SIKH SHRINES IN INDIA

G.S. RANDHIR



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G.S. Randhir

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About this Book

The Sikh Gurus had a unique place amongst the spiritual leaders, reformers and saints of India. Their teachings have universal appeal and hold good for all times. The impact of their teachings cannot be easily fathomed. Spiritually and ethically they have influenced the life, thinking and conduct of millions.

India can feel proud that these great Masters were born here. They did not confine their mission in any particular area but travelled far and wide. Guru Nanak travelled to Mecca, Bangladesh and many other distant lands. The land of Guru's birth Nanakana Sahib is now a part of Pakistan.

The concept of 'Sangat' has special importance in the Sikh philosophy. In practice this means a sitting-together of right-thinking people who normally assemble to remember God. A Gurdwara is a place where such a congregation can be held in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred Sikh scripture which contains compositions of Sikh Gurus and other saints. Most important Sikh shrines or Gurdwaras are those which are associated with the lives of Sikh Gurus. The pilgrims visit these Gurdwaras in large numbers and a message of love, peace, devotion to God, social justice, religious tolerance and universal brotherhood of man is being preached day in and day out. They are also great centres of Sikh culture.

A significant feature of Indian culture is its capacity to absorb different trends, blend them into composite whole and to maintain unity in diversity. The Sikh movement is a great landmark in the religious history and has made a deep impact on Indian society.

The book in hand gives an informative account of the important Sikh Gurdwaras, including historical details, architectural style, available amenities for pilgrims and tourists.

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The Sikhs

The Sikhs, constitute a small minority of the Indian population and live mostly in the northern state of Punjab, but have spread to all parts of the country where they have earned a place for themselves in trade and other professions and have also gone in sizeable numbers to various parts of the world.

Sikhism, comparatively speaking, is a young faith, its founder, Guru Nanak, having been born only five centuries ago in 1469. He was a great teacher who raised his voice against the malpractices and abuses that had crept into the religious and social customs then prevalent in India, and laid special emphasis in the fundamentals of abiding faith in God, good conduct and a harmonious, happy society. He expressed himself clear and forthright on God and His creations, man and his place in the universe and how one can seek enlightenment and salvation. It is his precepts, reiterated by the successor Gurus, that form the basis of Sikh thought. It was a century later, in 1604, that the fifth Guru, Arjan Dev, compiled the hymns composed by Guru Nanak. In his volume, the *Adi Granth*, he included the compositions of sixteen other Indian saints, such as Jaidev, Surdas, Farid, Namdev, Kabir and Ravidas.

The next stage, a revolutionary one, came another century later when Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru, organized the community into a distinct well-knit group the *Khalsa*-the pure. Infusing a new spirit into his followers, he wanted them to be soldiers and saints at the same time. He asked them to wear long hair (*kesh*, denoting saintly appearance); underwear (*kachha),* iron bangle (*kara*); comb (*kangha*, denoting cleanliness of mind and body); and sword (*kirpan)*, for self-defence, for use in an emergency and for a right and just cause).

The men among the Sikhs are easily recognized by their beard and turban covering their unshorn hair. Deeply religious and courageous, the community has had to make heavy sacrifices for cherished causes and saw severe and barbarous persecution on the one hand and a rule over Punjab and beyond on the other. For historical reasons, having had to continuously fight for their own and their faith's survival, becoming soldiers has become an important profession with them.

Guru Nanak's advent on the Indian scene coincided with the *Bhakti* movement and the appearance of *sufism*, and he preached oneness of God, brotherhood of man and service of humanity. Raising his voice against ritualism, superstitions, meaningless ceremonials, caste distinctions and injustice, he travelled widely with a Muslim musician, Mardana, and a Hindu, Bala, as his constant companions spreading the gospel of love, "Before the Lord, there is no one high or low."

When his sojourn in this world was drawing to a close, he selected a disciple, Lehna, later known as Guru Angad, to succeed him. The subsequent Gurus carried on the spiritual mission of Guru Nanak. They are, in fact considered as Nanak II, Nanak

III, and so on. Guru Arjan with whom Jahangir was much annoyed, was tortured to death at Lahore in 1606. This impelled his successor, Guru Har Gobind, to pick up the sword, and to call upon the community to fight for justice and righteousness, even while leading a life of piety and devotion. The ninth Guru, Tegh Bahadur, was beheaded at Delhi in 1675 when he refused to be converted to Islam. His son, Guru Gobind Singh, consequently spent years in the battlefield where he lost all his four sons and thousands of devotees. It was at Anandpur Sahib in 1699 that he performed the epoch-making ceremony of administering *Amrit*, the nectar, to the Sikhs, and wielded them into *Khalsa* brotherhood. He first baptized five persons, belonging to different castes, high and low, according to prevalent concepts, as *Panj Piyaras*, the Five Beloved Ones, and then asked them to give him the *Amrit* and, in turn, to baptise him, thus signifying that his own disciples were his equals. And among the Sikhs, there was to be no compartmentalization on the basis of caste, worldly wealth or status. Thousands of others took the *Amrit*, and soon a community of pacifists, devoted to a life of religion, was transformed into a band of crusaders, everyone being prepared to make the supreme sacrifice for the defence of liberty, justice and religion. It is in keeping with their traditions that the Sikhs have always been in the forefront of the struggle for India's independence and, later, for preserving it.

Just before his demise, Guru Gobind Singh laid down that, with him, the line of Gurus, in flesh and blood, would come to a close, and henceforth the holy book, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* would be the Guru incarnate. He added to it some hymns composed by Guru Tegh Bahadur as well as his own. The Sikhs now revere the *Granth Sahib* implicitly as the Guru. They seek peace, guidance and enlightenment through *Gurbani*, the Word of the Guru as enshrined in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

The basic teachings of the Sikh Gurus are simple enough even for laymen to grasp, and their sacred compositions are in language which is, by and large, easily comprehensible. Sikhism is a monotheistic faith, absolutely against all forms of idol worship. The concept of God is epitomized thus in the opening lines of the Granth Sahib.

There is one God,
Eternal Truth is His Name,
Maker of all things,
Fearing nothing and at enmity with none,
Timeless,
Not begotten, being of His own Being,
By the grace of the Guru made known to men

When He willed it, God created the universe, the plants, the sun and stars, and millions of creatures. He bestowed special favours on man, granting him the faculty to reason about the purpose of life, and the freedom of action to seek self-realisation. The

goal of man is to escape from the cycle of birth and death and for the soul to mingle with the Creator.

Thou art blessed with the human form,
This is thy opportunity to meet the Creator;
All other labours are unavailing,
Keep the company of enlightened souls and recite the name of God

The Sikh scripture lays great emphasis on the role of the Guru who imparts knowledge, initiates his disciples in the ways of God and guides them on the path to salvation. This union with God can be achieved best with the help of a Guru, a religious preceptor. The true Guru is himself in communion with God; he is charged with divine light.

Without the Guru's help,
The love of God is not aroused within us,
We cannot discard the evil of self-love,
Steeped in the Guru's word, one realizes one's true self,
And gains abiding faith in God,
By surrendering to the Guru, one knows one's reality,
Nothing else avails

While the Sikh faith accords a very high status to the Guru, worship is due only to God. Guru Nanak would accept for himself only the role of a teacher and a guide; he constantly referred to himself as the slave or servant of God. The first and foremost Guru is God himself. Enlightened souls, through whom the gospel of God or His Name spreads in the world, are also Gurus. Since the *Granth Sahib* contains the message of exalted souls, their compositions or *Bani*, Guru Gobind Singh gave it the status of Guru. "*The Bani is Guru, Guru is the Bani.*"

Sikhism lays down that, whatever one might be engaged in, God should always be in one's thoughts. One must concentrate on his name all the time, for it is through devotion to God that he can be realised.

By attuning ourselves with the Name, we gain truth,
Contentment and divine knowledge,
We gain the reward of bathing at the sixty-eight holy centres,
The Name begets one the honour that the study of texts yieldeth,
The mind is fixed in divine meditation,
Nanak sayeth, a devout is always in bliss,
And his pain and sin are annihilated

There is no one particular name which one has to recite with affection and concentrate on and contemplate. God has numerous Names given by different prophets

in different languages. The name could also express some of the great attributes of God. The Word of the Guru is also the name. By letting the name dwell in one's mind all the time, one lives in a state of divine bliss, gradually imbibes those great qualities, follows godly ways and attains freedom from births and deaths.

Sikhism believes in the theory of *Karma* or action and its consequences. Our present is thus linked with our past, and what we do today will have its repercussions on our future. God has given us the human form so that we might, through noble actions, attain spiritual reunion with the Creator. Purity of conduct leads us out of the evil influences of ego and makes the mind pure. When the mind is sublimated, God is realised. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* lays down the guidelines thus;

Thou offereth five prayers, five times a day, giving them different names,
But let truth be thy first prayer,
Honest living the second,
Invocation of His mercy for all, the third,
Honesty of mind, the fourth,
Fifth, the praise of the Lord,
Let good deeds be thy prayer,
Then alone wouldst thou be a true Muslim,
Nanak sayeth, those who follow any other path are trading in falsehood,
And falsehood begets only disrespect

While positive action is needed on the part of man to achieve an intermingling with God, His grace is absolutely essential. "By God's grace alone is He grasped."

Our transgressions are many; there is no limit to our misdeeds,
O Lord, be merciful, forgive us, we are great sinners,
If thou maketh a reckoning of our misdeeds,
There is no hope of our redemption,
Forgive us and unite us with Thyself,
Through the Guru's favour, we become one with God,
And are forgiven all our sins,
Nanak sayeth, glory be to those who concentrate on the name of God

Grace of the Lord does not, however, obviate the obligation of man to act righteously. The apparent contradiction between the two is only superficial. Through his *Karma*, man has to earn the title to His grace. While the Almighty ordains everything, he has given ample freedom to man, and the manner in which this freedom is exercised, determines the consequences.

Sikh religion does not advocate renunciation of the world or a life of asceticism, though ascetic virtues are extolled. It believes neither in renunciation nor in over indulgence. In fact, it is incumbent on man to fulfil his obligations to the family and the

society, and to seek his salvation through a life of discipline, piety and charity, love of all mankind and devotion to the Almighty.

The Sikh scripture lays great emphasis on *sadh sangat*, the society of the good. The company of saintly persons has an ennobling influence on the human mind. A gathering of good persons, devoted to the Lord concentrates on the name and the spirit of the true Guru resides in it.

A Sikh temple or shrine is called a gurdwara, that is, the House of God, the House of the Guru, where the Guru dwells. Its most essential element is the presence of the Guru.

According to the Sikh faith, while prayers to God can be offered any time and anywhere, a gurdwara is built particularly for congregational worship. Even a very small group of devotees inhabiting any place anywhere in the world would generally build a temple for them all to get together for religious or even social purposes. The building could be as simple as a temporary shack or a small room in a house, depending upon the resources of the local community.

It is expected of every Sikh that he would go to the gurdwara daily and join the congregation or *sangat* for prayers. The *sangat* is imbued with the love of God, and Sri Guru Granth Sahib presides over the congregation. The *sangat* thus exercises a benign influence on those present. One can recite the *Granth Sahib* at home all by one self, but then one misses the benediction of the congregation.

In the Gurdwaras, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, draped in fine raiment, is placed on a palanquin, often flower-bedecked, and under a canopy. The devotees, as they come, kneel before the *Granth Sahib*, the forehead touching the ground, place a small offering, generally some coin, and take their seat on the carpeted floor, The morning service begins before dawn with *kirtan*, the singing of hymns from *Granth Sahib* to the accompaniment of instrumental music, recitations from the holy book and *katha*, exposition of the scripture forming part of the programme. At the end, the entire congregation stands with hands folded and the priest recites the *Ardas*, literally meaning a humble petition or prayer, concluding, with a supplication to God, seeking His grace for the good of all mankind. The *Ardas* recalls the blessings of the Gurus and the sacrifices made by the community in the course of its history. At the end of the service, *prasad* or sacrament, generally a preparation of wheat flour, ghee and sugar, is distributed.

The Gurdwaras are open to all communities and castes and no *purdah* is observed. In the House of the Lord, all are equal, irrespective of their status in the world outside. On a visit to the temple, the head is to be kept covered as a mark of respect to the *Granth Sahib*, and shoes are not allowed inside. Smoking is taboo, and so also is liquor and other intoxicants.

There is no hereditary priestly class among the Sikhs. Anyone could work as a

priest in a Gurdwara or function as such on a given occasion. Any layman who can read the *Granth Sahib* can conduct even ceremonial rites, such as on the occasion of a marriage. All Gurdwaras, however, employ priest called *granthis*, so that someone can devote all his time to the upkeep of the temple and to routine duties. The priest is expected to be well-up with the scriptures. Sikhs recognise no hereditary class of people for performing *kirtan* in the shrines. There are persons who train themselves for *kirtan* and are employed for the purpose, but, often enough, even this duty is attended to by men and women from various walks of life.

Important Gurdwaras run a *langar* or a free community kitchen for pilgrims, travelers and others. The institution of *langar* came into being almost with the inception of the faith. Guru Nanak organised one at Kartarpur, where he settled down during the later part of his life. The third Guru Amar Das, made it obligatory for anyone coming to meet him for his divine *darshan* to partake of the meal in the common kitchen. Everyone, high or low, including Emperor Akbar, did that. The *langar* obliterated all distinctions of the rich and the poor, and of caste and creed, and promoted equality, brotherhood and social integration. On a visit to an important shrine, it is an act of piety for a devotee to put in some manual labour in the kitchen, to serve the meals and to take the food, sitting in a row on a mat. The food is traditionally vegetarian. Service of the congregation by all means is highly prized, the more the menial, the more the spiritually edifying. Even well-to-do people would consider it an honour to wipe the dust off the shoes of the devotees, and to sweep up the shrine to imbibe a lesson in humility and service.

Gurdwaras generally have provision of lodging for pilgrims. In a Gurdwara, any traveler can normally hope to find some food and a place to rest his tired limbs for a night or even longer.

For the Sikh community, a Gurdwara is not just a place of worship, it is a social institution as well. The shrines have funds at their disposal, built out of special donations made by the people and from day-to-day offerings. Some big shrines have large incomes and properties attached to them. Several educational and other institutions are run with the help of these funds; some of the schools function on the gurdwara premises. Often, marriages and various other ceremonies are performed in the shrines.

In earlier days, many a decision affecting the social and political life of the community used to be taken in the gurdwaras through a consensus of the *sangat*. These decisions, called *gurmattas*, were of a binding character, and a member of the community would think twice before violating them. Many important decisions were taken at the Akal Takht in Amritsar. There are four other historical shrines, given the status of *Takhts* (literally thrones) where the decisions taken by the sangat had great importance. These are Harmandir Sahib, Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur; Damdama Sahib, Talwandi Sabo; and Hazur Sahib, Nanded (Maharashtra).

Most of the important historical Sikh shrines in Punjab are managed by the

Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, a statutory body elected from amongst the members of the community. The other Gurdwaras also generally have locally elected and registered managing committees. The community had, however, to undergo great suffering to acquire the control of these shrines in its own hands. In the last century, a hereditary group of priests or *mahants* had entrenched themselves in these shrines. The large income from the lands attached to the shrines and the offering of the devotees was used up by the *mahants* in pursuit of pleasures of the flesh and in debauchery. Even in matters of prayers, they had introduced idolatry and other practices contrary to the basic tenets of the Sikh faith. A movement for the reform of the gurdwaras and their management was, therefore, launched. The British rulers backed the *mahants* and their vested interests. For the Sikhs, the rescue of the gurdwaras from the clutches of the *mahants* was a matter of survival of the faith, and in this struggle they had to bear the wrath of both the alien rulers and the corrupt, demoniac priests. A non-violent campaign had to be launched by the Sikhs in Amritsar, Nanakana Sahib and elsewhere. Thousands were beaten up mercilessly by the hired men of the *mahants* and the police. Several people laid down their lives in the struggle but the movement succeeded eventually in the vesting of the management in the hands of the community.

A Gurdwara can be spotted from a distance by the yellow triangular flag hoisted from a pole in the compound. The flag is called *Nishan Sahib*.

The building of the Sikh shrines are basically simple in their structure, the main requirement being that of a room in which *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* can be placed and some people can be seated as a congregation, to listen to the readings from the holy book and to sing and recite its verses. Most of the historical Gurdwaras were built first towards the end of the 18th century and in the 19th century when the Sikhs had gained political power in Punjab. That led to the construction of some impressive shrines. Some of these have been rebuilt in recent years, with an extensive use of marble for embellishment and durability.

While among the Sikh temples, the Golden Temple of Amritsar alone rises like an island in the midst of a large tank, the structure of this temple itself has provided a model and an inspiration to builders of other shrines. Many of them are two-storeyed, with the main roof being common to the two floors. The first floor has a gallery in the middle, overlooking the hall below, and it is supported by four or more columns and the outer walls. On the ground floor, in the space thus marked out by the four columns, or approximately in the centre, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is enshrined on a platform or a movable palanquin with a canopy above. The congregation occupies the remaining space.

On the top, a dome is always there, specially on older historical shrines. It is mostly white, and sometimes gilded, as in the Golden Temple of Amritsar, Tarn Taran and Sis Ganj, Delhi. Apart from the big central dome, there are often four other smaller cupolas, one on each corner. Several turrets decorate the parapet. The big domes are

always ribbed or fluted and have usually an inverted lotus symbol fashioned out at the top. At the bottom, one may come across floral or other artistic designs. Starting with a wide base, the domes reach the maximum circumference when they are less than half way up. On the pinnacle is a *kalas*, a short, straight, cylindrical construction with often some concentric circles and a very small canopy at the absolute top, pendants hanging at the outer rim.

The temples have entrances from all sides, signifying that they are open to all without any distinction whatsoever, and that God is omnipresent. Where space shortage does not make it possible to provide entrances from all the four sides, as in Sis Ganj Delhi, the style could be different. From the first floor, generally, windows bulge out on all sides, supported on brackets, and on their top are shallow elliptical cornices.

Many temples have a *deorhi* (gate) through which one has to pass before reaching the shrine proper. They are often impressive structures with a high gate and sometimes accommodation for office and other use. From the *deorhi* one gets the first glimpse of the sanctum sanctorum.

In their architecture, the Gurdwaras owe much to the Mughal style as the artisans of the day in Punjab were trained that way. However, in course of time, they developed certain prominent characteristics, such as the repeated use of *chhatris* and ornamenting of parapets, corners, angles and other permanent projections. Over the door-ways, florid ornamentation is sometimes to be found.

In some of the temples, more especially in the Golden Temple, Akal Takht and Baba Atal at Amritsar, the shrine at Tarn Taran and Baoli Sahib at Goindwal, artists have provided decorative embellishment through various disciplines. One type of artistic endeavour lies in *jaratkari* or in-lay-work, studding of precious and coloured stones into marbles slabs. The slabs often have florid or simple borders and sometimes flowery designs into which stones are in-laid at appropriate places. Workers in metal emboss pictures and other designs on copper or other metals.

But much of the artistic execution is by *naqquashs* with *gach*, a sort of gypsum. Beautiful designs are made on the walls with *gach* and then covered over with gold leaves. This work can be seen in plenty in the first storey of the Golden Temple and over Har-ki-Pori, Amritsar. Verses from the *Granth Sahib* have also been engraved in the same style.

In the ornamental *gach* work, cut glasses, coloured as well as mirrored, and at times precious stones, are also set in. This is called *tukri* work.

Frescoes are to be found in some of the shrines and they depict episodes from the lives of the Gurus. Vines, plants, flowers, birds and animals also figure therein. The largest number of such frescoes is on the first floor of Baba Atal. In a staircase in the Golden Temple is one fine painting of Guru Gobind Singh, riding a horse and accompanied by some of his followers.

THE SHRINES IN PUNJAB

AMRITSAR

Golden Temple

Baba Atal

Gurdwara Baba Bakala

Gurdwara Ramsar

Guru-Ki-Wadali

Khadur Sahib

Lohgarh

Sri Akal Takht

BATALA

Kandh Sahib

BHATINDA

Damdama Sahib

Gurdwara Sahib

Gurdwara Zafarnama

Talwandi sabo

FARIDKOT

Dina

Muktsar

FEROZPUR

Gurdwara Daroli Bhai

GOINDWAL

Baoli Sahib

Chaubara Sahib

GURDASPUR

Achal Sahib

Dera Baba Nanak

JAITU

Gangsar

JALANDHAR

Gurdwara Chhevin Padshahi

KARTARPUR

Tham Sahib

LUDHIANA

Gurdwara Alamgir

Gurdwara Raikot

MACHHIWARA

Gurdwara Charan Kanwal

Gurdwara Machhiwara

NANGAL

Gurdwara Ghat Sahib

Vibhore Sahib

PATIALA

Dukh Niwaran Sahib

Gurdwara Bahadurgarh

ROPAR

Anandpur Sahib

Bhatha Sahib

Gurdwara Parivar Vichhora

Kiratpur Sahib

Sri Chamkaur Sahib

SANGRUR

Gurdwara Bhadadur

SIRHIND

Fatehgarh Sahib

SRI HARGOBINDPUR

Damdama Sahib

Manji Sahib

SULTANPUR LODHI

Ber Sahib

Hatt Sahib

Kothi Sahib

Takhatpura

Tarn Taran Sahib

AMRITSAR

GOLDEN TEMPLE

The Golden Temple (Harmandir Sahib) has an atmosphere of peace and spiritual power which can be felt by all visitors irrespective of their beliefs. It was Guru Amar Das (1479-1574) the third Guru of the Sikhs who directed his would be successor in the holy seat, Ram Das (1534-1581) to establish a sacred bathing spot (Tiratha) where those seeking divine light might come and be blessed.

According to some historians the liberal Emperor Akbar impressed by Guru Amar Das's piety and deep universal humanity, insisted on his accepting a grant of land to maintain the langar (community kitchen) which was an essential feature of the religious dispensation of the Sikhs as ordained by the Guru. The piece of land was located at the site of the present pool and the Harmandir or Darbar Sahib (Golden Temple) situated therein and its immediate vicinity. Of course some of the land was purchased by Guru Ram Das later from Chaudhry or headman of the village Tung. The spot is said to have been hallowed earlier by Guru Nanak Dev who once meditated here by the side of the small pool in the forest. As its holy sanctity goes back to the very inception of the Sikh faith, it is considered as the holiest of the holy places.

Guru Ram Das, in obedience to his holy predecessors' behest, started digging the pool at the spot indicated as Guru Nanak's seat of meditation. The name of the place before it was sanctified as Amritsar was Guru Ka Chak (the Guru's manor). It was also called Ramdaspur.

Along the tank grew an old *ber* tree whose descendent is still alive as Dukh Bhanjan (Annuller of Sufferings) facing the rear of the Golden Temple. Here, it is said, a leper was cured of his disease when he had a dip in the holy pool. This happened more than 400 years ago but till today thousands of pilgrims visit the place daily for a holy dip.

