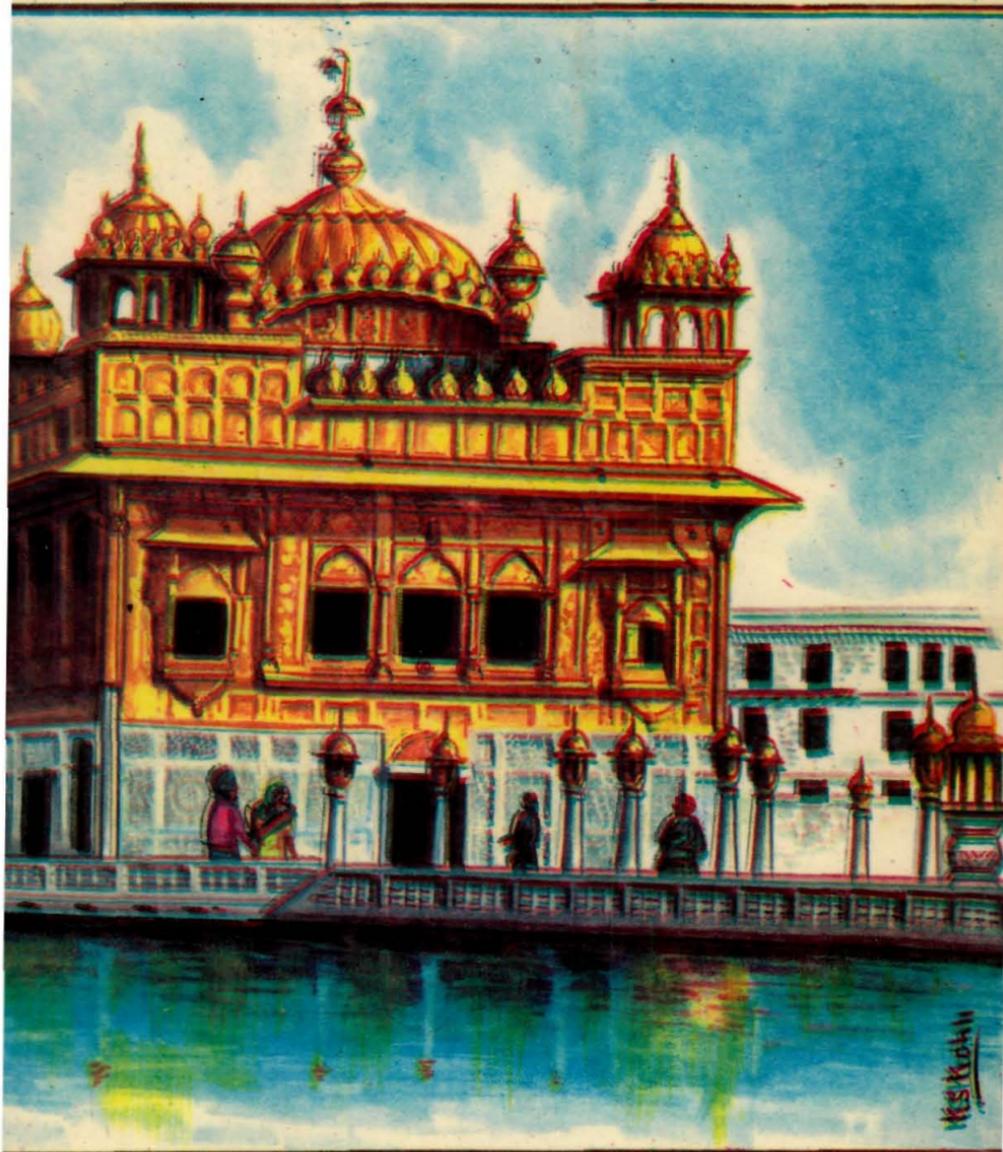


Stories from SIKH HISTORY

Book-II



Hemkunt

STORIES FROM SIKH HISTORY

BOOK-II

(Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ramdas and Guru Arjan Dev)

Kartar Singh
Gurdial Singh Dhillon
Edited by
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In this series

- Book I (Guru Nanak Dev)
- Book II (Guru Angad to Guru Arjun Dev)
- Book III (Guru Hargobind to Guru Teg Bahadur)
- Book IV (Guru Gobind Singh)
- Book V (Sikh Martyrs)
- Book VI (Banda Singh Bahadur)
- Book VII (Maharaja Ranjit Singh and thereafter till 1989)

FOREWORD

Moral and religious instruction, I am glad to find, is now being rehabilitated in our schools. Our country is secular. It is true, but there is no denying the fact that religious and moral education has a very useful function to serve. It is in this context that the Sri Prakasa Committee recommended moral instruction at the school level in order to develop the personality of students.

Modern psychology has emphasized that if the child is given proper guidance at his formative stages it will greatly help integrate his personality.

The great figures of the past specially the heroes of history have shown mankind how to fight successfully against evil and face the challenges from time to time. Among the great heroes of Indian History are the Sikh Gurus. Through their example, they challenged superstition, inertia, tyranny and bigotry. Their life story is a beacon light which gives inspiration to all who seek guidance in the path of truth and righteous action.

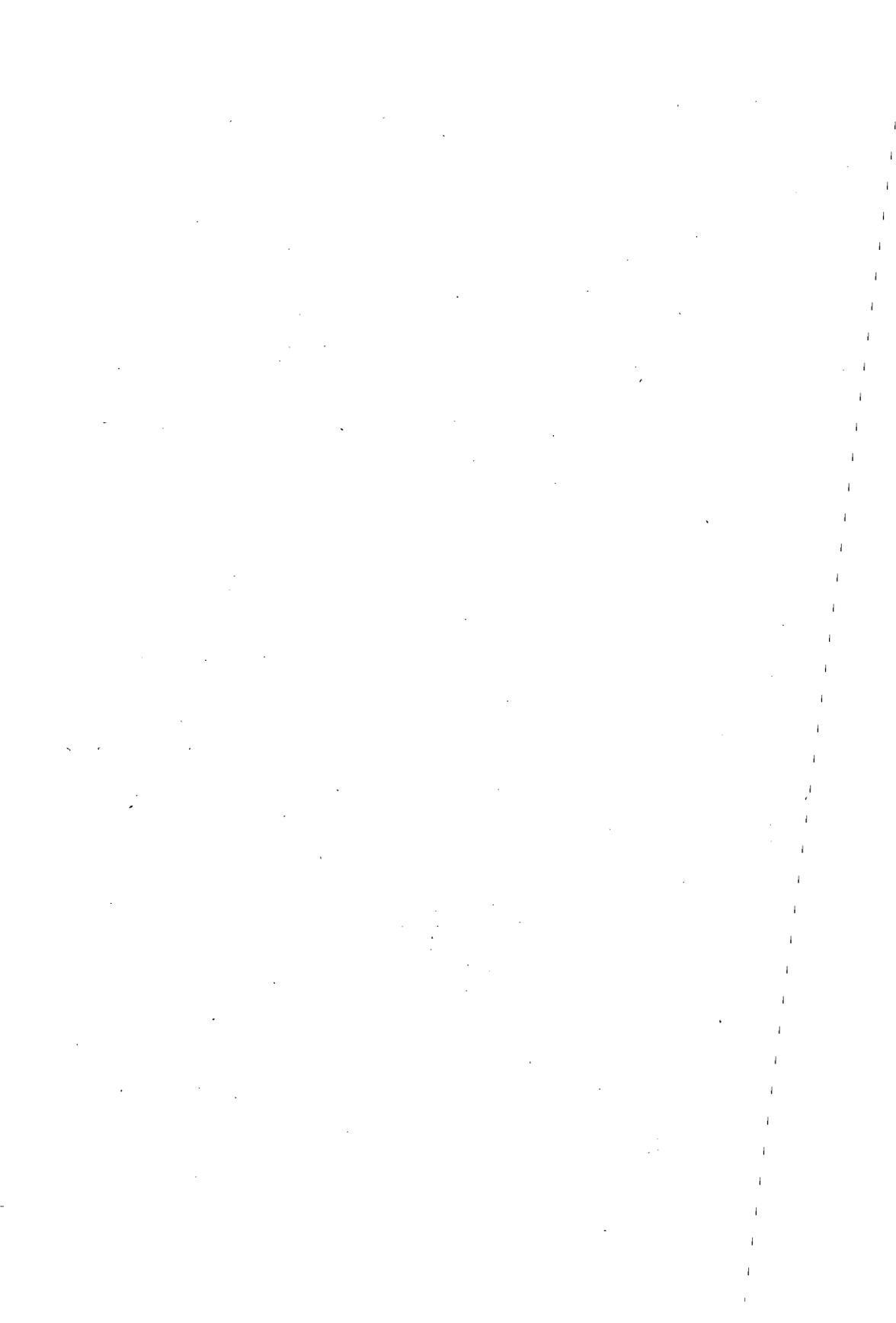
The youth of today, more than any other section of society, is at the cross-roads. School students are dazed by the march of exciting events and the great tensions of the modern world. Science may throw light on the physical world, but it is only the teachings of great saints and sages which offer a glimpse into the spiritual world. Any educational system which does not take into account the moral development of the student will remain inadequate and ineffective. I am glad to know that thoughtful educationists are devoting their attention to the moral education of the young. In this context, the efforts of Principal G.S. Dhillon and Prof. Kartar Singh deserve all appreciation.

In this book the authors have presented a number of stories from the lives of Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev in a broad and vivid manner. These, I am sure, will be a source of inspiration to our growing young men.

The pictures and sketches given therein, I am sure, will create a lasting impression on their minds. I sincerely hope that the series of Stories from Sikh History which they have planned will go a long way in moulding the lives of the young Indian students.

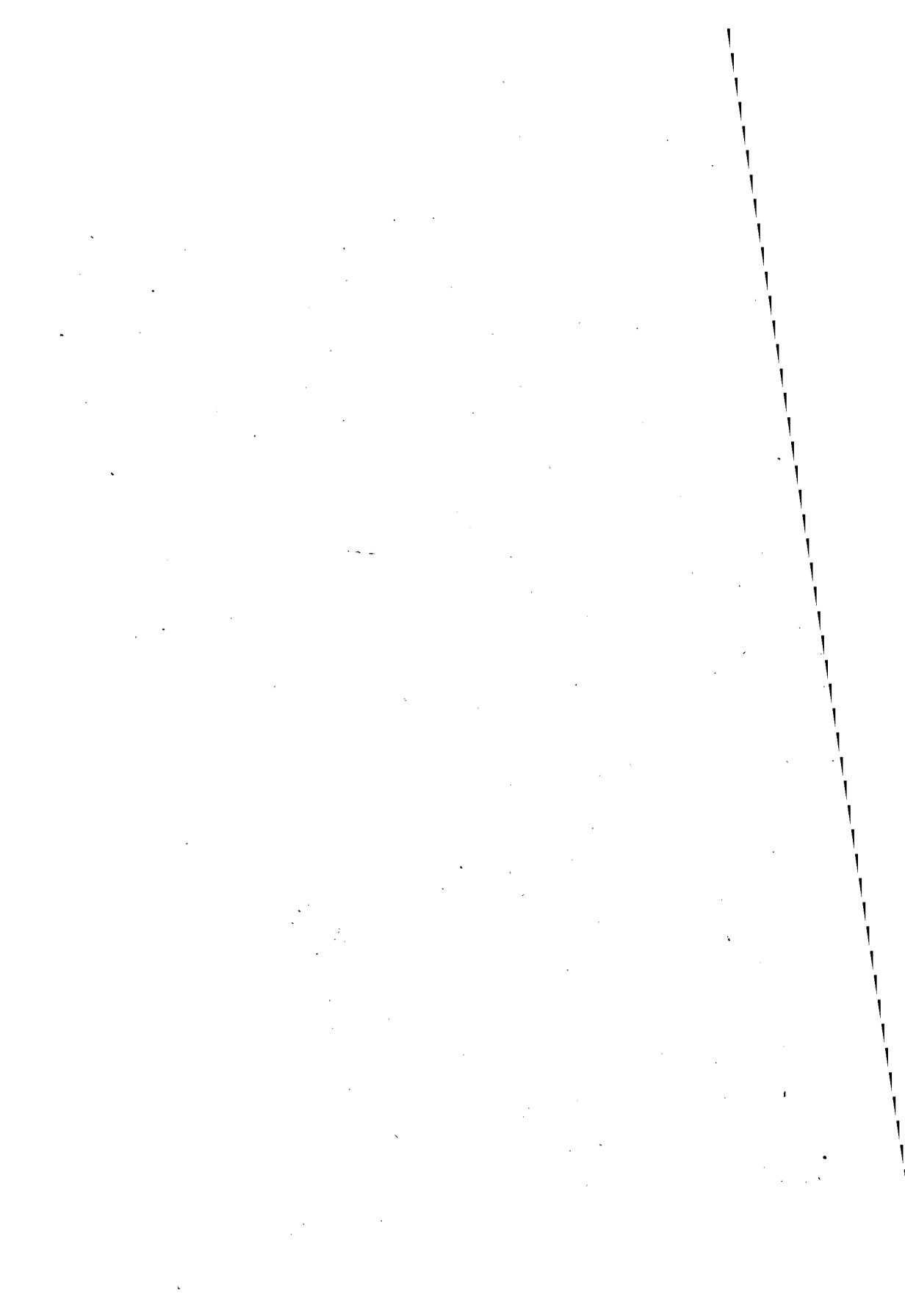
4th February, 1972

GANDA SINGH
Ph. D., D. Litt.



