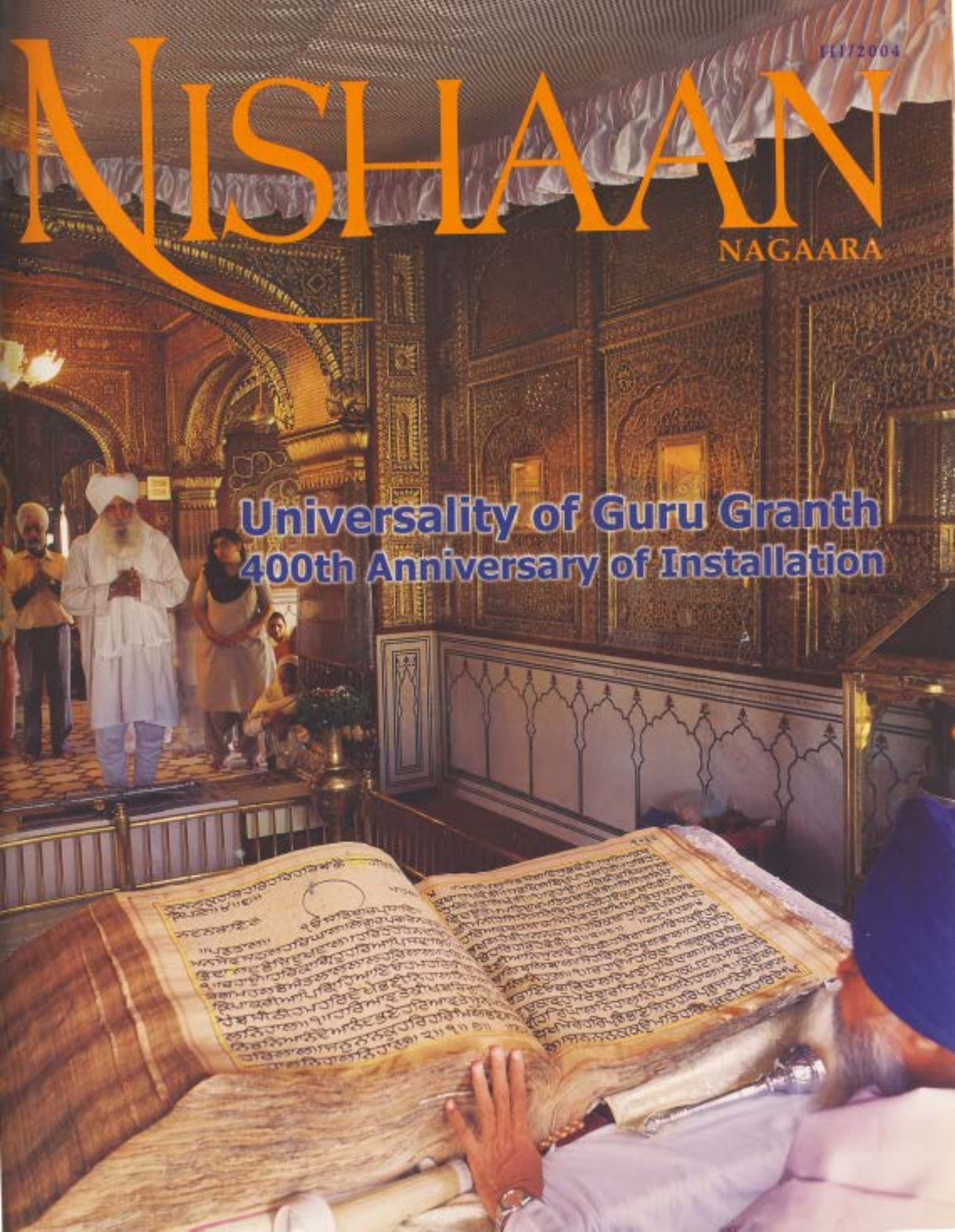


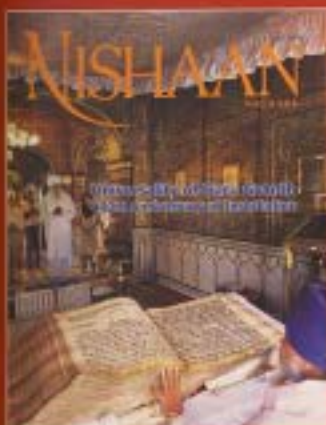
# NISHAAN

NAGAARA

**Universality of Guru Granth  
400th Anniversary of Installation**







Cover: Sri Guru Granth Sahib at Darbar Sahib, Amritsar.  
Photo by S. Hardev Singh.

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**Editorial Office**  
D-43, Sujana Singh Park  
New Delhi 110 003, India  
Tel: (91-11) 24617234  
Fax: (91-11) 24628615

e-mail : nishaan@lycos.com  
website : www.nishaan.com

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The Sikh religion is unique. Its beliefs, practices, values, discipline, in fact all elements of it are unique. There is no indulging in theological formulation for its practice even though it embodies unique philosophy and theology.

The Gurus called it the "superb path" (ਉਤਮ ਪੈਰ) and not a "superb religion" (ਉਤਮ ਧਰਮ). It is a way of life demonstrated and delineated by the Gurus whose lives were lived in its practice.

The Sikh way of living is a path of life whose manner was recorded by the Gurus in written form (ਸ਼ਬਦ) so determining that the message could not be distorted. These recordings, along with some writings of other people of faith which were in consonance with those of the house of Nanak, were consolidated, edited and compiled as the *Adi Granth* by the Fifth Guru in 1604, four hundred years ago. This unique volume is major corpus of the Guru Granth and spiritual repository of the Sikh belief. The Granth was installed as the Guru by Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Master, in 1708.

We have to visualise the distinct uniqueness and greatness of the path shown by the Gurus, the path which is delineated in such magnificent manner in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* which contains the pivotal thoughts, the philosophy, the purpose and intent of the Sikh faith as it embodies the *Word* or *Shabd*, which is the manifestation of Divinity in Sikh ethos. It contains the writings of the Sikh Gurus as well as of thirty other men of God, of varied faith, spread over a period of 500 years, from the 12<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> Centuries from different parts of the Indian subcontinent and as such, is the crucible of five centuries of Indian religious thought.

Guru Granth embodies descriptions of a complete spectrum of the way of life of the people, the social parameters, the prevalent folk lores, the beliefs and much more. All these were set to modes of Indian classical music tradition and folk tunes such as the *Vaars*, *Ghorian*, *Alahania*, *Sadd* and others known as *Dhruvan* in Sikh parlance. How such folk culture was used for the transmutation of society, is a unique aspect which must be researched by sociologists and could too be used as a means to propagate the Gurus' word in the contemporary world.

When Guru Nanak appeared in the 15<sup>th</sup> Century, he saw mankind suffering in all aspects: spiritual, economic and political life of the country. He protested to the Creator

(ਤੈ ਕੀ ਦਰ ਨ ਆਇਆ) for this state of affairs. He denounced the failure of local rulers to protect their people from the ravaging brutality of invaders. He did not stop at that, but explained in his own inimical manner, the limitations of life and the grandeur of the Lord. He went ahead to lay the foundation and framework of a society totally committed to fight political, theological, social and economic oppression inflicted in the name of religion and rule. He focussed especially on the caste system for its apartheid-like framework which promotes exploitation of man based on an accident of birth. He urged members of the two main religious beliefs in India, the Hindus and the Muslims, to be true to their own faiths and practice their faith's essence rather than being exploitative. A most unique attitude.

The Sikh way of life is simple, really simple but demanding. Its practice has one objective: **to practise the presence of God (Akal Purakh)** (ਹੁੰਮ ਦੀ ਹੋਂਦ ਨੂੰ ਮਹਿਸੂਸ ਕਰਨਾ) and this so while participating and enjoying one's normal social existence (ਤਸੱਲਿਆ, ਖੇਡੀਦਿਆਂ, ਪਹਿਲੀਦਿਆਂ, ਵਿਚੇ ਹੋਏ ਮੁਕਤ), with honest labour, sharing bounties of the Lord and by remembering Him. To see, realise, feel and become one with His being which pervades and permeates the entire creation. All phenomenon, happenings, occurrences, joys and sorrows are all His manifestation: *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* asserts this over and over again.

In *Aasa di Vaar* we find – ਕੁਦਰਤ ਹਮੇ ਕੁਦਰਤ ਕਰੈ, ਦੁਖ ਵੀ ਕਰ ਜਾਹਿ.

The founder of Sikhism propagated a way of life based on *Naam*, the Ultimate Truth and Reality which is known only through attributes, *satibnaam*.

ਤਹਿ ਸਰਬ ਨਮ ਕਰੈ ਕਦਨ, ਕਰਮ ਨਮ ਬਰਨਤ ਸੁਮਤ ।

This was a path of love and total submission to the will of God, of service and sacrifice, to speak for the oppressed and stand up for fundamental human values with irrevocable commitment.

The Sikh Gurus composed and recited songs in God's praise and His glories as seen in various facets of creation. This was the Guru's divine message. We call it *Bani*. These he wrote in a booklet, a *pothi* which he always carried with him and passed on to his successor who added his compositions. This practice continued till the Fifth Guru who consolidated the writings of the previous four, added his own compositions and also those of the 30 other saintly persons of various faiths.



*Bani* (ਬਾਣੀ) tells us that He created the Universe so that He could fill it with love. The Universe is infused with the Divine. He permeates it. The world is held together by His love and *Dharam*, rule of law.

A thought, a philosophy, a way of life, a *Panth* thus can only be seen, felt or realised if it is walked on, is lived upon, practiced ਸਿੱਖੀ ਕਾਨੀ ਜਾਂਦੀ ਹੈ - ਪੜ੍ਹੀ ਨਹੀਂ. All creation is consummated in *Ik Onkar* or *Ikongkar*. This experience of the *Bani* can be had only in an organised society ਜਿਹ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਸੇਵ ਕਰਾਈਐ. At the centre of such a society was installed the source of knowledge, a compendium, a repository of guidance and instruction. This perhaps would have been the reason for compilation of this grand anthology of wisdom.

This *Panth* is a path, a *Marg* of total commitment. For those treading this path there is no going back.

ਇਹ ਮਾਰਗ ਪੈਰ ਧਰੀਐ ਸਿਰ ਟੀਸੀ ਕਣ ਨ ਕੀਸੀ।

This is what Guru Tegh Bahadur demonstrated:

ਜੇ ਪੈਰ ਦਾ ਮਨੋਰਥ ਧਰਮ ਚਲਾਵਣ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਹੀ ਸਿਰ ਦੀਆ ਪਰ ਸਿਰਤ ਨ ਦੀ।

God of the Sikh concept is defined as Timeless, the *Akal Purakh* who was, is and will always permeate the entire creation, irrespective of good or evil. Guru Nanak emphasised that in order to establish a kingdom of heaven on earth, any social order that is not based on moral and ethical principles can not survive.

ਇਸੇ ਲਈ ਮੀਰੀ ਅਰ ਪੀਰੀ ਅਕੀਰੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਰਈ, a merger of the spiritual and sovereign.

The thought content of this sacred book is uniquely laid out. It begins with the *Mool Mantra* giving the fundamental definition and description or essence of the Ultimate Reality. When translated it reads:

**There is one God. His name is Truth. He is the Creator and is everywhere. Fearless, without any enemy. He is unborn and self existent. He can be realised through His grace.**

This is followed by the affirmation:

**Truth He was, Truth He is and Truth He will be**

ਅਇ ਸਚਿ ਜੁਗਾਟਿ ਸਚ, ਹੈ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਹੋਸੀ ਭੀ ਸਚੁ।

Guru Nanak's Jap(u)ji follows which embodies his complete philosophy, laying down the precepts, methods and their practice in the Sikh way of life, earning His grace.

As it continues, the *Guru Granth Sahib* is a reiteration and reassertion of these fundamentals, how to practice them with examples and illustrations given from ordinary life.

The contents of the Granth were "sealed" by the Fifth Guru in 1604 with the hymn called *Mundavani*, literally meaning the seal or stamp of conclusion to avoid any apocryphal element being inserted. The hymns of the Ninth Guru were subsequently added by Guru Gobind Singh in 1706, before the *Mundavani* resulting in the final recession.

When the Tenth Guru concluded that the followers of Guru Nanak's way of life had attained status of the archetype man of the Guru's vision, namely the Khalsa and the required level of new social structure had fully evolved, he discontinued the tradition of Guruship in human form. Shortly before his demise in 1708, he anointed the Divine message *Shabad*, as documented in this Holy Book, as the Guru for all Sikhs. The word, the *Shabad* then became the presiding Deity in the form of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

The centre of Sikh thought, adoration and perhaps worship, is the *Shabad*, the *Word* and *Knowledge*. This is the Guru and in traditional Sikh parlance, the *Shabad Guru*. Guru means dispeller of darkness, the guide, the light within. All the Gurus emphasised that the mortal frame had no particular sanctity attached to it as the *Shabad* is the Guru, the Divine Light that manifests itself in the heart of the devotee when he comes into communion with the *Shabad Guru*. The pages of a book can not be deemed as the Guru. This is subtle but significant, essential and also critical to remember while revering this Holy Book. It is not the Book but the message, the *Word*, which is the Guru and as such to be revered. To revere and worship the book would be contrary to the Guru's directives:

It will make them idolators, or book worshippers.

ਕੁਰਬ ਪਰਸਤ ਯਾ ਕੁਰ ਪਰਸਤ.

