**BABA ISHAR SINGH JI**

**(NANAKSAR KALERAN)**

 Baba Ishar Singh ji a true and pious propagator of sikh religion, an appropriate for occupying the coveted seat in the abode of Lord and well versed with the celestial knowledge, reverved Baba Ishar Singh ji was born on 13th Chet 1913 AD at village Jhoraran in the district of Ludhiana in the house of Mata Partap Kaur and S. Bagga Singh. It was evident that the almightly had sent this child for providing calmness to the restless minds of the people and spreading the true message of Gurmat.

 **“Dhan(u) vans(u) dhan(u) su pita**

**dhan(u) su mātā jin(i) jan jane.” (1135)**

 *Blessed is the lineage, the father, the mother who bear such person.*

**“Kabir soi kul bhali ja kul her ko dās.” (1370)**

 *Kabir blessed is the family where Gods servant is born.*

**Dhan(u) dhan(u) pitā dhan dhan(u) kul(u)**

**Dhan(u) dhan(u) su janani jin(i) gurū janian māey.**

*Blest is the father, the lineage*

*Bless is the mother who bore such kind teacher.*

 He had four brothers and two sisters. His childhood name was Inder Singh. He was very soft-spoken, kind temperament and showed very helpful attitude right from the childhood. He was very fond of listening to the historical accounts of guru’s life and other episodes of smithy persons. That is why perhaps he never liked to indulge in silly play things the children are generally fond of. Instead of jumping and playing around with boys of his age, he would rather spend time meditating on the formless god, in a secluded and calm place.

 When he was five years old, he was sent a school in a nearby village- Nathowal to study. But he could never involve his mind in the studies. Even a few residents of his village and his elder brother S. Phagan Singh tried their best to educate him but no one could infuse any interest in his detached and restless mind. All their efforts to put him through school to acquire necessary education weaned him away from books and attracted him more towards the Lord. At last he was asked to join in the family occupation of agriculture. He did this work with great devotion for many years. While he kept his hands busy in work and mind from the worldly business towards god, his detached and restless mind was ever in search of a complete saint and a holy man. His depressed, unattached, austere and troubled mind state could easily be read from his face. So inspite of his involvement in work, he would ever be on the look out for a noble and pious soul visiting any nearby village. He would shed his work and reach the benign presence of the holy man, he would often say, “You be friend” holy man, they will make you their own. Making God your friend will make everyone else your friend too. The world is full of selfish friends, out world friend, false friends deceitful friends; but Guru Nanak is our only true friend. Make those people your own who would not separate from you here or there, the world beyond. Those who would help us associate ourselves with the feet of Guru Nanak.

 He was only ten or eleven years old when his good deeds of the past life bore fruit when Baba Nand Singh ji Kaleranwale, the complete celestial master visited his village. He made it a point to attend the congregation both in body and mind. During this period he would perform service of a water carrier in the cookhouse and also fan the holy congregation with devotion and love. Thereafter, he started visiting Nanaksar Kaleran every day along with other devotees to hold a glimpse of Baba Nand Singh ji. He would often stay there for many days and perform voluntary service. Thus he developed ever increasing attachment with Divinity. After three years when Baba ji visited his village again, he was attracted so much that he left his home for good in favour of the house of Lord. He partook of Khande ki Pahul from Baba ji and started earnestly to achieve the higher state of knowledge through worship, penance, meditation, discipline and austerity. He would spend much time doing service for the holy congregation.

 Seeing this tendency, Baba ji sent him to the care of his teacher Baba Vadhawa Singh ji of Lehra Khana, in order to study spirituality. He completed this education in many years stay there. Then he returned to the abode of Baba ji at Kaleran and took up service there. Baba ji was very happy to see his love and involved study of Gurbani.

 During this period, his name was changed from Inder Singh to Ishar Singh. He was every busy in the care and service, forgetting his self completely. He could neither wear socks non-shoes in his feet. His heels had developed cracks, which were as wide to accommodate small stones in them. He had made no hut for his rest. Whenever he found sometime for rest, (specially when Baba Nand Singh ji would be busy in reciting his daily prayers) he would sit outside his gate best he is called by Baba ji at anytime. Whenever called, he would rush to his holy presence, often hitting his forehead into the pillar or wall. He would develop bumps in the forehead, yet rush to attend to Baba ji order. At last he reached a stage of oneness with Baba ji. Many a time when Baba ji would just think by something or desire something (like milk, curd or curd milk), Baba Ishar Singh ji would have the item in his hand to deliver. Baba Nand Singh ji would often make a mention of it during the daily assembly. Baba Ishar Singh would be ever ready to perform service. Perpetual service had caused the nails of some of his fingers uprooted – the hands that later blessed many rich and poor people alike. If, he ever extended his hand towards someone, that man would forget all about himself and go into a different state of mind. He would often experience an electric current running in to his body. That would bring to the all his sins and make him cry in order to commence his lift of penance to wash off the past ill deeds.

