

Third Nanak

Guru AMAR DAS

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**By the
Dedicated Sewadars
of
Sri Hemkunt Foundation**

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Preface

Sri Hemkunt Foundation Inc. was established in 1980, over four decades ago in New York, USA. The Foundation's primary objectives are to help children and youth ages 6-25 years old raised in the Western Hemisphere learn Sikhi, develop public speaking skills, and feel proud of being a Sikh.

We do this through educational books on the Sikh Gurus' lives, Sikh history, and Sikh philosophy; and by providing youth opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of Sikhi and skillfully communicate their understanding to others.

The main Foundation-sponsored event is an annual Symposium. Participants compete in five age groups: 6-8 years, 9-11 years, 12-14 years, 15-17 years, and 18-25 years. For each group, an age-appropriate book is prescribed. The Symposium encourages participants to critically examine various topics and answer a set of questions in specified time from a podium. Participants are graded for content and oratory skills.

Every year, there is a three-tier competition. In the first tier, nearly 2,500 children and youth participate in local competitions in the USA, U.K., and Kenya. In the 2nd tier, about 400 participants compete. These are the 1st and 2nd position holders in the local competitions. The final and international level is the 3rd tier, where nearly 125 participants compete. These are the 1st position holders of the 2nd tier competition.

For many years, the Foundation had used books published in India, the U.K., etc. However, the Foundation received valid criticism from parents, participants, and judges almost every year that some of the books used for the Symposium competition were unsatisfactory. The English vocabulary, sentence structure, and context were not appropriate for the Western participants and audience. Many of the stories and Sakhees inappropriately highlighted "miraculous" aspects rather than logic and common sense.

To remedy this situation, a few years ago, the Foundation decided to venture into writing the books itself so that suitable books are used for the Symposium and annual competition. Dedicated Sewadars of the Foundation

volunteered for this Seva.

The current book is meant for the 6-8-year-old age group. An attempt has been made to present Guru ji's teachings in a logical manner. The book uses simple, easy-to-understand language and avoids references to events and places that would not normally be familiar to the intended Western school-age participants. It is crucial to ensure that the students' focus is on key concepts and messages within the book. The teachers and parents are expected to be fully involved in helping students understand the depth of the material, rather than remembering only historical facts. The Foundation aims to use this book for the annual Symposium - Speech Competition. Detailed information regarding the yearly International Symposium is available at the website www.hemkunt2.org.

Both English and Panjabi versions of the books have been posted on our website. Sunday Schools run by Gurdwaras are welcome to use these books for free, and no permission is required from the Foundation for using the books.

Any suggestions and comments for improving the book are always welcome.

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1. Early Life of the Third Nanak

1479 (birth): Guru Amar Das Ji, the Third Nanak, was born in village Basarke, five miles from Amritsar, on May 5, 1479. (Some chronicles say April 1479). His father was Baba Tej Bhan Bhalla, and mother was Mata Sulakhani Devi. Baba Tej Bhan owned some land. He made his living by farming. He also owned and operated a grocery store. Bhai Amar Das, as he was known at the time, had four brothers.

1503 (age 24): Bhai Amar Das married Mata Mansa Devi and had four children – two daughters, Dani and Bhani (she later married Bhai Jetha), and two sons, Mohan and Mohri.

1521 (age 42): Bhai Amar Das was a religious person. Like his father, he performed rituals of the Hindu faith with great devotion. It had become part of his daily life to recite *Vedic Mantars*, give charity to Brahmins, worship Hindu gods and goddesses, celebrate religious festivals, and practice the caste system. In 1521, he went for the first time for a holy dip to Haridwar and other holy places for pilgrimage to wash away sins. After that, he went on pilgrimage to Hindu religious sites every year.



1541 (age 62): On his 21st pilgrimage to Haridwar, Bhai Amar Das halted at the inn of a Brahmin. During the stay, one ascetic (a so-called holy man) became friendly with Bhai Amar Das. Because of Bhai Amar Das's gentle nature, the ascetic spent many hours with him and had long conversations. The two stayed together for a few days. When he was leaving, the ascetic asked Bhai Amar Das the name of his guru (spiritual teacher). Bhai Amar Das replied that he had not yet found the right guru. Upon hearing this, the ascetic got upset and angry. He regretted having spent time with someone who had no guru. He believed he had wasted his time in the company of Bhai Amar Das. The ascetic strongly believed that one could not achieve spiritual enlightenment and salvation without a guru. He left Bhai Amar Das's company disappointed. The incident left a lasting impression on Bhai Amar Das.

2. Becoming a Sikh

1541 (age 62): The ascetic's insulting comment about Bhai Amar Das not having a guru still haunted him. Bhai Amar Das was desperate to find a worthy guru for spiritual guidance and to attain enlightenment. He could not think of anyone whom he could accept as his guru. One night, he could not sleep at all. The very next morning, he heard the following hymn being sung in a melodious voice:

ਕਰਣੀ ਕਾਗਦੁ ਮਨੁ ਮਸਵਾਣੀ ਬੁਰਾ ਭਲਾ ਦੁਇ ਲੇਖ ਪਏ ॥
ਜਿਉ ਜਿਉ ਕਿਰਤੁ ਚਲਾਏ ਤਿਉ ਚਲੀਐ ਤਉ ਗੁਣ ਨਾਹੀ ਅੰਤੁ ਹਰੇ ॥੧॥
ਚਿਤ ਚੇਤਸਿ ਕੀ ਨਹੀ ਬਾਵਰਿਆ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਸਰਤ ਤੇਰੇ ਗੁਣ ਗਲਿਆ ॥੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥
Karṇī kāgad man masvāṇī burā bhalā due lekh pae.
Jio jio kiraṭ chalāe tio chalāi tao gun nāhī ant hare. ||1||
Chit cheṭas kī nahī bāvriā. Har bisrat tere gun galiā. ||1|| rahāo SGGS, p. 990

Spiritual Meaning: Actions are the paper, and the mind is the ink; good and bad are both recorded upon it. As their past actions drive them, so are mortal driven. There is no end to the Creator's Glorious Virtues. Why do you not keep Him in your consciousness, you mad man? Without realizing the Creator within one becomes devoid of Divine Virtues. .