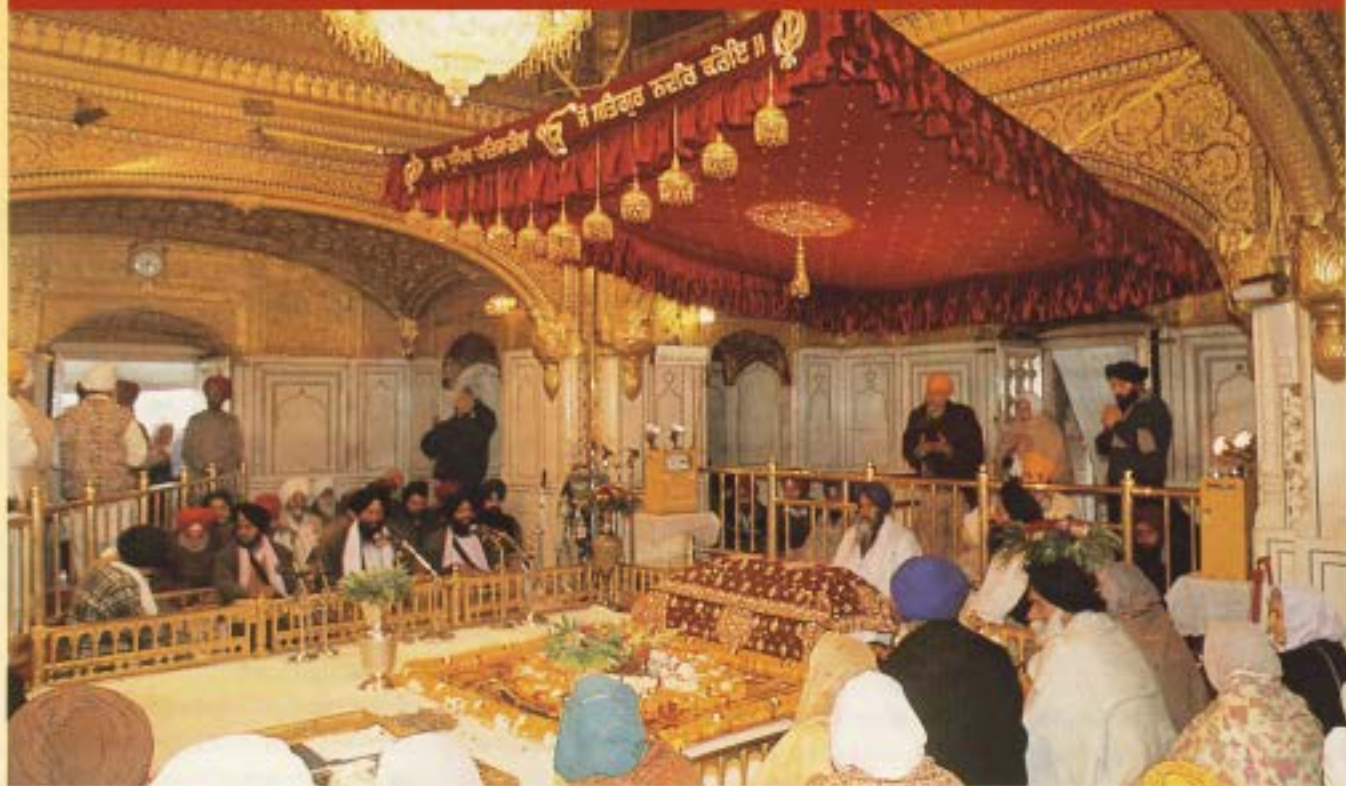
As so well put by the venerated Sirdar Kapur Singh:

"If a deity is defined as an immortal God, while a divinity as that mortal entity which possesses divine qualities, then we may say that the Granth is a Divinity, but not a deity and thus it cannot be and is not an object of worship by the Sikhs, though seemingly extreme reverence is shown to it as the visible body of the Guru and oriental formal homage is paid to this, as symbolic of the Sikh Sovereignty".



# Guru Granth Sahib

## the Boundless scripture



**S**ri Guru Granth Sahib is a sacred scripture of the world and Eternal Guru of the Sikhs. Adoration and veneration of Sri Guru Granth Sahib is an article of faith with the Sikhs. In the year of 2008 will be celebrated Tercentennial of the Canonization of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. Now, in 2004, the world celebrates the Quad-Centennial of the first compilation of Guru Granth Sahib as the sacred *pothi* that contained compositions of 36 holy poets from all religions of the sub-continent as the very first compilation. Because of such an extraordinary feature, this scripture becomes regarded as a universal religion. Indeed, many philosophers of the world and holy men consider the Sri Guru Granth Sahib as the unique treasure and a noble heritage for all humankind.

The sacred verses of Sri Guru Granth Sahib are called Gurbani, meaning the Guru's word or the song of messages enshrined in Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In Sikhism, the Guru is the 'Wisdom of the Word' and not human or a book. God revealed the Word through holy men and women from time to time and the most recent revelations were put in writing as the text of Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

To the Sikhs, any scripture not ingrained in the Guru Granth is unacceptable as the Guru's word or any authority

to back their theology and is not to be recited, sung, or chosen for liturgy in Sikh congregations, the only exception being the compositions of Guru Gobind Singh, Bhai Gurdas and Bhai Nand Lal. These were considered as elucidating the Guru Granth verses. Those who explain the scripture or teach the doctrines contained in the scripture are esteemed as teachers, the *granthis*, missionaries, saints or enlightened souls of the Sikh religion.

The Sikhs regard Sri Guru Granth Sahib as a complete, inviolable and final embodiment of the message. There is to be no word beyond *gurbani*. And this is how the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, spoke to the congregation on 20 October, 1708 shortly before his ascension.

*"Those who desire to behold the Guru should follow the Granth Sahib, whose contents are visible body of the Guru."*

ਜੇ ਮੁਖ ਕੇ ਮਿਲ ਬੇਚ ਹੈ, ਧੇਨ ਸਥਾਟ ਮੈ ਲੇ ।

Sri Guru Granth Sahib contains hymns of 36 composers written in twenty-two languages employing a phonetically perfected Gurmukhi script in 1430 pages with 511,874 words, 1,720,345 characters and 28,534 lines. It has been preserved in its original format since its completion by Guru Gobind Singh ji in 1705.



It is well accepted that religious institutions protect themselves from erosion by enshrining their tenets and doctrines in some tangible form. The best and the most modern form of preserving doctrinal purity today is the use of printed media or in electronic storage. At the time of the Granth's compilation, the Sikh Gurus created handwritten books and they used this medium very wisely. If they could, all founders and followers of the mankind's great religions would have wanted to compile their scriptures as one written volume as the Sikh gurus did and preserve their scriptures for posterity.

Guru Granth was composed in poetry, firstly perhaps to prevent alterations or adulterations and then reach out to the human heart. According to some writers, "its power is the power of the puissant and winged word and no exegesis or commentary or translation can ever convey the full beauty of its thought and poetry." Poetry can be left to the culture of the aeons that follow the prophet so as best to interpret the message.

The Guru Granth incorporates all the features to keep it alongside the world's greatest scriptures. This is the only scripture which, in spite of its interfaith nature, was dictated, edited, proof-read, and signed for authenticity by founders of the faith during their own life time. These unique features helped preserve the Sikh religion throughout the numerous onslaughts endured over the period of five centuries. The Granth proved the means for continuously providing safeguard against adulteration or extinction of the Sikh faith during those turbulent centuries.

The fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev compiled and installed the scripture in the central shrine of Sikhism, *Harmandir*, "Temple of the Infinite". Its foundation stone was laid by a Muslim holy man Mian Mir. The city built around it became known as Amritsar, popularly called "City of Golden Temple".

The Granth compiled by Guru Arjan contained hymns of the first five Gurus along with most of the saints and holy men of medieval India. Later, this copy was taken into possession by the Guru's rivals who did not wish to share this freely with the mainstream Sikhs. Guru Gobind Singh took upon himself to recreate the entire Granth. He dictated to a Sikh scholar, Bhai Mani Singh, all verses he considered revealed including the hymns written after Guru Arjan. This took him nearly five years at Anandpur Sahib and Damdama Sahib, completing this in 1705. He founded the Damdama township and established the first Sikh University to immortalise the sacred occasion.

On 20 October 1708 Guru Gobind Singh gave his final sermon that conferred permanent Gurudom on the Damdama version of the Granth. He selected the town of Nanded, a thousand kilometres away in the Deccan for this

event. Since that day, the Granth has universally been known as Sri Guru Granth Sahib.

The text in its original font has recently become available electronically on many web sites for everyone in the world to have free access. In addition to the edition in original Gurmukhi script, the Guru Granth is available in print and on the web in Hindi, Sindhi and roman English transliterations. Whereas translations in English, French, Spanish, Punjabi, Hindi, Sindhi and German are already available, those in Thai, Urdu, Hebrew and many Indic languages are under preparation.

Sri Guru Granth Sahib contains 5894 hymns. Guru Arjan contributed the largest number of 2216 hymns. Besides the hymns of other Gurus, he also included 937 hymns of fifteen other saints and eleven poet laureates of the Guru's court whose compositions tallied with gospel of the Sikh faith. Here, the Hindu, the Muslim, the Brahmin, the untouchable, all meet in the same congregation of holy souls to create a truly universal scripture for the world.

From the linguistic point of view, Sri Guru Granth Sahib is a treasury of languages of the times that communicated well with every segment of society. The language principally employed is the language of the saints, evolved during those periods in the Indian sub-Continent. Much of it is based upon the local dialects, blended with expressions from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic, Bengali and Marathi.

Language of the Guru Granth allowed for variations and enjoyed wide popularity in South East Asia. Its appeal is found in its directness, energy and resilience. In addition, the Guru designed a phonetically complete *gurmukhi* font to meet the need of inscribing the multi-linguistic scripture that also is musical.

The poetry of the Granth is, in itself, a subject of the highest consideration. Music forms the basis of the rhythms and classification of the hymns. They follow a definite metrical system called *raags*. A *raag* in Indian classical music means "a pattern of melodic notes". This form is used not only to preserve the originality of the composition, as the poetry written in this form is difficult to imitate, but more so to provide the divine experience through the medium of music and the sounds of cosmic effects. The total number of *raags* is 31. The gurus themselves created some of those. Under each *raag*, the hymns are arranged in different meters as *Chaupadas* and *Ashtapadas*; long poems include *Chhands*, *Vars*, and *Bhagat* verses.

The inner and integral relationship between music and verse has been maintained with scholarly rectitude and concern. The complete musicalisation of thought was accomplished in scientific and scholarly manner so that it makes for the unusually vigorous yet flexible discipline of the Granth's own metrics and notations. Whilst much of



Guru Granth is cast in traditional verse forms (e.g. *shlokas* and *paudis*), and could best be understood in the context of the well-known classical *raags*, several hymns and songs make use of popular folklore and meters (e.g. *laharis*, *ghoris*, *chands*, etc.).

Reading or recitation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib, known as *Gurbani path*, is sacred for every Sikh. It is more than a simple ritual or a complex scholarly endeavour. It permits them connection with the Guru for spiritual guidance. They engage intellectual deliberation to seek wisdom while they cultivate faith in the process to receive the inner light.

Reading the rhythmic poetry of Guru Granth is considered by some as healing in itself. Its chant is frequently prescribed to patients for relief of their ailments and to allenate sickness, facilitating understanding of pain and pleasure by "mindfulness" or "being in the moment".

Guru Granth verses are often sung in a process known as *kirtan*. Thus, true meaning is revealed directly to the *Surat* (specific consciousness and awareness of divine) through cosmic vibrations. The body's energetic vibrations to the singers' voices bond them with the spiritual light of universal intelligence. As people chant the Granth's verses, the universe speaks to them in metaphoric images. The physical body of the singer experiences the essence of each word through the oscillating energy in the brain and the calming vibrations in the body, all caused by such sound waves. They keep the mind focussed on the Word. They heal the physical body and cleanse inner thoughts. The sound waves of the *Gurmata Raags* connect the mind, body, and spirit by alignment of the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual entities. They implant in one's psyche the basis for both spiritual and mental growth. To witness a Sikh congregation chant the sacred hymns in unison is to see massed spiritual energy becoming effervescent before one's eyes. This is how ordinary words transfer into the logos and become auspicious.

In mystic literature of Guru Granth the appeal of the numinous becomes ineffable, if not inexplicable. And yet the great Sikh scripture is not a compendium of metaphysical riddles or abstract theorising. For the most part it employs the idiom of the common people and draws its imagery and metaphors from the home, the street and the work place everywhere. Hymns of the Guru Granth display an admirable use of the current figures of speech apart from their metrical richness and lovability. Imagery is taken from everyday life and common occurrence to simplify subtle thoughts and profound concepts.

The Gurus were lovers of nature and as such, have written wondrous descriptions of the panoramic and environmental beauty, changes in the times of day and changes of seasons

to inculcate love for the One Creator. Thus they made Guru Granth poetry an extraordinary blend of rhythm, divinity, mysticism, immediacy, concreteness and urgency which touches the human heart.

One of the greatest glories of the Guru Granth is its all-embracing character. It is a scripture completely free from bias, animus and debate. Indeed, uniqueness of the Granth is all the more astonishing when we remember the obscurantism, factionalism and religious fanaticism of the period during which it was composed, with inclusion of the songs and verses composed by a wide diversity of holy souls, saints, savants and bards. Of course, their hymns and couplets rendered in their own language and idiom were so dovetailed as to find complete correspondence with themes or motifs in the compositions of the Sikh Gurus.

The Guru Granth is unique in that it formed the world's first interfaith and perennially universal scripture. It is indeed a magnificent compendium of the religious, mystic and metaphysical poetry written or recited between the 12th and 17th centuries in different parts of the East. At the same time it is also reflection of the sociological, economic and political conditions of the day. The satire on the reactionary rulers, the obscurantist clergy, the fake fakirs and their ilk is uncompromising and telling. In showing the path to spiritual salvation, the Guru Granth does not ignore the secular and creative life of all living beings. In addition to its mysticism and spiritual depth, the poetry of the Gurus throws light on the contemporary situations. It exposes the corruption and degradation of society of those times and emphasises the need of social reform, moral rearmament and economic uplift. Guru Granth verses advocate a spiritual soul for the otherwise inhumane political philosophy of the then rulers.

The conception of Guru Arjan Dev was to celebrate the diversity in all religions and mystic experiences and, at the same time, establish the fundamental unity of spirituality and faith through the scripture of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. In this scripture he founded an integral congress of all minds and souls functioning at the same spiritual vibration. He elevated songs of the saints, the Sufis and the bards to those of the logos, saluting the power of the Word in whatever form it might take to reveal the glory of the One Reality.

The Sikhs in particular and the religious world in general are blessed to be recipients of the unique scripture of Sri Guru Granth Sahib. We must be humble and grateful to be chosen by Guru Gobind Singh who assigned us the task as keepers of the light of Sri Guru Granth Sahib on that Day of 20 October 1708.

