

*The Extraordinary Life
of
Baba Buta Singh*



The Extraordinary Life Of Baba Buta Singh

(Based upon Divya Gatha-Hindi)

Written by:

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Transcreation by:

Literature Screening Committee (UK)

Sant Nirankari Mandal

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PROLOGUE

The Nirankari Mission owes its existence to the courageous and charismatic personality of Baba Buta Singh Ji, who founded it in 1929. He was artistic, musically talented, well steeped in scriptures and conversant with English, Punjabi, Hindi, Urdu, Pushto and Persian.

He was an audacious person of high principles and equipoise, never ruffled under any circumstance. With a trademark of selflessness, he was a living example of service in the turbulent, diverse and vibrant surroundings of the North-West Frontier.

He revealed the all-pervading Truth to the genuine aspirant and revelled in the fellowship of the enlightened.

* * *

FOREWORD

The Extraordinary Life of Baba Buta Singh is a response to the curiosity in the Western World to learn about the life and work of Baba Buta Singh. This is an adaptation of a Hindi book- Divia Gatha- by the esteemed Mr. S.V. Lavhate published in 2007.

In the strict sense, it is not a translation, but a transcreation of it.

We are grateful to the Hindi author for providing the foundation upon which we have been able to liberally build. We have taken the liberty to add some new material gleaned from other sources, to enhance reader-friendliness. We feel sure that his magnanimity will accept our indulgences.

We sincerely hope that this humble effort helps to meet the quests of the reader, both in the East and the West.

Literature Screening Committee (UK)

25 October, 2009

AUTHOR'S NOTE

The soil of India has witnessed thousands of saints and prophets. Their life and teachings, a glowing part of history, have been inspiring the world since ages. Some of them are amazingly super-natural, while others have been covered by the dust of time and we are deprived of their teachings.

A dawn is, however, always hidden in the night's womb. Every night is followed by the day and vice-versa. Similarly, when the entire universe is under the darkness of ignorance, the Sun of God-knowledge rises and ends the reign of darkness. When, where and how this sun would rise is known only to the Almighty who is beyond this cycle of darkness and light. Only He and none else knows as to who is to play this divine role.

It is believed that one should not inquire about the origin of a saint and a river. But looking at the greatness of the saint and vastness of the river, one feels all the more anxious to know their origin. That is why, after seeing the Ganges, people proceed towards its source . Gangotri. Similarly, when one looks at this great Mission of universal peace, one becomes eager to know about its great founder, Baba Buta Singh. Every moment of his life was dedicated to the welfare of humanity. It is rather impossible to describe his contribution in words. For this he will be remembered by mankind for ages to come.

Today, we have very little literature to reveal the life story of Baba Buta Singh Ji detail. However, whatever I could lay my hands on, is reflected in this book . %Divya Gatha+(Voyage Divine). In this context I must express my thanks to the great writer Mrs. Raj Vasdev Singh, Additional Member Incharge Publications and Member Incharge Public Schools for her book Artman Ruhani Lehar (Modern Spiritual Movement) and the former distinguished poets of the Sant Nirankari Mission, Rev Puran Parkash Saqiq for his book Yug Purushq They provided a good base for writing this book. Similarly, I am grateful to Rev C.L. Gulati, Member Incharge Magazine Department and Rev Kirpa Sagar, Member Incharge Publications and Press and Publicity Department, for their book A Mission for Allq which also provided very useful references.

I realize that I have no ability to describe such a divine personality, but still I have ventured just to introduce Baba Buta Singh to the masses. I must apologize for the shortcomings that the esteemed readers may find in his book. I pray to His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj to bless me with faith and devotion and a life as per his divine guidance.

- **S.V. Lavhate**

Mumbai,
February 2, 2007

Publisher's Note

The realization of God is possible only by the grace of the True Master. There is no other means. The True Master is the only medium to establish the most needed link between man and God. He presents the Formless One in physical form. Whosoever bows at the holy feet of the True Master, realizes God through an instant revelation by him. As a matter of fact, this revelation of God is the sign of a Perfect Master.

The True Master has been appearing on this earth in human form since ages. The same is true of the present times. Four spiritual masters have appeared in the history of the Sant Nirankari Mission. They include the Founder Baba Buta Singh, his successors Baba Avtar Singh and Baba Gurbachan Singh and the present Spiritual Head, His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh.

The present book . "The Extraordinary Life of Baba Buta Singh" was first published in Marathi under the title "Divya Gatha" (Voyage Divine). On demand from readers, the author Rev S.V. Lavhate from Mumbai, rendered it into Hindi also. Now the Honorable Members of the Literature Screening Committee in UK have given this English version based on "Divya Gatha". They have described it as a "transcreation" rather than "translation" because they have incorporated some additional material also.

As mentioned by the distinguished author himself, there is very little literature directly related to the life and teachings of Baba Buta Singh. It is, therefore, hoped that the present book will be welcomed by our English knowing readers with great enthusiasm.

I congratulate the Honorable Members of the Literature Screening Committee in UK . Rev Harbans Singh, Rev Bhupinder Anand, Rev Daljit Mehta and Rev Surjit Dhani, on behalf of the Publications Department as also my own, for this valuable addition to the Mission's literature. I pray to His Holiness Baba Hardev Singh Ji Maharaj to bless them as well as Rev S.V. Lavhate with ability and strength to serve the Mission in general and its literature in particular with greater and greater zeal and spirit of devotion.

- Kirpa Sagar
Member Incharge Publication
Sant Nirankari Mandal

Delhi,
November 4, 2009

Chapter – I

Childhood

In the latter half of the 19th century, there lived a couple . Bishan Singh and Mayawanti . in the village of Hadwal, district Kaimalpur, North West Frontier of undivided India.

They were deeply religious and God fearing. Though devoid of much material wealth, they were spiritually very wealthy. The family frequented the local *Gurdwara* (Sikh Temple) to participate in worship and to serve the congregation. Visiting holy places and making religious observances, was also an integral part of their lives.

The couple was blessed with four sons and one daughter. The fourth son, named Buta (meaning a sapling in Punjabi) was born in 1873. Who could have foreseen that this sapling would grow into a majestic tree, enlightening the whole of mankind? For God, who works in mysterious ways, alone knows who is to be instrumental in his divine plan.

As a child, he would accompany his parents to the *Gurdwara*. He would attentively listen to *Kirtan* (the singing of holy hymns). He enjoyed the company of the old and wise, actively participating in their spiritual discourses whilst the other children of similar age played and got up to mischief.

His parents obviously had an enormous influence on his spiritual outlook. His nature set him apart from his siblings. He began to sing hymns at an early age at the *Gurdwara*, where his melodious voice enthralled the congregation. It seemed as if the Lord Almighty himself was preparing him for the future salvation of the world. He happily spent his childhood in an atmosphere filled with devotion.

* * *

Chapter II

Adolescence, Work and Marriage

Venerable (Ven.) Buta Singh continued to sing holy hymns from his early childhood to adolescence. He had a charismatic personality and a free spirit, which ran contrary to an ordinary, mundane life. But in line with social norms, he had to earn a living. So he joined the army and served for a number of years. However, the harshness or regimented army life could not keep him there for long. He therefore offered his resignation to look for a vocation which would allow him ample time and freedom for spiritual pursuits.

In those days Ven. Buta Singh resided in a place called Fatehganj, in the district of Kaimalpur. He had no time for trivialities. He had decided to work hard and earn an honest living to support his family. In accordance with the saying, *those who seek, they find* he found a vocation befitting his needs - the trade of a tattooist. This allowed him maximum time for his other-worldly activities and also brought him into contact with diverse people. Not confined to any fixed routine or location, he was able to take his work wherever he went. In fact, he spent only three days in a week working as a tattooist, and the other four were attributed to his inner quests.

The British, who ruled the undivided India, then, had a great desire to preserve their memories. The British soldiers . rank and file alike . prior to returning to their home land, would have tattoos designed on their hands and arms as souvenirs of their time abroad.

There were British garrisons in Naushehra, Landikotal and Peshawar. Ven. Buta Singh visited these places regularly on Fridays and at weekends. When the soldiers received their wages, a number of them would come to him for the inscription of flowers, lions, cobras, peacocks, names or religious symbols.

