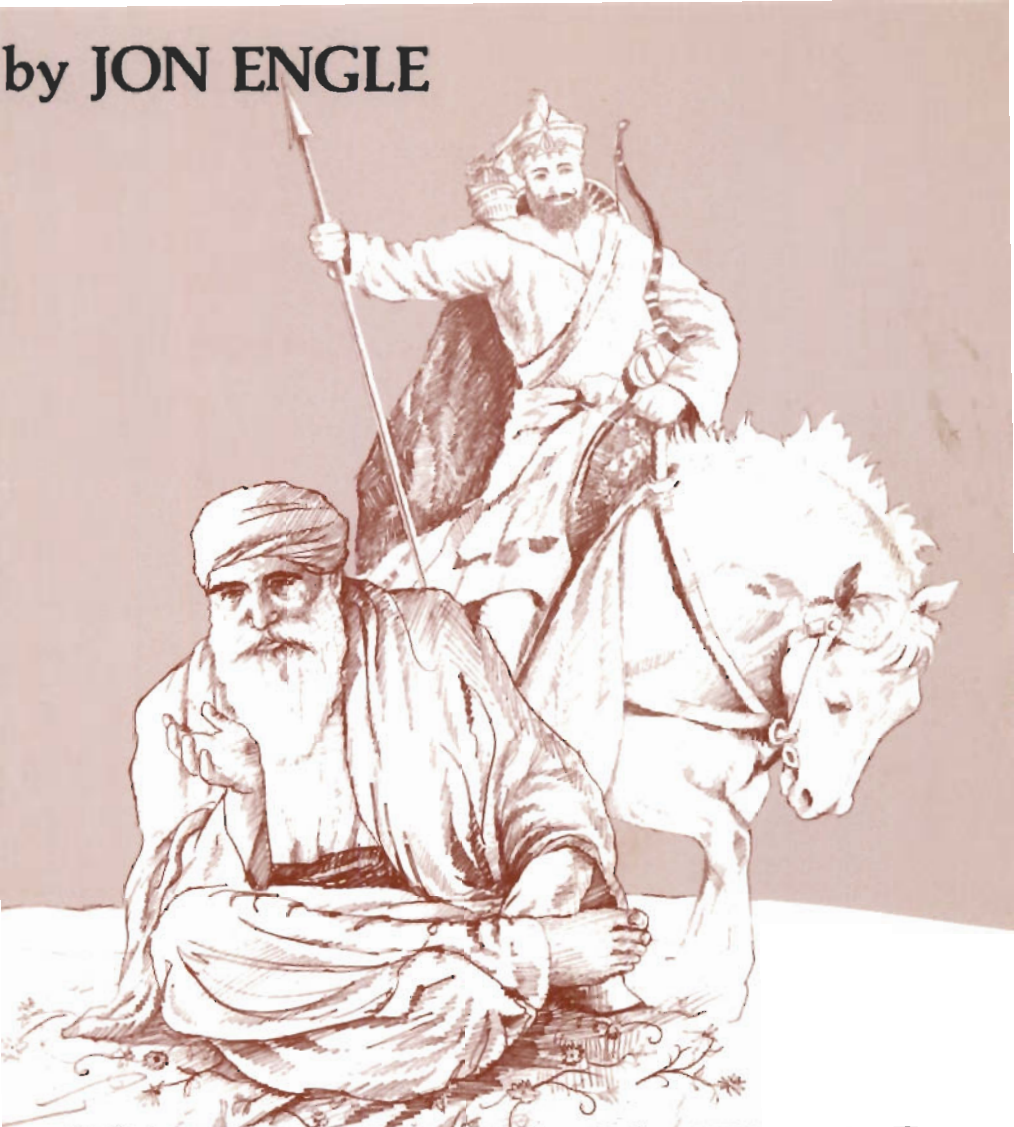
by JON ENGLE



# SERVANTS OF GOD

*Lives of the Ten Sikh Gurus*

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## *Lives of the Ten Sikh Gurus*

by Jon Engle
illustrated by Jonas Gerard

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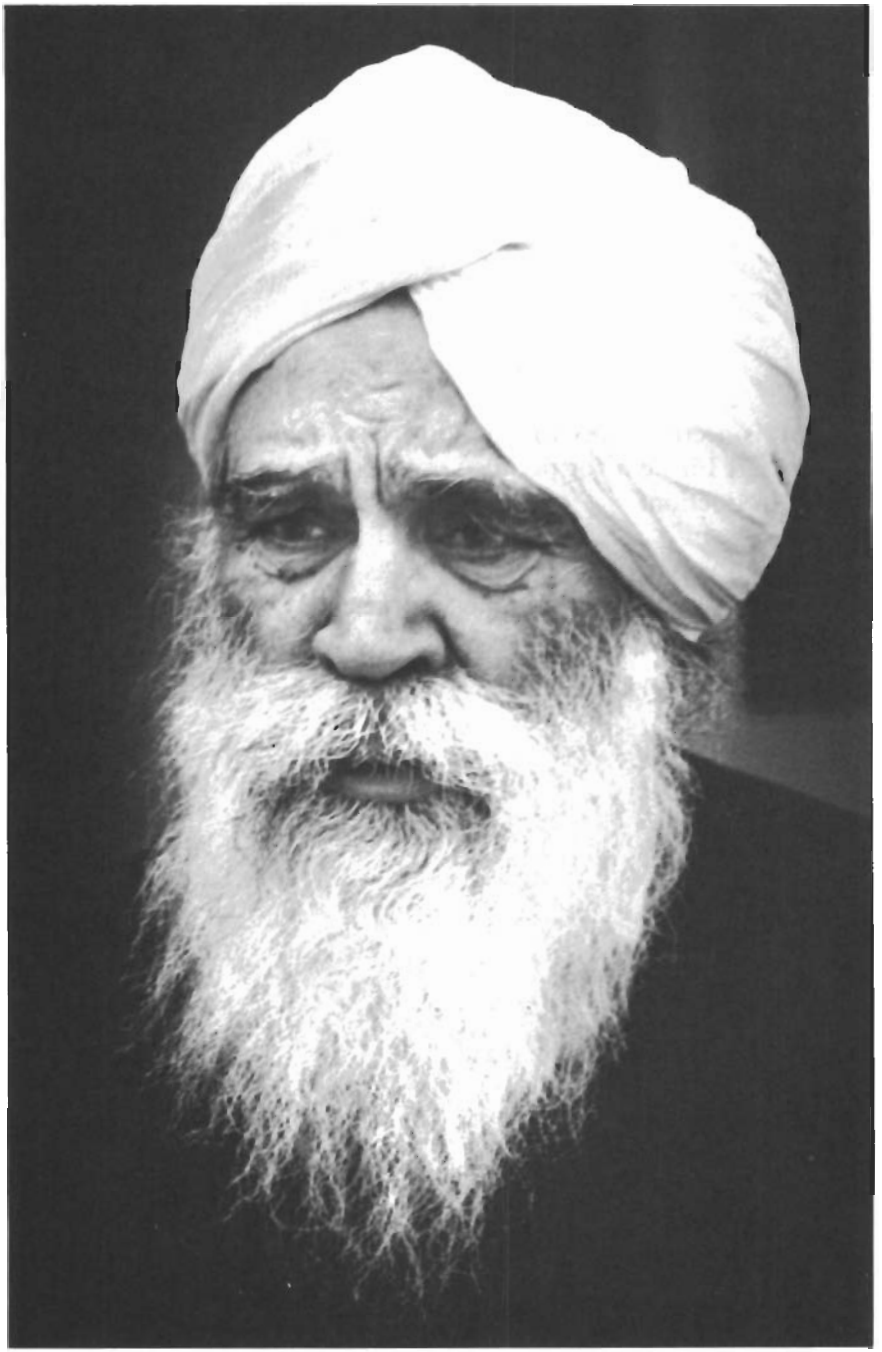

*Dedicated to*
*the Beloved Master*
*Sant Kirpal Singh Ji*

Thou art a King, and I address Thee as an "Elder-man";
Far from doing any honor to Thee, I bring Thee discredit.
GURU ARJAN

# Table of Contents


Preface . . . . . 3
Introduction . . . . . 6
Historical Sketch . . . . . 9
Guru Nanak . . . . . 15
Guru Angad . . . . . 49
Guru Amardas . . . . . 63
Guru Ramdas . . . . . 75
Guru Arjan . . . . . 83
Guru Har Gobind . . . . . 95
Guru Hari Rai . . . . . 111
Guru Hari Krishan . . . . . 117
Guru Teg Bahadur . . . . . 123
Guru Gobind Singh . . . . . 137
The Gurus After the Ten Gurus . . . . . 157
The Sikhs After the Gurus . . . . . 161
Related Persons . . . . . 163
- Bhai Nandlal (Goya) . . . . . 163
- Dhanna . . . . . 165
- Farid . . . . . 167
- Kabir . . . . . 169
- Mardana . . . . . 173
- Namdev . . . . . 174
- Ravidas . . . . . 176
- Sri Chand . . . . . 178
- Other Persons . . . . . 179

Glossary . . . . . 181
Bibliography . . . . . 189

# Preface

For the history of Man to carry a deep significance, it must be more than a record of passing events but rather a history of great deeds which have led men to a higher knowledge. But the history of the Saints lies still deeper than in apparent deeds. It is in the unfoldment and realization of an eternal truth—in the solving of the mystery of life and death—that one passes from "manhood" into "Saint-hood" and merges back into the Perennial Source of Life.

To understand a Saint is to understand His teachings, but it is only to a very rare soul that the full knowledge of such a life is given. Outwardly a Saint may come to live with man at his own level: sharing in his laughter and tears, selflessly helping him in his wants and needs—even taking upon Himself the sufferings of others. Yet all the while, He is reminding man, in gentle and persuasive words, of life's true purpose. But His work only begins here. In a Saint is lodged the whole of spirituality. Through a relentless search for Truth, He has made His will one with the Divine Will; and working as God's instrument, He leads seekers after Truth to what is their hereditary right: Self knowledge and God knowledge. He may make no claims about Himself, but pass all credit on to His own Master and God, yet His greatness is without limits, incomprehensible to us who live at the level of ordinary men.

