

Guru Amar Das Sahib

Guru Amar Das the third Guru of Sikhs was born on 23rd May 1479 (Gregorian) (੯ ਜੇਠ ੦੧੧, ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ) and became Guru at the age of 73 (16 April 1552, Gregorian, ੩ ਵਿਸਾਖ ੦੮੪, ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ) following the footsteps of Guru Angad Sahib. He was the eldest son of Tej Bhan a farmer and trader and Lachmi, a devoted mother. He was a shopkeeper and lived in a village called Basarke which is near Amritsar. He was married to Mata Mansa Devi and they had four children - Two sons named Bhai Mohan and Bhai Mohri and two daughters named Bibi Dani and younger daughter named Bibi Bhani. Bibi Bhani later married Bhai Jetha who became the fourth Sikh Guru, Guru Ram Das Sahib.

Before becoming a Sikh, Baba Amar Das, was a very religious Vaishnavite, who spent most of his life performing all sorts of rituals, pilgrimages and fasts. His life completely got changed after he heard some hymns of Guru Nanak Sahib being sung by Bibi Amro Ji, the daughter of Guru Angad Sahib. Bibi Amro was married to Bhai Sahib's brother, Bhai Manak Chand's son who was called Bhai Jasso. He was so much impressed and moved by these Shabads that he immediately decided to go to see Guru Angad Sahib at Khadur Sahib. At the age of 61 he started learning Gurbani and became a devoted Sikh. He was completely involved in the service to the Guru, Hukam of Akal Purkh and the community.

As a result of his commitment to Sikh principles and dedicated services, Guru Angad Sahib appointed him as third Nanak.

Guru Amar Das Sahib established his headquarters at newly built town on the banks of river Bias at Goindwal. He streamlined the administrative system of Sikhism and propagated the Sikh faith in a logical and planned manner. Guru Amar Das Sahib himself visited and sent Sikh missionaries to different parts of country to spread Sikhism. He divided the Sikh Sangat area into 22 branches called Manjis and appointed a local devout Sikh preacher at each place.

In order to remove the caste system he ordered that all those who want to visit him will have to take Langar first together with others before seeing the Guru. "First Pangat then Sangat". He used all types of techniques to abolish the Caste System. Once the emperor Akbar came to see Guru Sahib and he had to eat in the Langar before he could meet Guru Sahib. Emperor Akbar was too much impressed with this system that he expressed his desire to grant some royal property for 'Guru Ka Langar', but Guru Sahib declined it with respect. Guru Amar Das Sahib persuaded Akbar to waive off pilgrim's tax for non-Muslims while crossing Yamuna and Ganga, Akbar did so. Guru Amar Das Sahib maintained cordial relations with emperor Akbar.

Guru Sahib preached against Sati and advocated the re-marrying of widows. He got law passed

against Sati by the King Akbar. He advised the women to discard 'Purdah' (veil) and introduced new birth, marriage and death ceremonies. Guru Sahib raised the status of women and protected the rights of female infant who were killed without question as they were deemed to have no status. These teachings met stiff resistance from the Orthodox Hindus.

In order to solve the water problem for the down trodden people Guru Amar Das Sahib constructed Baoli at Goindwal Sahib. This was an important step in removing the disparity among the low and high caste people.

Guru Sahib reproduced more copies of the hymns of Guru Nanak Sahib and Guru Angad Sahib. Guru Amar Das Sahib contributed a total of 907 hymns to the Guru Granth Sahib. His Bani "Anand Sahib", is always recited in the end of each program of Sikhs.

Guru Amar Das Sahib selected a pious and diligent young follower of his called Jetha to marry his younger daughter Bibi Bhani. Jetha had come to visit the Guru with a party of pilgrims from Lahore and had become so enchanted by the Guru's teachings that he had decided to settle in Goindwal. Here, he earned his living by selling wheat and would regularly attend the services of Guru Amar Das in his spare time. Guru Amar Das Sahib did not consider anyone of his sons fit for Guruship and chose instead his son-in law (Guru) Ram Das to

succeed him. Before Guru Sahib died at the age of 95 (16 September 1574, Gregorian, ੨ ਅੱਸੂ ੧੦੬, ਨਾਨਕਸ਼ਾਹੀ), he nominated Guru Ram Das (Bhai Jetha) as the fourth Guru of the Sikhs. This practice shows that Guruship could be transferred to any body fit for the Sikh cause and not to the particular person who belonged to the same family or of other.

“ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕਾ ਖ਼ਾਲਸਾ ਵਾਹਿਗੁਰੂ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਫ਼ਤਹਿ”

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