Having tattoos was not just favoured by British soldiers; it was also very popular amongst the Indians, who loved to have religious symbols and other designs tattooed. This trend is still quite fashionable in India today.

As a tattooist he had ample opportunities to engage with people of diverse backgrounds on spiritual matters such as the attributes of God, his relationship with man, the purpose of life, self-realisation and God-consciousness. He would also devote significant time to the *Gurdwara*, where he would sing sacred psalms.

From his work, he enjoyed an excellent remuneration, and as a result he led a settled life. Had he wanted to, he could easily have become very wealthy, for the amount he earned in a single day many others earned in a month. But material riches did not appeal to him, and accumulation of wealth was not his aim.

Ven. Buta Singh was conversant with English, Persian, Urdu, Hindi and other languages. He was cheerful and vibrant, with a majestic and attractive aura. He was a tall, sturdy, fast-walker with a radiant face and large impressive eyes. He possessed an unconventional, unusually strong mind, and a formidable disposition.

When he was 18 years of age, in accordance with tradition at that time, his parents arranged his marriage to Lajwanti Ji. She was the daughter of Aasha Singh Jaggi. After blissful 13 years of married life, in 1904 Lajwanti Ji succumbed to the Lord's will as a victim of the plague. In that year the endemic plague had claimed many other lives.

Ven. Buta Singh subsequently married Banti Ji from the village of Hadwal. They led a simple, meaningful and spiritually rich life. It is said that she had very few demands. She was quite content with life.

Although he had no children, he regarded every child as his own. He was a loving, fatherly figure, a guide and guardian for all.

* * *

Chapter III

Yearning for the Lord

The stirring sacred *Gurbani* hymns kindled an inexorable yearning for the Lord in Ven. Buta Singh. This yearning welled up to the brim and reached its zenith whenever a scriptural verse referred to God. In many verses of the *Gurbani* (sacred words of the Gurus), God is addressed as *ਯਹੁਕਰ ਠਹੁਕ* which denotes a first person conversation, intimating that the addressee is close by or indeed within hearing distance. *ਯਹੁ* God is omnipresent and with me at hand *ਕਰ* he would ask, *ਠਹੁ* Why can I see it? This question constantly occupied his mind. So much so that he would become impatient and emotional with tears in his eyes to find the answer. One such verse is as follows:

*Tu darayao mera dana beena
Mai mashhlee kaisae ant lavan
Jeh jeh dhaekhaa theh theh thoo hai
Thujh tae nikasee foot maraa*

- *Adi Granth, page 25*

*As you're the omniscient, all-seeing ocean,
How can I, a mere fish, fathom your bounds
Wherever I look, I see your presence there
Devoid of you, in agony I'd die aground*

On reciting or hearing these words, many questions would arise in his mind . *ਠਹੁ* What is this ocean? *ਕਰ* And, *ਠਹੁ* How are we the fish of this ocean? He would pose these questions to many a learned person, but none could provide the answers. He would therefore resort to solitude for many hours, imagining himself at the feet of the Invincible, praying for guidance on to the true path.

He cherished the desire to know the Truth ever since his childhood days. He did his *Kirtan* with utmost sincerity, from the depths of his heart. His melodic and resonant voice, coupled with the harmonium, spellbound the audience. His recitals filled his

longing to such an extent that he would choke with deep-felt emotions. It is said that those who pray in earnest to meet the Lord, are never disappointed. By the kindness of the True Preceptor, their prayers are always answered. Later on, this is precisely what transpired in the life of Ven. Buta Singh.

* * *

Chapter IV

The Home Coming

On that day, as usual, the holy congregation in Rawalpindi was being held. The *Gurdwara* was packed with devotees, who were fully engaged in devotional agapé (profound love for God). In this atmosphere, a sweet melodious voice resounded:

*Mohan ghar aavo,
Haun karon jodariya*

- Adi Granth Page 1209

My beloved Lord,
Come home to me, I plea

This was the voice of Ven. Buta Singh, who was so absorbed in *Kirtan* (the singing of holy hymns in the congregation) that the whole congregation swayed in sheer ecstasy. It was as though his singing, expressing his innermost yearning for the divine vision, had won the Lord's favour, and that the Lord had been moved to shower, compassion and affection on him.

Following on from his recitation, an incident occurred that totally changed Ven. Buta Singh's life. It was a meeting with Ven. Kahan Singh, who had been looking for such an unparalleled, pious disciple. He was truly moved by the earnestness of his rendition.

He sensed his relentless thirst for the Lord's vision. So after the recital, he approached Ven. Buta Singh and asked:

My dear brother, does the Beloved really come to your home, or were you singing merely for praise and applause?

With these words he left the *Gurdwara* and went home. But the heart-wrenching words made an indelible mark on Ven. Buta Singh. He pondered over them, and felt that this great soul, Ven. Kahan Singh, was in possession of the divine secret . that is, the whereabouts of the Lord. He felt he must obtain it, and to be able to do so, he must meet him again. He too, therefore, left the *Gurdwara* and made a beeline for Ven. Kahan Singh's residence.

There, they both plunged into a deep spiritual dialogue. They discussed God and the realisation of the Truth. Being fully conversant with the *Gurbani*, Ven. Buta Singh was most impressed with him. His every word enshrined the Truth, unflinching faith and unshakable conviction. This accentuated Ven. Buta Singh's thirst for God even further. He felt peace and joy descending upon him.

Ven. Kahan Singh was very pleased, having discerned his purity, fervent love and a burning desire. In fact, he identified him as an ideal seeker, who would value and treasure the priceless jewel of God realisation. After the discussion, he asked him to come again in the morning.

Ven. Buta Singh's anxiety had no bounds; his eagerness was brimming with anticipation. His inner voice was exhorting him to obtain the secret . the revelation of the Formless, and to securely grasp the hand of this great redeeming soul, Ven. Kahan Singh.

He could not wait for the sun to rise and each moment seemed as if it was an epoch. His quest for the Truth had reached its zenith. It was dawn at last. The sun heralded a new era. The year was 1914.

Ven. Buta Singh returned to Ven. Kahan Singh's home in the morning, as asked. He knocked on the door. Ven. Kahan Singh, who had expected him, opened it. He was so moved by his devotion that he duly bestowed on him the realisation of God. The Almighty *Nirankar* was unveiled to him.

On beholding this wondrous, majestic Lord *Nirankar*, Ven. Buta Singh was awe-struck. He danced in ecstasy, as he had never experienced anything as enlightening as this before. He received the answers he had long waited for. He reverently fell at his Preceptor's feet and paid homage. As the Preceptor's hand rested on his head, he experienced the thrill of heavenly bliss. He saw God all around; there was no end to his happiness. In absolute elation, he exclaimed:

Love found Him! Love found Him!

The Lord had, at last, entered his home; and he had entered the Lord's home. Just like the river merging with the ocean, his soul merged with the Super-soul, unifying everything into the oneness of God's Name:

Tuhi Nirankar! Tuhi Nirankar! Tuhi Nirankar!

(Thou art the Formless! Thou art the Formless! Thou art the Formless!)

* * *

Chapter V

The Welfare of All

To endow a person with God-realisation is the greatest good, and the noblest deed. For, it is this realisation that helps one to attain liberation. It fulfils the true purpose of life, which leads to lasting equipoise. This is the subtle perception, or cognition of the Formless God. According to the scriptures, this *divine truth* cannot be acquired through mere recitation, asceticism, penances, rites and rituals. Just as, only a lit

candle can light up another, likewise only an enlightened soul can enlighten a seeker. This *wisdom* cannot be attained in any other way. As Saint Kabir confirms:

*Bhavsagar keh traas tey guru ki pakroh bahi
Guru binaa kaun ubaarsi bhavjal dhara mahi*

- Kabir Sakhi

*If fearful of the ocean of Life,
Grasp the Preceptor's hand, firmly,
For no other person, but he alone,
Will save you from this deadly sea*

The truth of the matter is that the individual, upon enlightenment, is invariably drawn to the welfare of mankind. It becomes his prime objective to use all the means at his disposal to disseminate this *wisdom* to others. But in spite of the efforts of the enlightened beings, since time immemorial, the message of ~~truth~~ truth has not struck the inner chord of every heart. The question arises as to why this is so.