*Who can sing the praises of the Master? He is the source of Truth.*

*He is eternally unchangeable, the source of all life from age to age.*[1]
*He is at once the Master of Truth and Truth itself.*
*In every age He comes down for the benefit of the devotees.*[2]

Little wonder that those who have come to their Feet declare time and again, "It is a great blessing to have a Living Master!"

This paper is an attempt to give a small insight into the greatness of ten such saints—the Sikh Gurus. Its basis is more moral, spiritual and devotional than academic or historical and therefore certain incidents which scholars may reject as unimportant or mere legend are here included simply to emphasize certain character traits of the Masters or to bring out some moral or spiritual point. Hymns that are included are not necessarily composed with direct reference to the story they are connected with but seemed appropriate or even the best means at hand for expressing the inner feelings of the Masters in their search for God or in their guiding of humanity. The reader who seeks to have a much fuller understanding of their path is referred to the writings of Sant Kirpal Singh (especially *Jap Ji: The Message of Guru Nanak* and *Naam or Word*), and the writings of Sant Ajaib Singh.

As it is now a time when man has explored the outer world almost to its limits and as he has secured for himself countless luxuries and enjoyments but still lacks an inner peace and meaning to life; he would do well—under competent guidance—to seek within himself, the noble Path of

1. As quoted by Kirpal Singh in *Godman*, p. 143.

2. Ibid., p. 145.

Love and Unity; of the "Brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God" which these Masters brought to the humanity at large.

*O Nanak, let us rise up on the Holy Naam and wish,*
*Peace be unto all the world over under Thy Will O Lord.*

JON ENGLE

# Introduction

ALL MASTERS who have come to the earth have brought a simple but universal truth. When they left, due to lack of right understanding, men put much of the truth aside and established their own rituals and customs. These in turn formed what became the "religions," and the Masters were often credited for their beliefs. Thus—particularly in the West—when many began to tire of worshiping an abstract Deity and turned to science, they also turned away from what they associated with religion. However, what the Masters taught has always been a science in itself: an inner science that deals with Life and has formed the substratum of great thinkers in almost all fields of human endeavor. The man who searches deeply into both religion and science—and more important, into himself—does not find the two to be contradictory, but in fact one. In this regard we have the testimony of scientists such as Albert Einstein:

> *(When) the individual feels the nothingness of human desires and aims, and sublimity and marvelous order which reveal themselves both in nature and the world of thought (then) he looks upon the individual existence as a prison of the spirit and wants to experience the universe as a single significant whole . . . The religious geniuses of all ages have been distinguished by this kind of religious feeling, which knows no dogma and no God conceived in man's image . . . We thus arrive at a conception of the relation of science*

*to religion, very different from the usual one . . . I maintain, however, that cosmic religious feeling is the strongest incitement to scientific research.*[1]

The Saints say this separation of man from the universe is caused by our own way of life: our thoughts which make us unable to step beyond the "prison of his individual existence." In Eastern scriptures, it is written that God was One: in an absolute state complete within Himself; but "with one Word of His, this vast creation blossomed into being; And a thousand streams (of life) sprang into existence." Within a world of matter, there were varied forms and colors, yet the power of the Unity remained; save for us who became identified with matter and lost our contact with the Conscious Self, the more the veil of illusion thickened.

*In the realm of relativity we cannot think, speak, or act except by putting one thing in juxtaposition to another. This is the way to understand what is phenomenal . . . Thus by the very nature of things, and by the nature of the cognizing faculties with which nature has endowed us, we live by the knowledge of the parts only and never get a true picture of anything in its totality. Since we have no knowledge and experience of the noumenon, we are contented all the while with forms and colors of the things we see, their attributes and characteristics that may be apparent or on the surface, without penetrating into the depth, the central life-principle which is the self-same in all in spite of the differences in the mass, the density, the volume, the weight, and the shape of what we see and observe . . . We live all the time in the world of shadows as reflected in the reflecting mirror (of mind and intellect) with our back turned even on the objec-*

1. Albert Einstein, "Science and Religion" in *Treasury of Philosophy*: D. Runes, ed.; New York: Philosophical Library, 1935, p. 370.

*tive world around us, what to speak of the subjective world in each of us.*[2]

But from the beginning of the human race, some rare individuals have ever been in search of the knowledge of this subjective world. Of these few searching men, fewer still had the proper guidance and reached their goal . . . Those who did, however, rarely hid this Truth but shared what they had found with the seeking humanity. This was the mission of the Buddha's life; of Plato's; of Christ's and of many other great figures. This also was the primary mission of the ten Sikh Gurus and it was the same message of Truth which they gave out.

2. Kirpal Singh, *Mystery of Death*, Delhi: Ruhani Satsang, 1971, p. 11.

# Historical Sketch

WHEN Guru Nanak came to earth, it was as though some spirit of awakening was being stirred across the world. He appeared in a time of restlessness among men, but a time of search and discovery as well. By the power of this spirit, many figures contemporary to him were lifted to greatness: some in their search for knowledge of the world in which they lived; others for the worlds of knowledge within themselves—what is man; what is life?

So while in Italy Michelangelo passed hard and austere nights, as though withdrawn from the world, in his search to express an inner drive; Nanak too felt these pangs of sleepless nights in his search to unravel the mystery of life and death. Christopher Columbus began his journey to find new sea routes, while a young Indian boy—Amardas—began his very long and demanding quest for Truth. And as Shakespeare was developing one literary masterpiece after another, his Asian equal, Tulsi Das, was writing the praises of Lord Rama; as was Guru Arjan writing and compiling what was to become the Sikh's holy scriptures.

But if it was a time of artistic and spiritual awakening, it was not always the same politically. In India, the northern part of the subcontinent had long been plagued by Muslim invasions. Repeated slaughters had broken the Indian empire into a number of feudal states, and the unjust and

fanatical rule had caused an even deeper harm to the Indian morale. During Nanak's early manhood, Sikandar Lodi ruled; and not unlike many other Muslim rulers, he razed Hindu temples and executed men for their adherence to non-Islamic beliefs. Following in his footsteps came the invasions of Babar (1483-1530)—a descendant from the line of both Timor the Turk and Genghis Khan. But Babar's rule was brief and soon a short period of political enlightenment and justice followed under the rule of his grandson, Akbar the Great (1556-1605). Akbar surrounded himself with wise and holy men and himself sought to establish a universal religion. His profound insight and great sense of justice make him almost unequaled as the leader of an empire. With his death, the imperial dynasty—though yet to gain in affluence, power and land—declined in its wealth of justice, until it was overthrown by the British Empire.

But India's history is not solely of social and political events. A vast wealth of spiritual knowledge has brought this land a great heritage. Most of the world's great religious teachers were born in or had traveled to her lands as were many of the world's great thinkers, both of ancient and modern times, influenced by her saints and seers. Yet strange enough, none of India's spiritual Masters claimed to be the founder of a new way of life or thought. Each—according to his own level of realization—gave out the knowledge of an eternal and unchangeable Truth, which was passed down from generation to generation: sometimes revealed to many, and at other times available only to a rare few.

It was in the eighth century A.D.—when this inner knowledge had dwindled and men had replaced it with empty ceremonies and rituals—that one of the world's greatest

philosophers, Shankara, appeared on the scene in south India. With his penetrating insight, he reconciled scriptural facts which many saw as contradictions; and he proposed a path called *Advaita* or non-dualism. Here he claimed that man's true essence is in his conscious spirit—Atman—and that one came to know it by rising above the limitations of the mind, body and senses. The world of matter has ever been in flux and those who identified themselves with it were under an illusion. It is the Self or Atman alone which remains unaffected, as it is by its nature primal and unchangeable. Thus the goal of knowledge was to know one's Self, and in such a realization see that the Self and God were not different. This knowledge, however, was to be had by a direct experience of the phenomenon and not merely something grasped on the intellectual level. Shankara was a man of highly rarified discriminatory powers which few people in history have shared. What dips into the Beyond he was able to experience were accessible only to a small number of others who followed his ways. Thus time brought another great figure who disputed Shankara's path and advocated a way accessible to the simple as well as the learned: the way of devotion or *Bhakti Marg*. This man was Ramanuja. His compassion, open-mindedness and wisdom drew large followings to his side but he did not comprehend the full import of Shankara's message. He believed that while the soul could, by devotion, become saturated with the divinity, it could not become one with it.[1]

Other Saintly figures appeared, such as Chaitanya, and Madhva, who also spread the way of *Bhakti Marg*. Some time after Ramanuja, there appeared in northern India one Ramananda. He is usually linked with Ramanuja but he

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Crown of Life,* pp. 123 and 140.

speaks of an inner path about which Ramanuja had little or no knowledge. He was the guru of many great saints including Kabir[2], Ravidas and Dhanna. It was through such men as these—and especially Kabir—that the secrets of the inner path—Surat Shabd Yoga—were brought into the forefront. In an age of social injustice and religious darkness, it was Kabir who proclaimed that the God of the Hindus and the God of the Muslims was one and the same; and that men, being born of that same Light, were all equal. With the simplicity of Ramanuja, he spoke of a path wherein the individual should see God for himself; and seeing, become one with Him.

Kabir was contemporary to Guru Nanak for several years and may very well have been his spiritual guide.[3] Regardless of this, the two—as well as Nanak's successors—gave out the same message of an unchanging Truth. They declared that the Absolute state of God (Anaam) expressed Itself—becoming Naam—in the form of Light and Sound. They clearly stated that the Naam was not to be confused with outer forms of worship—singing hymns, reciting scriptures or even the pranic rhythms. It is the power of life immanent in every form and the All-conscious force guiding and directing the entire creation.

> *Naam is the life-principle in all that lives.*
> *Naam is the foundation stone of the Cosmos with its divisions.*

2. According to the Masters, Kabir came into the world already perfected, but for the sake of form, took on a Guru, Ramananda.

3. While the Sikhs generally do not accept the theory that Kabir was the Guru of Guru Nanak, historical evidence appears to indicate that it was so. Compare G. H. Wescott, *Kabir and the Kabir Path,* pp. 1-2, and Ahmad Shah, *The Bijak of Kabir,* pp. 33-34.