The above Shabad of Guru Nanak Ji was being sung by Bibi Amro, the daughter of the Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji. Bibi Amro had married the nephew of Bhai Amar Das a few months earlier. She was 15 years old. Having been raised in the Guru Angad Ji's household, she had developed a keen interest in reciting the compositions of Guru Nanak Ji and her father (the Second Nanak). Even after marriage, she had maintained a devout spiritual practice of getting up early in the morning and reciting *baanee*.

Bhai Amar Das understood the hymn as it was composed in his mother tongue, Panjabi. The hymn explained that one's deeds were like sheets of paper on which one wrote good and bad actions with the ink of one's mind (thoughts). If someone did not realize the Creator, their virtues were destroyed. He asked Bibi Amro about the hymn he had just heard. She explained that the hymn was composed by Guru Nanak Ji. Before he

passed, Guru Nanak Ji had entrusted the responsibility of guiding the Sikhs to her father, the Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji, who was now showing the Sikh path to anyone who had gone astray.

When Bhai Amar Das inquired further about *baanee*, he came to understand its other verses as well. He learned that actions for the love of wealth became one's shackles. How could one be free from those shackles? Five vices – lust, anger, greed, attachment, and pride – consumed the mind. Sins acted like charcoal on it. The vices (metaphorically) covered the virtues and became more powerful than the virtues. The Guru's *baanee* – the Word of the Creator, in the form of the Creator's revelatory hymns – transformed and weaned the mind away from vices.



Bhai Amar Das knew of the Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji, as a relative. Bhai Amar Das had joined the marriage party of his nephew to Khadur, the headquarters of Sikhism at that time. He took Bibi Amro with him to Khadur. On reaching there, he sought out the Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji. He earnestly requested him to kindly accept him as a follower of Sikhi. The Second Nanak had developed a large following of Sikhs by then. Bhai Amar Das was 62 years old at that time. Age had not deterred him from accepting the Guru's Word and becoming a Sikh. He decided to spend more time at Khadur. Bhai Amar Das attended discourses on *baanee* in the *Sangat*. He had conversations with the Second Nanak to learn the

teachings of the new Sikh religion instead of following the rituals he was raised in. Bhai Amar Das adopted the Second Nanak as his Guru (spiritual guide). He resided at Khadur Sahib. He would rise early in the morning and fetch wood from the forest for *langar*. Bhai Amar Das tirelessly served Guru's institutions.



Bhai Amar Das would take meals in the *pangat* (everyone sitting together for meals). By doing this, his earlier belief in the so-called low and high castes, and the false pride of being a Khatri (a high caste), disappeared. He would spend time in the company of Guru Ji, listening to and understanding *baanee*. He developed a passion for the poetry of *baanee*, and at the age of 73, became an accomplished poet composing spiritual hymns.

3. From Selfless Seva to Guruship

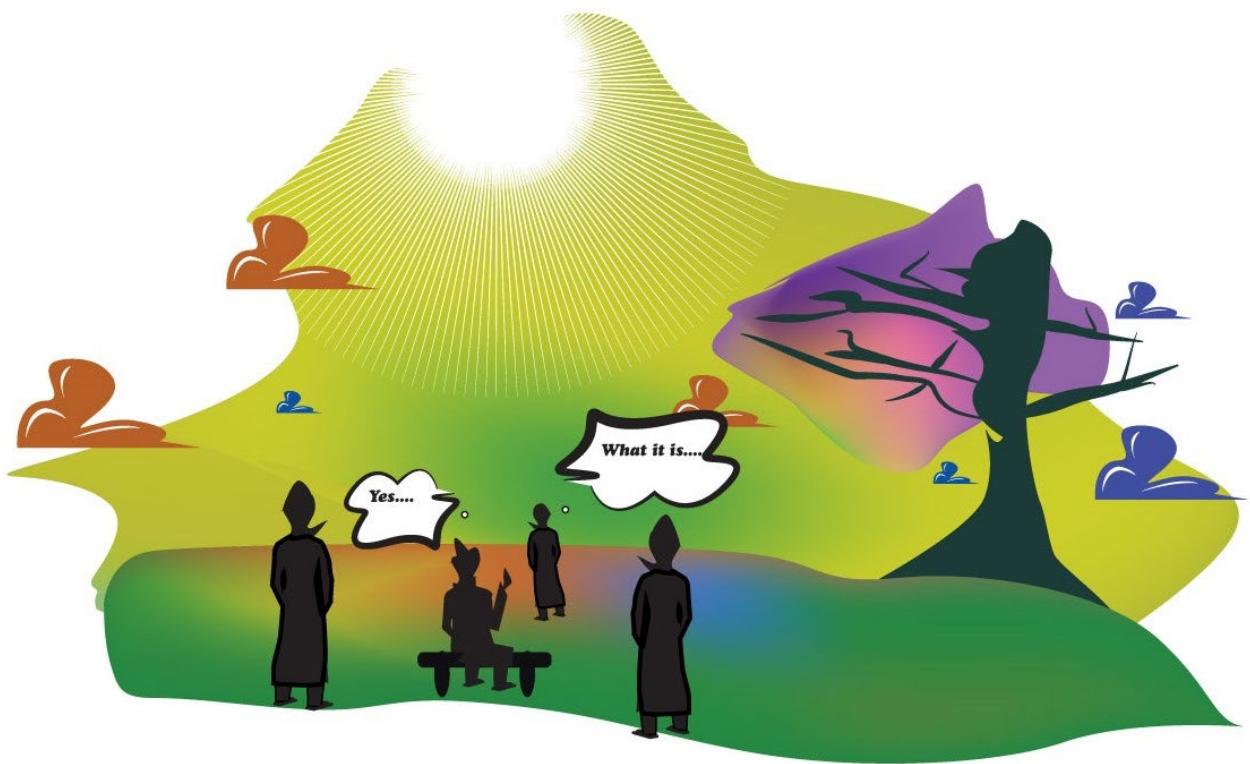
1552 (age 73): By this time Bhai Amar Das was in the company of Guru Ji for 11 years. By emulating Guru Ji at every step, Bhai Amar Das Ji inculcated Divine Virtues e. g. compassion, contentment, humility, sense of gratitude. He was also to control five vices, lust, anger, greed, attachment and ego. He treated every human being with respect and love irrespective of one's caste or creed. However, ancient Sikh literature written during the period of Nirmalas highlights his physical service towards Guru Ji. (Attachment 2) Guru Ji was greatly impressed by Bhai Amar Das's profound knowledge and understanding of *baanee*. Guru Ji became convinced that Bhai Amar Das was the best successor to spread Guru Nanak Ji's teachings.

The Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji, handed over the responsibility of leading the Sikhs to Bhai Amar Das Ji by anointing him as Guru in March 1552. The installation resulted from Bhai AMAR DAS Ji's services and devotion to the Second Nanak and his teachings. Guru Angad Ji instructed Bhai Amar Das Ji to shift his headquarters from Khadur to Goindwal. Baba Buddha Ji and other prominent Sikhs accompanied Guru Amar Das Ji to Goindwal.

4. Brahmins' Complain to Emperor Akbar

1557 (age 78): Datu, Guru Angad Ji's son, had aspired to be the next Guru. However, the Second Nanak had deemed Bhai Amar Das Ji the most qualified person to lead the Sikhs as the Third Nanak. He had passed on the Guruship to Bhai Amar Das Ji, which angered Datu.

Brahmins were also upset with Sikh Gurus (Guru Nanak Ji to Guru Amar Das Ji), as Sikhs had become aware of and spoke of the Brahmins' claims and rituals. Brahmins could not tolerate that Sikhs treated the so-called low caste and upper castes as equals, even to the extent of eating meals together. Moreover, the Brahmin priests' source of income diminished as Sikhs would go to the Guru for spiritual understanding instead of them.



Some Brahmins incited Datu to make a complaint to Emperor Akbar about Guru Amar Das Ji. Guru Ji appointed 23-year-old Bhai Jetha, as he was known, to go to Emperor Akbar to answer the alleged charges from Datu. Bhai Jetha's explanation of Guru Nanak Ji's message of God's love for

humanity greatly impressed the Emperor. Akbar dismissed all complaints of the Brahmins.

The Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji, instructed Bhai Jetha to also impress Akbar with the need to address hardships imposed by the ruler on the ordinary person. Bhai Jetha successfully convinced Akbar to issue a royal decree to end the practice of *sati* (the Hindu religious practice of forcing a widow to burn herself alive on her husband's funeral pyre). Bhai Jetha also secured relief from a state tax imposed on non-Muslims visiting their sacred places of pilgrimage.

5. First *Pangat* then *Sangat*

Guru Nanak Ji had started the practice of *langar* (community kitchen) where everyone, regardless of caste or class, would sit together and share a meal. It was a revolutionary concept. The Hindu religion had divided Indian society into four castes. It was against the religion for a low caste person to sit with one belonging to the upper caste and eat food together.

The Second Nanak had continued the practice of *langar*, and the Third Nanak strengthened the *langar* program even further. He instructed that no one could join the *sangat* (congregation) unless they first sat in the *pangat* (sitting together to have food at *langar*). This instruction reinforced the message given to the congregation to treat everyone as equal, irrespective of their caste.

Many people were slow in giving up the centuries-old concept of caste distinctions. Some upper-caste Hindus, including Brahmins, had started attending the Guru's congregation because of his spiritual message of One Creator. However, they were still hesitant to have food sitting with a so-called low caste person.



History records one specific incident. A Brahmin named Maee Das was reluctant to sit in the *Pangat* to partake food sitting next to low caste persons. However, he mustered the moral strength to accept Guru Ji's instruction, realizing that he had to develop a love for fellow humans (irrespective of their caste) before joining the *sangat* to benefit from the Guru's words of wisdom. By listening to and accepting Guru Ji's message of the brotherhood of all humans and the fatherhood of the Creator, he became a *Gurmukh* (a Guru-oriented, virtuous person). The Third Nanak later appointed him to head one of the 22 religious centers to spread the message of Guru Nanak Ji.

In 1560, Akbar visited Guru Ji at Goindwal. He, too, sat in the *sangat* and enjoyed the *langar*. He was incredibly impressed that everyone was treated equally with love and respect, irrespective of social or economic status.

Sadly, the sanctity of the 'Pangat' is being gradually eroded in present day community. Young and able-bodied Sikhs visiting the Gurudwara prefer to sit on the chairs and tables (provided for infirm or disabled) and partake of langar in cafeteria style. We should refrain from this ill practice and educate a wider audience as well. We should respect the thought behind this concept and practice Guru's teaching on this aspect.