For the answer, one does not have to look very far. Those who strove to proclaim the truth; were denounced, tormented and even tortured. However, despite these hurdles, they marched on undauntedly to work for the good of all. Saint Kabir further ratifies:

*Sant Na Charey Santata Kotit Mileh Asant
Malya Bhuvangam Bedhya Seetalta Na Tajant*

- Kabir Sakhi

*A saint never gives up his saintliness,
However many impious he may meet
Sandalwood never sheds its fragrance
However many girding serpents surfeit*

Ven. Buta Singh was no different. Having been graced with the perception of truth, he was immersed, from that moment onwards, in celestial bliss. Impulsively

overwhelmed by his natural instinct to serve others, he petitioned his Preceptor with utmost humility:

Oh merciful Lord, I wish to share this divine secret with others. Please grant me your permission. Kindly do not place any fetters on it, because there are many in this world who thirst for it immensely.

Ven. Kahan Singh knew full well that this pure soul was ideally suited to propagate the realisation of God. For, he too wanted ordinary people to have access to it. But he was fully aware of how enlightened souls were ill-treated, persecuted, tortured, mocked and vehemently opposed by narrow-minded bigots. He was also mindful of how they ostracised the proponents of the truth, who did not follow their religious conventions.

For this reason, the very Venerable Kahan Singh did not feel it was appropriate to grant him his request. He told Ven. Buta Singh that if he was to start spreading the divine secret, the very people who addressed him as *Bhagatji* (the revered wise one), held him in high esteem and affectionately listened to his *Kirtan* now, would then call him mad and brand him as insane. They would belligerently contend that it is impossible to meet God and even go to the extent of inflicting grievous bodily harm.

Ven. Buta Singh, in spite of this warning, was still keen to spread the Truth. He fell at his Preceptor's feet and supplicated. He said that any physical harm did not concern him. He simply wanted to propagate the truth to every nook and cranny of the world, for he maintained, there are so many seekers crying out for the divine truth. He pleaded for the people who were trapped or entangled in rites and rituals devised by selfish custodians of religion. He felt it was imperative to free them from their shackles by giving them an opportunity to attain God-realisation.

However, the true Preceptor knew what was best. Although he fully respected the Ven. Buta Singh's sentiments and profusely praised his selfless desires, he did not feel it was right, at that moment in time, to grant him permission to divulge this

wisdom to public at large. With a sweet smile, Ven. Buta Singh bowed his head and happily accepted his Preceptor's command.

For 15 years, he relished the divine-revelation, practised it and kept it close to his chest.

* * *

Chapter VI

Search for Seekers

Having been anointed at the age of 40, Ven. Buta Singh, for 15 years, immersed himself in the contemplation and adoration of God as directed, whilst savouring the divine knowledge. Acknowledging his capability and altruistic nature, Ven. Kahan Singh felt that time had come to grant Ven. Buta Singh the permission to promulgate the divine knowledge to the world at large. This had been long awaited. It was as if he had acquired wings.

From that day onwards, Baba Buta Singh (Baba Ji) became proactive in his vigorous search for genuine seekers. He resolved to dedicate all his energy and time to do so. With the blessings of his Preceptor, he commenced the search for needy souls in Loralai and Peshawar areas.

Whoever he came into contact with, he would engage them in conversation. He would ask as to whether they knew who their *Father* was, as to where they were going after this life, and whether they knew their real home. Many were astounded and taken aback by these unusual questions. Often Baba Buta Singh would say:

It is true that your mother and father are related to your body, but isn't the individual's relationship with the Almighty Lord, the ultimate source of all souls, of paramount importance? Do you know who he is? Do you know where he is? Do

you know your real home? Do you know that it is He, the Lord, who protects us all in good and bad times?

These questions rendered the awe struck individuals speechless. His manner of posing questions was exceptional, and so was the way in which he answered. The motive was to identify the thirsty souls. Anyone who expressed the slightest desire to find the real home, Baba Ji instantly conferred the realisation.

He would divulge the divine truth to the seeker in the manner that Lord Krishna is depicted as doing in Chapter 11 of the Bhagvat-Gita. On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, he bestowed the divine vision on Arjuna.

One such recipient was Saint Des Raj, who hungered for the Lord's vision. He wanted to leave his hearth and home for the life of a recluse. One of the disciples who knew him told him that it was possible to get a glimpse of the Lord without resorting to asceticism. He took him to Baba Ji.

It was 4:00 am; a freezing cold winter morning. He was taken to the congregation at Baba Ji's residence, where he found himself in great awe, listening to him. As a Hindu, he was at variance with Sikhism. He was totally ignorant of the *Gurbani*, yet he was overly impressed with Baba Ji's rendition of it. He felt relaxed, chastened and soothed.

He attended three morning congregations consecutively, and on the fourth day in the evening, he felt so moved that he fell at Baba Ji's feet. He cried and begged to be enlightened. Baba Ji enquired as to what he believed in. He responded that it was the Bhagavad-Gita.

Upon request, the Bhagavad-Gita in Urdu was brought. In accordance with its teachings, Baba Ji bade him to bring some offerings for the Guru. He returned with some milk sweets, but still awe-gripped.

Baba Ji took him up to the flat roof, where he was asked to sit cross-legged. He was asked to straighten up, be alert and conscious. He was then questioned as to

whether he studied the Gita on a daily basis, and whether or not he understood Chapter 11 in particular. The answers for both were affirmative.

Baba Ji opened the chapter in question, showed it to him and asked if he knew the meaning of the term *Viraat Swaroop* (cosmic vision). He answered in the negative.

Baba Ji then familiarized him with the natural elements that made up the cosmos and the human body. Where does the spirit go after the body is destroyed, he probed? Then he unveiled the eternal truth and said:

¶This is within you, within me, everywhere, in everything and it is everything. There is now no difference between you and I, and we are all one¶

Saint Des Raj turned out to be one of the staunchest of disciples, who transcended his sectarian beliefs and bigoted prejudices. Later on, he was to become the president of the Sant Nirankari Mandal.

In this manner, Baba Ji spent all his time in the search for true aspirants. He spoke about God realization with whomsoever he came into contact with.

He was a highly disciplined early riser who used to conduct congregations at four o'clock every morning. He would sit on the floor, cross-legged, on a small mat at the same level as his enlightened disciples, namely saints Avtar Singh, Labh Singh, Gopal Singh Premi and Des Raj. With the aid of an oil lamp, he would expound the *Gurbani* verses. His examples would be full of aphorisms and impromptu allegories.

On seeing his great zeal to propagate the truth, a friend advised him not to divulge it, but to keep it to himself;

¶Buta Singh, there is no need to share it with others. People think you are mad. So why bother to spread it?¶

To which Baba Ji replied:

My friend, I have sackfuls of seeds. I am scattering them wherever I go. Even if a single seed were to germinate and grow into a fruit-bearing tree, it would be enough to fill all my granaries.

He continued to proclaim the truth, not caring for what people thought. His following grew one by one. Saint Gokal Singh Kohli, a lawyer, was one of his early selfless devotees. He had allocated a room in his house for the congregations. The disciples would meet in this room to discuss, praise and deliberate on the Name. Although Baba Ji's followers were a few in number, his opponents were many. They were growing rapidly.

Where Baba Ji's disciples could not reach, the didactic rumour-mongers did; they turned out to be unwitting promoters of his spiritual work. Their false rumours were the reason for the many inquisitive minds to come to him to probe his claims. They were so impressed by his inspiring words that they were compelled to acquire the divine enlightenment, and to remain firm thenceforth.

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Chapter VII

The Angelic Encounter

On 25 May 1929, an extraordinary encounter took place . a meeting of two great angelic souls, who like two converging rivers, stemming and flowing from two different directions, met and formed a single confluence. It was a historic day . a day on which Baba Ji invested Ven. Avtar Singh with enlightenment.

This laid the foundation for the Sant Nirankari Mission, whose prime objective was to propagate the Truth, and thereby promoting non-violence, equality, tolerance and fraternity.