 Once Baba Nand Singh ji had camped on a hillside at Solan. A spring of water was located at a distance of about two miles by a straight and steep down path. Baba Ishar Singh ji went to collect water from there for the bath of Baba Nand Singh ji. Suddenly the sky became overcast with dark clouds. It became pitch dark. Baba Ishar Sing ji lost his way, though he would leave small pieces of cloth tied with bushes as mark of identification of his route. So with great difficulty, he managed to reach the benign presence of Baba ji to deliver a tin of water well in time, that is, before 12:15 A.M. He helped Baba ji in his bath. Now another demand was placed on him. Baba ji was seated inside the tent and it started raining heavily. After the bath, he was required to serve hot tea but the firewood was wet with rain. Baba Ishar Singh ji went behind a boulder opened his umbrella and started burning the fire. He took off his turban and burnt the whole cloth piece meal into fire. Than he took off his loose shirt and started burning it bit by bit. He managed to offer Baba ji a cup of tea well in time. Baba Nand Singh ji took Baba Ishar Singh ji in a dear hug and expressed his appreciation for his singular devotion.

 At another place, Baba ji was sitting engrossed in meditation inside a cave by the hillside. Suddenly it started raining with hard storm. Baba Ishar Singh ji was standing in service of the Baba ji. He bent down on Baba Nand Singh ji covering his head from the falling hails and bore their brunt on his body. Once again Baba Nand Singh ji became very happy with his devotion.

 Once Baba Nand Singh ji was returning back from Dam Dama Sahib (Bathinda) to Nanaksar after attending Baisakhi function. It was blowing hot enroute. He came out of the car, went and stood under a tree. Other people in the encourage also stopped their cars. There was no place to sit. Baba Ishar Singh ji hurriedly prepared a small platform of earth and spread his shirt on it. When Baba Nand Singh expressed his desire to drink water, Baba Ishar Singh ji picked up the metallic pitcher and ran to fetch water. There was no village near by and it was a desolate countryside. At last he reached a well where the water surface was very deep. There was neither a rope nor a pail to take out water with. He at once tore his turban, tied its end to end and managed to pull out a pot of water. He rushed back and served it to Baba ji.

 He went through yet another test. Baba Nand Singh ji expressed, desire for a meal through sign language. Baba Ishar Singh ji ran towards the car. One of the ministrel (Ragi) had kept some flour for fixing it on his percussion instrument called *‘Jodi’*, He hurriedly kneaded the flour. Now he had no hot plate to bake chapaties. A farmer with a spade on his shoulder was walking by. He borrowed the spade from him and dug out a pathole to light fire in it. He cleaned up the blade of the spade and used it as a hot plate for baking chapaties. He served hot chapaties to Baba ji who blessed him with Divine happiness.

 Thus Baba Ishar Singh ji served Baba Nand Singh ji through myriad difficulties ignoring his own comforts, happiness, conveniences, sleep, hunger, laziness etc. His loving devotion is an example of selfless service in itself. At last Baba Nand Singh ji left for his heavenly abode by the divine order on 13th Bhadon Samvat 2000 corresponding to 29 August 1943 by common era calendars.

**“Sūraj kiran (i) milé jal kā jal huā Ram.**

**Jotī jot rali sanpūram thiyā Ram(u)” (846)**

 *The ray blouds with sun, the water merges with water, so merges the human light with the Supreme and achieves perfection.*

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 After the departure of Baba Nand Singh for his heavenly abode, it was an unbearable and indescribable pangs of separation. On the tenth day of his demise, the Sangat (holy gathering) offered him turban, symbolic of dawning the mentle of his successor to continue with the Divine work, but he was still in a state of shock at the departure of his dear one.

