

Guru Angad

The 2nd of the 10 Sikh gurus of Sikhism was Guru Angad who was born on 31st March 1504 and passed away on 29th March 1552. Guru Nanak gave Lehna the name Angad ("my own limb") and selected Angad as the second Sikh Guru after Lehna met Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism, became a Sikh, spent many years serving and working with Guru Nanak. Guru Angad took over as head of the Sikh tradition after Guru Nanak's passing in 1539. For embracing and standardising the Gurmukhi alphabet, he is revered in the Sikh religion. He started the process of gathering Guru Nanak's hymns and added 62 or 63 of his own. He selected his student Amar Das to succeed him as the third Guru of Sikhism rather than his own son.

About Guru Angad

In the Punjab region, in the village of Harike (other sources list Khadur as his birthplace), Guru Angad was born with the given name Lehna (or Lahina). He was the son of Pheru Mal, a modest yet prosperous trader. Mata Ramo (also known as Mata Sabhirai, Mansa Devi and Daya Kaur) was the name of his mother. Lehna, like all the Sikh Gurus, belonged to the Trehan gotra of the Khatri caste (clan). In January 1520, Angad, then age 16, wed Mata Khivi, a Khatri woman. Depending on the main accounts, they had one or two daughters (Amro and Anokhi), two boys (Dasu and Datu), etc. His father's entire family had fled their ancestral hamlet out of fear of Babur's forces invading. Following this, the family relocated to Khadur Sahib, a village by the River Beas close to Tarn Taran as it is today. Lehna was a spiritual advisor to Khadur, who worshipped the goddess Durga, before becoming a student of Guru Nanak and adopting the Sikh way of life as Angad. In his late 20s, Bhai Lehna sought out Guru Nanak, accepted his invitation to become one of his disciples, gave roughly six to seven years of devoted service to his Guru in Kartarpur, and then rejected the Sanatan way of life.

Becoming the Second Sikh Guru

Several legends in the Sikh tradition explains why Guru Nanak picked Lehna as his successor over his own sons. One of these stories involves a jug that slipped into the mud and was asked to be picked up by Guru Nanak's sons. Guru Nanak's sons refused to pick it up because it was too unclean or menial a duty. Then he asked Bhai Lehna, who pulled it out of the muck, scrubbed it clean, and brought it to Guru Nanak full of water. On September 7, 1539, Guru Nanak touched him and christened him Angad (from Ang, meaning portion of the body), and named him his successor and the second Nanak. Guru Angad, unable to endure the loss of Guru Nanak after his death on September 22, 1539, retired into a chamber in a disciple's home in a phase of Vairagya. After a long search, Baba Buddha found him and asked him to rejoin Guruship. The Gurbani recited at the time "Die before the one whom you love, to live after he dies is to live a meaningless life in this world" was Guru Angad's first hymn in Guru Granth Sahib and represents the anguish he felt at his separation from Guru Nanak. Subsequently, Guru Angad left Kartarpur for the hamlet of Khadur Sahib (near Goindwal Sahib).

Following the succession, relatively few Sikhs regarded Guru Angad as their leader, and the sons of Guru Nanak claimed to be the successors. Guru Angad concentrated on Nanak's teachings and community building via humanitarian actions such as langar.

Death and Successor

Guru Angad named Guru Amar Das as his successor before his death, following Guru Nanak's pattern (The Third Nanak). Amar Das was born into a Hindu family and was said to have made twenty

pilgrimages into the Himalayas, including one to Haridwar on the Ganges. On one of these Hindu pilgrimages, around 1539, he encountered a sadhu, or ascetic, who questioned him why he didn't have a guru (teacher, spiritual counsellor), and Amar Das resolved to obtain one. On his way back, he overheard Bibi Amro, the daughter of Guru Angad, who had wedded his brother's son, chanting a Guru Nanak hymn. Amar Das learned about Guru Angad through her, and with her assistance, met the second Guru of Sikhism in 1539, embracing Guru Angad as his spiritual Guru, despite the fact that he was much younger than his own age. Amar Das showed unwavering dedication and service to Guru Angad. According to Sikh legend, he awoke early to bring water for Guru Angad's bath, cleaned and prepared for the Guru's volunteers and spent much time meditating and praying in the morning and evenings. In 1552, Guru Angad appointed Amar Das as his successor. Guru Angad passed away on March 29, 1552.

Relations with the Mughal Empire

After losing the Battle of Kannauj and hence the Mughal crown to Sher Shah Suri, the 2nd Mughal Emperor of India, Humayun, paid a visit to Guru Angad in the year 1540. As per Sikh hagiographies, as Humayun arrived at Khadur Sahib's Gurdwara Mal Akhara Sahib, Guru Angad was seated and educating youngsters. Humayun was enraged by his refusal to greet the Emperor. Humayun retaliated, but the Guru reminded him that when you needed to fight, you ran away and did not fight, and now you want to attack someone who is praying. Guru Angad is believed to have blessed the emperor and reassured him that he will reclaim the throne eventually in Sikh writings written more than a century after the occurrence.

Influence

Gurmukhi Script

In the Sikh tradition, Guru Angad is credited with inventing the Gurmukhi script, which is now the traditional writing script for Punjabi in India, as opposed to Punjabi in Pakistan, where a Perso-Arabic script named Shahmukhi is the standard. The ancient Sikh scriptures, as well as the majority of historical Sikh literature, were written in the Gurmukhi script. Guru Angad standardised and improved the regional scripts to create the Gurmukhi script. Potential forerunners of the script include at least one hymn written in acrostic style by Guru Nanak, and its previous history is unknown. Additionally, he composed 62 or 63 Saloks, which together make up around 1% of the Guru Granth Sahib, the central text of Sikhism. Angad was significant as a consolidator of Guru Nanak's hymns instead of as a contributor to hymns. As tradition dictates, Guru Angad may have also spearheaded an account of Guru Nanak's existence from his initial disciples. Guru Angad had also overseen the documenting of Nanak's hymns by Bhai Paira Mokha and scrutinised the resulting compilation, paving the way for a Sikh scripture in addition to the starting of vernacular Punjabi literature. Additionally, the collection of hymns became more crucial as the community grew.

Community Efforts and Langar

The institution of the langar, where guests from near and far may enjoy a free basic meal in a common seating, was systematised by Guru Angad. Additionally, he established the guidelines and taught the volunteers (Sevadars) how to run the kitchen, emphasising the need of treating it as a haven of solace and being consistently kind and welcoming to all guests. Guru Angad travelled to different locations and institutions built by Guru Nanak to spread the Sikhism message. By establishing new centres, he expanded the base.

Mall Akhara

The Guru, who was a huge fan of wrestling, established a Mall Akhara (wrestling arena) network where physical training, martial arts, and wrestling were taught together with health related subjects like abstaining from harmful items like tobacco. He stressed the need for everyday exercise and maintaining good physical health. He established several of these Mall Akharas in Khandur, among other places. Usually, the wrestling took place after morning prayers and involved both light combat and games.

