Navin Paneeri

Stories from the life of Guru Nanak Dev

Volume - 1



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Stories from the life of Guru Nanak Dev (Vol. 1)

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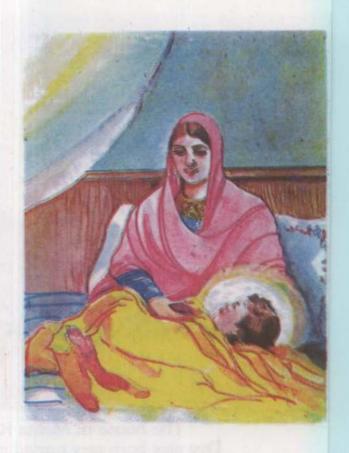
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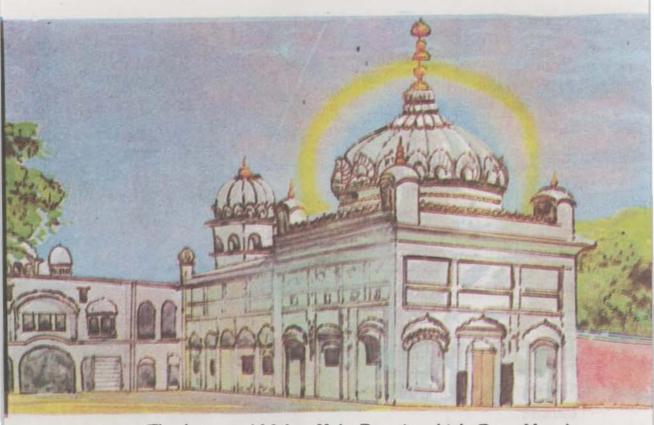
Birth of Guru Nanak Dev

Shri Guru Nanak Dev is our first Guru. He was born in 1469 A.D. The name of his father was Mehta Kalu Ram. His mother was called Tripta. The Guru was born at Rai Bhoi's Talwandi. As the Guru was born in this town it was given the name of Nankana Sahib. This town is situated in Pakistan at a distance of seventy five kilometres from Lahore.



Bibi Nanaki was the only sister of Guru Nanak Dev. She was elder to him by five years. Her beloved brother was given a name similar to her's. In those days Behlol Lodhi ruled over India. Rai Bular was the local ruler at Rai Bhoi's Talwandi. Mehta Kalu Ram used to look after the estates and properties of Rai Bular and was also called Patwari. Generally a child cries at the time of his birth but the Guru came to the world smiling.

Gurdwara Sri Nankana Sahib



The house of Mehta Kalu Ram in which Guru Nanak Dev was born was turned into a Gurdwara and came to be known as Gurdwara Janam Sthan. The town was also renamed twice. At first it was called Rai Pur. Then it was named Rai Bhoi's Talwandi. After the birth of Guru Nanak Dev it came to be known as Nankana Sahib. Guru Nanak Dev spent his childhood here and performed many miracles. There are the five other Gurdwaras which were built in the memory of Guru Nanak Dev at Nankana Sahib:

- 1. Gurdwara Kiara Sahib
- 2. Gurdwara Tambu Sahib
- 3. Gurdwara Patti Sahib
- 4. Gurdwara Bal Lila
- 5. Gurdwara Mal Ji Sahib.

Har Dayal Pandit prepares the Horoscope

The family rejoiced at the birth of Guru Nanak Dev. Whosoever came to congratulate, looked at the child and felt that he had been blessed. This had never happened at the birth of any other child in the town. Pandit Har Dayal was called to cast the child's horoscope. He made his calculations and said "This child is a holy person. He is not an ordinary



child. He is the messenger of the Almighty and has come to the world to show the people the path of holiness." He also told Mehta Kalu Ram to be careful and not to consider him like other children. With great reverence he bowed to the child and saluted him.

A Charming Childhood

Even during the first two years of his childhood it was observed that his behaviour was different from that of other children. He would lie down quietly in the cradle. Even when



hungry he would not cry. He would not weep to make others lift him and carry him about. Lying in the cradle he would look at the sky. Feeling drowsy he would go to sleep. All were astonished that the child did not behave at all like other children.

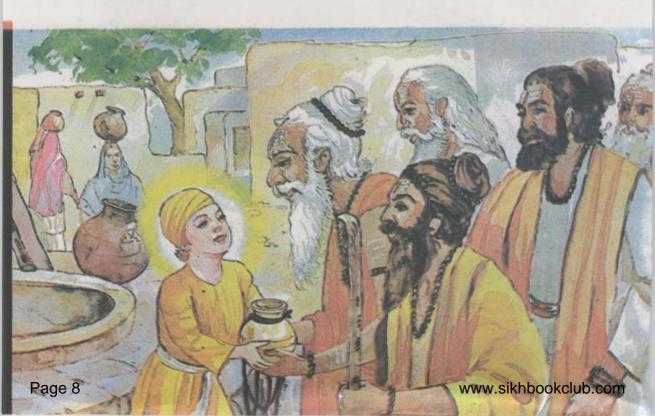
Time and again his sister who was then a girl of six, would come, look at him and talk in short sweet words. He too would go on looking at her and listen to her sweet and loving words. The smile on his lips created the impression that he was listening carefully. The child's charming behaviour pleased one and all.

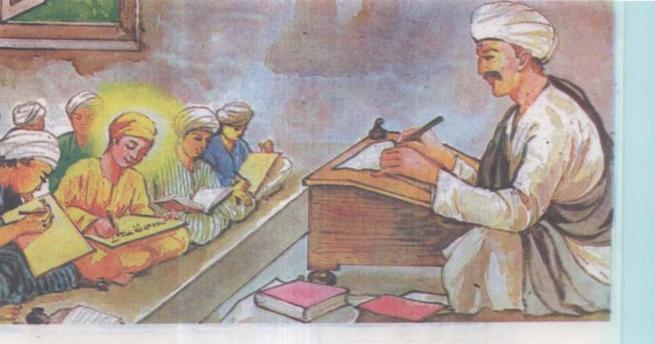


A Kind Child

As a child Nanak became popular throughout the town. Wherever he went people would stop him, talk to him and ask questions. His answers filled them with wonder and joy. Though a child, he would talk wisely like grown up people. Even then he used to talk of God and often utter the word 'soi' which means God. Even great scholars could not talk of the secrets of life in the manner in which the Guru was talking in his childhood.