*Naam is the Manifestor of all forms.*
*Naam is the substrata of all regions.*
*Naam is the liberator from all bondage.*

*GAURI M.5.*[4]

As man is also a conscious being, he is of the same essence as Naam and can thus return to God by rising above personal limitations and communing with this God-into-Expression Power (Naam). This they said was the highest aim before man and could be had under the guidance and care of a competent Master who himself was one with God.

*There is One Reality, the Unmanifest-Manifested;*
*Ever-Existent, He is Naam (Conscious Spirit)*
*The Creator; pervading all;*
*Without fear; without enmity;*
*The Timeless; the Unborn and the Self-existent;*
*Complete within Itself.*
*Through the favor of His true Servant, the Guru,*
*He may be realized.*
*He was when there was nothing;*
*He was before all ages began;*
*He existeth now, O Nanak,*
*And shall exist forevermore.*[5]

4. Guru Arjan as quoted by Kirpal Singh, *Naam or Word,* p. 23.
5. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji,* p. 87.

ONE

# Guru Nanak

(1469-1539)

*Guru Nanak is not the sole monopoly of the Sikhs nor of India alone. He belongs to the glory of one God, one brotherhood, one law, the law of human fellowship and love. . . . He came to announce the ancient truth in the common man's language . . . and to show that one flame of love shone in all temples and shrines and sacraments of man.*[1]

IT WAS the fifteenth century when Guru Nanak was born and by this time an ancient prophecy had proven true: a dark age—the Kali Yug—had arisen and though the Brahmins (priest class) remained, they had lost the knowledge of Brahm (God). The ignorant led the masses and the vast majority of those who sought the inner knowledge were lost in a bewildering plight.

*This Kali Yug is like a sword, the kings are like butchers;*
*And Dharma has taken wings and vanished.*
*Falsehood is rampant over the land as a thick veil of darkness*
*Hiding the face of the moon of Truth.*
*Saith Nanak, In this Dark Age, where is the Path of Salvation?*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 5[2]

1. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji,* p. 127.
2. The writings of the Sikh Gurus are contained in two volumes: the *Guru Granth Sahib* and the *Dasm Granth.* The former of these contains

But a cry of anguish cannot go unheeded. Where there is suffering there is also compassion, and God then seeks a place to manifest Himself to guide the child humanity. It was one Baba Nanak—whose heart was pure enough; whose entire life was dedicated to the knowledge of Truth—who became this chosen human pole; born to revive the eternal message of the one God. In a terrible age of darkness, he offered the way out:

*In this Kali Yug, the Word of God is the world's Light.*
*But only a rare one swims across, through the Guru.*
*On whom He casts His glance of grace, to him is given the Holy Word.*

the hymns of Guru Nanak, Angad, Amardas, Ramdas, Arjan, Teg Bahadur and one couplet of Gobind Singh; as well as the writings of other saints (the Bhagats): Kabir, Farid, Namdev, Ravidas, Dhanna, Beni, Sain, Jaidev, Bhika, Pipa, Ramanand, Sadna, Surdas and Trilochan; and fifteen Bhatts or devotees of the Gurus.

After the four main devotional prayers: The Jap Ji (The Morning Prayer); So Daru (First hymn of the evening prayers); So Purkhu; Sohila (the day's final prayer, before retiring to rest); the writings of the Granth are arranged according to different melodies or *Ragas*. Within each particular raga, the hymns are arranged according to meter: Shabds, Astpadis, Chants, Vars, etc. Then within each meter, hymns are arranged according to chronology of the writer (i.e., Guru Nanak's hymns would precede Angad's, etc.).

The Sikh Gurus' names are not affixed to their own hymns: all write under the name "Nanak" (of all poets other than the Gurus, Mardana is the only one who writes under the name of Nanak). However, preceding each hymn is written '*Mahala*" (or M.) followed by a numeral which identifies its author. (i.e., M.I. means the first Guru, Nanak; M. II, the second, Guru Angad, etc.) The hymns of the Bhagats and the Bhatts are simply identified by their names.

The second volume of sacred writings, *The Dasm Granth*, contains only the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh.

*And that man, O Nanak, receiveth the jewel of the Lord's Naam.*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 3

## II

It was in the Indian month of Baisakh (April-May)[3] that a first son was born to Mata Tripta and Mehta Kalu—the latter, an accountant of the village of Talwandi. The boy was named "Nanak" after his sister, Nanaki. He at once became his father's pride; a son who would fulfill his cherished hopes and attain greatness in the world. Then astonishing reports came about the infant and Mehta Kalu's heart was all the more gladdened. The mid-wife spoke of voices that seemed to sing from within a heavenly music announcing the child's birth, and then, not with tears did he enter the world but with a composed smile and the laughter of a wise man. When the family astrologer, Hardial, appeared, yet greater omens manifested. Hardial saw the child wrapped in a great halo of light and prostrated himself at what he saw. He had no need of consulting his books to foretell the child's destiny: he would become a king among kings—the bearer of the Divine Treasure.

As he became a little older, Nanak continued to show unusual signs. From his first years, he was gripped by an inner power: the mystery of life and death had taken possession of his heart and left him without rest. To the conster-

3. Among Sikh scholars, there is some controversy as to the actual time of Guru Nanak's birth. Some say he was born in Kartik (October-November) while others say Baisakh (April-May). An entire book was written on the subject and most thorough studies indicate that he was born in Baisakh (despite the fact that his birthday is now celebrated in November). However, Hari Ram Gupta shows evidence that the time of his spiritual awakening—his "true birthday"—was probably around the fall months—Kartik. See Hari Ram Gupta, *History of Sikh Gurus*, pp. 34-36.

nation of his parents, he spent many a sleepless night in silent prayer to uncover life's hidden meaning. One stormy summer night as he sat in prayer, his mother entreated him to take some rest. "My child, it is dark and late. Other boys your age are comfortably resting. You should also come in now to sleep." Her words were interrupted by the call of the cuckoo bird[4] and Nanak replied: "Mother, my rival is awake. How then can I sleep?"

Like one drawn by some mysterious force, he rarely sought the companionship of his peers or passed his time in idle amusements. Rather he was wont to spend the hours enwrapped in the depths of meditation or sitting quietly, reposed in the silence of nature. His innate love of solitude was put aside for little save the company of the holy. And whatever his parents gave him, he would give to the poor or to wandering yogis and sadhus.

At an early age, he had won the hearts of nearly all by his strong religious inclinations; but to his own family, he became a cause of grave discomfort. When he saw his son taking no interest in worldly affairs, Mehta Kalu lost faith in the auspicious signs of his birth. Time and again, he would try to break Nanak of his unworldly habits, but even in his youth, Nanak's saintly determination was unshakable.

At the age of five, Nanak was sent to school. He exhibited a remarkable precocity and seemed to know the ancient languages and texts as though they were already a part of him. Yet his behavior aroused curiosity from his teacher; Nanak would often sit quietly, as though withdrawn from the outside commotions, and when his attention returned to

4. The repeated cry of the Indian cuckoo, "Pee-ah, Pee-ah" sounds like the Hindi word for "Beloved." Here Nanak calls the cuckoo his rival because it is passing the night without sleep calling for its beloved.

outer consciousness, a radiant joy shone from his face. Or at other times, amid the commotions of his playmates, the child saint would stand apart; silently and with a deep sense of compassion, his eyes brimmed with tears as he reflected on the sufferings which men unknowingly brought upon themselves. And yet with his profound sense of independence and detachment, Nanak as a child—and throughout his life—was free from the severe, almost inhumane, qualities of one of rigid dogma or asceticism: he was cheerful and overflowed with love and respect for life.

During his studies, his class was given the alphabet to learn. All others quickly jotted down the letters, but Nanak, without looking up, continued writing diligently. Wondering what Nanak was doing, the teacher walked over to inspect his work. It is said that amazement filled the teacher's eyes and he could not help but bow his head before his own pupil: for to each letter, Nanak had written a hymn expounding upon the Mystery of God. When he looked up at his teacher, Nanak advised him that true knowledge is in having the love of God and without His love, cartloads of books would be of no avail. So impressed was the tutor, that he took Nanak to Mehta Kalu and told him that it was not for another to guide him who had come for the guidance of humanity.

A year later, Nanak was taken to the village mosque to learn Arabic. Again within an astonishingly short time, he mastered all the lessons the priest could give him, and again his teacher beheld this child wonder in awe: "By Thy grace O Lord, has this boy mastered in days what takes others years!" Nanak thus learned to speak to the Muslims of their religion in their own language and to the Hindus in theirs—just as he spoke to the simple man in the common man's words or to the learned, giving references from a great

variety of religious texts—and all listened to the young boy with deep attention. To the Hindus, he was a child saint, and to Muslims, a messenger of God.

In spite of the saintly reputation his son had gained, Mehta Kalu wished to see him wise only in a worldly way and to expose him to the responsibilities of the world. Accordingly Nanak was given a herd of cattle to tend. During these days, many strange incidents came to light. As the young saint's mind was not with this chore, he would let the cattle roam as they pleased while he studied the scriptures or passed the hours in meditation. One day as he was absorbed in prayer, the shade from the tree passed behind him and the sun's light struck his face. Seeing this and drawn by the power that radiated from him, a cobra drew near and raised its hood to provide him shade. The time passed and the serpent remained within the peaceful aura. Only when a passerby feared for Nanak's safety and galloped to his side did the cobra slip away. Another time, as Nanak sat in meditation, his cattle wandered into a nearby field and destroyed its crop. When the farmer saw this and Nanak's negligence, he dragged Nanak to Mehta Kalu and demanded financial compensation. Along with the village proprietor, the farmer's field was inspected to ascertain the loss. When they arrived at the scene, all were amazed to find it more plentiful than it had been before. As word of these and other similar occurrences spread throughout the village, even the wise could not help but look upon the young Nanak with a feeling of awe and reverence. Yet this feeling never came from within Nanak's own household.