In the midst of this holy tank, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606) invited the Muslim saint Hazrat Mian Mir of Lahore to lay the foundation stone of Harmandir (Golden Temple) which is symbolic of the all embracing faith started by Guru Nanak.

Guru Arjun, the fifth Guru had the temple doors open on all four sides to welcome all who wished to enter. A marble causeway across the water leads to the temple whose walls are inlaid with semiprecious stones in delicate floral patterns as well as some beautiful frescoes of the Sikh school of art. Excellent glass work using concave and convex glass cover/adorn the ceiling.

In 1604, Guru Arjun installed the holy book, the Granth Sahib, in the Harmandir as its presiding presence before which worshippers must bow. The devoted Bhai Buddha

who in Guru Ram Das' time supervised the excavation of the pool was ordered by Guru Arjun as the first Granthi (Reader priest) of the Harmandir. Since then it has had an unbroken line of priests who have ministered to the spiritual needs of the devotees.

The world famous Tosha-Khana (Treasure-trove) is situated on the first floor of the Darshni-Deorhi which is the main entrance to Harmandir Sahib. Its contents are displayed for public view once a year, on the occasion of the birthday celebration of the founder of the city of Amritsar, Sri Guru Ram Dasji. Among the valuable possessions kept in the Tosha-Khana is a cloth canopy studded with jewels presented to Maharaja Ranjit Singh by the Nizam of Hyderabad. This was later presented by him to Golden Temple as a token of his devotion to the holy shrine. Besides, a unique piece of art is a peacock made of single blue sapphire, studded with precious stone and a Chauri or flywhisk made out of sandalwood. This Chauri is made of 1,45,000 threads of sandalwood, in the shape of a fan made by a Muslim devotee in five years and seven months. He used 1120 lbs of sandalwood for it. The Maharaja's own pearl necklace is also kept in the Tosha Khana. He also presented the Sehra of his grand son Kanwar Naunihal Singh to Harmandir Sahib.

Generally the main sanctuary has silver doors but on special occasions specially made doors in gold leaves replace the silver doors of the shrine. These golden gates are also kept in safe custody in the Tosha Khana above the Darshni-Deorhi.

Above the gate of the Deorhi, is embedded a golden plaque on which is mentioned, "the Sikh sovereign had the Harmandir Sahib covered with gold plates."

Around Golden Temple, grew up first a township and later a considerable city to which merchants from far and near brought their merchandise. Some of the old landmarks around the temple may still be seen. Among these are Karmon Deorhi, Guru Bazar and various Katras or city squares and Bungas (mansions). Even in Guru Arjun's time the town had become densely populated humming with the fervour of God's consciousness and noble human relationships. Later, the city itself came to be known as Amritsar, the name by which it has become famous today. Amritsar, the city of immortality, is not only the pride of the Punjabis but also of the entire nation. Founded by Sri Guru Ram Das in 1577, it prospered rapidly but its prosperity always remained entrenched in its sanctity. A visit to Amritsar is believed to absolve one of all the sins. Ever since it has been a symbol of resistance against injustice and suppression. This city saw fierce battles between invading armies of Ahmed Shah Abdali against scantily armed but fearless and determined Sikh warriors who ultimately became victorious and established a secular Government under the leadership of Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Credit goes to the Mahahraja for taking special pains to beautify the city of Amritsar and giving golden look to Harmandir Sahib. People of Amritsar city took active part during freedom struggle. People from all over India come to Amritsar to pay homage to the martyrs, who were gunned down during freedom struggle in Jallianwala Bagh on Baisakhi Day in 1919 under orders of General Dyer. Thus, here was shed the blood

of innocent Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims who were freedom loving people. Amritsar is still an important trade centre of textiles, fancy goods, carpets, fresh and dry fruits, aromatics and musk and precious skins. It is connected by rail, road and air with all important cities of India. Adequate accommodation is available for the visitors in the Guru Ram Das Sarai and Guru Nanak Niwas. Besides. The city has many hotels catering to all classes of visitors.

BABA ATAL

The Gurdwara of Baba Atal was built in memory of the nine year old son of Sri Guru Hargobindji. The divine soul in this child's body once emitted a dazzling spark, others called it a miracle. Baba Atal the young dutiful son had to leave earthly form in answer to his father's remonstration.

Atal Rai was born at Amritsar on December 22, 1619. He was the beloved son of Guru Hargobind and Mata Nanaki. The Guru often told his son that he had been blessed by God with much power and he should not fritter it away by showing miracles. But when Atal Rai brought to life his playmate Mohan, the great Guru remonstrated his divinely gifted son and ordained, "None should intervene in the will of God!"

Atal Rai listened to the admonition with downcast eyes. He bowed his head before his father in reverence and left for the sacred pool called Kaulsar which was his favourite resort. Here he sat in samadhi, his soul departed from the earthly body and he became a part of eternal light.

Guru Hargobind soon learnt about the death of Baba Atal. He bore the loss of his beloved son cheerfully, saying, "what pleases the Lord Almighty is good."

Baba Atal's body was cremated on the bank of Kaulsar tank. A small shrine was raised over the spot. The construction of the present nine-storeyed Gurdwara is reminiscent of the nine years of his earthly existence. The Gurdwara is known as Baba Atal Sahib. A special features of the shrine, is free food i.e. langar served round the clock to all visitors irrespective of caste, creed or colour.

GURDWARA BABA BAKALA

The historical shrine at Baba Bakala is associated with an important event in Sikh history. Here, Makhan Shah Lubana declared from house top that he had found the true Guru. It may be recalled that before his death at Delhi on March 30, 1664 Guru Harkrishan mumbled feebly 'Baba Bakala', thereby meaning that his successor was to be found at Bakala village in Amritsar. On that day, the only Baba at Bakala was Baba Tegh Bahadur and none else. But many imposters tried to grab the Guru Gaddi by posing themselves as the real Guru. Credit goes to Makhan Shah Lubana, a *banjara*

trader from Jhelum district, for discovering the Guru. It is said that a ship carrying his goods was caught up in a storm. His life and goods were in great danger. Helplessly, he knelt down and prayed to God and Guru Nanak for safety. He vowed that if by the grace of Guru he landed at the nearest port safely, he would donate five hundred dinars to the Guru for charitable purposes.

As good luck would have it, his ship steered safely off the wild storm. He felt that his life and goods were saved by the grace of the Guru. The first thing he wanted was to fulfil his vow. But on reaching Baba Bakala he found several imposters, each posing as Guru. He decided to offer only two Dinars to every one posing to be Guru Harkrishan's successor. The true Guru would himself demand the exact amount he had vowed to give. According to him it would not be possible for the false and imposters to define the exact purpose of his visit. Thereby their ignorance, lack of spiritual insight and character would be exposed.

As expected one of the imposters could recognise him. But when he placed two Dinars before Guru Tegh Bahadur, the great sage at once remarked "God bless you my man, why only two Dinars after pledging five hundred? The Guru is never in need of any thing but a Sikh is expected to keep his pledge to the Guru." Thus the issue was clinched and the real Guru was discovered. Since this historic event Bakala has become a place of pilgrimage. A beautiful Gurdwara stands at the spot where Guru Tegh Bahadur used to meditate in an underground cell. This small village, where Guru Tegh Bahadur revealed himself subsequent came to be called Baba – Bakala. The Gurdwara has many beautiful paintings pertaining to the Sikh history. People gather in thousands on every *amavas* night. Besides, an Annual Fair is held on *rakshabandhan day* when many people throng this holy place from all over the country. It is situated only 3 km away from Butari railway station and is well connected by road to important towns of Punjab.

GURDWARA RAMSAR

Among the other famous historical shrines located in the city of Amritsar is the Ramsar Gurdwara situated on the bank of the pool of the same name. Located north-east from the Golden Temple, this place is where Guru Arjun Dev, for a year or more, went into seclusion along with his scribe, the great savant Bhai Gurdas to compile the holy Adi Granth. The sacred volume was completed in 1604 and installed with due honour and ceremonies in the Harmandir Sahib. In this holy book, Guru Arjun Dev collected the hymns of first four Gurus, namely Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and adding his own compositions as well as selections from the writings of the Hindu and Muslim mystic saints. The selection for the holy scripture was based on the principle of the unity of God and the brotherhood of mankind. In this

unique holy book is preserved the purity of the scriptures, embodying the philosophy of the Gurus for the perpetual guidance of the Sikhism and other faiths.

This holy Adi Granth was arranged according to the musical measures or notes in which they were intended to be sung. The holy book was given the status of the Guru by Guru Gobind Singh. Just before he left for his abode in heaven on October 7, 1708, in his wisdom he proclaimed, "Accept Guru Granth Sahib as the visible image of the Guru. Those whose hearts are pure can find the truth in the *shabad*". This was the last injuction to the Sikhs of the Tenth Guru. He put an end to apostolic succession and enjoined upon the Sikhs to look upon the Granth Sahib as their only Guru in future. There lies the importance of the place where this sacred volume was compiled by Guru Arjun Dev Gurdwara Ramsar is held in great reverence by the Sikhs.

GURU KI WADALI

Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru of the Sikhs was born on June 14, 1595 at village Wadali, near Amritsar city. The birth place of the Guru has beautiful shrine named as Gurdwara Guru Ki Wadali. This small village has become a place of pilgrimage, where devotees come from far and near to pay homage to Mata Ganga who gave birth to the great Guru, the giver of a new direction to the Sikh faith.

KHADUR SAHIB

Khadur Sahib, close to Goindwal, is the sacred village where the second Guru Angad propagated the message of God, for many years. A grand Gurdwara Khaddi Sahib has been constructed here in memory of Guru Amar Das. A khaddi (loom) of a cloth weaver was located at the spot where the Gurdwara stands today. One dark night Guru Amar Das stumbled into a weaver pit, while carrying pitcher of water on his head. He was fetching water from river Beas at a distance of 10 km for his Guru Sri Angad Dev. Notwithstanding his fall, he succeeded in saving the water filled pitcher. The noise of the fall awakened the weaver who suspected a thief. When weaver's wife heard a voice uttering 'Japji' she remarked that there was no thief but poor, homeless Amar. When the incident came to the notice of Guru Angad, he was pleased to observe, 'Amar Das was not homeless and lowly. He shall be the home of the homeless, and honour of the dishonoured, the strength of the strengthless, the support of the unsupported, the shelter of the shelterless, the protector of the unprotected, and the emancipator of the captives.'

Guru Angad then formally held the investiture ceremony, appointed Guru Amar Das as his successor and the third Guru. There are two other Gurdwaras namely Thara Sahib and Killa Sahib located at Khadur Sahib associated with Guru Amar Das. Gurdwara Thara Sahib stands on the spot where Guru Amar Das received tilak

(anointment) as Guru from the blessed hands of Baba Budhaji who performed Tilak ceremonies of five Sikh Gurus. He was also the first head priest of the Golden Temple. Gurdwara Killa Sahib is located where Guru Amar Das used to place his pitcher full of water for a moment's respite, from fatigue of the long tiring walk.

Gurdwara Mal Akhara is associated with the place where Guru Angad Dev finalized *Gurmukhi* script. The Gurdwara has a fine hall with canopied doors.

LOHGARH

Gurdwara Lohgarh is located inside Lohgarh gate of Amritsar city. It stands on the spot around which the sixth Guru Hargobind constructed a fort for the protection of the city from the raids of Mughal forces.

SRI AKAL TAKHT

Adjacent to the Golden Temple, is the marble paved square facing the Darshni-Deorhi. On the opposite side of the marble square stands the Akal Takht, which is regarded as the supreme seat of Sikh religious authority. It was constructed by the sixth Guru Sri Hargobind in 1609. It is also called as Akal Bunga, the house of the Lord. The place is repository of the various weapons used by Sikh Gurus and heroes. These weapons are ceremoniously displayed every evening to the congregation of devotees. The Akal Takht, being the holiest of holy seats of Sikhs, was used for a special purpose which considerably changed the Sikh character and organisation. The sixth Guru himself sat here and held a court of justice. Many Sikhs gathered here for the redressal of their grievances. Offerings were made to the Guru.

At the place where Akal Takht is situated was a playground, and the Guru used to play here during his childhood. Here he was ceremoniously installed as the Guru in 1606 after the death of his father Guru Arjun Dev. The sixth Guru Hargobind watched the Sikhs exercising in the art of warfare. He was training them for the coming struggle against the Mughal authoritarianism.

The Akal Takht is a massive five storey building standing on a marble paved platform. The ground floor was ready in 1774 and four storeys were added later by Maharaja Ranjit Singh. The Golden dome was constructed by famous Sikh General Hari Singh Nalwa.

The Hukamnama issued by Jathedar of Akal Takht is binding on all Sikhs. Even Maharaja Ranjit Singh had to bow before the orders of the Jathedar of the Akal Takht. During the Misal period, after the death of Guru Gobind Singh and before the rise of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, *Gurmatta* used to be passed by Sarbat Khalsa at Akal Takht for the protection of the country from the invaders. During British period, volunteers

took vow of non-violence at Akal Takht before participating in the *morchas* launched by the Sikhs for the improvement of management of their holy shrines. A Saropa (robe of honour) conferred at Akal Takht is a distinction of a high order. It is given for extraordinary service rendered to Sikh community.

BATALA

KANDH SAHIB

Batala city, situated on the Amritsar-Pathankot railway line, is a sub-divisional headquarter of Gurdaspur district of Punjab. Though it is a very important industrial town yet it is better known all over the world because Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh faith, was married here to Bibi Sulakhni, daughter of Mul Chand Chauna.

It is said Guru Nanak refused to be married according to the prevalent rites. As he was a reformer, he suggested a simpler wedding ceremony. The Brahmins resisted and Mul Chand Chauna, would be father-in-law of the Guru, refused to marry his daughter to Nanak according to any other rites. He even threatened to send the wedding party back. On the other hand Bhandari family of Batala offered to marry their daughter to the Guru if Mul Chand broke his daughter's engagement to the bridegroom. A discussion took place between the Brahmins and Guru Nanak. Nanak was given a seat near a crooked, decaying mud-wall which was about to fall. The idea was to bury Nanak under the mud wall by giving it a little push. However, an old lady informed Nanak who smiled and proclaimed, "This wall will not fall for centuries. The will of God shall prevail." Centuries have passed. The wall (Kandh) still stands intact, shielded in glass, within Gurudwara Kandh Sahib. A gala celebration is held every year on the anniversary of Guru Nanak's marriage. A big procession is taken out to mark the occasion.

According to records, the marriage party of Guru Nanak left Talwandi village (Nankana Sahib) now in Pakistan, for Sultanpur Lodhi in Kapurthala district of Punjab (India) and from there it went to Batala. There at Sultanpur his sister Bibi Nanaki and brother-in-law Jairam joined the marriage party. Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi, sent his elephants and horses to add colour to the marriage procession.

BHATINDA

DAMDAMA SAHIB

This shrine consecrates the memory of an earlier visit of Guru Gobind Singh to the place in the course of his return from Kurukshetra. Here, Raja Ajmer Chand together

with two Mughals, Sayyed Beg and Alaf Khan made a surprise attack on the Guru but was badly beaten back. The Mughal General was so impressed by the charismatic personality of the Guru that he became his devotee. There is another Gurdwara Shahidi Asthan. This shrine commemorates the martyrdom of Rangreta Sikhs.

GURDWARA SAHIB

The city of Bhatinda was also graced by Guru Gobind Singh. He halted at the mausoleum of Haji Rattan, a celebrated muslim saint, which was at a distance of two kilometers outside the city. On the site a Gurdwara, called Haji Rattan, stands today in the memory of the Tenth Master. The keeper of the tomb, tried to dissuade the Guru from camping here, on the pretext that it was a haunted place. The Guru disregarding his warning tied his horse to the trunk of a 'van' tree. People of Bhatinda met him and begged him to evict the one-eyed cruel ogre living in the fort. The merciful Guru, readily acceded to the request and forcibly turned out the giant. Gurdwara Sahib in Bhatinda Qila stands at the place where according to tradition, the Guru combated the ogre and sent him into flight.

It was in this fort that first woman ruler of India, Empress Razia Sultan, was imprisoned before being executed.

Today Bhatinda is a leading market of foodgrains and cotton, and Guru Nanak Thermal Power Plant dominates the horizon. Gurdwara Dam Dama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo is only 35 km. south of Bhatinda. The pilgrims come by train to Bhatinda and then proceed to Talwandi Sabo by road.

GURDWARA ZAFARNAMA

The village Kangar in Bhatinda district was once the Capital of a big Hindu Zamindar Rai Jodh, disciple of Sixth Guru Hargobind. The holy dagger bestowed upon him by Guru Hargobind is still in the possession of his descendents. This village is famous for the Gurdwara Zafarnama Sahib. It was here that Guru Gobind Singh wrote a letter in Persian poetry called 'Zafarnama' i.e. 'Epistle of Victory'. He handed it over to Bhai Dya Singh to deliver it to Emperor Aurangzeb in the South.

TALWANDI SABO

Talwandi Sabo is also known as *Guru Ki Kashi*. Here the fifth Takht of the Sikhs is located. The other four Takhts are Akal Takht, Amritsar, Takht Keshgarh Sahib, Anandpur, Takht Hazur Sahib, Nanded (Maharashtra) and Takht Harmandir Sahib, Patna (Bihar).

Guru Gobind Singh arrived here on 20-21 January, 1706 and camped outside the village. The magnificent Gurdwara Sri Damdama Sahib marks the place of his stay. Here local *Chaudhary* Bhai Dalla looked after Guruji with great devotion. He refused to arrest the Guru as directed by Wazir Khan, Nawab of Sirhind.

Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur escorted by Bhai Mani Singh came here from Delhi to meet Guruji of Guruji spent nine months of intense literary activities. Here Bhai Mani Singh prepared the holy volume under the guidance of Guruji. Talwandi thus became a seat of learning and assumed the status of *Guru Ki Kashi.* It was here that Chaudharies Tiloka and Rama , ancestors of the Pulkian (Patiala, Nabha and Jind) rulers received *Amrit* from the blessed hands of the Guru. Sacred articles of the tenth Guru, namely, Sri Sahib (Sword), a mirror, a match lock, a portrait of the tenth Guru, a pothi (book) transcribed by Baba Deep Singh, sword of Baba Deep Singh and a Persian sword are displayed in the Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. The other sacred place at Talwandi Sabo are, Jand Sahib, Tibbi Sahib, Likhansar and Gurusar.

Besides, there are two Gurdwaras in memory of the ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur, known as Wada Darbar Sahib and Gurusar.

Guru Gobind Singh had come to Talwandi Sabo at the request of Bhai Dala, a devoted follower. He was the Chief of Brar Jats of Malwa area. He liked the place immensely and stayed for over nine months. During his stay, the place was transformed into abode of the Khalsa and became a second Anandpur.

At Damdama Sahib, as it is now called, the Guru preached complete sacrifice of personal and family interests at the altar of the good of mankind. The following words of the great Guru expressing his firm faith in the Khalsa, are inscribed on a pillar installed by the Punjab Government.

"To the Khalsa does belong all,
My home, my body, and all I possess"

FARIDKOT

DINA

Guru Gobind Singh visited the village Dina on his way to Muktsar. Here, he was looked after with great devotion by Chaudharies, Lakmir and Shamir, grandsons of Rai Jodh, a devoted disciple of sixth Guru Hargobind. Here, Guruji discarded his blue dress of *Uch Ka Pir.* Till then very few people knew that *Uch Ka Pir* was none else but the Tenth Master. Nawab of Sirhind Wazir Khan also got the news about the Guru and consequently directed the Chaudhary to arrest the Guru and send him to Sirhind. A man of steadfast faith, Shamir, after consulting his brother, wrote back "Just as you hold

your 'Pir' in high respect, we too are dedicated to the service of our Guru. Since he loves all, we cannot carry out your orders and would beg to be excused." The Gurdwara built at Dina in memory of Guruji is called 'Lohgarh Sahib'.

MUKTSAR

Muktsar is a flourishing town and a sub-divisional headquarter. It is an important pilgrim centre. Originally it used to be called 'Khidrana Ki Dhab'. The present name is derived from *Chali Muktas* (Forty Redeemed) who sacrificed their livers here fighting the Mughals.

The troops of Wazir Khan Nawab of Sirhind, came in pursuit of the Guru, fought with the Sikhs and were routed.

This was the last engagement of the Guru. It took place on December 29, 1705. The Guru personally cremated the martyrs. When Guru Gobind Singh, along with devotees, was collecting the dead bodies for cremation, he saw one of them named Mahan Singh, bleeding to death. On seeing the Guru, he made an effort to rise. The Guru at once took him in his embrace and sat down with him. Mahan Singh, tearful and exhausted, requested the great Master to destroy the Bedahwa, the letter disclaiming his Guruship, submitted by the Sikhs of Majha while escaping from the fort of Anandpur Sahib. He also restored the broken link. The merciful Guru took out the said document and tore it up. That is how the Great Guru showed infinite mercy towards his followers. The four Gurdwaras located at Muktsar are Shahid Ganj Sahib, Tibbi Sahib, Tambu Sahib and Darbar Sahib.

Gurdwara Shahid Ganj is picturesquely set beside a water tank. Its walls are covered with paintings of the Sikh Gurus and scenes from their lives. This shrine is the meeting place of millions of devotees, who gather here on the first day of the month *Magha* according to the Indian Calendar (January-February), to pay their homage to the martyrs.

FEROZAPUR

GURDWARA DAROLI BHAI

Gurdwara at village Daroli Bhai in Ferozepur district is associated with the sixth Guru Sri Hargobindji. Here was born his eldest son Baba Gurdita. A magnificent Gurdwara stands at the spot in memory of the eldest son of the Sixth Guru.

In the Gurdwara, the chola or gown of Guruji is displayed. The devotees bow before it to pay respect to their spiritual preceptor. Besides, an iron hot plate is also

preserved in the Gurudwara of Daroli Bhai. It is said that Guru cooked *chapatis* on this hot plate when he founded a free kitchen on Baisakhi day in this village.

Another Gurdwara in village Daroli Bhai has been constructed in memory of Mata Damodri. She expired in this village. She was the daughter of Bhai Narain Dass and married to Sri Guru Hargobind.

GOINDWAL

BAOLI SAHIB

Goindwal is situated at a distance of 30 km. south-east of Amritsar city. Here, there are two historic Gurdwaras, associated with the third Guru Sri Amar Das. He provided a place of pilgrimage, alternative to Hardwar and Benaras, where God alone was to be worshipped. He planned to construct a 'Baoli' – a well with descending steps in Goindwal. He purchased some land and laid the foundation of the 'Baoli' with due religious ceremonies. His devoted Sikhs joined in the work on self-help basis and many willingly came forward to provide food for the volunteers engaged in the digging operation. The Baoli had eighty-four steps. The Guru decreed that whoever should attentively repeat *Japji* on every step, should escape from the travail of wandering through eighty four lakh births and rebirths. Thus, Baoli at Goindwal Sahib became an object of pilgrimage to Hindu as well as Sikhs. This Gurdwara is considered the first great Sikh centre of pilgrimage. The entrance to the Baoli has been artistically decorated. There is a row of frescoes depicting scenes from Sikh history. A dip in the Baoli is considered holy. Adjoining the Baoli, a magnificent Gurdwara has been built. Besides, there is 'Langar' the famous community kitchen of Guru Amar Das, where each visitor is offered food free of cost. It has been recorded by a Sikh historian that Emperor Akbar also took meal in the langar before meeting the Guru.