From the very early days of his childhood he was kind-hearted. He wanted to give all that he had in charity to the needy. He did not have any feelings of attachment. Whatever he had he would give to the person who asked for it or needed it. He had a small pot. A holy man said to him that he did not have any pot to drink from. The child Guru gave his own drinking pot to the sadhu and came back home.





The Guru was sent to School

When the Guru was of school going age, his father took him to Pandit Gopal Das, the village priest. He used to teach the children of the village in his school. Guru Nanak Dev, was admitted to the school.

As was his practice Pandit Gopal Das wrote the first four letters of alphabet on the wooden slate. The Guru read out those words at once. The next day the priest tried to teach him how to write the first ten numbers. The Guru wrote down these numbers with such ease that it appeared as if he knew everything about the numbers. On the third day he wanted to teach how to spell different words. The Guru easily wrote 'soi'. The priest asked him what he had written. The Guru smiled and said, "It means God - our Creator."

After some days the priest saw a long verse written on Guru's wooden slate. Only a scholarly poet could have written it. The priest told Mehta Kalu Ram, 'He has been sent by the Almighty to teach the Pandits.'

Then the Guru was sent to the Maulvi

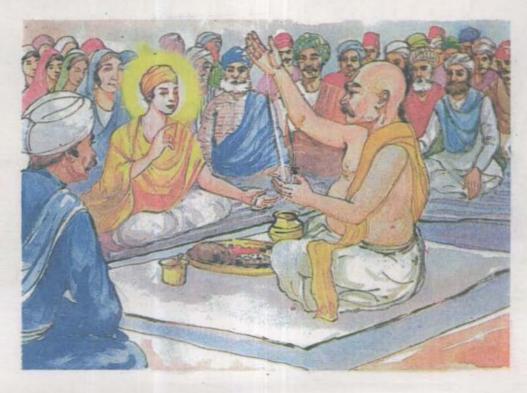
Then his father sent him to the village mosque to learn the court language, Persian. In those days the Muslim priests used to teach Persian and the Hindu priests used to give

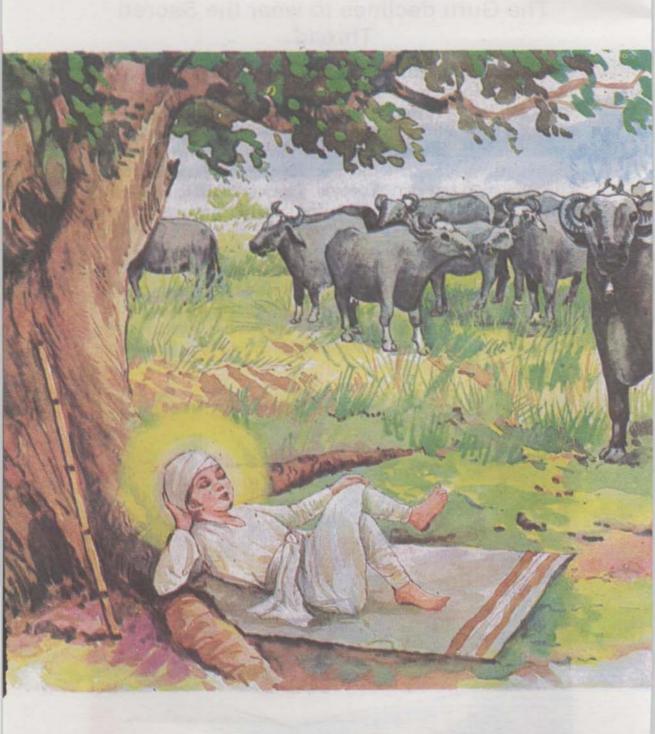


instruction in Indian languages and Sanskrit. The Maulvi gave the Persian Primer to the Guru and tried to teach him the alphabet. The Maulvi was surprised to see that the Guru was able to read all that he had written. After a few days he saw that the Guru had written a lot in Persian. He was astonished to find that the Guru had been writing about God. What he had written could be written only by priests, scholars and prophets. The Maulvi said, "You are not my student. You are the very light of God. You have not come to be taught. You are here in this world to teach us."

The Guru declines to wear the Sacred Thread

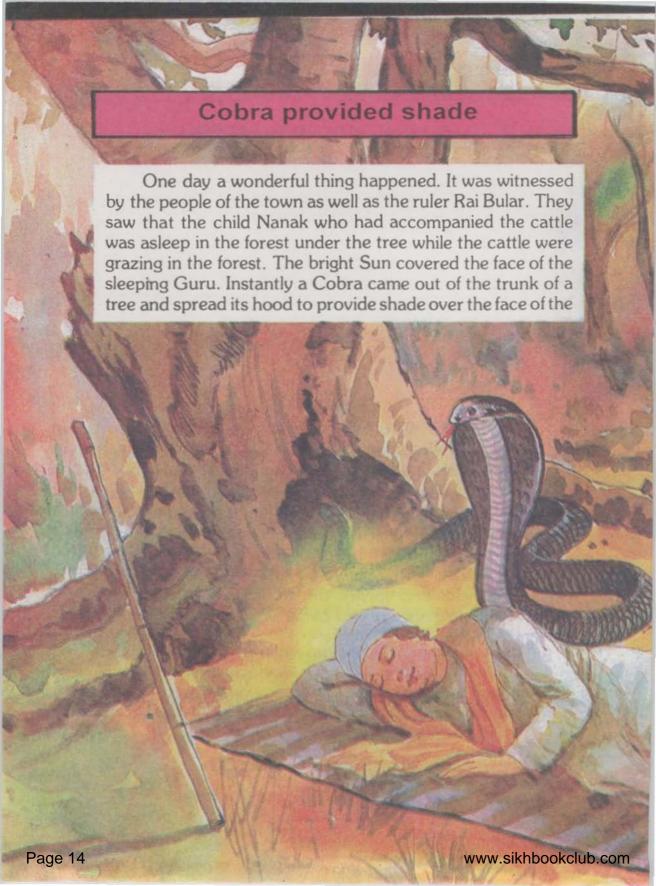
According to the Hindu custom of those days when a child reached the age of eleven he was given the sacred thread to wear. On the occasion of performing this ceremony Mehta Kalu Ram invited a large number of people. Pandit Har Dayal occupied himself in making preparations for this ceremony. He twisted seven different threads to prepare the sacred thread and asked Guru Nanak Dev to wear it. But the Guru declined to wear it. He said. "I won't wear this sacred thread. Give me the sacred thread that never breaks or gets dirty. I want that sacred thread which after the death of a man accompanies his soul to the next world." The Pandit was taken aback. He said, "I do not have such a sacred thread. What type of sacred thread have you in mind?" The Guru said, "Take the cotton of kindness and spin the thread of contentment. Tie the knot of truth and virtue. I want to wear the sacred thread having these qualities. Every one should wear such a sacred thread."