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A Durga Worshipper at Kartarpur

Sri Laihna was a pious man who lived at Khadur in the district of Amritsar. He was a shopkeeper. He was a good and honest man. He was very rich. He used to worship the goddess Durga. Many other people of his village did the same. He was their leader. Every year a large group of them used to visit the temple of that goddess. The temple is called Jawalamukhi. It is in the Himalayas. Bhai Laihna used to go with these worshippers of Durga as their leader. On his hands and feet he wore bells. He used to dance before the goddess. The bells used to tinkle when he danced.

He went on doing this till he grew to be an old man. In his village there lived a Sikh or follower of Guru Nanak. His name was Bhai Jodha. He was not a worshipper of Durga. No Sikh worships any god or goddess. All Sikhs are worshippers of one God. Bhai Jodha did not visit Durga's temple. On the

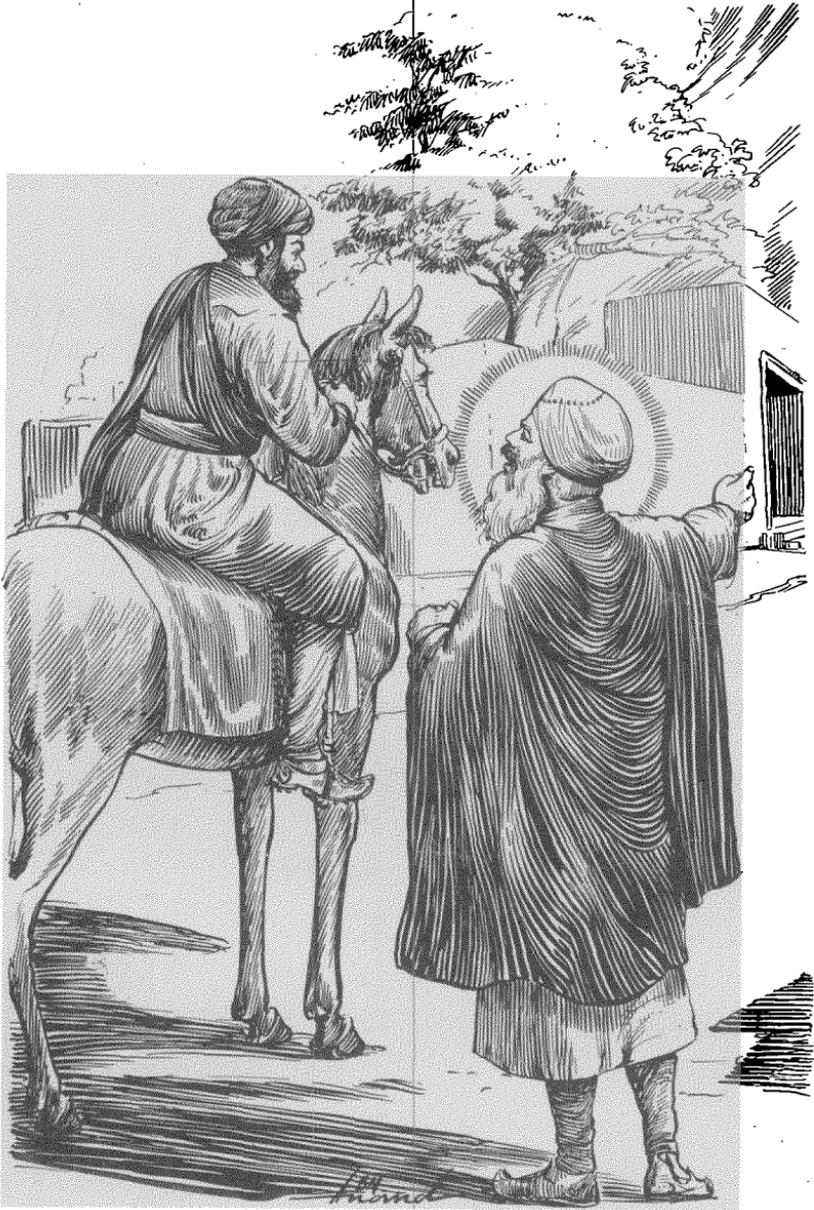
other hand, he used to think of God. He used to recite or read aloud the holy songs or hymns of Guru Nanak. One day, Sri Laihna heard him singing one of those sweet, sacred songs. He liked it very much. He requested Bhai Jodha to teach it to him. Bhai Jodha did so with pleasure. He also told him of Guru Nanak. The Guru was an old man by that time. He lived at Kartarpur. That town is now in Pakistan.

Sri Laihna made up his mind to see the Guru. A short time after that he and his fellow-villagers started on their annual visit to Jawalamukhi. They halted for the night near Kartarpur. While his companions took rest, Sri Laihna started towards the town. He was on horseback. He was eager to see Guru Nanak.

On the way, he met a tall, strong and cheerful looking old man. 'O good man,' said Sri Laihna to him, 'kindly tell me the way to Guru Nanak's place.'

'Follow me, dear brother,' replied the old man. 'I am going that way myself.'

The old man led the way on foot. Sri



Enter there. That is the place, dear friend.

Laihna followed him on horse-back. Soon, they reached the town. The old man pointed towards a gate and said, 'Enter there. That is the place, dear Friend.'

Sri Laihna went in. He tied his horse to a peg in the compound. Then he looked about for the Guru. A man guided him to the door of a room and said, 'The Guru is in that room. He is alone. Go in and see him, brother.'

Sri Laihna entered the room. He was greatly surprised at what he saw. The old man sitting there was the same who had led his horse to this place. Sri Laihna felt very upset. He said to himself, 'I did a wrong thing. I rode while the Guru walked before me.'

Guru Nanak guessed what was passing in Sri Laihna's mind. 'Don't be upset, my brother,' said he. 'You did nothing wrong. I did my duty. You are my guest. I am your host. It is the duty of a host to serve his guests. I did that. I did nothing more. Come, sit near me. Let us talk. Let us get to know each other.'

'How kind and sweet he is!' thought Sri Laihna. He sat near the Guru. Soon they

were talking like old, intimate friends. Sri Laihna learnt many new and good things from the Guru. His heart was filled with deep love and respect for him. He decided to give up worshipping Durga. He would worship God instead of the goddess. He would become a Sikh or follower of the Guru. He threw away the bells from his hands and feet. In the morning he met his companions. He said to them, 'I do not wish to go to Jawalamukhi. I shall not worship any goddess any more. I have decided to worship God in Guru Nanak's company.' His companions went away. He remained with the Guru. He became his Sikh and became to be known as Bhai Laihna.

2

Work and Service

Bhai Laihna's companions left for Jawalamukhi. He stayed at Kartarpur. After a few days, he said to himself, 'Let me go to my village. Let me take leave of my family and friends. Then I shall come back and stay with the Guru for good.'

He did not stay in his village for more than a few days. He soon got ready to return to Kartarpur. He wanted to be with the Guru. He wanted to serve him. He wanted to learn true wisdom from him.

Before starting he said to himself, 'I must take with me something for the Guru. He runs a free kitchen. Scores of people take their meals from there. They do not have to pay anything for the meals. I should take something for his *langar* or free kitchen for all. But what should it be? Yes, let it be as heavy a load of salt as I can carry on my head.'

He went to Kartarpur on foot. He carried a load of salt on his head. It was as heavy as he

could carry. He placed the load of salt in the Guru's *langar*. Then he went out to see the Guru, who was working in the field.

He reached the field and saw that the Guru had prepared three bundles of grass for his cattle. He wanted someone to carry them home. He asked his two sons to do so. They said, 'Such work is not fit for sons of the Guru. Some other Sikh should do it. Perhaps, that man, coming this way, might agree to do it. Let us wait for him.'

Bhai Laihna heard these words. He was glad to get a chance to serve the Guru. He said to the Guru, 'Let me carry the bundles home.' He carried the three bundles of grass to the Guru's place. The grass had been taken out from a paddy field. It was wet. Drops of muddy water fell from it, now and then. They fell upon his clothes. His clothes were made of fine silk. The drops of muddy water spoiled his fine, new silk clothes. But this did not worry him. He was glad to obey and serve the Guru. The Guru was greatly pleased with his new Sikh, Bhai Laihna.

The Guru taught the golden rules of his

religion to all who came to him. He also worked in the fields like a farmer and he also thought of God all the time. He repeated His name and so did all his Sikhs. Some worked in the fields. Some worked in the common kitchen. Some brought dry wood for the *langar*. Others worked to make articles needed for the Guru's family. They did not want any payment for such work. They did it all out of their love for the Guru and his Sikhs. It was all a labour of love. They also thought of God all the time. The Guru loved them for this.

Bhai Laihna began to work like other Sikhs. He worked more actively than the rest. He loved to obey and serve the Guru. He did whatever the Guru wished him to do. He found real joy in doing this. He thought of God at all times. He repeated His Name. He learnt and recited the Guru's hymns.

The Guru began to love Bhai Laihna very dearly. His love for Bhai Laihna was greater than his love for any other Sikh. It was greater even than his love for his own two sons. They did not obey and serve him as well as Bhai Laihna did.

Bhai Laihna began to be respected highly by all Sikhs.

They began to call him Baba Laihna. By serving and working for the Guru, Bhai Laihna became Baba Laihna. But this fact did not produce any feeling of pride in him. It did not make him think himself better or higher than the rest. Rather, it made him humbler, more kindly and more eager to serve the Guru and his Sikhs. As a consequence, he grew more and more popular; more and more deeply respected. The Guru's love for him went on increasing, day by day.

Who Should Take Guru Nanak's Place ?

Guru Nanak used to say, 'Every Sikh should obey his Guru without asking any questions. To obey and serve the Guru should be the Sikh's rule of life.' Baba Laihna lived and acted in accordance with the Guru's wishes. He obeyed all orders of Guru Nanak most readily and joyfully. He asked no questions. He never said, 'Why or what for ?'

Guru Nanak tested Baba Laihna several times. Every time Baba Laihna was found to be up to the mark. Here are some of those tests.

(i)

One winter night it rained very heavily. A part of the wall of the Guru's house fell. He said that it must be built up again at once. He called upon his sons to do the work. They refused to do it. They said, 'It is midnight. The night is dark and cold. Moreover, it is no business of ours to build walls. When it is day

we shall call masons and coolies. They will build the wall.'

The Guru said, 'It is the Guru's work. It must be done by his Sikhs. There is no need of masons and coolies. It must be done right now.'

The Guru looked at Baba Laihna. The latter at once got up. He began to build up the wall. After a time the Guru saw the wall built by Baba Laihna. He said, 'The wall is not straight. Pull it down and build it again more carefully.'