 For sometime, Baba Ishar Singh ji remained busy with worship at Dehra Dun. Baba Kundan Singh Baba Sadhu Singh ji. The head ministrel, Baba Kehar Singh ji, Inder Singh (Jodiwala) and Jaswant Singh Lamejat purwale were with him. For seven years Baba Ishar Singh ji meditated in the under ground room at Jhoran. Baba Narain Singh ji constructed a thirteen storey *‘Thath’* at this very place, in order to attach the Sangat with Guru Granth Sahib ji the embodiment of Guru Nanak in accordance with the code established and practiced by Baba Nand Singh ji. Baba Ishar Singh Ji started discourses and *‘Kirtan’*. People thronged the place to listen to Baba ji. On 13th Har 1950, he commenced work of digging up a *‘Sarovar’* (pond) at Nanksar Thath Kaleran. The engineer and mason estimated that the work will finish in not less than six months but with the kind grace of Guru Nanak, Baba ji could complete the work in 28 days and declared it open for bathing by the Sangat. He also commenced work on the underground room where Baba Nand Singh ji used to pray and worship. After some more time, he got a five storied thath completed and covered its dome with gold plates. The main congregation hall and The Baradari (place with twelve doors) too was completed at a fast pace by the ever-increasing voluntary service of people of the villages around. Baba Ishar Singh ji completed all this miraculously in a short span of time.

 The important thing to note is that he never asked for a penny from any one for completing all these works. He did not even permit any of his mendicant to collect money for these tasks. He would often say in holy congregation that he has never touched a currency note so far in his life even just to see what it feels like. Sangat used to take care of the meals as well as all material required for construction.

 Once he became free from all these involvements, he started receiving requests from *‘Sangat’* for the spread and propagation of Sikh faith. He accepted the requests of the Sikh Sangat and commenced his tour on a missionary work after attending Baisakhi function of 1953 at Dam Dama Sahib (Bathinda). He started visiting villages, towns and cities to spread the message of Guru Nanak Patishah. Besides discourses and singing of Lords praises, he commenced administration of Khande ki Pahul. He went to far of places in provinces other than the Punjab and visited Patna Sahib, Delhi, Bombay, Gawalior, Agra, Indore, Calcutta, Sri Hazoor Sahib, Kanpur, Ranchi in order to spread the tenets of Sikh faith in every nook and corner of India. He kept at this mission for ten long years and brought lakhs of people to the fold of Guru by administration of Amrit (Khande Ki Pahul).

 The main approach of Baba ji’s missionary work was to accept Guru Granth Sahib ji as the true Guru and spend life in the light of its teachings. He motivated people to partake *‘Amrit’*– a boon given to us by the tenth master. He adopted this approached for the spread of Sikhism through discourses and propagating the gist and main contents of Gurbani in very simple language easily understood by the layman as well as well read people beside singing of gurbani for more pronounced impact on their mind. People sitting and listening would often be spell bound by his singing and discourses. The epitome of worship and power, an ideal example of service and meditation, capable of calling a spade a spade, fearless and courageous Baba ji often say, “We can belong to the Guru only after obtaining the Amrit (Khande ki Pahul). Only than can we go before the Guru. Those who are born in a sikh family and remain bereft of the *‘Amrit’* are divorced from Guru. They are without *‘Guru’*. The formless Almighty it, and yet one has given you the looks of a lion, but a barber who hold one’s face and even slaps it while shaving or trimming it, and yet one has to pay some money for all this insult. Beware ! all sikhs must support untarnished look. If one has taken Amrit, one recites Gurbani, he is the Sikh of the Guru. If one is without Amrit does not read and recite gurbani; he is not Sikh and certainly not a loved one. God loves the daily code of conduct of a Sikh. So a sight of a Guru-less or even making a mention of him is a sin.

**“Vich(i) haumai karam kamāvade**

 **jion vesuā put(u) ninaon” (82)**

 One is a hardworking person with plenty of wealth and respect, but what is ones status ? “Son of a harlot who has no lineage”. Whom would a harlot son call his father ? No one, because he has no father. The status of a guruless person is no different. Let us not become guruless; let us belong to the Kalgidhar (One who wears plume-meaning Guru Gobind Singh ji). Let us be a complete and true sikh after receiving *‘Amrit’*. This is not the time for laziness. This is the time to remain alert. Khalsa must remain ready for ever”.