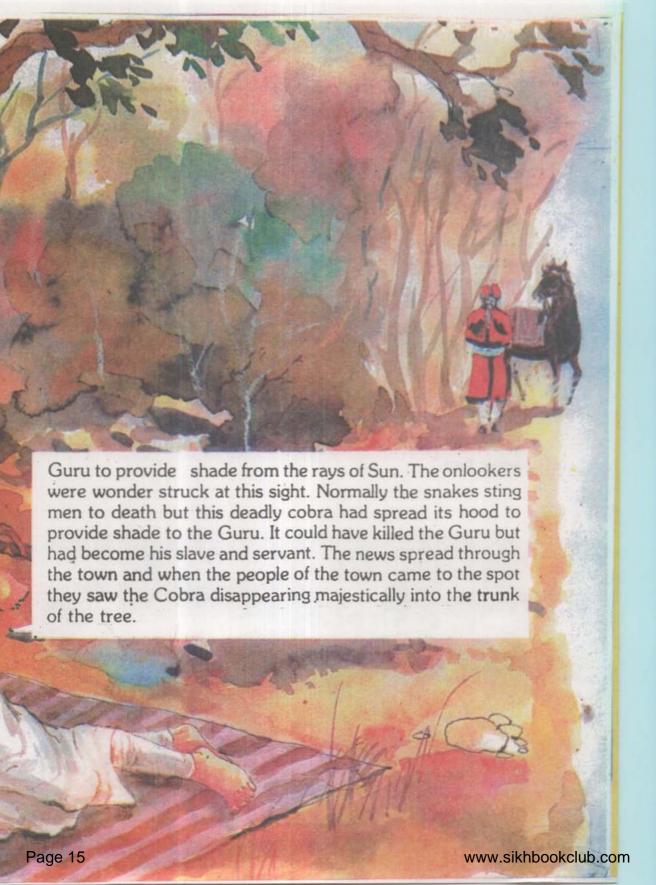




He became a Cowherd

His parents observed that he would remain absorbed in thoughts all the time but was happy while roaming about in open fields and talking to the people. They thought that he should be given such a job as kept him busy and happy. He was asked to look after the cattle. Thus the Guru became a cowherd. The Guru left the cattle for grazing in a lonely place and himself sat down to meditate on God. The cattle entered the lush fields and spoiled the growing crops. The farmer drove the animals out and complained to Rai Bular. Guru Nanak Dev was asked to present himself in the court of Rai Bular, Rai Bular then sent his men to the fields of the farmer to draw an estimate of the loss suffered by him. They visited the fields and reported that no damage whatsoever had been done to the standing crops. Every one agreed that the Guru was not an ordinary child. He was God in human form. He could not be proved wrong.





What did Rai Bular realise

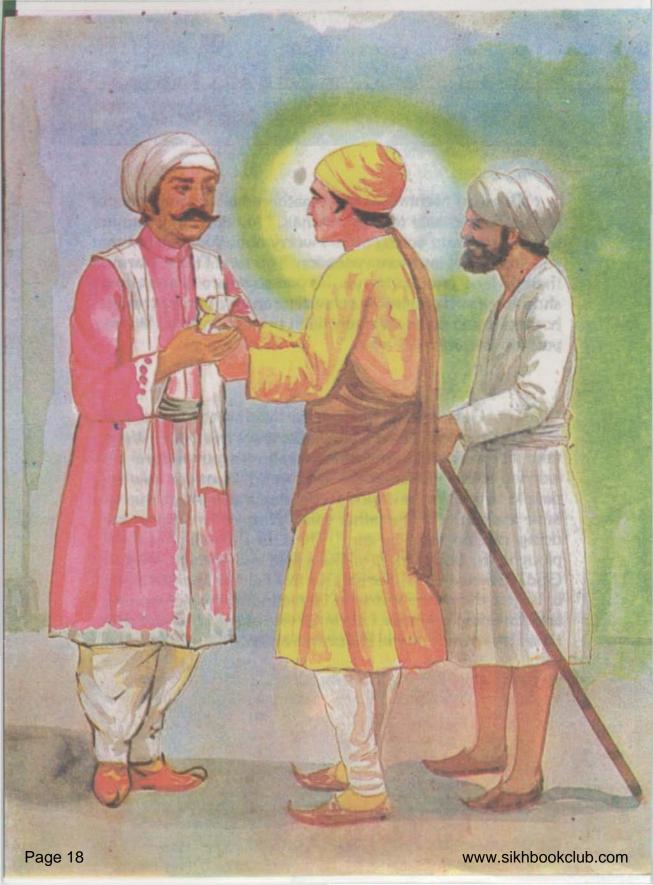
Rai Bular and Bibi Nanaki were the first to realise that Guru Nanak was not an ordinary man but a messenger of God and had been specially sent by Him to this world. On hearing from the village Pandit and Maulvi that the Guru had not come to them for getting instructions but for teaching them, Rai Bular specially went to see the Guru. He was deeply affected by the Guru's noble words and his handsome magnatic face shinning with the divine halo. He had seen the cobra spreading its hood to provide shade to the sleeping Guru. He had also seen that the damage done to the fields by the grazing cattle had been undone mysteriously. So long as the Guru stayed at Rai Bhoi's Talwandi, Rai Bular would go to see him every day. Whenever Mehta Kalu Ram complained to Rai Bular about Guru's lack of interest in the affairs of the world, Rai Bular would tell him, "God has come to your house. Don't be angry with him. Don't worry. I am here to serve him "



Exchange of Ideas with His Father

One day Mehta Kalu Ram gathered all the members of his family and said to Guru Nanak, "My dear son, you are now a grown up young man. I worry about you. I want that you should get into some vocation. If you want to be a farmer, there is land enough for you. If you so desire I can set up a shop for you. If you feel like travelling around you can trade in horses. If you do not like any such profession, then like me, you too can take up a job."