CHAUBARA SAHIB

The place where Guru Amar Dasji lived and Guru Ram Das was bestowed with Guruship is called Gurdwara Chaubara Sahib. This is the birth place of Guru Arjun Dev, the fifth Guru.

Guru Amar Das and Guru Ram Das both breathed their last in this very place at the age of 95 and 47 years respectively.

Before his death Guru Amar Das selected Bhai Jethaji as his successor. He performed the coronation of Bhai Jetha (Guru Ram Das) in the traditional manner in 1574 A.D. An annual fair is held at Goindwal to commemorate the day.

Goindwal town has been linked with Kapurthala by a road bridge constructed over river Beas. An Industrial centre has been set up by Punjab Government in the neighbourhood. Many prominent industrialists have set up their factories in the Goindwal Industrial centre.

GURDASPUR

ACHAL SAHIB

Gurdwara Achal Sahib is situated on the Batala – Baba Bakala road. Achal Batala was the most important centre of Nathpanthi yogis during the Mughal rule. Guru Nanak came to this place on Shivratri festival along with his disciples.

As soon as Guru Nanak reached the place, people gathered around him to touch his feet. This created jealousy and bitterness in the hearts of yogis, as people paid much attention to the Guru and ignored them outright. This was too much for yogis to tolerate. Feeling that Guru Nanak was an intruder to their sacred place to win over their disciples, their leader Bhangar Nath had a bitter debate with the great Guru. Guru Nanak told the yogi that he was a hypocrite. Though outwardly he had renounced the world being a recluse, yet he goes to the houses of the worldly people to beg his food. He questioned, "In what way you are superior to those at whose door you beg your daily meal? What do you give them in return." Instead of replying, the Yogi started showing miracle of black magic and occult powers. But Guru Nanak was not impressed by his magic tricks. It so happened that yogi lost the power to show his miracle in the presence of the Guru. He realized that some superior power had taken the wind out of sail. The Yogi came to Nanak calm and bewildered. Guru told him that all these magic tricks would be insignificant compared to the love and grace of God.

Gurdwara Achal Sahib stands on the spot where Guru Nanak had discussion with Yogi Bhangar Nath.

DERA BABA NANAK

At Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district, Guru Nanak spent last days of his worldly life. This town is situated on the left bank of river Ravi on the Indo-Pak border. In fact his land was located on both sides of the river. Guru Nanak used to return to this side of the river daily for meditation. He also founded the city of Kartarpur on the right bank of the river. The importance of Kartarpur Gurdwara is that Guru Nanak left for his heavenly abode here at the age of seventy. Now that historical Gurdwara is in Pakistan territory it is still visible to the naked eye from Dera Baba Nanak, where another Gurdwara was constructed by his devotees to perpetuate his memory.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh provided copper guilded throne to the Gurdwara and also covered its canopy with marble. A *Chola* (cloak) said to have been worn by Guruji during his visit to Mecca and Madina is kept here. Lakhs of people, visit this town every year to have a glimpse of the Chola Sahib, which is displayed for public view. Dera Baba Nanak is only 55 kilometres from Amritsar city and is connected by rail and road. As the railway bridge over river Ravi was destroyed in 1965 Indo-Pak war, train service between Dera Baba Nanak and Sialkot (Pakistan) has been suspended since then.

JAITU

GANGSAR

This place was sanctified by Guru Gobind Singh. A Gurdwara sacred to his memory, stands to the west of the town. A tank close by is known as Gangsar. It is believed that the Guru came across a pilgrim on the way to Ganga and convinced him that a dip in the tank at Jaitu would deliver him similar benefits. It is for that reason the tank is called Gangsar. Gurdwara Gangsar became famous during Akali agitation against British regime. The Government interrupted the Akhand Path on account of which the Jaitu Morcha was commenced on September 14, 1924. Many Sikh volunteers laid down their lives as martyrs. Pt. Jawharlal Nehru along with Dr. Gidwani was arrested here. Ultimately the British Government had to relent. Another Gurdwara Tibbi Sahib, to the north of Jaitu, pertains to the visit of the tenth Guru. It was here that he shot some arrows and enquired from a Brar Jat, Khana,"What village is this?" Khana replied, "It is not a village. Only few hamlets of Jaitu spread out here and there." The Guru blessed, "It will be a big place in times to come." The above words of the Guru are believed to be behind the present prosperity of Jaitu.

From Jaitu, Guru Gobind Singh passed through many villages on way to Muktsar. His devotees have built shrines in each village graced by him.

JALANDHAR

GURDWARA CHHEVIN PADSHAHI

Guru Hargobind also visited the city of Jalandhar during his tour of Doaba area. Gurdwara Chhevin Padshahi in Basti Shaikh, Jalandhar city, stands on the spot where Guruji granted interview to a Muslim holy saint popularly known as Shaikh Darvesh. The saint blindfolded his eyes so that he could swear before the Mughal authorities that



Golden Temple, Amritsar, Punjab



Another view of Golden Temple, Amritsar, Punjab



Gurdwara Tarn Taran Sahib, Punjab



Gurdwara Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab



Gurdwara Takhat, Anandpur Sahib, Punjab



Gurdwara Muktsar Sahib, Punjab



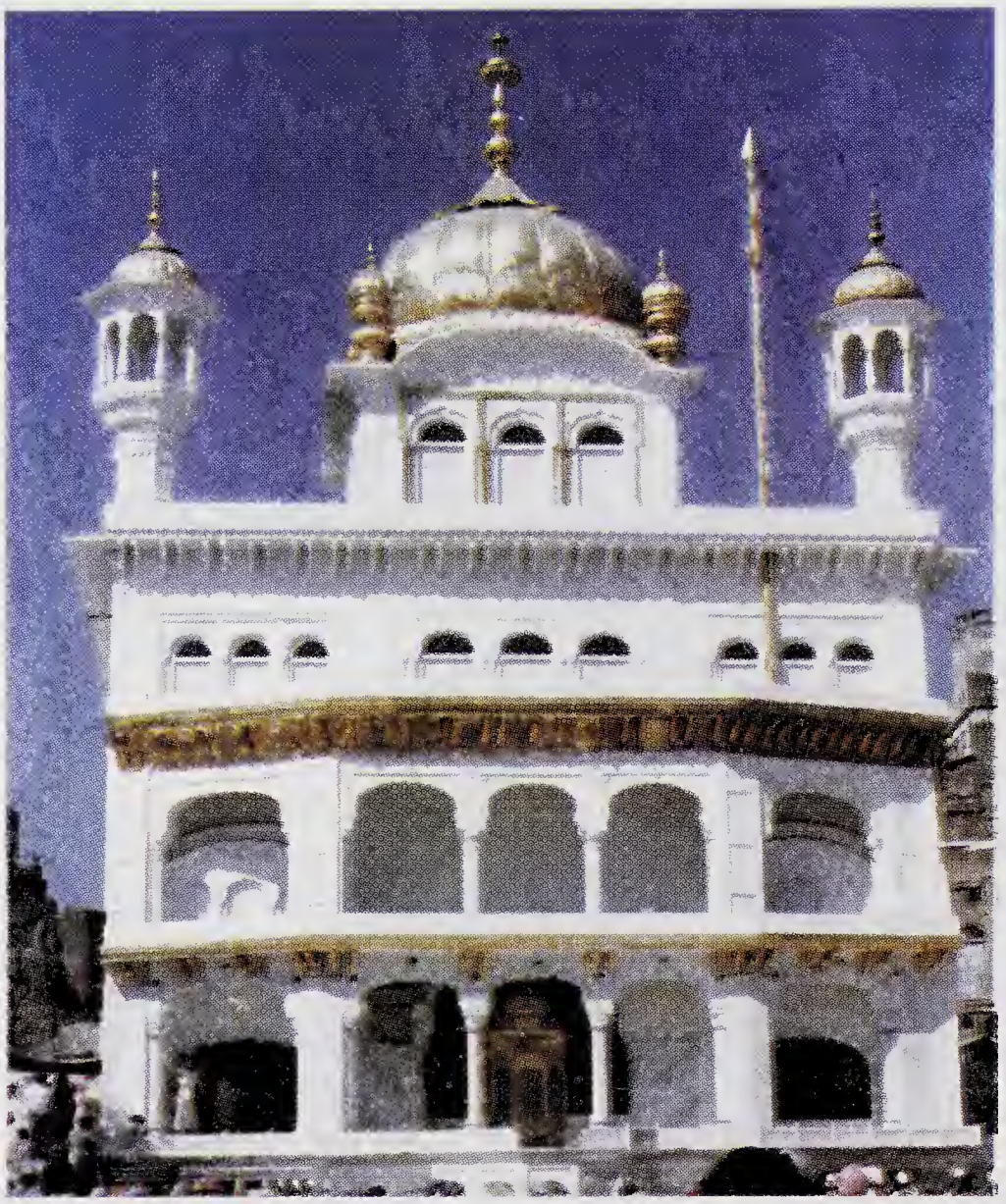
Gurdwara Dukh Nivaran Sahib, Punjab



Gurdwara Alamgir Sahib, Punjab



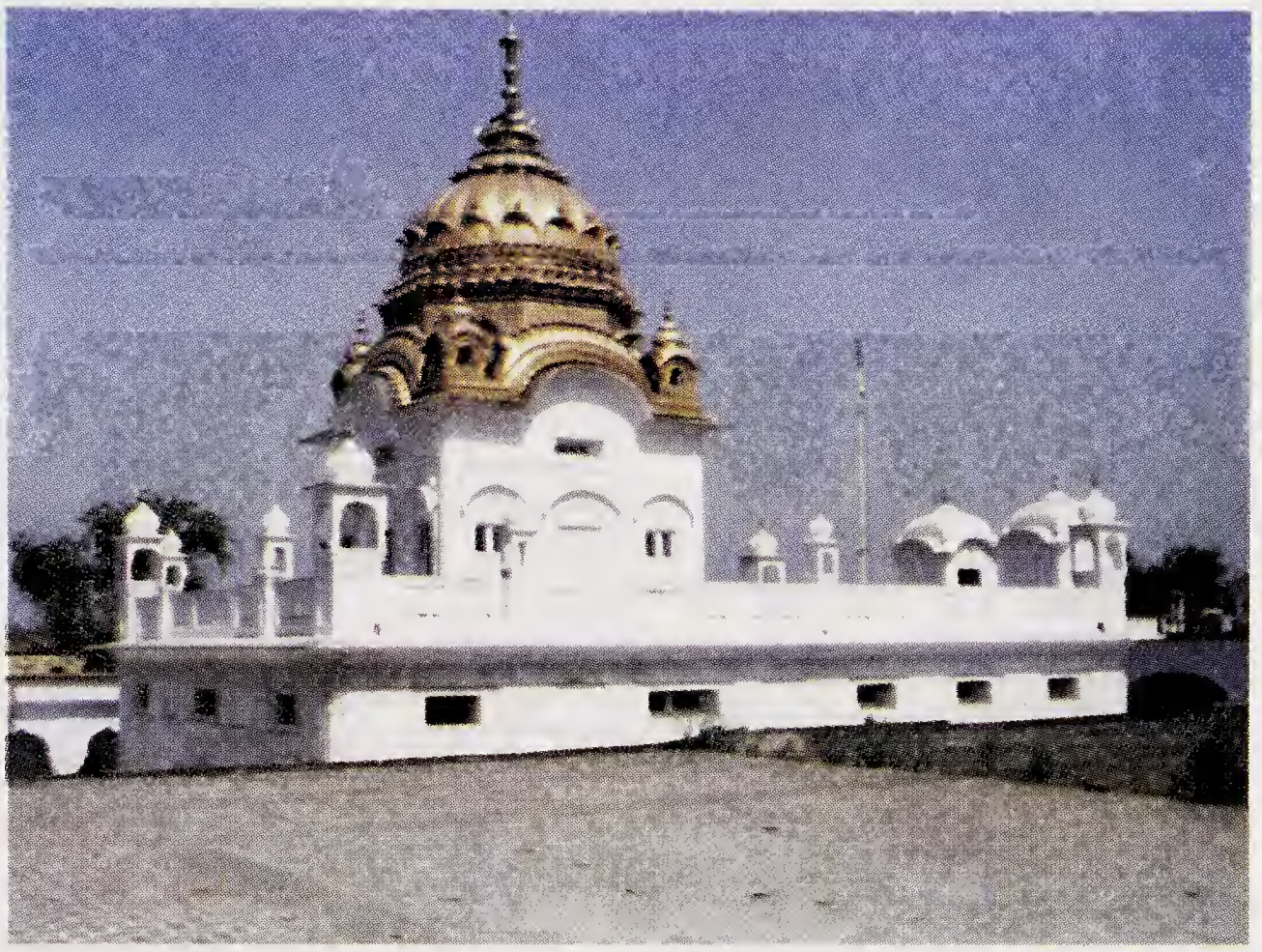
Gurdwara Baoli Sahib, Punjab



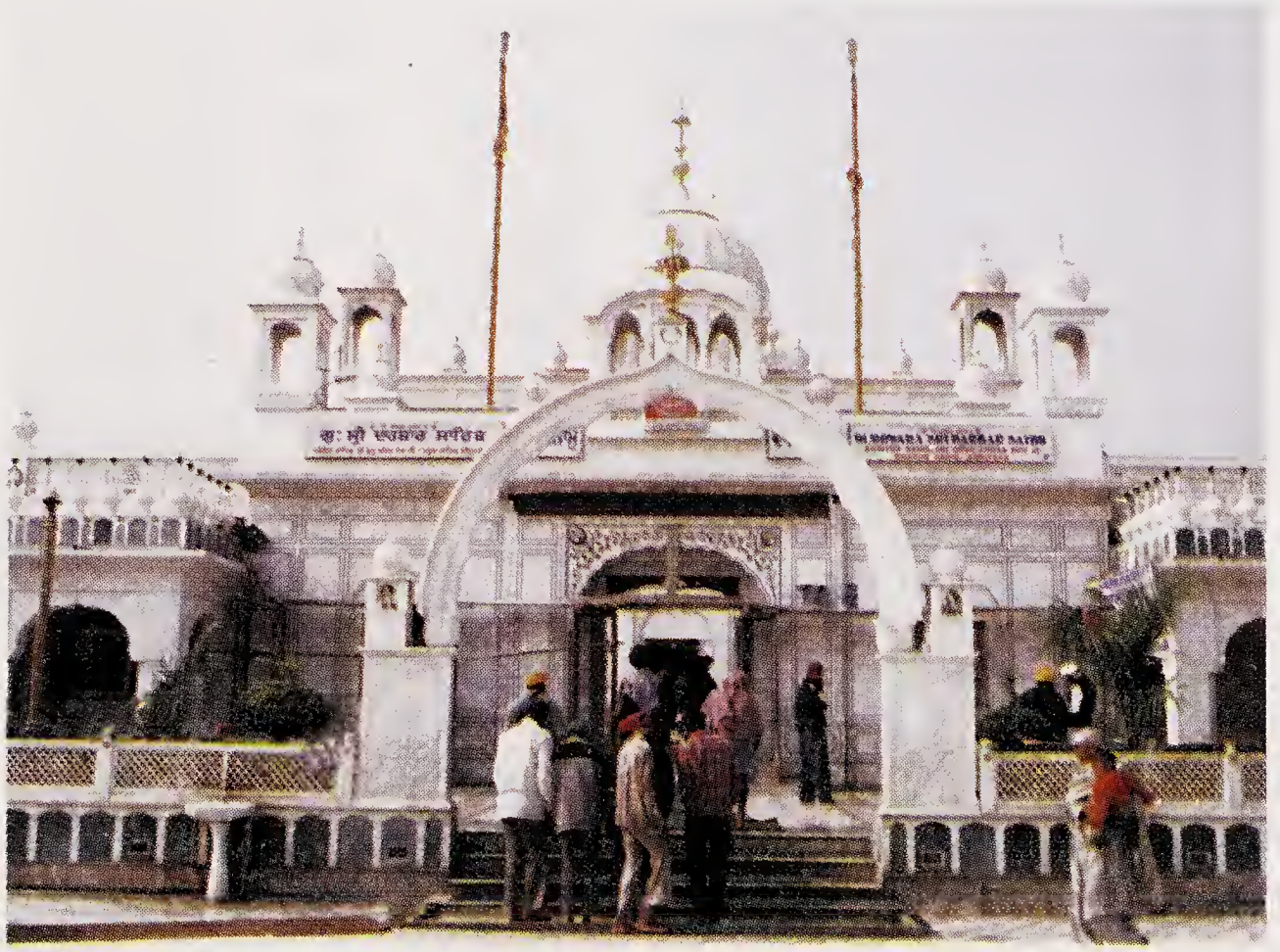
Akal Takht, Punjab



Gurdwara Sultanpur Lodhi, Punjab



Gurdwara Dera Baba Nanak, Punjab



Gurdwara Khadur Sahib, Punjab



Gurdwara Baba Atal, Punjab

he had not seen the Guru. The great Guru had indepth discussion with Shaikh Darvesh about spiritual matter which created good impact on the holy man.

Jalandhar city of today is well known for the manufacture of sports goods. It is not only the divisional headquarter, but also cultural, social and political centre of Punjab. A number of dailies are published from here. Besides, it has a Radio Station and Television Centre too.

KARTARPUR

THAM SAHIB

Kartarpur town in Jalandhar district was founded by the fifth Guru Sri Arjun Dev. He visited Kartarpur in 1598 and stuck his walking stick fast in the ground, exclaming, "This shall be the support of our faith". The village which rapidly thrived under his protection and patronage is now a town of considerable importance. Guru Arjun's stick is still shown to the pilgrims. It is a stout piece of sandalwood known as Tham. This shrine is called Gurdwara Tham Sahib.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh made a grant of one and a quarter lakh rupees in 1833 towards the building of the fine edifice known as 'Thamji in which this stick is kept. He also set apart the revenue of Fatehpur village in Amritsar district for the maintenance of the institution. Today it is a popular resort for pilgrims of every sect.

Guru Arjun Dev sunk a well near the shrine and called it Gangsar. It is said that the Ganga water flows into it by an underground channel. This was established during the life time of the Guru. One of his followers, having visited Hardwar, mentioned on his return that he had lost his brass *Lota* in the Ganga while bathing. "Let not this trouble you!", remarked the Guru, "for you will find it here in the Gangsar." The half believing disciple, let himself dive into the well by a rope in the presence of a large gathering of followers and emerged full of joy with the Lota in his hand. Since then pilgrims have been freely coming here to bathe in the holy water of the well.

The Kartarpur town was also sanctified by the visit of the sixth Sikh Guru Sri Hargobind who fought his fourth battle against the Mughals in May 1634 near this place. Here, Pendhe Khan, who had eaten from the hands of the Guru all his life, turned traitor and joined hands with a big Mughal army to attack the Guru. As usual the Guru's army fought with such determination and valour that the opponents could not withstand them. Kale Khan, the commander of the army, was captured while his men fled. Pendhe Khan, the traitor, also paid with his life and died in the battlefield. It was the last battle of Guru Hargobind.

Kartarpur is also regarded as a holy place by Sikhs because the ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur was married here. A small monument stands at the place where the

marriage ceremony took place. This town is situated on the Jalandhar-Amritsar road. It is only 20 km south of Jalandhar city. It is well connected by rail and road. The nearest airport is Raja Sansi in Amritsar, 50 km away.

LUDHIANA

GURDWARA ALAMGIR

This Gurdwara stands at a place where Guru Gobind Singh stayed for a few days after covering journey full of hazards, because of the presence of Mughal military contingents in the area. On reaching Alamgir, 11 km from Ludhiana and not finding any drinking water, the Guru shot an arrow into the ground and a spring appeared there. This spring was converted into a tank known as 'Tirsar' (arrow lake).

Nearby stands the magnificent six-storeyed Gurdwara Manji Sahib. Here a devoted Sikh presented a horse to Guru Gobind Singh. Thenceforth he discarded traveling in a Palki (palanquin). He also gave a very affectionate send off to Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan by bestowing a Hukamnama by which their services were appreciated. This Gurdwara is situated only a few kilometers away from the industrial town of Ludhiana popularly known as Manchester of India. Pilgrims and tourists can get suitable accommodation in private hotels and tourist bungalows of the Punjab Government at reasonable rates.

GURDWARA RAIKOT

Guru Gobind Singh stayed at Raikot which was the headquarter of the Pathan Chief, Rai Kalla. He was a devoted follower of the Guru and a close relative of Nihang Khan of Ropar. He looked after the comforts of the Guru like a true and faithful disciple. Under an order of the Guru he sent his man Nura Nabi to Sirhind to enquire about the welfare of the Guru's younger sons and his mother Mata Gujri. Rai Kalla with tears in his eyes, narrated to the Guru the sad story of the immortal martyrdom of his two younger sons Baba Zorawar Singh and Baba Fateh Singh as also of Mata Gujri. The Guru remarked that they were the gift of *Akal Purkh* (Almighty God) and have gone back to him.

MACHHIWARA

GURDWARA CHARAN KANWAL

.Gurdwara Charan Kanwal at Machhiwara marks the site of the garden where Guru Gobind Singh had a sip of water and a spell of brief sleep. It was here that his

three devotees Dhram Singh, Daga Singh and Manu Singh joined him. The sacred shrine commemorating the historical event, has a beautiful building worthy of the holy tradition.

Another shrine popularly called Gurdwara Chubara Sahib is located at Machhiwara. Here at the house of Masand Gulaba, the Guru spent the night. The place is known as 'Gulaba da Chubara'.

GURDWARA MACHHIWARA

This holy pace is sanctified by the visit of Guru Gobind Singh. After the battle of Chamkaur Sahib, enduring hardships, he pushed his way through the thick jungles infested with thorny bushes. After an arduous journey, he lay down on the bare stony ground for rest in the garden of Masand Gulab Rai. Here, his pathan devotees Ghani Khan and Nabi Khan recognised him and provided all facilities to the great Guru. From here Guru was taken in a Palki (palanquin) disguised as 'Uch Ka Pir'. For this purpose the Guru put on a blue dress and so did his disciples accompanying him. The plan they adopted proved a total success. Only once the procession of the Guru was intercepted by Mughal army but answer of Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan was so convincing that no suspicion was raised by the Mughal soldiers. Thus, Gurdwara Machhiwara has became a place of pilgrimage. Upto this day people remember the two Pathans Nabi Khan and Ghani Khan with great respect as they risked their lives in serving the Tenth Master.