6. Pilgrimage not Acceptable

1559 (age 80): The Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji, made a concerted effort to uplift the down-trodden segments of society by treating them as equal to those of the upper castes. Some people belonging to the so-called upper castes were looking for ways to fight the change. One method used by them was to harass Sikhs fetching water from the common well. Miscreants would throw rocks at the earthen pitchers of Sikhs. As usual, Guru Ji asked Sikhs to stay calm. However, he suggested that Sikhs use metallic pitchers. Even these were targeted and damaged.



To solve the problem of everyday mischief, Guru Ji decided to construct a step-well (*baoli*) to meet the Sikh community's need for clean water. Sikhs developed a keen interest in the project, and it was undertaken collectively by the whole community for their common good. They worked with great zeal on the construction, and Sikhs started coming from afar to help. However, later, the project got wrongly characterized as a holy pilgrimage.

Because of the low groundwater level in the area, the step-well required 84 steps to get to the water level. Some ignorant persons started falsely linking the 84 steps to the belief in 84 lakh cycles of rebirth prevalent in the Hindu religion. They did not understand that in Sikhism, no ritual leads

to spiritual liberation, and only a liberated Sikh frees themselves from the bondage of personal vices. The *baoli* had been built simply to fulfill the community's need for clean water and not for pilgrimage or to follow superstitious or ritualistic beliefs.

7. Establishment of Guru-ka-Chakk (Amritsar)

1564 (age 85): During the Third Nanak's time, Goindwal was a prominent center of Sikhism. It was established in 1546 by Bhai Amar Das at the direction of the Second Nanak, Guru Angad Ji. Gradually, the Sikh population grew and expanded there.

The Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji, involved Bhai Jetha in the planning and developing of yet another Sikh center, Guru-ka-Chakk, presently, Amritsar. Guru Ji asked him to search for someplace other than Goindwal for the residence of Sikhs. Guru Ji further instructed Bhai Jetha to build a great city and cause it to be inhabited. First step was to dig a tank to fulfil the need for clean water for the residents of the new town.



Bhai Jetha searched and found an open uninhabited tract of the country some twenty-five miles from Goindwal. He built a house for his residence and employed a crowd of laborers to dig the earth to construct a water tank. After some time, when a portion of the work was accomplished, several people had built huts for themselves on the new site, Bhai Jetha, suffering from the pain of separation from Guru Ji, returned to Goindwal

to report the extent of the work he had performed. Bhai Jetha remained for some time at Goindwal to help manage the Sikh center there.

When Ramdas ji became the Fourth Nanak in the year 1574, Guru Amar Das ji directed him to move to Guru-ka-Chakk and resume establishment of the new Sikh center. During the period of the Fourth Nanak, the new center became known as Amritsar.

8. Selecting the Most Qualified as Guru

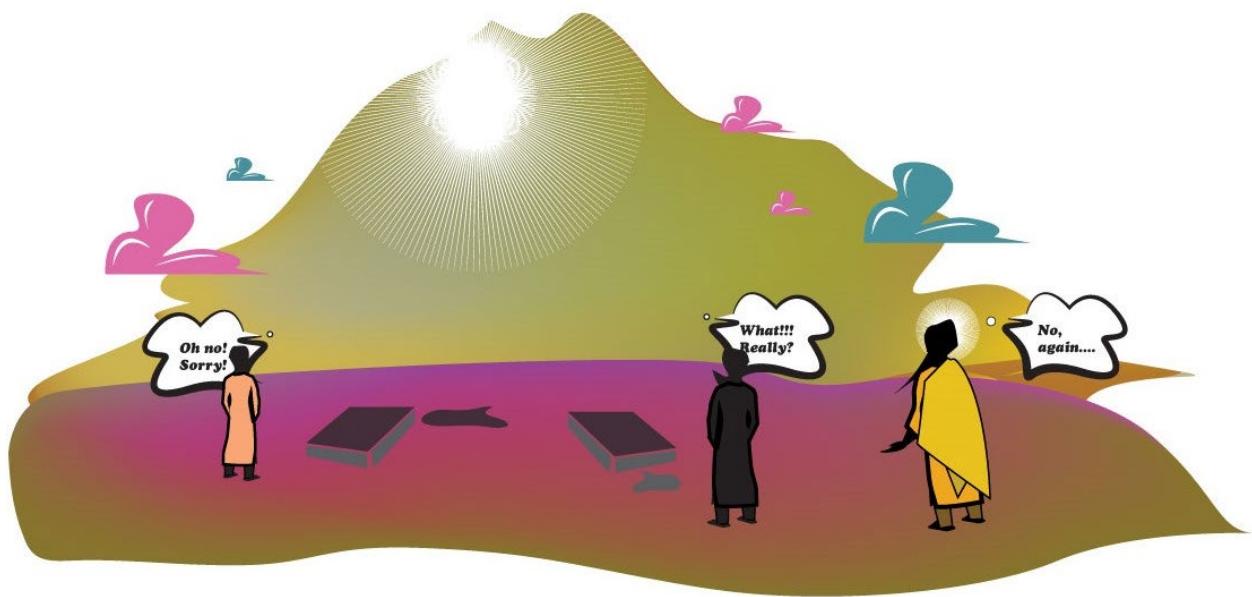
1574 (age 95): In the year 1541, at the age of 62, Bhai Amar Das had moved from Basarke to Khadur to be in the service of the Second Nanak. Bhai Jetha was only seven years old at that time, and his father had already passed away. Coincidentally, the same year Bhai Jetha's maternal grandmother brought the young boy from Lahore to her home in Basarke. Bhai Amar Das developed a liking for the young boy and took him under his wing. Bhai Jetha spent 32 years in the company of the Second Nanak and Bhai Amar Das. He grew up learning Sikhi in the company of Gurus. Bhai Jetha not only became proficient in understanding Sikhi principles, but he was also obedient, soft-spoken, intelligent, and always eager to do *seva*.