Baba Laihna obeyed at once. He built up the wall again very carefully. But the Guru was still not satisfied. Baba Laihna pulled it down once more. He built it up again with the utmost care. When the Guru saw it, he said, 'The wall should not have been built here. It should be moved back about half a foot.'

Baba Laihna obeyed without asking any question. He pulled down the wall again. He built it up in the place desired by the Guru. But the Guru was not satisfied. Baba Laihna again pulled down the wall. He began to build it again with great care.

Upon this the Guru's sons said to Baba Laihna, 'You can never please him. Give up the work.'

But Baba Laihna, replied, 'A servant has to do his master's work. It is for the master to choose what that work should be.'

(ii)

One day, the Guru was holding a cup. It slipped from his hand. It fell into a pit of dirty water. The Guru told his sons to take it out of the dirty pit. They refused to do so.

The Guru then looked at Baba Laihna. Baba Laihna entered the pit at once. He brought out the cup. He then washed it with clean water and gave it to the Guru.

(iii)

The Guru used to get up three hours before day and go to bathe in the Ravi. Baba Laihna always went with him. He sat near the Guru's clothes, while the Guru bathed. One day three other Sikhs decided to do as Baba Laihna did. They wanted to please the Guru as Baba Laihna had pleased him. They went with the Guru. It was the winter season. Soon black clouds gathered in the sky. A cold wind began to blow. Then hail began to fall. The



The three Sikhs went away

three Sikhs could not bear the cold. They went back home. But Baba Laihna did not move. He waited there till the Guru came out. The Guru said, 'The others went away. Why didn't you do the same?' Baba Laihna replied, 'A servant should not run away from his master. How could I go, leaving my master here?'

Guru Nanak gave a few more tests to Baba Laihna. He was successful in every one of them. Guru Nanak was fully satisfied. He said to Baba Laihna, 'You have become as dear to me as my own self. You are my *Angad*, a part of my *ang* or body.

After a time the Guru felt that the time for his leaving the world was at hand. He seated Sri Angad on the Guru's throne. He told Bhai Budha to put a *tilak*, the mark of Guruship, on his forehead.

He placed five paise and a coconut before Sri Angad. Then he bowed before him. 'You are now Guru Angad,' said Guru Nanak. He told his Sikhs to bow before the Guru.

Thus through work, service and obedience, Sri Laihna became Guru Angad, the second Guru Nanak.

Guru Angad and the Tapa

Guru Nanak chose Baba Laihna to take his place after him. He changed his name to Sri Angad. Then he seated him on the Guru's throne. He appointed him the Guru in his own place. Thus Guru Angad became the second Guru of the Sikhs.

Guru Angad lived at Khadur Sahib, near Tarn Taran. His home was in that village. He lived there with his family like a householder. At the same time, he acted as the Guru.

In that village there lived at that time a *sadhu*. He was a *jogi*. His name was Shiv Nath. People called him Tapa. He tried all he could to appear a truly religious man. But really he was not truly religious. He was only making a show of religion. He was proud. He wanted the people to worship him as a Guru. Some *jats* of that place did worship him as a Guru. He was much pleased with them.

But Guru Angad was becoming popular.

Everyday more and more people began to gather around him for advice and help. They liked his teachings. They began to regard him as their Guru. The number of people going to the Tapa became less and less. He began to be less and less popular with the people. This made him burn with anger against Guru Angad. He said to himself, 'I must get him turned out of this place.'

One year, there was no rain. Not even a drop of rain fell during the rainy months. Crops began to dry up. Fields could not be ploughed and prepared for the next crop. There was a fear of famine. All the tanks became dry. Cattle could not get enough water to drink. They died in large numbers. The people were very worried. They did not know what to do. Some of them went to the Tapa. They begged him to save them. They appealed to him to cause rain to fall.

The Tapa said, 'How can you expect rain to fall here? You are doing something totally against true religion. The rain-god is angry with you. I am a *jogi*, a truly religious man. I have no family. I give my whole time and thought to religion. You have stopped coming

to me. You do not worship me. Instead, you now worship a family man. You regard him as your Guru. Ask him to cause rain to fall. If he refuses or fails to do so, turn him out of your village. I shall then cause rain to fall within twenty-four hours.'

The *jats* were simple people. They were in great misery. They were very much in need of rain so they decided to do as advised by the Tapa. They went to the Guru and said, 'Kindly cause rain to fall or leave the village. If you go away, the Tapa will cause rain to fall. We shall be saved.'

The Guru said, 'It is God alone who causes rain to fall. But if my going away from here can get you rain, I shall gladly go.'

The Guru left Khadur. The Tapa read many *mantras*. He did many things to please the rain-god. But rain did not fall. The people began to shout at the Tapa in great anger. He did not know what to do.

By that time, Sri Amar Das arrived at Khadur. As you will see, Sri Amar Das was to be the third Guru. He heard what had happened. He felt sad and angry. He said to

the people, 'The Tapa has played a trick on you. He has made you do something very bad. I'll tell you how to get rain. Take the Tapa into your fields. Wherever you take him before sunset, rain will fall in plenty there.'

The people caught hold of the Tapa. They dragged him from field to field. Rain fell wherever he was taken. Everybody wanted to drag him into his own fields. Thus dragged this way and that the Tapa breathed his last.

Guru Angad heard all this. He called for Sri Amar Das and said to him, 'You should have a more generous heart. All happens according to God's Will. It is not right for us to feel anger against any man whatever happens. A Sikh should always do good even to evil people. He should return good for evil. He should forgive all wrong-doers and show them how to follow the right path. Never do such a thing again. We should accept God's Will, most readily and willingly.'

Humayun and Guru Angad

Babar had come from Kabul with a large army. He wanted to be emperor of India. His wish was fulfilled. He became the first Mughul Emperor of India.

He died after a few years. His son, Humayun, became the Emperor in his place. But a few years later Sher Shah Suri made up his mind to become the emperor of India. So he decided to drive away Humayun and take his throne. He fought a number of battles against Humayun. Humayun was defeated. He ran for his life.

After some time, he reached Lahore. He decided to see some holy men or saints. He wanted that they should pray for his success in getting back the throne of Delhi. He believed that the prayers of holy men were granted by God. So he thought, 'If I can find a really holy man, my wish can be fulfilled. He will pray for my success in getting back my throne. His prayer will be granted. I shall

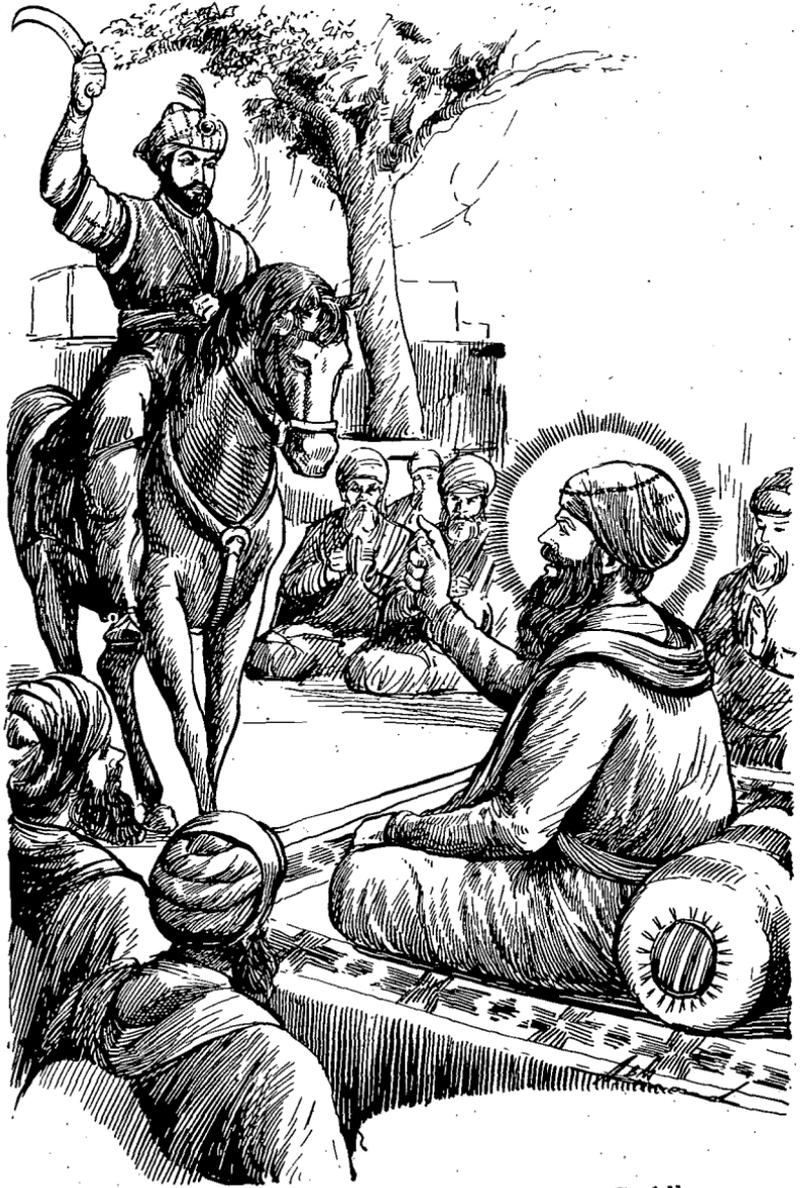
again become the emperor of India. But where to find such a holy man ?

Some people told him, 'Your father met Guru Nanak at Eminabad. He begged the Guru to pray for him. The Guru agreed to pray for your father's success. His prayer was granted by God.'

'Then,' said Humayun, 'I, too, shall see him. I shall beg him to pray for me. His prayer will again be granted. I shall get back my throne. But where is he ?'

He was told, 'Guru Nanak is no more in the world. He chose Guru Angad to take his place after him. Guru Angad lives at Khadur, near Tarn Taran.'

Hearing this Humayun got ready to go to Khadur. He took with him a number of things. He wanted to offer them to the Guru. In due course he reached Khadur. He went to the Guru's place on horseback. He did not get down from the horse on reaching the Guru's presence. He remained sitting on the horse. He thought that the Guru would get up to meet and greet him. When the Guru did not get up, Humayun thought, 'He has insulted me. I must punish him.'



"Your sword comes out to strike men of God."

At that time the Guru's mind was fixed on God. Sikhs were singing hymns. The Guru did not notice Humayun. At this, Humayun became angry. He said to himself, 'I am the Emperor. He is a mere *fakir*. He has not stood up to show respect to me. He has paid no heed to me.'

Thinking thus, he drew his sword. He wanted to cut off the Guru's head with the sword. The Guru opened his eyes. He looked at Humayun. Then he smiled and said, 'O Emperor, your sword comes out so readily to strike men of God. But it could do nothing against Sher Shah. Where was it then?'

Humayun felt ashamed. He put back his sword into its sheath. He got down from the horse. He went to the Guru and bowed before him and begged the Guru's pardon. Then he said, 'O holy man of God, pray for me. Pray to God that I may get back my throne.'

The Guru replied, 'I shall pray for you. You will get back your kingdom after some time. But do not forget God even then. Be a just and kind ruler.'

Humayun was pleased. He bowed to the Guru and went away. After some time, he got his throne back.

The Home of the Homeless

Sri Amar Das lived in his village Basarke, near Amritsar. He was over sixty years of age. He was a shopkeeper. His nephew, his brother's son was married to Guru Angad's daughter. Her name was Bibi Amro. It was her practice to get up three hours before day. Then she bathed and began to recite the *Japji* and other hymns of Guru Nanak.

Early one morning Sri Amar Das was sitting on a cot on the roof of his house. He heard Bibi Amro singing Guru Nanak's sacred songs. The hymns had a strong effect on him. He liked them very much. He sat listening attentively.

After daybreak, Sri Amar Das asked Bibi Amro, 'Whose hymns were you reciting? Where and from whom did you learn them?' She replied, 'They are Guru Nanak's hymns. I learnt them from my father. He is the second Guru of the Sikhs. You may learn them from me.'