Dr. (Bhai) Harbans Lal,  
The Academy of Guru Granth Studies  
Arlington, Texas 76016, USA



# UNIVERSALITY OF GURU GRANTH

*Extracts from Guru Granth Ratnavali, presenting as outline the canvas of thought-content in the Granth, the priceless offering of the Sikhs to mankind.*

No institutionalised religion is free from erosion until its tenets and doctrines have been enshrined in some tangible and permanent form. Great religions of the world have taken care to prepare or compile their scripture which is sovereign and supreme in its authority, employing the medium of poetry to reach out to infinity. Such is the *Guru Granth*, the sacred book of the Sikhs, that takes its place alongside the world's greatest scriptures, the *Vedas*, the *Zind-Avesta*, the *Bible* and the *Quran*. Its power is that of the puissant and winged word and no exegesis or commentary or translation can ever convey the entire majesty of its thought and poetry.

In all mystic literature the appeal of the numinous and the ineffable is inexplicable, if not incommunicable. And yet the great Sikh scripture is not a knot of metaphysical riddles and abstract theorising. On the contrary, since for the most part it employs the idiom of the common people, and draws its imagery, metaphors and symbols from the home, the street and the market-place, its poetry has a rare kind of immediacy, concreteness and urgency. The Sikhs indeed regard the *Granth* as a complete, inviolable and final embodiment of the message of the Gurus. There is no word beyond the *Word*. And this is how Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Master, addressed the congregation just before his ascension.

"O Beloved Khalsa, let him who desireth to behold the Guru or Spiritual teacher, obey the *Granth Sahib*.

This is the visible body of the Guru."

The *Adi Granth* was compiled by the Fifth Sikh Guru, Arjan Dev, in 1604 at the city of Amritsar. The second and final version was the presentation of Guru Gobind Singh which was finalised at Damdama in the year 1705. He included the hymns of the Ninth Guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur

and completed the *Granth* for all time. This authorised *Granth* has been transcribed and printed a number of times, and abides. Its adoration and veneration is an article of the greatest of faith with the Sikhs.

One of the glories of the *Guru Granth* is its catholic character. It is a scripture completely free from bias, animus and controversy. Indeed, the uniqueness of the *Granth* in this respect is all the more remarkable when one thinks of the obscurantism, factionalism and fanaticism of the period during which it was composed. Perhaps it is the only scripture of its kind which contains within its sacred covers the songs and utterances of a large number of saints, savants and bards. It is instructive to note that a fairly substantial part of the volume carries the compositions of Hindu *bhagats*, Muslim divines and *Sufi* poets and those God-inspired in quest of Truth and Love. Of course, their hymns and couplets rendered in their own language and idiom, are so integrated as to find complete correspondence with themes or motifs in compositions of the Sikh Gurus. Obviously, the idea of Guru Arjan Dev was to establish the fundamental unity of all religions and mystic experiences. It was an integral congress of minds and souls, operating on the same spiritual plane. To have so elevated the songs of the *bhagats*, the *sufis* and the *bhatts* to the condition of the *logos* was to salute the power of the *Word* in whatever form it might take to reveal the glory of God. The *Guru Granth* contains the compositions and utterances of the "high-born" Brahmins and the "proud" Kshatriyas, as also of the "lowly" Shudras and the "unlettered" Jats. This was at a time when the caste-system in India had almost paralysed the conscience of man. The revolutionary egalitarianism, so essential in Sikh ethos which such a step symbolises, is the core creed of the Sikhs. Above all, a poetic and mystic collage bespeaks the essential humility of the



Sikh mind, for humility has been given a place of pride in the table of virtues drawn up by the Gurus.

The *Guru Granth* is a *sui generis* scripture, indeed a magnificent compendium of the religious, mystic and metaphysical poetry written or spoken between the 12th and 17th centuries in different parts of India. It is also a mirror of the sociological, economic and political conditions of the time. The satire on the reactionary rulers, the obscurantist clergy, the fake fakirs and their like is clear, uncompromising and telling. In showing the path to spiritual salvation, the *Guru Granth* does not ignore the secular and practical life of man.

The poetry of the *Granth* is in itself a subject worthy of the highest consideration. The language principally employed is the language of the saints, evolved during the medieval period, a language which, allowing for variations, has wide currency in Northern India. The appeal lay in its directness, energy and resilience. Based upon the local dialects, it was leavened with expressions from Sanskrit, Prakrit, Persian, Arabic and Marathi.

Another outstanding feature of the *Guru Granth* is the precision and beauty of its prosody. Whilst a great deal of this is cast in traditional verse forms (*shlokas* and *paudis*), and could best be understood in context of the well-known classical *raags*, several hymns and songs make use of popular folklore and metres (*alahanis*, *ghoris*, *chands* etc.). The inner and integral relationship between music and verse has been maintained with scholarly rectitude and concern. This complete musicalisation of thought in a scientific and studied manner makes for the unusually vigorous yet supple discipline of the *Granth's* metrics and notations.

The entire *Bani* whose printed version in its current form comes to 1430 pages, is divided into 33 sections. Whilst the first section comprises the soulful and inspiring song of Guru Nanak, the *Japuji*, as also a few selected *paudis* or couplets, the final section is a collection of assorted verses including the *shlokas* and the *swaiyas* of the *Bhatts*. The remaining 31 sections are named after well-known classical ragas such as *Sri*, *Majh*, *Gauri*, *Gujri*, *Devchandhari*, *Dhanasari*, *Bilawal*, *Kedara*, *Malhar*, *Kalyan* and others. The division, thus, is fully based on musicology. Furthermore, each psalm or song is preceded by a number (*mohalla*) which denotes the name of the composer-Guru from Guru Nanak onwards. The apostolic succession extends from the First to the Tenth Guru, and the Gurus are often

reverentially referred to by their place in the order. What is more, each Guru speaks in the name of the Founder Guru whose spirit prevails in his nine successors. The House of Nanak is indeed a spiritual decagon, based upon a geometry of vision. The major hymns, *Japuji* (Guru Nanak), *Anand* (Guru Amar Das) *Sukhmani* or the Psalm of Peace (Guru Arjan Dev), *Rehras* (Guru Nanak, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan Dev) are widely recited individually or in congregation by the faithful as morning and evening prayers.

The Sikh philosophy as embodied in the *Guru Granth* is chiefly a philosophy of action and deed and consequence. The emphasis is on shared communal experience, on purposive and idealistic involvement. The extinction of the ego or self is the corner-stone of Sikhism. A person finds fulfilment or vindication by immersion in the sea of life. Thus the paths of renunciation, abdication, aloofness, flagellation and so on, are abjured. A Sikh is enjoined upon to be an insider, not detached. The Sikh philosophy is that of "the Everlasting Yea". Which is not to deny the importance or value of contemplation and peacefulness. The ideal Sikh cultivates these qualities in the midst of business and engagement. He too regards the world as ultimately *maya* or illusion and the life of man as a tableau of light and shade, but the Divine goal may not be achieved except through an acceptance of the reality of this unreality and a proper disposition of the allotted role in the phantasmagoria of life. To that extent, the relative concreteness or solidity of the world is to be endorsed as a measure of understanding. So long as man has a role to play, the artefact of that stage or theatre has to be taken for granted. For it has pleased the Creator to effect the world and people it with multiples of His Self.

And the whole creation moves according to a predestined plan. Many a time has the grand show of earth been mounted and dismantled. It is not given to creature man to fully comprehend the essence of reality. God, according to the holy *Granth*, is Omnipresent, Omnipotent, Omniscient. He is the Initiator and the End. He is Self-Creator and Self-Propeller. The individual loses state of bliss as a result of ego and the *id*. Caught in the meshes of power and self, it loses its native and true moorings and is being tossed about by the whirlpool of time. A soul thus alienated from the Lord goes through aeons and aeons of suffering. The road to heaven is only through His Grace.

Taran Singh  
Punjabi University, Patiala



# Compositions enshrined in the Guru Granth

## Guru Nanak (1469-1539)



In a world rife with falsehood, sunk in superstitions and plagued by all kinds of inequities and inequalities, Guru Nanak rang in the gospel of truth, universal love and brotherhood. The Founder Guru of the Sikhs and one of the greatest and saintliest of saviours, he redeemed the soul of a moribund society that had experienced a total eclipse, if not annihilation, of all abiding human values.

The condition of the contemporary society has been vividly described by the First Master in the well-known words:

### RAAG DHANASRI

The whole Heaven with its myriad lights  
goes round and round my Beloved!  
The little stars are as pearls!  
The wind fans Him,  
And there rises in His temple incense  
from the hearts of a million  
flowers,  
The endless music of creation  
resounds!  
A million eyes hath my Beloved!  
And yet no mortal eyes!  
A million lotus-feet are His,  
And yet no mortal feet!  
I die with joy of the perfume of His  
presence!  
His Flesh emits a million perfumes!  
And yet He hath no scent!  
He is the Light of Life.  
By the beams of His face the stars  
burn bright,  
And He is the soul of everything.  
My Arti is waiting for things to be as He  
willeth.  
When the Master comes and stands by,  
the Divine Light is revealed!  
The Moon of His lotus-feet draws me  
like a thirsty *sarang* whose thirst  
daily increases.  
O God! Come and bestow on me Thy  
saving grace  
And let me repose for ever in Thy Holy,  
Holy, Naming Thee.

*"This age is a knife, kings are  
butchers; justice hath taken wings and  
fled.*

*In this completely dark night of  
falsehood the moon of truth is never seen  
to rise."*



Guru Nanak was born in a Bedi family at Talwandi (Nankana Sahib) near Lahore, in 1469. At an early age he learnt Sanskrit, Persian and the prevalent form of Gurmukhi. He was a precocious child with a pronounced penchant for religion. His father, Mehta Kalu, made vain efforts to make him lead a mundane mode of life. Thus, he was employed in a Government store of the Nawab of Sultanpur where he served for 13 years.

His day of destiny of ecstatic communion with God came in 1499. While taking his daily bath in the rivulet *Bein* that flows near Sultanpur, Nanak had his illumination through a soul-stirring vision of Almighty God. It was here that the Guru delivered his great sermon in the memorable words: "There is no Hindu, there is no Musalman". The spiritual enlightenment enjoined on him a mission for the propagation of which he consecrated his entire life. He set out on his great *Udasis* (missionary journeys) to deliver God's message to the suffering humanity.

He toured the whole of India and many foreign countries, preaching the gospel of true religion for rooting out ignorance and evil. The great Guru undertook five major missionary journeys in this manner.

In the course of his first long travel, Guru Nanak visited celebrated Hindu places of pilgrimage including Kurukshetra, Benaras and Jagannath Puri. He taught people how to distinguish *Dharma* from *Adharma* and abandon such pretentious rituals and prayers as constituted the accepted religious practice of the times. During his second journey the Guru went as far as Sangla Deep and having done his ministry, returned to the Punjab.

The Master's third missionary journey is known for his discussions with reputed Kashmiri Pandits and savants and for his visits to famous haunts of the *Yogis*, the *Sidhas* and the *Nathas* in the Himalayas. The Guru preached truth and righteousness wherever he went.

The fourth missionary journey comprised the Master's visit to prominent Muslim shrines in Mecca, Medina and Baghdad. After his return to the Punjab, the Guru set out on his fifth and final journey. This time he confined his travel to places nearer home such as Saidpur, Pakpattan, Multan, Achal Batala, and others. Saidpur had been sacked by Babar's forces. Deeply moved by spectacle of infinite human suffering resulting from the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by the Mughal invader, the Guru chanted hymns of Sorrow (*Khoun Ke Sohlay*).

At Achal Batala, a renowned centre of the *Yogis* and *Sidhas*, the Guru preached the validity of all religions. For

twenty-two years Guru Nanak propagated his faith in India and abroad. During his 18 years' stay at Kartarpur, he incarnated into splendid deeds the lofty ideals that he had been preaching all his life. Thus, by his own inspiring example, the Guru demonstrated how *Raj* and *Yog*, the worldly and the spiritual modes of life, could be happily and fruitfully conjoined.

During his extensive missionary journeys, Guru Nanak exhorted the benighted humanity to pursue the path of divine meditation. He stressed the significance of righteous living above all other things. The Guru made men realise that there is only one God, who is peerless. He held that through *Nam Simran* (Repeated Remembrance of God's Name) and concentration on *Shabad* (the word) man could muster courage to uphold truth in his life.

Guru Nanak disavowed all cant and blind observance of meaningless customs, rites and rituals. The Guru averred that they were purposeless meandering; unconnected with the attainment of man's spiritual destiny. He rightly laid accent on pious practical living which alone constitutes true religiosity.

The quintessence of Guru Nanak's philosophy is enshrined in his *mool mantra*. He has aptly emphasised the imperative need of truth and beauty, freedom and fraternity. According to Guru Nanak, religion implies a communion between God and man. As a corollary to this, a person who devotes himself to *Nam Simran* becomes virtuous and fearless. Unsullied by ill-will or enmity, he works for the amelioration of the weak and the down-trodden. His noble actions give an impulse to his aesthetic sensibility. A truly religious man of the Guru's conception is opposed alike to serfdom and masterdom. His life is radiant with love and humility, sweetness and light.

Indeed, Guru Nanak wanted to unite and organise his disciples in order to give religion true solidarity. He established *sangat* (congregations) at numerous places and appointed their heads. He compiled his writings in book form which he handed over to his successor, Guru Angad Dev.

The Guru established a *sangat* at Kartarpur and prescribed a set of values to be cherished and practised. He also founded the great institution of *langar* (gratuitous community kitchen) and spent his earnings from land on running them. He gave living form to his doctrine of work (*kirat*), *Nam Simran* and the temple of bread. The Guru nominated Bhai Lehna, his most beloved and devoted disciple, to be the Guru after him. In the holy *Granth* are enshrined 974 hymns by the First Master.



## Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552)

The mantle of the First Master fell on Angad, the second Sikh Guru, in 1539 and he graced the exalted position till 1552.

Born at Mate-de Saran, a village in Punjab, in 1504, Guru Angad was originally known as Bhai Lehna. His parents were orthodox Hindus and worshippers of the goddess Durga. The most momentous and exulting moment in Bhai Lehna's life came around 1531 when he met Guru Nanak at Kartarpur. So

### SHLOKA

The World is the abode of the True One; in it the True One abides.  
Some, in His Will He mergeth in Himself; others He destroys in His Will.  
Some, in His Will, He rids of Maya: others in it He involves  
And who of us can say, O whom in His Mercy He'll bless.  
Nanak, turns Guru-Ward but he, whose mind He Himself illumines.

(Var Asa)



due course, elevated him to the Guruship.