So while his fervent search for that knowledge which all scriptures spoke of incensed his father; Nanak was yet urged to perform the Hindu ceremony for his confirmation (*Upanayana*). Here the children were said to be made

"twice born"; they were given a sacrificial thread to wear around them and a sacred mantra (chant) which spoke of beholding the light of the sun within. But how could he who was to be the manifestation of that sun's Light be part of an empty ritual? So as the Brahmin went to place the thread around the boy's neck, Nanak refused to allow him. "What is the use of a mere piece of cotton thread that will tear even in this life and helps no one in the Beyond? And where is the good that you say it confers when men who deem themselves 'twice-born' by this string, commit the foulest deeds?" The assembly was aroused to indignation by such behavior at a holy gathering. But unmoved by their feelings, Nanak composed the following hymn:

*With mercy as thy cotton*
*Make the thread of contentment*
*Upon it, tie the knot of continence*
*And give it the twist of Truth.*
*Such a thread as this, O Pandit, may thou put around my neck.*
*This thread will not break, get stained, be burnt or lost.*
*Blessed is the man, O Nanak, who wears this sacred thread.*

RAG ASA DI VAR M. 1

These words soothed the Brahmin's anger, perhaps even opened his eyes to something more profound: how his religion had degenerated to empty rituals and how even its leaders were truly "threadless" ones.

Despite Nanak's having won the respect of so many of the learned, his father still believed him to be indolent—perhaps even mad. He was forever bent on breaking his son of his unworldly ways and continued to goad him towards conformity. Each time he failed, Mehta Kalu became all the

more outraged but all the more intent. Thinking Nanak incapable of the farming duties, the father had yet another scheme.

He gave Nanak a sum of money and requested him to invest it wisely. He felt that surely once Nanak began handling money in his own hands, he would realize its importance. Obediently and with all good intentions of pleasing his father, the child set out with the money to a neighboring town. On the way, he met a group of renunciates who were emaciated and possessed only a sincere desire to find God. Knowing of no better investment than the feeding of the holy, Nanak gave away the money. When word of this reached Mehta Kalu, his rage knew no limits. He scolded Nanak for his mindlessness, for his inability to make any considerations for his future. To his father's anger, Nanak replied calmly, "Father, you are growing old but have made no plans to meet your death." . . . but his words fell on deaf ears and he was beaten till colored with bruises.

*O Lord, tell me who is my father and who my mother*
*And from whence I have come.*

*I who am but a poor fish in Thy vast sea.*
*How can I know Thee and reach to Thy shore?*
*But pulled from Thy water, I writhe in separation.*
*In my agony, I call upon Thee for help.*

GAURI & SRI RAG M. 1.

Nanak would now spend days together absorbed in meditation. He would neither eat nor speak with anyone. Each day worried his parents more until finally they sent for a doctor. However Nanak politely dismissed him: "My sickness is not of my body but of separation from God which makes me pine and waste away. And it is from the eye of death that I see constantly over my head. God Himself has

given me this disease and He alone will cure me of it."

Thus Mehta Kalu began to see that no one could help his son: neither could the doctor cure him nor the wise change him. But he felt certain that if only Nanak would get properly involved in worldly affairs, it would pass that not only his son be all the better for it, but Mehta Kalu himself would thus be relieved of the shame which the boy's strange behavior caused him. To Mehta Kalu's encouragement, Nanaki offered to make suitable arrangements for her brother. Her husband got him a job as a keeper in a small grain store, and Nanaki further arranged for his marriage. His family was at last well-pleased for Nanak had proven himself a competent store keeper. Though he still enjoyed his spiritual practices and the company of the holy, yet he managed the store responsibly and with a rare honesty. Further his straightforward and friendly nature drew him ample respect. As a family man, he had become the father of one son Sri Chand, and was the expectant father of another. But amidst the worldly affairs, his heart was attached to God. Then one day while Nanak was busy at his work, a faqir entered the shop, straightway walked up to Nanak and declared: "We have not come into the world for this." He then promptly walked out of the store. The fire that had burned in Nanak's heart was again set ablaze. Later in that same day, he was weighing off grain for a customer, counting the pounds as he loaded it on the scale. When he reached the number "tera"—which in Punjabi means thirteen but also "Thine"—he went into a state of Divine intoxication over and again repeating the words "Tera, Tera" ("I am Thine O Lord; I am Thine") and continued heaping more and more wheat onto the customer's load. When word of this reached the store owner, he rushed to reprimand Nanak and to ascertain his loss, but God has

mysterious ways and cares for those who put their cares in Him. It then turned out that rather than having squandered any of the store's money, a large sum was due to him. The store keeper apologized and asked Nanak to stay on with his work; but he replied that it was now time for him to attend to his true business: the realization of God.

## III

*O Lord! No longer can I live in this separation*
*The night of remembrance and waiting for Thee is past,*
*Thou knowest how my soul thirsts for Thee and how my heart aches*
*Please come and save me now.*

GURU NANAK

One morning Nanak left for the Ravi River, at whose banks he sat lost in meditation. It is said that he attained to his supreme realization here and saw what his worldly mission was to be: to serve the poor and needy, dedicate himself to the Name of God (Sat Naam) and bring men nearer to God.

For three days he remained within a glorious vision, and on the fourth he broke his silence, declaring, "There is neither Hindu nor Muslim." This simple message spread through the town and left people in bewilderment. When the town qazis (Muslim priests) heard it, they approached Nanak and asked him its meaning. They received no reply; but both curious and offended, they invited him to pray with them: to prove they were indeed Muslims. Nanak accepted and entered the Mosque with them. When all others knelt for prayer, Nanak remained standing. The prayers finished and the qazis lept up in outrage that a Hindu should pay such disrespect to their religious practices. Nanak replied: "You were not praying but thinking of your

mare who had just given birth." And then referring to the qazi beside him, he added, "And you were in Kabul buying horses." Both men were ashamed; they bowed their heads admitting that Nanak had spoken the truth. Now they further questioned him as to who he was and Nanak replied: "If I say I am a Hindu, you will kill me, and Muslim I am not. I am a puppet made up of five elements in which something invisible plays. That something invisible is what I am."

"What is true religion? How can one live by it?" pressed the qazis. Nanak replied in verse:

*Make mercy thy mosque*
*Faith, thy prayer mat*
*And righteous life, thy Koran.*
*Make modesty, thy circumcision*
*And piety thy fasts.*
*In this way wouldst thou become a true Muslim.*

*Right deeds are the Kaaba*[5]
*And the True Pir,*[6] *the Kalma.*[7]
*And to live in His Will, thy rosary*
*Saith Nanak, Such a Muslim will the Lord preserve.*

RAG MAGH KI VAR M. 1

Leaving the qazis, Nanak gave away most of his possessions and left for a secluded place just outside of Sultanpur. With his faithful disciple, Mardana, he awaited the inner command which was to start him on the first of a series of long

5. Kaaba—a place of pilgrimage to Muslims, considered to be the house of God. See Glossary.

6. Pir—a spiritual guide. Same as guru.

7. Kalma—lit. Word. A holy recitation, proclaiming "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger (Rasul)." See Glossary.

travels to remote and strange lands. During his stay in Sultanpur, a second son was born to him—Lakhmi Das. The birth was a final prompting for his family to dissuade him from his renunciation. Each for his own reason remonstrated with the Guru for renouncing his worldly ties: as a family man he was told it was his duty to maintain his household; as a son, he should not forget his parents; and as a husband, how could he leave his wife and children? When all had finished their words, he replied in a tone bespeaking his heart—unshakably strong but gentle and filled with understanding: "All humanity is my family, and the Lord overhead is our one Father. I leave you all in the care of Him who cares for us all. The world is in the grip of deadly flames and I go to extinguish the invisible flames which envelop all mankind." As though mesmerized by the music of his voice, each one silently acceded and stepped back.

Then, knowing the burden of what his wife had yet to face, he gazed upon her with eyes that could hold the sorrows of the world and placed his hand upon her head. "Your love has been great, Sulakni, and great too is the sacrifice you must make; but be rest assured that He whose work I do shall reward you greater still."

Finally the Master turned to his sister, who all the while looked on silently, holding back the tears in her eyes. She had long since ceased to consider her brother as merely another man but saw him as a divine incarnation. "Nanaki, that love and devotion is the greatest in which one asks nothing for himself but remains silently content in the Will of the Lord. Know that I am forever residing with you and when you turn your attention within, there will you find me. But many are my sisters in this world who suffer pain and I am called forth to go." He then blessed them all and took his leave.

## IV

*There are lowly amongst the noble*
*And pure amongst the low.*
*The former shouldst thou avoid*
*And be like dust under the feet of the latter.*

GURU NANAK

Nanak began his travels within the Punjab area, after which he went eastward, preaching at places of Hindu worship: notably Hardwar, Benares, and Patna; and he traveled as far as the delta of the Ganges at Dacca and Assam. When he came to the village of Saidpur (now Eminabad in the Punjab), he saw a poor carpenter busy at work.

"What dost thou do, Lalo?" the Master asked.

"I am busy at my repairs," replied the carpenter without looking up.

"Come. I shall give thee better work than this, that thou mayest repair thy heart to contain the Lord."

Looking up, Lalo saw the holy figure before him; spontaneously he fell at His feet. A mere touch and a glance were enough to transform his simple heart to that of a devout disciple. Drawn by Lalo's devotion and simplicity, Nanak remained with him for several days.

Quickly the word spread that a holy man was staying with the carpenter Lalo, and many came there for his Godly counsel. But when one Malik Bhago, a high official of the army, invited Nanak to a religious feast and the Master refused, scandalous reports were spread against him. Bhago himself sought Nanak out and demanded an explanation: why had he refused the Malik's feast and instead partaken of food from a low caste carpenter? But the Guru, who had renounced all idea of castes except the "caste of God," replied: "That man is holy who loves the Lord and earns his

livelihood by the sweat of his brow. Lalo's food is coarse and plain but earned by honest means and cooked in the remembrance of God—and such food is pure and peace-giving. But your wealth, Bhago, has been gained by extorting the poor, and to partake of it breeds a restless mind and evil passions. Lalo's food is sweet like honey but yours reeks of blood."