Bhai Jetha, at the age of 23, had successfully represented Guru Ji before the Mughal Emperor Akbar to address Brahmins' complaints.

Because of his advancing age, Guru Amar Das Ji started thinking of entrusting the responsibility of Guruship to the most qualified Sikh. He did not consider either of his sons fit for Guruship. Guru Ji had two Sikhs in mind – Bhai Jetha (40 years old) and Bhai Rama. Both were Guru Ji's sons-in-laws and used to serve the *Sangat* wholeheartedly. Guru Ji wanted the selection process for appointing the next Guru to be transparent and merit based.

One morning, Guru Ji asked Bhai Jetha and Bhai Rama to construct a brick platform. Both erected platforms. In the evening, Guru Ji inspected the platforms and declared the construction to be unsatisfactory. Guru Ji instructed that the platforms be demolished and reconstructed. The next day, Bhai Jetha and Bhai Rama reconstructed the platforms. Again, Guru Ji rejected them. This scenario was repeated on the third day. Bhai Rama got frustrated. He told Guru Ji that he had indeed followed Guru Ji's instructions faithfully. He said that perhaps because of old age, Guru Ji did not

remember his own instructions. He refused to demolish and reconstruct the platform. Bhai Jetha, however, humbly acted on the instructions. He demolished the platform and rebuilt it with total sincerity. The process of making and demolishing the platforms went on for seven days. On the seventh day, Guru Ji again found faults with the platform Bhai Jetha had built.



Bhai Jetha begged Guru Ji to kindly excuse his stupidity of not being able to follow his instructions. He requested Guru Ji to bless him with the wisdom to follow his instructions. When Guru Ji heard this response from Bhai Jetha, he was convinced that Bhai Jetha had liberated himself from the vice of ego.

Bhai Jetha had passed the test of accepting Guru's command unhesitatingly and without questioning it. Bhai Jetha had also already demonstrated a deep understanding and commitment to Sikhi principles and practices. Guru Amar Das Ji was convinced that Bhai Jetha was now capable and worthy of the responsibility of Guruship. He installed Bhai Jetha Ji as Guru Ramdas Ji, the Fourth Nanak. This process was a continuance of Guru Nanak Ji's practice of selecting the most deserving Sikh as the next Guru.

After installing Guru Ramdas Ji as the Fourth Nanak, The Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji bowed before him as a mark of respect and asked

that all Sikhs do the same. All those present obeyed the Guru's command. The Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji, then handed over to Guru Ramdas Ji the entire compilation of Baanee that he had received from Guru Angad Ji. The compilation of *baanee* included all the hymns composed by Guru Nanak Ji, Guru Angad Ji, and the entire collection of compositions of Bhagats that Guru Nanak Ji had personally collected during his missionary travels throughout India. Guru Amar Das Ji also handed over to Guru Ramdas Ji all the hymns he had himself composed and recorded in the *Pothi*.

9. Accepting Death as the Creator's Call

1574 (age 95): Before the Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji *joti jot samaey*, he assembled the members of his family and Sikh followers and instructed them not to perform any ritual prescribed by the Hindu religion (Appendix 3). He directed everyone not to cry when the time came for him to leave his earthly body comprising of five elements. He further instructed them not to place a lit earthen lamp on the palm of his hand at the time of his passing. He explained that the enlightenment provided by the *baanee*, the Word of the Guru, had already removed the darkness of ignorance from his mind.



He instructed that the Hindu rite of *Pind* (balls of food ritualistically thrown into water) or feeding of Brahmins was also inappropriate and should not be performed. He said that the *Naam*, the Name of the Creator, was the only food (metaphorically) required for the soul. He forbade the Sikhs from taking his ashes to Haridwar and said they should instead immerse them in nearby running water. He instructed everyone to enlighten themselves from *baanee* after his death. His instructions regarding the customs to be followed upon a Sikh's death are recorded in SGGS as *Sadd* (The Call) on page 923.

10. The Third Nanak's Initiatives

Guru ka langar: The Third Nanak strengthened the tradition of *langar* and made it obligatory for the visitor to the Guru, saying *Pehle Pangat Phir Sangat*, first partake the food together, then join the congregation. Guru ka *langar* aimed to end the presumed sense of superiority or inferiority because of birth into a so-called high or low caste or class. The realization of equality started with taking food together as equals. It was meant to be followed by every aspect of life. In the prevailing period it was inconceivable of a high caste person to share a meal with one from a lower caste. This false barrier needed to be broken down.

Once, the Mughal Emperor Akbar came to meet with Guru Ji. He, too, had to eat food in the *langar* sitting in the *Pangat* before seeing Guru Ji. This system greatly impressed Akbar, and he expressed his desire to grant some royal property for *langar*. Guru Ji respectfully declined the offer. He explained that *langar* should be supported collectively by the offerings of ordinary people. Guru Ji maintained cordial relations with Emperor Akbar.



Widow-remarriage: Guru Ji preached against *sati*; the Hindu practice of a wife forced to die on her husband's burning funeral pyre. Guru Ji also advocated widow-remarriage and the opportunity to start her life afresh. He argued that a woman was not a man's property but a free and equal member of society. He also asked the women to discard the custom of *Purda*, the veil across the face, which was prevalent in Hindu and Muslim communities.