Sri Amar Das learnt the hymns by heart. Then he asked her to take him to her father. He added, 'I want to become his Sikh.'

She did as he wished. They reached Khadur Sahib. He went straight to the Guru. Sri Amar Das was an uncle of Guru Angad's son-in-law. He was also more than twenty years older than the Guru. Hence, on seeing Sri Amar Das, Guru Angad stood up to receive him. But Sri Amar Das fell at the Guru's feet. He said, 'I am here not as a relative of yours. I have come to be your servant. Please make me a Sikh. Let me serve you.'

Guru Angad Dev granted his wish. Sri Amar Das began to live at Khadur Sahib. He spent his time in serving the Guru and his Sikhs. All the time he kept his mind fixed on God. He learnt by heart a large number of the Guru's hymns.

He got up four or five hours before day. He went to the river Beas. The river was about five kilometres from Khadur Sahib. He bathed in the river. He brought from there a pitcher of water for the Guru's bath. Rain, hail or storm could not make him fail in this work. It

should be remembered that Sri Amar Das was over sixty years old.

After giving the water to the Guru for his bath, Sri Amar Das began to work in the Guru's *langar* or free kitchen for all. He supplied well-water for use in the kitchen. He brought firewood from the forest. He cleaned and washed the utensils. He did everything else that was required to be done.

Twelve years passed in this way. Once he started towards the river as usual. It began to rain heavily. At the same time a strong wind began to blow. The night was dark. Sri Amar Das reached the river. He started back with the pitcher of water on his head. He had to walk knee-deep in water in some places. Because of the rain, the wind, and the dark, he lost his way. There was a weaver's house near the path. His foot struck against a peg. He fell into the hole of the weaver's loom. But he did not let the pitcher fall from his head.

The weaver woke up on hearing the sound of Sri Amar Das's fall. He said to his wife, 'Somebody seems to have fallen into the loom's hole. I wonder who is out in this weather and at this hour.' His wife said, 'It

must be the poor homeless Amru. He has left his home, family and business. He has taken shelter with his nephew's father-in-law. He works day and night in order to get food. What should I say about the Guru who takes such work from such a man ?

Sri Amar Das was pained to hear her words against the Guru. He said, 'You have gone mad. That is why you say such things against the Guru.' Saying this, he went away with the pitcher of water for the Guru's bath.

The weaver's wife actually went mad. The weaver went to the Guru in the morning. He told the Guru what had happened. He begged him to pardon the mad woman's error. The Guru said, 'Sri Amar Das is not poor and homeless. He shall be a home for the homeless, a shelter for the unsheltered, the strength of the weak and the protector of those in trouble. The peg against which he struck his foot will grow green. The weaver's wife shall become well.'

After that he bathed Sri Amar Das. He dressed him in new clothes. He seated him on the Guru's *gaddi* or throne. He placed five

copper coins and a coconut before him. He ordered Bhai Budha to put a *tilak* mark on his forehead. Then the Guru bowed before Sri Amar Das. He then said, 'Sri Amar Das is Guru Amar Das now. He will be the Guru after me.'

Guru Amar Das Hides Himself

Guru Angad had chosen Sri Amar Das to take his place after him. Some time after that he said to Guru Amar Das, 'My time to go from the world is coming near. When I am gone, go to Goindwal. Live there and save people by your teachings.' Guru Amar Das obeyed his Guru's last order.

After Guru Angad's death, his son Sri Datu sat on the Guru's throne at Khadur Sahib. He made it known to all, 'Amru (Guru Amar Das) was my father's servant. He is my servant now. My father's *gaddi* (throne) is mine. I am the Guru.'

But the Sikhs did not accept him as their Guru. They said, 'Our true Guru is Guru Amar Das. He was chosen by Guru Angad Dev.' So they all went to Goindwal. Sri Datu was left alone. Naturally enough, this made him angry.

Guru Amar Das lived at Goindwal. His Sikhs gathered around him. There was always

a large crowd of his followers at this place. The Guru became more and more popular, day by day. This fact made Sri Datu burn with anger. He decided to turn out the Guru from Goindwal also. He went to Goindwal. On reaching the Guru's place, Sri Datu saw a large number of Sikhs gathered there. Some Sikhs were singing hymns. The Guru sat with his eyes closed and his mind fixed on God.

Sri Datu went up to the Guru's seat. He said in a loud and angry voice, 'Only yesterday you were a water-carrier in our house. Today you sit here as the Guru. Get away. This throne is mine.' Saying this, Datu gave the Guru a kick in the back. The Guru fell from his seat. Datu took his seat on the Guru's throne. The Guru did not feel angry at all. He was perfectly calm. He got up and began to press Sri Datu's foot. At the same time he said, 'Please pardon me. I am old. My bones are hard. They might have hurt your tender foot.'

Then the Guru left that place. Early next morning he left Goindwal. He did not let anybody know where he was going. He went to his home-village, Basarke. There he shut



"Get away. This throne is mine."

himself in a room outside the village. On the door he wrote the following order, 'Whoever opens the door is no Sikh of mine, nor am I his Guru.' Thus did the Guru hide himself from all.

Sri Datu sat on the Guru's throne at Goindwal. 'I am now the Guru,' he said to himself. He became very proud. But the Sikhs did not go near him. They would not even look at him. After a few days, Sri Datu decided to go back to Khadur Sahib. He gathered all the wealth that he found in the Guru's place. He loaded it on to a camel and started towards his home. On the way robbers fell upon him. They took away the camel with its load. One of them struck Sri Datu on the foot. It was the same foot with which he had struck the Guru. It swelled up and caused him great pain. The pain did not leave him till the end of his life.

The Sikhs did not know where the Guru had hidden himself. Some looked for him in the forest nearby. Others looked for him near the banks of the Beas. They all failed to find him. At last they requested Baba Budha to find out where the Guru was. He thought out

a plan. He and the Sikhs bowed towards the Guru's vacant seat. Then they prayed for the success of their plan. After that the Guru's mare was let loose. The Sikhs followed her at a short distance.

The mare went straight to the Guru's room outside Basarke and stood before its door. The Sikhs were glad. They felt sure that the Guru was in that room. But then they read his order written on the door. This made them sad. Baba Budha came to their help again. He said, 'We dare not disobey the Guru. We must not open the door. But all the same some one has to go into the room and bring out the Guru. I will do that.' Saying this he made a hole in the backwall of the room. He entered the room through that hole. He begged the Guru to show himself to his Sikhs. The Guru agreed and then he returned with them to Goindwal.

Gangu Shah

There was a merchant named Ganga Das. He was generally called Gangu. He lived and did business in Lahore. He fell on evil days and suffered loss after loss in his trade. He became extremely poor. When he was rich he had many friends. When he became poor, all his friends and relatives left him. They even laughed at him.

Gangu decided to leave Lahore and go somewhere else. He had heard a good deal about Guru Amar Das and his greatness. He made up his mind to see him. Accordingly, he started towards Goindwal. Reaching there, he tried to see the Guru. He was told, 'Every person wishing to see the Guru, must first take food from his free kitchen. That is the rule.' Gangu agreed to follow that rule. He went to the kitchen where he saw people of all castes, Hindus and Muslims, sitting side by side and taking food. Gangu was a high-caste *Khatri*. He had his pride of caste. He hesitated

at first to sit and dine with the low-castes. Then he thought, 'I must see the Guru. He will help me. I must give up my pride of caste. I must take food from his kitchen.'

Accordingly, he took food from the Guru's kitchen. He was then permitted to see the Guru. He fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'I am very unfortunate. I have lost everything. But I have found you. I have come to seek your protection, O Shelter of the shelterless ! Help me, save me.'

The Guru said to him, 'Go to Delhi and start your business there. Luck will favour you. You will become wealthy again. But be careful. Don't let wealth turn your head. Always remember God. Help those who need your help. Serve and respect the holy men who visit you. Remember one thing. Those who forget God become unhappy in the end.'

Gangu agreed to live and act as advised by the Guru. He then touched the Guru's feet and went away. He went to Delhi. He started business there. As the Guru had said, luck favoured him. He became wealthy again in no time.

After some time, a poor needy Brahmin of Delhi came to the Guru. He bowed before him and said, 'True King, I have a daughter. She is of age to be married. But I am poor. I cannot meet the expenses of the marriage. Kindly help me.'

The Guru felt that the Brahmin was really in need. He decided to help him. He gave the Brahmin a letter addressed to Gangu. In it he wrote, 'Give this poor needy Brahmin what he needs.' The Brahmin went to Delhi, met Gangu, gave him the Guru's letter and told him what he needed.

But wealth had turned Gangu's head. His love for money had become stronger than his love for the Guru. He said to himself, 'I have earned my wealth with my hard work. If I give money to this man, the Guru will send more persons for similar help. If I refuse to help this man, the Guru will not send anyone again.'

Thinking thus, he refused to help the poor needy Brahmin. The latter felt very sad. He returned to the Guru and told him what had happened. The Guru gave him the needed

money from his own pocket. The Brahmin went away full of joy, and performed his daughter's marriage.

After some time Gangu's luck turned against him. He began to suffer loss after loss. He became poor once again. He said to himself, 'I disobeyed the Guru. This bad luck has come to me for that reason. I must go to him, and beg forgiveness.'

So he went to Goindwal. But he did not have the courage to meet the Guru. He began to serve in the kitchen. He worked very hard. All the time, he kept repeating God's name, and reciting the Guru's hymns.

After some time, the Guru sent for him. He fell at the Guru's feet, and begged forgiveness. The Guru granted it to him. Then he gave him a white dress and said, 'Gangu Shah, you are now a true Sikh. Go and live according to the rules of the Sikh faith. Make others do the same. You will be happy. Your name will live in the world.'

Gangu Shah bowed and took leave of the Guru. He spent the rest of his life in living and acting as advised by the Guru. He began to

practise the golden rules of religion preached by the Gurus. He earned his living with honest hard-work. He shared his earnings with the needy. He always repeated God's name or recited the Guru's hymns. He made others live the same life. He treated everybody with kindness, love and sympathy. He was everybody's friend and helper. This gave him happiness and peace; for happiness and peace always attend those who love God and lovingly serve His children.

Akbar and the Guru's Langar

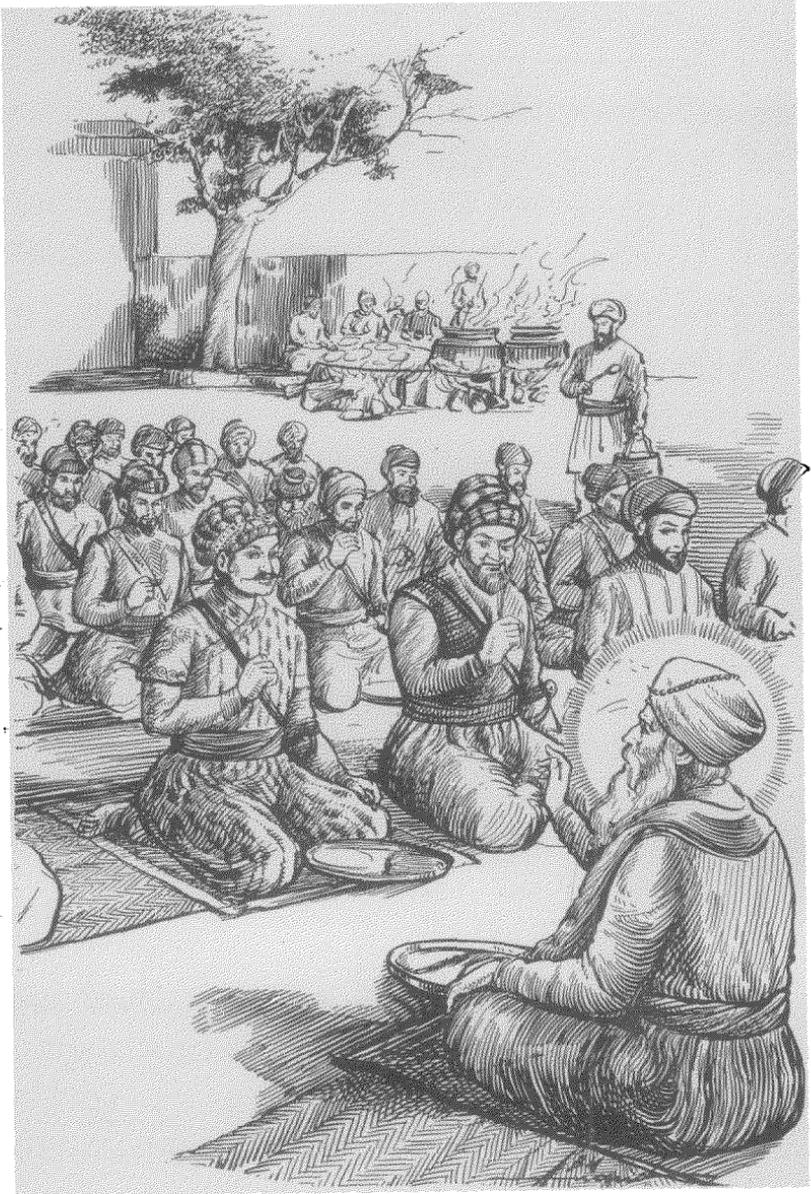
We have already read that Babar came to India from Kabul. He had a large army with him. He wanted to become emperor of India. He met Guru Nanak at Eminabad. Accepting the Guru's advice, he set free all his prisoners. He then requested Guru Nanak to pray for his success. The Guru said to him, 'I shall pray for your success. You will have success. But you must promise to be a just and kind ruler. You must give up all bad habits like gambling and drinking wine. You should be just and kind to all your subjects.' Babar promised to live and act as advised by the Guru.