Ven. Avtar Singh had been hitherto, a deeply religious, honest and hard working human rights activist, who stood for justice, equality and human dignity. He believed in moral values and high ethical standards.

The milkman Dhana Singh was a devotee of Baba Buta Singh. The information he conveyed regarding his Preceptor's teachings, created a fervent desire in Ven. Avtar Singh to meet Baba Ji. He did not have to wait too long.

In the last week of May 1929, Ven. Avtar Singh was standing in his bakery when his neighbour, Anoop Singh saw Baba Ji in the street, and called out:

Look! Bro. Avtar Singh, there's Brother Buta Singh, whom you are so eager to meet!

Ven. Avtar Singh immediately looked up and saw the radiant, larger than life figure of Baba Buta Singh. It seemed to him as if a great nobleman or a prince was striding by.

Anoop Singh addressed Baba Ji:

How are you brother? Are you well?

To which, Baba Ji responded:

What sort of well-being are you enquiring about brother? Is it my inner or outer well-being? If you're asking about my inner state, I must say I'm truly well and blissful. If you wish to know about my outer state, you can see it for yourself; I'm standing right before you.

Looking towards Ven. Avtar Singh, Anoop Singh introduced him to the Preceptor:

This is our Bro. Avtar Singh, who is very eager to meet you.

With utmost respect and reverence, Ven. Avtar Singh requested Baba Ji to grace him with his time, so that he could understand the deeper meanings and the intricacies of the *Gurbani*.

Baba Ji was very pleased to see that Ven. Avtar Singh was a genuine seeker, anxious to learn and understand the deeper scriptural meaning. Hence, he said:

Let's go brother. We shall sit and talk for a while, in your shop

Without waiting for a reply, Baba Ji unexpectedly went into the bakery. Whilst still on his feet, he said with a benign smile:

My dear brother Avtar Singh, you're the first person expressing this desire. People don't seem to want to know about the secret of the soul and God. You're really great! Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji has expounded in his sacred verses:

*Jis jan kao prabh dars piyasa
Nanak, ta ke bal bal jasa*

- Adi Granth Page 266

Whoever thirsts for the Lord's vision
Nanak accords the highest of position

Although Ven. Avtar Singh welcomed Baba Ji to his humble bakery, he was in a dilemma. On the one hand he wanted to meet him, on the other; he had no fitting venue for it. He felt very uncomfortable to host a meeting in a shop that was totally unfit for such a great personage. However, totally oblivious to the state of the bakery, Baba Ji pulled up a stool from nearby and sat on it. He also asked Ven. Avtar Singh to do the same, so that they could talk. Baba Ji's natural, easygoing and reassuring persona completely overwhelmed him. He was beside himself with the thought of beholding a personality, who did not hesitate in the least to make himself at home at such an improper place, irrespective of his immaculate clothes.

Unsure of how to compose his words, Ven. Avtar Singh reverently beseeched Baba Ji to enlighten him . to show him the path of devotion to, and love for God. Being pleased, Baba Ji said:

± shall be more than happy to come here whenever you have time. If you wish, I can come daily.q

Ven. Avtar Singh implored:

± is the thirsty who go to the well to quench their thirst. Rather than troubling you, please give me the time and place where I can make myself available at your feet.q

Having given him the address for the venue and time . 8.00 am next day, Baba Ji left.

The next day, after the daily, routine worship at the *Gurdwara*, Ven. Avtar Singh reached Baba Ji's residence, where he was being keenly awaited.

It was 25 May 1929. Ven. Avtar Singh took his seat, as asked, and a dialogue commenced on the realisation of God.

Baba Ji prepared the ground by explaining the true meaning of the sacred verses of Gurbani. For, prior to imparting the *cosmic vision*, he wanted to ensure that there were no difficulties in understanding it.

After a while Ven. Avtar Singh became impatient - impatient to the point that he could no longer contain his yearning. On observing his intense desire for the revelation of the mystique, Baba Ji unveiled it by saying:

±ook! This is the Formless . Lord-God our Father, in the pursuit of whom people undergo penances, observe abstinences, and waste their time by resorting to forests as ascetics. Behold it! See how it pervades everything, everywhere. It was as it is now, before creation; it will remain as it is now after everything comes to an end.+

He further quoted from the *Gurbani*:

Jo Thakur sad sada Hajuray
Ta ko anda janat duray

- Adi Granth page
267

The blind regard as far and absent
The Lord God who is ever present

Nal Narayan meray
Jam dut na avay neray

- Adi Granth Page
630

Baba Ji gave many such examples from the *Gurbani*. The more he heard, the more joyous Ven. Avtar Singh became. He was overwhelmed and fully absorbed in this newfound spiritual intoxication . a state of delight, which he relished himself and shared, in due course, with countless other devouts.

Immediately after the revelation, Ven. Avtar Singh described his state of mind as follows:

My dear brother! I cannot explain in words how I felt at the time of anointment. It was as if I was sitting in the lap of the Almighty, engulfed in *divine light*. I felt one with the Lord. There was no separation between myself and my Lord.

Filled with eternal bliss and inner peace, Ven. Avtar Singh prostrated before his Preceptor, sang the following verses:

Apne satguru ke balharay
Aage sukh, pase sukh sehja ghar anand hamaray

- Adi Granth page
609

To my Preceptor, I sacrifice my all
I feel bliss all around and in my soul

Anand bhaya meri maye satguru men paya

- Adi Granth page
917

I am overjoyed, Mother; I have found my Preceptor

Having reached his eternal home through the guru's grace and mercy, Ven. Avtar Singh prostrated again and again at Baba Ji's feet. He was at a loss for words to describe his contentment. He could not thank him enough.

In actual fact, Baba Ji had bestowed this truth on many other people, but none of them exhibited such rapture as instantly as Ven. Avtar Singh. An example of this matchless disciple must be cited.

When he went back home, he narrated his divine experience to his maternal uncle, Jai Singh. He told him how Baba Ji had graced him with enlightenment. Being absolutely elated, he expected him to appreciate and endorse his encounter. But it was quite the contrary. His uncle became very angry and scolded him:

Avtar Singh, you have lost your good name. Whatever respect you earned from the *Gurdwara* and the Sikh fraternity has gone. Your standing in the community no longer remains. Effectively, by going to this Buta Singh you have authored your own demise.

Ven. Avtar Singh, in response, did not take his uncle's words to heart. He simply replied with a smile:

For many years, dear uncle, I have been reciting Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji's hymns. Today, for the first time in my life, I have done what Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji has been advocating and enjoining.

With these words Ven. Avtar Singh resorted to the contemplation of *Nirankar* . Lord-God without form, commonly known in the Mission as The Formless.

The following day, at dawn, Ven. Avtar Singh headed towards Baba Ji's house. As he met him en route, he fell at his feet, and began to praise him. Baba Ji helped him up, embraced him and said:

Let's go for a walk, and at the same time do simran (remembrance of God).

Baba Ji asked:

Brother, can you explain the four causes of life?

Ven. Avtar Singh shook his head, absent-mindedly. Then Baba Ji retorted:

Why don't you ask me? I can explain them to you.

Sensing that Ven. Avtar Singh had not fully understood, he repeated:

I asked you about the four causes of life?

Ven. Avtar Singh replied:

Yes, I know them full well?

Then Baba Ji interjected:

Dear brother, when I first asked, you indicated that you didn't know?

Ven. Avtar Singh replied:

I was so absorbed in *simran*, as per your bidding . that I did not hear your question. Hence, I could not respond.

Baba Ji was so pleased with the answer that he began to say:

Love found him, love found him.

Whilst still articulating these words, Baba Ji prostrated before Ven. Avtar Singh, who in turn became very uncomfortable on seeing such display of humility. He could not help but say:

Lord, what are you doing?

To which Baba Ji replied:

You're truly remarkable, Avtar Singh; you're really great. This is the sort of concentration one should ideally have. I have been looking for a disciple like you, who can accept my words in letter and spirit. You are such a disciple. This is why I am prostrating before you.

Following his enlightenment, Ven. Avtar Singh acted upon Baba Ji's every word, and tirelessly served him. He dedicated everything he had, to assist his Preceptor in the propagation of the Truth.