The Guru spoke to his father with great respect and affection and said, "Every one has to leave this world. We can take with us nothing out of the wealth we gather here. I am worried about my life in the next world. I wonder how shall people fare in the next world. I am doing everything that you have spoken of". The father said, "Nothing of what you are doing can be seen by me." The Guru Ji said, "My mind ploughs my body which is like a field and sows the name of God. Patience is the planker for this field. In the same way I have put the merchandise of Name in the shop of my years and am doing business. I am in service of the Lord and all the time I try to understand His orders and put them in practice."



The Physician was called

Guru Nanak Dev was then fifteen years of age. He was loved by one and all. Although he was in his teens but all the time he remained absorbed in his thoughts and appeared to be very serious. For days together he would lie and contemplate in the bed. He would neither eat nor talk to any one. Although he had a fresh, glowing face, his body had become feeble. All those who looked at him would tell his father Kalu Ram that his son was suffering from some serious disease. They would say, "Show your beloved son to a physician. Get proper treatment for him. He neither plays nor laughs, nor eats nor drinks anything. If his body were healthy he would not keep lying like this. His illness is the real reason for not taking up any job."

Mehta Kalu Ram was already worried about his son. When his friends and relatives spoke about Guru Nanak Dev, his anxiety increased. He went to the famous vaid (Physician) Hari Das and spoke to him about the degenerating health of his son. The vaid accompanied Mehta Kalu Ram to his house to cure the Guru.

Mehta Kalu Ram told the vaid in detail about the sickness from which his son was suffering. "My son," he said, "never asks for food. We persuade him to accept some food after a couple of days. He keeps lying all the time. He does not talk to any one freely. He surely suffers from some disease which makes him indifferent to everything. He was not like this earlier. Please treat him." When the vaid wanted to feel

the Guru's pulse the Guru at once sat up and said to him, "why have you come here." The vaid told him that he had come to cure him. The Guru started talking to him like an old, experienced, wise man, 'There is nothing wrong either with my arms or veins. No part of my body suffers from any disease whose symptoms can be found by you. There is a pain deep down in my heart. You can neither know the cause nor understand the nature of this pain. I will regard you a vaid if you understand your own inner sickness. You should try to find out a cure for the diseases of the mind and body."



The vaid was irritated and said, "This child calls me a patient." The Guru interrupted him and said, "vaidji, you are a sick man. You suffer from ego and pride. Not only you but every one suffers from these diseases but no body really understands." The vaid was satisfied and said, "You are correct. I am a physician who cures the body but you cure the mind. You treat only the spiritual sick."

The True Bargain

All agreed that the son of Mehta Kalu Ram was a man of great nobility and spiritual power and that what he knew, was not known even to great hermits and saints. But Mehta Kalu Ram used to worry all the time that his son was a grown up man and he should take to business and bear the responsibility of supporting the family. He felt that even after the visit of the vaid he would still waste time lying down, roaming about and moving in the company of holy men His talk of trading in God's Name had not been to the liking of his father.

One day his father gave him twenty rupees. He said to him, "go to the neighbouring town, Chuharkana. Find out some merchandise which is not available in our town. Buy it from there and sell it at a profit here. When you have learnt to trade in the neighbouring areas you may start going to far off places. Try to strike a good bargain. Don't go alone. Take Bala alongwith you."

Respecting the wishes of his father Guru Ji left for Chuharkana in the company of Bala. When they had almost reached Chuharkana he came across a group of holy men in a deserted place. Guru Ji went to them and started discussing spiritual matters with Head of those mendicants. He said, "We had been meditating to control the desires of the body. We eat when God gives us something to eat. We have been without food for the last three days."

Guru Ji thought, 'Hunger causes the greatest suffering to human beings. The noblest thing to do is to satisfy a man's hunger. My father will surely feel happy if I spend this amount to feed these holy men. This true bargain will bring benefit here and hereafter.'

Guru Ji presented the money to the Chief of the holy men. He tried to persuade the Guru to spend the money only as per the directions of his father. But Guru Ji said, "I must obey the orders of my Lord. I think this is the best bargain." The chief said, "Money is of no use to us. If you want to feed us then please buy us provisions with this money."

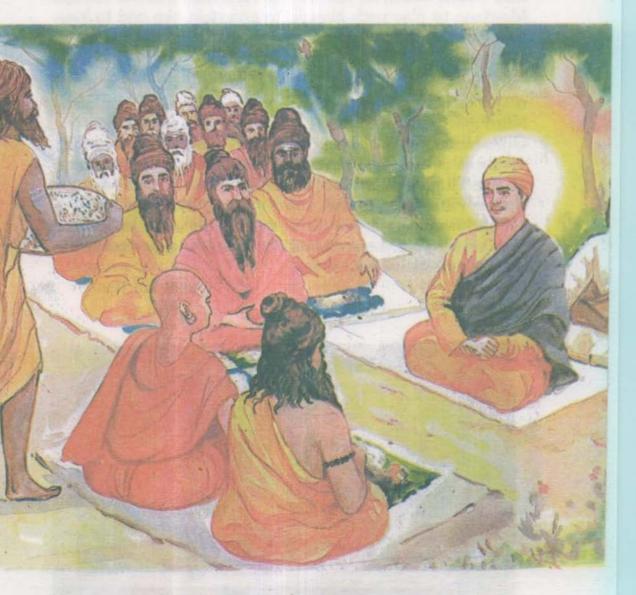
Guru Ji left for Chuharkana alongwith Bala, bought the provisions like flour, rice and ghee and presented these to the chief who said, "For you the world's pain is like your own pain".

After striking the True Bargain the Guru came back to Talwandi, sat on the banks of a dry pond and sent Bala home. Mehta Kalu Ram came running and finding Guru in deep meditation, could not contain his anger and slapped him. In the meanwhile Bibi Nanaki reached there and restrained her father. Many other people also gathered at that spot.

Rai Bular called Mehta Kalu Ram and was angry with him for having slapped the Guru. He gave twenty rupees to Mehta

Kalu Ram and said, "God has come to your house. Don't be angry with him. Whatever loss he incurs will be made up by me."

