

Under the Benign Grace of the Gurus

- *Shakun Narain Kimatrai*



A Tribute to Mrs Lajwanti Jamnadas Khiani
3.10.1920 – 21.08.2002

Dedicated to
My Mother,
My Guide,
My Inspiration,
My Friend.

MY MOTHER

Mrs. LAJWANTI JAMNADAS KHIANI

My mother and I had a very strong Karmic connection.
I lost my father when I was very young.
My sister, being older to me by 7 years, got married at an early age and stayed overseas.
Until I was a young teen-ager, I lived in Spain.
My outlook and thoughts were totally western.
I could not meet my classmates in discussion when they wondered aloud, how Hindus could be so pagan as to worship cows, monkeys and elephants
After my sister got married, my mother decided that I needed to be introduced to our rich Indian heritage.

Thus, I returned to India, confused.

My mother was deeply religious. She spent most of her time going for Spiritual discourses. She would not leave me alone at home, hence we would strike a deal.
If I went with her for a religious gathering, she would allow me to go somewhere I enjoyed.

At the Spiritual discourses that I was made to attend, my mind would wander to whatever was fancying me at the moment.

But, somehow, somewhere, sometimes a sentence would find its way into my intellect. Questions within me would surface. Initially the questions overflowed, probably to argue, to prove myself right. But as I came across scholars in front of whom my arguments seemed to have not a chance, I realized the Ocean of Wisdom that Hinduism is.
Mummy's Ishtdeva was Krishna, but she had deep faith in the Guru Granth Sahib.
I would sing with devotion at Janmashtami and Radhashtami functions, and pay my respects to the Guru.

So I grew in the company of Krishna and under the benign Grace of the great Gurus.
Thank you mummy, for being the instrument in instilling a spiritual interest in me.
Mummy was extremely independent. She lived alone after my marriage.

Did I say alone? No way! She would spend time, traveling to the abodes of the various Deities, be it, in the lofty Himalayas or in Southern Bharat-Desh.
But did all these prayers and rituals make her superstitious and afraid?
No! Love and Faith in her life were paramount
She always, concentrated and thanked the Lord for the glass half-full, rather than it being half-empty.

Thank you mummy, for giving me the gift, of learning to be grateful, and the capacity to love, despite odds!

She helped me nurse my children through their various childhood illnesses.

My children teasingly called her the night nurse.

Thank you mummy for being a great mom and Big-mama!

The last years of her life, she withdrew into herself.

I was not sure, whether the above, was a spiritual method to reduce her attachments and desires, until a Spiritual Giant, described her condition as Sahaj Samaadhi.

She did not trouble me, in the last 7 years that she stayed with me.

I was troubled however, by watching her go, through the inevitable difficulties of old age.

But she bore them with patience.

She told me that I (should not fret as I) had done my best, and she expressed the desire of moving on.

So, Good bye mummy,

Thank you, for being my mother, my friend, my Guide.

Until we meet again, fare you well!

Your daughter,

Vimlu (My maiden name)

Sincerely,

Shakun Narain Kimatrai

27 August 2002

UNDER THE BENIGN GRACE OF THE GURUS

GURU NANAK

(1469-1539)

The Sindhis were greatly influenced by Guru Nanak's teachings as he did pass through Sindh and expound his beautifully simple philosophy to the Sindhis of that area. The Sindhis were so deeply influenced by the Master's teachings that it was not uncommon for the Sindhis to make their first son a Sikh. Even today the Sindhis worship Guru Nanak with the same fervor that they accord to, Shri Krishna, Shri Ram, Shivji or/ and Ma Durga, Laxmi and Saraswati. The Geeta and The Guru Granth Sahib both enjoy an exalted status in Sindhi homes. Come let us pay homage to this Giant personality.

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 in the Western Punjab village of Talwandi. The Birthplace of Guru Nanak is in Pakistan, driving distance from Lahore and is today called Nanakana Saheb. During the time Guru Nanak was born, India was being ruled by Muslim kings. Disrespect was openly accorded to non Muslim places of worship. Both Hinduism and Islam were being corrupted by their religious authorities. At this juncture, Guru Nanak's simple philosophy of the oneness of God (Ek Omkaar Satnaam) felt very welcome. The teachings of the Sikh Gurus are compiled in the Holy Book of the Sikhs: The Guru Granth Sahib.

The Sikhs believe that the Light of the first Guru's Soul (Guru Nanak) was transmitted to each of His successors. These in turn became embodied in their Holy Book, the Guru Granth Sahib. The word 'Sikh' comes from the word Seekhna (to learn) or Shishya meaning disciple. The role of the Guru in Sikhism is very important. The Guru is considered the Bridge that connects the Disciple with God. The Sikhs were enraged when Guru Arjan Dev Ji was cruelly killed by a Moghul Emperor. It was then, that the Sikh Religion acquired a militant hue.