Later, Babar's son, Humayun, met Guru Angad Dev at Khadur Sahib. He had been driven from his throne by Sher Shah Suri. He wanted to get back the throne. He begged the Guru to pray for his success. The Guru agreed to do so. At the same time he advised him to be a good and pious man and a just and kind ruler.

After Humayun's death, his son, Akbar, became the Emperor of India. He was a just, good and kind ruler. He respected all holy men. He knew that his grandfather had met Guru Nanak. He also knew that his father had met Guru Angad Dev. He knew that the Gurus had agreed to pray for them. He made up his mind to see and pay respects to Guru Amar Das.

Akbar used to visit Lahore, now and then. He decided to see the Guru during one of these visits. Having crossed the Beas, he went to Goindwal. He had with him a large number of Mughal and Pathan soldiers. He took with him costly offerings of various kinds. On reaching Goindwal, he wanted to go into the Guru's presence. But he was told, 'Anyone wishing to see the Guru must first take food from his free kitchen for all. If you want to see him, you will have to do the same. Nobody is allowed to break this rule.'

We know what the practice was in the Guru's kitchen. People of all castes and religions had to sit side by side on the floor and take their food. There was no special place for the rich or the high. The rich and the



Akbar at the court of Guru Amar Das.

poor, kings and beggars, Hindus and Muslims, masters and servants, high and low, Brahmins and Shudras, all were treated alike. All had to take the same food, sitting side by side. No special dishes were prepared for anyone, not even for the Guru. As a matter of fact, the food served to the Guru was far simple than that served to the public.

Akbar knew all this. But he was eager to see the Guru. So he went to the Guru's kitchen. He took his seat on the floor like all others. He took the same food as was taken by all others. The food that day consisted of coarse bread, rice and pulses. The Emperor found it very tasty. Rarely ever before had he tasted anything so sweet and nice. He made a hearty meal. All his soldiers did the same.

Akbar saw that a large number of people were fed from the Guru's kitchen. He said to himself, 'A very large quantity of food is used here every day. It must be a hard job for the Guru to provide so much food. I should give some help to the Guru in this noble work.'

So he said to the Guru, 'Holy sir, countless people are fed from your kitchen. I would like to provide a part of the food used here. I wish

to give you a grant of some good, fertile land. Choose it anywhere. Let it be of any size that you may like. I shall be glad to do anything else also that you may desire. Kindly accept my service and offering, O man of God.'

The Guru replied, 'Emperor, you are very good and kind. Your intentions are noble and high. But I am unable to accept your offer. God has given me everything in plenty. My Sikhs supply whatever is needed. They set apart a part of their honest earnings for this purpose. I wish that this practice should continue for all times. The Guru's *langar* must be supported and run by the Sikhs.'

The Emperor then said, 'I see that you desire nothing for yourself. Still I want to do something for you. I need your blessings. I wished to give you a grant of some villages. You refuse to accept it. I shall grant them to your daughter Bibi Bhani. She is like a daughter to me.'

The Emperor then signed a grant of the villages in Bibi Bhani's name. The Guru gave the Emperor a *saropa* or dress of honour.

The Emperor went away highly pleased. Baba Budha was appointed to manage the villages granted by the Emperor. The produce from the said villages was all used for the good of the people.

Sri Jetha and Bibi Bhani

In the part of Lahore called Chuna Mandi, there lived a *khatri* named Hari Das, and his wife named Daya Kaur. They were deeply religious. They did not worship gods and goddesses. They worshipped only one God. For a long time after their marriage, no son or daughter was born to them. They wanted very much to have a son. So they always prayed to God for one. After twelve years of married life a son was born to them. He was their first-born child. They named him Ram Das. But usually they called him Jetha. The word *jetha* means 'first born.'

Sri Jetha was yet a child when his parents died. He was thus left an orphan. His maternal grandmother took him with her to her home in Basarke. There he began to earn a living by selling boiled, salted and spiced grams. Sometimes he met beggars and holy men. They needed food. Being very kind-hearted, he gave them his grams free, in the name of God.

When Sri Jetha grew into a youngman, he went to Goindwal in the company of some Sikhs. On arriving there, he fell at the Guru's feet, 'O True Guru,' he said, 'make me your servant and Sikh.' Guru Amar Das was much pleased with Sri Jetha. He said to him, 'Continue to work as you do now. When you are free, serve in the *langar*. You will get a high reward.'

Sri Jetha became at once busy in the Guru's service. He cooked in the Guru's *langar*, he drew water, and brought firewood from the forest. At the same time, he continued to earn his living by selling grams. But he earned only as much as he required for his needs. After that he became busy in serving in the Guru's *langar*, or free kitchen.

Guru Amar Das had two daughters. The elder was called Bibi Dani. She was married to Sri Rama. The younger daughter was named Bibi Bhani. She was deeply religious. She spent most of her time in repeating God's name or reciting the Guru's hymns. She was yet unmarried.

One day, it so happened that Sri Jetha was sitting near the door of the Guru's house. He

was selling his boiled, salted and spiced grams. Guru Amar Das's wife, Mata Ram Kaur, said to the Guru, 'Bibi Bhani is now of the age to be married. We should search for a husband for her.' The Guru ordered one of his men to make the necessary search.

The man was about to go. Just then Bibi Bhani's mother saw Sri Jetha at the door. She said to the man, 'Search for a youth like that one there, to be my daughter's husband.' Hearing this, the Guru said, 'He alone is like him. None other can be like him. No further search need be made. That youth will be our son-in-law.'

Sri Jetha was called in. He fell at the Guru's feet. Then he touched Mata Ram Kaur's feet. Then folding his hands, he said, 'O True Guru, what are your orders for me ?' The Guru told him of his decision. Sri Jetha bowed his head. He was betrothed to Bibi Bhani. After some time the two were married. Sri Jetha came to live with the Guru. The Guru began to call him Sri Ram Das.

Sri Jetha or Sri Ram Das continued to do his work and service in the *langar* as before. He had no pride. In India, sons-in-law get

much respect and regard at the homes of their fathers-in-law. They do not work. They rest on soft, clean beds. They get rich and tasty food. But Sri Ram Das was not a son-in-law of that type. He did not behave like the Guru's son-in-law. He thought himself to be the Guru's servant and Sikh. He regarded his father-in-law as his master and Guru. He continued to work and serve like a labourer.

After a time, the Guru began to construct a *bawli*, a well with steps leading to the level of the water. Sri Ram Das began to labour at the *bawli*. He kept ever busy in carrying baskets of earth on his head. The earth soiled his clothes and covered his body. But he did not mind all this. Some people laughed at him, saying, 'There goes a grand son-in-law, working as a coolie in his father-in-law's house !' But he paid no heed to their words. He kept himself busy in doing work and service for the Guru.

Sri Rama or Sri Ram Das ?

Guru Amar Das had two daughters. The elder, Bibi Dani, was married to Sri Rama. The younger, Bibi Bhani, was married to Sri Ram Das. The two sons-in-law of the Guru lived at Goindwal. Both were zealous Sikhs. Both did their best to please the Guru with their work and service.

Some Sikhs began to ask one another, 'Which of the two is dearer to the Guru? Whom does he consider to be better—Sri Rama or Sri Ram Das?'

The Guru understood what was passing in the Sikhs' minds. He decided to test the two in public. The Sikhs would then see for themselves which of the two was better.

One day he came to the place where the *bawli* was being made. He said to Sri Rama, 'Make here a platform for me to sit on and watch the work.' He then explained what the shape and size of the platform should be.

Then going to another place, he said the same thing to Sri Ram Das.

Both began to build the platforms. When they were completed, the Guru came to see them. Sri Rama showed his work to the Guru and said, 'I have made it exactly as you ordered. I am sure you will like it.' But the Guru shook his head and said, 'No, it is not well-made. Pull it down and make it again.' Sri Rama said in reply, 'But holy sir, I have made it exactly according to your orders. It is well-built and beautiful.' The Guru, however, said again, 'No. It is not to my satisfaction.' Sri Rama agreed to do as desired. But he did so unwillingly and half-heartedly. He thought that the Guru was wrong.

Then the Guru went to see Ram Das's platform. After seeing it he said, 'I don't like it. Pull it down and build another in its place.' Sri Ram Das bowed and made no reply. He at once began to pull down the platform and to build another in its place.

Both built the platforms again. When they were completed, the Guru came to see them. He again said to each, 'I am not satisfied with

your work. Pull down the platform, and build another with greater care.'

Sri Rama said, 'I cannot see what is wrong with my platform. It is exactly like what you desired.' But the Guru was firm. He said, 'Pull it down and build another.' Sri Rama felt a little displeased. But he agreed to do as desired.

On the other hand, Sri Ram Das bowed and said, 'I am sorry for my failure to understand and carry out your orders properly. I shall try again.' He began to do the work again with care and zeal.

When the platforms were completed again, the Guru went to see them. He again said that they were not to his satisfaction. He again gave the same order—'Pull them down and build them again with greater care.'

Upon this Sri Rama said, 'I have done my best. I can do no better.' He refused to build the platform a fourth time. He said to himself, 'The Guru has become old. He says one thing today. He forgets it the next day, and says something else. It is impossible to satisfy him.'

But Sri Ram Das accepted the Guru's orders most cheerfully. He pulled down the platform at once. He built another in its place. The Guru was not satisfied even with that. Sri Ram Das pulled it down and built another. In this way he pulled down and rebuilt the platform as many as seven times. But the Guru was still not satisfied. Sri Ram Das fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'I am a fool. I fail to understand your orders properly. Let me try again, perhaps I may succeed.'

The Guru embraced him and said, 'You have been successful in these tests.' Then he said to his Sikhs, 'You have seen which of the two is better. Ram Das is the perfect being. He is in every way fit to take my place.'

One day soon afterwards, the Guru, caused Sri Ram Das to bathe and put on a new dress. He called his two sons and his principal Sikhs. He said to them, 'Guru Nanak made the rule that the Guruship should go to the best person. I have found Sri Ram Das to be most worthy. I now bestow the Guruship on him.'

The Guru got down from his throne.

Taking Sri Ram Das's arm, he seated him on it. Bhai Budha put the *tilak* of Guruship on Sri Ram Das's forehead. Guru Amar Das placed a coconut and five *paise* before him and bowed to him. He ordered his sons and Sikhs to do the same. Thus did Jetha or Sri Ram Das become Guru Ram Das, the fourth Guru of the Sikhs.