Imbibing the spirit of the First Master, Guru Angad began to disseminate the gospel of Guru Nanak to redeem the caste-worn and custom-ridden contemporary society. He denounced formalism and ritualism and highlighted the edifying experience of adoration of the Guru, service of the Guru (*Guru Seva*) and divine meditation (*Nam Simran*). These he regarded as the noblest means of God-realisation. Guru Angad held service in high esteem. Indeed, he placed the love of God and service of humanity on the same pedestal.

To consolidate and propagate the mission of Guru Nanak, the Second Master collected the celestial songs and teachings of his predecessor which, together with his own compositions, he transmitted to mankind. There are sixty-two hymns by Guru Angad in the *Guruth Sahib*.

Guru Angad was also a great pioneer in education. He started a school which, besides promoting the moral health of the students, organised wrestling and such other manly sports. The Guru's system of education sought a harmonious development of the physical, intellectual and spiritual aspects of the human personality.

The Second Master modified and improved upon the Gurumukhi script and made arrangements for popularising it. He established his headquarters at Khandoor and under his divine spell, many embraced the Sikh faith. The Guru commended the significance of honest work and corporate kitchens. He exhorted the Sikhs not to take to renunciation or asceticism but to carry on the worship of God along with their worldly duties and obligations. Thus, he strengthened the institution of *Guru ka Langar* or the Temple of community dining, an imaginative measure which enlisted all men in a league of love and service.

powerful and profound was the Guru's divine spell on him that he wound up all his domestic affairs and devoted himself entirely to the service of the Guru and of fellow-men in whom the Lord constantly dwells. Because of his patient and unpretentious service, he endeared himself to the Guru who lovingly called him 'Angad' (of my own limb) and in



## Guru Amar Das (1479-1574)

Guru Amar Das, the seventy-three year old disciple who had endeared himself for his humility and simplicity in Guru Angad's holy company was nominated Guru in 1552.

Born of orthodox Hindu parents in Baserke, a Punjab village, in 1479, Guru Amar Das was a great pilgrim. Once he happened to listen to rapturous chanting of Guru Nanak's *Japji* by Bibi Amro, Guru Angad's daughter and his nephew's wife. He was so enthralled by its supernal note that he instantly went to Guru Angad, the Second Master. He spent about 12 years, from 1540 to 1552 in selfless service of the Guru and in deep meditation, amidst an aura of holiness and splendour radiating from his beloved Guru.

While propagating the gospel of Guru Nanak, the Third Master laid special stress on the service of the Guru and contemplation of the Lord's Name. He asserted that man could attain *Sahaj* (tranquility) through the path of the holy Name. All doubts disappear and man attains *Ananda* (bliss), a stage achieved by the Bhagats through God-realisation and these values could be acquired only through the Guru's grace.

During the 22 years of his ministry, Guru Amar Das took a number of significant measures to consolidate the Sikh religion, as also to endear it to the masses. To widen the scope of the movement, he made Goindwal his missionary centre. Here he caused a big *baoli* (an open well) dug and organised festivals on the occasion of *Devali* and *Baisakhi*. A large number of Sikhs from far-flung places flocked to Goindwal. Indeed it became the first place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

Besides, the Guru set up twenty-two *manjis*, or dioceses in different parts of the country where Sikhism had taken roots. Each *Manji* was placed under the charge of a pious

Sikh with whose effort the Sikh *Sangats* (congregations) met daily and chanted the Guru's hymns.



The Third Master invested the institution of *langar* with a kind of inviolable sanctity. No one could have *darshan* of the Guru without first partaking of food in the *langar*. This had the desired effect of proclaiming and establishing the essential equality of all mankind and negation of caste divides. In the Guru's community kitchen, the rich and the poor, the high-born and the untouchable, all ate together as members of an integrated human family. The Guru also fought other rampant social evils like *sati*, intoxicants and *purdah*. With a view to marking the Sikhs as a distinct people, Guru Amar Das prescribed a set of rites to be followed on birth and death. The Guru also visited Hindu cities of pilgrimage and there, too, propagated the gospel of Guru Nanak and the Sikh way of life.

Nor did the Guru ignore the socio-economic problems of the people. He persuaded Emperor Akbar to abolish the pilgrim tax, an oppressive measure that hurt sentiments of the non-Muslims. Akbar, who visited the Guru was so deeply impressed with his ideology, particularly the community kitchen, that he offered a gift of land for the *langar*. The Guru politely declined the offer, saying that the *langar* belonged to the common man who alone must manage it from his own honest earnings.

Guru Amar Das preached Guru Nanak's word and also composed his own hymns. He

had a number of copies of hymns of the Gurus prepared in order to preserve and propagate the holy word. Under his direction, his grandson, Sahsar Ram compiled the compositions of the first three Gurus along with those of the Bhagats in two volumes, known as Baba Mohan's *pothis*. There are 907 hymns by Guru Amar Das in the *Granth Sahib*.

Thus, under the aegis of the Third Master, the great movement of Sikhism, besides ministering to man's moral needs, also addressed itself to the social issues.

### RAAG RAMKALI

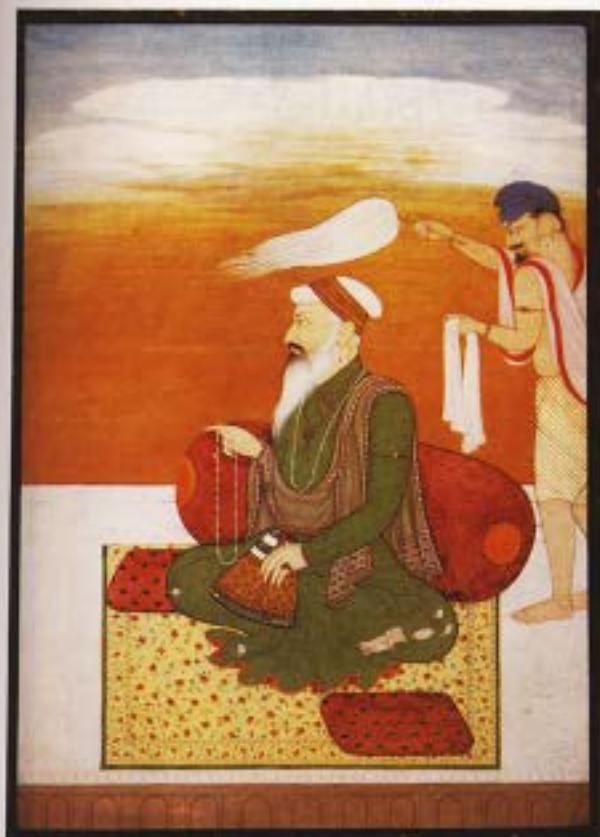
Through mere deeds, poise cometh not to the mind,  
And without poise one's doubt is stilled not.  
Yea, through no other discipline is the Doubt dispelled.  
Howsoever many one doeth the deeds.  
With Doubt is the mind stained:  
Through what discipline is it to be cleansed?  
Pray, attune thyself to the Word and so cleanse thy mind  
And in it cherish thou thy Lord.  
Sayeth Nanak: "Thus, By the Guru's Grace,  
Doth poise come to the mind and one's  
Doubt is dispelled"

(Anand)



## Guru Ram Das (1534-1581)

Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Master, ascended the holy *gaddi* of Guru Nanak in 1574 and adorned the exalted office till 1581. Though he was the son-in-law of Guru Amar Das, being married to his daughter Bibi Bhani, yet he revered the Third Master as his Guru with an unwavering fervour. Inebriated with the nectar of the divine *Nam*, he spurned worldly comforts, and spent all his time in ecstatic communion with the Lord through moments of deep meditation.



Originally called Jetha Ji, Guru Ram Das was born in a Sodhi family at Lahore in 1534. His parents had died when he was just a child and was then brought up by his maternal grandparents. He had an opportunity to visit Goindwal, the seat of the Third Master, at a time when the *baoli* was being dug through voluntary labour. He immersed himself in this labour of love with verve and dedication that he won the Guru's appreciation and recognition. The Third Master was so highly pleased with the disciple that he gave his daughter Bibi Bhani to him in marriage. He served Guru Amar Das with as

much love and devotion as ever before. It was in 1574 that he was invested with Guruship and named Guru Ram Das.

Guru Ram Das's contribution to *Bani* is considerable. His compositions throb with an emotion born of love for fellowman and yearning for God. They inculcate in the people adoration of the Lord and the Guru. Rightly does the Master image an ideal man as one who had drunk deep at the fount of *Nam* and whose eyes are aglow with the love of the Lord. He sought a consummation of the human personality through God-realisation.

### RAAG GUJARI

I beseech thee, O true Guru, the true being, God's own.  
We, the humble and the lowly, have sought Thy Refuge  
Take pity and awaken the Name in us.  
O my friend, my Guru, illumine my heart with the Lord's Name.  
The Name revealed to me by the Guru is the Friend of my life;  
To meditate upon Thee, O Lord, is my daily routine.  
They are Thy Own and their Destiny is high, who trust in Thee  
and are athirst for Thee.  
They are satiated only with Thy Name.  
In the Society of the Holy, their virtues shine forth.  
They who tasted not the Name of the Lord, they, the unfortunate  
ones,  
Are handed over to the *Kama*  
They who sought not the Shelter of the Guru in the  
Society of the holy, lie on Them! O, lie is on their life to come!  
They who were received in the sanctuary of the Guru  
They were the ones so destined by God.  
Blessed, Blessed is the Society of the Holy where I taste  
The Essence of the lord, and the Name is revealed to me .

The *Vars* (ballads) of the Fourth Master, enshrined in the Guru Granth Sahib, are more than those of other contributors. After Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Das, it was he who expanded the range of the *Raags* in the *Adi Granth* adding as many as eleven to the existing ones. Notable among the Fourth Master's contribution to Sikhism is the establishment of a new *Chak* called *Guru Ka Chak* on the land gifted by Emperor Akbar to Bibi Bhani, the Guru's wife. Later, this developed into the city of Amritsar. Here, the Guru started the excavation for two *sarovars* (pools) which when completed during Guru Arjan's time, came to be known as *Santokhsar* and *Amritsar*. So great was the Guru's magnetism that during his pontificate,



Amritsar became the famous place of pilgrimage for the Sikhs.

With a view to transmitting the gospel of Sikhism as also to meeting the expenditure incurred on the ever expanding altruistic plans and programmes, the Guru founded the institution of *masands*. The offerings of the Sikhs were collected by the *masands* who rendered these to the Guru.

Guru Ram Das also deputed learned missionaries to establish contact with the Sikhs outside the Punjab.

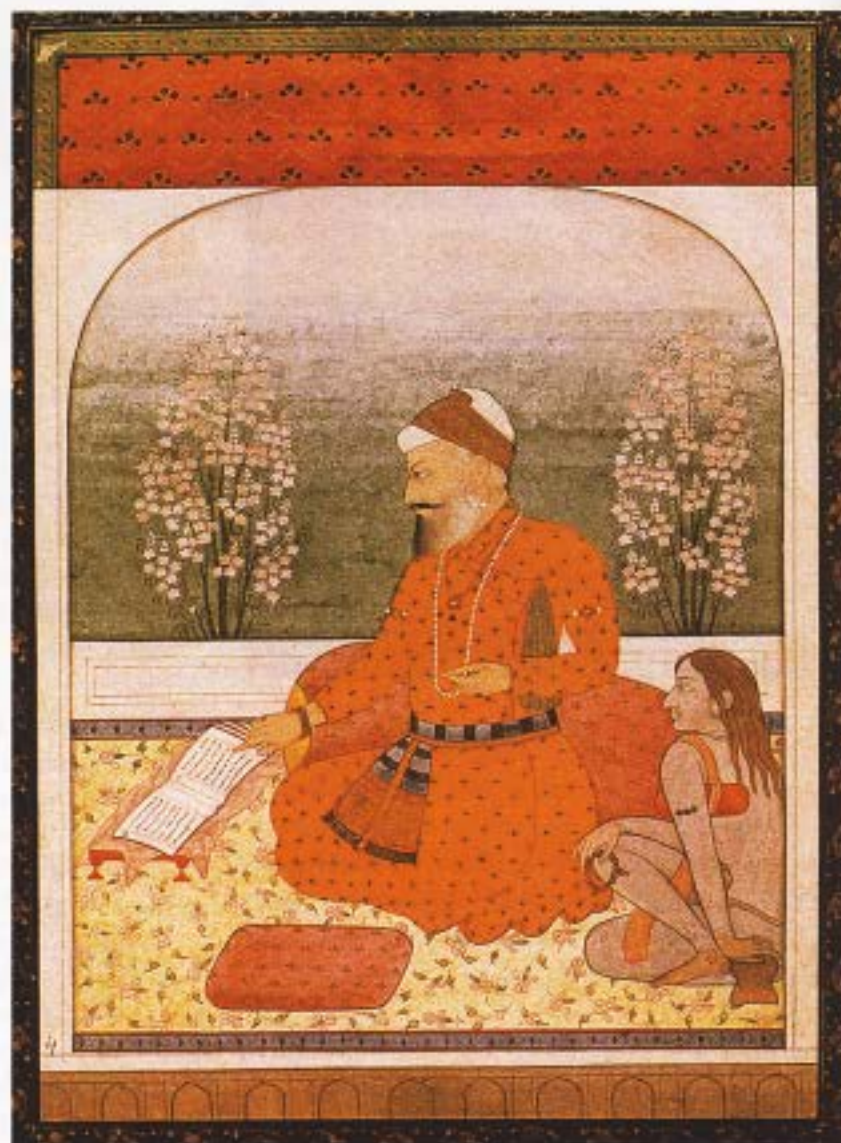
Guru Amar Das had already set up 22 *Manjis* (dioceses). Accordingly, the Fourth Master bade Bhai Hindal and Bhai Gurdas to begin their missionary work and preach Sikhism at Jandiala and Agra respectively. The Guru also shifted his headquarters from Goindwal to Amritsar. Besides, he got handwritten *Gutkas* (booklets of holy hymns) prepared. The *Adi Granth* contains 679 hymns by Guru Ram Das.

Guru Ram Das had three sons: Prithi Chand, Mahan Dev and Arjan Dev. He considered the youngest son, Arjan Dev, as the ablest and saintliest and installed him as his successor Guru in 1581.

## Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606)

Guru Arjan, the 'Prince of Martyrs' and the 'Prophet of Peace', proffered his precious life to nurture the glory that was to be the Sikh *Panth*. The Fifth Master's life was marked by divine bliss and sublime sacrifices, born of a sweet acceptance of God's Will, gifted with a quintessential poetic afflatus and immeasurable imaginative sympathies, the Guru gave the movement of Sikhism a definite direction, perspective and programme. He made the new faith coeval or coextensive with the entire gamut of existence and raised its exquisite edifice on values for which there is neither death nor change.

Guru Arjan Dev adorned the sacred throne of Guru Nanak from 1581 to 1606. Born at Goindwal in 1563, he was the youngest and noblest son of Guru Ram Das. He had an innate poetic sensibility which was exquisitely displayed in the epistles that he sent to his father from Lahore. They are deeply expressive of the pangs of separation and the exuberance of Love. The Fourth Master's decision to make Guru Arjan his spiritual heir was bitterly opposed by Prithi Chand who contended that, being the eldest son, he alone was entitled to the Guruship. Thus, he never reconciled to his younger brother's installation as the Guru.





Under Guru Arjan Dev the Sikh movement registered great progress. The Guru not only completed the construction of the *Sarovars* started at 'Guru Ka Chak' by his predecessor but also constructed two more *Sarovars*. He had the *Harimandar* built in the middle of a *Sarovar* and invited a celebrated Muslim divine, Mian Mir, to lay its foundation stone. Remarkable for its architectural and aesthetic beauty and unique in its conception, the temple with its four doors symbolises the inborn equality of all mankind. Indeed, it is open to all of the "four castes" without any discrimination. Thus, the Guru sought dissolution of all castes and creed distinctions. Unlike the Hindu shrines that are built on a high plinth, the *Harimandar*

#### RAAG KANRA

Now, I'm jealous of no one;  
Now that I have attained unto the Society  
of Saints.  
Yea, I am estranged with no one; nor is  
any one a stranger unto me.  
Indeed I am the friend of all  
All that the God Doeth, with that I am  
pleased, this is the Wisdom I've  
received from the Saints.  
Yea, the One God pervadeth all: and,  
Seeing Him, I am wholly in Bloom.

(the Temple of God) was built on a level lower than that of the surrounding areas, thereby making it incumbent upon devotees to go down the steps in a spirit of true humility. In addition, the towns of Tarn Taran and Kartarpur flourished under the Guru's tutelage. He had a magnificent *sarovar* built at Tarn Taran ("pool of salvation") and a *baoli* constructed at Lahore.

Guru Arjan undertook tours of the Punjab to preach Sikhism. He rationalised the institution of the *masands* and ordained that every Sikh should voluntarily donate a tenth of his income earned by his hard work for religious purposes. The *masands* collected the offerings thus made and deposited them in the Guru's treasury.

When the Punjab was in the grip of drought and famine, Guru Arjan persuaded Emperor Akbar to remit the land revenue for that year.

The most epochal achievement of Guru Arjan was compilation of the *Adi Granth*. The Guru devoted three years, from 1601 to 1604, to completion of the sublime project. He thoroughly studied the entire treasure of *Gurbani*, collected the hymns and psalms of the previous Gurus and screened the sayings of the *Bhagats* collected by the previous Gurus. He not only put the entire *Bani* together but also compiled it systematically under different *ragas*. Guru Arjan's genius for compilation is eminently projected by the *vars* included in the *Adi Granth*. He added *shlokas* to the *Bani* of all the earlier Gurus in order to elucidate their deeper meanings. To compile the sacred sayings of his predecessors and the *Bhagats* under various *ragas* (musical measures) obviously demanded an unfaltering grasp of the musical measures. Besides being a notable compiler, Guru Arjan was also a gifted poet. More than half the holy *Granth* consist of his own sayings which comprise 2218 verses. Thus his work exceeds that of the other 35 inspired poets whose compositions are enshrined in the *Adi Granth*.

The essential message of Guru Arjan's hymns is meditation on *Nam*. The Guru has lucidly expatiated on the concept of *brahmigiani* (the enlightened soul). According to him, this enlightenment can be attained only through meditation on the Lord and the Guru's grace. In depicting the attributes of the *brahmigiani*, he has compared him to a lotus flower which immersed in mud and water is yet pure and beautiful. Without rancour or enmity, he is forever courageous and calm.

Guru Arjan set a wonderful personal example by living up to his own concept of a *brahmigiani*. All his holy compositions are characterised by humility and tenderness. He seeks the grace of God for the fulfilment of all human needs. With compilation of the first volume of the *Adi Granth*, the Sikh religion registered greater unity and identity. The Sikhs now treasured a unique *Book* or *Granth* of their own and thus established a distinct and separate entity. Guru Arjan installed the holy *Granth* at the *Harimandar*. Amritsar became the most significant centre of the Sikh faith and the Sikhs emerged as a pristine and powerful community.

During the period between Guru Nanak and Guru Arjan, there was no conflict between the Sikhs and the Mughal Kings. Emperor Akbar in particular was a man of liberal views and much respected the ideals of the Sikh movement. But with his death and the following enthronement of Jehangir, there was a total reversal of policy and change of attitude.

Jehangir's own writings reveal that he considered the spread of Sikhism as a positive threat to Islam. In a moment of fanatic frenzy, he characterised Sikhism as a 'shop of falsehood' and declared that he would extirpate it at the earliest opportunity. Thus he set about with a fanatical zeal to carry out his threat and trumped up the charge of treason against the Guru. With complicity of some officials, Jehangir had the Guru imprisoned and tortured to death at Lahore in 1606. The martyrdom of Guru Arjan engendered a wave of shock and fury amongst the Sikhs. No single event till then had so profoundly brought home to them the power of the sword. Under the Sixth Master, Guru Hargobind they were militarised and prepared to face the Mughal might squarely. Thus emerged a new stance in the history of Sikhism which led to a synthesis between *Bhagati* and *Shakti* (wordly power). Guru Arjan was the first Sikh Guru, who by his martyrdom lent to Sikhism such amazing strength and solidarity as had never been known before. As desired by the Fifth Master, Guru Hargobind was ordained Guru in 1606; he guided and shaped the destiny of the Sikh community until 1645.



## Guru Tegh Bahadur (1621-1675)

In the galaxy of immortal martyrs who gave their precious lives to keep ablaze the flame of faith and freedom, the example of the Ninth Master, Guru Tegh Bahadur stands out with brilliant radiance. There have, doubtless, been other prophets who sacrificed themselves at the altar

defending the religion of another faith, that of the persecuted Hindus who had sought his shelter when they were forced to choose between death and conversion. Guru Tegh Bahadur, the second martyr Guru, who was born at Amritsar in 1621, was the youngest son of Guru Hargobind

Sahib, the Sixth Master (1595-1645). Guru Har Rai, the Seventh Master (1630-61), and Guru Hari Krishan, the Eighth Master (1656-1664) however, preceded him as Gurus. He adorned the sacred throne of Guru Nanak from 1664 to 1675.

Guru Tegh Bahadur toured the Punjab particularly the Malwa region, and Eastern India, to preach Sikhism. He went to Assam with Raja Ram Singh and stayed with him for nearly two years. The Guru's family accompanied him on this trip. While proceeding to Assam, he left his family at Patna. It was here that his only son Guru Gobind Singh was born in 1666. While leaving Assam for the Punjab, Guru Tegh Bahadur broke his journey at Patna for a short

while and then returned to the Punjab. He purchased land from the Raja of Kahloor at Makhawal and settled there and named the place as Anandpur. From here he set out on extensive missionary tours and attracted amongst others, several Muslims to his faith.

The main theme of Guru Tegh Bahadur's sacred hymns is *Nam Simran* (concentration on the Divine Name) and love of Guru (adoration of the Guru). One hundred and fifteen hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur are incorporated in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.

During Guru Tegh Bahadur's ministry, Emperor Aurangzeb intensified his fanatical plans for forcibly converting the Hindus to Islam. This move had serious repercussions in Kashmir, and the learned Pandits of Kashmir came to Guru Tegh Bahadur to seek refuge. The Guru advised them to go and inform Aurangzeb that if he could persuade Guru Tegh Bahadur to embrace Islam, they would all willingly become Muslims. This proposal appealed to Aurangzeb, who had already hatched plans to bring to an end Guru Tegh Bahadur's missionary activities, so, he at once issued orders for his arrest.



### RAAG SORATH

That man who in the midst of grief is free from grieving,  
And free from fear, and free from the snare of delight,  
Nor is covetous of gold that he knows to be dust,  
Who is neither a backbiter nor a flatterer,  
Nor has greed in his heart, nor vanity, nor any worldly attachment,  
Who remains at his balance unmoved by good and ill fortune,  
Who indifferent to the world's praise and blame  
And discards every wishful fantasy  
Accepting his lot in the disinterested fashion,  
Not worked upon by lust or by wrath,  
In such a man God dwelleth.  
The man on whom the Grace of the Guru alights  
Understands the way of conduct:  
His soul, O Nanak, is mingled with the Lord  
As water mingles with water!

of their own religion, but the uniqueness of the Ninth Master's martyrdom lies in that he courted death for



The Guru, along with some of his companions was finally brought to Delhi and asked to convert to Islam or else face the penalty of death. The Master averred that he would sacrifice his life rather than give up his faith and the freedom of one's belief. Under Aurangzeb's orders, he was beheaded at the place now called *Sis Ganj* in Delhi. His martyrdom was yet another severe challenge to the Sikh conscience. It was realised then that there could be no

compromise between an insensate power imbrued with blood and a proud people wedded to a life of peace with honour. The sacrifice roused the devitalised Indians from their supine somnolence and gave them a hint of the power that comes from self-respect and sacrifice.

Guru Tegh Bahadur earned the enduring sobriquet title of *Hind-di-Chadar* or the *Protector of India*.

## Sheikh Farid (1175-1265)



### RAAG ASA

They who love their lord with their heart alone are true,  
But they who say one thing and do another, they are reckoned false.  
They who are imbued with the Love of Allaha are inebriated  
with His Vision.  
Yea, they who have forsaken the Lord's Name are a burden to  
the earth.  
The true Darveshas are those whom the Lord Himself Owneth.  
Blessed is their mother, fruitful is their coming into the world.  
Thou art the Sustainer of the world; Infinite, Unfathomable, O  
Lord,  
Yea, they who have realised Thy Truth, their Feet I kiss.  
O Lord, I seek Thy Refuge; Thou art our Forgiving Lord:  
So Bless Thou Farid, the Sheikh, with the Bounty of Thy worship.

Sheikh Farid is one of those Sufi saints who by their spiritual influence initiated many into a life of divine meditation. While fanatical Muslim invaders had violated the spirit of Islam by their misdeeds, Sheikh Farid's noble impact redeemed its image.

Sheikh Faridudin Masaud Shakarganj, who was born of Bibi Kursam and Sheikh Jamatuddin in 1175 at Kothiwal (Chawal Mushaikhhan) in the district of Multan, became a disciple of Khwaja Kutubdin Bakhtiar Kaki of Multan where he did hard penance. He spent 15 to 20 years at Hansi and then stayed at Ajodhan which was later known as Pak Pattan. It is here that there is the spiritual seat of Baba Farid.

In recognition of his deep piety, sacrifices and his spiritual ability, Khwaja Bakhtiar Kaki appointed him leader of the *Christi* Order. His life was an excellent example of patience,

contentment and humility. He lived in mud huts, ate bread made of *jowar* and wore simple garments which constituted his only wealth. The offerings received were never spent on his personal needs.

He was a householder with a large family of eight children some of whom worked on the land, one was in the army, and the rest looked forward to ascending the Sheikh's *gaddi*. But when his end came, Sheikh Farid sent his *Musalam* and *Tasabi* to Sheikh Nizamuddin at Delhi. He died on 15 October, 1265 at Pak Pattan.

Baba Farid had a great fund of love and kindness for his fellowman, the reason for which he came to be known as Shakarganj. This sweetness is discernible in his *shlokas*. There are as many as 116 hymns by Sheikh Farid in the *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*.





#### RAAG GUJARI

Primal Being, sublimely beautiful,  
 Primal Truth, all-pervading,  
 Supremely wonderful, transcending nature:  
 Why not then contemplate Him, the Redeemer,  
 Devote thy mind only to the Holy Name  
 Which is the ambrosia and essence of life.  
 For those who remember the Lord,  
 There is no fear of birth, of old age, and of death.  
 If thou desirest to defeat the angel of death  
 And all his ministers.  
 Praise and bless thy Lord,  
 And no virtuous deeds.  
 The bliss of the Lord is unchanging,  
 Now, and in the past, and in the future.  
 Man, if thou seekst to do virtuous deeds  
 Renounce thy greed, renounce thy coveting  
 Of thy neighbour's wife, all sins, all sinful desires,  
 And make the Lord thy refuge!  
 In heart and in words and in deeds  
 Devote thyself solely to thy Beloved Lord.  
 Without such devotion, what profit is there  
 In Yoga, temple rituals, alms, and austerities?  
 O man, repeat the Sweet Name of the Beloved  
 Who is the bestower of all power upon men!  
 Jaidev openly seeketh his refuge in Thee!  
 Who art now, has been, and who pervadest all!

Shri Jaidev was the renowned Bhagat of Bengal. His *Geet Govind* is renowned for its poetic beauty and musical richness and is sung in the Vaishnava temples. The son of Bhaj Dev and Bam Devi, he was born in the village Kandli in district Bir Bhoom. A temple at Kandli commemorates his memory.

The earliest reference to Jaidev's greatness is found in Kabir's verse:

*Thou have crowned with thy boundless Grace, O Lord!  
 Jaidev, Namdeva and Sudama, the Brahman.*

Guru Arjan Dev also writes:

*Jaideva has risen above his egoism.*

*(Basant Mahala 5)*

Two of Jaidev's hymns, one in *raag Gujari* and the another in *raag Maru*, have been incorporated into the *Guru Granth Sahib*.



## ❧ Bhagat Trilochan (1267-1335) ❧

Bhakt Trilochan came of a Vaish family. There is no unanimity regarding the place of his birth but some historians give the honour to the village Barsi near Sholapur (Maharashtra State). Others hold that, though born and brought up in Uttar Pradesh, he spent most of his time in Maharashtra. The fact that two *slokas* of Kabir constitute a dialogue between Namdev and Trilochan shows that these two saints were contemporaries.