Guru Nanak's father's name was Mehta Kalian Das. At the age of 6, young Nanak was sent to school. Guru Nanak was well versed in Hindi, Mathematics, Muslim Literature, Persian and Arabic. Young Nanak learned quickly. One day Guru Nanak wrote a hymn for the Village school teacher which admonished man for having forgotten the Lord who was the true Giver and the One who had created the world. Guru Nanak told his Muslim teacher to be good, honest and truthful. He urged him to love everyone and to live together like one family. Both Guru Nanak's Muslim as well as Hindu teacher were awe-struck at the Divine child's knowledge and proclaimed him their Guru. When Guru Nanak was 13 years old, his parents wanted to invest him with the sacred thread according to the traditional Hindu custom. At the ceremony, Guru Nanak refused to accept the sacred cotton thread from the Hindu priest. He sang the following poem:

"Let mercy be the cotton, contentment the thread, Continnence the knot and truth the twist. O priest! If you have such a thread, Do give it to me. It'll not wear out, nor get soiled, nor burnt, nor lost. Says Nanak, blessed are those who go about wearing such a thread".

Guru Nanak did not object to getting married as he believed that married life did not conflict with spiritual yearnings. At age 16 he was married to Sulakhani and was happy. He loved his wife and eventually had two sons Sri Chand in 1494 and Lakshmi Chand three years later.

For Guru Nanak, meditation became his way of life. Once a cobra shielded him from the scorching heat as he was absorbed in the name of the Lord. Another time, the cattle that he was tending crossed over and destroyed a farmer's field. The farmer complained to young Nanak's father but when they went to inspect the field, they were astonished to note that the crops were intact. The farmer insisted that it was a miracle.

Young Nanak's father wanted him to lead a normal life and to earn a decent living. So he gave him some money to strike a profitable bargain. Guru Nanak spent that money feeding sages and mendicants. He claimed that that was a 'Sacha Sauda' (A good bargain).

Guru Nanakji became a shop-keeper, in the service of Nawab Daulat Khan, the Governor of Sultanpur. The young apprentice would go into a trance as he weighed and counted his provisions and reached the number 'tera' (13) Tera means 'yours or thine' Everything and Everyone belongs to Thee O Lord! He would repeat prayerfully!

At Sultanpur where Guru Nanak worked as a shop-keeper, he met Mardana, who was to become his constant companion. Mardana was a musician. Guru Nanak started to sing hymns accompanied by Mardana on the rabab (a string instrument). These sessions attracted a lot of people. Guru Nanak went to the river one morning accompanied by Mardana. After plunging into the river, Guru Nanak did not surface and people believed that he must have drowned. He emerged from the water, after 3 days Enlightened.

Nanak uttered the famous words of the Japji Sahib for the words and translation) These immortal words are enshrined at the beginning of the Sikh Holy Scripture: The Guru Granth Sahib.

When Guru Nanak emerged from his trance, he proclaimed that there was no Hindu and no Mussalman. He explained that since both were the children of God, they were brothers and sisters.

At the age of 30, Guru Nanak, started his extensive travels to spread the word of God. He conveyed his message in the form of musical hymns. Wherever he went, his followers could gather to recite hymns and meditate.

Guru Nanak deplored hypocrisy. He recognized that 'Sajjan' a man he met in Talamba, in Multan district, now in Pakistan, did not really act as a good person like his name suggested. Even though Sajjan had built a rest house for weary travelers, he would steal from them, kill them and throw them into a nearby well. Guru Nanak told him that he may be able to deceive man but he would not be able to deceive God. He further explained that grace may be obtained by open confession and reparation of wrong. Repentant Sajjan mended his ways inspired by the great Master. He gave away all his wealth to the poor and reformed his life.

To become a good Mussalman, Guru Nanak urged that: God's grace become the mosque, and devotion the prayer mat. The Quran should become the good conduct, modesty become compassion, good manners fasting, Good deeds become their Kaaba and Truth their mentor. Their Kalma should become their creed and prayer.

Guru Nanak did not believe in the rigidity and hypocrisy of Hindu Prayers. Once at Hardwar, he saw Hindus offering water to their dead ancestors. Guru Nanak mocked the futile ritual by offering water to the thirsty crops miles away!

Guru Nanak gave no preference to his High Caste devotees much to their chagrin. He would prefer to dine with a carpenter called Bhai Lalo, instead of with Malik Bhago who was the manager of a Muslim Sardar. Once Malik confronted Guru Nanak on his choice of host. Malik thundered: "You refuse my invitation, and prefer to dine with a low-caste man?" Guru Nanak asked Malik Bhago to get some food from his kitchen. Guru Nanak had with him, Bhai Lalo's coarse bread. He held Bhago's seasoned bread in his left hand and squeezed it. Drops of blood oozed out from it while milk trickled from Bhai Lalo's bread. Guru Nanak explained that bread earned by hard honest work is sweet, whereas food earned deceitfully is tainted with poor people's blood!

Guru Nanak taught that material wealth is mostly gathered sinfully, but sadly it does not accompany us at the time of death!

Guru Nanak once went up boldly and unafraid in front of a dreaded cannibal chief named Kauda. Kauda was thrilled as he saw his 'meal' coming to him. He started to heat the oil in anticipation. When Guru Nanak came close to him, Kauda tested the oil. He found it cold! Not to give up so easily, Kauda caught Guru Nanak in his muscular arms and flung him into the fire! As Kauda watched Guru Nanak step out of the fire unharmed, Kauda trembled, repented and stood reverently with folded hands. Kauda took a vow not to harm anyone. Thus from a killer Kauda was transformed into a servant and teacher of men.