NANGAL

GURDWARA GHAT SAHIB

Nangal Town in Ropar district has become a foremost tourist attraction due to the Bhakra Dam and the fertilizer factory. The road from Chandigarh to Nangal passes through the sacred land every inch of which has been sanctified by the blood of patriots and heroes who defied the oppression of the Mughals for many years. Several shrines commemorate the memory of these martyrs. Gurdwara Ghatu at Nangal is one of the holy shrines situated on the left bank of the river Satluj, 13 km down stream of Bhakra Dam. This Gurdwara was visited by tenth Guru Shri Gobind Singh who crossed the river Satluj from this Ghat by boat to the right bank of the river.

The Punjab Government has taken steps to provide amenities to tourists and pilgrims at Nangal. Its Tourist Department has set up a field hostel in Nangal township where all facilities are provided to visitors. Bhakra Management Board also has its

guest house known as Satluj Sadan. Here too, facilites for boarding and lodging are available at reasonable rates.

VIBHORE SAHIB

Gurdwara Vibhore Guru, is situated on the right bank of the river Satluj, just opposite the Satluj Sadan of Bhakra Management Board. Here Guru Gobind Singh stayed for about a year and composed hymns in praise of Almighty God.

The pilgrims have to cross Satluj river across the Nangal Dam to reach Naya Nangal township, adjoining which Gurdwara Vibhore Sahib is situated. Besides, there is the Nangal Fertilizer Factory.

For pilgrims and tourists anxious to visit Sikh shrines in the Nangal area, there are excellent facilities by road. It is also connected by rail with Delhi, Amritsar and other parts of India. Nearest Airport is at Chandigarh. From Chandigarh buses and taxies are available for travel to Nangal and Bhakra Dam. It is only three hour drive from Chandigarh to Nangal. Most of the people who come on pilgrimage to shrines also visit Bhakra Dam, a marvel of civil engineering and one of the grandest achievements of the young nation. Behind this Dam, extends the Gobind Sagar lake, the impounded waters of the Satluj in an area of 60 square miles. The lake perpetuates the memory of the Guru Gobind Singh who fought many pitched battles in its neighbourhood against hill Rajas and Mughal forces. The whole area is dotted with famous shrines of Anandpur Sahib, Kiratpur, Parvar Vichhora, Ghat Sahib and Vibhore Sahib. Bhakra Nangal Dam popularly known as a market of India has many historical shrines associated with the rich cultural heritage of Sikhs.

PATIALA

DUKH NIWARAN SAHIB

The capital of the former princely state, Patiala has a magnificent historical shrine, Gurdwara Dukh Niwaran. It is built on the spot graced by ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur. The Gurdwara stands adjoining a tank where a dip is considered must by devoted pilgrims. Another Gurdwara having historical background is called Gurdwara Motibagh. It is partly designed like the 'Sheesh Mahal' and has some fine miniatures.

Patiala is one of the important cities of Punjab. The Punjabi University is located on the outskirts. The Motibagh Palace of the former Maharaja now houses the National Institute of Sports and the Punjab Art Gallery. The Gallery contains valuable

paintings and illustrated manuscripts dealing with the life and times of Sikh Gurus. A Regional Cultural Centre has recently been established here.

GURDWARA BAHADURGARH

The ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur stayed at Saifabad during one of his travels. He came here to meet his old friend Nawab Saif Khan. In memory of his visit, Maharaja Karm Singh built a fort at Saifabad and named it as Bahadurgarh. He also built a beautiful Gurdwara here in the panchbati garden near a pool. Its inner sanctuaries are covered with mirror work, murals and paintings in Patiala style. On Baisakhi day a big festival is held and thousands of pilgrims throng this place to pay homage to the great Guru. This Gurdwara is situated on the Patiala-Rajpura Road at a distance of 6 km from Patiala City. The place is connected by rail and road with Delhi, Chandigarh and other important towns. Nearest airport is Chandigarh at a distance of 67 km.

ROPAR

ANANDPUR SAHIB

Anandpur Sahib "City of Bliss", is one of the most holy places of the Sikhs. It is closely linked with their religious traditions and history. Situated 45 km from Ropar on the left bank of the river Sutlej, Anandpur Sahib has a number of historical Gurdwaras. The town gained further importance with the construction of Nangal and Bhakra projects nearby, 20 km to the North. These projects have brought Anandpur Sahib on the rail and road map of India. It is located at a distance of 80 km from Chandigarh – the city of dreams.

Today, Anandpur is one of the five most important religious places of the Sikhs. This is the birth place of the Sikh faith. Here Guru Gobind Singh founded the Khalsa Panth on Baisakhi in 1699. The Takht Keshgarh Sahib stands at the place where the tenth master baptised the 'Panj Pyaras', the five beloved ones, and administered Amrit to them.

Besides, there are a number of other Gurdwaras associated with Sikh history. Gurdwara Guru Ka Mahal was built by Guru Tegh Bahadur for his residence and it was here that sons of Guru Gobind Singh were born. Gurdwara Sisganj commemorates the spot where the head of ninth Guru Teg Bahadur was cremated when it was brought to Anandpur Sahib by Bhai Jaita from Delhi, after his martyrdom in Chandni Chowk in 1675.

Besides, Gurdwaras Keshgarh, Anandgarh, Lohgarh and Fatehgarh mark the spots where once stood four fortresses built by Guru Gobind Singh who fought many pitched battles against Mughal and Rajput forces.

Every year on the day following Holi, Hola Mohalla festival is celebrated at Anandpur Sahib. On this day Anandpur Sahib relives the martial splendour of the Khalsa under their great Guru. About two lakh pilgrims from all over India and abroad participate in the festival with gay abundance. For visitors, accommodation is no problem at Anandpur Sahib. Well furnished tourist huts, have been set up by Tourist Department of Punjab Government. Nearby at Nangal the Punjab Tourist Department has a tourist bungalow where accommodation is available at nominal rate. The field hostels of Bhakra Nangal Management Board also offer accommodation. Pilgrims mostly come by rail and road to this historic place. Pilgrims and tourists also come by air from all over India and abroad. For them nearest airport is Chandigarh from where they can travel by road.

For pilgrims and tourists, a visit to Sri Guru Teg Bahadur Museum is a must. It was set up in the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur who made supreme sacrifice for the sake of liberation of the oppressed and for the freedom of conscience and belief. The great saga of Sikh history of this period is full of struggle and sacrifices which are depicted here through the medium of paintings, prepared by eminent artists. These paintings are primarily in realistic style covering the most turbulent, significant and epoch-making period of the Sikh history.

BHATHA SAHIB

This Gurdwara commemorates the visit of tenth Guru Sri Gobind Singh. There is a fascinating story about this place. Here by the touch of the hoof of Guru's horse the red hot brick kiln (Bhatha) instantaneously cooled down. The then local Pathan Chief, Nihang Khan, a sincere devotee of the Guru at a great personal risk, looked after the Guru and his followers. The Gurdwara is on the main highway from Chandigarh to Kulu and Kangra valleys. It is only at a distance of 5 km from Ropar on the left bank of the river Satlej, where remains of an old Harappan city of ancient civilization were discovered by the Archaeological Survey of India. The tourist bungalow on the left bank of the river Satluj is frequented by a large number of tourists on their way to Bhakra Nangal, Kulu Valley, and Anandpur Sahib. Nearest airport at Chandigarh is only 40 km away.

GURDWARA PARIVAR VICHHORA

This Gurdwara is situated on the bank of the river Sarsa. Here Guru Gobind Singh decided to make a brief halt for the morning religious congregation. Earlier he had

vacated fortress of Anandpur Sahib after Mughal army commander had promised to allow them to leave the fort unmolested. But he broke the oath taken on holy Quran and attacked the Guru on the bank of this river. Many devoted Sikhs laid down their lives while fighting the enemy. The Guru himself followed by devoted Sikhs, after invoking the blessings of the Almighty, fearlessly rode the horses into the swollen stream with sparkling swords in their hands. In the chaos two younger sons of the Guru along with their grandmother got separated. At this holy spot magnificent Gurdwara Parivar Vichhora, was built by grateful devotees of the great Guru.

KIRATPUR SAHIB

Kiratpur Sahib was founded by the sixth Guru Sri Hargobind Sahib. Here the seventh and eighth Gurus were born and brought up. It was here that Guru Gobind Singh along with his followers received the sacred head of the ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur, brought from Delhi with great devotion and respect by Bhai Jaita in 1675. The particular spot associated with and sanctified by it, is known as Gurdwara Babangarh Sahib. The tenth Guru took the sacred head of his father in a procession to Anandpur Sahib for cremation. The Punjab Government has constructed a pillar here, on which is inscribed the following quotation from Guru Gobind Singh describing the unique martyrdom of Sri Guru Tegh Bahdurji, "The Lord (Guru Tegh Bahadur) protected their paste mark (Tilak) – and the sacred thread. A great deed he enacted in the age of kala (darkness)".

SRI CHAMKAUR SAHIB

This Gurdwara commemorates the historical battle fought by Guru Gobind Singh in a small fortress. He faced a mighty Mughal army with just forty Sikhs. On the same spot, the great Guru blessed his two elder sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, and saw them off to the battlefield and exhorted them to attain spiritual perfection by sacrificing their lives. The two *Sahibzadas* and 37 Sikhs, attained martyrdom in the battle. Here stands a pillar, on which the words breathing the spirit of determination in the battle field are inscribed...

O Lord! Bless me,
That I may never be deterred
From righteous actions,
And fear no adversary in battle,
That victories be mine,
Let conscience be my guide,
I crave that I may sing Thy Praises,
May I draw my last breath in heroic battle

Never before has any teenager warrior displayed such a cool courage in the face of death. Their heroic deeds against tyranny are remembered every year by grateful devotees. They assemble in thousands at Chamkaur Sahib to attend the *Shahidi Jormela* in the memory of the two *Sahibzadas*.

There are five historical Gurdwaras at Chamkaur. Gurdwara Garhi Sahib stands at a place where once stood a *haveli* of one Chaudhri Garibu. This was converted into a fortress by Guruji to face the larger hostile Mughal force.

Another Gurdwara is Tarhi Sahib. Here the Tenth Master left the Garhi along with his three devoted Sikhs at the dead of night. The place where they clapped hands to announce the departure of the Guru, a memorial called 'Tarhi Sahib', has been raised. Gurdwara 'Katalgarh Sahib' commemorates the martyrdom of the Guru's two elder sons, Ajit Singh and Jujhar Singh, who displayed supreme valour and heroism and perished while fighting against formidable odds.

SANGRUR

GURDWARA BHADAUR

This village was founded by Baba Ala Singh the founder of Patiala state. It is said that the tenth Guru came here in the course of a hunting excursion. The Gurdwara is located inside the village. The *Udasi* Baba Charan Dass who had been brought up by Mata Sundri belonged to this village. His memorial stands outside the village.

SIRHIND

FATEHGARH SAHIB

The ancient town of Sirhind is replete with ruins of beautiful mosques and tombs. During Mughal days it was a town of considerable importance. Its ancient fort was built by 'Firoz Tughlaq'. The Fatehgarh Sahib Gurdwara marks the spot where the two brave children, the younger sons of Guru Gobind Singh died for the noble cause. They refused to be converted to Islam during the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb.

After the heroic death of two elder sons of Guru Gobind Singh in the battle of Chamkaur, on December 22, 1704 his two younger sons, namely, Zorawar Singh and Fateh Singh were done to death, by being bricked alive in the fort of Sirhind on December 28, 1704 under orders of the tyrant Nawab Wazir Khan. Mata Gujri, grandmother of the two Sahibzadas expired due to the shock of brutal murder of her

two grand children. A Hindu philanthropist, Dewan Todar Mal cremated the dead bodies with the help of other devotees of the Guru. He purchased the land by paying gold coins to the muslim zamindar named Atta. Here stands the Gurdwara Jyoti Swarup. A big hall with a seating capacity for 5,000 persons has been constructed and has been named Dewan Todar Mal Hall.

At a short distance is the Rauza of Hazrat Mirajabad-ud-din Alaf Sheikh Ahmed Sirhindi. Thousands of pilgrims from all over the world visit Sirhind to pay respects to Gurdwara Fategarh Sahib and Rauza Sharif. To the south-east of the city is a Caravan Serai of the Mughal period known as Aam-Khas Bagh. It has now been converted into a tourist complex where suitable accommodation is available at reasonable rates.

Sirhind is 53 km from Chandigarh airport. It is well connected by road and is a railway junction too.

SRI HARGOBINDPUR

DAMDAMA SAHIB

In 1630, the Mughals had tried to confiscate, by force, the site of a township called Sri Hargobindpur, established by Guru Arjun Dev in 1587. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru, took objection to this action. This brought him in conflict with the Mughal army. In this battle which was fought in 1630 A.D., it was misreported to Abdulla Khan, Subedar of Jalandhar, that Guru was constructing a fort at Sri Hargobindpur. He was also incited by Rattan Chand, son of Gherer Chaudhry and Karam Chand, son of Chandu Shah to attack the Guru. The Muslim commander, his two sons and a large number of officers were killed and the remaining army took to flight. At the site of this historic battle, now stands a magnificent shrine called Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. This town stands on the right bank of the river Beas in Gurdaspur district of Punjab. It was founded by Guru Hargobind and is now an important place of pilgrimage. It is connected by road with Amritsar, Gurdaspur and Batala town.

The site, where Guru Hargobind actually laid the foundation of a new town, was situated in a tiny village Ruhela on the right bank of the river Beas. He liked the place so much that he decided to build a town on an open space available on the bank of the river. This brought him in conflict with Chaudhry Bhagwan Dass of Gherer tribe. The Chaudhry was killed in a squabble when he used undignified words for the Guru. The local population was thankful for riddance of the tyrant and the evil minded Chaudhry. They helped the Guru in the construction work of the town which came to be called after the Guru as Sri Hargobindpur.

A unique feature of the town was the construction of a mosque which was a conclusive evidence of the freedom from any narrow minded religious prejudices.

MANJI SAHIB

During his stay at Sri Hargobindpur, Guru Hargobind built a house in the new town for his own stay. It is a three-storeyed building. Though very much ravaged by the passage of time, people regard it a place of pilgrimage. A saffron flag post indicating the place can be spotted from distance.

SULTANPUR LODHI

BER SAHIB

During his stay at Sultanpur Lodhi, Guru Nanak would go to the Bein stream every morning for bath and meditation. There he planted a Ber (Jujube) sapling. The tree is still present. A shrine was built there by Baba Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, the founder of the Kapurthala State. Later on, the construction of the present building was started in 1938 and completed in 1942. It is all in marble and mosaic.

One day while bathing in the stream, Nanak saw a peculiar light. He moved towards the light and was drawn into the stream. People thought that he had been drowned. But when he came out of the water after three days, he kept muttering again and again the words, "We are neither Hindus nor Muslims, we are human beings." All this was very strange to the people. Now large crowds came to him to listen to his words. The *Qazi* of the town was considered a learned man among the Muslims. He asked the Guru to join him in offering Namaz (prayer) in a mosque if he really did not believe in any distinction between Hindus and Muslims. Nanak accompanied the *Qazi* to the Mosque. Everybody said his prayer, but Guru Nanak Dev, however, only stood watching. When questioned by *the Qazi* as to why he did not join him offering namaz, the Guru replied that *Qazi* himself was worried about a new born colt all the time. He was afraid that it might fall into the well. With whom he was to offer a prayer? The crowd was greatly amazed. People came to believe that the Guru was a divine being, as he could read the inner thoughts of others.

The hallowed city of Sultanpur, where the great Guru Nanak spread his first message of one God and brotherhood of mankind, has become a place of pilgrimage.

HATT SAHIB

Guru Nanak, the founder of the Sikh faith, spent 14 years in Sultanpur Lodhi situated in Kapurthala district of Punjab. His brother-in-law, Jai Ram, got him employed in the service of Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi who was much impressed by the intellectual equipment of Nanak. The Nawab offered him the portfolio of Household

Minister but Nanak preferred the administration of Provision Supplies Department, the Modikhana. Probabiy it was concerned with charitable institution, helping the poor and the needy.

As the custodian of the stores, the Guru worked with complete honesty. He gave everybody his due. Unlike the previous custodians, who had become rich by pilfering and short weighing, he always gave full measure to the customers. Everybody was satisfied and spoke highly to the Nawab about the good work of the Guru. At the site of the store where the great Guru distributed provisions, a Gurdwara has been built, with a tank adjoining it. It is called Gurdwara Hatt Sahib, where eleven stone weights said to have been used by the Guru, are preserved.

There is an episode mentioned in the biography of Guru Nanak connected with this place. Some jealous persons carried stories to the Nawab that Nanak was mismanaging the stores and squandering away state wealth. However, when the accounts were checked, it was found that instead of shortfall, there was some money in excess. Nawab Dault Khan Lodhi at once sent for his treasurer Bhavani Das to pay the excess amount to Nanak immediately. He offered Nanak Rs. 3,000 as reward for honesty and efficiency.

KOTHI SAHIB

Situated at a distance of 14 km from the city of Kapurthala, this historical shrine is just a small room where Guru Nanak is said to have been kept under house arrest by the order of the Nawab Daulat Khan Lodhi, while accounts of the *modikhana* were being checked. All this happened because of the false reports jealous elements had lodged. But the charges proved wrong and the Nawab had to offer apologies to Nanak for lending ears to the false reports. He promised never to do so again. He even offered the Dewanship (Prime Ministership) of his State. But the Guru refused to accept it as he had decided to serve God through the service of humanity.

The pilgrims also visit the house where Guru used to stay in Sultanpur. In this house his two sons Srichand and Lakhmi Chand were born. The two-storeyed building alongwith the garden is still intact.

TAKHATPURA

Takhatpura is at a distance of about 90 km from Chandigarh and 225 km from Anandpur Sahib. Three historical Gurdwaras are located here. Gurdwara Pehli Padshahi had been built in honour of Guru Nanak's visit to this place. To the west of the Gurdwara is a tank, known as Nanaksar.

Gurdwara Chhevin Padshahi, commemorates Guru Hargobind who during his travels in the Malwa region made a brief halt here. The third Gurdwara is called Gurdwara Dasvin Padshai. The tenth Master graced this place and took bath in the holy tank of Nanaksar.

TARN TARAN

Gurdwara Tarn Taran Sahib, is situated at a distance of 22 km south-east of Amritsar city. It was built by Guru Arjun Dev, in the Mughal style, in memory of Guru Ram Das. Its dome is covered with copper gilt. It is located on the edge of a big tank whose water is believed to cure leprosy. So, affected persons have been visiting this holy shrine for the last four centuries to seek cure of their lacerated wounds caused by leprosy. A big fair is held here every month on Amavas day.

THE SHRINES IN HARYANA

AMBALA

Gurdwara Badshahi Bagh

Gurdwara Gobindpura

Gurdwara Kapal Mochan

Lakhnaur Sahib

Manji Sahib

Panjokhra Sahib

KURUKSHETRA

Gurdwara Manji Sahib

PANCHKULA

Nadha Sahib

AMBALA

GURDWARA BADSHAHI BAGH

Gurdwara Badshahi Bagh, situated near district courts of Ambala city, commemorates the visit of Guru Gobind Singh who stayed here while coming from Lakhnaur, where he had gone to meet his maternal parents. He camped in the garden, under a cluster of trees. A tank has also been built near the Gurdwara Badshahi Bagh. Every year a big festival is held here on the *Baisakhi day*, regarded as the birthday of Khalsa Panth. Keeping in view the historical importance of three holy shrines, Haryana Tourism has set up a new tourist complex, Kingfisher at a strategic site on the main highway.

GURDWARA GOBINDPURA

Guru Gobind Singh came to Ambala, on his way back from Kurukshetra to Anandpur Sahib, where he had gone on the occasion of solar eclipse to preach the name of God and the message of Guru Nanak. Gurdwara Gobindpura was constructed by faithful disciples of the tenth Guru near the railway station of Ambala city. It is said to be the holy place where Guru Gobind Singh gave some *Amrit* to sparrows which gave so much courage and strength that they killed the hawk of Qazi Mir Din.

GURDWARA KAPAL MOCHAN

Kapal Mochan is also known as Gopal Mochan. It is about 17 km north-east of Jagadhari town on the Bilaspur-Ranjitpura road in Ambala district. It is an ancient place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Sikhs. Its importance is evident from the fact that its name appears at numerous places in Mahabharata and Puranas.

Kapal Mochan has been described as famous in all the three mythological worlds. It is the destroyer of all sins. The devotees get rid of their sins by taking a dip in the sacred tank.

Kapal Mochan is a natural hollow pool near the bank of Saraswati river. This place was also visited by Guru Gobind Singh after the battle of Bhangani in 1679 A.D. on his way to Paonta Sahib. He stayed and worshipped here for 52 days. His soldiers cleaned their weapons and tested them to meet future challenges. Here the great Guru distributed awards and *Saropas* to brave soldiers who distinguished themselves in the battle of Bhangani. He also exhorted his followers to maintain the sanctity of the sacred place.

He gave a copper plate bearing his signature as a momento to the Chief priest of Kapal Mochan. A Gurdwara stands near this tank in his memory.

This holy place was also visited by Draupadi and five Pandavas, as tradition goes. They bathed here to get salvation. The five brothers also cleaned their weapons in the holy tank.

It is connected by road with Ambala, Karnal and Delhi. Nearest railway station is Yamunanagar, at a distance of 20 km.

LAKHNAUR SAHIB

Lakhnaur is a small village, situated at a distance of 12 km from Ambala city, on Ambala-Barrola road. Here the tenth Guru spent about seven months during his childhood. The Guru during his childhood used to play his favourite game of mock warfare.

Sayeed Bhikhan Shah, from Thaska near Thanesar, came to pay respects to the child Guru here. Earlier this Muslim holyman had dreamt that a great prophet has taken birth as Gobind at Patna. He went all the way to Patna from his home and bowed before the child Guru. He also presented two baskets full of sweets to him. He had expected that the Guru would accept one basket. But the Guru place his hands on both baskets, thereby signifying that he would bestow his love and affection, on both Hindus and Muslims.

Another Muslim saint, Pir Arif Din, visited Lakhnaur and bowed before the child Guru. His disciples resented this action of the holyman. The Pir quietened them, saying that he had bowed before none else than the Lord, whom he saw manifested in the child.

The Gurdwara at Lakhnaur is visited by devotees of all religions to pay respects to the memory of the tenth Guru.

MANJI SAHIB

Ambala city is situated on the National Highway No.1, popularly called Sher Shah Suri Marg, about 190 km from Delhi and 48 km from Chandigarh.

This city was sanctified by the sixth Guru Sri Hargobind and Sri Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Guru Gurdwara Manji Sahib was constructed at the place where the sixth Guru stayed during his visit to Ambala city. The grand building of the Gurdwara is located on the National Highway No. 1 (Sher Shah Suri Marg). The devotees visit this shrine to have a dip in the tank nearby. They also take *Amrit* from the *Baoli*, constructed by the sixth Guru, during his stay here.