At the place where the Guru fed the holy men stands Gurdwara Sacha Sauda.



Guru Nanak and Mardana

Mardana alongwith his parents lived in the same town—Rai Bhoi's Talwandi. The members of his family used to do sundry jobs for the household of Mehta Kalu Ram. Guru Nanak used to spend hours on end in meditation in lonely deserted places. This would make his parents anxious and they would search for him. Mehta Kalu Ram therefore asked Mardana to play with Nanak, to entertain him and to look after him. Mardana was ordered to remain with the Guru all the time.

Mardana had a sweet voice and a beautiful style of singing. The Guru began to listen to his songs. He would ask Mardana to sing songs in glory of the Creator. When the Guru himself started composing divine songs Mardana would set these to music. Mardana became such a steadfast friend of the Guru that he accompanied him through his four travels. He was the Guru's companion for the longest period. He performed Kirtan for the Guru and many Muslim singers from among his descendants continued singing Gurbani in the Sikh religious assemblies.



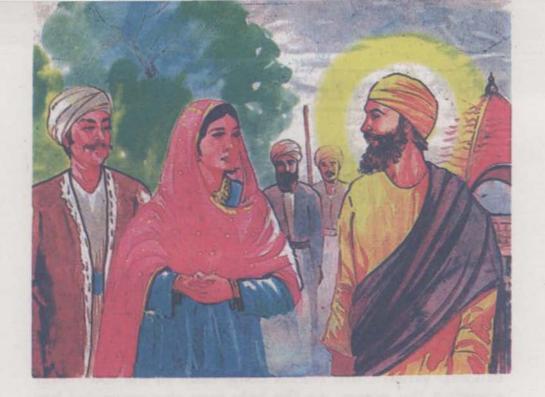
Bibi Nanaki's Love for Guru Nanak Dev

Mehta Kalu Ram had two children, Bibi Nanaki and Guru Nanak Dev. They had great love for each other. Even when she played with other girls, Bibi Nanaki used to think of her brother. While singing play rhymes she would always sing the one which expressed the feelings of a sister wishing to meet her brother.

Bibi Nanaki would play with Guru Nanak Dev and showered great affection on him. When the child Nanak learned to walk she would never stop him or get angry with him. She would simply follow him. She was the first to feel that her brother was not an ordinary child. He was the very image of God. When Guru Nanak came back to the town after spending the money on the holy men she requested her father not to beat the Guru.

She was married to Bhai Jai Ram of Sultan Pur Lodhi. He was an officer under Daulat Khan Lodhi who was the ruler of the area. Bibi Nanaki left for the house of her in-laws but she would often come to Talwandi to see her brother.





Guru Nanak moved to Sultan Pur

Bibi Nanaki thought of asking her brother to settle at Sultan Pur. She consulted her husband in this regard and got a letter sent to her father. Rai Bular also liked the suggestion. He too realised that Mehta Kalu Ram had not been able to understand the fact that the Guru was not an ordinary person and was often unnecessarily angry with him. Under pressure from Rai Bular Mehta Kalu Ram also agreed that the Guru should go to Sultan Pur Lodhi. Guru Nanak left Talwandi of Rai Bhoi and walked down to Lahore from where he went to Goindwal where he stayed for sometime before crossing the river Beas. He reached Sultan Pur where Bibi Nanaki and Bhai Jai Ram welcomed him warmly and received him with great respect and affection.

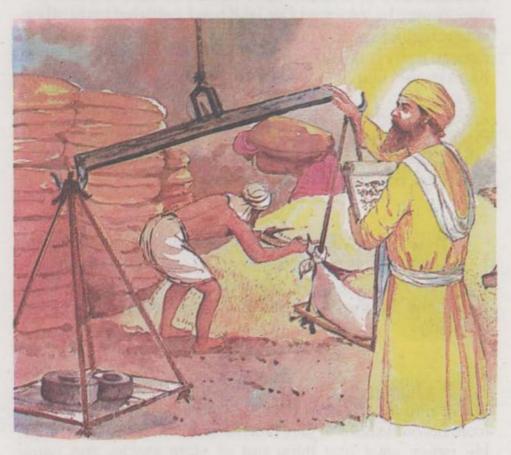
Guru Nanak became a Modi

Daulat Khan Lodhi was the governor of the province and Sultan Pur was his capital. Jai Ram was an officer who served Daulat Khan. He occupied a high position and was considered to be a dependable officer. Finding a favourable opportunity he informed Daulat Khan Lodhi that his brother-in-law had come to stay with him. He was well versed in Persian and Hindi and was a very honest young man. Daulat Khan invited Guru Nanak Dev to his court. He was so much pleased after talking to Guru Nanak that he immediately appointed him as Modi (the chief storekeeper) in the Provisions store for his citizens. He also offered him decent salary. Besides salary he was also to get flour, pulses, ghee, sugar and rice from the Sultan's store.

Thus within a few days of his coming to Sultan Pur he became the Chief Administrator of the store. He was different from other storekeepers. He spoke sweetly and purchased provisions of the best quality. He never allowed under weighing.

If a hungry, poor and helpless person approached him out of pity for the man the Guru would give him provisions from his own share or give him money from his own earnings. He never gave any thing out of state stocks and never permitted any damage to the provisions in the store.

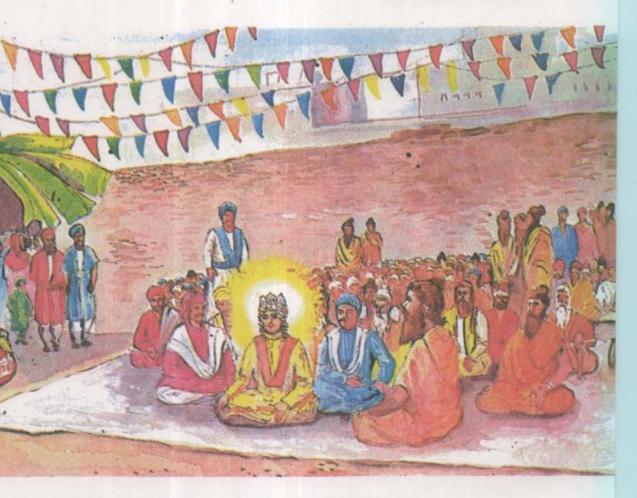
The Guru did not give up his spiritual work even after becoming a store keeper. He would talk to people in the morning and evening and inspire them to attach themselves to God. At dawn he used to take a bath in the river Wayyain and meditate on God. Even while at work in the store he used to utter 'Dhann Nirankar' (God is great) and while weighing provisions he would constantly chant 'Tera' (I am Yours). He would do full justice to the work and at the same time remember God and repeat His name.