Babar, the moghul Emperor had looted houses of many people in Eminabad, who were then made to carry their own looted property to Babar's camp. Guru Nanak and Bhai Mardana, who were visiting Eminabad at that time were taken prisoners. Guru Nanak did not lose his equipoise, he continued to sing for the Lord in prison much to the solace of the other victims. Babar decided to visit the prison to witness this uncommon occurrence. Looking at the peaceful countenance of Guru Nanak, Babar seemed to come under a magic spell. Since the Emperor did not comprehend the words of the holy song, he asked Guru Nanak for a translation. The Guru boldly told him that he was singing about the cruelty of the Emperor and the sad state of the victims. Impressed by Guru Nanak's frankness, fearlessness and courage, Babar freed the prisoners and returned to them their homes and possessions.

Guru Nanak traveled for 21 long years imparting his wisdom wherever he set foot. He arrived in Mecca after an exhausting journey. To rest his weary feet he lay down. The Muslims who saw him took great offence when they noticed that the Guru's feet were pointing towards the 'Kaaba' or 'the House of God'. One of the hajis kicked the Guru in anger and demanded an explanation. The Guru benevolently smiled and said that he respected the House of God as much as they did. However if his 'misconduct' offended them, he requested that they turn his feet. As the haji moved the Guru's feet in various directions, he would 'see' the kaaba in the same line as the feet of Guru Nanak. The Guru had once again imparted an immortal lesson. That the Lord resides in every place and in every heart.

The last part of his worldly life, Guru Nanak spent in Kartarpur. The Great Guru would wake at dawn and recite his daily prayers. At daybreak, he would address his followers. He worked in his free kitchen, which even today is popularly known as 'langar'. This food would be partaken by Hindus, Muslims, rich, poor, high or/and so called low castes. Guru Nanak worked in the field and earned his livelihood. On 22 September of the year 1539, at the age of 70 years, Guru Nanak gave up his body after he had requested his disciples to sing the 'Sohila' (the praise of God).

Once when Guru Nanak was asked which religion, Hinduism or Islam was the true path to God, Guru Nanak replied that the true way to attain God was to worship Him who is eternal and contained in the whole Universe.

When Guru Nanak merged into the eternal light, the Hindus wanted to cremate him while the Muslims wanted to bury the body. However on raising the sheet under which the Great Guru's body lay, both found nothing but fresh flowers which were divided between themselves. The Hindus cremated the flowers whereas the Muslims buried theirs. Like Guru Nanak claims in one of his hymns;

*'Nanak leen bhayo Govind syon
Jyon pani sang pani'*

Which means that Nanak has so merged with the Lord
Like water does with water.

GURU NANAK'S TEACHINGS

God is formless, omnipresent, compassionate, and can be reached through prayer, humility, service, meditation, and virtuous living.

He did not propagate ritual worship, discrimination against women and against those of lower socio-economic status.

Guru Nanak urged his followers to:

Naam Japo – Constantly meditate on God's name

Kirat Karo –to earn ones livelihood through honest means

Wand Chakko- To share

Guru Nanak practices

Sangat People should meditate and pray together

Pangat people should sit and eat together to create a sense of equality

Langar a free distribution of food to rich and poor

Sadh-Sangat keep the company of spiritually-inclined people

THE GURU GRANTH SAHEB AND THE SINDHIS

(Follows an excerpt from a translation by Narain Kimatrai from the original book 'A History of Hindus in Sind' by Diwan Bherumal Advani published in 1946)

Diwan Manecksingh was a minister with Mir Shehdad Khan and the son of Diwan Kishinchand. He wanted to expound the philosophy of Sikhism to his cousins and other Hindus.

Before doing so he gained the knowledge after being granted audience with Maharaja Ranjit Singh in Punjab. Diwan Manecksingh brought the Guru Granth Saheb, with due respect laden on elephant back to Hyderabad.

The temporary Gurdwara structure in the year 1855 was reconstructed into a permanent one after British takeover. Every follower did manual labour to help construct the Gurdwara. Everyone contributed 4 annas (25 paise) everyday. The structure was completed in 1858. Till 1946 the cost towards the construction exceeded Rs25000. The area on which the structure sits is around 10000 sq. ft. and is/was operated by the trust.

2ND Guru

Guru Angad (1504-1552)

Guru Angad was a disciple of Guru Nanak. He was also called Lehnaji.

One day, Lehnaji heard a beautiful song, sung by another disciple of Guru Nanak.

The song cast a spell on Lehnaji. The latter set out to meet Guru Nanak, on horseback.

On his way, he met an old man. Lehnaji asked him the directions to go to Guru Nanak's house. The old man showed him the house. When Lehnaji entered the house, he was surprised to find that the old man was none other than Guru Nanak Himself.

Lehnaji felt very remorseful that he had ridden on a horse, while Guru Nanak walked the path to show him his own house!

Once Guru Nanak wanted three bundles of wet, muddy grass to be taken home. Guru Nanak's own sons refused to do this work, but Lehnaji, was happy to do this task for his beloved master. Guru Nanak's own wife admonished her husband for making a guest carry muddy grass. Guru Nanak said that that was not mud but saffron. Surprisingly, the mud dripping from Lehnaji had miraculously changed to fragrant saffron!

Lehnaji would happily follow his Guru's requests, time and time again.

One day, Guru Nanak wanted his clothes washed in the middle of the night, And yet on another occasion, Guru Nanak wanted a part of the wall, which had collapsed to be repaired. The sons of the Guru and other disciples disobeyed these orders as they considered Guru Nanak a hard taskmaster.