Nanak then took a loaf of the Malik's bread in one hand and a loaf of Lalo's in the other. As he squeezed Lalo's, drops of milk fell to the ground; but when he squeezed the Malik's, blood oozed out of it.[8] It is said that Bhago then repented his past and sought the Guru's forgiveness, and thereafter sought to live a life of devotion to the Lord.

Beckoned on by the Divine Will, Nanak left Saidpur, to the deep anguish of his disciple Lalo. Enroute to Tulamba, he came across one Sajjan, who posed as a wealthy man of God and offered hospitality to tired wayfarers. As they took to sleep, he would empty their purses and cut their throats. When Nanak and Mardana passed by, Sajjan mistook them for rich travelers and offered them the accommodations of his house; and with darkness, a place to

8. Guru Nanak claimed, "I have no miracles except Naam." Because of this statement, many modern historians reason that any miracles associated with him are inconsistent with his own words. Therefore they discredit them as inventions of overzealous Sikh historians (of which there are unfortunately many).

However, God-realized men understand nature's higher laws, many of which appear as miracles to people living wholely within the laws of this world.

If at all there are miracles to a Saint, they occur when the soul is reconnected with the Oversoul, God, through the Power of Naam. Moreover, Saints do not use these "occult powers" for any personal gains (as many yogis or others may do): to attract attention, gather a following or whatever other reasons one may have. However, they may use them in some rare instances for the sake of a devotee; to change a man's heart

sleep. Nanak accepted, but perceiving his host's intentions, first requested to sing a hymn:

*Behold the luster of the bronze—but rub it and*
*your hands are blackened*
*Wash them but the impurities remain.*
*They are true friends*[9] *who always abide at one's side*
*and are ever prepared to account for their deeds.*
*Temples arrayed in pomp but hollow within*
*are but a disguise to deceive the world.*
*Mansions too may dazzle the beholder*
*but all things pass away.*
*White herons stand silently as though in prayer at*
*places of pilgrimage*
*But behind their appearance they await the*
*chance to devour living things.*
*Who can call them 'white'?*
*This body is like a tree whose fruit is useless*
*but men beholding it, mistake it.*
*A blind man carries a burden on a long mountainous*
*way*
*He seeks eyes, which he cannot find; how shall he*
*rise up and reach his journey's end?*

toward God, or other reasons, unbeknown to us. But they act in accordance with God's Will, and not by exertions of their own powers. Ordinary men may praise them for working miracles but they themselves take these powers as they take all other worldly things—passing displays. Therefore, they not only avoid using them when possible, but strictly enjoin their disciples who are yet on the way to avoid them at all costs as they are fraught with dangers.

Further, "miracles" upset a balance in Nature's plan and this balance must somehow be restored. Whoever has been around a true Saint feels the deep pain of seeing Him take upon Himself great suffering to lighten the burden of His "children." But moved by disciples' sufferings or by their love and devotion, He will sacrifice His own well-being for their sake.

9. The word *Sajjan* implies a true friend.

*Of what avail are services, cleverness and virtues?*
*O Nanak, contemplate the Naam, so thou may be released from thy bondage.*

SUHI M. 1

Hearing these words, Sajjan was stung to the depths of his life. In this holy presence, he began to tremble from head to foot, as the full weight of his sins came before his vision. His tears became as washings on the Master's feet—which he clung tenaciously to, while he sobbed in repentance. His deceit and treachery were exposed, yet he felt a great love and forgiveness there also. When he looked up, Sajjan folded his hands and confessed all that he had done. "In the Name of God, distribute your wealth to the poor and holy," Nanak told him. "Leave off the evil ways of your past and devote yourself to the service of God and humanity."

In the presence of a holy man, life abounds with miracles; but the greatest of them all is the spark which kindles the Divine Love; and in Sajjan, such a miracle was worked through the Master's grace. He not only distributed his ill-gained wealth, but also destroyed his palace in which countless murders had been committed, and built for himself a small hut in its place. He then constructed a house for meditation and prayer, which was to become the first Gurdwara. But above all else, he was blessed with the treasure of Naam.

Nanak continued his travels and eventually arrived at Hardwar, a place of Hindu sanctity. Here, as in many places yet to come, he found men who, though seeking righteousness and God, followed fruitless paths. With the fullness of compassion, he came to awaken them from their spiritual slumber. The day was just breaking as he approached the banks of the Ganges and there several pilgrims

were offering water to the rising sun. He questioned them about their actions and they replied that they were offering this sacred water to their ancestors in the 'land of the sun.' Nanak walked down to the river bank and began throwing water to the west. They in turn questioned him concerning his offering. "I am watering my fields in the Punjab." The pilgrims broke into mock laughter: "Your water falls into the Ganga itself. How can it reach your fields in a faraway land?" The Master replied, "You claim your water can reach the world of the dead; why is it foolish to believe that mine can reach a corner of this world?" At this all were silenced. And then stepping onto dry land, the Guru instructed the men thus: "Your offerings of water, food or money cannot reach your departed ancestors. Rather they stay in the hands of him to whom you give them. Do not be misled by false counsel nor follow another's words blindly. Each man receives the fruits of his own actions—as did your ancestors in the past, so do you now. Thus one who lives a life of high character and self restraint will find happiness both here and hereafter."

Later at Hardwar, under the pretense of needing firewood, Nanak walked within the sacred lines of a Brahmin's cooking square. This was considered a bold sacrilege and the Brahmin was outraged. He shouted at the Master for entering his sacred area and thus defiling his food. "Your kitchen was already made impure," the Guru replied. "Of what avail were your lines?" "An evil mind is like a scavenger; cruelty, a butcher. Slander is a sweeper, and anger, a jester.[10] While these four are seated within one, he is yet of

10. People of lower castes were believed by orthodox Hindus to pollute the atmosphere of the kitchen and the food that was cooked in it. Therefore many Hindus would draw lines around their cooking areas, allowing no one to enter within them.

the lower caste. Only by a pure heart, a noble character, and the loving remembrance of God, does one's touch become pure."

From Hardwar, the Guru proceeded to Gorakhmata (renamed Nanakmata after his visit there) and on to Benares, Patna, Ayodhya, Gaya and then into Assam and Dacca. From Dacca, he went on to Puri where he met the God-intoxicated Vaishnava, Chaitanya (who is well-known for his chanting of "Hari Bole") and his chief devotees. The two spent some days together singing the praises of God before Nanak resumed his travels.

By now, Mardana was exhausted by the demands of travel and requested that they return to the Punjab. His wish was granted, but first the two met with Sheik Ibrahim—the twelfth successor to Farid, a famous Sufi Master. The great Sheik bowed humbly when he met Guru Nanak, and the words "Thou art Allah" poured involuntarily from his lips. Nanak replied, "Allah is only the aim of my life, O Farid! Allah is the very essence of my being." Ibrahim gave Nanak Farid's writings, which were later to be incorporated into the Sikh holy scripture. Here also Nanak founded the city of Kartarpur. (*lit.* The Abode of the Creator Lord) where he built a house and settled his family. But his rest was short as the world's confusion called for a place of refuge. In response, he gain set out to fulfill the Divine Orders. This time he headed to the south, as far as Ceylon.

These travels were to lead Nanak into strange lands, where he met people of diverse ways and varying powers. Though warned repeatedly of great dangers, Nanak disregarded them. Wherever there was the yearning of love and devotion, or where there was suffering that cried for relief, he responded as a messenger of the Divine Will, without allowing the smallest thought of self to interfere:

"He who has sent me forth, shall also provide for me." Here he saw people blinded by their own powers, by their worldly charms or wealth or by their own selfish motives. But he remained ever of steady mind. And each time, the dim glow of the ephemeral dwindled before the Sun of Divinity and the miracles of witchery and yoga became insipid within its light.

On the final leg of this journey, Nanak met with a wealthy banker named Dhuni Chand. Dhuni Chand invited the Guru to attend a ritual where he offered homage to his deceased father. Nanak however discouraged such performances as they had become a source of livelihood for priests but incurred none of the supposed benefits. The following night Dhuni Chand had a vision which confirmed the Guru's words. After this, he sought the Guru's company more closely and would listen carefully to his discourses. One day he approached Nanak—perhaps with a tint of pride over his vast wealth—and asked him to accept some favor. The Master handed a small pin to Dhuni Chand and said, "When we meet again in the Beyond, please return this pin to me."

"How can that be done? Who can take anything along with himself when he dies?"

"Then what do you gain by a treasure, not one cent of which you can take along with you?"

Dhuni Chand was stunned by these words: his whole life had been spent in amassing a fortune, and once gained, he had dwelt constantly upon it.

"The Lord's Name—which is within you—is the only profit that benefits you both here and hereafter," Nanak continued. "The Guru can give you some capital—spiritual capital—to start with and that can be developed from day to day. The disciple need only follow the Master's injunc-

tions and he will reap the true profit of life which will never fail him." Shortly thereafter, Dhuni Chand was initiated into the mysteries of the Panch Shabda. He worked hard to cultivate this Divine gift and distributed much of his wealth in the service of the holy, the poor and the needy.

After these long travels, Nanak again retraced his footsteps to the Punjab. Nanaki, his sister, was told of his homecoming in her meditations and left her house in Sultanpur to see him in Talwandi. She was the first to see him coming but respectfully waited in the background as others rushed forward to greet him. Mehta Kalu was the first to meet him—and joy filled the heart of the father who again saw his son. Nanak bowed low to his feet and then bowed before his mother. Tears rolled down from Tripta's eyes as she embraced her son. Only when called for did Nanaki come forward—and then not to meet her brother but to meet her most dearly beloved Guru. She bowed down to touch his feet but Nanak would not allow this. He picked her up and embraced her with a warm, loving caress.

News spread of the Guru's arrival and many came to receive his darshan and to hear his holy words. For Mehta Kalu, however, while the animosities of earlier years had faded, the idea of his son's divinity could not penetrate into his heart. Thus he continued to speak to him concerning future responsibilities: Had he not traveled enough now? Was he not now ready to take over the cares of the household? And was it not a parent's due right to have some claim on his child? Such were among the many questions he put to Nanak when alone with him and his wife Tripta.