*Bewitched by Maya, Nam Deva asketh Trilochana, his friend  
Wherefore printest thou these sheets unwindful of thy Lord?*

*Sayeth Trilochana, O Namdeva!*

*The Lord's sweet name is ever on my lips.*

*And while I work with my hands and feet*

*My heart dwelleth on the Divine Being.*

The Bhagat speaks of himself thus:

*With thy Grace, O Lord! were redeemed Namdev,*

*Kabir and Trilochana*

*As were Sadna and Sain.*

There are four hymns of Bhagat Trilochan in the *Guru Granth Sahib*. In these he has condemned superficial rituals and pretentious renunciation and stressed holiness of the heart.

### RAG GUJARI

Thou who has not cleansed the dirt  
from thy heart.

Why wearest thou the outer garb of  
hermit?

And thou who in the unfolding lotus  
of thy heart

Has not enclosed thy Lord,

Why hast thou adopted complete  
renunciation?

And thou, learned Brahmin, Jai Chand,  
Thou hast gone astray in error and  
illusion;

For all thy learning, thou knowest not  
God as the Primal Joy;

Thou, Yogi, eating in every house

Hast fattened only thy body;

For gain thou wearest thy patched  
coat.

For gain thy beggar's ear-rings.

Thou hast rubbed thyself with the  
ashes

Of the dead from the cremation  
ground,

But since thou hast no Guru

Thou hast not found the One Reality!

All of ye, why these holy mutterings?

Why practice all these outward  
penances?

Ye might as well churn water!

Remember the Lord in His Peace

Who hath made millions of worlds!

Why, O holy beggar, carrying the  
water-pot

Trudgest thou to the sixty-eight holy  
places?

Trilochan says: Listen, O foolish  
mortals!

What does it avail to thrash husks  
instead of corn.

## ❧ Bhagat Namdev (1270-1350) ❧

Nam Dev was a celebrated saint whose name was a household word for the people of Maharashtra. He was born in the village of Narsi Bamni in the Satara District of Maharashtra in a family of calico printers. His father was Dam Seti and mother Gona Bai. There are many legends about his piety. They say that once as a child when his maternal grandfather was to go out somewhere, he instructed Nam Dev to offer milk to God. Following the instructions literally, he placed a cup of milk before the image of the Lord. With a child's unquestioning faith and unfaltering devotion he created such an atmosphere it is said, that God drank the proffered milk.

During his pilgrimages, Nam Dev once came to the Punjab. Local tradition has it that he spent a number of years in the village of Ghuman in Gurdaspur and died here at Traudsi, in the month of Asso. Every year a fair is held at his shrine as a mark of homage to his spirit.

Prior to Swami Rama Nand and Bhagat Kabir, the credit for spreading the thought of *bhagati* from Maharashtra to Punjab goes to Nam Dev. He wrote in Marathi as well as in Sant Bhasha. Marathi Abhangas included in the *Nam Dev Gatha* are sung throughout Maharashtra. Sixty-one of Nam Dev's verses have been incorporated in the *Holy Granth* under different ragas.

### RAAG SORATH

The neighbouring woman asketh Nam Deva:

Pray, who hath built thy tenement?

I will pay him double the wages if thou tellest me of that mason.

Sayeth Nam Dev: O woman I can tell not of the mason.

For, seeest thou not that He Pervadeth all?

That Mason is he mainstay of my vital breath.

The Mason demands the wages of Love if one wants

Him to put up one's tenement.

Yea, if one breaks with the people,

Even one's kindred, then the Mason cometh of His own.

I can describe Him not, for He abideth in the hearts of all, all over

And, pray, how can the dumb one describe the taste of Nectar?

Hear thou the merits of the Mason who hath bounded

The seas and made Dhruva eternal,

And rescued Sita from the clutches of Ravana,

And handed over Lanka to Bibhikshan,

Yea, such is my Lord, the God"



Bhagat Sadhna was a resident of Sehwan in Sindh. Though a butcher by calling, his piety and meditation on God elevated him to the ranks of a great saint.

There are several myths about his mystic character. It is said that once while he was using *Saligram* (sacred phatic stone) for weighing meat, a Sadhu lost his temper with him and abused



him for this sacrilege. Sadhna gave that *Saligram* to the Sadhu who then discovered that Sadhna was a great *bhagat*. He was so smitten with remorse and felt so small that he returned the stone to Sadhna. After some time, Sadhna renounced his home and set out on a pilgrimage. On the way he encountered a beautiful woman who tried to entice him, but Sadhna did not yield to the temptation. She thought that he was afraid of her husband and had the latter killed. But even then, Sadhna did not fall victim to

## RAAG BILAWAL

For the love of a king's daughter,  
A man disguised himself as Vishnu,  
For the love of her and for his own ambitions:  
Yet, Lord, Thou didst protect him from his shame!  
Of what avail are Thy Powers,  
O Lord of all the world,  
If my sins cannot like his, be forgiven?  
What does it profit me  
To seek for the Lion's help,  
If the Lion still letteth the jackal devour me?  
The *chatrik*, that bird  
That can drink only raindrops,  
Thirsteth in agony  
For a single drop of water.  
If when the bird dieth  
He is given an ocean,  
Of what avail is it to him?  
Now that my life is foundering  
And will not last much longer,  
How can I still be patient?  
Will it help if a boat arrives  
When I am already drowned?  
I am nothing in myself;  
I have nothing to offer;  
There is nothing that by right  
I can claim from Thee!  
At this moment of desperation,  
Sadhna, Thy servant, prayeth:  
Protect me, Lord, from shame!

her evil ways. Utterly exasperated by his integrity, she raised a hue and cry to blackmail Sadhna by saying that he had killed her husband with a view to molesting her. Soon after big crowd gathered there. Sadhna was arrested and his hands were cut off. But to vindicate his honour and uphold truth, it is said that God restored his hands.

There is one *shabad* of Bhagat Sadhna in the holy *Granth* in the Bilawal *rang*.

# Bhagat Beni

Little is known about Beni's date or place of birth. What emerges from his writings is the portrait of a great saint who dedicated himself, heart and soul, to the spiritual pursuits of life. Unperturbed by poverty, he enjoyed a life of calm contemplation and sweet serenity. Bhai Gurdas says that Beni always lived in solitude enriched by moments of spiritual edification. Whenever anyone asked him about his home, he would say that he was a servant of the Royal Court. It is believed that God was so pleased

with Beni's devotion that by His Grace the king supplied the *Bhagat* with all the material necessities of life.

Beni was a great scholar who had made a deep study of the contemporary schools of thought. That is why he criticised not only the ritualistic Brahmanical religion of his time but also the *Yog mat*.

Three verses of Bhakt Beni have been incorporated in the *Guru Granth Sahib* under *Sri Rang*, *Ramkali* and *Prabhati*.



## RAAG RAMKALI

Where the Ida, Pingala and Sushumana converge:  
There is the confluence for me of Ganga, Yamuna and Saraswati,  
And there my mind bathes  
O Saints, there one see-eth the immaculate God,  
But rare is the one who mounteth to the Guru and knoweth,  
That there abideth the all-pervading and detached God.  
O, what is the symbol of God's abode?  
Yea, there ringeth the unstruck melody of the Word,  
There, one findeth not the sun nor the moon, neither air nor  
water,  
And the (God's) word becometh manifest, though known it is  
through the Guru.  
Then Wisdom wells up within one and one sheddeth one's evil  
nature;  
And one drinketh the (Lord's) Nectar, Imbued (with God) in the  
core of (the mind's) sky.  
He, who knoweth the mystery of this Experience,  
Him meeteth the Supreme Being, Our Lord the God.  
Infinite and boundless is the tenth Door, yea, 'tis the abode of  
the Supreme Being.  
For, lo, above all is man, and in the man his head, and in the  
head the window (of the Self).  
He who's ever awake (to God), sleepeth never:  
And in his trance is merged the trinity of the three modes.

He, who enshrineth in his heart the seed of the God's Mantram.  
His mind turneth away (from the world), and abideth in the void  
(of the Absolute Lord)  
Yea, one should be ever awake (to God) and utter not untruth,  
And discipline the five sense-organs,  
And enshrine in the mind the Guru's word,  
And offer his body and mind to Krishna, the God.  
The hands one should look upon as the leaves and braches (of  
the human tree)  
And so one should gamble not away one's precious birth,  
And plug the source of the stream of evil,  
And blaze the sun (of Wisdom), turning it back from the West.  
If he beareth the unbearable (Truth), then constant within him  
Is the flow of Bliss,  
And he converseth with God, as man to man.  
At the (tenth) Door, burneth the four-faced lamp (of Wisdom)  
On the forehead is the Lotus: all around it are the jewels:  
Within it abideth the detached God, the master of the three worlds.  
Here ringeth the white still melody of the five sounds,  
And wave the fly-brushes, and the conches blare with a mighty  
roar.  
He who becometh wise through the Guru smothers under foot  
the demons (of sin).  
So Beni craveth only for the name of God

## Swami Ramanand (1366-1467)

Swami Ramanand was born in 1366, son of Bhoor Karma and Sushila. He was mystically inclined from his early childhood. Educated by an anchorite, he had the proud privilege of meeting Acharya Ragavanand, who showed him the practical path of *Yog Sadhna* and is said to have become proficient in it. He visited Kanshi where, as a mark of respect to him, people built a memorial which stands to this day. When he returned to Acharya Raghvananda, he had been disillusioned of his Vaishnav thinking. The Vaishnava Sadhu believed in *Sadhu Varna Ashrama* and did not allow every individual to be entitled to perform *Puja Bhagti*. Ramanand had realised this to be wrong for God is the All Merciful father and can be worshipped by anyone.

He started preaching his gospel in Kanshi. Kabir was the most renowned amongst his disciples. Ravidas, Sain, Dhanna and Pipa are believed to have been his followers even though all of them were not his contemporaries. Nabha Das in his *Bhaktmala* has listed

### RAAG BASANT

Whither need I go to seek holiness?  
I am happy here within myself at home  
My heart is no longer a pilgrim:  
It has become tied down to itself.  
Restlessly one day I did want to go:  
I prepared sandal-wood paste,  
Distilled aloe wood, and many perfumes;  
I set out towards a temple to worship:  
Then my Guru showed me God in my own heart.  
Whatever holy place I seek as a pilgrim  
All I find is worship of water or stones,  
But Thou, Lord, equally pervadest all things!  
I have studied all the *Vedas* and the *Puranas*:  
There or elsewhere thou mayest seek God  
If God is not here in thy heart!  
O gracious Guru, I am beholden unto thee  
Who hast cut away my doubts and my vacillations!  
Ramanand's Lord is the all-prevasive God:  
The Guru's word removeth countless delusions.



twelve followers; but, there are others who reckon the strength of the disciples to have been five hundred. That indicates the nature and the extent of his impact.

Shri Ramanand was a learned Pandit. Many of his books

such as *Shri Vaishnava Matanbui Bhaskar*, *Shri Ramarachan Padhti*, etc, are still available.

One of his hymns is included in the holy *Granth* under *Raag Basant*.

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## *Kabir (1398-1495)*

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Kabir was the most celebrated revolutionary saint of the *Bhakti* movement. He condemned social and religious abuses and emphasised the fundamental equality and fraternity of all mankind. Born in a weaver's family of Banaras, he joined the *Bhakti* fold under Swami Ramanand's influence. Thinking that being a low-caste he might not be considered fit to receive initiation, he lay prostrate one day, early in the morning, along the path which Ramanand used to follow while going to his bath. When the Swami's feet touched Kabir's body, he uttered the words 'Ram, Ram'. The saint affectionately lifted him and made him his disciple. Thereafter, Kabir got so deeply absorbed



### RAAG PARBHATI

The Lord first created Light :  
From the Lord's play all living creatures came,  
And from the Divine Light the whole creation sprang.  
Why then should we divide human creatures  
Into the high and the low?  
Brother, be not in error:  
Out of the Creator the Creation comes:  
The Lord's Spirit is all-pervading!  
The Lord, the Maker, hath moulded one mass of clay  
Into vessels of diverse shapes.  
Free from taint are all the vessels of clay  
Since free from taint is the Divine Potter.  
The True One pervadeth all things  
All things come to pass as the Lord ordaineth.  
He who hath understood the Divine Will  
Recognizeth only the One Reality  
And he alone is what man ought to be.  
The Lord, being Unknowable, cannot be comprehended.  
But the Guru hath given me  
A sweet joy of His presence.  
Kabir sayeth : My doubts have departed from me.  
In all things I have recognised the Taintless One.

in meditation that he began to dwell habitually in the realms of the spirit.

*Kabir has so blended with God  
That none can distinguish him from his Lord*

A staunch believer in the worth of constructive human endeavour, Kabir was opposed alike to ritualism and asceticism. Indian society was rife with communal dissensions. Undaunted by opposition, Kabir fought against all the vicious influences. He pulled up the *Pandits*, the *Kazis* and the *Mullas* and



inveighed against the *Jogis* and *Sadhus*. This enraged the Muslim *Mullanas* who had him arrested by complaining to the King, Sikandar Lodi that Kabir had been preaching what ran counter to the Islamic canon. Once an attempt was made to drown him in the Ganges: and, on another occasion, he was thrown before a drunken elephant to be crushed to death, nevertheless, Kabir remained unperturbed. Eventually, he became the leader of the Bhakti Movement.

'Kabir Panthis' 'or the followers of Kabir, with their headquarters at Kanshi, constitute an important sect. Their holy book *Kabir Bijak* is well known.

Kabir's contribution to the *Adi Granth*, comprising 541 different verses arranged under 17 different *raags*, exceeds that of any other *bhagat*. And in the absence of any other reliable manuscript, it remains the most authentic and precious part of his work.