But maybe Guru Nanak was testing Lehnaji to see if the latter was obedient and worthy of becoming Guru Nanak's successor.

Guru Nanak became very fond of Lehnaji. Guru Nanak told Lehnaji, that the latter had become as dear to him as a part (Ang) of his body. Hence Lehnaji would be known as Angad.

Lehnaji told his unhappy sons that only one who is sincere, devoted, obedient and self sacrificing is the right kind of disciple, and worthy of becoming his successor.

Thus Lehnaji became Guru Angad, the 2nd Guru, after Guru Nanak.

Guru Angad would wake up very early to meditate, and he healed the sick..

Guru Angad simplified the old Punjabi alphabet. It is called Gurmukhi.

He compiled Guru Nanak's verses. He opened several schools for children.

He took great interest in their physical fitness programmes.

He was a Great Guru who truly lived by the principles of the Sikh Religion.

3rd Guru

Guru Amardas (1479-1574)

Guru Angad's daughter Bibi Amro, was married to the nephew of Amardas.

One day, Amardas heard Bibi Amro singing the hymns of Guru Nanak.

On hearing the story of Guru Angad, Amardas expressed the wish that he wanted to meet Guru Angad.

When Amardas met Guru Angad, Amardas fell at Guru Angad's feet.

Guru Angad protested as Amardas was not only his relative, but 20 years older.

However Amardas insisted on serving Guru Angad.

Amardas was a very obedient and devoted disciple.

He once sucked out a stubborn stain from Guru Angad's clothing.

Amardas felt that the impurities of his personality had also got cleansed together with the stain.

Once Guru Amardas went to fetch water at the middle of the night for his guru, when others did not want to do so, as they were sleeping.

As Amardas was returning, he tripped and fell at a weaver's house.

The wife of the weaver cursed Guru Angad for sending his disciple to fetch water at this unearthly hour.

Amardas told the weaver's wife that she was insane to speak badly about Guru Angad who was a man of God.

It is believed that the weaver's wife went really mad, until her husband sought forgiveness of the Guru.

Guru Angad then gave the gaddi to Amardas.

Gaddi literally means the 'seat'

Giving the 'gaddi' means that Guru Angad nominated Amardas as his successor.

On hearing the above, the son of Angad, Datu became very jealous, and he kicked Guru Amardas.

Instead of getting angry, Guru Amardas told Datu: "I am so sorry, that my hard old bones have hurt your tender feet."

Then Guru Amardas left for his home town.

However no one accepted Datu as their Guru. So the latter took his belongings and left town. On the way, he was robbed and hurt on the same foot with which he had kicked Guru Amardas.

It is believed that that foot hurt all his life.

The Sikhs called Amardas back to sit on the 'gaddi' that had been given to him by Swami Angad.

Guru Amardas encouraged the widows to remarry. And he stopped the terrible custom of women taking their lives when their husband's died. This terrible custom was called 'Sati'.

Guru Amardas reigned spiritually for 22 years!

4th Guru

Guru Ramdas

1534-1581

Guru Ramdas' real name was Sri Jetha.

When Guru Amardas appointed Jetha as his successor, Sri Jetha was given the name of Guru Ramdas.

Guru Ramdas was the disciple of Guru Amardas. Guru Amardas had 2 daughters, His elder daughter whose name was Bibi Dani was married to Sri Ram.

Guru Ramdas married the second daughter of his Guru.

Her name was Bibi Bhani.

Guru Ramdas was very humble and never expected special favors from Guru Amardas.

Everyone used to tease him for working like an ordinary laborer in his own father-in-law's house.

Before Guru Amardas died, he wanted to appoint a successor.

So he put both his sons-in-law to the test.

He asked both his sons-in-law to build a platform.

As soon as they were built, Guru Ramdas asked that they be demolished and brought up again. The above operation was carried on many times. At last Sri Ram was upset and asked what was wrong with his construction. Ramdas on the other hand stated that he had probably not understood his guru's orders.

Guru Amardas appointed Guru Ramdas as his successor as the latter had proved to be more worthy in terms of obedience and humility.

Do you remember, how Guru Nanak had appointed Guru Angad as his successor, as the latter had proved more worthy than his own sons?

Once Guru Ramdas went to visit the son of Guru Nanak whose name was Sri Chand.

At that time Sri Chand had become a hermit who had renounced the world and spent his time praying to God.

Guru Ramdas humbly told Sri Chand that the reason for him having grown such a long beard is, so that he could wipe the feet of holy men, like Sri Chand.

Sri Chand was impressed at Guru Ramdas' humility despite the fact that the latter was in his father's place.

Sri Chand conceded that Sri Ramdas had deserved his father's 'gaddi'

(I had also explained to you what 'gaddi' means. Do you remember?)

Sri Ramdas fulfilled the wish of a childless couple who had served by providing firewood to warm the shivering crowds in the spiritual camps.

What the childless couple had wished for, was a child.

And a son was born to the generous and grateful couple.

Guru Ramdas did not make any distinction between rich or poor. Or whether one belonged to a higher caste or a lower caste.

All ate together the same food. This practice is until today called a 'Langar'.

Guru Ramdas gave rights to a woman, and insisted that they be treated equally.

In the old times, and even today sometimes, women are not given education and are treated worse than the men. Do you think that is fair?