Establishment of *Manjis* (Seats): Guru Amar Das Ji divided the areas where Sikhs resided into 22 zones (dioceses) to spread Sikhi. Every zone was called a *Manji* (seat). The *Manji* became the center for preaching Sikh thought. The persons in charge of *Manjis* were Sikhs of high character; of those, some *Manjis in charge* were women. These persons answered questions and clarified the doubts of Sikhs regarding Sikh principles. The *Manjis* in charge visited Guru Ji twice a year. They sought clarifications from Guru Ji regarding Sikhs' questions that they could not answer. Thus, people were no longer going to Brahmin priests to seek religious guidance. It also made it easier to spread Guru Ji's message to far-off places and established a system for the Sangat to send their offerings to the Guru. The whole Sikh community became a big extended family.

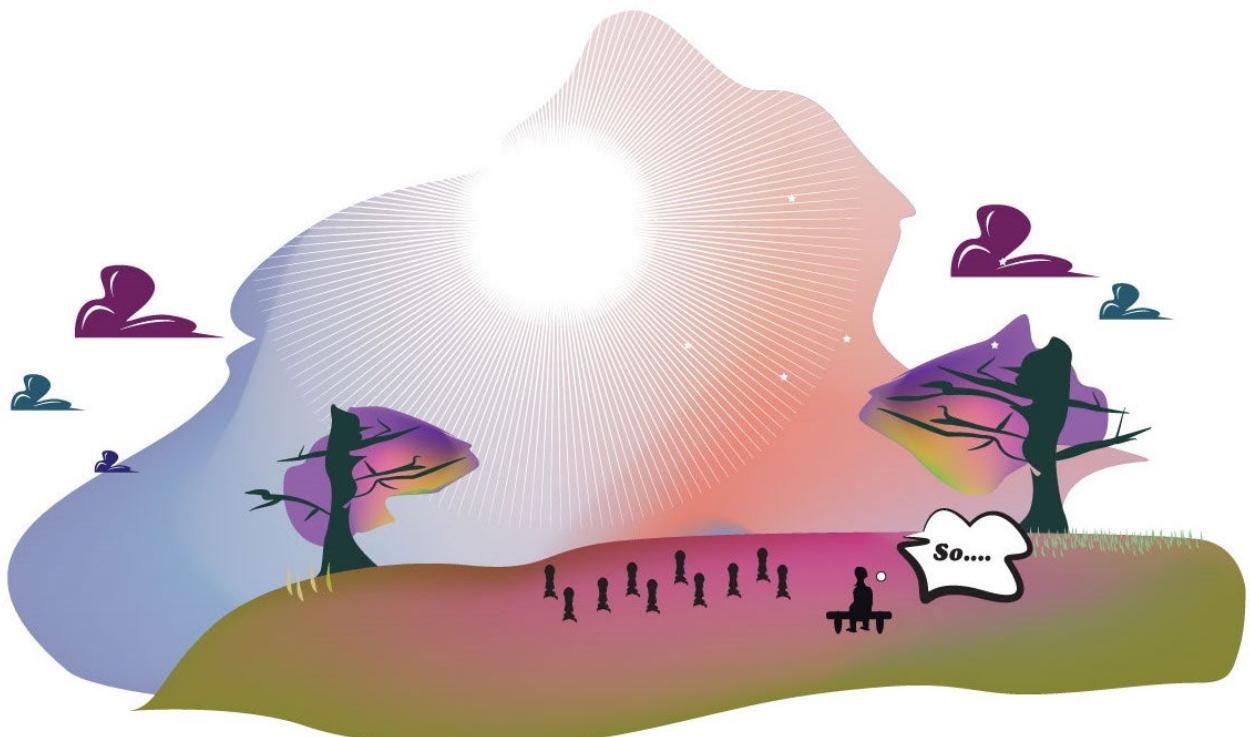
Sikh Code of Conduct: Guru Ji formalized traditional practices to inspire the spirit of, and pride in, the new religious Sikh identity. He introduced new ceremonies for marking life's stage of life observances – birth, marriage, and death. He instructed that every religious occasion should be accompanied by reciting Gurus' *baanee*. The Third Nanak continued to teach the practices created by Guru Nanak Ji and the Second Nanak, treating every person with respect and love as God's creation. He did this despite stiff resistance from orthodox Hindus and Muslims. He began formalizing a "Sikh Code of Conduct," which was essential to develop further to ensure that Sikhs did not return to Muslim or Hindu rituals.

11. Administrative System

Manji System: The *Manji* and *Peehri* systems for women were innovative systems established by the Third Nanak, Guru Amar Das Ji. The word *Manji* refers to the low wooden cots on which the Sikh congregation leader would sit and explain Sikh doctrines and principles to their *sangats* and sing *shabads* (hymns), followed in chorus by the congregation.

The *Manji* system helped establish a logical and well-planned method of administration to spread Sikhi throughout Punjab and India. Twenty-two devoted Gursikhs, all devout men and women, were appointed by Guru Amar Das Ji to spread Gurus' message, provide spiritual guidance, and keep the *sangat* (congregation) in touch with Guru Ji.