## ❖❖❖ Bhagat Ravi Das ❖❖❖

Like Kabir, Ravi Das was also a resident of Kanshi and came from a cobbler's family. In spite of his "low caste", Ravi Das rose to a position of great honour through a life of simplicity and piety. He never felt ashamed of his status and fearlessly faced the *pundits*, who were proud of their "high" caste. He told them that spiritual greatness is achieved through loving devotion to the Lord and the attainment of his grace. He boldly proclaims:

*O people of the city, everyone knows  
I am a cobbler by trade and tanner by caste.  
One of the low-caste, and yet within my heart  
I meditate upon God*

Again, he says:

*I am haunted day and night by the thought .  
Of my low birth, society and deeds  
O God! the Lord of the Universe!  
O Life of my life! Forget me not,  
I am ever Thy Slave.*

He was greatly respected during his life-time, to the extent that even the veteran *pundits* of Kanshi bowed before him. Tradition has it that Queen Jhalan of Mewar became a follower of Ravi Das. But despite close contacts with affluent sections of society, he chose to live austerely. Once someone offered him a *paras* (the philosopher's stone that turns cheap metal into gold) and assured him that he could get any amount of wealth by making use of it. Ravi Das asked him to place it in a corner. When he came to Ravi Das again after some months, he found the saint still living in poverty. He asked the *bhakt* why he had not utilised the *paras*. Ravi

### RAAG GAURI

'Griefless' is the name of my town,  
Where abide not either pain or care.  
No anguish there of tax on goods.  
Neither fear, nor error, nor dread, nor decline.  
Oh! how wondrous is my fatherland,  
Where there is always Peace, and Calm, O Friend!  
And there is not a second nor a third there, by my only Lord.  
Populous as ever, its repute is eternal,  
Yea, there abide only the Rich and the Content.  
And there men go about as and where they wish.  
They know the Mansion of their Lord, so no one preventeth  
(them).  
Ravidas, a mere tanner, hath been emancipated in this land;  
And, he who's his fellow citizen is also his friend.

Das remarked that for him, 'God's Name alone was the *paras*, that was the 'Kamdhen' and 'Chintamani'.

*He who is the Ocean of Peace, the Tree which yields all  
Fruits, the wish fulfilling Jewel, the Master of kamadhenu,  
In whose hands are the four life-objects, the eighteen extra-  
psychic powers and the nine treasures  
That Lord thou tellest not with thy tongue.*

In Hindi literature, Ravi Das is known as Raidas and his work is found under the title: *Raidas ji ki Bani*. Forty of his verses have been included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* under sixteen different *raags*.



## ❀ Bhagat Pipa ❀

Pipa *bhagat* (b. 1426 A.D.) was one of the followers of Swami Ramanand. According to the history of Mewar, he was a contemporary of Rana Kumbha, the Chauhan Raja of Gaghongarh, a city about 50 miles to the east of Kotah. Cunningham records that he belonged to the fourth generation of Jaipal.

It is said that Pipa was a devout worshipper of the goddess Durga. Under the impact of a veteran Sadhu, he became a Vaishnava *bhagat*. Consequently, he abdicated and went on a pilgrimage to Dwarka. The well-known *Pipa Math*, which is named after him, commemorates his visit to the holy city. Pipa also went to Brindaban. The only hymn by Pipa included in the holy *Granth* under *Dhanasari Raag* advocates the search of *Param tatva* (Supreme Being) within oneself.

### RAAG DHANASARI

In the body, God is present. The body is His temple. In the body is the place of pilgrimage Of which I am the pilgrim. In the body are the incense and candles, In the body is the holy offering. In the body the oblation. After searching in many regions It is only in the body	I have found the nine treasures. For me there is no going away, For me there is no coming back Since I have appealed to God. He who pervades the universe Also dwells in the body: He who seeks shall find Him there. Saith Pipa: God is the primal Being. The True Guru shall reveal Him
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## ❀ Bhagat Sain (1390-1440) ❀

According to popular belief, Sain was a barber by caste who served as a personal attendant under Raja Ram, the ruler of Bandhawgad. Bhai Gurdas, who regards him as a follower of Gosai Ramanand, says that under Kabir's moral influence, Sain, the barber, became a *bhagat*. His nights were consecrated to a loving adoration of the Lord while the days were devoted to the humdrum duties at the king's *darbar*.



### RAAG DHANASARI

He who is worshipped with offerings  
 Of incense, lamps, and clarified butter,  
 To Him I am a sacrifice!  
 Hail, unto the Lord, all Hail!  
 Hail ever to the all-pervading Lord!  
 The choicest lamp and the purest wick  
 Art thou alone, O Lord of Splendours!  
 It is Thy saints who know divine bliss,  
 They speak of Thee as the all-pervading Primal Joy.  
 O God, whose beauty fascinates me,  
 Waft me safely over the sea of terror,  
 Sain sayeth: Worship the Supreme Joy!

That he was a forerunner of Ravi Das is amply borne out by the fact that the latter had classed him with the great *bhagats*:

*With Thy Grace, O Lord! were redeemed  
 Namdeva, Kabir and Trilochan  
 As were Sadhna and Sain.*

Guru Arjan writes:

*Jaidev has abandoned ego and Sain, the barber, has been  
 redeemed by serving the Lord selflessly.*

One hymn of *Bhakt Sain* is incorporated in the holy *Granth* under *Dhanasari Raag*.



## Bhagat Dhanna

Born in 1415 and brought up at Dhuan Nagar in the Taank area of Rajasthan, Dhanna was a Jat Zamindar. From his very childhood, he was diligent and straightforward with deep-rooted faith in God.

It is said that Dhanna had a Brahmin neighbour who used to worship *Thakurs* (idols) daily. Dhanna thought that he should also worship like the Brahmin. So he requested the Brahmin to get him one Thakur. The pandit told him that it was very difficult because a daily bath, putting on neat clean clothes, burning incense, reciting holy hymns and prayers etc., were compulsions and that this would be impossible for an illiterate man like him. But Dhanna was not satisfied with this answer. He pressed the Pandit again and again to get him a Thakur whom he might worship and to whom he could offer milk. Ultimately, the Pandit out of sheer disgust gave him a stone and bade him worship it as his God. The faithful Dhanna accepted it gratefully and devoutly followed the ritual that the Pandit had prescribed. Accordingly, the *bhakt* took a bath, put on clean clothes and placed food before the Thakur. Then with the deepest devotion he prayed to the Thakur again and again to accept the food. When nothing happened he told the Thakur that if he did not accept his food he too would not eat nor drink anything. They say God could not remain indifferent to this sincere prayer of the faithful Dhanna; and, lo! He appeared before his devotee and partook of the food so lovingly proffered by him.

The simplicity, selflessness, piety and courage of the Saint Dhanna are vividly reflected in his hymns. They show that the *bhagat* did not overlook the needs of the body while seeking the graces of the spirit. He has offered *Aarta* to God instead of *Arti*:

*I adore Thee, O Gopal my Love;  
(For) Thou Fulfillest all who Worship Thee.  
I beg to Thee to Bless me with wheat flour,  
That my heart keepeth ever pleased with Thee*

## Sheikh Bhikhan (1480-1573)

Sheikh Bhikhan was a Muslim Sufi saint of Kakori, a place near Lucknow. A married man and householder, he was held in high repute for his piety and learning. It was under his spiritual mentor, Sayed Mir Ibrahim, that he pondered the problems of *Shariyat-Tarikat*. During those days the impact of the *bhakti* movement was universally felt. Bhikhan, too, was deeply influenced by it. Transgressing the bounds of rituals, he regarded *bandgi* (divine meditation) and *simran* (repetition of the holy word) as the panacea of all human ills. His belief was:

*The Lord's Immaculate nectar-Name is the cure-all  
for all maladies of the world.*

*Sayeth Bhikhan. "By the Guru's Grace,  
I Attain to the Door of Deliverance".*

### RAAG AASA

O mind, why dost thou not Cherish thy Lord greater  
than whom there is none?

For even if thou roamest the whole world, the whole  
universe, that alone happens what the Lord  
Willeth

The Lord, who in the waters of the mother's womb  
built our body of ten doors

And Sustained us within its fire; such, yea, is He, our  
God and Master.

The she-tortoise is herself in waters, her young ones  
are on the bank: and they are neither protected  
by the mother's wings nor fed upon her milk.

But lo, the Beauteous, Perfect Lord, ever in Sublime  
Bliss, Feedeth them too.

The worm liveth in stone, and findeth not a way of  
escape:

Him too, Sayeth Dhanna, the Lord Sustaineth: so fear  
not thou, O my mind.

*And I beg also for silken wear and also footwear  
And the foodgrains too, grown by tilling the land  
seven times over*

*And hark, I ask also for a milk cow and a buffalo too,  
And a fine Arabian horse for me to ride through Thy  
Wondrous earth*

*And I ask for a dutiful wife to look after my household;  
Yea, these are my needs which I seek, and ask of  
Thee, O my Beneficent God.*

Three verses of Bhakt Dhanna are included in  
the *Guru Granth* under *Aasa* and *Dhanasari* raags.

### RAAG SORATH

Tears trickle down my eyes.

My body has become enfeebled.

My hair is as white as milk.

My throat is choked, when I try to speak

I falter, Lord, what shall I do?

O Sovereign Lord, Protector of the world

Be Thou my healer, and save Thy saints!

My heart is in extreme anguish:

My head aches, my body is in a fever.

I am in such a state of pain

No human medicine can cure me.

The Name of God that is pure nectar

Is in the end the best of all medicines.

Sayeth Bhikhan: Through the grace of the Guru alone  
Shall we reach the harbour of our salvation!



## Bhagat Parmananda

There is a scarcity of authentic material about the life of Sant Parmanand. Macauliffe holds that he was a resident of Barsi in the Sholapur District of Maharashtra. Some scholars identify him with the Parma Nanda Das whose name appears among the Hindi poets of *Asht Chhap* school. He was a Kankabuj Brahman and a resident of Kanauj. He studied at the feet of Swami Vallabhacharya and graduated to be a great Vaishnava *bhagat* and poet of Brij Bhasha. His verses are collected in the Granth, *Parma Nanda Sagar*.

One of his *shabads* has been enshrined in the *Adi Granth* under *Sarang Raag*.

### RAAG SARANG

Mortal man, what has been thy profit  
From hearing the *Puranas*?  
Thou hast not acquired a single-minded  
Spirit of devotion to thy Lord!  
Thou hast not given alms to the wretched.  
Thou hast not put away thy lust  
Thou hast not put away thine anger.  
Greed of gain has not left thee;  
Thy lips are not clean of slander.  
Thy outlawed shows of worship  
Have all been utterly in vain.  
Still thou robbest men on the roads  
And breakest into men's houses to steal,  
That thus, O criminal, thou mayest fill thy belly.  
Fool, thou hast done such folly  
As after death will earn thee an evil name!  
From cruel violence thou hast not freed thy mind:  
Thou has not cherished mercy for living creatures.  
Parmanand sayeth: In the company of the blest  
Thou hast not joined in their holy speech!

## Bhagat Surdas

There have been many poets bearing the name Surdas, including the celebrated author of *Sursagar* and devotee of Lord Krishna. But the *bhagat* whose Word is enshrined in the *Adi Granth* is a different person with the same name. He was born in 1529 in a Brahmin family. In addition to learning Sanskrit and Persian, he studied music and poetry. He was originally named Madan Mohan, but later on came to be known as Surdas. Emperor Akbar, who always respected and rewarded the virtuous and the learned, made him Governor of Sandila. His duty was to collect revenue and deposit it in the Government treasury. Since he was a man of kindly and charitable disposition, he often doled out money to the needy and did not bother about the accounts. Some people complained to the Emperor, who then took him to task. Surdas gave up his job and disappeared. When Akbar came to know of his saintliness and benevolence, he sent for him. He spent the rest of his life in meditation at Banaras where a temple commemorates his memory.

### RAAG SARANG

Those whom God has chosen  
Dwell ever in Him,  
To Him they dedicate body and soul,  
To Him they dedicate all possessions,  
And while they exalt His Name  
They enjoy divine rapture.  
On beholding the Lord  
A man is set free  
From all sinful carvings  
And all his desires are fulfilled.  
One has no need of anything else,  
Having gazed on His Beauty.  
But they who forsake the Beauteous Lord  
And set the desires of their hearts  
On any other object,  
Are like leeches sucking a leper!  
O Surdas, God hath taken thy soul in His keeping  
And hath blest it with His Kingdom!

In one of his hymns, he says:

"Abandon, O my heart,  
The company of those  
Who have turned away from the Lord.

The hymn compiled by Guru Arjan under the name of Surdas is in *Sarang Raag*.



## Bhai Mardana

Bhai Mardana was a Muslim rebeck-player of Talwandi, the birthplace of Guru Nanak. He rendered the message of the Guru in sweet and melodious notes. Music has a special significance in Sikhism. All the Gurus wrote their *bani* in raags and preached through 'kirtan'. When Guru Nanak set out on his missionary journeys he chose Mardana as his companion. Thus he spent many years in the Guru's company and won his grace. He enthralled the Sikh congregations with the soul-stirring music of his rebeck.

Son of Bhai Badre and Mai Lakho, he was an accomplished minstrel and the Guru's comrade from his very childhood. While at Sultanpur the Master made his plans for missionary work and sent specially for Bhai Mardana, who was then at Talwandi. The Guru bought him a rabaak from Bhai Firanda and set out on his great spiritual mission. Mardana accompanied the Guru everywhere.

Not unfrequently he got weary of the hardships and hunger suffered during the long travels, but each time the Guru's holy company and *kirtan* restored him to genial mood and he followed the Guru joyfully. He kept him company all his life and died during the fourth missionary journey in

### SLOK BIHAGARI DI VAAR

The *Ka'fage* is the pitcher filled with the wine of lust, and the mind drinketh it deep.

Yea, wrath is the drinking bowl brimming over with desire, with ego as the barman.

And we have our drinking bouts in the society of ego; and so are wrested away.

Let good deeds be the pitcher, and Truth the molasses and the wine be of the True Name

And virtues be the bread, culture the butter, and modesty be the meat.

Nanak: these eats and drinks one receiveth through the Guru, and they consume all one's sins.

Afghanistan on the bank of the river Khuram, where a shrine honours his memory. Guru Nanak performed the last rites of his companion himself.

Mardana was not a mere musician but also a spiritually elevated soul. That is why the Guru used to call him 'Bhai', an expression connotive of love and regard.

There are three hymns by Bhai Mardana in the *Guru Granth Sahib* under *Bihagari di Var*.

## Baba Sunder

Baba Sunder came from the Bhalla family of Guru Amar Das. According to *Gur Partap Surai*, he was the son of Anand and grandson of Baba Mohri. It is generally believed that Baba Sunder collected the last sermons of Guru Amar Das in his composition called *sadd* (the call) after passing of the Guru. It is also probable that he might have listened to a recitation of the Guru's sermons by the elders and given them poetic form. Baba Sunder's composition comprising six stanzas is to be found in *Ramkali raag* under the title *Sadd*. The hymn emphasizes the transitoriness of this world and the consequent futility of all human tears rising from a sense of death and despair. It suggests that every one should accept death as the will of God. When someone is so honoured, his friends should rejoice at his achievement.