Guru Ramdas excavated the tank around the Golden temple of Amritsar.

'Sar' means 'pond' and Amrit means nectar.

When it was time for Guru Ramdas to leave the world, he appointed his son Arjan as the successor. Guru Ramdas found his son worthy to succeed him and sit on his 'gaddi'.

5th Guru

Guru Arjan

(1563-1606)

Guru Ramdas had three sons. Guru Arjan was the youngest one.

The eldest son whose name was Prithia was very unhappy with his father's decision to give the gaddi to his youngest brother Arjan.

After Guru Ramdas' death, young Arjan, who was only 18 years of age, became the 5th Guru of the Sikhs.

But Prithia refused to accept his father's decision and declared himself the rightful successor.

Prithia's followers would forcibly take the offerings that came for Arjan and give them to Prithia.

Naturally the 'Langar' suffered. There was never enough food. The quality of the food that was there, deteriorated in quality.

But young Arjan remained calm.

Guru Arjan's maternal uncle and Respected Baba Buddha met the visiting Sikhs and explained the prevailing unfair situation.

After that matters came into order. The quality and the quantity of the food, subsequently served in the Langar improved.

Guru Arjan married Mata Ganga. Mata Ganga was often taunted for not having borne a child, despite being married for so many years.

Mata Ganga cried to her husband. Guru Arjan advised his wife to pray to Bhai Buddha.

So the next day, Mata Ganga set out in her beautiful carriage, while her servants carried delicious dishes for the saint.

When Bhai Buddha saw the impressive procession and heard Mata Ganga's plea, he told her that he was a mere servant and possessed no powers

Mata Ganga returned to Amritsar. She expressed her disappointment to the Guru.

Guru Arjan explained to his wife that one ought to go to saint's door in utter humility.

This time, Mata Ganga cooked the food herself and set out humbly to meet Bhai Buddha.

The latter happily accepted the food, which he ate with relish, and then blessed Mata Ganga. True enough within a year Mata Ganga bore a handsome son who turned out to as brave as he was spiritual.

Guru Arjan was totally surrendered to the will of God.

He founded the town of Taran Taaran and Kartarpur near Jullunder.

Guru Arjan completed the tank at Amritsar and built the famous Hari Mandir, known today as the Golden Temple, in the middle of the water, believed to be filled with nectar, by God Himself.

Guru Arjan was a zealous preacher. He was also regarded as a political leader.

Perhaps that was the reason why jealous opponents poisoned the mind of Jehangir, the ruling Moghul Emperor against Guru Arjan.

There were allegations against the Guru for having helped Prince Khusru, who had rebelled against his father, the Emperor Jehangir.

The guru was tortured by various inhuman means. Burning sand was poured on him, he was bathed in boiling water. But the latter remained calm.

Mian Mir, a saint respected, by both Jehangir and Guru Arjan wanted to appeal for the Guru's release. The Guru replied that to stand for the truth demands suffering. Besides whatever transpires is because the Lord will it so.

Through the ordeal, the Guru was reciting the Japji Saheb.

Before he discarded his body, the Guru declared that his son Sri Hargobind should succeed him.

Amongst the great works that the Guru performed, one must mention that he compiled the Holy Book of the Sikhs called the Adi Granth.

It comprises of hymns of the Gurus as well as those of Farid, Kabir, Raidas, Jaidev and Bhikham.

It is after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan that the Sikhs, became famous for readily taking to arms, to bravely defend the faith, if required.

6th Guru of the Sikhs

Guru Hargobind

(1594-1644)

It is after the martyrdom of Guru Arjan that the Sikhs, became famous for readily taking to arms, to bravely defend the faith.

When Sri Hargobind heard about the martyrdom of his father Guru Arjan, he was barely 11 years of age.

Guru Arjan had forbidden his son to grieve over his (Guru Arjan's) death.

Guru Hargobind therefore remained composed and heard the Guru's hymns and readings from the Guru Granth.

Guru Hargobind refused to wear the 'seli' (a woolen cord worn round the neck)

The seli was the symbol of the fact that they occupied the position of the next guru.

Instead, Guru Hargobind opted to wear the sword as he believed that the faith had to be defended at all costs.

Many eager Sikhs enrolled in the army of the military and Spiritual leader.

The enemies of the guru were jealous of the growing popularity of the young guru.

They were also afraid of his growing power.

The enemies convinced Emperor Jehangir that the young Guru was more dangerous than his father, Guru Arjan.

Jehangir invited Guru Hargobind on a hunting spree where the young Guru saved the life of the Emperor.

For a while the Guru and Jehangir spent a lot of time together.

The enemies of the Guru connived again.

This time they brought a corrupt astrologer to Jehangir . The astrologer urged the Emperor to send a holy person to the fort of Gwalior to do penance as the latter would prove beneficial to the emperor.

In the fort, there were kings which had been detained after having been stripped of their kingdoms. They were not given sufficient food. Neither did they have clean clothes to wear. Guru Hargobind refused to eat any food himself, and distributed what he had amongst the prisoners.

The Guru refused to leave the prison until the kings were freed as well.

Also the Emperor had fearful visions, so he had no choice but to comply with the Guru's wishes.

A few years later, the Mughal Army attacked the Guru.

Painde Khan, a young brave lad, fought bravely.