From 1929 right to the end of Baba Ji's sojourn on earth in 1943, their unfaltering relationship, that of a Master and his disciple remained intact, in spite of the many attempts by their adversaries to break them up. The divine duo, in the spiritual world, will be remembered throughout the ages.

* * *

Chapter VIII

Poison Becoming Nectar

To propagate the truth in this world is akin to putting your hand in the fire deliberately. However, knowing full well that there is no way to liberate this world other than through the knowledge of the Truth. Saints, sages, prophets and gurus have continued to redeem the world without malice or ill will, in spite of the ill treatment meted out by their opponents.

Looking at some of the pages of history, we find that the great devotee, Meera Bhai, was poisoned, and a malicious individual also spiked Lord Buddha's food with poison. Whenever saints came to this world, they were vilified, due to the ignorance of their opponents. But saints even then took pity and ever showered blessings on their rancorous slanders. In the holy Avtar Bani, Baba Avtar Singh Ji describes this fact beautifully as follows:

*Jinaa sach da beera chukiah duniyah keeti ghat nahin
Sant janan har aukar jhalhi mathay paiya vat nahin*

*Sant janan noon manukh hardam boarha jhalha kehney rahey
Apnay nij soharth khatar santan day kal khehnday rahay*

*Rehbar noo vi rahon bhulay lok kurayia kehnday rahay
Bayparvah eh sant hari day tahnay mahnay senfay rahay*

*Suraan day kayal jabar hakam rajh rajh vehr kamanday rahay
Kazi pandit annay aagooaj raj fatvay lahnday rahay*

*Aahay di ta kadar na janan deevay balan mariyan tay
Kahay avtar areh nay murakh aj vi ohnan arhiyan tay*

- Avtar Bani, Verse 8

*Though scorned and ridiculed
In ordeals saints persevered
In crossing hurdles, not one
Single frown ever appeared*

*Though for their selfish gain
The self-centred hurled abuse
To shine at saints' expense
They made every ill excuse*

*Misguided have declared
Even the Guide as a strayed
Carefree souls of the Lord
Their taunts, gladly braved*

*Fundamental, ruling tyrants
Inexorably waged many wars
Kazi, Pundit, fanatic leaders
Issued death decrees galore*

*When here, honour him not
They light lamps on his tomb
Avtar, Such foolish people
Without doubt, still loom*

Incidents of such adversity also occurred in Baba Buta Singh's life. Obstacles created by the opponents have always featured in the path of truth. But the fact of the matter is that as the opposition to the truth grew, the truth multiplied exponentially. In view of Baba Ji's popularity, borne out of his claim that God is realisable, the opponents of the truth became so inflamed that they contrived to kill him. They poisoned people's minds and incited them to oppose vigorously Baba Ji's teachings, in places where he hadn't even been able to visit.

Baba Ji was opposed to orthodox, religious rituals. He was against the divisions of society based on caste, creed and social taboos. He taught that habits, diet and dress had very little, if at all, to do with spirituality. His liberal approach inflamed the diehard, who even threatened him with physical harm. This ironically served to popularize him and help him to attract more followers.

In such an atmosphere, one individual asked him:

“Can you show me God?”

In accordance with his character, Baba Ji simply replied:

“I will show you God you can never run away from.”

That person, with bad intentions, said:

“Yes, but first you must come to my house for a meal.”

In the knowledge that the person had maledictions, the fearless Baba Buta Singh accepted the invitation, as it is not in saint's character to turn down such requests.

He went to that person's house. The food that was served to him had been admixed with poison. Baba Ji, in a state of contemplation, took the food as if it was nectar. On the way back home, his repeated vomiting threw up the poison. The poison was so strong that it affected the very ground it fell on, but with God's grace, he escaped its effects.

On seeing Baba Ji alive and well and unaffected by the poison, the malignant person was taken aback and never dared to face him again.

Inspite of the opposition's manifold obstacles, Baba Ji and Ven. Avtar Singh continued to spread the message of truth unconcerned for their own personal safety. They entrusted their lives God.

Baba Ji talked about his convictions with everybody, be it the chess players or shopkeepers in the bazaar. He came across some boisterous young men playing chess outside a shop. As he addressed them to attract their attention, they began to insult and abuse him. But he remained unperturbed.

One of his disciples lost his temper in retaliation. Baba Ji, totally relaxed, said to him:

Why are you so disturbed? Be it praise or condemnation, honour or disgrace, it doesn't bother me in any way. Why is it bothering you? Whoever loses his temper under any circumstance cannot be my disciple, for whatever happens, always happens for the best.

Another example of Baba Buta Singh's fearlessness and the unfolding of God's mysterious way must be mentioned to appreciate the extent to which the opponents went to finish off these two great souls.

Ven. Avtar Singh's paternal village was Latiphal, with which he kept in touch, even after having settled in Rawalpindi.

One day Baba Avtar Singh decided to go to Latiphal with Baba Ji. To be able to get there, they had to take the train to Dhudial, and then walk for three or four miles.

In Dhudial there were a sizeable number of opponents. The so-called religious custodians, in the name of religion, incited some of the gullible village people, who hatched a plan to assassinate Baba Ji and Ven. Avtar Singh en route to Latiphal from Dhudial. Armed with machetes, axes and spears, they laid in wait.

When the train reached Dhudial, it was already dusk. Ven. Avtar Singh, accompanied by Baba Ji, took the usual path to his paternal village, Latiphal, that he had taken many times before. On that very path the assassins were waiting for them.

The two were so immersed in Lord's contemplation that they unknowingly strayed from their intended path. It can be said that the diversion was part of the Lord's plan. After a long detour, they reached home safely.

The assassins in the meantime waited in vain for many hours. It was through one of those would be assassins that this conspiracy came to light.

In spite of such incidents, the propagation of the truth by the divine duo did not suffer in the least.

* * *

Chapter IX

Service of the saints

Baba Ji worked conscientiously to make a living; he used his earnings to serve the saints. He worked as a tattooist in Peshawar at a time when the British ruled India. The westerns, being very fond of tattoos, would have them inscribed on their hands, arms and torso to take home with them as memories of India. They found it very convenient to visit Baba Ji because of the close proximity of this house to their garrison. They came to him on a regular basis, which provided him with an easy source of income. As a result, he and his family led a comfortable life. Many a time he would make 40 to 50 rupees in one day, which was considered then to be a very large sum of money.

Had Baba Ji wanted to, he could have bought land and amassed huge wealth, but it was not in his nature to do so. On his way back home, he would invite every saint he came across to an evening meal. So much so that he was not content until he had spent the whole day's earning. The invitees were treated with such respect and love that they were overwhelmed and taken aback. After the meal, he reveled in cleaning their dishes, and washing their feet. When asked as to why he was doing what he was doing, he would say that he was not doing anything different or contrary

to the norm, and that he was merely following the injunction of the sacred words of the holy *Gurbani*:

Charan sadh kay dhoay dhoay peeoh

Arap sadh koh apna jeeoh

- *Adi Granth; 283*

The nectar of saints' foot-wash imbibe

Your life to saints sacrifice and subscribe

Elaborating on his words even further, he would unequivocally state:

Who could possibly be a greater saint than you, the God-realized souls?

By doing it himself, he exemplified the importance of serving the saints. Apart from this, on a daily basis, he would glorify and sing the praises of the *sadh-sangat* (holy congregation) in order for the devotees to appreciate its virtues. By setting a prime example himself, he would inspire others to serve saints. On many occasions, what appeared to be his unorthodox methods became the public talking point. Whilst some called him a charlatan, there were others who worshiped him as a holy being. He had, in fact, a multi-faceted personality.

He was always detached from *maya* (worldly lures). For instance, whenever he travelled in a *tonga* (horse carriage), he would hand over to the driver whatever money he had. Incidents like these are still cherished by saints who were close to him.

The following occurrence serves as an undeniable testimony to his detachment and spirit of service:

One day he earned approximately 150 rupees. As per his habit, he bought 40/50 rupees worth of food and invited the saints to dinner on his way home. Ven. Avtar Singh was also with him. After the meal many people left, but Baba Ji asked Ven.