Sweet Humility Always Wins

As you know, Guru Nanak had two sons. The elder son's name was Baba Sri Chand. He was a deeply religious man. He hoped that after his father he would become the Guru. But Guru Nanak had not found him worthy of taking his place. Hence he had chosen Guru Angad to be the Guru after him. Baba Sri Chand had felt displeased at this. He felt that injustice had been done to him. He said, 'A servant has been given what was mine by right.'

Consequently, he was angry with those who occupied his father's place. He had kept away from Guru Angad. He had never visited Guru Amar Das. But by now, his anger had cooled down. So he made up his mind to see Guru Ram Das.

Baba Sri Chand was a very holy man. He was a great saint. He spent most of his time in worshipping God. He had not married. He remained a bachelor throughout his life. He

was not householder like his father. As we know, all the Gurus were householders, but Sri Chand was *Udasi*—one who had given up worldly life. He had a large following. His followers were called *Udasis* or *Udasi Sikhs*.

Having decided to see Guru Ram Das, Baba Sri Chand set out for Goindwal. The Guru learnt that Baba Sri Chand was on his way to see him. He said to himself, 'Baba Sri Chand is Guru Nanak's son. He is a great saint. He is senior to me in age. For all these reasons, he is worthy of deep respect. I should treat him most respectfully.'

Thinking thus, the Guru went out to receive and welcome the holy visitor. He made him an offering of a strong, beautiful horse and five hundred rupees in cash. Baba Sri Chand accepted the offering with pleasure.

On seeing Guru Ram Das, Baba Sri Chand said to himself, 'He looks exactly like my father. He is the very image of Guru Nanak.'

On reaching Goindwal, the Guru and his holy guest began to talk together. Now Guru



**“O Holy Sir, I have grown a long beard to wipe with it the feet
of holy men like you.”**

Ram Das differed altogether from Baba Sri Chand in appearance. He had uncut hair on the head. He had a very long beard. All Sikh Gurus and their Sikhs used to let their hair and beards grow uncut. All true Sikhs do the same now, too. But Baba Sri Chand used to shave off his hair and beard. He was clean-shaven. All his followers do the same to this day. They have clean-shaven heads and chins.

On seeing the Guru's long beard, Baba Sri Chand said, 'You have grown a very long beard. What is it for?' With sweet humility, the Guru replied, 'O Holy Sir, I have grown a long beard in order to wipe with it the feet of holy men like you.'

Saying this, the Guru began actually to wipe Baba Sri Chand's feet with his long black beard. Baba Sri Chand became a bit uneasy. He drew back his feet from the Guru, and said, 'O True King, you are in my father's place. You are, therefore, senior to me. I should show respect to you, and not you to me. It is because of your great sweetness and humility, that you have taken my father's place. I do not possess these good qualities.'

That is why I was not chosen to be the Guru. You are very great, indeed. You are, in every way, fit to occupy my father's throne of Guruship. I admire you. I bow to you.'

Indeed, sweetness and humility are very noble qualities. To treat everyone with love and sweetness, to be free from pride of every sort, to serve all with a heart full of love and kindness—these are great qualities. Every Sikh, every good man, should possess them. He should use them in his daily life. He will win everybody's heart. Sweet humility wins the heart.

A Childless Couple's Prayer

In a certain village there lived a man named Adam. He had no child. He and his wife served and worshipped many *sadhus* and *fakirs*. They made offerings at many places of worship. But no child was born to them. This made them sad. They were getting old. They began to fear that they might never get a son or daughter. They did not like to die childless. But what could they do !

Once they met a Sikh. On hearing their story, he said to them, 'Go to Guru Ram Das. He occupies Guru Nanak's throne. He will pray for you. His prayers are always accepted by God. Your wishes will be fulfilled.'

At that time Guru Ram Das lived at *Guru ka Chak*. That place was later called Amritsar. Accepting the Sikh's advice, the childless couple went to *Guru ka Chak*. They began to live there. Adam became busy in work, service, and prayer. He attended the Guru's court every morning and evening. There he

listened to the hymns sung by the Sikhs. He read and learnt *Gurbani* or the Gurus' hymns.

He kept repeating the name of God. During the day he went into the nearby forest. He brought two loads of firewood from there. One of them he kept in his house. He took the other load to the Guru's *langar* or free kitchen.

Six months passed in this way. Once the Guru went away to a certain place. When he returned, a large number of Sikhs came with him. Quite a large number of Sikhs had arrived during his absence. It was mid-winter then. The days were very cold. The nights were colder still. The visiting Sikhs shivered with cold.

Adam saw them suffering thus. He made up his mind to help them. He had a stock of dry firewood at home. He took bundles of it to all the camps where the Sikhs were staying. With that firewood a fire was lit in every camp. The Sikhs sat round the fire and warmed themselves. They thanked Adam for his gift.

After a time the Guru came out of his

place. He visited the camps where the Sikhs were staying. He wanted to know if they needed anything. He found them all warming themselves round heaps of burning firewood. He was much pleased at the sight. He asked, 'Who has done this service ? Who has provided firewood for all the camps ?'

The Guru's cook said, 'O True King, there is a zealous Sikh named Adam. He has been here for the last six months. Every day he brings two loads of firewood from the forest. One of them he keeps at his house. The other he brings to the *langar*. He keeps repeating God's name. He does not take food from the *langar*. He sells some of the firewood. He lives on the money earned by the sale. Today he saw the Sikhs shivering with cold. He brought out firewood from his house. He gave some of it to each camp. Thus he provided warm comfort to your Sikhs.'

The Guru was mightily pleased to hear this. He sent for Adam. Adam came, bowed, and stood with folded hands. The Guru said to him, 'I am mightily pleased with you. Ask for any boon you like. It will be granted.'



"I will pray for you. You will get a son."

Adam had a deep desire for a son. But he was an old man. He felt shy of asking for such a gift. He lowered his eyes and said nothing. The Guru again asked him to say what he wanted to have. Adam said, 'O True King, having seen you, I have obtained everything.'

On going home, Adam told the whole story to his wife. She said, 'You made a great mistake. You should not have felt shy. You should have begged for a son.' The next day, they both went to the Guru's court. The Guru understood what was passing in their minds. He said to them, 'Don't be shy. Speak out. Say what you wish to have.' Adam still felt unable to speak. His wife folded her hands and said, 'O True King, grant us the boon of a son.'

The Guru said, 'God is great and merciful. He answers His servants' prayers. I will pray for you. You should also pray to him. You will get a son. Name him Bhagtu. He will be a great *bhagat* or worshipper of God. He will earn a good name. He will make you happy.'

Adam and his wife were greatly pleased. They continued to lead a life of work, service

and worship. They also continued to pray to God to bless them with a son. They had full faith that God would accept their prayers. And He actually did so. In due course, they were blessed with a son. They were extremely happy. They thanked God and the Guru. All of us should thank God and the Guru for all their gifts to us. Adam and his wife named their son Bhagtu.

Falsehood Fails, Truth Succeeds

Guru Ram Das felt that the time of departure from the world was coming near. So, it was the time for him to decide who was to take his place after him. He carried out a number of tests. He found that his youngest son, Sri Arjan, alone was fit for the Guruship. He made his decision known to his Sikhs. They agreed with him. Then he called together his principal Sikhs. He sent for five paise and a coconut. He came down from his throne. He seated Sri Arjan on it in the presence of the assembled Sikhs. He placed the coconut and the five paise before him. He ordered Baba Budha to put the *tilak* or mark of Guruship on Sri Arjan's forehead. He then bowed before Sri Arjan and said, 'Sri Arjan is the Guru now. As one lamp is lighted from another, so has the Guru's light or spirit passed onto him. Thus Guru Nanak's light and spirit have come to dwell in him. He is the fifth Guru Nanak.'

Prithia was the eldest son of Guru Ram Das. He thought that it was his right to become the Guru after his father. But his father had given the Guruship to Sri Arjan. Prithia became mad with anger.

He quarrelled with his father. He spoke to him in harsh, angry words. He said to Guru Ram Das, 'The Guruship was my right. You have given it to my youngest brother. I will remove him and seat myself on the Guru's throne.'

Guru Ram Das advised Prithia that it was improper for a son to quarrel with his father. He desired him to accept his decision dutifully, like a good son. But Prithia continued to speak in harsh language to his father. He said again and again, 'You have done me a great wrong. I will undo what you have done. I will drive him away. I will become the Guru in his place. I don't accept your unjust decision.'

On the following day, Guru Ram Das set out for Goindwal. He took Guru Arjan with him. There he bade farewell to his dear ones and departed from this world.

Soon after that Guru Arjan returned to

Guru ka Chak or Amritsar. There he began to carry out his duties as the fifth Guru of the Sikhs.

Prithia declared himself to be the Guru. He sent out his men to make it known that he was the Guru. Many Sikhs were deceived by his men. When the Sikhs came to Amritsar with their offerings, Prithia's men took them to him. Thus all offerings went to Prithia. Guru Arjan was left with no income. Still he managed to run the Guru's kitchen with what he had with him. He remained calm and busy in repeating God's name. He took no steps against Prithia. He had full faith in God. He believed that Truth would succeed and falsehood would fail.

Prithia played another trick. While he took the offerings from the visiting Sikhs, he sent them on to the Guru's *langar* for food. The Guru did not mind this. He provided the best possible food for all in the *langar*. But it was not as good as it used to be in former days. He and his wife had often to live on nothing but parched grams. Sometimes they had to be content with a little coarse food, only once a day. But they were happy and at peace, all the time.

This went on for some time. Then Bhai Gurdas came from Agra. He was a cousin of Bibi Bhani, Guru Arjan Dev's mother. He was a zealous and learned Sikh. He was pained to see what was happening. He was sad to see the poor quality of food served in the Guru's *langar*. He was pained still more to see the very poor quality of the food taken by the Guru and his wife.

He made up his mind to set things right. He called together some principal Sikhs like Baba Budha. He discussed the matter with them. Baba Budha took his position at a place called Pipli Sahib. He met the visiting Sikhs there. He told them about the tricks being played by Prithia. He received their offerings for the Guru. These offerings he sent to the Guru. The Guru's *langar* became well-provided. Other prominent Sikhs went out in all directions. They informed the Sikhs of all places of what was happening at Amritsar. Soon the truth became known far and wide. All Sikhs accepted Guru Arjan as their true Guru. They sent him their offerings, or brought them to him when they came to see him. Prithia's plans were defeated. Falsehood failed and Truth prevailed.

A Lesson in Humility

Guru Arjan had become more than thirty years of age. So far no child had been born to him. His brother Prithia had a son named Meharban. The Guru treated his nephew, Meharban, as his own son. Prithia and his wife used to tell each other, 'The Guru has no son. After his death, the Guruship will come to our son.' One day, his wife said to the Guru's wife, 'What if your husband has unjustly taken possession of the Guru's throne? You have no son. The Guruship will, after all, come to my son and my family.'

The Guru's wife, Mata Ganga, was much pained at these words. She repeated them to the Guru and said, 'My Lord, you grant people all their wishes. Grant one wish of mine. Grant me a son.'

The Guru decided to use this chance to give his Sikhs a lesson in humility. He, no doubt, possessed the power to grant her the desired gift. But he decided to ask her to go to

Baba Budha and pray to him for that gift. So he said to her, 'God accepts the prayers of His dear ones. I would advise you to go to Baba Budha. He is a true and perfect Sikh of Guru Nanak's time. He possesses great powers. His prayers can never fail to be accepted. If he be pleased to bless you, your wish will be fulfilled. He lives in the forest. He looks after the Guru's cattle there. He is a humble man. He is ever engaged in worship. He takes only one meal a day. He eats what is sent to him from the Guru's *langar*. If you succeed in pleasing him, he will bless you, and you will have a son.'