Because everyone praised Painde, for his bravery, he soon became very proud.

Because of Painde Khan's subsequent misconduct, he was asked to leave the court.

Painde Khan's ego was hurt beyond repair.

As he left, he swore revenge on the guru.

In a battle initiated by Painde Khan, the latter was killed by the Guru.

Guru Hargobind's heart was filled with sadness as the Guru remembered the time when he had loved Painde like a son.

The Guru prayed for the soul of Painde Khan.

Guru Hargobind was a warrior as well as a highly Spiritual soul.

Once the guru humbly stated that though he was internally a hermit, outwardly he was a prince. The arms that he wore, were for the protection of the poor, and to destroy the oppressor.

Guru Hargobind believed, like Guru Nanak that he truly renounces, who renounces the ego.

Guru Hargobind's son's name was Baba Atal. Though barely nine years old, he had miraculous powers.

Once he brought his young friend back to life.

Guru Hargobind was not happy with his son's powers, as the guru felt that God's will must be accepted.

However when the young boy departed from the world, his father built a nine storied Gurdwara in his son's memory, where free food was distributed.

It is believed that when Guru Hargobind left his body, soft singing was heard from unseen sources.

The great Guru urged his followers not to mourn his departure, but to rejoice, his entering his final abode.

I believe that a life well spent is an occasion for celebration!

7th Guru

GURU HAR RAI

1630-1661

Guru Har Rai was 13 years old when he ascended the gaddi.

He was the son of Baba Guruditta, Hargobind's elder son.

He was both strong and compassionate.

Guru Har Rai lived during the reign of the Moghul Emperor Shah Jahan.

Shah Jahan had two sons: Dara Shikoh and Aurangzeb

While Dara was the heir apparent. Aurangzeb wanted to be his father's successor, hence Aurangzeb poisoned Dara.

Dara did not recuperate, despite all efforts.

It came to the Emperor's notice that Guru Har Rai had certain medicines which could cure Dara.

The Guru provided the medicines, despite the fact that his father had been treated so unfairly by the Moghul Emperor.

The above throws light on the tremendous compassion of Guru Har Rai.

The Guru would not distinguish between rich and poor.

There was an old lady who regularly baked bread with her own hands, with the hope that the Guru would partake of the food. She bought the wheat with the money that she made by spinning.

The Guru came to know about the desire of the old lady. He went to her and ate with relish the humble meal.

Bhai Gonda was a devout disciple. Once he had gone on a mission.

Bhai Gonda went into deep meditation. In that he pictured himself holding the Guru's feet in a tight clasp.

Guru Har Rai not only sensed the intense devotion of his disciple, but felt his feet bound. The Guru sat in his seat for hours, forgetting to partake his meals.

It is only when Bhai Gonda loosened the hold, (in his meditation) that the Guru was able to get up and go about his normal routine.

Guru Har Rai was succeeded by his son Harkrishan. The reason why Guru Har Rai did not give the gaddi to his elder son, Sri Ram Rai is interesting.

Sri Ram Rai explained the Guru Granth Sahib to Emperor Aurangzeb in a different manner from what it meant, in order to not annoy the emperor.

8th GURU

GURU HARKRISHAN

(1656-1664)

When Guru Harkrishan succeeded to the gaddi in 1661, he was 5 years old.

A proud Brahmin felt annoyed at the fact , the guru shared the same name with Lord Krishna.

The Brahmin wished to test the Guru on the teachings of the Bhagvad Geeta.

The Guru humbly told the Brahmin that any Sikh, even though he may not be lettered, could do that.

The Brahmin brought an ignorant villager , called Chhaju to the court.

The Guru placed a wand on Chhaju's head and requested him to discuss the meaning of the Bhagvad Geeta with the Brahmin.

It was obvious that the Guru had transmitted his powers to the humble villager as Chhaju gave reply after learned reply.

Even though Guru Harkrishan was invited to attend the Emperor's Court the 7 year old Guru declined. Guru Harkrishan said that he was under his father's instruction to concentrate on only preaching the Lord's name . His brother could take charge of the affairs of the court. The Emperor could not help but be impressed at the above reply.

Guru Harkrishan miraculously cured people suffering from the plague.

At one point the young Guru was put to the test.

The growing popularity of the young Guru irked his elder brother Ram Rai.

The son of the Emperor was sent to speak to the Guru to inform him that the Emperor believed that the Guruship should have gone to the elder brother Ram Rai.

The Guru calmly replied that the Guruship should go to the deserving. He cited examples of the previous Gurus. Some of them had rejected their own sons, for the more deserving.

Raja Jai Singh tested the Guru by asking him to recognize the queen, as she stood dressed like a maid servant surrounded by them. The Guru recognized her immediately.

The young Guru died in 1664, after he suffered an attack of small pox.

Before the Guru died, he said "Baba Bakale" which implied that the next Guru would be from Bakala.