PANJOKHRA SAHIB

This Gurdwara is dedicated to the memory of the eighth Guru Sri Harkrishanji. He visited this place on his way to Delhi. It is situated on the Ambala-Naraingarh road. The Guru, during his journey from Kiratpur to Panjokhra, traveled through Ropar, Banur, Rajpura and Ambala. Along the way he gave the universal message of Guru Nanak, to disciples, who came to call on him. As he neared Panjokhra, a disciple spoke with humility. "Respected *Sangats* are coming from Peshawar, Kabul and Kashmir for *darshan*. Kindly stay at Panjokhra for a few days so that they may have the chance of seeing their beloved spiritual preceptor." The Guru agreed to extend his stay in this village.

There lived a learned Pandit, Lal Chand, who was proud of his caste as well as of his learning. He came to see the Guru with devotion and asked, "It is said that you sit on the *gaddi* of Guru Nanak, but what do you know of the old religious books?"

By chance Chhaju Ram, an illiterate dark-skinned village water carrier happened to pass by at that moment. Guru Harkrishan asked one Dargah Mal to call him. As Chhaju Ram came, the Guru enquired if he would explain to Pandit the gist of Bhagavatgita. Saying so, the Guru placed his stick over the head of the water carrier, who astonished every one by giving a convincing commentary on the sacred book. Lal Chand's pride was overcome. Humbly he fell at the Guru's feet. Both he and Chhaju Ram became the disciples of the great Guru and traveled with him upto Kurukshetra.

It is said that Pandit Lal Chand entered the fold of Khalsa in Guru Gobind Singh's time and took the name, Lal Singh. He met with a hero's death fighting in the battle of Chamkaur, on December 7, 1705.

According to historical records, Guru Harkrishan on reaching village Panjokhra, made a boundry of sand and said that any one who wanted to see him, should stand there, make his supplication and he would have his desire fulfilled. A shrine has been built at the site. *There are many shrines in and around Kurukshetra connected with Gurus. The place has been visited by Guru Nanak, Guru Amar Das, Guru Har Rai, Guru Hargobind, Guru Tegh Bahadur and Guru Gobind Singh. Of all the places of pilgrimage here, Brahmsar is considered the holiest. It is said that here *Brahma* performed *yagna*. Bathing in the tank on the day of solar eclipse, gives a person the benefit of a thousand *Ashwamedha yajnas*. On the north-western end of the tank stands a Gurdwara. It was built to commemorate the visit of Guru Gobind Singh.

Another Gurdwara dedicated to sixth Guru Sri Hargobind, stands close to another holy tank, called Sannihit tank. There are many other shrines associated with Gurus. When Guru Hargobind visited Kurukshetra on the occasion of the solar eclipse, he met many Bibeke Sikhs who were holding congregations. He was much pleased to see that they were able to grasp Guru Nanak's message according to His teachings. Thousands of Hindus and Sikhs visit holy Kurukshetra on the occasion of *Kumbh mela* on solar

eclipse. Here, Lord Krishna gave the message of the celestial song, called *Bhagavatgita* to Arjuna before the commencement of the Mahabharata war.

Haryana Tourism has set up a tourist complex at Pipli near Kurukshetra Railway Station. It provides facilities to tourists and pilgrims. Besides, there is a restaurant and spacious lawns for garden parties. This historical place is 152 km from Delhi.

KURUKSHETRA

GURDWARA MANJI SAHIB

Gurdwara Manji Sahib, in village Cheeka of Kurukshetra district, is dedicated to the memory of sixth and ninth Gurus. Sri Hargobind, the sixth Guru, graced this place on his way to Gurdwara Nanakmata, in Nainital district of Uttar Pradesh. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Guru, also visited this place. He passed through this area while going to Delhi where he made the supreme sacrifice for the cause of truth on November 11, 1675 at the site of Gurdwara Sis Ganj.

PANCHKULA

NADHA SAHIB

Gurdwara Nadha Sahib is situated in the village Panchkula on the left bank of the river. Near this historical Gurdwara, Government of Haryana has constructed an industrial township and a housing colony of Panchkula.

Gurdwara Nadha Sahib was sanctified by the visit of Guru Gobind Singh who came to this place along with his victorious army, after the glorious victory at Bhangani. He stayed here for a few days on his way to Anandpur Sahib. Here a Lobana Sikh, Nadhu Shah served the Guru and his disciples with great devotion. Consequently, Guruji prophesied that this place would become a place of pilgrimage, and it would be called after the name of Nadhu Shah. He also proclaimed that those who would visit this place with dedication and devotion, would have their wishes fulfilled. This historical shrine is 10 km away from Chandigarh.

The pilgrims and tourists, who visit Gurdwara Nadha Sahib, also go around the modern city of Chandigarh, which has become the focus of worldwide interest for its unique architecture and town planning. In the lap of Shivalik Hills, this garden city provides all amenities to visitors. It has the biggest rose garden in Asia, called Zakir Hussain Rose Garden. World famous rock garden of Nek Chand is also worth a visit. There is an artificial lake – Sukhna Lake which covers an area of about 3 square kilometers. Rowing and pedal boats are available on hire. The Punjab University

Campus, at Sector 14, is most appealing to the eye with its beautiful buildings and parks. No tourist can afford to miss a visit to the Museum and Art Gallery in Sector 10. Besides, there are monumental buildings designed by world famous architect, Le Corbusier in which he displayed best of his architectural talent. Among them housing the Secretariat, legistative Assembly and the High Court are worth seeing. Facilities of boarding and lodging for pilgrims and tourists are available in hotels and guest houses of Punjab and Haryana Governments. There are some paying guest accommodations for the foreign tourists only.

Pilgrims visiting famous shrines of Anandpur Sahib, Kiratpur Sahib and Kotla Nihang can take buses from local bus stand. Nangal can be reached by buses plying between Chandigarh and Nangal. Tourist Departments of Punjab and Haryana Governments have set up opened Information Centres to assist the tourists and pilgrims.

THE SHRINES
IN
HIMACHAL PRADESH

KANGRA

Nadaun

MANDI

Mandi
Rawalsar

NAHAN

Paonta Sahib
Bhangani Sahib

KANGRA

NADAUN

Nadaun is in Kangra district of Himachal Pradesh. Here, a holy shrine stands in memory of Guru Gobind Singh. He fought a pitched battle against Alif Khan, the Mughal Commander-in-Chief, sent by Viceroy of Jammu to collect arrears of tribute from hill Rajas in 1687. Alif Khan was defeated. The Guru stayed for eight days in Nadaun on the bank of river Beas.

MANDI

MANDI

Mandi situated at a height of about 2000 ft above sea level, is about 165 kms from Shimla, the capital of Himachal Pradesh and 225 kms from Pathankot. Buses ply regularly between Shimla and Mandi via Bilaspur and between Pathankot and Mandi via Kangra.

Guru Gobind Singh was invited by Raja Sidh Sen of Mandi to stay at his palace. But the Guru preferred to stay on the bank of the river. Inside the river there was a big stone, on which, the Guru used to hold his *darbar*. This stone can be seen even today. A beautiful Gurdwara has been built at the site. Some sacred relics of the Guru have been preserved in the Gurdwara. They include a cot and a rifle.

RAWALSAR

A few kilometers away from Mandi is Rawalsar. Rawalsar is of great significance as it was sanctified by the visit of tenth Guru Gobind Singh. A Gurdwara was constructed here by devotees of the Guru to perpetuate his memory. Adjoining the Gurdwara is a big tank, whose water has medicinal values. A dip in this tank is considered auspicious. The Gurdwara is built of stone and one can reach it by climbing 108 stairs. People visit this shrine with great devotion.

It is a sacred place for Buddhists too. Many people from Tibet come here on pilgrimage to pay homage to the Buddhist shrine situated here.

NAHAN

PAONTA SAHIB

About 120 km away from Ambala in the shadow of the Himalayas, stands the holy shrine of Paonta Sahib dedicated to Guru Gobind Singh. The magic of the lower

Himalayas works on the mind of the pilgrims who come here to pay respects to the great Guru. It can be reached from two sides, from Ambala via Nahan and straight from Yamunanagar. It is a picturesque site on the bank of the river Yamuna. One can reach Paonta Sahib from Dehradun too. Its outskirts are dotted with gardens, green meadows and tall evergreen trees, that echo the gushing waters of Yamuna.

The time spent at Paonta by Guru Gobind Singh, was the happiest period of his life. He enjoyed hunting in the thick forests around. The opportunites were enormous. The Guru wrote, "I enjoyed myself on the banks of Yamuna and saw amusements of different kinds."

The Guru took many steps to beautify Paonta Sahib and devoted most of his time in composing poetry. He was so much enamoured with poetry that he invited 52 poets to his court. The pleasant environment and salubrious climate refreshed his mind. Most of the other time he spent in reading and writing.

Besides, the Guru selected a site noted for its scenic beauty and splendour and got constructed a fort on the bank of Yamuna. Here, Pir Buddhu Shah, a renowned Muslim saint living in Sadhaura near Paonta, called on the Guru. The two had a long discourse and ultimately the muslim holyman recognized the superiority of the Guru. He became a devotee of the tenth Master.

A magnificent shrine has been built at Paonta Sahib, on the right bank of the river Yamuna. Thousands of pilgrims go there on the occasion of the Hola Mohalla every year. A big *Kavi Darbar* is held in which well known poets participate. It is held at the same place where Guruji used to sit along with 52 poets. The other sacred place in the Gurdwara complex is Sri Talab Sahib, where the Guru used to distribute salary to his soldiers.

BHANGANI SAHIB

A fierce and bloody battle was fought at Bhangani near Paonta Sahib when Rajput hill Rajas jointly attacked Guruji. Raja Bhim Chand, Raja Fateh Singh and Raja Kesri Singh led the Rajput troops. The Sikhs fought valiantly with courage and determination. Their patriotic fervour came handy and they carried the day under the command of Guru Gobind Singh. This was a decisive battle won by the Guru. Praises were showered on him for his valour, skill and courage in the battlefield. Pir Buddhu Shah alongwith his 500 disciples fought on the side of the Guru. His timely help was appreciated by the Guru.

A Gurdwara stands today at the place where the battle of Bhangani took place.

THE SHRINES
IN
JAMMU & KASHMIR

MATTAN

Gurdwara Mattan

SRINAGAR

Gurdwara Srinagar

MATTAN

GURDWARA MATTAN

In the year 1516 Guru Nanak started his third *udasi* i.e. missionary tour. This time he visited Mansarovar, Tibet, China, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir. He visited Srinagar, Anantnag and reached Mattan in the interior of the valley.

At Mattan, Guruji had discussion with a great Sanskrit scholar Pandit Brahm Das, who was proud of his knowledge. Guruji on seeing him coming with huge stock of books, recited the following couplet-

"One may read thousands of books,
with cart load of books to follow,
One may study innumerable epics or fill,
One's cellars with volumes of study,
One may read for generations and generations,
And spend every month in the year studying
And one may read one's entire life,
Right up to one's last breath,
Sayeth Nanak, there is one truth His name only,
All else is vanity of the egoistic mind

Pandit Brahm Das was shaken and fell at the feet of the Guru. A gurdwara in memory of Guru Nanak has been built at Mattan. It is situated at a distance of 60 kms from Srinagar. Large number of devotees visit this shrine in the summer season.

It may be recalled that in 1675 A.D. a group of Kashmiri Brahmins of Mattan visited Anandpur Sahib to narrate their tale of woe to Guru Tegh Bahadur. He was deeply moved by their plight. For some time he was completely absorbed in thought and long unbroken silence descended upon the entire audience.

The tradition has it that at this critical moment the young *Sahibzada* Gobind Rai, by chance, entered the audience hall from outside. He enquired his father the cause of this strange silence. The ninth Guru informed him about the grave situation that had arisen in the country in the wake of religious persecution of Hindus by Mughal rulers and remarked that only the supreme sacrifice of a great man could save the people. Forthwith the young Prince replied that there could be no greater man than his father himself. This brave remark of Gobind Rai settled the issue finally. Guru Tegh Bahadur left for Delhi and made the supreme sacrifice on November 11, 1675 in Chandni Chowk for the cause of truth, dharma and freedom of faith of the masses.

SRINAGAR

GURDWARA SRINAGAR

In the summer of 1620 A.D. Guru Hargobind visited Kashmir. A *Manji* or the seat of Sikh mission was established at Srinagar in Guru Amar Das's time. The contemporary *masand* or the incumbent incharge of the Manji was Sewa Das. His old mother, Mai Bhagbhari had sewn a gown for the Guru with her own hands and cherished a wish that the Guru should wear it in front of her eyes. It was the magnetism of Mai Bhagbhari which drew Guru Hargobind to Kashmir. On reaching Srinagar the Guru met Sewa Das and many more Kashmiri devotees. They received him with great love and devotion. The mother of Sewa Das touched the feet of the Guru who asked her to bring the gown she had made for him and put it on. The joy of Mai Bhagbhari knew no bounds.

The Guru stayed at Srinagar for nearly three months. He held congregations, delivered discourses and left the place only after he had supervised the last rites of Mata Bhagbhari and had thus immortalised her. At Srinagar, Guru Hargobind expounded the thesis that the Guru's treasure chest is for the benevolence of the poor.

During his stay at Srinagar, Guru Hargobind, built a shrine at Hariparbat, appointed Bhai Sewa Das its incharge, asked him to live there and preach the true faith. This shrine is visited by thousands of devotees, who go to Srinagar during the summer season.

Other Gurdwaras in Kashmir, commemorating the visit of Guru Hargobind are, Gurdwara Thana Sahib-Baramula, Gurdwara Parampila – Uri, Gurdwara Nagani Sahib – Poonch.

THE SHRINES IN DELHI

Bala Sahib

Bangla Sahib

Damdama Sahib

Gurdwara Banda Bahadur

Gurdwara Mata Sundri

Gurdwara Moti Bagh

Majnu-Ka-Tilla

Nanak Piao

Rakab Ganj

Sis Ganj

BALA SAHIB

Gurdwara Bala Sahib is one of the most important Sikh shrines in Delhi, next in importance to Gurdwara Sis Ganj and Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. Large number of Sikhs and Hindus visit this holy place daily. This Gurdwara is associated with the eighth Guru Sri Harkrishan and two wives of Guru Gobind Singh namely Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur.

During his stay in Delhi, Guru Harkrishan won hearts of a large number of admirers by applying healing touch on ailing bodies. He cured hundreds of people, suffering from acute attacks of cholera and smallpox. For Sikhs of Delhi, his very presence amidst them, had a very healthy impact. For them the Guru was the boat of salvation, a ladder to reach one's ultimate home, a key to open the lock, a unifier of man with God and so on. In fact for Sikhs a Guru is indispensable, yet he is not an end in himself, but only a means for the attainment of salvation. So they were all happy to be in close association of their spiritual preceptor. But their joy was short-lived as he soon left for his heavenly abode. During his stay in Delhi as guest of Raja Jai Singh, Guru Harkrishan performed the humane miracle of healing and giving solace to the poor and the sick. In fact the noble deeds of serving the suffering humanity won him more adherents than any other religious leader living in Delhi at that time. Even Muslims respected him greatly for the radiant peace and the hope his serene personality reflected. As if he had taken the burden and sufferings of others on his own shoulders, he himself got a severe attack of smallpox and died on March 30, 1684.

Earlier, he had shifted from the bungalow of Raja Jai Singh to the bank of river Yamuna. He was cremated at the same spot where Gurdwara Bala Sahib has been raised. This shrine is situated on the Ring Road on the other side of Maharani Bagh Colony. The Gurdwara is no longer on the bank of the river as Yamuna has since changed its course.

Gurdwara Bala Sahib is also sacred because Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur were also cremated there. The *samadhi* of Mata Sahib Kaur, a small marble room, is in the main hall of the Gurdwara, whereas that of Mata Sundri is outside the new Gurdwara building.

Both old and new buildings of the Gurdwara are situated side by side. The new building has a big hall and it was completed in 1957-58.

Guru Harkrishan was called upon to lead the Sikhs at a very crucial juncture. He was nominated as successor by the seventh Guru Sri Har Rai in 1661 A.D. in preference to his elder brother Ram Rai who was a favourite at the court of Aurangzeb. The latter complained to the Emperor against the decision of his father who ignored his claims to *Gurugadi*. Consequently *Bala Guru* (the child Guru) was summoned to Delhi by the Emperor. At first the Guru refused to oblige but later agreed

to come at the intervention of Raja Jai Singh of Amber. The Raja sent a high official to bring the Guru. He was received with full honour. The Raja persuaded the Emperor to leave the choice of their spiritual leader to the Sikhs themselves and a deputation of the Sikhs made it clear to him that their choice was Guru Harkrishan. Aurangzeb was however, anxious to meet Guru Harkrishan and Raja Jai Singh promised to arrange a meeting between them. But due to sudden demise of Guru this meeting could not be held.

According to historical record when Guru Harkrishan was about to die, his devotees asked him to name his successor. He uttered the words 'Baba Bakala', Bakala is a small village on the bank of river Beas in Amritsar District, where Tegh Bahadur, the younger brother of his grandfather Baba Gurditta lived. The Sikhs went to Bakala village and acknowledged Guru Tegh Bahadur as their ninth Guru.

BANGLA SAHIB

A magnificent and spacious bungalow in Delhi owned by Raja Jai Singh of Amber (Jaipur) who commanded great respect and honour in the court of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb now enjoys the status of a holy shrine called Gurdwara Bangla Sahib. The eighth Guru Sri Harkishan had stayed here for a few months as guest of Raja Jai Singh. Since then it has become a place of pilgrimage for both Hindus and Sikhs. They pay their respect to the memory of Guru Harkrishan, nominated as successor by the seventh Guru, Sri Har Rai. He passed away on October 6, 1661 A.D. When only a little over five year old, he had been tried and tested as a perfect fearless and fully illuminated soul.

Baba Ram Rai, his elder brother became much perturbed when he learnt that Har Krishan had been appointed the spiritual head. He tried in vain to influence the leading Sikhs of Delhi and Punjab. Later he approached Emperor Aurangzeb to help him acquire the *Gurugadi*. Consequently, Aurangzeb agreed to summon Guru Harkrishan to see whether he was really superior and more spiritual.

Fortunately both Raja Jai Singh and his son Raja Ram Singh were in Delhi at that time. When approached by Sikhs for help, they agreed to assist them in their predicament.

The Rajput chief took over the responsibility of persuading Guru Harkrishan to come to Delhi and also gained assurance from the Emperor that as long as he (the Emperor) was not satisfied about the succession issue, Guru Harkrishan would stay with him in his bungalow as guest.

During his stay in Delhi the Guru spent most of his time in serving the humble, the sick and the destitutes as cholera and smallpox were spreading in an epidemic form. He distributed medicines, food and clothes to the needy. He also directed Diwan

Dargah Mal to spend all the daily offerings made by the people to the Guru for the poor. The Guru won more admirers. Soon stories about his healing powers spread throughout the city.

A small tank was constructed by Raja Jai Singh over a well. Nowadays, the faithful take home this water as *amrit* to cure their ailments. The Delhi Sikh Gurdwara Management Committee runs a hospital in the basement of the Gurdwara building. Besides, the Khalsa Girls School is located in the adjoining building. A tank 225 x 235 ft with 18 ft wide Parikarma and 12 ft wide verandah along its three sides has been constructed entirely with people's contribution and voluntary labour.

The Art Gallery located in the basement of the Gurdwara is also very popular with visitors. They evince keen interest in the paintings depicting historical events connected with Sikh history. It is named after the Sikh General Sardar Bhagel Singh who supervised the construction of nine Sikh shrines in Delhi in 1783 during the time of Shah Alam II.

DAM DAMA SAHIB

Some notes, it is true, are to be found in historical documents pertaining to the visit of Guru Gobind Singh to Delhi at the request of Prince who had then already declared himself as Emperor of India. Though all such references are too brief to convey any adequate idea of the relations subsisting between the Guru and the Mughal Prince, there is no lack of material for reconstructing the background history pertaining to the important events which took place in the neighbourhood of Humayun Tomb in those days of stress and strain.

Here on the bank of Yamuna near the Humayun Tomb, the two had a historic meeting and planned the strategy for the battle of succession. Later at that place a shrine which is now known as Gurdwara Dam Dama Sahib was built.

As to why this place was selected in preference to Red Fort for the crucial meeting, no clue is available in official records. But keeping in view the importance and the high status of the personalities involved in the top level secret discussion, a secluded place was selected amidst a thick jungle on the river bank. Accordingly, the Prince came all the way to Humayun Tomb from Red Fort and encamped there, whereas the Guru moved from Gurdwara Moti Bagh and encamped at a vacant place adjacent to the Tomb, at its back.

On arrival at the site, Guru Gobind Singh was presented a guard of honour by a contingent of Mughal army. He was received with great respect and felicitations by the Prince Muazzam who presented many gifts to the Guru. Credit must be given to the Guru who forgetting all the persecutions to which his ancestors and he himself had been subjected to, by the previous Mughal Emperors and by Aurangzeb in particular,

agreed to help Prince Muazzam in the war of succession as his cause was just. So good hearted was the Great Guru that he gladly visited Delhi to help the rightful heir-apparent Prince Muazzam. For an astute politician the chaos and confusion after Aurangzeb's death would have been a rare opportunity. But Guru Gobind Singh refused to exploit the situation and harass the prince for the sins of his father and forefathers.

While Muazzam and the Guru were planning for the capture of Agra, Prince Azam reached Gwalior on June 2. The two armies met at Jajau on June 8. According to a Punjab historical document Guruji first sent his regiment commander Kuldip Singh with an army unit and when the battle was raging fiercely, he himself entered the fray and the fighting became stormy and reached a decisive phase. Bider Bakhat the brave son of Azam was killed. Prince Azam himself also got a fatal blow and died in the battlefield. Muazzam won a great victory that made him the undisputed Emperor of India. He personally thanked Guru Gobind Singh in many ways and also offered a *khilat* (robe of honour) to Kuldip Singh who covered himself with great distinction in battle of Jajau. According to historian Dr. Trilochan Singh, the Emperor sent jewels worth Rs. 5 lakhs to Mata Sundri as a present. The King was indeed impressed by the heroic deeds and the dexterity of the Sikh warriors. Thus the agreement effected between the Mughal Emperor and Guruji proved fruitful and the throne of Delhi was won over by the rightful claimant.

Gurdwara Dam dama Sahib (place of rest) was first built by Sardar Bhagel Singh in 1783, when a huge Sikh army under his command conquered Delhi. At first it was a small Gurdwara. Later Maharaja Ranjit Singh deputed his officials to renovate it. Consequently a *deorhi* was constructed. Beside, some other buildings for priests and pilgrims were also added. In 1984 a new building was constructed. Every year thousands of devotees assemble here to celebrate the festival called *Hola Mohalla*.