"I am but a poor servant to the Lord," Nanak replied. "Mine is simply to live within His Will." The Guru then sat silent for some moments and looked deeply into their eyes. He became ablaze with Light; and when he now spoke, his

parents no longer heard the voice of their son but of a divine personage whose words brought solace and awakening. "There is One God who pervades His creation as Conscious Spirit (Naam). He is the Light that is everywhere and is found deep within ourselves. Those who turn to Him find Divine beatitude. Others wander lost in the torments of worldliness. In the veil of egoism, man runs blindly after sense pleasures and evil desires though they never bring fulfillment. In contacting the Naam, the mind is brought to rest and the curtain of darkness is rent asunder. Only then does the inner man find peace."

After much silence, Tripta finally spoke. "Under our delusion, we tried to hold you within the bounds of filial attachment. Why didn't you show us earlier your heavenly mission?" But Nanak remained silent.

A few days later, the Guru began his third journey which took him north: through the Himalayas into Nepal and Tibet. In the mountains and foothills, he gathered yogis from their hermitages and preached to them of the vanity of their performing miracles; of the needlessness of their total isolation and the wasted efforts of their outer and symbolic worship.

When they asked Nanak how the world below fared, he spoke of a pitiable condition and condemned these renunciates for living on the alms of those they hid themselves from, during a time when the very same people were desperately in need of guidance. "God cannot be gained by selfish prayer. And you who should have been the example of Hindu society, have concealed yourselves in the fastness of these mountains. You have deserted your responsibility to those seeking guidance and taken to a life of waste. When you turned your face from suffering humanity, you also turned your hearts from God." He then spoke to them at

great length on the true path of yoga: that while man must live in solitude to realize God, that solitude is within oneself, found by an unceasing communion with the Holy Naam. He who wished to cross the ocean of life must do so with an ever-alert and worshipful mind; and though living in the midst of impurities, he must remain pure. Then whether in the jungles or towns, one would dwell with the inner Peace and behold the Light of the One reality present in all life.

These men were great ascetics: old in years and endowed with supernatural powers. That one who by age seemed but a mere child to them, had such wisdom, aroused within them the desire to convert him to their own path—so that its respect might be revived. But Nanak replied that he followed a different system:

*My own system is unbroken communion with the Word*
*My wearing of earrings is in discarding pride and attachment.*
*My renunciate's garb is seeing the Lord in all things.*
*Only God can make me free.*
*Saith Nanak, He is the Truth: Eternal, Unchangeable*
*He who will, may test this.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 1

He continued that his system was not of man's make but stemmed from God's own infallible wisdom, and only by treading such a path could man attain to the Highest.

*With the beginning of the life breath*
*So too began my system.*
*Its source is the Satguru.*
*Shabda (the Word) is the Guru*
*And Surat (soul or attention) is the disciple.*
*My detachment is maintained by meditating upon the Incomprehensible One.*

*Through the Divine Word is God revealed to us*
*And in the company of the Saints is the fire of*
*Ego destroyed.*
*I am a slave to Him who knoweth the Unknowable*
*And enables others to know Him as well.*

RAG RAMKALI M. 1

The yogis were moved by the depths of wisdom with which he spoke and their pride was broken. But only one, Bharathri Yogi—who had earlier met the Master in a dense forest Ashram, and still before that, had come to know of his advent into the world while in deep contemplation—left the isolation of the Himalayas. He spent his remaining years in the Guru's home village of Kartarpur, living to enjoy His holy darshan.

After his meeting with the Siddhas, Nanak returned to the Punjab. His stay was again brief as his mission called him to the fourth point of the compass—west—and to the land of the Muslims.

When Nanak entered the city of Multan (which was considered to be a place of many holy men), he met a high priest who carried a bowl full to the brim with milk. It was a silent message that the city had no more room for holy men. Understanding it, Nanak floated a jasmine flower across the milk, allowing none to spill: his silent reply that he would pass through so lightly, so silently, that all would be left undisturbed, yet they would receive the sweet fragrance of God's holy Word.

Passing through various stations on his long march, Nanak eventually reached Mecca, a famous place of Muslim pilgrimage. At the city's outskirts, he went into meditation with his feet pointing toward the Kaaba. This was considered a sacrilege; and espying it, a priest kicked him, shouting that the Guru had his feet pointed toward the

"House of God." Unperturbed, Nanak replied: "Would you kindly turn my feet in that direction where God is not?" The Mullah was startled by the answer, but from it, realized how he had narrowed his worship by limiting God to man-made temples and forgotten the words of the Koran: that the Lord God is omnipresent and that any place becomes sanctified where one sits for devout prayer.

When the people of Mecca had heard of this strange Master, they crowded around him and pressed him as to which was the greater of the two: Hindu or Muslim? He replied that without right deeds, both would perish, "but to him whose delusion of mind is gone, Hindu and Muslim are alike."[11]

Leaving Mecca, he traveled on to Bhagdad. Here again, people thronged around him. They asked him his religious faith and he replied: "My religion is that of God. I have renounced all sects. I know only the one true God, the Supreme Being who is on earth, in the heavens and in between and in all directions."[12] Here he also met the Muslim divine Shah Bahlol. After a short stay with him, Nanak prepared to leave; but the faqir quickly attached himself to the Master's presence and begged him to settle there. To the Shah's regret, the Guru replied that no place of impermanence can be a man's home:

*We have made this world our home; but a true home is only that which remains.*
*What kind of station is this world?*
*Do the deeds of faith, gather thy needs for travel beyond and meditate upon the Naam.*
*Home is that place where the Hand of Death is no more.*

11. Kirpal Singh, *The Jap Ji*, p. 136.
12. *Ibid.*

*The skies and the earth will pass away; the One God alone remains.*
*The sun, the day; the moon and the night and millions of stars will all vanish.*
*The True Lord alone remains.*
*Listen, O Man, for Nanak speaketh the Truth.*

SOHILA M. 1

"In memory . . . of the Divine Master Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia" Shah Bahlol constructed a shrine.

For the final time, Nanak turned his feet back toward Kartarpur. He had spent nearly thirty years carrying his message to the four directions of the compass and tirelessly given of his own life in the service of God and humanity. But even as he returned to the Punjab, he found no chance for rest. While staying with his disciple, Lalo, he witnessed Babar launch his third massacre upon the Punjab. Palaces were reduced to rubble; men were ruthlessly slaughtered and women and children were dragged into slavery. He was deeply moved and wrote the following:

*Though Thou hast protected Khurasan*
*And struck terror to the heart of Hindustan*
*Thou O Creator bringest no blame unto Thyself.*
*Thou hast sent Death in the guise of the Mughal, Babar.*
*Terrible was the killing.*
*O Lord, did Thou not hear the cries?*
*Did not Thy heart fill with pain?*

*A jewel among kingdoms was wasted by the dogs*
*But now they are gone; who shall recall their names or mourn their death?*
*It is Thou who unites and Thou who divides.*

*That man who thinketh himself great, indulging himself to his every whim*
*Before the Lord is but an insect nibbling at grain.*

*Saith Nanak: Only they who die while yet alive have truly tasted life;*
*And only they can gain the gift of Thy Naam.*

RAG ASA M. 1

The emperor's soldiers arrested Nanak and Mardana and put them to labor. However word got back to Babar of a "holy man who sat in meditation, while his mill beside him worked of its own accord," and thus his imprisonment was brief. The emperor himself went to see this holy man and on meeting him was deeply humbled. His apologies were profuse. Taking Nanak into his tent, Babar offered him some hashish, but the Master refused. "The effect of this drug, if taken in the evening, will be gone in the morning. But the intoxication of Naam is with me twenty-four hours of the day and night." Babar then requested Nanak to please take some other favor, but again he refused: "Foolish would be the faqir who would beg of kings. God is the only giver, munificent beyond all measure. Nanak hungers for God alone and he asks for naught."

The Guru spent his last days with his family in Kartarpur. Here he worked as a farmer to provide for himself and his family and likewise employed many of his disciples. Ample food was thus provided and a huge langar (community kitchen) was started. Free meals were given to all who came, regardless of caste, religion, or position. The langar continued to be used by the later Sikh Masters and even now the tradition of serving meals to all is carried on.

Nanak's disciples would daily rise early for meditation and prayers, often followed by discourses given by the Master. Without fail, a certain young boy would come and sit for the meditation, and afterwards listen attentively to the Master's Satsang. Soon Nanak approached him and asked why he was not asleep as were other children his age.

The child replied that he sought refuge from death: "One day I watched my mother start a fire. It was the little sticks that burned first and I thought how death could likewise so easily overtake me, also being so little. Then the emperor came and burned our fields. I was afraid and ran to my father but he could do nothing. I thought that since my father could not even protect me from the emperor, who would protect me from death? So I sought the refuge of a Saint." Nanak was very pleased with the boy's reply; though so young, he had the wisdom of an old man—a budha—and from thence onward, he was known as Bhai Budha.

Bhai Budha grew to an old age and fully developed the gift Guru Nanak had given him. He lived to serve the five succeeding Masters after Nanak, performing for each the ritual which symbolized their ascension to the spiritual throne. The love and respect that the Masters had for him is clearly shown in many instances, but devout disciple that he was, he never transcended the bounds of humility. When finally he lay on his deathbed, Guru Har Gobind (the sixth of the Gurus) hastened to his side. Bhai Budha was thrilled with the joy of the Master's presence in his dying hour. But the Master bent before him and asked for his last counsel. "Thou shinest forth like the sun and I am no more than a firefly," replied the aged sage. "By Thine own grace, help me to swim across the vast Sea of Life."

"You ask for what you have already gained," said Har Gobind and placed his hand upon Bhai Budha's forehead, whereupon his soul withdrew forever into the Region of the Imperishable One.

So many came to the Master's feet, and while that great love radiates to all alike, each can receive it only according to his own level of receptivity. Some saw Guru Nanak only

then turned to Ajitha: "Now, this is the type of person who enjoys the very Essence of the Guru's presence."[13]

## V

After seventy years of his earthly mission, Nanak's life drew to a close. But if flesh and blood decay, that Power within does not, but continues to provide to the seeking humanity. So when the people grieved, he assured them he would not leave: "If your Friend comes to you in one garment or the other, won't you recognize him?" The Power that worked through Nanak was now passed on so that the divine work could continue. He had two sons, but found them both lacking in the necessary spiritual qualities. In his devout servant, whom he had made "Angad," he found the fullness of self-surrender and Godliness; and through this human pole, "Nanak continued to reign."