 He deligently followed the practice of seeing Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the embodiment of Guru Nanak. He extended these thoughts discourses, Kirtan (singing of Lords praises) and through informal discussions. That is why innumerable people through out the country are religiously following the practices set by Baba ji and are deriving maximum benefit.

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 Baba ji constructed many *‘Thaths’* at Barnala, Bhadaur, Bhai ki Samadh, Seeharey, Dehra Dun, Ludhiana, Jho ar , Sherpur, Baroondi and Delhi. People of villages and habitation around these *‘Thaths’* soon started thronging these centers of Guru Nanak’s teachings. Not only this, Baba visited many places in the country and held congregations for propagation of Guru Nanak’s gospel. The specialty of these congregations was that it had a fair spread of Hindus and Muslim attendants. His loving and serene words had a universal appeal that the assembled people would listen for hours with rapt attention.

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 Once Baba Ishar Singh ji went to Calcutta. This visit of his was in connection with the anniversary function of Baba Nand Singh ji. Besides the continuous recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib from beginning to the end, many minstrel and bards too had gathered there. One devotee asked Baba Ishar Singh ji, “Give us some simple and straight forward talk since most of the audience is illiterate who has motor driving as their occupation. Your down to earth advise may bring about some change in them”. Baba Ji said, “You create a problem and make us resolve it by force”. So when his time came to address the assembly, he said that a lion was the strongest of all whose moustache couldn’t be touched by any one.If any one ever touched that, he would not live to see another day. Therefore all must become lions by taking Amrit. That was all that he. He had no Aarti (a feminine gender of a form of worship) but being a peasant class himself he had Aarta (musculine gender of Aarti).

“**Gopāl tera ārtā jo jan tumarī bhagati(i) karandey,**

 **tin ke kāj sawaratā .” (685)**

*O Lord I am a beggar at thy door,*

*You accomplish their tasks who prays to you constantly.*

 These illiterate people have to be explained differently. They do not understand easily. They keep cutting their beards. One of them said, “Beards is not essential to be Sikh, it is with in oneself ”. I said, “Show it to me”. “Beard alone does not make a Sikh. What has it to do with being a Sikh? He interjected. Baba ji explained to him that a devoted wife wears ornaments to attract her spouce. She looks beautiful. If she was without ornaments, would she look as attractive ? One may even take her as a beggar woman. The wearing of ornaments add to her beauty and impressiveness.

 “The beard is the ornament and true make up of a Sikh. If one is not born in a Sikh family yet keeps faith in Guru Nanak, (Sehajdhari *‘Sikh’*), it is understandable since it is not part of his original religion. Part for a sikh, it is a crime. What I mean is that a sikh must preserve his natural form given to him by God Almighty. Our bearings do effect our conduct and project our personality as it should be. It is not enough for a sikh to wear good clothes and collect donations. He must also recite gurbani. He need not worry then. If he is without Amrit and does not read/ recite gurbani, he is not a sikh. A sikh who does not keep his code and routine as dictated by the guru is not loved by him.

 **“Rehanī rahai soi, sikh merā**

 **Uh Sāhib main uska cherā.”**

 *He who abides by the code is true Sikh of mine,*

 *He is my respected master and I am his servant.*

 Baba ji enforced the following of set code of conduct of Nanaksar Kaleran and other *‘Thaths’* with equal fervour so as to bring in uniformity and innate oneness among the sangat at all places. Similarly he extended the practices and norms set up by Baba Nand Singh and followed the laid down code for Paths (recitation of Gurbani) Katha (discourses), Kirtan (singing of holy hymns) at various functions. Punctuality and sticking to the laid down rules was his main principal. He would pay particular attention to the service of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, cleanliness of the assembly hall and its decorations. He would ask sewadars (volunteers) and inmates of the Dehra to ensure strict compliance of the rules, code of conduct and other instructions laid down from time to time. One can say that the small orchard of Sikhism that he had looked after for twenty years has now blossoming in to a full-fledged garden in the country and abroad and spreading out the sweet fragrance of the philosophy of Guru Nanak.

 Baba ji breathed his last on the 7th October 1963 (21st. Assu Sambat 2002) at the young age of 48 years and went to the holy abode of Guru Nanak to merge at his holy feet. His holy body was assigned to the deep water at Harike near the bridge on the 9th October 1963. His body was brought to the site by a multitude of Sikhs in a long procession who bade him fare well with moist eyes.