart moved to compassion, Hari Krishan began the journey.

On his way to Delhi, he met a learned priest who was filled with the pride of his learning. Noting that such a young boy was called a Guru, the priest challenged him to a debate concerning the Hindu scriptures. Rather than confront him directly, Hari Krishan called an illiterate washerman to his side. He touched the washerman's

shoulder with a stick and said to the priest: "He will speak on my behalf." So profound did this illiterate man's knowledge suddenly become that the priest was overwhelmed with amazement and begged the Master to forgive him for his pride.

When Hari Krishan arrived in Delhi, he was showered with gifts and given another invitation to meet the emperor. The Guru again refused: he had come only for spiritual matters and if the emperor wished political counsel, he could meet with Ram Rai. Moreover, should the emperor confer any favor to Hari Krishan, then his brother would be all the more spiteful and the Master wished to avoid this. When he received his reply, Aurangzeb was surprised that such a young boy could answer so intelligently and courageously; but the emperor did not accept his reply and again requested the Guru's audience. Again the reply was same with the addition of a hymn by Guru Nanak:

If the Master is not in one's heart,
What then is good food or fine dress?
Of what avail is an army, servants or even a palace to dwell in?
O Nanak, All things perish except the Naam.

MAJH KI VAR M. 1

While Hari Krishan was in Delhi, a plague infected the city. With no cares for his own welfare, he worked tirelessly to administer relief to the sick. That he could give to men in need was a source of happiness, but when he could cure one forever, by the spiritual medicine, great indeed was his joy. Even the emperor Aurangzeb was inspired by the boy's wisdom, but his mind could not rest long with deeper spiritual matters as he had a flair for outer displays. Soon he told a raja of his court—who also

held the Guru in high esteem—to put Him to the test: to see if He had supernatural powers. To the Guru's grave disappointment, the raja acted on Aurangzeb's wishes. He invited the Master to meet his head queen but dressed her as a slave woman. Knowing the raja's intentions, Hari Krishan was very reluctant even to meet with the raja; but circumstances arose which made the meeting necessary. He was taken to the palace and passing by many women of royalty, picked the queen out from amongst an assemblage of slaves. Satisfaction came to the minds of all except the Guru. Saddened, but with a stern voice, he spoke: "Guru Nanak extends happiness to those of unwavering faith. He is ever with them, giving His protection; and they who live by His Will, will be loved by God, both here and hereafter. But one whose mind is swayed by doubts, has not yet tasted the fruits of true discipleship; one who thinks himself exalted, must like a high peak, ultimately meet his fall. Devotion is like the rain which does not gather on lofty peaks."

Soon Hari Krishan became very ill with fever and announced that his time of departure had come. His sikhs pleaded with him to remain in the world longer: he was still so very young and moreover who was there who would carry on the spiritual work? He remained composed and reminded them of God's Will. And then he spoke on Death —that all must leave the body someday, and why then should it matter whether one be young or old? To those who had learned to die while yet living, death would come as the greatest joy—for it meant the final reunion with the Beloved Lord. And regarding a successor, there should be no worries as God would always provide for the spiritual welfare of His children. "The seed planted by Guru Nanak's holy hand will abide forever. Droughts, storms and heat may prevail, but that seed shall not perish." A

long period of silence followed and the power in his eyes gave men assurance. "None should weep for me, for I will be ever with you. Seek me in Bakale." And uttering these words, he closed his eyes to the world for the final time.