AVtar Singh to stay for a while. Baba Ji asked his wife, Mata Wanti Ji, to give him 30 rupees out of the money he had given her for safekeeping. She immediately obliged. Having distributed the money amongst the saints, he came a few minutes later and asked for the rest of the money. Mata Wanti Ji hesitated, but he asked her once again. She then gave him all the money, but could not hide her resentment. On seeing her disapproval, he struck a match and burnt all the notes. Ven. Avtar Singh silently observed the whole incident, but dared to stop him. Looking at the heaped ashes of notes, he said with a smile:

“Look Wanti Ji, I have burnt the very wall that came between our affection for each other. Maya or wealth that divides the soul from the Super-soul and obstructs the path of love must be totally crushed to bits.”

Immediately after this, he turned to Ven. Avtar Singh and asked:

“My dear brother, whatever I have said and done is right, isn’t it?”

Ven. Avtar Singh replied:

“This is not something that everybody can do. It can only be done by a perfect saint.”

* * *

Chapter X

Service and Happiness

Any plan to be brought into fruition requires hard work, dedication and even struggle. Just as building a pass through a mountain requires explosives to break down rocks, the excavation of tunnels, and the circumnavigation of the contours to lay down roads, the sweat and toil of thousands of labourers, engineers and contractors is also needed. Having established the road infrastructure with such industry, motor vehicles are then able to travel at high speed.

Similarly, Baba Ji laid the spiritual infrastructure on which the Mission could travel. The qualities of service, devotion and congregation that the Preceptor taught his devotees, was not just in words but also in deed. He would invite saints home to dinner and then personally serve them, already mentioned. From waiting on to washing up, he took it on himself to do selflessly. He, as the Lord Master, to show the way to his devotees, would wash their feet, imbibe their *charnamrit* (holy water) just to be able to explain its importance to them. In this way he inspired the saints to serve each other.

Satguru ki seva chakri sukhi hoon such sareh

Aethe milnay badeyaiyan dargah mokh darvarah

- *Adi Granth; 586*

As Guru's servant, I get joy and elation

Laudation here, and hereafter salvation

As per the above directive, he guided his devotees to serve others with body, mind and wealth to attain happiness. Now and again, he would unhesitatingly ask the saints as to how much money they had in their pockets, and tell them to spend some of it in serving the fellow saints.

On one particular occasion, in this manner, he got one of his saints to part with some of his money as an act of service. Ven. Avtar Singh, standing nearby, felt that the atmosphere was somewhat uncomfortable, and humbly asked him with folded hands as to why he was forcing the saints to serve. After all, they could easily misconstrue.

Ven. Avtar Singh reverently iterated:

~~Both my shop and till are yours. Take as much as you want. It would give me great pleasure.~~

After listening to Ven. Avtar Singh, Baba Ji remained quiet for a while and then asked:

~~Avtar Singh, is the Guru the giver or the beggar?~~

Realising his mistake, Ven. Avtar Singh fell at his feet, prostrated and replied:

My Lord, Guru is indeed the giver.

Before Ven. Avtar Singh could say anything else, Baba Ji interjected:

Avtar Singh Ji, they are all my children and I want to see them all happy. Remember always that the gates of peace and happiness only open up with selfless service. I compel them to sow such a seed, so that they can be happy.

In this way he encouraged everybody to march on the path of devotion through selfless service.

Today, all over the world, Nirankari devotees are known for their selfless service. It is only by imagining the difficulties Baba Ji had to face in instilling the spirit of service in saints with body, mind and wealth, can one truly appreciate his divine nature.

This spirit of service that he instilled in saints is now seen to be bearing fruit. It can be said that selfless-service is one of the pillars of the Sant Nirankari Mission. For those who serve with their body, mind and wealth are never short of peace, contentment and bliss, which millions of Nirankari saints are experiencing today.

* * *

Chapter XI

The Preceptor for all ages

Like a skilled jeweler, Baba Ji sought out suitable individuals, one by one, to merge with the Truth and thereafter to refine them. He knew full well that later on the Mission's responsibility of liberating mankind and endowing on them the gift of

devotion would squarely fall on their shoulder. With the passage of time, all his expectations and blessings proved to be right. After him, Ven. Avtar Singh became a fine leader of the Mission. Those who apprenticed under Baba Ji were saints like Lakh Singh, Santokh Singh, Buta Singh (Jagat Mata Budhwanti Ji's brother), Rishi Vias Dev, Mata Prem, Gokul Singh Kohli, Ram Saran, Gopal Singh Premi, Krishan Lal. They all proved to be great pillars of the Mission.

Another pillar of the Mission was Saint Babu Mahadev Singh, who was an orthodox Sikh. He used to disapprove of every human being who paraded as a divine messenger. His own mother-in-law used to touch Baba Ji's feet, who in turn used to place his hand on her head in blessing. She often told him that Baba Ji was a great enlightened soul. But he was vehemently against such a practice.

Babu Mahadev Singh dislike Baba Ji to such an extent that when Baba Ji stayed at their house on one particular occasion, he even had his bed moved away to avoid hearing him.

Accompanied by Ven. Avtar Singh, Baba Ji again visited Babu Mahadev Singh's village. His whole family, including his father, became enlightened. But he himself kept aloof. To him, it was all a hoax.

One day he went to the village *gurdwara*, where he found Baba Ji expounding the holy verses. He beckoned him to sit near and listen to what he was about to say. A small group also gathered round him. He talked about God and God knowledge. Using a few words, Baba Ji revealed to him the Almighty God.

Upon realising God, he was metamorphosed. A surge of sheer joy engulfed him; he felt light and liberated. He placed his head at Baba Ji's feet, accepting him as his Preceptor.

Baba Ji was sovereign Lord of the three worlds . the past, present and the future. On seeing his saint's exemplary devotion to the Truth, he would grant them, in a state of elation, many boons. One day, in addressing the holy congregation, he said:

You will see for yourself the Mission spreading one day all over of the world. It will be hailed and lauded.

The handful of saints present then, on hearing these words, began to look at each other in great awe, because there were so few of them. How a handful of people could become countless, was a question on everybody's mind.

Although the Master himself is the triune Lord, he never presents himself as such. Remaining within spiritual parameters, he does not interfere with the divine law. But his angelic works prove him to be Master of the three worlds.

On particular day, sitting at home, as Baba Ji mapped out long lines of berries (fruit of the jujube tree) on the floor, Jagatmata Budhwanti Ji came down. She could not understand what he was doing. To seek the answer to his mystic puzzle, she questioned:

Baba Ji, why are you lining up these berries?

He replied:

Budhan (Jagatmata Ji's family pet name). In making lines of devotees. Our congregations will become so large that you will see long, ever growing queues of saints wanting to pay homage to the Guru, like these berries are laid out. Ven. Avtar Singh and your good self would be seated on a raised dais and paraded and lauded through the streets. Your fragrance of devotion and love would spread all around.

Whatever Baba Ji uttered in his lifetime, has become true, for we can now see the Nirankari Mission in the process of spreading all over the world. His dream of one global family is, in fact, being materialized. We see devotees standing in queues for hours on end, in the sure hope of being sated by their Guru's one solitary glance. Baba Ji's forecasts that seemed impossible then, are seen to be practically possible today. We can see now that the real craftsman and architect of the whole scene, was Baba Ji. Things that one could not even imagine or predict, Baba Ji was

making possible through his words and actions. All this is only possible for the True Master, Lord of the three worlds.

* * *

Chapter XII

Astrologer's Tale

Baba Buta Singh and Ven. Avtar Singh were going from one place to another, spreading the word of God. One day the divine duo arrived in Lahore. As they were walking through the bazaar, Baba Ji's eye caught a glimpse of an astrologer's board. The astrologer was adept at telling the future. People came from afar to consult him.

Baba Ji said to Ven. Avtar Singh:

“Come on, let me show you something.”

Ven. Avtar Singh obliged by following him up the stairs, to see the astrologer, who on seeing them stood up. Having observed Baba Ji for a while, the astrologer turned round to Ven. Avtar Singh and said:

“Your companion is an accomplished Seer, who has all the worldly powers. He can do whatever he likes.”

On hearing these words from the astrologer in praise of his Guru, Ven. Avtar Singh became overjoyed. He put his hand in his pocket to reach for some money to give him, but Baba Ji stopped him and, by holding his hand, led him downstairs. The poor astrologer was taken aback.