Mata Ganga ordered her cooks to prepare tasty dishes. She took a maid-servant with her to carry the food. She put on rich fine clothes. Riding in a carriage, she went close to the forest where Baba Budha used to live and work. The carriage raised much dust in the air. Baba Budha saw the rising dust. He asked, 'What is that? Who is coming?' A Sikh replied, 'It is the Guru's wife coming this way.' Baba Budha said, 'What misfortune has made her thus fly from her home?'

Mata Ganga soon reached his presence.

She placed the tasty dishes before him. He took some food, but was not much pleased. The maid-servant explained to him why the Guru's wife had come. Baba Budha said, 'Who am I to grant such gifts ? I am only the grass-cutter and servant of the Guru. If I had such powers why should I cut grass and sweep the Guru's stables ?'

Mata Ganga grew sad on hearing Baba Budha's reply. She returned to Amritsar, lost in grief. She told the whole story to the Guru. He said, 'The holy saints should be served with humility and respect. You made a show of your position. You went there seated in a carriage. You took him food prepared by your servants. You took with you a servant to carry the food. In return, you got not a reward but a curse. I will tell you how to please him. Grind wheat and grams with your own hands. Knead the flour. Mix in it salt and spices. Then bake the bread yourself. Prepare also butter and buttermilk with your own hands. Put on a simple dress. Then take the bread, butter, thick buttermilk, curd, and some onions on your head. Go on foot and alone. While walking, go on repeating God's Name and



“It is the Guru’s wife coming this way.”

praying to Him. In that way you will please Babaji and obtain his blessings.'

Mata Ganga did exactly as advised by the Guru. She ground wheat and grams. She kneaded the flour. She mixed in it salt and spices. She baked the bread. She prepared butter and buttermilk. She selected some good onions. She put on a simple dress. She took all these things on her head. She walked barefoot to the forest where Baba Budha lived. She went alone, repeating God's Name all the time.

Baba Budha saw her coming. He said to himself, 'There comes *Mataji*, dear, respected mother. She has brought me my meal. If a mother were not to care for her son, who else will do so ? I was wrong in sending her away yesterday in that manner. But she has pardoned me.'

He stood up to greet and welcome her. He saluted her with folded hands and a deep bow. He joyfully accepted what she had brought. While eating the salted and spiced wheat-and-gram-flour bread or *missi roti*, he said, 'The Guru is the owner of the Divine

storehouse, but I have received an order to open it. As you have given me food to my heart's content, so shall you have a son to your heart's content. He shall be very handsome and brave. He shall possess great powers of body, mind, and spirit. As I crush the onions here, so shall he crush his enemies' heads.'

Mata Ganga returned home mightily pleased. Baba Budha's promise was fulfilled. Within a year she gave birth to a son. He was named Sri Hargobind.

Thy Will is Ever Sweet, O Lord !

Once, a Sikh named Bhai Gurmukh came to see Guru Arjan. He sat listening to the hymns being sung in the Guru's court. One of those hymns contained the following lines :

'Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord !

The wealth of Thy Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee.'

Bhai Gurmukh thought within himself, 'Good luck and bad luck, pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, are all caused by God. Everything happens as willed by Him. Good luck, pleasure, and joy are sweet, no doubt. But bad luck, pain, and sorrow can never be sweet. How, then, can anybody say that His Will is ever sweet to him.'

On meeting the Guru that day, he expressed his doubts to him and said, 'I very much wish to see a Sikh who looks upon pain and pleasure, sorrow and joy, as equally sweet gifts given by God; who calmly accepts all that may happen to him. Does such a one really exist ?'

The Guru replied, 'Yes, there are many such true Sikhs alive. I can show you one, not very far away. His name is Bhai Bhikhari. Go and see him.'

Bhai Gurmukh went to Bhai Bhikhari's house. On reaching there, he found a band playing at his door.

Inside he found ladies making merry and singing songs of joy. Girls and boys were dancing about in glee. The songs being sung were *ghories*. So he concluded that a boy's marriage was to take place. On enquiry, he was told that Bhai Bhikhari's only son was about to be married.

He asked someone to let him see Bhai Bhikhari. The man took him to a room at the back of the house. Bhai Bhikhari was there in that room. All the joy and merry-making going on in the house seemed to be unknown to him. He was calm, neither happy nor sad. He was busy in sewing a white sheet of cloth. As he worked, he went on reciting a hymn of the Guru. It contained the lines :

Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord!
The wealth of Thy Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee.'

Bhai Gurmukh was surprised to see Bhai

Bhikhari thus occupied. Going near to him, he said, 'O Sikh of the Guru, what I have seen here has filled me with wonder. I cannot understand all this. Please be kind and explain.'

Bhai Bhikhari said, 'What is it that needs explanation, my brother?'

Bhai Gurmukh said, 'Your son is about to be married. It is a happy event. All your people are busy in singing songs and making merry. Why don't you join them? How and why is it that you sit here away from all? And why are you sewing this white sheet? You don't seem to share the joy felt by all your friends and relatives. I cannot understand all this. This is what I wish you to explain to me.'

Bhai Bhikhari replied, 'My brother, what you say is right. My son's marriage is to take place tomorrow morning. The marriage party is to go today. It will return tomorrow with the bride. But I pass my days in accordance with the Will of the Guru and God. Everything happens according to that Will. I bow to that Will in every case. Pain and sorrow do not make me sad. Pleasure and joy do not make me glad. I have learnt to be calm under all circumstances, good or bad. Who knows.

what may happen tomorrow ? Today my son is going with his marriage party. Tomorrow he may have to go with his funeral party. I am preparing this shroud or winding-sheet for him. His dead body will be wrapped in it. Who knows when it may be needed ? It might be needed tomorrow.'

Bhai Gurmukh was filled with still greater wonder on hearing this. The marriage party left that day. It returned with the bride on the following day. The bride and the bridegroom were welcomed with songs of joy.

But soon after his return, the bridegroom began to have severe pain in his body. He died after a few minutes. All began to weep and cry. But Bhai Bhikhari was calm as ever. He shed no tears. He uttered no cry. He felt no sorrow. He quietly brought the white winding-sheet which he had prepared the previous day. His son's dead body was wrapped in that shroud. It was carried to the cremation ground and cremated.

While the rest were weeping and crying, Bhai Bhikhari went on reciting the Guru's hymns.

On their return from the cremation ground, Bhai Gurmukh said to Bhai Bhikhari, 'So you knew that your son was to die today, the very day of his marriage. You knew that his wife would become a widow on the very day of her marriage. Why did you let them get married?'

Bhai Bhikhari said, 'All had to happen as willed by Him. How could I interfere? How could I stop it?'

Then he closed his eyes and repeated,

Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord!

The wealth of Thy Name is all that Nanak begs for from Thee.'

Bhai Gurmukh bowed to him, touched his feet and returned to the Guru.

Tarn Taran and Muslim Ranghars

At Jhabal, about fifteen kilometres to the South-west of Amritsar, there lived a zealous Sikh. He was called Baba Langah. Some members of his family left that village. They settled on their own land. They built two small villages near each other. The villages were called Thathi Khera. They are now about five kilometres to the north of Tarn Taran.

Once Guru Arjan was making a tour of the country south of Amritsar. Many Sikhs were with him. Baba Langah was one of them. The Guru and his party stayed for a few days at Thathi Khera. They were guests of Baba Langah and his people.

Now, near the villages there was a large pond of clear, clean water. Shady trees grew near it on all sides. The Guru liked this place very much. He used to visit it every morning and spend some hours there. One day he said to Baba Langah, 'I have a mind to build a

temple and dig a tank in this part of the country. The tank shall be much larger than that at Amritsar. I have been looking for a suitable place for that purpose. I would like to dig the tank and build the temple here. I shall call it Tarn Taran. A town will grow around it. It will be one of the most important holy places of my Sikhs. How do you like the idea ?

Baba Langah folded his hands and said, 'O True Guru, the land here is hardly sufficient for my children living here. The tank, the temple, and the town will use up a large area. My children will be left with insufficient land. But, only a few kilometres from here, there is plenty of open, uncultivated land. A rain-water stream flows through it. That land will be wholly suitable. The rain-water stream will provide water for the tank. The land in question belongs to the Muslim Ranghars of Palasaur. I shall buy from them as much land as is needed. I shall pay them as much as they demand. I shall then humbly offer it to you. I beg you to accept this plan of mine.'

The Guru agreed. He visited the land in Baba Langah's company. He selected a plot.

On a fixed day prayers were offered and the work of digging the tank was started. Sikhs from the nearby villages came in large numbers every day to do the digging. They did this work as a labour of love, as a piece of service for their dear Guru.

Baba Langah met the owners of the land. He bought from them eighty bighas* of their land. He paid them as much as they asked for it. The price was paid in silver coins. All together, they formed quite a heavy load. The Muslim Ranghars took the money to their homes. Their women-folk, on seeing the heap of silver coins, said, 'From whom have you got all this money? And what for?'

They were told the story of the sale of the land. On hearing this, they said, 'What have you done? That *fakir* of Allah requires the land not for his private or family use. He is to use it for public religious purpose. He will build here a house of God, like the one he built at Amritsar. Don't you know that the foundation-stone of that House of God was laid by our Hazrat Mian Mir? Should we accept money for this piece of land? No. The

* A Bigha is equal to five eighths of an acre.

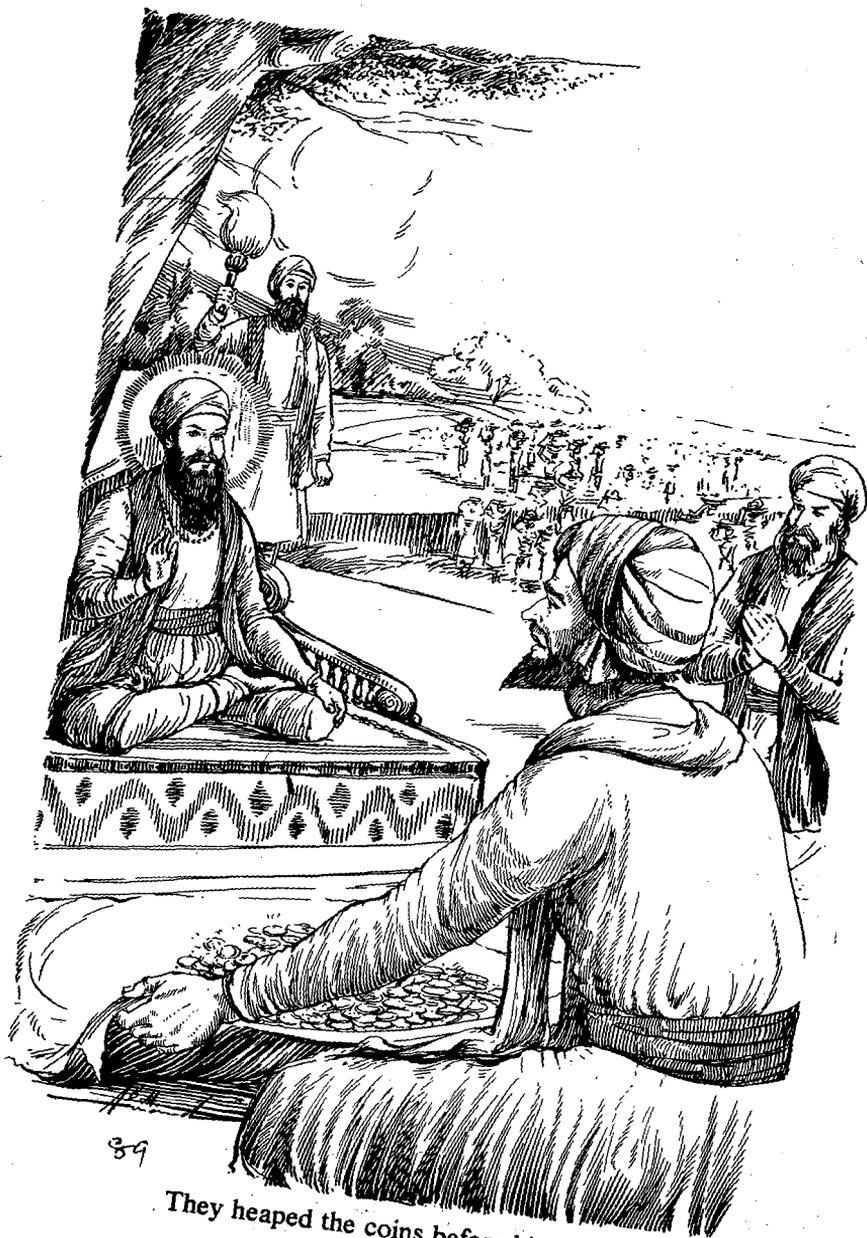
land was lying unused. It will be used for a holy purpose. We should consider it a great honour. Go and return the money. Also beg the Guru's pardon for having, accepted it thoughtlessly.'