THE GURU'S AARTI

Lately I have been reading the Guru Granth.Sahib, the Holy book of the Sikhs.
It is a compilation of the sayings of Gurus and Great Bhaktas (Devotees).
The Guru Granth is considered the Living Guru.
From the lines of the Guru Granth:

Guru Granth Jee Maaniyo Pragat Guraa Kee Deh
Jaa Kaa Hirdaa Shudh hai Khoj Shabad Mei Leih

Which means:

Believe that the Guru Granth is the Body of the Living Guru
The Seeker whose heart is pure will find his answer in 'The Utterings'

The Shrimad Bhaagvad recounts the different Incarnations of the Lord,
The Bhagvad Geeta expounds a Mighty Philosophy,
And The Guru Granth is an ecstatic pouring of a Spiritual Heart.
As I go through the Guru Granth , I feel that Guru Nanak is trying to describe what he
'sees' and experiences...yet he often says how difficult it is to do the above, because
words fail him, to describe the magnitude of what we know as 'God'
I am sharing with you the Aarti that is generally sung, at a Gurdwaara..
This ode was partly composed by Guru Nanak..
At Jagannaath Puri, a famous pilgrimage center of the Hindus, Guru Nanak noticed that
the priests were more interested in the rituals and elaborate arrangements rather than in
their love for God. So he stepped outside the temple and burst into the following
masterpiece.

Gagan mah thaal, Rav-chand Deepak baney
Taarka mandal Janak Moti
Dhoop maliaanlo Pavan chavaro karey
Sagal Banrai phoolant jyoti

Which means:

The Sky is Your platter

The sun and moon are the 'Deepaks' the lamps (lights)

The Stars in the sky are the pearls

The 'Dhoop' (Incense)is the fragrance

That the wind propels

The whole forest is Your flowers

Kaisee Aarti hoi Bhaykandana Teree Aarti
Anhata Shabad Vajanta bheree

Which means:

O! What a wonderful Aarti, this is!

You, are a destroyer of Fear

The sound of Your Name, which is so subtle, that It goes unheard

Resounds endlessly

Sahas Tav Nain na na
Nain hai Tohey kau
Sahas moorat Nana Ik Tohee

Sahas Pad Bimal Na na
Ik Pad Gandh bin
Sahas Tav Gandh Iv
Chalat Mohee

Sabh Mah Jot Jot Hai Sohee
Tis Dat Chanaan Sabh Mah Chanaan Hoi

Gur Sakhi Jot Pragat Hoi
Jo Tis Bhaavey So Aarti Hoi

Which means:
You have a thousand eyes, forms, feet, noses...And you have none...
I am charmed!
Your Light enlightens all!
It is by the Grace of the Guru that the real Light (Knowledge) Manifests.
What pleases the Almighty is this Aarti (Creation)

Har Charan Kamal Makrand Lobhit Mano
Ana Din Mohey Aayey Pyaasa

Kirpaa Jal Dey Nanak Sarang Kau
Hoi Jaatey Terey nai Vaasa

Which means:
I yearn for Your Lotus feet
Night and day
Nanak is like the thirsty bird that asks
For a drop of water
From You O Lord!
That drop (Grace) will make Nanak find comfort,
In the uttering of Your Name.

(The next part of the Aarti is a composition by Sri Ravidasji)

Naam Tero Aarti Majan Muraarey
Har Kay Naam Bina Joothey Sagal Pasaarey

Naam Tero Aasno Naam Tero Ursaa
Naam Tero Kesro Lay Chhitkaarey

Naam Tera Ambhula Naam Tero Chandno
Ghas Japey Naam Lay Tujaher Kau Chaarey

Naam Tera Deeva Naam Tera Baatee
Naam Tero Tel Lai , Maahee Pasaarey

Naam Terey Kee Jyot Lagaayee
Bhaiyaa Ujiyaaro Bhavan Saglaarey

Naam Teraa Taagaa Naam Phul Maalaa
Bhaar Athaarah Sagala Joothaarey

Tero Keeyaa Tujhahee kyaa arpau
Naam Tera Tuhee Chavar Dhulaarey

Das Atha Atha Sathey Chaarey Khaanee
Ehay Vartan Hai Sagal Sansaare

Kahay Ravdaas Naam Tero Aartee
Sat Naam Har Bhog Tuhaarey

***SantRavidasji says that:
O Lord, Your name is the Aarti,
Your name is the Flower, the saffron,
and the sandalwood
That is offered to You
Your Name is the (Deeya)
The Lamp, the oil and the cotton
That is lighted in it.
With the Light that Your Name gives out,
The whole world is brightened.
Your Name is the Thread and Your Name is also
The Flowers that are strung into that thread.
All that I offer to You is Yours,
Your Name is the flywhisk, that you use,
The (Chant of Your) True Name
We offer to You
All is false except Your Name!***

(The following part of the aarti is composed by Sant Sainji)

Dhoop Deep Dhrit Saaj Aartee
Vaarney Jaau Kamlapati

Mangalaa Har Mangalaa
Nit Mangal Raaja Raam Raako

Uttam Deeyaraa Nirmal Baatee
Toohee Niranjana Kamlaapati

Raam Bhagat Raamaananda Jaaney
Pooran Paramaananda Bakhaaney

Madana Moorata Bhay Taarey Govindey
Sain Bhanay Bhaj Paramaananda

The Aarti is adorned by the lighted lamp

And the fragrance of the incense

All is Auspicious

Thou art the Supreme and Pure Light

Thou art the Lord of the Goddess of Wealth

My obeisance to Thee

And to the Lord Rama, Beautiful Govinda,

Who is described as Replete Pure Bliss!