The weights which were used by the Guru are still there at Gurdwara Hatt Sahib, Sultan Pur Lodhi.

The Marriage of Guru Nanak Dev

Historians have recorded that Guru Nanak Dev's marriage with Bibi Sulakhani took place at Batala. The marriage party was a unique one. Many saints and holy men had joined it. This marriage became the talk of the town. The wall near which the marriage party halted, has been preserved till today, at Batala. The people in the neighbourhood were astonished to see such a marriage party



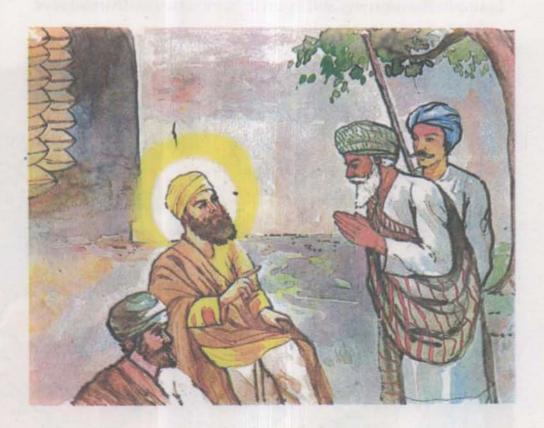
and bride groom. Mehta Kalu Ram had never hoped that his son would agree to the marriage proposal. But the Guru agreed to his marriage with Bibi Sulakhani because he considered the life of a house holder to be the best.

In Sultan Pur there is a Gurdwara called Sehra Sahib. It was here that the bridegroom's wreath was tied to his head. Thus with his marriage the family life of the Guru started. Earlier he used to live with Bibi Nanaki. After his marriage he started living in a separate house. Ample quantities of food was cooked in the morning and evening and given to the needy. Kirtan was performed both in the morning and the evening and Mardana used to sing hymns in the company of Guru Nanak Dev.

Two sons were born to the Guru. They were named Lakhmi Das and Shri Chand.

The Marriage of Mardana's Daughter

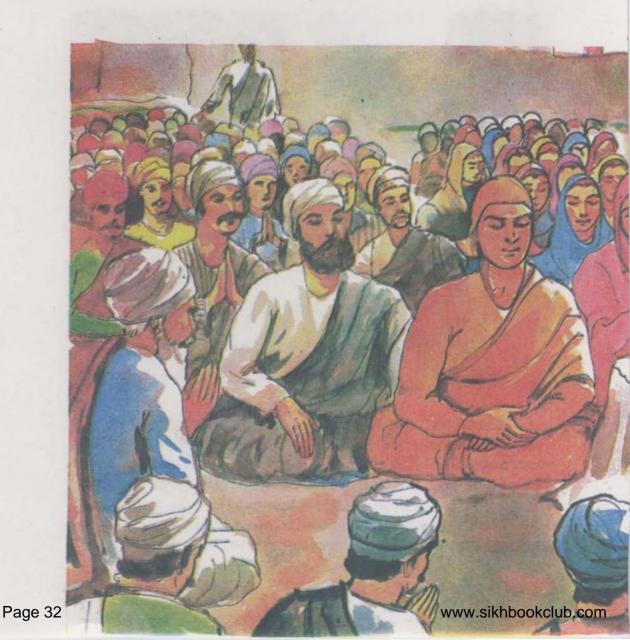
Mardana went to Talwandi for a few days and on his return told Guru Nanak Dev that every one at Talwandi remembered him. Rai Bular too was happy to know that the Guru was happily absorbed in meditation on God.



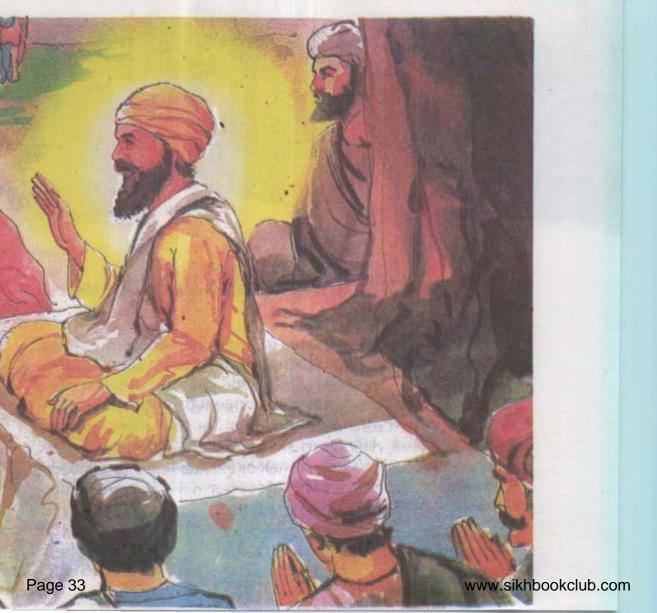
Mardana told the Guru that his daughter was of marriagable age but he had no money to spend on her marriage. Guru Nanak Dev Ji said, "God will bless you. He helps one and all." The Guru told Bhai Bhagirath to go to Lahore and purchase all that was needed for the marriage of Mardana's daughter. The provisions were brought next day and thus the worries of Mardana came to an end.