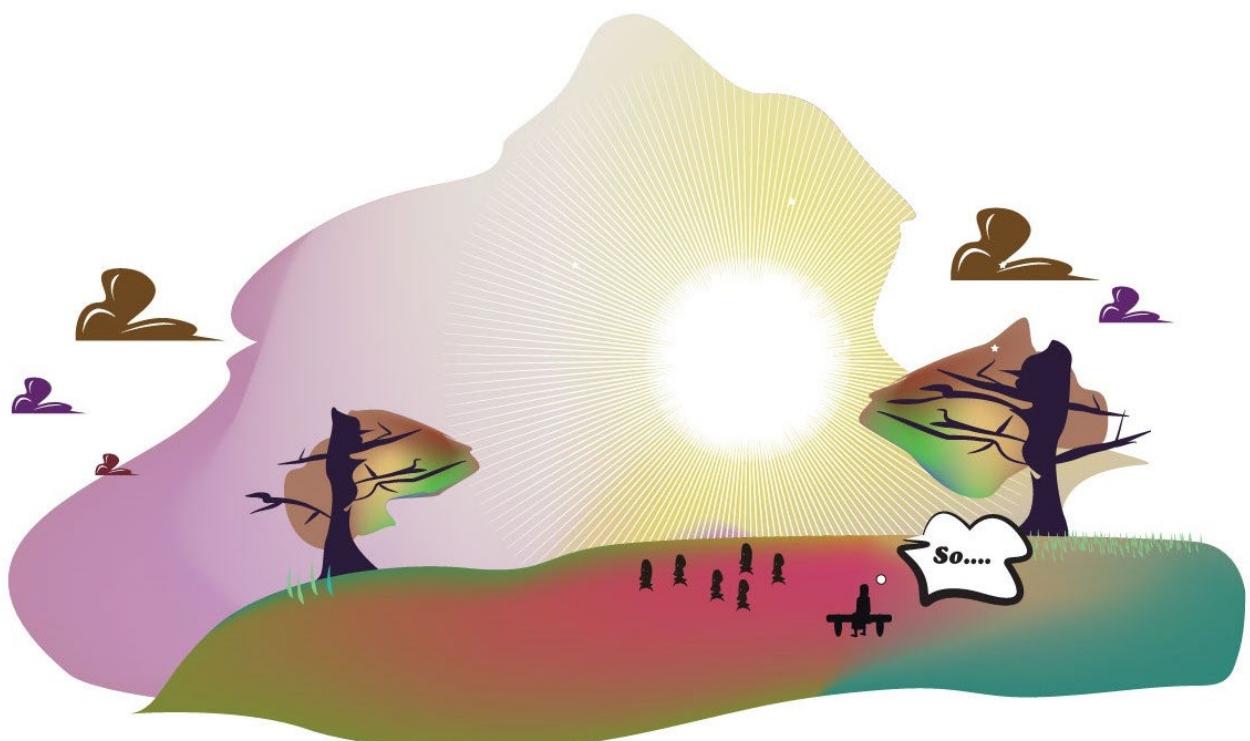
Each *Manji* (diocese) was also responsible for collecting the offerings (*dasvandh*) of the *sangat* made in gratitude for the Sikh teachings and maintaining and expanding Sikh community affairs. The Sikhs' offerings were used for programs such as *langar* (free communal meal with nourishing food) and expenses of the local chapters. The surplus was passed on to the *golak* (the community treasury) at Goindwal.



Goindwal was becoming a busy place, with ever-increasing numbers of Sikhs coming to hear Guru Ji's teachings. Hence, the Guru's presence in Goindwal had become necessary. The appointment of *Manjis* helped administer the Sikh community's affairs in other parts of the region. Guru Ji wanted his Sikhs to lead a householder's life and setting up the *Manji* system ensured that they had support for a spiritual practice and lifestyle.

Devout Sikhs, men, and women were appointed to teach Sikhi through the *Manji* system in the following regions: Majha (Amritsar, Lahore, and Sialkot districts), Jalandhar Doab, Kangra hills, Kashmir hills, Malwa (Patiala, Ludhiana, and Bhatinda districts), and Sind. Some of these areas are now in current-day Pakistan or states like Himachal Pradesh and Jammu/ Kashmir.

Peehri System: Guru Amar Das Ji established the *Peehri* system to spread the teachings of Gurus', especially among women. *Peehri* is a small wooden stool from which a person would guide the *sangat*. Even though Guru Nanak Ji had called for equality of women and men, the women of the region, whether Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, or Jain, were for the most part dominated by men.



During their menstruation period and even those giving birth, women were considered ritually unclean. They were segregated and kept out of sight. Women were often kept behind walls in each religion and were allowed out only in *Purda* (veiled). Muslim women could be divorced by the husband, uttering only a few words. Hindu women were blamed for their husbands' death, supposedly due to the wives' so-called bad karma. Hindu widows were not allowed to remarry and were expected to give up color in their clothing and socializing outside their mother's house. In their husband's house, women were often treated almost as domestic servants. Gurus had considered this behavior, along with the practice of *sati*, as an abomination.

In the society of that time and region, because men dominated their wives and daughters, a family's honor depended on maintaining the virtue of their women by never meeting any male who was not a part of the immediate family. So, to avoid any impression of impropriety, Guru Amar Das Ji introduced a system in which women spiritual leaders would guide other women about Sikh doctrines and traditions. Guru Nanak truly initiated the beginning of women's liberation, preached against inequality which centuries later still prevails in many cultures. All Gurus followed and propagated it to higher levels.

The task of the women in charge of *Peehris* was to enlighten other women with the Gurus' Word and to spread the spirit of *Naam*. Bibi Bhani, Bibi Dani, and Bibi Pal were some of the most revered leaders of the different *peehris* established by Guru Amar Das Ji, the Third Nanak.

Both the *Manji* and the *Peehri* systems had the same objective, to teach and share Sikhi and the practice of equality among all Sikh men and women throughout the region.