BANDA BAHADUR GURDWARA

"In every faith and every land, whenever men become corrupt, despotic and tyrannous, God sends a scourge like me to punish them and teach them a lesson". Thus spoke Banda Singh Bahadur, a great Sikh hero in reply to a question put to him by Mohammad Amin Khan, the author of Siyarul-Mutakherin when he went near him to ask as to why he was waging war against Mughals. Banda Bahadur was tortured to death by the order of Mughal King Farrukhsiyar on June 19, 1716 in Mehrauli near Qutab Minar. Earlier he was taken through the streets of Delhi to the shrine of the Sufi Saint Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki in Mehrauli. He was paraded around the tomb of Emperor Bahadur Shah. He was offered the usual choice of death or conversion to Islam but like all his companions he chose death. He was ordered to kill his own four-year-old son Ajai Singh but he refused. Thereafter they butchered the innocent child. His heart was taken out and thrust into Banda's mouth.

Banda's eyes were gouged out with a knife. His left foot was cut off. His flesh was torn off, his body pierced with red-hot pincers and afterwards was hacked to pieces limb by limb.

Exactly three years later nemesis overtook Emperor Farrukhsiyar who had brutally murdered Banda and his companions. He was deposed, imprisoned, blinded and ultimately killed in a very ignominous manner on April 28, 1719.

Banda Bahadur's courage was unparallel. He possessed most fearless and undaunted spirit. Mr. M. Gregor wrote that Banda Bahadur was a man of undaunted valour and bravery. The coolness with which he met his death earned praise for Banda even from historians like Khafi Khan.

Banda Bahadur took over the leadership of the Sikhs after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. On embracing Sikhism he became a staunch *amritdhari* follower of the tenth Guru, and followed the teachings of the Gurus in theory and practice. He lived a pure and simple life.

During his time followers of Sikh faith increased. He also baptised a number of Muslims and brought them into the new faith. Nawab Amin-ud-Daula writes in the third Ruqat-I-Amin-Ud-Daula as follows – "Many Hindus and Musalmans adopted their faith and rituals. And their chief (Banda Bahadur) captivated the hearts of Musalmans who came in contact with him. He addressed them with the title of Singh. Accordingly, Dinder Khan, a powerful ruler of neighbourhood was named Dinder Singh and Mir Nasir Singh. In the same way a large number of Musalmans abandoned Islam and adopted the path of Sikhism."

A newswriter reported to Mughal Emperor about the activites of Banda Bahadur in the following words-

"The wretched has his camp in the town of Kalanaur up to 9th instant. During the period he promised and proclaimed, 'I do not oppress Muslims'. He fixed a daily allowance and wages and looks after them. He has permitted them to read *Khutba* and perform *Namaz*. As many as 5,000 Musalmans have gathered around him. Having entered his friendship, they are free to shout their call and say prayer in the army of the wretched."

The newsletter of Mughal official speaks of the Banda's liberal mindedness and that too, in spite of the fact that the Mughal Emperor Bahadur Shah, who had ascended the Delhi throne with the help of the Sikhs, had on December 10, 1710 issued an imperial ordinance to the effect that "every Sikh wherever found should be put to death without any hesitation and without any further thought".

Banda Bahadur established the first independent Sovereign State with its own coins and seal. Although it was short-lived but it put the Sikhs on the path to establish their own rule subsequently. Sri Gokal Chand Narang writes in his book entitled

"Transformation of Sikhism" that personal magnetism of Banda Bahadur was too great and his undaunted courage and extraordinary valour knit his followers closely to him. The fact that not a single Sikh out of thousands captured and executed by the Mughal Government renounced his faith to save his life, was no less due to the exemplary piety and lofty character of Banda Bahadur.

The Nobel Laureate and great poet Rabindra Nath Tagore has vividly portrayed the heroism of Banda's martyrdom in his poem 'Banda Bir' which is memorized by almost every Bengali school boy. The following lines of this poem are worth noting-

"In the arms of Banda the Brave, the *Qazi* flung his little babe, tender and innocent was the babe. He ordered Banda to kill his own child. Silently Banda looked at the child. Passionately he embraced the child. Lovingly he blessed the child, tenderly he kissed the babe, looking fixedly at his face, then in his ear he softly whispered,

'Say, 'Glory unto the Guru my little one,
Fear not death my son,
Inspired by these words,
The child's face was aglow with fearlessness,
With tender but shrill speech,
He shouted loudly;
Guru Ki Jai,
Kichchu nahi bhai,
Hail to thee, Guru hail to thee,
From fear of death I am free,
With his eyes beaming with mighty courage,
He looked at his father's face,
On his left side struck deep the knife,
"Glory unto the Guru" shouted the child,
As he breathed his last breath,
On the earth he fell dead'

The 50-foot high pillar made of stone over-looking the Dargah of Khwaja Bakhtair Kaki in Mehrauli now houses a Gurdwara in the memory of the supreme sacrifice made by this great Sikh hero. The pillar still has a steel hook from which it is believed he was hanged and his skin pealed off.

There is another Gurdwara in an improvised room in the courtyard of an adjoining site. It lies amid ruins.

MATA SUNDRI GURDWARA

Gurdwara Mata Sundri is situated behind J.P. Narayan Hospital, adjoining the Ghalib Urdu Academy. The Delhi Gurdwara Committee constructed an imposing shrine

on the site of the Haveli, where Mata Sundri, wife of Guru Gobind Singh stayed after his departure to Deccan.

According to historical records, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur stayed for many years in Kucha Dilwali Singh near Ajmeri Gate. They were attended to by Bhai Nand Lal who worked as Mir Munshi to Prince Muazzam – Emperor Bahadur Shah. Besides, Bhai Kirpal Chand maternal uncle of the tenth Guru, and Bhai Sahib Singh, brother of Mata Sahib Kaur, also looked after them.

According to one tradition they both accompanied Guruji to the South but were sent back to Delhi just before his death. When Mata Sahib Kaur asked for a gift Guruji handed over to her his five weapons – one sword, one *khanda* (double edged sword), one *khanjar* (Poniard) and two *katars* (daggers). She was also made the eternal mother of the Khalsa. Every Sikh even today reveres her as true mother. Along with Mata Sundari, Mata Sahib Kaur was also authorised by him to use his seal on the *hukamnamas* issued for the guidance of the Sikh community.

Guru Gobind Singh considered Delhi as a safer place. Consequently he made proper arrangements for stay of his two wives in the Mughal capital. Probably improvement of relationship with Emperor Bahadur Shah whom he helped in the battle of succession prompted him to keep them in Delhi. As a gesture of goodwill Empeor Bahadur Shah arranged a grand reception in honour of the great Guru near Humayun Tomb, where Gurdwara Damdama Sahib was constructed to commemorate the event.

But Guru Gobind Singh was certainly not happy with Emperor Aurangzeb under whose orders Nawab Wazir Khan, Governor of Sirhind, tried his utmost to trap him in Punjab. His feelings are truly evident in letter which the Guru addressed to him. This letter written in lucid Persian poetry is known as *Zafarnama*, meaning letter of victory. Perhaps it was written in reply to some letters of Emperor Aurangzeb showing his genuine repentance. He also urged the Guru to meet him in Deccan.

Guru Gobind Singh wrote, "He (Guru) who trusted your oath on the Koran, taken with God as witness, was graciously protected by the same God. Not a hair of my body was touched. No injury whatsoever came to my body. God protected me even when I left the hillock (fort Anandpur) in the thick of night fighting my way out. You are neither sincere in your faith nor even practice the virtues of your religion."

In spite of such bitter feelings against Emperor Aurangzeb, the Guru helped his son Prince Muazzam, in the battle of succession as he considered him the rightful heir-apparent. The Guru had no ill will against Emperor Bahadur Shah despite the fact that his ancestors had been directly responsible for the persecution and execution of the Guru's ancestors.

Besides, it is reported in official records that the grateful Emperor had promised to punish guilty officials of Punjab who committed heinous crimes and were responsible for creating trouble for the Guru. He also marked the place where his father the ninth



Gurdwara Sis Ganj Sahib, Delhi



Gurdwara Bangla Sahib, Delhi



Gurdwara Bala Sahib, Delhi



Gurdwara Rakab Ganj Sahib, Delhi



Gurdwara Moti Bagh, Delhi



Gurdwara Damdama Sahib, Delhi



Gurdwara Majnu Ka Tilla, Delhi



Gurdwara Mata Sundri, Delhi



Gurdwara Hemkunt Sahib, Uttaranchal



Gurdwara Hazoor Sahib, Maharashtra



Gurdwara Patna Sahib, Bihar

Sikh Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur was executed on the orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. He also visited Raisina village where the headless body of Guru Tegh Bahadur was cremated by a devoted Sikh, Bhai Lakhi Shah Banjara.

After the death of Guru Gobind Singh in Nanded (Maharashtra) the Khalsa Panth held Mata Sundri in great esteem and followed her instructions. She sent *hukamnama* to Sikhs of Punjab during her stay in Delhi. She deputed Bhai Mani Singh to Amritsar as head priest of the Golden Temple.

It was Mata Sundri who looked after Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia during his childhood. Later, she sent him to Punjab to serve under Nawab Kapur Singh, the then leader of the Dal Khalsa. By the blessings of Mata Sundri, Sardar Jassa Singh Ahluwalia achieved great distinctions as a warrior and made victories against the Afghans and Mughal armies. He conquered Lahore and minted his own coins.

Mata Sundri expired in 1747 A.D. while Mata Sahib Kaur died a year or two later. The *samadhi*s of both of them were constructed on the river bank where Gurdwara Bala Sahib stands today. After the death of Mata Sahib Kaur the Guru's weapons were preserved by Bhai Jiwan Singh and his descendants in their house in 'Chitli Kabar Mohalla' of Matia Bazar. Some of these weapons are now kept in Gurdwara Mata Sundri.

The martyrdom day of Guru Gobind Singh's sons is observed here every year by Sikhs of Delhi with great devotion and dedication.

This holy shrine is serving the citizens of Delhi without distinction of caste and creed, as a fountain of learning and dissemination of moral and spiritual teachings.

MOTI BAGH GURDWARA

Gurdwara Moti Bagh is associated with the tenth Guru Sri Gobind Singh. He camped here during his first visit to Delhi. He had come to Delhi in response to the request made by Prince Muazzam who sought his help in the battle of succession for the throne of Delhi. This happened in 1707, when the struggle for succession started due to sudden death of Emperor Aurangzeb in Deccan, Bhai Nand Lal great scholar and poet of Persian, and a devotee of Guruji, requested him to help Prince Muazzam, the eldest son of Aurangzeb.

Guru Gobind Singh already had a good impression about the prince who earned the displeasure of his father by refusing to attack the former at Anandpur Sahib. The prince had been deputed by the Mughal Emperor to surpress the activites of the Guru in Punjab. He had received alarming reports in Deccan from Chiefs of Shivalik Hills against the Guru. But the prince after making impartial inquiry into the false reports sent by the hill chiefs wrote to the Emperor that Guru Gobind Singh was a *Darvesh*

(Holyman) and the real trouble makers were the Hill chiefs. Opposition to father's will had cost the prince imprisonment.

Aurangzeb did not believe in what his son wrote and sent four of his best generals as messengers to find out the truth. These generals also reported that the Guru had done nothing against anyone and he led a saintly life in his city state. They infact also punished some trouble-makers who had been creating problems for the Guru.

In 1704, Anandpur Sahib was again besieged by the combined troops of hill chiefs and the Mughal contingent when Aurangzeb envisaged to dislodge the Guru from his stronghold on the persuasion of hill rulers and the Mughal Governors. After putting up a tough fight the Guru was forced to vacate Anandpur Sahib.

In subsequent battles also the Guru had suffered heavy losses. But he still had no ill-will against the eldest son of the Mughal Emperor and agreed to help in the battle of succession. He was such a fine archer that when he shot two arrows from a colony of cobblers in Moti Bagh they hit the 'Divan' of the Prince Muazzam (King Bahadur Shah). The Guru shot first arrow to announce his arrival in Delhi and the second arrow carried a chit saying, "It is not magic but skill of archery".

The *deohri* from where Guru Gobind Singh shot the arrows has been preserved and Guru Granth Sahib has been installed there as a mark of respect to the superb archery of the Guru. Even now from the top of the *deohri* (gate) one can see the skyline of Delhi and the Red Fort.

The Sikhs of Delhi have constructed a new Gurdwara building, but the old building from where the tenth Guru shot two arrows to Red Fort is still intact. The Gurdwara Moti Bagh is situated on the Ring Road between Dhaula Kuan and Shanti Path.

Every year the anniversary of the first installation of the *Adi Granth* as Guru is celebrated with great enthusiasm by thousands of Hindus and Sikhs at the Moti Bagh Gurdwara. They remember with reverence Guru Gobind Singh. His last injunction to the Sikhs was "he who wishes to behold the Guru, let him search the holy Granth." He left for his heavenly abode on October 7, 1708. Thus at the age of 42 Guru Gobind Singh was immortalised. Throughout his life he struggled against religious intolerance and oppression of the downtrodden. His teachings are summerised in the following lines –

"The same God dwells in the temple and the mosque,
The Hindus worship and the Muslims pray
Human beings are all one though of diverse forms,
Gods, demons, yakshas and the minstrels divine,
The Muslims and Hindus are all one,
Imbibe the influence of environ, they inhabit,
Similar eyes, ears, body they have,

They are made of earth, air and water alike,
Allah and Abekh are the names of same One,
Whom adore the holy Puranas and Quran,
All are of the same form,
And one in their making."

MAJNU-KA-TILLA

Gurdwara Majnu-Ka-Tilla is situated on the right bank of river Yamuna, opposite Timarpur Colony beyond Khyber Pass. Every year on Baisakhi Day, the birthday of the *Khalsa* is celebrated by the Sikhs of Delhi with great enthusiasm. A *langar* (free kitchen) is arranged on the occasion when thousands of people join irrespective of caste, creed and status.

During the reign of Sultan Sikander Shah Lodhi, a Muslim hermit lived here. He used to carry people across the river in his boat free of charge. He yearned for glimpse of God. He was so much lost in his thoughts that people started calling him "Majnu", the Persian lover whose name became symbolic of intense love in mysticism in the Sufi literature. When Guru Nanak visited this place, he blessed the Muslim hermit, who attained enlightenment and became a devout disciple of the great Guru. His hermitage on the bank of the Yamuna on a hillock, came to be known as Majnu-ka-Tilla (the hillock of Majnu). Many people were attracted by the divine personality of Majnu. Infact, radiant spirit and dedicated love for the Guru, made this shrine as an outstanding missionary centre for centuries to follow. Many Sufi saints of Delhi went to meet Guruji when he was camping atop this hillock and held spiritual discussions with him. Most prominent among those who came to pay homage and were deeply influenced by Guru Nanak Dev was the Sajjada Nashin of the Mausoleum of Hazrat Nizamuddin Aulia.

This hillock was also blessed by the visit of the sixth Guru Sri Hargobind. He was a dynamic personality who instilled revoluntionary spirit into the Sikhs to make them saviours of *dharma* and righteousness. He emboldened his followers morally, mentally and physically to defeat evil designs of the Mughal rulers to annihilate rich cultural heritage of the country. It was he as a religious head, who in the history of the world with two swords of *Piri* and *Miri*, spiritual and temporal, a combination of *Bhakti* and *Shakti*, created warrior saints to fight against tyranny and oppression. It is worth mentioning here that the ideology given by Guru Hargobind, shattered the designs of the rulers and changed the course of our history from slavery to self respect and dignity. It was again in pursuance of his policy of militarising the Sikhs, Guru Hargobind laid the foundation of the 'Akal Takht' just opposite Harmandir Sahib. It is from Aḳal Takht that all the *hukamnamas* i.e. religious decrees are issued to Sikhs. These decrees are binding on all members of Sikh community. It served as a unifying force and a rallying centre for the Sikhs during the turbulent times.

When Guru Hargobind was invited by Emperor Jahangir, he came and stayed at Gurdwara Majnu-Ka-Tilla. The suspicious Emperor got him deported to Gwalior and imprisoned him there. Later he was released. He insisted that all other prisoners also be set free. On his way back to Punjab, Guruji again stayed at Majnu-Ka-Tilla.

When Guru Har Rai the seventh Guru sent his son Ram Rai to explain the tenets of Sikhism to Emperor Aurangzeb, he also stayed at Majnu-Ka-Tilla. Thus the Gurdwara here acquired historic importance. It is said that when Guru Nanak Dev blessed *Majnu* with supreme enlightenment and was pleased with his dedication, he said that his name "will be immortalized". So in sacred memory of this Muslim Saint the shrine was named as Gurdwara Majnu-Ka-Tilla. There is a well in the compound of this holy shrine. It is said that Ram Rai showed his miracles to Aurangzeb near this well. It is also said that General Baghel Singh who conquered Delhi in 1783 and held it under his way for a few months also encamped at Majnu-Ka-Tilla. According to records it was General Baghel Singh who raised a small structure at this sacred place to perpetuate the memory of the Sikh Gurus. The tiny, old marble Gurdwara which exists even today was constructed by Maharaja Ranjit Singh who also endowed it with a *jagir*. The income from this *jagir* was spent on the maintenance of this historical shrine. In 1950 a big Gurdwara building was constructed by the people of Delhi.

NANAK PIAO

Gurdwara Nanak Piao is associated with the first Guru Nanak Dev. The great Guru visited Delhi in June 1505 or thereabout. He camped on the outskirts of Delhi in National Highway a garden now situated on the outside old Subzimandi. Exact location of this garden is on Rana Pratap Road beyond Gurmandi adjoining the State Bank colony.

Here, now stands a grand building of the Gurdwara to commemorate the visit of the holy Guru who graced this place about 500 years ago during the reign of Sultan Sikander Shah Lodhi. People of Delhi used to flock in large numbers to pay homage to the great prophet who delivered sermons in music and poetry. They not only began to worship Guru Nanak and brought precious offerings for him but also bestowed countless gifts to his bard Mardana. The Guru distributed all the offerings he received, among the poor and needy. Here the Guru served water to the thirsty and food to hungry. The well from which he served water is still well maintained and fully protected. According to Sikh traditions, any and every place visited by the Guru becomes a hallow. Consequently Gurdwara Nanak Piao attained a status of holy shrine. Guru, was an apostle of peace, brotherhood, non-violence and amity. His sermons created very healthy impact on the people who bowed before him for his spiritual attainments. In fact, the garden became a place of pilgrimage for the people from where they got the message of deliverance. A story goes that during his stay in Delhi' Guru Nanak by his grace revived a dead elephant. Emperor Sikander Shah

Lodhi came to know that a holy man had won the admiration of all the Hindu and Muslim devouts of Delhi and had brought a dead elephant to life. It is said that when one of the royal elephants died he sent for the Guru and requested him to revive his elephant too. But the Guru refused to oblige him. Consequently the Guru was immediately imprisoned. In the prison his deep compassion for the suffering of prisoners had a great moral and spiritual influence on the prison officals. They informed the Emperor that Guru Nanak was not an idolator and that as a saint he was greatly respected both by Hindus and Muslims.

A strange thing happened during the imprisonment of Guru Nanak. A great earthquake shook the capital on July 3, 1505. According to a chronicler "the mountains were overturned and lofty edifices were dashed to the ground. The living thought the day of judgement had come and for dead, the day of resurrection". Many thought that the new Faqir Nanak who had been imprisoned by the Emperor had cursed the King and the empire. This or some other equally strong influence like the intervention of the Chisti Sufi saint changed the mind of Emperor and he ordered the release of the Guru Nanak and at his request many other prisoners.

RAKABGANJ

On the fateful day a sword of executioner Jalaudin of Samana, struck with a thud. The head of Guru Tegh Bahadur was cut off and people cried in utter helplessness. This tragedy took place on November 11, 1675, in Chandni Chowk, Delhi under orders of Emperor Aurangzeb. The sky was overcast with dark clouds and a terrible duststorm followed. In the midst of invisibility caused by the duststorm, a disciple of the Guru took away the head of the great martyr and ran away to a place of safety. Covering a 500 km journey with courage and fortitude, he managed to reach Anandpur Sahib in Punjab along with the holy head of his spiritual preceptor and placed it before Guru Gobind Singh. This devoted Sikh was none else but Bhai Jaita a Rengreta Sikh. The tenth Guru embraced him and remarked '*Rengreta Guru Ka beta*'. So the head of the Guru was cremated at Anandpur Sahib with proper ceremony.

Another act of valour and dedication was performed by Bhai Lakhi Shah Banjara and his son, Bhai Naghaiya. They reached Chandni Chowk after the execution of the Guru with a convoy of ox-driven carts carrying bales of cotton and foodstuffs. They lifted the headless body of the Guru with speed and alacrity and placed it in the cart under the cotton bales. They pushed away briskly towards Raisina village, the place of their habitat. No alarm was raised by the guards as the dust storm was raging and nothing was visible. They were hiding in a safer place to save themselves from the fury of natural elements and defiant men. To avoid any suspicion by the authorities Bhai Lakhi Banjara placed the body on a bed and set fire to the whole house. This place came to be known as Rakab Ganj because most of the residents of Raisina village used

to manufacture straps for the cavalry of Mughal Army. How they managed to bring the headless body of the Guru safely to their house was a miracle. Bhai Lakhi Banjara and his sons were successful in their mission of bringing the headless body of the Guru to their village, notwithstanding the search which was instituted immediately after by the Imperial police when they found the body of the Guru missing. But the devotees of the Guru had already cremated the holy body by burning their own house. After the cremation of the body the ashes were put in a *gagar* (urn) and buried on the spot. For general public it was a miracle as Guru's dead body could not be found out by the police despite serious efforts. Bhai Lakhi Shah Banjara and his sons put themselves in evident danger and performed an exemplary act of religious devotion. This act earned them gratitude of the Sikhs for all times to come.

According to historical records, Sardar Bhagel Singh constructed a Gurdwara in village Raisina in 1783 to perpetuate the memory of the ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur. He had conquered Delhi by leading an army of 30,000 Sikh warriors alongwith four other commanders.

Earlier, Muslims of Delhi had built a mosque on the spot where the Guru's headless body was cremated. The Sikhs claimed this spot as their own sacred place. Muslims contested this claim and strongly objected to the dismantling of the mosque. Rival parties stood with swords drawn and anything could have happened. But the Sikhs offered the Muslims to reconstruct the mosque on their expense in case the urn containing the ashes of the respected Guru was not found buried beneath. Thus tempers cooled down and excavation work commenced in the presence of the Mughal officials.

The assertion of the Sikhs proved to be correct and they were allowed to construct Gurdwara Rakab Ganj by Emperor Shah Alam II. He also granted two *Sanads* to Sikhs. One sanad granted permission to S. Bhagel Singh to take possession of the land for construction of a Gurdwara and a garden. By second *Sanad* the Emperor also gifted 101 bighas and 5 *biswas pukhta* equal to about 63 acres with 3 wells and land revenue free. Sikh forces agreed to withdraw from Delhi territory peacefully after the construction of their religious shrines in the Mughal capital in lieu of these concessions.

Thus Sikhs were able to build a magnificent Gurdwara to keep up the memory of the great Guru who made supreme sacrifice for the freedom of worship, belief and expression. He lived and died for the morally and spiritually civilised future of mankind.

Gurdwara Rakab Ganj stands today on the Pant Road in New Delhi, facing Parliament House and North Block of Central Secretariat. It has the most modern building in white marble surrounded by a beautiful garden.