Sain prays to Thee, Who obliterates all Fear

(The following part is composed by Sant Kabeer)

Sun Sandhyaa Teree Dev Devaakar
AdhPati Aadee Samaayee
Sidh Samaadhee
Anta Naheen Paayaa
Laagee Rahey Sarnaayee

Leho Aartee Ho Purakh Niranjan
Satguru Poojo Bhaai

Thaada Brahmaa Nigam Bichaarey
Alakh Na Lakhiyaa Jaayee

Tat Tel Naam Keeyaa Baatee
Deepak Deh Ujiyaaraa

Jyot Laayee Jagadeesha Jagaiyaa
Boojhey Boojhana Haaraa

Panchey Sabada Anaahada Baajey
Sangey Saaringa Paanee
Kabbeer Daas Teree Aartee Keenee
Nirankaar Nirbaanee

Which means:

Dear Lord!

The Greatest of Yogis have not been able

To comprehend You

Those who worship the Unmanifest

Fail to realize You

Even though they have persevered in their quest.

Your Name resounds unheard (By the worldly)

And only He can hear (On who Your Grace descends)

Pray to Your satguru!

Almighty Lord!

Accept the Aarti, with the oil, Lit with the Chant of Your Name,

By You, the Lord of the Universe!

Kabirdas performs the Aarti of the 'Beyond Description' and the 'Without Form'

The following part is composed by Sri Dhanaji

Gopaal Teraa Aartaa

Jo Jan Teree Bhagat Karantey

Tin Key Kaaj Sanvaartaa

Dal Seedhaa Maangau Ghee

Hamraa Khusee Karey Nit Jee

Pania Chaadan Neekaa

Anaaj Maangau

Gau Bhais Maangau Laaveree

Ik Taajana Turee Changeree

Ghar Kee Geehanee Changee

Jan Dhanaa Levey Manglee

Gopaal Tera Aartaa

Hey Dayaal Teraa Aartaa

Which means:

O Gopaala,(Accept) your Aarti!

You grant the wishes of those who worship You!

I ask for my basic sustenance (food, oil, lentils, good quality grains)

Which makes me feel fulfilled.

I also pray for a good wife ,good clothes

good grain, a horse, a cow...

The following has been composed by 'Daswin Patshaahi, The 10th Guru:
GobindSingh.Maharaj

I believe that in the following words, the same feeling is conveyed as Guru Nanak's:
That the Cosmos is an Aarti, constantly in motion, paying obeisance to the Almighty.

Yaa Tey Prasann
Bhayey Hain Mahaa Muni

Devan Key Tap Mein Sukh Paavey
Jag Karey Ik Ved Rarey

Bhav Taap Harey
Mili Dhyaan Hi Laavey

Jhaalar Taal Mrudanga Upanga
Rabaab Leeyey
Sur Saaj milaavey
Kinnar Gandharva Gaana Karey
Gani Jachha Upachhara Nirata Dikhaavey

Sankhana kee Dhunee Ghantan kee Kari
Phoolan Kee Barkhaa Barsaavey

Aartee Kot Karey Sur Sunder
Pekh Purandar Key Bali Jaavey

Daanatee Dachhan Dey Key Pradachhan
Bhaal Mein Kum Kum Achhan Laavey

Hot Kulaahal DevPuree mil Devan KeyKuli Mangal Gaavey

Aisey Chand Partaap Tey Devan Badhyo Prataap
Teen Lok Jai Jai Karey Rarei Naam Sat Jaap

It means:

The Lord is pleased by the penance, prayers, rituals recitation of the
Scriptures,

***Meditation, music, dance of the Celestial Beings, adorned with vermillion, various
musical instruments, Ringing of bells and the showering of flowers, and the tune of
the Aarti . The cosmic worlds rejoice and chant the Divine Name***

Sagal Dwaar Ko Chaad Key Gahyo Tumhaaro Dwaar
Baanh Gahey Kee Laaj Rakh Govind Daas Tuhaar

Aagya Bhayee Akaal Kee Tabhee Chalaayo Panth
Sabh Sikhan Ko Hukum Hai Guru Maaniyo Granth

Guru Granth Jee Maaniyo Pragat Guraa Kee Deh

Jaa Kaa Hirdaa Shudh hai Khoj Shabad Mei Leih

Vaanee Guru Guru Hai Baanee Vich Baanee Amrit saarey
Gurbaanee Kahey Sevak Jan Maaney Partakh Guru Nistaarey

It means:

I have come to Your door-step O Lord, having left the world behind,

Protect me, I am in Your service

Because of the Lord's command, this order (Sikhism)

Came into being.

The Sikhs are urged to believe that the Granth is the Guru manifest,

Whoever is pure in heart, will find the answers within the words of

the Guru Granth Sahib.

Its words are the Guru, and the Guru is in the Guru Granth's Utterings,

And within the words is the nectar (Of knowledge)

And the words urge disciples to believe in the Guru!

The more I read the Guru Granth, the more I personally believe that the words in it are the result of deep and true visions of realization.

The Sindhis, though Hindus are followers of Guru Nanak and are deeply influenced by His teachings.

It is not uncommon to seek answers of baffling questions by opening the Divine Book at random. And as the Guru Granth Itself claims, the pure of heart will find their queries replied.

Sincerely,
Shakun

'Under the Benign Grace of the Gurus'
-Shakun Narain Kimatrai



A Tribute to Mrs. Lajwanti Jamnadas Khiani
3.10.1920 - 21.08.2002