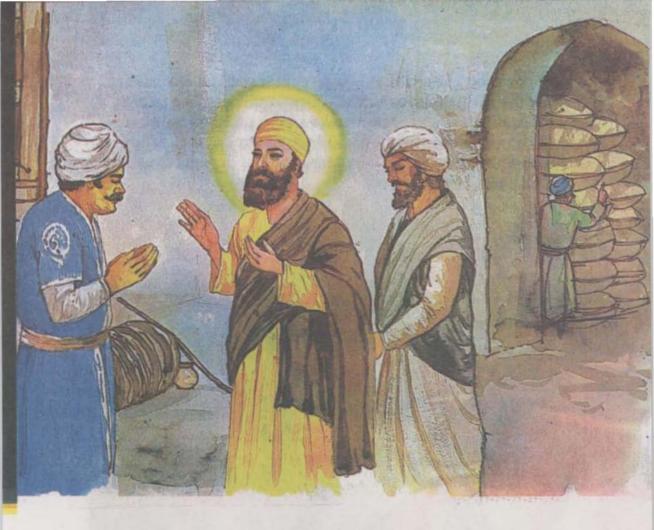
Congregation at Sultan Pur

As Guru Nanak Dev worked in the store many people were drawn to, him. Owing to his kind nature and sweet speech many became his devotees. They would come to his house in the morning and listen to hymns sung with great love



and devotion. The divine hymns cast a spell on one and all. After the Kirtan they would ask questions regarding life in this world and the next. His answers fully satisfied them. The number of people at the daily holy assembly at his house swelled up. In this way a very large number of people became his disciples and devotees.





Mansukh came to see the Guru

Mansukh was the owner of a big shop at Lahore. Bhai Bhagirath had gone to his shop to purchase provisions for the marriage of Mardana's daughter. He gave him the list and Mansukh promised to provide the needed goods. Bhagirath told Mansukh, "Guru Nanak Dev is the very image of the Almighty. It was difficult to say whether God Himself has come to this world as Guru Nanak or He has sent His beloved emissary. He acts like human beings but in the holy assembly he is like God Himself"

Mansukh made up his mind to see the Guru and accompanied Bhai Bhagirath to Sultan Pur. On the way he thought, "If the Guru knows everything he will call me by my name". When both came to the Guru and bowed to him in reverence, the Guru said, "You have become a benefactor. You had gone to do one good deed but you have done two. The man who has come with you needs peace of mind. Although his name is Mansukh he does not have peace of mind". Mansukh fell at the Guru's feet and tears of love filled his eyes. He said, "You are the perfect Guru. You are God Himself." Mansukh stayed there for a number of days and enjoyed the bliss of the holy assemblies.

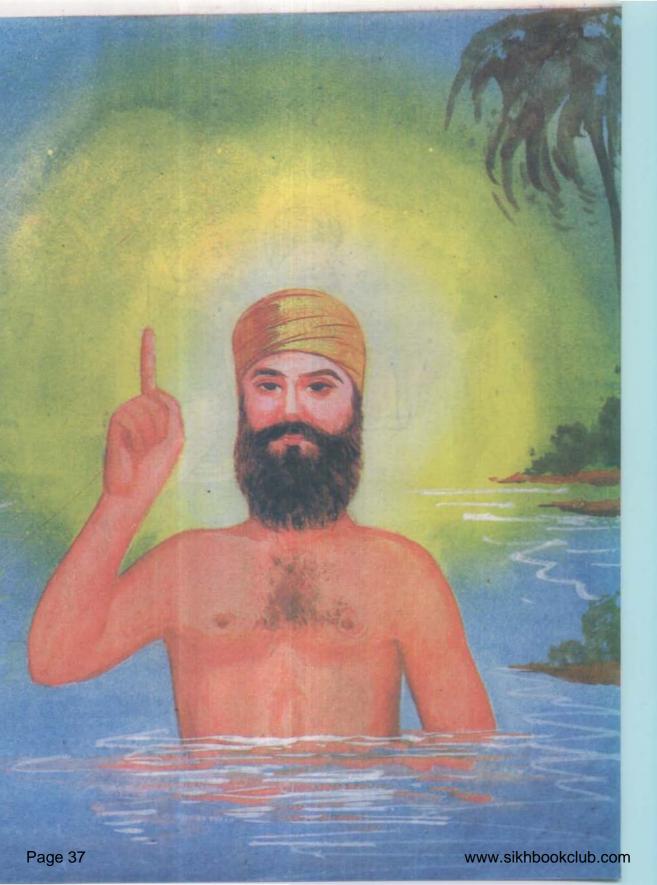
One day the Guru called Mansukh and told him that there are three things which one should understand and do:

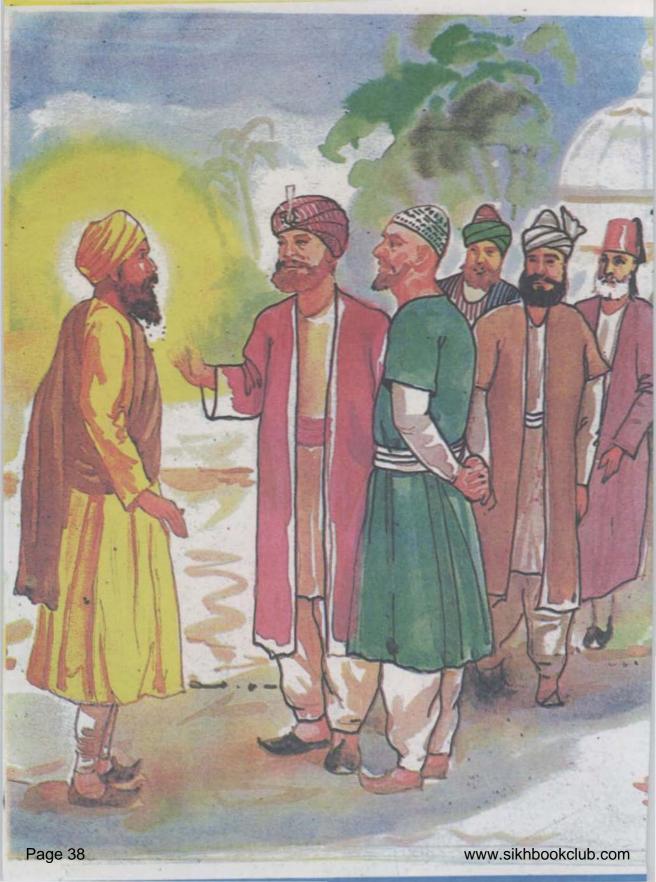
- (1) There is only one God. We can realise Him not through the body but through the mind. If the intentions are good we can see Him within ourselves. By remembering His Name and listening to Kirtan we can learn to love Him.
- (2) Joys and sorrows are the outcome of our actions. Sorrows should not unsettle us and joy should not make us forget the Lord.
- (3) Pride is a sickness. It misleads a man. We should avoid it. Humility can overcome it. By remembering God we shun pride.