The Master's final day arrived—that day, the thought of which was an unbearable remorse to each disciple. But amidst their immeasurable grief, Nanak found great delight: it was the time when he was to rejoin the Beloved Lord forever.

*Sing ye my comrades! Sing ye all*
*Sing now my wedding song.*
*. . . The blessed day hath dawned.*
*The hour of consummation draweth nigh.*
*Come ye my comrades, come!*
*And consecrate me with your blessings.*
*Behold ye the Bride uniting with the Bridegroom.*

GURU NANAK[14]

13. Kirpal Singh, *The Night is a Jungle,* pp. 202-4.
14. Guru Nanak as quoted by Kirpal Singh in *The Jap Ji,* p. 144.

He had long spoken to them of death: that all should learn to rise above the body at their own will and commune with the Lord on the Spiritual planes. Then there would be no fear of death and their days left on earth would be finished peaceably and in love's detachment. He assured them that that Power was ever with them; they need only turn their attention within—with a silenced mind and full faith and devotion—and He who had once dwelt amongst them, would again appear before their vision and guide them step by step through the spiritual regions until they reached the True Home of the Father and were absorbed into it.

## VI

*He who transcends the Sat Lok*
*Alone knows the essence of Agam and Alakh*
*The Saints have their abode above these*
*And poor Nanak too is a resident there.*

GURU NANAK

As a young boy, Nanak had known the deep torment of yearning to reunite with the Most High; and on attaining his goal, he spared himself no effort in his mission of rekindling this knowledge across the world. He had become one with a sublime and indescribable state of awareness and beauty—which is given to few men even to conceive of—yet he walked the earth in all humility and lived as a servant to the poor, the sick and the neglected. To the confused masses, he brought a message of righteousness, service and worship of the One God; and his words were so charged with a confidence, love and insight—which sprang from the depths of his heart—that even those who once formed the sub-strata of society, sought refuge in them. But he, who

had in no uncertain terms spoken of *seeing God*, endured countless hardships not only to bear testimony to that Reality but to enable others to see It as well. For this reason, above all others—to guide the lost but seeking souls back to a Vision of God—did he live and travel among men. Whosoever approached him with a sincere and humble heart, lost himself in the ineffable joy of his presence. And whosoever was blessed with his gift of Naam, found that the Master's own life impulse could lift his attention above the physical and mental limitations, and he would behold for himself the glory of God's primal manifestations, on which the soul could ride "joyously Homeward."

TWO

# Guru Angad

(1504-1522)

ANGAD was born in the Ferozepur district of the Punjab, the son of a poor trader. His parents gave him the name Lehna—which means a debt which is due to one—but by the grace of Guru Nanak, he became "Angad" or a "Limb of His own Self."

*By Lehna's devoted service*
*Did Nanak proclaim him as his successor.*
*The same Light is manifest within him.*
*His ways of life are the same.*
*The body alone has changed.*
*Through him, Nanak himself reigns as Guru.*

RAMKALI VAR SATTA BALWAND

Lehna spent many years as a devotee of the goddess Durga (an aspect of the Divine Mother); and in his fervor for inner knowledge, he kept night-long vigils of supplication to her. True prayers cannot go long unheeded, and one night he heard the melody of devotion sung from the tongue of Bhai Jodha—a disciple of Guru Nanak. Divine beatitude thrilled his whole being, and with daybreak he found his way to the inspired devotee. Bhai Jodha told him that they were the hymns of the great Living Master, Guru Nanak. When he heard the words "Guru Nanak" something strange and mysterious was kindled in his heart, and the desire to meet this great Saint would not leave him.

The days passed and Lehna could not rid himself of the

yearning to behold the Master Nanak. When the time arrived for the annual pilgrimage to Jawalmukhi, Lehna expressed his wish to meet Nanak on their way—thus to gain benefits both from the goddess and from the company of a holy man. All agreed to the double merits to be won and Lehna rode ahead to have the Master's darshan. On his way, he met an old man who said he was also bound to see the Guru and could lead Lehna there. Overjoyed, Lehna rode on, just behind the old man who continued on foot. Reaching the gate where Nanak was staying, the two separated and Lehna was soon taken to the Master's room. On entering, he found the same old man who had led him there, and fell at His Feet. Lehna expressed his shame for riding while the Master walked, but Nanak only smiled: "How were you to know?" Perhaps a silence followed: who can say? A silence filled with an indescribable joy. But whatever it was, in it was the answer to the eternal cry of a heart: "So your name is Lehna? You have come at last for your 'lehna' [that which is due you]. I have been waiting for you."

*Were a hundred moons to rise together*
*And a thousand suns to be shining in their brightness*
*All that light*
*Leaves man yet in darkness*
*Without the benevolence of the Guru.*

VAR ASA M. 2

Though he left the Master physically to return to his fellow pilgrims, Lehna could not take his mind from the joy he had at His feet. Reaching the camp, he tore off the bells he wore as part of his worship to the goddess and proclaimed that all his pilgrimages were now completed. The blessings he had long sought became his with one glance from the holy Nanak.

On Nanak's instructions, Lehna returned to his home to settle accounts there. He told his wife of the holy man of Kartarpur and the divine intoxication that He radiated. Lehna purchased a new suit and with a heavy rock of salt for the Master's langar on his shoulders, began his return journey to Kartarpur. Arriving there, he was met by Nanak's wife, Sulakhni, and told to take rest. Lehnaji was not set on rest for his body but for his heart which throbbed for a glance from the Master. Thus he excused himself and rushed to the fields where the Beloved was at work. As Lehnaji approached Nanak, he saw three large bundles of hay and heard the workers complaining about being asked to carry them in. Even Nanak's sons shrank from the service as the bundles were heavy and dripped with mud. Instead they suggested that a laborer be found in the morning. But when Lehna heard these words, no more needed to be said. He paid his humble respect to the Master and then with disregard for human capacities, thrust all three bundles on his shoulders, crying, "I am the laborer you seek!" Aided only by divine grace, he carried them in from the fields and to the storage area, past Nanak's house. Seeing him pass, Sulakhni remonstrated the Guru for allowing their guest—who should still be tired from travels—to perform such heavy labor. And moreover, not only were his physical comforts ignored but his new silken suit was stained and ruined by the mud. But Lehna replied, "To me this is not mud, it is saffron."[1] Such was his love and service to the Master.

*O Nanak, obey him who himself hath obeyed God;*
*The Lord is found by the Grace of the Master.*

RAM KALI KI VAR M. 2

1. Guru Angad as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, from a discourse at Sant Bani Ashram, Franklin, N.H., August, 1977.

So great was Lehna's devotion that he labored without cares for himself. It was through such a service of love that his soul was soon to be made one with the Master's. However, before the disciple's devotion is consummated, it is first tested, both within and without; and while what happens within may be locked in the hearts of the lover and the Beloved, what happens without can be known to all. One night when the late hours had put most men to bed and the storms and cold would make them reluctant to leave it, Nanak awakened his sons and told them to repair a wall outside his house at that very hour. They thought their father had lost his wits and refused the work; they told him to wait till morning and then sevadars could be found. But Nanak would not agree and proposed that the disciples do this work now. His request reached many ears but there was no response until Lehna heard of it. Many called him a fool to obey such strange demands, but Lehna only heard the joy of devotion and completed the task as a humble servant. Over and again did strange situations arise which showed the depths of love and faith of His devotee and exposed those attached to him for personal motives. When Guru Nanak threw a bowl into the mud and told his eldest son, Sri Chand, to fetch it, Sri Chand replied, "I am your son and you are a great saint. You have many servants. Why should I fetch it?" Guru Nanak then just looked at Bhai Lehna and he jumped into the mud to get the bowl. About this incident Nanak later said, "If anyone is really devoted to the Master, he has to understand His very hint as the order and has to do that. One even has to go and bathe in the dirt."[2]

When not in the physical service of the Guru, Lehna

2. Guru Nanak as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, from a discourse at Sant Bani Ashram, Franklin, N.H. August, 1977.

would give his time to spiritual practices. On his Master's orders, he once returned to his home town of Khadur, and in the pain of separation would spend his whole day lost in the inner joys of the holy Naam.

No one possessed his devotional enthusiasm, and while he had already won the esteem of his brother disciples as well as many others, it was as though he were blind to it—being lost in the oneness of divine love. Nanak, so moved by his beloved disciple, told his wife that while Sri Chand and Lakmi Das were her sons, his was Lehna. Despite all this, there was still one test that was yet to come.

When a yogi one day came to the Master, he was very impressed by the number of disciples that he had. But to this, Nanak responded that the truth of matters was not always as it appeared, and actually, he had very few real disciples. Tomorrow Nanak would show him the truth of matters. When the sun rose, Nanak appeared before his Sangat—not with simple farming tools but with a knife at his waist, hunting dogs at his side and a gleam of madness in his eyes. Certain that the Master had gone mad, many of the followers immediately fled. Those that remained proceeded into the jungles with the Guru. But soon all save a very small number had left; either due to his strange behavior or chasing allurements found along the way. When finally only the on-looking yogi, Lehna, and two other disciples remained, they stumbled across an old corpse. It had long been infested with worms and emitted a foul odor; but on its discovery the Master demanded: "Let him who wishes to remain with me eat this corpse!" Two disciples stood frozen in horrified amazement and then ran off. But Lehna approached the dead body and bent down to eat it. Suddenly it changed into parshad. Now being a sweet-tasting and

blessed food, in deep love and humility, he offered it to the Master. The guise of madness lifted from Nanak's face and He stood revealed in a divine glory. Betraying a pleasure rarely gained, Nanak spoke and the sound danced like music upon Lehna's heart: "You have performed excessive devotions, and between you and me there is now no difference. None of my sikhs have shown such faith and surrender as you. Truly you are 'Angad'—a limb of my own self."