The Ranghars went back. They met Baba Langah. They wanted him to take back the money. He replied, 'No brothers, I have given it in the Guru's name, for the Guru's cause. I cannot take back what has been once offered to the Guru or in his name.'

They then went to the Guru. They heaped the coins before him. They told him the whole story. They begged him to take back the money. They begged him to pardon them for having accepted it. The Guru said, 'I never gave it to you. How can I take back what I never gave?'

It was agreed at last, to distribute the money among those who were engaged in digging the tank. A handful of silver coins was given to everyone.

The Guru was pleased with the Muslim Ranghars. He blessed them, saying, 'Your family, your children, shall ever be happy



They heaped the coins before him.

and well-off.' Of all the families of Ranghars living in Palasaur, the family of these Ranghars grew to be the most happy and well-off. They continued to have faith in the Guru. they made regular offerings at the temple at Tarn Taran. They had to leave their village in 1947, to go to Pakistan. They were sad to be cut off from Tarn Taran. Even to this day, some of them have visited the temple and have offered prayers there.

Baba Langah

The work of digging the tank of Tarn Taran went on at great speed. Hundreds of Sikhs were engaged in this labour of love. Guru Arjan stayed there for the whole day. He watched the work being done. He looked to the needs of those doing that work. Sometimes he joined them and worked with them.

After the day's work was over, the Guru used to go with Baba Langah to Thathi Khera. He passed the night there. The house where he stayed was later changed into a Gurdwara. It is called Manji Sahib.

After some time, a house was built for the Guru near the tank. He began to live there. Baba Langah went every day to his village Jhabal. He got up very early every morning. To get up very early each morning is a rule that every Sikh has to follow. He took his bath. Then he set out for Tarn Taran. On his head he carried a neat earthen pot. It contained sweet curd and butter. These two things were

meant for the Guru. He walked barefoot, repeating God's name and reciting the Guru's hymns. He reached the Guru's presence before sunrise. He offered the curd and butter to the Guru. After that he returned to his village, with the empty earthen pot on his head. Then he took his breakfast. Thereafter he returned to Tarn Taran. He spent the day in the Guru's work and service.

This went on for quite a long time. One day the Guru decided to test Baba Langah. That night he said to his servant, 'Go out early in the morning tomorrow. Standing on some high place, be on the look out for Bhai Langah. When you see him coming, come back quickly and inform me.' To another servant he said, 'Get up early in the morning tomorrow. Feed and water the mare. Then saddle it. Keep it ready for me. I shall require it before sunrise.'

The servants did as directed. One went out to wait for Baba Langah. The other went to prepare the mare for the journey. The first of these two saw Baba Langah coming. He was yet quite far away. He ran to the Guru and informed him that Baba Langah was coming.

The Guru took his mare and rode away to Amritsar.

A short time after that Baba Langah arrived. He found that the Guru was not in his house. He searched for him. Then he asked the Guru's servants to tell him where he could see the Guru. He was told that the Guru had left for Amritsar. Baba Langah said, 'All right. Let it be as it pleases him.'

Baba Langah started towards Amritsar. He walked barefoot, repeating God's name and reciting the Guru's hymns. He had taken no food or drink. He walked as fast as he could.

On the other hand, the Guru wanted to test him still further. He kept the mare saddled and ready. He said to a Sikh, 'Bhai Langah will be coming. Be on the look out for him. When you see him coming, come and tell me at once.'

In due course Baba Langah reached near the Guru's house at Amritsar. The servant saw him coming. He went in to inform the Guru. The Guru took his mare and rode off to Tarn Taran.

Baba Langah reached the Guru's house. He asked for the Guru. He was told that the Guru had left for Tarn Taran. 'All right,' said Baba Langah 'Let it be as it pleases him.'

He started back towards Tarn Taran. By the time he reached there, it was already past noon. He entered the Guru's house. The Guru rose to receive him. He took the pot of curd and butter from Baba Langah's head. Baba Langah fell at the Guru's feet and said, 'Pardon me, O True King. I was a bit late this morning. I should have reached here before your departure. I have kept you waiting too long for this small, humble breakfast.'

The Guru said, 'No, Bhai Langah, you were not late. I wanted to test you. I am glad that you have stood the test so well. Now your service has become complete. Now you need not come here daily. I shall send for you, when I need your service.'

Baba Langah bowed and thanked the Guru. He left for his village. He took his breakfast on reaching home. It was quite late in the afternoon by then.

Jahangir and Guru Arjan

Under Guru Arjan the Sikh religion became very popular. It was making rapid progress. More and more people of all castes were becoming Sikhs. Even a large number of Muslims had accepted Guru Arjan as their guide and religious teacher, or their Guru.

The Muslim priests—Qazis and Mullahs—did not like this. They wanted that all non-Muslims should become Muslims. But just the opposite was happening under the Guru's guidance. He was standing in their way. He must be stopped. They began to make plans against him.

The first three Mughal Emperors had been kind and just to all their people. They did not work against any religion. Babar, Humayun and Akbar had even made friends with the Sikh Gurus. After Akbar, his son, Jahangir had sat on the throne. His policy and views were different. He wanted to spread Islam or the Muslim religion.

The Qazis and Mullahs met him. They spoke against the Guru. They urged him to stop the spread of Sikhism. 'If that is not done soon,' said they, 'very few Muslims will be left in the country. The only way to do this is to put an end to Guru Arjan's life.' The Emperor promised to meet their wishes.

It so happened that Jahangir's son Khusrau rose against him. He wanted to become the emperor in place of his own father. He fought against Jahangir. He lost the battle. He ran towards Lahore. Jahangir went after him. He wanted to catch and punish him. He knew that many people had helped the rebel prince. As he went along, he made enquiries to find out such people. He punished as many of them as he could catch.

On his way to Lahore, he passed by Goindwal and Tarn Taran. He made a halt at the former place. All along, he went on making enquiries to find out Khusrau's helpers. He asked people, 'Did anybody help Khusrau?' He made the enquiry at Goindwal, too. Nobody said a word against the Guru. The Guru had a number of enemies like Chandu, Prithia, some Brahmins, and Qazis. If the

Guru had helped Khusrau, they would certainly have said so to Jahangir.

Jahangir reached Lahore. After some time he got ready to return to Delhi. The enemies of Guru Arjan decided to act. They made up a false story against him. They met Jahangir. They said to him, 'Khusrau met Guru Arjan at Goindwal. He asked for help from the Guru. The Guru prayed for his success against Your Majesty. He also gave him a large sum of money.'

On hearing this, Jahangir became red with anger. He had already made up his mind to put an end to Guru Arjan's life. He had made that resolve on account of what the Qazis and Mullahs had told him. Now he had been given another excuse against the Guru. He had helped the Emperor's rebel son. He must be punished for having worked against the Emperor.

Jahangir did not make any enquiry. He did not try to find out the truth. He had no time to do so. He had no mind to do so. He forgot one most important fact. Otherwise, he would not have believed the Guru's enemies. That fact

was this. No such report had been made to him at Goindwal or at any other place. He had made enquiries at every place.

But Jahangir only wanted some excuse against the Guru. He remembered the promise that he had given to the Qazis to put an end to the Guru's life and activities. He was glad that he had an excuse to fulfil that promise.

He acted at once. He said to his men, 'Go to Amritsar, arrest the Guru, and bring him here to me.' Then he said to his officers, 'When the Guru is brought here, put him to death with torture.'

He gave these orders and left for Delhi. His men went to Amritsar, arrested Guru Arjan Dev, took him to Lahore, and handed him over to the Emperor's officers there.

Tortures

Jahangir's officers at Lahore were to carry out his orders regarding Guru Arjan. They began to make plans for torturing the Guru. Chandu, an enemy of the Guru, was one of those officers. He said to them, 'I shall carry out the Emperor's orders. I have made my plans. Give the Guru into my hands. I shall kill him with torture.'

The officers agreed at once. Chandu took the Guru to his palace in Lahore. There he said to the Guru, 'You know what you have done against me. Now I am going to take my revenge. Be ready.'

The Guru replied, 'I bear no enmity or ill-will against any one. All happens as God Almighty wills it to happen. I am prepared to accept His Will. You may do what you like.'

Chandu began to torture the Guru. On the first day, the Guru was not given anything to eat or drink. He was not allowed to sleep at night. He was kept awake. He bore all this

most calmly. He kept thinking of God, repeating His Name, and reciting Holy hymns.

On the following day, Chandu made the Guru sit in a big copper vessel. He filled the vessel with water. He ordered his men to light a fire under the copper vessel.

The water began to get hot. After a time, the water began to boil. It scalded the Guru's body. But the Guru sat calmly and quietly. He felt no pain. He gave out no cry. He did not even sigh. He felt no anger against those who were torturing him. He went on praying to God. He prayed for strength to bear everything with calmness and courage. He went on repeating His Name. He went on repeating, 'All is happening, O Lord, according to Thy Will. Thy Will is ever sweet to me.'

The boiling water made the Guru's flesh soft and painful. Blisters appeared all over his body.

On the third day, Chandu ordered his men, 'Make some sand red hot in iron pans. Seat the Guru in boiling water. Then pour the red-hot burning sand on his head and body.' This was done. The water boiled his flesh from

below. The burning red-hot sand burned his head and body from above. The persons engaged in torturing him were wet with sweat. They felt most uncomfortable because of the heat. It was the hottest summer month. But the Guru kept calm and quiet. He felt no pain. He uttered no cry. He did not sigh. He felt no anger against those who tortured him. He kept thinking of God. He kept repeating His Name. He kept repeating, 'Thy Will to me is ever sweet, O Lord !'

Hazrat Mian Mir was a great Muslim saint of Lahore. He was the friend of the Guru. He was greatly respected by all Muslims. Even Emperor Jahangir had great respect for him. Hazrat Mian Mir heard of what was happening to Guru Arjan. He was very sad at the news. He went to see the Guru. On seeing the Guru being tortured, Hazrat Mian Mir cried out in grief and pain. He said to the Guru, 'May I appeal to the Emperor for your release ? May I ask him to punish these people who are torturing you ?'

The Guru said, 'No brother, All is happening in accordance with God's Will. Men who stand for Truth have often to suffer. Their



Thy will is ever sweet to me

sufferings give strength to the cause of Truth. Go, brother. Pray for me. Pray for the success of my cause. Pray for victory to Truth.'

On the fourth day, the Guru was made to sit on an iron plate. It was heated from below. The iron plate became red hot with the heat. The Guru's flesh began to be roasted. Burning red-hot sand was poured on his body. The Guru sat calm and quiet. He seemed to feel no pain. He did not sigh. He uttered no cry. He felt no anger against his torturers. He sat with his mind fixed on God. He kept repeating His Name. He kept repeating, 'Thy Will is ever sweet to me, O Lord!'

On the fifth day, the Guru was taken to the river Ravi. He was thrown into the running river. His body was too weak to stand up against the fast-flowing water. It was washed away. He himself returned to God's presence.

On the place where this happened stands a beautiful Gurdwara. It is called Dera Sahib. For the Sikhs, it is a very dear sacred place. They used to visit it in their thousands every day. Every year a very big gathering, called

Jor Mel, was held there on the day on which the Guru left for his Eternal Home or God's presence. But now the Sikhs are not free to visit that most sacred and dear place of theirs. How sad ! May God so arrange things that the Sikhs may be free to visit their sacred places now in Pakistan ! All Sikhs make this prayer everyday.