Seeing that Ven. Avtar Singh was puzzled, Baba Ji explained:

“My dear brother Avtar Singh, you're so gullible. Even if the astrologer were right, his prediction would be worthless. Let me explain why.”

Baba Ji continued:

He was simply coming out with tall stories to make money. The knowledge in which the adept himself has no faith should be deemed useless. Just think about it yourself. If he had even the slightest faith in his own knowledge, he would not have remained silent on beholding such a divine soul. He would have fallen at his feet wholeheartedly in the pursuit of the *mystique*. But he did nothing of the sort. We can learn one thing conclusively from this. His knowledge is either false, or even if genuine, the fact that he has no faith in it, he himself has falsified it.

Ven. Avtar Singh was very pleased on hearing Baba Ji's explanation. So much of that he started to thank the Lord for having been blessed with the Perfect Master.

In actual fact, to verify a Guru, one does not have to go to an astrologer, for the only identification of the Preceptor is to manifest the Truth. The greatest characteristic of such a person is that he reveals the Truth. Whoever Baba Ji came into contact with, he graced with the wealth of God-realisation. For this very reason, he was a perfect spiritual guide. There can be no doubt about it.

Baba Ji would emphasize the importance and greatness of those who possessed *God Knowledge*. However, those who did not, were not to be considered as the source of wisdom. Baba Ji was always direct; he never minced his words.

The following incident is an example.

Once, overlooking a crowd below, from a balcony, he asked a disciple:

What is that?

They people replied the disciple.

They not people; they are lifeless souls. Baba Ji corrected.

Baba Ji's robustness was such that he would express his innermost thoughts without hesitation. He would tell mature adults to become like children to be free from their frets and fears, for you can behold God only by acquiring the innocence and humility of a child.

* * *

Chapter-XIII

Sings of Departure

On seeing the divine purpose for which he took birth, come into fruition, Baba Buta Singh appeared to be absolutely elated during his final days on earth. His aim of eradicating prevalent global darkness through the light of *brahm gyan* (the knowledge of God) was being fulfilled. To safeguard and propagate such *light* amongst one and all, Baba Ji had met the ideal personage in the form of Ven. Avtar Singh, who passed all his trials and tribulations with flying colours. With this in mind, Baba Ji was very happy.

He, his wife and mother-in-law agreed to live with Ven. Avtar Singh, who successfully persuaded them to do so. Thenceforth, Baba Ji, together with his family, lived there for the rest of his life, and Ven. Avtar Singh and his family continue to serve them.

Carefree relentless service became Ven. Avtar Singh's trademark. After spreading the gospel for approximately 10 to 12 years in Peshawar, Ladikothal, Kaimalpur and many other places, Baba Ji and Ven. Avtar Singh came to Rawalpindi. They settled down in Ven. Avtar Singh's house in an area known as Mohanpura.

Saints who came from outside Rawalpindi would always stay at Ven. Avtar Singh's house. Jagatmata Budhwanti Ji not only fed them and washed up for them, but also did their washing with utmost dedication. There are simply not enough words to express the greatness of her service. Ven. Avtar Singh's sons, Gurbachan Singh and Sajjan Singh, were also fully engaged in serving saints ever since childhood. In

seeing this spirit of service, every visiting saint just could not help praising the family. The one who stood out most eminently, was young Gurbachan Singh. His trait was to speak less and do more.

As a child, Gurbachan Singh played in Baba Ji's lap. He loved the chubby little boy, for he was gentle, quietly spoken and rarely complained. He was called *Bhola Ji* (the innocent one) because he seldom argued, ever eager to serve and obey instructions without question. He never quarreled but remained calm even when shouted at by his peers. He was known as a peacemaker.

Baba Ji showered these children with so much love and blessings that people were astonished. Once he said to Ven. Avtar Singh:

Avtar Singh, mark my words. This innocent looking child referring to Gurbachan Singh, shall one day captain the world's ship. People will be seen to prostrate before him for peace of mind and bliss.

As time went on, Baba Ji's every word proved to be right, as if etched on stone. After Baba Avtar Singh, Baba Gurbachan Singh was endowed with the *mantle of truth* in December 1962.

One day Baba Buta Singh spoke to the young Gurbachan Singh:

Son, love *Nirankar* (God Almighty).

The young Gurbachan ran towards him, hugged and kissed him. On seeing his lively reaction, Baba Ji's face lit up and immediately granted a benefaction:

Innocent one, you're so knowledgeable and the source of real wisdom, for whoever accepts the Guru as *Nirankar* - apparent becomes in truth the light of Gnostic wisdom.

Baba Ji continued to strengthen the foundations of the Mission for a secure future, by teaching one by one the rules of devotion.

As Ven. Avtar Singh was getting full marks for every test, Baba Ji was quite content. Another incident occurred to emphasise the greatness of Ven. Avtar Singh's family. In serving visiting saints, his family never hesitated once.

One day, while the house was full of saints, Rawalpindi refuse-workers went on strike. All the washrooms and gutters were filled with filth to such an extent that there was a repugnant stench everywhere. There was just one question on everyone's mind. What should be done now? But Ven. Avtar Singh did not stop to think. He got hold of a broomstick and began to clean the toilets. On seeing what he was doing, Mata Budhwanti Ji, his wife, ran to him. She snatched the broom from him and started to clean up. Ven. Avtar Singh explained:

My dear, these saints are my guests, and it is I who should serve them.

She replied with a smile:

The service of guests is very much the duty of ladies. Besides, they all address me as mother. It is the mother who carries the responsibility of washing children's clothes and keeping the house clean.

Having said these words, she started in earnest to clean the toilets. Ven. Avtar Singh, on the other hand, could not idly stand by either. He filled and refilled buckets of water and poured them down the toilets. Then he started to wash down the gutters with further buckets of water. This course of action continued for four days. On observing this unparalleled service, Baba Ji, sharing his profound sentiments with the whole congregation, said:

The divine personality I have been looking for, I have found. Now I can leave this world without a single care, for a person who can clean the toilets and gutters, irrespective of his personal status or social standing, is also capable of cleansing people's maligned minds and illumine them with the *lamp of truth*. Of this fact, there can be no doubt.

He was now fully aware of his impending end. So he started to prepare and mould the congregations accordingly. He used to often say in the holy congregation:

¶Saints do not attach themselves to any physical body, but remain tied to the Guru's word. The worlds of God can manifest through any person. In actual fact, it's through the power of Nirankar that everything takes place.q

In the scorching hot summer, Ven. Avtar Singh used to take his preceptor to Koh Murrie because of its cool climate. In 1943, returning to Rawalpindi from a preaching tour of Peshawar, Baba Ji became unwell. So Ven. Avtar Singh, as usual, decided to take him to Koh Murrie. But prior to going, Sukhdev Ji, the wife of Ven. Rem Chand of Kapurthala, came to seek Baba Ji's blessings. After stopping in Rawalpindi for a couple of days, she was about to leave for her village, when Baba Ji said to her:

¶My work has now come to an end. The great soul I was looking for, I have now found. After my departure, Baba Avtar Singh will take on the mantle. Every devotee is to obey his words. . So, *Dhan Nirankar* (God is great).q

He indicated many a time about his departure to his eternal abode. Prior to leaving his body in May 1943, another extraordinary event occurred.

A week prior to inviting his devotees to Koh Murrie to witness his final moments, an incident took place. Devotees who were present there, declare him to be dead, but a little later, they were surprised to hear him repeat:

¶Tuhi Nirankar, Tuhi Nirankar (Thou Formless, Thou Formless).q

Amongst them, a devotee asked:

¶My Lord, what is this conundrum?q

Then Baba Ji smiled and said:

It's no big deal. As I was about to leave, I remembered my promise to the saints. I had said: I am not a thief who would leave stealthily. I would only go after meeting and informing everyone. Hence, I came back.

After this event, Baba Buta Singh entered the final leg of his earthly journey.

* * *

Chapter XIV

The Departure

During his 14 years of mentorship, from 1929 to 1943, Baba Buta Singh sowed the seed of the Sant Nirankari Mission, invested with spreading peace and happiness everywhere, into a formidably unshakable tree.