Soon the time of Nanak's departure from the earth plane came and he made it known that "Angad" was his spiritual successor. While his sons Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das became jealous, a devotee is happy only in the service of his Beloved and cares nothing of what the world thinks about him, nor its wealth or powers. Thus in the agony of separation, Angad spent six months in seclusion and almost unbroken meditation, seeing no one but one woman who brought him a glass of milk each day for his sustenance.

*Die before thy dearly Beloved*
*To live after him in the world is a curse to life.*
*Sever the head which boweth not to the Lord.*
*Nanak, burn the wretched body which feeleth not the pain of separation.*

SRI RAG KI VAR M. 2

But the time of his seclusion ended as other souls cried for the darshan of the Living Master. Led by Bhai Budha, they came to him for mercy. With a Master's rare love, he took them all in as his own children and his work as a servant to humanity now began. And yet while a period of uninterrupted meditation may thus end, a devotee's love for his

Master never leaves him. When he was asked why he, who had himself become one with the Guru, should suffer so much pain at the Master's physical death, a solemn look covered his face: "Yes, I know . . . that's all right. The Master is ever with me, but the initiate, as a son of man, has a great suffering."[3]

## II

*He is not blind*
*Who has no eyes upon his face.*
*O Nanak, he is blind*
*Who sees not the Will of God.*
VAR RAMKALI M. 2

As did Nanak and those who were to follow him, Angad taught his disciples to worship the one God Who was manifested in the form of Light and Music of the Spheres. He taught that man is entitled to a great spiritual wealth and yet he blindly attaches himself to the ephemeral and shallow pleasures of the world. Others were lost in severe penances, intellectual wranglings or outward devotions; but God, Who is within, cannot be found by these outer means. He taught that men must first lead an ethical life of love, purity, humility and honesty. They must support themselves and their families and help others in need with money gained through their own labors. To live a simple and pure life causing injury to none[4] were his basic injunctions; and then, while living in the world, one must develop the ruling

3. Guru Angad, as quoted by Kirpal Singh in a discourse, Manav Kendra, Dehra Dun, India, Dec. 25, 1971.

4. The principle of *ahimsa* or nonviolence espoused by the Gurus includes non-injury to all alike and not to man alone. It therefore included the strict abstinence from all flesh foods. Certain biographers have por-

passion to know God. As an ideal teacher, Angad radiated the perfect example of true living and high thinking.

Countless people came to him daily and to all he showed patience and understanding—even those who did not understand him or whose beliefs differed from his own Path. He always avoided controversies that were just for the sake of intellectual display, but was nonetheless often confronted by men who came just to dispute with him. Once a yogi came to him and, while questioning his teachings, added that should Angad take to the path of

trayed the Gurus as meat-eaters but even a surface examination shows that this is not so. In his writings, Guru Nanak asks how a heron can be called "white" (i.e. "pure") when it "devours living things" (Suhi M.I) and further states that "Gurus and Pirs are pleased when their disciples eat nothing which has known life." (Majh M.I) In the Persian manuscript, *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* (written by a historian friendly with the fifth Guru) it is stated that Nanak forbade the use of "wine and pork" among his following and ordered them not to injure any living being. He goes on to say that when it came to Guru Arjan's notice that certain disciples were not abiding by the vegetarian injunction, he at once let it be known that none should partake of flesh foods.

As Sant Ajaib Singh has pointed out, most biographies of the Sikh gurus—and particularly of Guru Gobind Singh—were written well after they had left their bodies, and are usually colored by the biographer's particular feelings. Those who were close disciples of Gobind Singh and who were in a position to write accurately about him were mostly in the deserts or in the jungles engaged in combat—and thus unable to write anything. Sant Ji went on to say that Sawan Singh had shown him documents written at the time of Gobind Singh in which it is declared that he also forbade the eating of flesh foods.

The importance of a vegetarian diet is stressed not only for its moral implications but also with regard to the biological effect which a simple vegetarian diet, as opposed to a meat diet, has upon the nervous system. While vegetarian foods are more conducive for calming the mind, meat tends to flare up passions and anger. This has been a well-known fact in most systems of yoga and mysticism for centuries. In most cultures, both ancient and modern, outstanding figures also have been aware of this fact.

Gorakh, wealth, supernatural powers and long life would all be his. Angad replied that none of these could confer inner peace. Rather they were the cause of pride and avarice and therefore led not to freedom but to bondage. He further told the yogi how, by the grace of Guru Nanak, he had crossed the vast ocean of life and not for a moment could wealth, powers, or attractions of the world tempt him. When one experiences the inner spiritual happiness, his mind is held steadfast. Then, while living the life of a householder and family man, one would remain unaffected by the world. The yogi heard the message only superficially but said he was pleased with the Master's reply, so pleased in fact that he would grant him any wish he made. Angad replied that he had already received all that he wished and therefore the boon was of no avail. But the yogi continued to press him and finally Angad replied that he wished the gift of humility. The yogi was startled by this reply and confessed that he could not give it—since he did not have it himself. Thereupon he closed his eyes and prayed that he might receive the gift of humility. In his prayer, it is said that he was directed by an inner voice to Guru Angad, the Master of the time, but unable to thus humble himself, the yogi went his own way.

Once also Humayun, the son of Babar, came to Angad. Humayun ruled for some years but lost his empire in battle against an Afghan soldier, Sher Khan. Now a fugitive and in utter despair, he sought the Guru's blessings that he might regain his throne. However, Angad was very fond of children and happened to be playing with some when Humayun arrived. So the time passed but no attention was paid to him and Humayun's annoyance was stirred. He put his hand to the hilt of his sword, but although he pulled as hard as he could, he could not remove it from its sheath.

The Guru looked up and smiled: "Brave Humayun! Where was your sword when you fought Sher Khan? Beaten by him, you wish to use it on a poor fakir." Humayun felt ashamed and he bowed at the Guru's feet asking his pardon. The Master's blessings were given but he told him some years would pass before he would regain his kingdom. And so it came to pass: Humayun spent many years in lonesome exile before he was able to raise forces and step back upon his throne.

*Nanak, cast the glories of this world into the flames.*
*By them have men forgotten the Holy Naam.*

VAR MALAR M. 2

Wherever greatness manifests, pettiness and jealousy also seem to arise. In Khadur Sahib, there lived one spiteful yogi who made the Guru his target of condemnation. He had performed austerities which gave him certain powers; but these, rather than helping him on the spiritual path, only served to inflate his ego and further obscure his vision of Truth. And then as men began to follow the Living Master, they turned away from this yogi, and his business was impaired and his pride annoyed. So when a long period of drought came, he seized the opportunity to exile Angad. He gathered the village people and told them that the Master was the cause of the drought. He said that though men revered Angad as the True Guru, he was not; or else why would he not bring them rain? If, however, Angad were driven from the area, the monk himself promised to bring the rains. Anxiety gripped the hearts of the poor village folk. Even through the rainy season, they were without showers; and if their crops should fail, what would be their means of sustenance? They approached the Master and pleaded with him to make it rain. In his unfailing equipoise,

he bid them to put their faith in God's Will: "He knows what we want and what we need and He will give us that, so we should not ask for anything."[5] With all the power and love his presence afforded them, with all the peace and assurance they felt from his words, yet when they left his presence, they found themselves unable to obey his words. Fear had overtaken their minds and they sought refuge in the monk's promise: they drove Angad from the village. From one village to the next was he driven, suffering abuse as he went. But as his mind was fully embedded in the Divine, Angad peacefully underwent the torments until finally he found shelter in a small village in the jungle where people welcomed him with reverence and where he was able to devote himself to long hours of meditation.

The time for the promised rain passed but despite all the monk's incantations, it did not come. But in the meantime, Amardas, Angad's most devoted disciple, returned. When he heard what had happened, he asked the people if they had taken leave of their senses; what fools they were to expel divine shelter and hope to replace it with an unworthy monk. Realizing what they had done, the people cursed their own ignorance; not only did the rain not come, but they had betrayed the True Guru. Amardas then said that wherever they dragged the yogi, there would the rain fall in abundance. Men at once began pulling at the poor yogi to drag him through their fields,[6] and Amardas' words proved

5. Guru Angad, as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, op cit.

6. History seems to indicate that when one willfully obstructs the mission of a true holy man, the very forces of nature seem to turn against him. When Devadatta tried to set himself in opposition to his Master, Gautama Buddha, he died a pitiable death. Similarly was it with Judas at the time of Christ's death, or with Chandu, who was responsible for Guru Arjan's execution. Nature may show her displeasure either in im-

true: wherever the yogi was dragged, the rain fell. Satisfied that justice had been done, the people began searching for the Master. When they found Him, Amardas went before Him, but the Guru turned His back. Amardas then went to His other side, but again the Guru turned around. Amardas asked why He was displeased, and the Guru replied: "I gave you the Power not to show miracles. I gave you the Power to keep within you. Why did you do that?[7]

"Tranquility, forgiveness and forbearance are the qualities of a disciple. Thus you must endure the unendurable and suffer the insufferable. Like the earth must be your perseverance; like a mountain, your steadfastness in joy and sorrow; and forgiveness must flow from your heart like a river. As such, do good to all, irrespective of their actions; and always be humble, for the humble shall be exalted."

Amardas took these words deep into his heart and became the living example of these virtues.

When Angad saw his earthly end approaching, he advised his disciples accordingly. He told them that Masters come into the world to distribute the wealth of Divinity. When their mission is finished, they joyously respond to the Will of the Lord and return to the place of abiding peace.

personal means, such as the terrible storms like those following the death of Christ or Teg Bahadur; or it may be executed through the hands of man. But if a Master's hands are to dole out justice, they are conscious of what they are doing and not dragged impulsively by the forces of nature. And by their very nature, the Saints temper their justice with mercy and forgiveness, like Christ or Mansur who prayed for the blessings of their "enemies" (but we ordinary people who see only the happenings of this world may well be blind to the grace extended).

For details of "Non-violence" in physical violence, see the Bhagavad Gita, especially discourses II, III and XI.

7. Guru Angad, as quoted by Sant Ajaib Singh, op cit.

He had put his disciples—including his sons—to the test, but found only his beloved servant, Amardas, to be worthy of the immaculate duties of the Guru.