12. Highlights of the Third Nanak

1479 - 1574

Born on:	May 5, 1479
Born in:	Village Basarke Gillan in Amritsar district
Parents:	Father – Baba Tej Bhan Bhalla Mother – Mata Bakht Kaur (also known as Sulakhani and Lakhmi Devi)
Wife:	Mata Mansa Devi
Children:	Two daughters - Dani and Bhani (married to Guru Ramdas Ji) Two sons - Mohan and Mohri
Gurgaddi:	April 16, 1552 (age 73)
Joti Jot:	September 1, 1574 (age 95)
Contributions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ A total of 907 hymns were incorporated in the Guru Granth Sahib Ji. ■ The gift of the prayer Anand Sahib, which is one of the Five <i>baanees</i> recited daily by devout Sikhs. ■ All visitors (from any caste, creed, ranking, social status) to Gurdwaras were asked to first partake in <i>langar</i> (a free communal meal) before seeing the Guru (<i>First Pangat, then Sangat</i>). When Emperor Akbar visited the Guru, he first ate in the <i>langar</i> and then had a meeting with the Guru. ■ He further preached against the caste system. ■ Guru Ji uplifted the status of women and preached equality with men. He strictly prohibited practices such as <i>Sati</i> (the burning of a wife on her husband's funeral pyre), <i>Parda</i> (veil to cover the face), and encouraged widow-remarriage. ■ He established an administrative system of <i>Manjis</i> and <i>Peehris</i> for spreading the message of Gurus' and managing the increasing Sikh programs and congregations all over the region. ■ He established the city of Goindwal on the banks of the River Beas.

Guru Ramdas Ji's Physical Sewa

Be it summer, winter, rain, or shine, Bhai Amar Das never skipped bringing water for Guru Ramdas Ji's morning bath. He had started this *seva* when he was 62. He continued this service for 11 years. Because of his age, he must have stumbled many times on the way. He had to listen to insulting remarks from ignorant people who wondered why an old man was doing this service. Bhai Amar Das was always engrossed in Guru Ji's *seva*. He never paid any attention to such comments.



One such incident is recorded in Sikh history. One early morning during winter, Bhai Amar Das tripped against a wooden peg in front of a village weaver's house while he was trying to balance the metallic pitcher of water on his head. It awakened the weaver and his wife. The weaver loudly asked who was outside making noise so early in the morning. The weaver's wife asked him to calm down and said that it could not be anyone other than Amroo, the homeless. She asked her husband to ignore the noise and go back to sleep. Bhai Amar Das heard all this, and as usual, paid no attention to it and continued to get water to Guru Ji for his bath. Soon, talk of the incident reached Guru Ji. He must have previously heard that people were insulting and criticizing Bhai Amar Das. Guru Ji was greatly impressed by Bhai Amar Das's peaceful manner, ability to stay calm ignoring offensive comments, and dedication to service.

Death Ceremonies

Hindu Religion:

A complex set of rules and rituals had been devised in the Hindu religion. Here is a summary.

Upon death, the person is removed from the bed and is laid down on the floor. A hand-made lamp made of flour is placed on the palm of the dead body. As much as one can afford, some money is placed near the lamp as a donation for the priest. The explanation is that the spirit must go through dark alleys to the next world and needs light to find the path. Before the funeral, round balls made of flour are distributed to the public. The priest takes some water in his mouth and spits it out. These are considered meals for the departed spirit in the next world.

It is assumed that the deceased person's spirit wanders around the house for 13 days and is reluctant to move on. For 13 days, elder relatives come and stay overnight to support the dead person's relatives.

On the 13th day, the priest performs a religious ceremony to push the spirit to move to the other world. It is considered that the journey takes 365 days to accomplish.

After 365 days, on the day of the death, a special ceremony called *Vareena* is performed. Utensils and clothes are provided to the priest with the intent of sending them to the deceased. After that, every year on the day of the passing, clothes are given to the priest, expecting these will reach the deceased in the next world.

(The above is an abstract of details provided by Professor Sahib Singh on pages 92-94 in his book, "Gur Itihas, Patshahi 2 -9", Published by Singh Brothers).

Sikh Religion:

Refer to Page 46 Sikh Rehat Maryada published by SGPC.

<http://www.sgpc.net/rehat-maryada.php>

Significant World Events

Around the period of the Third Nanak

1501	The world has a population of around 435 million – about one-eighteenth of today's population of 7.8 billion, as of March 2020.
1502	Christopher Columbus begins his fourth and last journey to the Caribbean. He still believed that the islands he had found laid off the coast of India.
1510	Portuguese ships are heavily armed with cannons and dominate the Indian Ocean. India these days has a population of around 105 million. India today has a population of about 1.6 billion.
1521	Charles V was elected as the Holy Roman Emperor. Pope Leo X allied himself with Charles against Martin Luther.
1526	The printing press was introduced in Stockholm, Sweden.
1526	From Kabul, a Muslim tribal leader, Babar, has been making a series of raids through the Khyber Pass into the Indus Valley, seeking plunder. At Panipat, he defeated Ibrahim Lodi – an Afghan who has ruled much of India since 1489.
1535	Henry VIII breaks from Catholicism and declares himself head of the Church of England.
1543	Nicolaus Copernicus is dead. He defied Church doctrine with the publication of his work "On The Revolution of Heavenly Bodies," explaining his theory that the earth and other planets revolve around the sun, rather than the sun around the earth.
1543	Michelangelo paints the altar wall of the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican.
1551	In Geneva, Robert Estienne, also known as Robert Stephanus, was the first to print the Bible divided into standard numbered verses.

1558	Queen Mary dies and is succeeded by her half-sister, Elizabeth, the daughter of Henry VIII and his second wife, Anne Boleyn. Elizabeth re-establishes Anglican Protestantism as the state religion of England.
1568	The population of China reaches 60 million, and it is 1.4 billion as of August 2021. Akbar expanded his empire in India. He killed more than 30,000 Hindu peasants following his conquest of Chittor.
1579	The British navigator Sir Francis Drake passes through Maluku and transit in Ternate on his circumnavigation of the world.
1600	Elizabeth I grants a charter to the British East India Company beginning the English advance in Asia.

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