Like most other Sikh shrines this Gurdwara too has entrances from four sides symbolising that they are open to all without any distinction of caste and creed. This

historical Gurdwara was built at a cost of 25 lakh rupees and took 12 years to complete.

History is full of tales of martyrs who were first arrested and then executed by the powers, who dared to oppose or resist for a righteous cause. Guru Tegh Bahadur was an unique martyr in the sense that he himself went to Delhi, sacrificed his life in defence of the oppressed, who were helpless before the might of the Mughal empire.

SIS GANJ

The twin city of Delhi and New Delhi is not only the capital of India but also has become the central place and the pivot of all political activities. It has gained importance since Independence as the seat of the biggest democracy of the world.

There are nine historic Gurdwaras, associated with important events, which had a great bearing on the history of Punjab and changed its course and direction. Consequently it became a renowned place of pilgrimage, being the sacred city, as the five Gurus visited the capital. Various Gurdwaras have been constructed to commemorate their visits. Thousands of pilgrims throng these holy shrines everyday to listen to *kirtan* (devotional music) from Granth Sahib. Of the ten Sikh Gurus, at least five, namely Nanak Dev, Hargobind, Harkrishan, Tegh Bahadur and Gobind Singh visited Delhi. Guru Tegh Bahadur the ninth Guru was beheaded in Chandni Chowk by the order of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. Earlier the eighth Guru Harkrishan died of smallpox during his visit to Delhi.

Two wives of Guru, Gobind Singh, Mata Sundri and Mata Sahib Kaur, lived in Delhi for 35 years after his death and they issued directions to the Sikh forces from Gurdwara Mata Sundri, Delhi. This Gurdwara near the Turkman Gate was built to perpetuate their memory.

After the death of the last Guru, Gobind Singh at Nanded (Hazur Sahib) in Maharashtra, his disciple Baba Banda Bahadur camped in the neighbourhood of Delhi and chalked out his programme to attack the Mughal forces in Punjab. The village Budhkhalsa where he stayed, is situated along the National Highway No. 1 (Shershah Suri Marg). This great Sikh hero shook the Mughal empire in Punjab, gave crushing blows to the Imperial Army and captured the tract of land lying between Yamuna and Sutluj. After his defeat in 1716, Banda Bahadur was brought to Delhi as a prisoner along with 1,000 followers, who were beheaded in Gandhi ground opposite Old Delhi Railway Station at a site known as, *Qatal Gahe Sikhan*. Harding Library now renamed as Hardyal Library stands on this site today. Over 100 Sikhs were killed daily for about 100 days. Banda Bahadur too was tortured to death near Qutab Minar situated in Mehrauli, a suburb of Delhi. Two stone pillars of a gateway overlooking the Dargah of Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki still stand as a witness to the martyrdom of Baba Banda Bahadur, the army commander of Guru Gobind Singh. The 50 feet high pillar

made of stone with a steep stains, now houses a Gurdwara in memory of the supreme sacrifice made by the valiant Sikh hero.

Sardar Bhagel Singh, commander of the Kironsinghia Misal, who held Delhi under his sway for some months in 1783, during the time of Shah Alam II, took special pains to locate the sites of historical shrines. He made great contribution to the Sikh religion by constructing buildings over all the historic sites in Delhi.

In March 1783, a large Sikh Army commanded by Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Bhagel Singh Kironsinghia, Rai Singh Bhangi and Gurdit Singh, Raja of Ladwa, advanced to the Imperial capital and attacked the Red Fort. Tis Hazari was so named by Bhagel Singh because he had used the site as a stable for 30,000 horses of his cavalry.

The Mughal king opened negotiations. The Sikhs received three lakh rupees in cash as *Nazrana* and the permission to build their shrines on the historic sites where mosques had been built. Bhagel Singh remained in Delhi as the head of 4,000 strong Sikh troops to build the Gurdwaras.

The ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur, was beheaded in the heart of the city in 1675 A.D. by the order of Mughal Emperor, Aurangzeb for espousing the cause of freedom of worship of the Hindus, against whom the Emperor had unleashed a war of extermination. Guru Tegh Bahadur opposed it and paid heavy price by sacrificing his life. At the place of his martyrdom, stands Gurdwara Sis Ganj, as a symbol of unique sacrifice made by the sage Prophet.

Adjoining the Gurdwara Sis Ganj is the *Kotwali* (police station), where the faithful disciples of the Great Guru Bhai Mati Das, Bhai Dyala and Bhai Sati Das were tortured to death.

It is important to mention that when the Sikhs came into power in Punjab after pushing out the Afghans, they fought pitched battles with the Mughal forces on the sandy beds of Yamuna river, where now stands Indraprastha Indoor Stadium. A small Gurdwara indicates the spot near the Indraprastha power station, where two forces clashed for supremacy.

THE SHRINES IN UTTARANCHAL

HARDWAR

Gurdwara Nanakwara

HEMKUNT

Hemkunt Sahib

NAINITAL

Nanak Matta

HARDWAR

GURDWARA NANAKWARA

During his longest tour called first *Udasi* Guru Nanak visited Hardwar, a pilgrimage centre of the Hindus. It was believed that a dip in the holy Ganges would absolve the bather of all his sins. The Guru himself entered the river at *Kushwan Ghat* and started splashing water with his left hand towards the West, while other pilgrims were splashing water towards East. When questioned by others, the Guru informed them that he was directing water to his thirsty fields in Punjab. The priests laughed and asked him how could water reach his crops situated 460 km away. Guru Nanak politely told them if water sent by him could not reach his fields in Punjab, how could it reach their ancestors in the heaven. The Guru's reply startled the people. At first they were a bit perplexed but later began to realize the truth in the Guru's statement.

A Gurdwara constructed on the site is known as Gurdwara Nanakwara. Besides, there is another Gurdwara at Hardwar in the name of the third Guru Sri Amar Das who visited Hardwar twenty two times during his life time.

HEMKUNT

GURDWARA HEMKUNT SAHIB

Gurdwara Hemkunt in the Himalayas is also regarded as one of the holiest places of the Sikhs. It was there that Sri Guru Gobind Singh the tenth and last Guru of the Sikhs is reported to have meditated in his previous life. In 'Bachitar Natak' the great Guru relates his story in the following words-

"I shall now relate my own story, how God sent me into this world. I was busy performing penance on the hills of 'Hemkunt' where seven peaks are prominent. The place is called 'Sapt Shring' where King Pandu had performed *Yoga*, there I practiced austerity and worshipped the God of death".

"My father and mother meditated on the incomprehensible. They both practiced the highest *Yoga* through diverse spiritual efforts. Their devout service in the love of God pleased the Almighty who commanded me to take human form in this world. I did not like to come. God sent me into the world with a mandate saying, 'I cherish thee as my son and send thee to establish the path of truth. Go into the world and establish virtue and keep the people, away from evil.' When my father came to Triveni (Allahabad) he daily devoted himself to meditation and charity. There at Allahabad the dazzling light manifested itself into human form."

This is the story about 'Hemkunt' the holy place hallowed by Guru Gobind Singh in his previous life. It was discovered in the early thirties by Pandit Tara Singh

Narotam. A small hut was constructed there in 1936 by the side of the lake with bluish green water. The place is of enchanting beauty surrounded by tall trees and flowers bursting from every bush. Next year in 1937 Guru Granth Sahib was installed by the devotee Sikhs in this hut, where now stands a beautiful Gurdwara situated at a height of 4,636 meters in the Garhwal region of Uttaranchal.

The Gurdwara is visited by thousands of pilgrims every year in fair weather. One has to go to Rishikesh from where 300 kms journey to Hemkunt starts. The pilgrims move along Dev Prayag, Srinagar (Garhwal), Rudra Prayag, Chamoli, Joshimath, Gobind Ghat and Ghagariya.

Before reaching Hemkunt, pilgrims pass through a flower-decked valley called Valley of Flowers. Forests of silver birch, fir, pine and sycamore wear mantles of snow in winter.

The snowy bluish waters of the lake of Hemkunt with backdrop of Himalayan peaks make a visit to this holy place a memorable one.

NAINITAL

NANAK MATTA

The first Guru Sri Nanak Dev, on his way to Kailash Parbat, passed through Pilibhit district of Uttaranchal. Here in the Tehri region, used to be a centre of *Yogis* called *Gurakh-Matta*. Guruji came to this place in 1515 and had prolonged discussion with them. He stayed with *Yogis* for a few days and gave them some more lessons on true religion. The place was later called Nanak Matta in the sacred memory of his visit to this place. During the time of the sixth Guru Sri Hargobind, a Sikh called Almast used to serve this shrine under the *Pipal* tree, sanctified by the Guru's visit. He was pestered by *Gorakh Panthis* to vacate the place as they wanted to re-establish their centre there. They went to the extent of burning the holy Pipal tree in a bid to oust Almast. Meanwhile Guru Hargobind who was on a tour to Garh Mukteshwar, Moradabad, Bareily and Pilibhit reached Nanak Matta. The *Gorakh Panthis* were so impressed by the presence of the Guru that they left the place for good. Thenceforth, Gurdwara Nanakmatta has been sanctified by the holy feet of two Gurus, Sri Guru Nanak Dev and Guru Hargobind.

About 140 km from this shrine is another famous spot called Gurdwara Retha Sahib. When Guru Nanak along with companion Mardana visited this place, he took rest under a Soapnut (Retha) tree. Mardana felt hungry. Guruji asked him to pluck and eat the fruit from the soapnut tree. Soapnuts are bitter in taste but there on that particular branch they are sweet even today. Pilgrims bring a soapnut or two as *parsad*.

THE SHRINES IN UTTAR PRADESH

AGRA

Gurdwara Mai Than

ALLAHABAD

Gurdwara Pukka Sangat

VARANASI

Guru Ka Bagh

AGRA

GURDWARA MAI THAN

The ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur on his way to Patna visited Agra. Earlier this city had also been graced by the visit of Guru Nanak Dev. According to available records the fourth Guru Ram Das along with Bhai Gurdas had also stayed in Agra when they were assigned important mission by Guru Amar Das to represent Sikhism in Akbar's Court. A devout disciple invited Guru Tegh Bahadur to her house where he stayed for a day or two. Her name was Mai Jassi. The site of house has become a shrine and is known as Gurdwara Maithan.

Agra attained fame during Mughal period as it became the capital city. And it is for the Mughal glory, epitomised by the world famous Taj Mahal that Agra has become such a major tourist attraction. The massive grandeur of its fort also impresses the visitors.

ALLAHABAD

GURDWARA PUKKA SANGAT

From Agra, Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Allahabad (Prayag). Here in addition to daily prayer and meditation, the great Guru devoted himself to boundless charity, and humanitarian acts of piety. A joyful event took place at Allahabad which thrilled the devotees of the Guru. Here the divine mother Mata Gujri conceived the son of God.

This event has been described by Guru Gobind Singh himself in his work "Apnikatha" (Autobiography) which forms the first book of his great historical epic "The Bachittar Natak".

According to the Guru, in his previous life he was doing austerities on Sapt-Shring near Hemkunt in the Himalayas where he performed such penance that his soul blended with the supreme spirit. Here God Almighty commanded him to take human form in the world. Thus he was born in *kaliyug* (dark age). Hence both Allahabad and Hemkunt have become holy places of pilgrimage for Sikhs. The place where Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed is known as Gurdwara Pukka Sangat.

VARANASI

GURU-KA-BAGH

Gurdwara Guru-Ka-Bagh in Varanasi, is dedicated to Guru Nanak who had discussion here with Pandit Chattar Das. An impressive Gurdwara has been built here in memory of the founder of the Sikh faith.

The ninth Guru Sri Tegh Bahadur also visited the holy city of Varanasi. There was already a large religious centre under masand Jawehrimal, commemorating the memory of Guru Nanak's visit to this place of pilgrimage. With the coming of Guru Tegh Bahadur into the city of Varanasi the whole atmosphere was divinely inspired. The devotees from all parts of the country flocked to have a glimpse of the Guru who camped here for a fortnight. He entered the city on his white horse named 'Sri Dhar' a gift of his Muslim friend Saiffuddin of Bahadurgarh. He was adorned in a dark brown dress in Rajput style. This dress is still preserved there in the Gurdwara.

The holy city is picturesquely situated on the left bank of the Ganges. One of the ancient seats of learning in India, it is said to be a compound of two streams, the Varuna and the Assi which still flow in the North and South of the city. It is connected by rail and road to all important towns of India. Nearest Airport is Babatpur, 22 kms away from Varanasi.

THE SHRINES
IN
MADHYA PRADESH

GWALIOR

Gurdwara Bandichhor

GWALIOR

GURDWARA BANDI CHHOR

Sri Hargobind, the sixth Guru was detained in the Fort of Gwalior by the order of Emperor Jahangir. The cause of detention, it is said, was that the fanatical Muslim officers, particularly those under the influence of Naqshbandi cult, were alarmed by the Guru's new policy of militarisation. They poisoned the mind of Jahangir, who otherwise about that time had soft corner for Guru. He was summoned to Delhi and was asked to pay a fine of Rs. two lakhs which had been imposed on his father and which the latter had refused to pay. As Guru Hargobind showed little inclination to pay the fine, he was sent for detention to Gwalior Fort where the Mughal Emperor used to keep his political prisoners. Obviously the cause of detention was political. Non-payment of fine was merely an excuse.

According to Sikh chronicles, the detention was for a period of 40 days or two months. The latter period seems more likely. The persuasive efforts of Bhai Jetha at Jahangir's court and may be the exercise of influence with the Emperor by the Muslim saint Hazrat Mian Mir, a friend of Guru Arjun, brought an early end to his detention. The release came in the nature of general amnesty which also brought the end of the imprisonment of 52 *Rajas* who had been kept there. The Guru came to be known as 'Bandi Chhor' – The Grand emancipator.

A magnificent Gurdwara has been built in the Gwalior Fort in memory of the sixth Guru. It is called Gurdwara Bandichhor. Pilgrims from all over the country visit this Gurdwara to pay homage to Guru Hargobind.

THE SHRINES IN MAHARASHTRA

NANDED

Hazur Sahib

NANDED

HAZUR SAHIB

"The Eternal Father willed and I raised the Panth. All my Sikhs are hereby ordered to accept the *Granth* as their Preceptor. Have faith in the holy Granth, as your master and consider it the visible manifestation of the Gurus. He who hath a pure heart will seek guidance from its holy words."

These are the words uttered by the tenth Guru Sri Gobind Singh, before his death on October 7, 1708 at Nanded in Maharashtra. At the site where the Guru breathed his last, was built a Gurdwara between 1832 and 1837, under instructions from Maharaja Ranjit Singh. It is called "Sachkhand Sri Hazur Abchal Nagar Sahib". It is a two-storey building. The architectural design resembles that of the Golden Temple. It's interior is artistically ornamented in the style of Harmandir Sahib, Amritsar. The walls of the inner room called *Angitha Sahib* have been covered with golden plates. On the first floor, recitations from Sri Guru Granth Sahib go on day and night. The dome is polished and on the pinnacle is the Kalash made of goldplated copper.

Some of the sacred relics of Guru Gobind Singh are also preserved here. These are, a golden dagger, a matchlock gun, an archer with 35 arrows, two bows, a steel shield studded with precious stones and five golden swords.

This historical shrine is situated on the bank of the Godavari river and is visited by thousand of devotees throughout the year from all over India and abroad. It is one of the five Takhts (thrones) of the Sikhs and is much venerated by them. Here took place in the first week of September, 1708, the conversion to Sikhism of a Bairagi Sadhu, Madho Dass, who under a new name of Banda Singh Bahadur gave a sharp turn to the history of the Sikhs. It was this great hero who in the next seven years (1709-1715) shook the Mughal empire in the North-West to its very foundation and paved the way for the liberation of the Punjab in 1764-65.

Guru Gobind Singh's mission was not to consolidate his power to achieve mundane glory, by pitting one community against another. His crusade was not directed against Islam either. He makes it clear in the following words. "Men quarrel over food and dress, rituals and caste, community and creed and have thus torn man from man. My mission is to restore mankind to a single brotherhood."

He fully realised that human beings are perishable, but noble ideas live. For this reason he made the Granth Sahib a respository of sublime ideals, spiritual and secular Guru as it contains hymns of Muslim, Hindu and Harijan saints in addition to the compositions of Sikh Gurus. In this way he entrusted the destiny of the *Khalsa* not to a charismatic personality but to the collective wisdom of the humanity.

The objective he attempted was great and laudable. The means which he adopted were such as a comprehensive mind alone could have suggested. None but a person

of saintly disposition, highly spiritual and with a complete resignation to the will of God could have behaved as he did.

One of the greatest achievements of Guru Gobind Singh was the founding of the Khalsa (the pure) the Sikh brotherhood, on Baisakhi day in 1699 at Anandpur Sahib.

The initiation into the Khalsa brotherhood was through a baptismal ceremony, popularly known as *Khande-Ki-Pahul*. Henceforth they would all be called by the new name 'Singh' meaning lion. The local affairs of the Sikhs were to be managed by a panchayat, a committee of five. The Sikhs believe where five of them meet, Guru is present in their midst.

The Guru enjoined upon the Sikhs some general duties which are defined in *Rahitnamas* and *Rahit maryada*. These may be called a code of conduct. The code defines a Sikh as one who believes in the Gurus, baptism prescribed by the tenth Guru and the Adi Granth. A Sikh should live according to the teachings of the Gurus and should have faith in one God. He should have no faith in castes and none should practise them. He should not believe in untouchablility and miracles and should reject all superstitions and accept the unity of God as the supreme reality.

The Khalsa should seek the blessings of the Supreme Lord, in all the deeds he performs. The daily prayer of Khalsa is meant to reinforce his will and put a healthy moral effect on his activities and conduct.

The code says that the Sikhs should not take intoxicants nor should they commit female infanticide and should refrain from social contact with those who commit such immoral acts. Adultery should not be practised. Extra marital relations are forbidden. Men are ordained to respect women and accord them equal status in society.

A Sikh should earn his livelihood through right and honest means. He should help the poor and needy and regard such help and assistance as an act of service to the Guru. Stealing, gambling and other such vices are prohibited.

The code specifically prohibits removal of hair, eating of meat prepared by the gradual and painful slaughter of the animal and use of tobacco. The code also lays down that in the case of violation of these imperatives, the defaulter himself appears before the sangat (congregation) to seek their award and be rebaptised.

A Sikh shall honour and revere Guru Nanak and his nine successors and follow their teachings as embodied in Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The salutation among the Sikhs shall be *Wahi Guru Ji Ka Khalsa, Sri Wahi Guru Ji Ki Fateh* (Lord's is the Khalsa Lord's is the victory).

Besides Gurdwara Sachkhand Sahib, other Gurdwaras at Nanded are Sangat Sahib, Shikar Ghat, Nagina Ghat and Hira Ghat. These too, were built in memory of visit of Sri Guru Gobind Singh to this place.

THE SHRINES IN ASSAM

DHANPUR

Barchha Sahib

DHUBRI

Damdama Sahib

DHANPUR

BARCHHA SAHIB

During his long wanderings, Guru Nanak halted for some time at Dhanpur in Assam. Here people worshipped the temple of Goddess Kamakshi Devi. In those days it was ruled by a Queen Nur Shah of Kamrup area (Assam). This temple was the seat of black magicians and the Queen herself was a magician of repute. She was advised by Guru Nanak to renounce magic and secure happiness by repeating God's name. She realised that Guru Nanak was a representative of God as her magic failed to affect him. It is said that the Queen Nur Shah and her subjects became followers of the Guru and got salvation. She begged Guruji to leave some of his belongings with her as token of a memento. The story goes that Guru Nanak left his barchha (lance) which he was carrying with him in the travel through jungles. He marked a place with his lance, where a pond was dug as desired by the Guru. The shrine built near this site is known as Gurdwara Barchha Sahib.

DHUBRI

DAMDAMA SAHIB

Sikh holy shrines having bearing on the history of Punjab, are spread all over India. Whichever place the great Gurus visited during their life time, became a place of worship for the devotees of the spiritual leaders and benefactors. Out of five *Takhts*, two are outside Punjab, namely Takht Sri Hazur Sahib at Nanded in Maharashtra and Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib at Patna in Bihar. Both these historical shrines are associated with the tenth Guru Sri Gobind Singh. These holy shrines have become places of pilgrimage and the followers visit these Gurdwaras from all over India and abroad to pay their homage to the great Guru.

Dhubri in Assam was sanctified by the visit of Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur. During his stay in Dhubri, the ninth Guru received the news that a son was born to him at Patna. This son was Gobind Rai who later became the most respected tenth Guru popularly known as Sri Guru Gobind Singh. He succeeded *Guru Gaddi* after the execution of his father in Chandni Chowk, Delhi in 1675.

Historic shrine Damdama Sahib at Dhubri in Assam was built in memory of the visit of Guru Nanak. Hence it has great importance for Sikh community.

When Raja Ram Singh, son of Mirza Raja Jai Singh was deputed by Emperor Aurangzeb to crush the revolt of King Chakradhwaj Singh of Kamrup (Assam), he called on Guru Tegh Bahadur at Dhaka and requested him to accompany him on the

expedition to Assam. His request was accepted by the Guru as the latter himself had planned to visit Assam to revive the religious centre built to commemorate the visit of Guru Nanak in the land of magic and beauty. Together Raja Ram Singh and Guruji, marched along the river Dhubri and Brahmaputra and reached Kamrup early in February, 1669 A.D. Guru Tegh Bahadur camped at Dhubri while Raja Ram Singh camped at Rangamati. The Imperial army was confident of its strength but was not as yet sure whether the holyman with them would be able to destroy the evil effects of magic and witchcraft. The Assamese were unnerved by the superior strength of the Imperial army but they were confident that the supernatural powers of their magicians backed by tactful resistance would keep the enemy away.

The magic women with their *tantric* paraphernalia began reciting *mantras* of destruction while camping on the other side of the river just opposite the camp of Guru Tegh Bahadur. But their magic failed to harm the great Guru. The magicians were too confident of their ability to destroy any human being. Across the river they hurled a 26 feet long stone, which came swinging across the sky like a missile and struck the ground near Guruji's camp so hard that nearly half of it went into the ground. It can still be seen in the same position.

When the stone-missile failed to harm the holy benefactor, the magicians flung a tree, which fell very close to Guru's camp without causing injury to any one. Afterwards, Guru Tegh Bahadur took a bow and arrow and aimed at the altar of magic. That ended all their magic and sorcery. The magicians realised that superior powers appeared to have completely deprived them of their strength and will power, so they appeared before the Guru and begged forgiveness for having offended him. They told him that they were only fighting against the foreigners who had come to enslave them. Guru Tegh Bahadur assured the magicians that he would try to bring about peace between Raja Ram Singh and the Ahom King, for which, change of heart is necessary on both sides. Consequently, he advised Raja Ram Singh to try to achieve his end through peaceful negotiations and not to fight unless he was provoked to do so. The rest of the story is a part of history as to how Guruji succeeded in patching up the differences between the Imperial Commander Raja Ram Singh and Ahom King of Assam. The grateful Ahom King invited Guruji to the Kamakhya shrine, where he was honoured with great respect.