The Guru disappeared in the River Wayyain

While at Sultan Pur the Guru used to go to the river Wayyain for a bath at dawn. One day he handed over his clothes to an attendant, entered the river but did not come out. The attendant came back home and said that the Guru had been drowned in the river. All the members of the family and Nawab Daulat Khan came rushing to the river. A thorough search was carried out but in vain. All were stricken with sorrow. Sulakhani was extremely worried. Bibi Nanaki would console them by saying, "My brother was born to bring deliverence to the world. He is destined to save people from drowning. He himself can never die by drowning in the river." She asked Bhai Jai Ram not to inform her parents at Talwandi of this incident. She said, "I am sure my brother will come back home. The river cannot take away from us the image of God" Mardana would roam on the banks of the river the whole day and sing hymns of sorrow and separation. Guru's disciples would also roam on the banks of the river in the hope of finding the Guru.

On the third day the Guru came out of the river at a place three miles away from the city. Gurdwara Sant Ghat is now situated at that spot. The people of the town came rushing and were over joyed to see the Guru again. Sultan Khan Lodhi came and said, "What had happened to you. Where were You?" The Guru did not answer his questions. Despite their pleadings he did not talk to any member of his family. At last Mardana came there and sitting near the Guru started singing a hymn. He sang all those hymns which he had learnt. The Guru told Mardana to play on the Rabab while he himself started singing a hymn. Thus the Guru broke his silence.



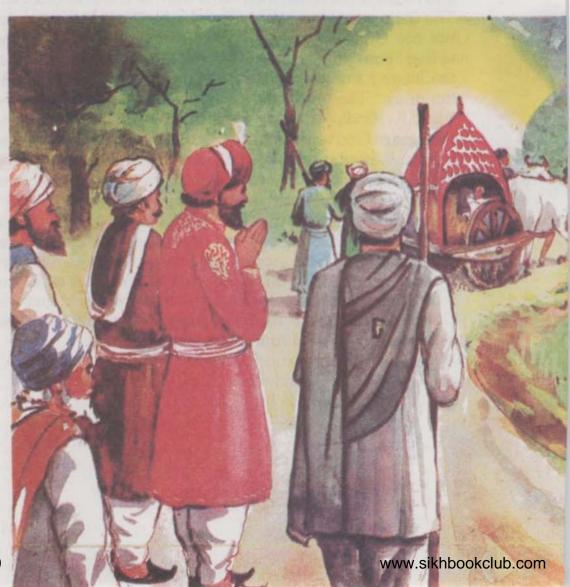


The Guru was asked to offer Namaz

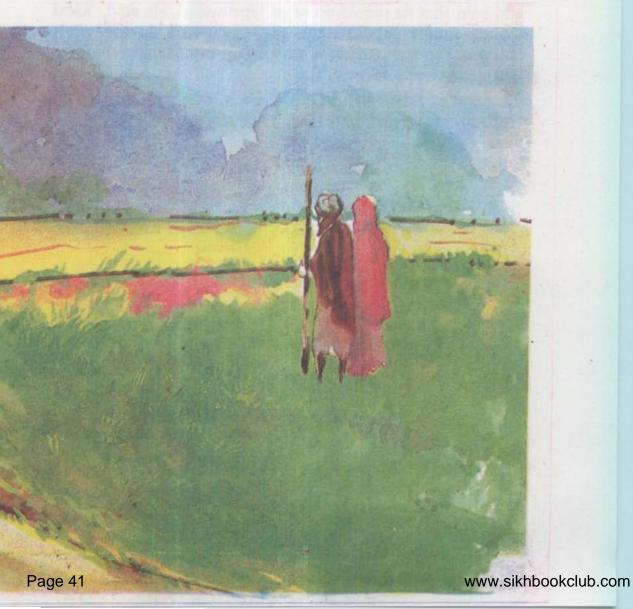
After coming out of the river when the Guru spoke next morning, he said, "None is Hindu none Musalman." He meant that a man who tells lies, underweighs or whose acts are those of an evil man can neither be a Muslim nor a Hindu. The Qazi gave a different meaning to his words and complained against him to the Nawab. The Nawab called the Guru and respectfully said, "If you consider both the Hindus and Muslims the same, then come with me and offer Namaz." The Guru accompanied the Nawab, the Qazi led the prayers but the Guru did not offer Namaz. He simply stood and smiled. The Qazi was angry and said, "Why did you not offer the Namaz along with all of us? You kept smiling and made fun of us." The Guru said sweetly and patiently, "Please be truthful. Kindly tell me, while offering prayers were you thinking of God or the mare which has recently given birth to a colt. Were you not worried that the colt may fall into the well?" Then the Guru addressed Nawab Daulat Khan and said, "Your were also thinking of buying horses at Kabul," The Nawab admitted that the Guru was correct. The Oazi also accepted that his mind was not absorbed in the prayers. The Guru said, "God accepts our prayers only when we offer them sincerely. What is the use of offering prayers when the mind strays?" Those who had gathered there felt that the Guru could read the minds of the people and know their feelings. They bowed to the Guru in reverence.

The Guru leaves Sultan Pur Lodhi

When the Guru disappeared in the river Wayyain different stories were concocted by different people. Some said that the Guru had distributed the provisions from the state warehouse among the needy. Those who were jealous complained to the Nawab to this effect. When the Nawab



asked the Guru to resume his work,he refused to do so. The Nawab said, "Is there any shortage in the store? The Guru said, "Weigh the provisions and you will come to know." When the provisions in the store were actually weighed they were found to be in excess. The Guru had not even drawn the provisions which were due to him."



After leaving his job the Guru would sit at a lonely place out side the city and spend his time in singing hymns or meditating on God. His fame spread far and wide. People started coming to him in large numbers. Hindus said that he was the very image of God and the Muslims said that God spoke through him.

At last the Guru decided to leave Sultan Pur. He called Bibi Nanaki and told her to look after his family. The Nawab and the people of the town pleaded with him to stay there and assured him of all comforts. The Guru consoled the people and said that he would do what God willed. He said, "God wishes that I should leave this place and do the work entrusted to me by Him. I am leaving this place to perform that work." The Nawab, the members of Guru's family and the people of the town all got together to bid farewell to the Guru and returned with tearful eyes.