He had a glowing personality. He was born in 1873 and died in 1943. He lived to be 70 years old. In spite of his advanced years, his hair was still black. Immersed in deep devotion, he led a life of fearlessness, never dismayed by his rancorous opponents.

Very much like a father making the necessary preparations before going away on a long journey abroad, Baba Ji accordingly handed over the responsibility of the Mission to Ven. Avtar Singh, and then departed.

Death can be very painful to hear about, but in the case of Baba Buta Singh, even his last few days were full of bliss and every single moment, the epitome of charm. His life was not heading towards death, but immortality, which he subdued and conquered. Having been victorious over death himself, he granted the same boon of immortality to mankind.

Now the simple requirement was to take advantage of it and march on in its direction.

There were already some saints settled in Koh Murrie, and because of the cool climate, saints from afar were also to-ing and fro-ing. Daily holy congregations were already being held and saints like Sarup Singh, Bhag Singh, Kishan Lal, Thakur Dass and his wife Harnam Kaur and Mata Prem Kaur, were always ready to serve.

In spite of the fact that he was being nursed round the clock and medically treated, his health was deteriorating day by day. It seemed as if he had already made up his mind to merge with *Nirankar*. Irrespective of the illness, his face exuded an effulgent aura. Although his body was failing him, he never complained. He still met and engaged with all the people who came to see him. In moments of solitude, he delved deep into *simran* (Remembrance of God).

During that period, one day, baba Ji invested his coat and scarf on Ven. Avtar Singh and prostrated before him in front of many saints. In addressing everyone, he said:

From today, everyone is to accept Bhai Avtar Singh as your spiritual guide. You must obey all of his instruction.

Do not garland you saints with flowers, but garlanding Avtar Singh with razor blades. My speech may sound sharp, but my successors, you will find, will be soothing and sweet. But I will be speaking through him.

Turning to Ven. Avtar Singh Ji said:

This scarf is like a garland of razor blades. They will harm you only if you turn your neck. So keep your neck straight.

In this way he was advising Ven. Avtar Singh to concentrate on enlightening the ignorant and not to divert his attention under the influence of the material world.

Then he entreated everyone present, to pay homage to Baba Avtar Singh.

On hearing this, Baba Avtar Singh stood up and said:

Saints, our Preceptor is still with us in bodily form. With the aid of medication in a few days his health will improve. I pray with every breath to *Nirankar* for Baba Ji to continue to shower of his grace on us for a very long time.

As he said this, he choked on his emotions. Tears rolling down his face exhibited his unremitting love and profound devotion.

Next day, Baba Buta Singh suggested to Baba Avtar Singh to summon all the remaining enlightened saints, by letter or telegram, to Koh Murrie so that he could meet them all.

As they got the message, they began to gather in Koh Murrie. Sujaan Singh was one of them. On leaving home, he made up his mind to offer in homage the sum of 50 rupees, which in those days was a very large amount. Having offered only 10 rupees, he was about to sit down. Baba Buta Singh immediately said:

Well, Sujaan Singh Ji, from 50 you've come right down to 10 rupees!

Having realised his mistake, the disciple instantly placed 50 rupees at Baba Ji's feet and asked for forgiveness.

Baba Ji explained to the whole gathering:

Maya, the material wealth, can be seen as poison. It devours one's peace and happiness. But when saints surrender it at the Preceptor's holy feet, then the same Maya becomes nectar. This imbibes the spirit of service, which leads to contentment and bliss. This Maya, when utilized in the welfare and wellbeing of mankind, transforms into devotion.

Having heard these words of wisdom, they all started, one by one, to receive Baba Ji's blessings. Baba Ji began to stroke the money offering, by which many of the disciples were taken aback. On noticing their reaction, Baba Ji said:

~~Some~~ Some of you may well be wondering why I am stroking these notes. In actual fact, I am multiplying them for you. I wish to see none of my devotees deprived of material comforts. The money should be employed in the welfare of others, and doors of happiness will open to those who serve.

When the saints were asked to come to Koh Murrie, Baba Ji asked Baba Avtar Singh to also arrange for some white sheets for his impending final rites. It was evident that he has decided to pass on. To shed his mortal coil was not a big deal. He had delayed his departure for a special reason.

When Baba Avtar Singh's sons, Gurbachan Singh and Sajjan Singh offered 5 rupees each, Baba Ji was very pleased. He beckoned them and affectionately patted their backs. He asked them to have two white sheets sewn together. On hearing this, the disciples became tearful.

A doctor was called. On seeing him, Baba Ji smiled and said:

~~You~~ You've come to cure me, but why don't you get your *self* cured first.

The doctor too submitted to his extraordinary mystic power and bowed at his feet. After a brief discussion, the doctor agreed to be enlightened. After which he was instructed to do *simran* as follows:

ॐ Tuhi Nirankar, Tuhi Nirankar ॐ .

Baba Ji had already given instructions to Baba Avtar Singh for the appropriate arrangements for saints' food and refreshments. He drew the saints, approximately 30 in number, near to him and urged them to dine in groups of four or five from one plate for reasons of convenience and practicality. Even at the time of breathing his

last, he demonstrated how to rise above social stratas, prejudice and small mindedness.

After eating, everyone gathered around Baba Ji's bed in anticipation of his next sign. Baba Ji desired to sit up. Baba Avtar Singh immediately helped him to sit up with the aid of a pillow. The white sheets had already been laid. Saints came and received blessings. Everyone had now met Baba Ji. He, however, reminded with a smile that his beloved ones . Gurbachan Singh and Sajjan Singh . had not met him. Baba Avtar Singh called the children immediately and they sought Baba Ji's blessings. Then Baba Ji addressed all the devotees:

After enlightenment, everybody has served me according to their measure and means. But Baba Avtar Singh and his family served me night and day; they never failed to serve me on any occasion. Their service is an example and a real source of inspiration for those who wish to walk the Guru's path. My time has come. As the love of devotees is never corporeal, but spiritual, no one should grieve after my departure. To propagate the work that I started is to be your true devotion. I have called you solely for the purpose of meeting you so that you know who will lead you after me.

He then raised his head and saw the tear filled eyes gazing towards Baba Avtar Singh. Acknowledging their consensus, he draped his own scarf around Baba Avtar Singh. He bowed to Baba Avtar Singh and his silence said everything he wanted to say.

After that brief silence, in a low tone, he said to the saints:

I am heartily pleased with the fact that you have chosen as your spiritual leader such an individual who has passed every test and successfully overcome every adversity. From now on, Bhai Avtar Singh is in fact Buta Singh!

Then he wished to lie down. Baba Avtar Singh stepped forward and facilitated it. Baba Ji repeated the words

ॐ Tuhi Nirankar, Tuhi Nirankarõ q

With folded hands he saluted the saints, and expired.q

Even at the end, his face shone with a rare, unforgettable smile. Thus he fulfilled his promise . he would not go without announcing his departure.

On the question of the funeral cortege, Baba Avtar Singh said:

± would like to see Baba Buta Singh's procession to be conducted with pomp and ceremony.q

Everybody agreed. Although it was not impossible, it was very difficult to get hold of a band. Many saints, including the cloth merchant Lala Thakhur Das, began to look for the musicians. They spotted an ideal band on reaching Mall Road.

When asked, they explained that they had come from Rawalpindi at the invitation of the additional district collector, Khan Sahib M. Fateh Ulla Khan, because of a happy occasion in his family. As such, they were unable to go anywhere else without his permission.

The saints went straight to Khan Sahib's residence and explained the circumstances. Khan Sahib acquiesced their request.

The band led Baba Buta Singh's funeral procession. Baba Avtar Singh left no stone unturned to let people know that it was the last journey of the perfect saint's corporeal body. He took the initiative to bear the bier on his shoulders to the crematorium. Petals were being strewn along the path and the words *ॐ Tuhi Nirankar'* resounded all the way. The Koh Murrie businessmen, who had opposed him all their lives, eagerly joined the procession him all their respects. Baba Avtar Singh performed the final rites and lit the funeral pyre.

The first chapter of the campaign for human liberation, in the form of the Nirankari Mission, concluded with Baba Buta Singh's departure.