The happy occasion of the peace settlement brought about by the blessings of Guru Tegh Bahadur was celebrated by a joint homage to the shrine of Guru Nanak by both Mughal and the Ahom armies. The Mound of Peace of Dhubri was erected with the red earth brought by the soldiers of both the armies in their shields. This permanent monument to Guru Tegh Bahadur's successful peace efforts stands at Dhubri to this day. Pilgrims from all over India visit Dhubri to pay homage at Gurdwara Damdama Sahib. They also visit the Mound of Peace constructed by Hindu and Muslim soldiers of the two armies.

THE SHRINES IN BIHAR

PATNA

Harmandir Sahib

PATNA

HARMANDIR SAHIB

Patna city has had the unique distinction of being honoured by the holy presence of the Buddha, Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur. Besides, it is also the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh.

He was born here on December 22, 1666. There stands, at the sacred place a magnificent holy shrine, called Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib. It is situated in one of the old quarters of Patna city, once known as Kucha Farrukh Khan, now known as Harmandir Gali. It is regarded as one of the holiest of five Takhts, the seat of the Sikh authority. Two of the five Takhts are located outside Punjab. These are Takht Sri Harmandir Sahib, Patna in Bihar and Takht Sri Hazoor Sahib at Nanded in Maharashtra. Three Takhts are in Punjab. These are Akal Takht Amritsar, Keshgarh Sahib Anandpur and Sri Damdama Sahib at Talwandi Sabo in Bhatinda district. Besides, there are over one hundred important holy Sikh shrines spread over the length and breadth of the country which are humming with the sacred messages of the Sikh Gurus and reminding the people of their teachings. These are visited by thousands of pilgrims throughout the year.

In fact, the new order, *Khalsa Panth* was set up by the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh with emphasis on unity and integration. He baptised *Panj Piaras* on Baisakhi day at Anandpur Sahib in 1699 and founded the Khalsa Panth. The Panj Piaras represented the different segments of society. Thus the tenth Guru created Khalsa Panth for the protection of the downtrodden and deprived sections of people.

The site where the present Harmandir stands, was originally called the haveli of Salis Rai Johri, who was a great devotee of Guru Nanak. He was so much influenced by the teachings of the Guru that he converted his palatial house into a *dharamsala*. When Guru Tegh Bahadur visited Patna, he stayed in the same place. A magnificent house was built above the *dharamsala* of Salis Rai. Mullah Ahmed Bukhari, the author of Mirat-ul-Ahwal Jahan Nama, who stayed at Patna for some time at the close of the 18th century, has made a reference to Harmandir. He writes, "Over the birthplace of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs have raised a public edifice, made it a place of power and strength, and call it 'Harmandir'. It is also called 'Sangat' and is held in great esteem and veneration. They have made it a place of pilgrimage, Maharaja Ranjit Singh started the work of reconstructing the Harmandir in 1839 following destruction by fire, but did not survive to see the new structure. Again in 1934, when the entire Bihar was rocked by an earthquake some portion of Harmandir fell down. Construction of the present building was taken up on November 19, 1954 and was completed in about three years.

Some relics of the tenth Guru are also preserved in this shrine. Among them is a *pangura* (cradle) with four stands covered with Golden plates. Guruji during his childhood used to sleep in this cradle. Moreover, four iron arrows, sacred sword of the Master and a pair of his sandals are also preserved. *Hukamnamas* of Guru Gobind Singh and Guru Tegh Bahadur contained in a book are also kept in this holy Gurdwara.

Let us recall Guru's message: *Manas ki Jaat Sabh Ei Eke Pehchanbu*. (The entire mankind should be recognised as one)

THE SHRINES
IN
ORISSA

PURI

Gurdwara Mangu Math

PURI

GURDWARA MANGU MATH

Guru Nanak during his travels came to Jagannath Puri in Orissa. It is a very important place of pilgrimage of Hindus, situated on the sea shore, touching the Bay of Bengal. Lord Krishna and Vishnu are worshipped here as Jagannath the Lord of the universe. Here a special kind of idol worship is performed with the usual formalities. It is known as *Arti*. It is said that in the evening when the priests performed *Arti*, Guru Nanak stood there as a silent spectator as if nothing was happening. He came out in the open and sang the following hymn;

"The entire sky is the silver plate. The Moon and the Sun are lamps. The luminous stars are studded in it like jewels. The wind wafts the scent of all flowers on earth. Thus worship performed, O Thou the destroyer of births!

And the unstruck melody of his word ringeth through the universe. Millions are Thy eyes and yet Thou has no eye. Millions are Thy feet and yet Thou has no feet, Millions are Thy noses and yet Thou has no nose, and through the Guru's instruction this light is illuminated, O people! That alone is worship that pleaseth my Lord. Like the honey is to bee, my mind cherishes the honey of His Lotus feet. O Lord! allay the thirst of Nanak, thy Sarang, O Lord of Bliss! So that he merges in His Name".

The place where Guru Nanak sang the above mentioned hymn, a Gurdwara called Mangu Math stands in his memory.

THE SHRINES IN WEST BENGAL

KOLKATA

Gurdwara Bari Sangat

KOLKATA

GURDWARA BARI SANGAT

On his return journey from Dhaka to Punjab, Guru Nanak went to Kolkata. He stayed at a place called Bari Sangat where a Gurdwara has been built in his memory. During his stay here he met the ruler, Raja Bahadur Singh.

The Raja was greatly impressed by the teachings of the great Guru. He raised a shrine in memory of the Guru. It is said that Guru Tegh Bahadur during his journey of Bengal and Assam also stayed here. Thus the shrine was doubly blessed by the visit of two Gurus.

THE SHRINES IN KARNATAKA

BIDAR

Nanak Jhira

BIDAR

NANAK JHIRA

Guru Nanak, traveled all over India and abroad to spread the message of the Almighty God. He communicated his creed of adoration and oneness of God in simple language. He visited many places and had discussions with saints, *fakirs*, Sufis and ascetics, representing various religious orders.

He had been to the East, as far as Assam, down south to Sri Lanka and up in North to Tibet. He also visited very citadel of Islam, Mecca and studied in depth the Islamic faith and its way of life. Guru Nanak accompanied by Mardana traveled by stages. His main object was to awaken the dormant souls, to show true path to the misguided and to spread the name of God among people.

The gist of his teachings is summed up in the Preamble of *Japji Sahib* as follows-

"There is but one God,
His name is truth,
He is the creator,
Devoid of fear and enmity,
Timeless,
Nor does he die to be born again,
He was true in the beginning,
The true one was when time began to run its course,
He was the truth,
He is now,
And truth shall ever prevail"

Such was Guru Nanak who gave the message of love to all human beings. Men were drawn towards him by his charismatic personality, the mystic atmosphere he generated, the magic of his words and the music of his hymns. He transformed the thinking of those who met him by the directness of his sermons, the subtlety of humour and his innate humility.

During his second 'Udasi' (missionary tour) of southern India, Guru Nanak after sojourning through Nagpur and Khandwa visited the ancient Hindu Temple of Om kareshwar on the Narmada and reached Nanded where 200 years later Guru Gobind Singh spent his last days. From Nanded he proceeded towards Hyderabad and Golkonda where he met Muslim saints and then came to Bidar to meet Pir Jalaluddin and Yakoob Ali.

The Guru accompanied by his disciple Mardana stayed in the outskirts of Bidar town where 'Nanak Jhira' Gurdwara is now located. In the nearby were huts of Muslim *fakirs*, who took keen interest in the sermons and teachings of the great Guru.

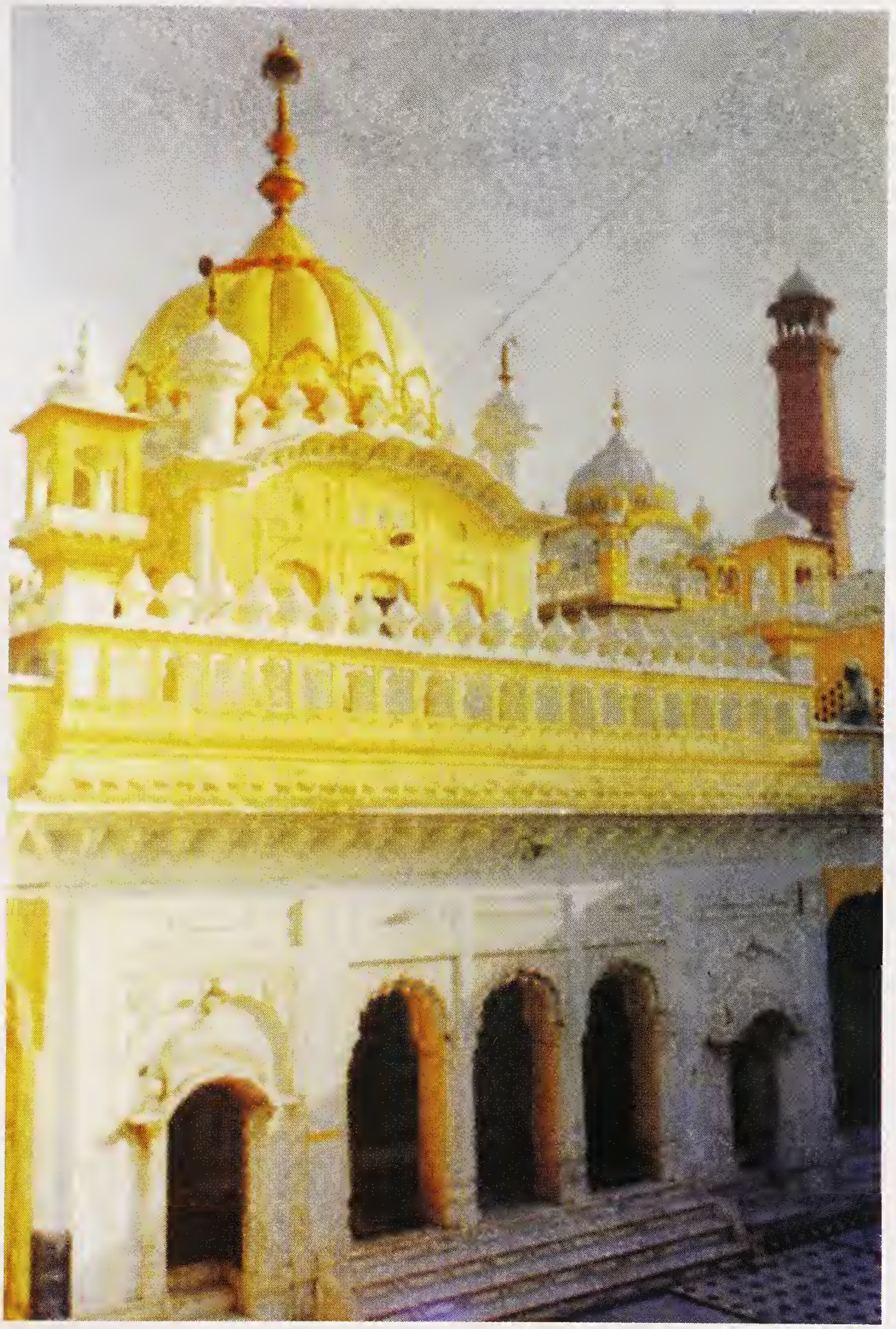
The news soon spread throughout Bidar and its surrounding area about the holy Saint of the North and large number of people started coming to him to have his "Darshan" and seek his blessings. There used to be acute shortage of drinking water in Bidar. All efforts of the people to dig wells were of no avail. Even where the wells were dug the water was found to be unfit for drinking.

The Guru was greatly moved by the miserable condition of the people. With divine name on his lips and mercy in his heart he touched the hillside with his toe and removed some rubble from the place. To the utter surprise of all, fountain of sweet, cool water gushed out of the hillside. The place soon came to be known as 'Nanak-Jhira'.

A beautiful Gurdwara has now been constructed by the side of the fountain. The water of the fountain is collected in a small 'Amrit-Khud' built in white marble. There is a free kitchen (guru ka langar) where free food is given to pilgrims 24 hours. A Sikh museum has been built in the memory of Guru Tegh Bahadur, depicting the important events of Sikh history through pictures and paintings. The birthday of Guru Nanak and the Hola Mohalla festival attract large number of devotees from all over India.

It may be recalled that Bhai Sahib Singh, one of the Panj Piaras (five beloved of Guru Gobind Singh) hailed from Bidar.

We find holy shrines of the Sikhs not only in Punjab but also in the States of Haryana, Himachal, J&K, Delhi, U.P., Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Assam, Bihar, Orissa, West Bengal and Karnataka.



Gurdwara Dera Sahib, Pakistan



Gurdwara Nankana Sahib, Pakistan



Samadhi of Guru Arjun Dev at Lahore, Pakistan



Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Nankana Sahib, Pakistan

Appendix I

Guru Gobind Singh Marg

Guru Gobind Singh Marg – a highway named after the great Guru is an all-weather metalled road. It connects all the 91 sacred shrines with which Guru's name is eternally associated. This marg blessed by the sacred touch of Guru Gobind Singh and his saint soldiers during their memorable and eventful journey of 47 days from Anandpur Sahib to Talwandi Sabo, has got significant place in the history of Punjab. On this highway measuring about 640 kms 20 Dashmesh pillars, with the inscription of the holy and sacred verses of the great Guru have been installed.

Prominent Gurdwaras connected by this highway are Anandpur Sahib, Parwar Vichhora, Bhatha Sahib, Chamkaur Sahib, Machhiwara, Alamgir Sahib, Dina Kangar, Gangsar, Jaitu, Muktsar and Talwandi Sabo.

Guru Gobind Singh Marg is both an idea and a reality. Starting from Anandpur Sahib, the City of Bliss, it traverses hundreds of miles and scores of places that still resound with echoes of the blessed footfalls. It is the highway of eternity, spanning events and epiphanies. Here is the confluence of divine music and earthly symphonies.

It was at Anandpur Sahib where Guru Gobind Singh spent nearly three quarters of 42 years of his life. Here he initiated a great and sustained struggle against all kinds of oppression. Here too he wrote great verses embodying mystic visions and ethical values. And here he fashioned the Sikh Panth and made it an instrument of his power and will. Pressed by the countless troops of the enemy, Guruji was obliged to leave Anandpur Sahib in 1705 A.D. for the South. His sojourn in South-east Punjab add up to a drama of rare exploits and deeds. The battle of Chamkaur and Muktsar bear ample testimony. At Chamkaur fell the Guru's two elder sons and many devoted followers. At Machhiwara a noble Muslim family came to the aid of the Guru and received his blessings. This episode alone, should suffice to show that the brotherhood of man was his avowed objective and message.

At Muktsar, out of generosity, he welcomed back to his fold even those who had earlier repudiated him. There was indeed no limit to his generosity and love. While at Dina Kangar he addressed a poetic Epistle of Victory (Zafarnama) to Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. He told the proud monarch how he had betrayed the trust reposed in him and flouted all cannons of decency in public life. No rules he formed would survive without involvement of pieties and values of life.

On April 10, 1973, Guru Gobind Singh Marg was inaugurated amidst great rejoicing and fanfare. A mighty pilgrimage was hoisted on wheels and according to official estimate, about 25 lakh men and women formed part of the concourse enroute.

The procession on this 640 km Marg was nearly 21 km long. The entire route was tastefully decorated by people living in the villages and towns around. Thousands

flocked continually at focal points to see the mounted procession. Refreshments were served in a spirit of joyous participation. A noteworthy fact of this pilgrimage was its catholic and representative character. People drawn from all walks of life, professing diverse faiths and political views joined this mighty cavalcade. Thus Guru Gobind Singh Marg, stands for us today a way of life symbolizing virtues and values of Sikhism.

Appendix II

Shrines in Pakistan

DERA SAHIB

Several important Sikh shrines are located in areas now forming part of Pakistan. The founder of the faith, Guru Nanak, was born there and travelled extensively in those parts. Later Guru Arjan was martyred at Lahore.

The martyrdom of Guru Arjan in 1606 in Lahore came at the end of several days of the most cruel torture, including a hot sand bath. His body was blistered all over. To cause him further physical pain, he was made to have a dip in the Ravi, flowing close by. Guru Arjan took a dip and never came out. The shrine at Lahore built by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in his memory opposite the fort is called Dera Sahib. The Maharaja's own *Samadhi* is only a few meters away.

A door set in marble provides the entrance to the temple. First come the long court paved with white and black marble tiles. On the left, a flight of marble steps leads into the verandah of the *samadhi*, surrounding the main square sanctuary. The ceiling of the verandah is decorated with floral and other paintings.

NANKANA SAHIB

The most important Sikh shrine in Pakistan is Nankana Sahib, about 64 kilometers from Lahore. The founder of the Sikh faith, Guru Nanak, was born there in 1469. The town was then called Talwandi and it has since been named as Nankana Sahib. Several shrines connected with the Guru are there.

JANAM ASTHAN

This is where Guru Nanak was born. The structure of the present building goes back to 1819-20. The management of the shrine passed on from the *udasi mahants* to the Sikh community in 1921 after a bloody holocaust. A day earlier, a group of Sikhs, pledged to non-violence, had gone to the shrine in the morning to take possession of it, and while they were praying, they were attacked by hired men of the mahant with guns and other lethal weapons. About eighty Sikhs were killed and even Guru Granth Sahib bore the brunt of the bullets. The British army was immediately called in from Lahore and the shrine was locked up by the Government. The next day the keys were handed over to a representative body of the Sikhs.

BAL LILA

It is about 250 metres South-east of Janam Asthan and commemorates the childhood days of the Guru. It was built first in 1820 together with the adjoining tank. Later Nirmala mahants who were managing the shrine, took up its reconstruction but could not complete it. The task was accomplished in 1945-46.

MALJI SAHIB

It is about one and a half kilometers east of Janam Asthan and opposite the railway station. As a child, Guru Nanak used to take cattle out for grazing, and once, when he fell asleep beneath a tree, a cobra shaded his face against the hot sun.

KIARA SAHIB

One day a farmer complained to Rai Bular, the local chieftain, that Nanak's cattle had destroyed his crops. An on-the-spot enquiry, however, revealed that the fields were intact. The shrine named Kiara (field) Sahib stands about 400 meters east of Malji Sahib.

TAMBU SAHIB

It is 400 metres east of Janam Asthan. When Nanak grew up, he was given twenty rupees by his father to buy some merchandise to be sold later for a profit. Instead, he used up the entire amount to feed hungry ascetics, whom he happened to meet on the way. This, he felt, was *Sacha Sauda* (true transaction). Back to his village, he sat underneath a tree outside, where his father came and reprimanded him. That tree, with its branches spread out like a tent (tambu) still stands.

PANJA SAHIB

The Gurdwara at Panja Sahib, some distance from Rawalpindi, is also associated with Guru Nanak. At the time Guru Nanak visited the place, a Muslim saint, Wali Qandhari, lived there on a hillock. The only fresh water spring in the village flowed by the side of his hut. Guru Nanak's companion, Mardana, was very thirsty and at the Guru's suggestion, he went to Wali Qandhari repeatedly to fetch some water.Wali Qandhari refused. Thereupon, Guru Nanak miraculously brought down the spring to the ground level. Wali Qandhari, in anger, hurled down a big stone to crush Guru Nanak who stopped it with a touch of his palm. The impression of the palm is engraved on the stone. The shrine built at the spot is called Panja (palm) Sahib, the place-name of the town being Hassan Abdal.

The water from the spring collects into a marble tank and a three-storeyed temple has been built by its side. The large open space around the temple is also paved with marble and on its four sides, are two-storeyed buildings to provide accommodation to the pilgrims.

The temple and the tank were first built by Hari Singh Nalwa when he conquered the areas across the Indus during the reign of Maharaja Ranjit Singh.

Appendix III

Shrines in Bangladesh

Both Guru Nanak and Guru Tegh Bahadur hallowed Dhaka and some other places in Bangladesh with their visit and there are shrines that are a reminder of their stay.

GURDWARA CHOWK BAZAR – CHITTAGONG

Janam Sakhi Bhai Bala and Puratan Janam Sakhi make a reference to Guru Nanak having been to Chittagong. A devout carpenter, Jhanda by name, was the first to pay his respects to Guru Nanak and to be blessed by the Master. Subsequently, Inder Sain, the nephew of the ruler, and later the ruler, Sudhar Sain, himself became the Guru's disciples.

NANAK SHAHI – DHAKA

The shrine, commemorating Guru Nanak's visit, is located close to the Dhaka University. For some years in the recent past, the place had suffered neglect, and it was on the 2nd January, 1972, after the liberation of Bangladesh, that *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was installed again at the shrine. The room where the congregation met was 9 by 9 metres. Towards the left is an ancient tank, with a *baoli* in its midst.

GURDWARA SANGAT TOLA – BANGLA BAZAR

Guru Tegh Bahadur stayed at this place on his way to Assam. The local followers received him with great affection and built the two-storeyed structure specially for his stay. Devotees visited him in hundreds every day and listened to the *kirtan* and holy discourses.

Some manuscripts of the holy *Granth Sahib*, a portrait of Guru Tegh Bahadur and some epistles sent by Guru Gobind Singh have been discovered at the shrine.

Appendix IV

The Gurus

	Name	Birth	Installation	Death
1.	Guru Nanak	15-5-1469*		22-9-1539
2.	Guru Angad	31-3-1504	14-6-1539	29-3-1552
3.	Guru Amar Das	5-5-1479	29-3-1552	1-9-1574
4.	Guru Ram Das	24-9-1534	1-9-1574	1-9-1581
5.	Guru Arjan	15-4-1563	1-9-1581	30-5-1606
6.	Guru Har Gobind	14-6-1595	25-5-1606	3-3-1644
7.	Guru Har Rai	26-2-1630	8-3-1644	6-10-1661
8.	Guru Har Krishan	7-7-1656	7-10-1661	30-3-1664
9.	Guru Tegh Bahadur	1-4-1621	20-3-1665	11-11-1675
10.	Guru Gobind Singh	22-12-1666	11-11-1675	7-10-1708

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, compiled by Guru Arjan, was enshrined by him in the Golden Temple, Amritsar, in 1604. In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh ordained that, after him, Sri Guru Granth Sahib shall be the Guru for the Sikhs for ever.



The concept of 'Sangat' has a special importance in the Sikh philosopy. In practice this means sitting together of right thinking people for prayers. A Gurdwara is a place where such an assembly can be held in the presence of Guru Granth Sahib, the sacred Sikh scripture which contains compositions of Sikh Gurus and other saints. Most important Shrines or Gurdwaras are those which are associated with the lives of Sikh Gurus. Besides being the great centres of Sikh culture the Gurdwaras spread message of love, peace and universal brotherhood. This book gives an informative account of important Sikh Gurdwaras which includes historical details and architectural style of these Sikh Centres. For pilgrims of Sikh shrines and tourists of all shades the book may prove to be a useful guide.

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