Therefore, when God calls the Guru to His abode, it does not behove anyone to express sorrow on such an occasion. The hymn presents the Sikh view of death according to which the Guru enjoins on the followers to recite *Kirtan* and *bani*, which alone should constitute the last rites.

### RAMKALI SADD

"Hark, O my disciples, sons, brothers : My Lord Hath so Willed that I go now to meet with Him.

And I'm pleased with this His Will, for, the Lord hath Blest me so.

Yea, he alone is the Devotee, the Guru, the Purusha, who's pleased with the Lord's Will.

And when he's United with his God, within him ringeth the Unstruck Melody of Bliss;

O my kindred, my sons, my brothers, discriminative ye thiswise and know,

That the Will of God no one can erase : and the Guru will forsure enter into his God."

The Guru so ordained that his kindred be near him (towards the close of his earthly life). And he instructed them all thus :

"Pray weep not for me : and he, who doeth so, with him I'll be displeased

For, a friend is in bloom when he seeth a friend honoured.

Discriminative ye, and see that the Lord is going to clothe me with Robes (of Eternity)

The Guru, in his lifetime, hath passed on his throne to the next Guru :

So fall thou at the feet of Guru Ram Das, O my disciples, sons, kindreds and brothers".

(In the end the Guru said) "After me, sing only the song of my detached God.

And call in only the Lord's Saints or utter the Gospel of God

Yea, utter only the Lord's Gospel, hear only the Lord's Name and carry me in the hearse of Lord's Love.

And, yea, offer my earthly remains to the God's Sea : let these be the last rites ye perform for me".

The Lord was pleased with what the Guru spoke and he met with Him, the Wise Purusha, And anointed he Ram Das of the Sodhi clan as the Guru, blessing him with the standard of the True Word.



## ❧ Rai Balwand ❧

Rai Balwand was a Muslim bard who, in collaboration with Satta, composed a *vaar* in praise of the Guru. Written in *Ramkali raag* it comprises eight stanzas. It is generally believed that the first five stanzas were composed by Rai Balwand and the last three by Satta, the drummer and rebeck player of the House of Nanak.

According to Sikh history, Rai Balwand used to recite 'Kirtan' in the Guru's *darbar*. Once he asked the Guru for an exorbitant amount of money for his daughter's marriage. The Guru gave him reasonable assistance but this did not satisfy him. He started disparaging him and cast aspersions upon the other Gurus, too. Upon hearing this, the Guru said that the bard had become inflated with ego. This proved a curse for Balwand who got stricken with flatulence and was in a state of terrible agony. The Sikhs knew that if they pleaded for these detractors of the Gurus, they would have their faces blackened. So, they went to a great Sikh, Bhai Ladha, and told him of Balwand's fall from grace. Subjecting himself to the prescribed punishment by blackening his face and riding a donkey from Lahore to Amritsar, Bhai Ladha, accompanied by the rebeck players, sought to restore them to the Guru's good grace. After seeing this, the Guru got down from his seat, embraced Bhai Ladha and forgave the bards, who composed a ballad on this occasion. The theme of the ballad is the spiritual unity of all the Gurus. Guru Nanak had established a new tradition by making his tried disciple, Bhai Lehna, his successor. Thus he had laid the foundation of a new *Dharma*.

*Nanak established the kingdom of God on earth and set up the citadel of truth on a sound foundation.*

The first five stanzas of the composition are an elaboration of this idea. The ballad chronicles some of the proudest traditions and achievements of the Sikh faith. Despite its brevity, it enjoys a special place because of the nobility of its conception and the felicity of its expressions.

## ❧ Bhai Satta ❧

Bhai Satta, a companion of Balwand and a drummer by profession, was a rebeck-player of the Guru. He used to recite *kirtan* in Guru Arjan's *darbar*. Later, they jointly composed a *vaar* (ballad) in *Ramkali raag*. It appears that the first five stanzas were composed by Rai Balwand and the last three by Bhai Satta, whose name figures in the sixth stanza. Satta says that "true charity is that which is acceptable to the Lord".

Satta has eulogised Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev in his composition. The ballad indicates that the Sikh movement was gaining momentum at that time.

A special feature of this *vaar* is the oneness in spirit of the Gurus. It is also known as the *Vaar* of Tikka. Whenever a new Guru was installed, this composition was sung.

### RAMKALI DI VAAR

Because of the devoted service of Lehna  
Nanak proclaimed him his successor  
The same divine light of Nanak shines in Him.  
His ways of life are the same,  
Only the body he has changed.  
An umbrella of spiritual sovereignty  
Is held over his head,  
As he occupies the throne of Guruship.  
With unstinted devotion he served Guru Nanak  
And followed the arduous path  
Learning to union with God.  
Food was given free  
From the Guru's inexhaustible store.  
Out of the infinite gifts of the Lord,  
He himself partakes of much  
And bestows freely on others.  
The praises of God are sung,  
And His grace, like light, descends from heaven;  
A glimpse of you, O True King,  
Is enough to wash the sins of thousands of births.  
Truly has Guru Nanak made Angad his successor  
How can we desist from proclaiming this truth;  
Guru Nanak's sons did not obey him  
They turned their backs to the True Guru.  
Insincere were their hearts,  
Defiant were their attitudes,  
Loads of sins they carried on their heads.  
Guru Nanak appointed him the Guru.  
Through him, Nanak himself reigns as the Guru,  
He who has imparted the Guruship,  
Has brought about all this;  
Lo who was won and who has lost?

### RAMKALI DI VAAR

The four (Gurus) illumined their own times, and then came Arjan, their very soul.  
Yea, he was by himself created, and he himself became his own support.  
He himself became the tablet, the pen, the scribe (of his destiny)  
And though his followers were subject to coming and going, he himself was ever fresh, ever new.  
The Guru Arjan is seated on Nanak's Throne: Lo, how sparkles his star-studded canopy!  
From where the sun rises to where it setteth, the Guru illumines all the four corners (of the earth)  
Yea, they who served not the Guru, the self-minded egotists, were destroyed (by God).  
This, yea, is the True God's Blessings on thee that thy glory hath increased four-fold.  
The four (Gurus) illumined their own times, and then came the Fifth Guru Arjan, their very soul.



# Bhatt Bani

Bhatt Bani (the hymns by the bards) comprising 20 pages, is incorporated in the concluding part of the *Adi Granth* as follows:

		Swaye Mahle I	Swaye Mahle II	Swaye Mahle III	Swaye Mahle IV	Swaye Mahle V	Total
1.	Kalsahar	10	10	9	13	12	54
2.	Jalap	-	-	5	-	-	5
3.	Kirat	-	-	4	4	-	8
4.	Bhikha	-	-	2	-	-	2
5.	Salh	-	-	1	2	-	3
6.	Bhal	-	-	1	-	-	1
7.	Nalh	-	-	-	16	-	16
8.	Gayand	-	-	-	13	-	13
9.	Mathura	-	-	-	7	7	14
10.	Balh	-	-	-	5	-	5
11.	Haribans	-	-	-	-	2	2
		10	10	22	60	21	123

These eleven Bhattas were very close to the Gurus, but no authentic information is available about their life-history. Nor is there any mention in the biographies of the Gurus of what exactly their position was vis-a-vis the house of the Gurus. But the very fact that their word has been included in the *Guru Granth Sahib* shows that their thoughts were held in high esteem.

The Bhattas belonged to the Punjab and, according to *Bhatt Chronicle*, they were residents of Sultanpur, where Guru Nanak served in the Modikhana for 13 years. There are indications that these Bhattas were the sons or nephews of Bhikha Bhatt.

The Bhatt *bani* comprises *Swayas* in praise of the first five Gurus under the captions *Swaye Mahle Pahle Ke*, *Swaye Mahle Duie Ke*, etc. Although the Bhatt *bani* eulogizes Guru Nanak and Guru Angad Dev also, there is no evidence to prove that any of these Bhattas ever presented themselves in Guru Nanak's *darbar* or even met the Guru. Most likely, some of them visited the Gurus during the pontification of Guru Amardas, Guru Ram Das and Guru Arjan Dev. It is possible that one of the Bhattas, particularly Bhikha, who was the eldest of them all, might have come there and chanted hymns in praise of the Guru. It is also likely that later his sons and nephews might have, on different occasions, met the Fourth

and the Fifth Masters. It is possible that all these Bhattas met Guru Arjan Dev and composed hymns glorifying all the Gurus.

The following hymn by Bhatt Bhikha is of historical significance:

*In search of a true saint  
I vainly wandered about;  
Recluses I encountered many,  
Sweet-tongued no doubt were they,  
For full one year in this search I wandered.  
None of them gave me the solace of spiritual light.  
I heard them talk a lot of high ideals  
But their practice was most disappointing.  
Discarding the Name of God,  
They indulged in worldly ways,  
O, what need I say of them?  
By the Grace of God,  
I have found Guru Amardas,  
By Thy will I shall ever abide, O Guru.*

Because of their being devotees of Shri Ram Chandra and Lord Krishna, the Bhattas, in their adoration of the Sikh Gurus, spoke in images drawn from their ancestral religious traditions:



O Wondrous and Beauteous and Lustrous art thou,  
O Guru,  
Lotus-eyed, sweet-tongued, Embellished with a myriad friendly  
Hosts, yea, thou indeed  
Art the one whom the mother fed with rice and curds.

The hymns written by the Bhattas reveal us that Kalsahar was their leading light. Of the 123 *Stanyas* that comprise the entire Bhatt Bani, 54 were composed by Kalsahar alone, and, that he sang praises of all the five Gurus in his *Stanyas*.

The Bhatt Bani, in the main, eulogises the Sikh Gurus besides throwing light on their history. It is the spirit, however, of the Guruship rather than the Guru as an individual that they celebrate in their devotional compositions. In their depiction of the greatness of the Gurus, the Bhattas were inspired by the belief that whoever ascended the Gurugaddi inherited all the gifts and graces of the Eternal Guru who alone is the unchanging, indwelling soul.

Bhattas are to be found all over India. Their main vocation had been singing the chivalry of heroes. Gradually, some well-known Bhattas got attached to distinguished families whom they extolled in their verses. But the bards who chanted hymns in praise of the Gurus were not prompted by any mercenary motives. They were ardent Sikhs who had full faith in the greatness of the Gurus. Naturally, their hymns were the genuine and spontaneous articulation of their deep-rooted devotion to the Gurus.

The Bhattas had evolved a distinctive and individual style, eminently represented by the *Stanyas* which constitute their most glowing tribute to the Gurus. Their poetic diction has strong affinities with Brij and Sanskrit. Their style is extremely hyperbolic, full of ornate and high-flown expressions and rhythmic beauty. Their verses abound in allusions to Indian mythology. The compositions of the Bhattas are charged with spiritual aura.

Bhatt Bani was incorporated in the *Adi Granth* which was first compiled by Guru Arjan Dev in 1604. Obviously, it had been written by that time and was sung as was the ballad of Rai Balwand and Satta in Guru Arjan's *durbār*.

## Bhatt Kalsahar

Kalsahar was the most prominent Bhatt. He has written *stanyas* in praise of each of the first five Gurus. In his verses on Guru Nanak, he has called him the supreme Guru of both the temporal and the spiritual worlds. He believed that the Guru who had been adored by the *devotas*, *siddhas* and *munis* throughout the ages had appeared from time to time for the redemption of humanity.

While describing the greatness of Guru Angad, he says that it was because of Guru Nanak's blessings that he rose to the highest spiritual position of Guruship and dispelled the darkness of ignorance from the world.



In the Satyuga too, Thou enjoyed the state of Rajyoga, when Thou  
'deceived' Bali, becoming a dwarf, whose form pleased Thee;  
And in the Treta age too, when Thou wert called Rama of the Raghu  
clan  
And in the Duapar age too as Krishna, when Thou delivered Kansa  
And blest Ugarsena with a kingdom, and Thy Devotees with the state  
of fearlessness.  
In the Kali age Thou wert called Nanak, and Angad and Amar Das.  
Yea, eternal and moveless is Thy rule, O Guru : for, such was the  
command of the Primeval Lord.

In his homage to Guru Amar Das, Kalsahar says that he became Guru by virtue of *Nam Simran* and Guru Nanak's grace. He likens Guru Ram Das to a fount of nectar from whence flowed many a life-giving stream. Guru Arjan Dev's time has been characterised as *Janak Raiya*. The Bhatt says that Guru Arjan remained calm and unperturbed even in moments of greatest tribulations.

## Bhatt Jalap

Bhatt Jalap composed five *Stanyas* as a mark of respect to Guru Amardas. He stressed the point that the Third Master achieved Guruship only through *Nam Simran*. According to this belief many Indian *bhaktas* have attained the height of spiritual glory through meditation on God's name.



Blessed are the feet  
Which lead one to Guru Amardas;  
Blessed are the hands,  
That touch the holy feet of the Guru :  
Blessed is the tongue  
Which sings the glory of Guru Amardas;

## Bhatt Kirat

According to modern research Bhatt Kirat was the son of Bhatt Bhikha. He enlisted in the army of Guru Hargobind and was killed in the first battle that the Guru fought against the Mughals.

Bhatt Kirat has written four *Stanyas*, each in praise of the Third and the Fourth Gurus. He prays for Guru Amar Das's blessings and avers that the spirit that dwelt in Guru Amar Das was the same as inferred in Guru Nanak and Guru Angad:

Lo, God, by His Power, became Manifest to the world!  
For, He, the Formless One, Assumed the form (of Guru Amar  
Das) and thus Illumined the whole world.  
The World, that is All-pervading, that God Revealed through  
the Light (of the Guru)





Sins abound in me,  
No virtues have I;  
Forsaking the nectar  
I drink poison,  
Lost in error and delusion am I,  
Deeply attached to wife and children;  
I heard of a lofty way  
In the company of the Guru.  
Meeting him, the fear of death  
Has ceased to exist  
Bard Kirat hath but one prayer:  
Keep me under your protection, O Guru Ramdas.

*And whosoever ingathered his Wisdom, him he United,  
instantaneously, with God.*

*In the 'family' of Nanak was Lehna known as Angad and the  
Immaculate Guru Amar Das:*

*O Guru, thou art my only Saviour: birth after birth, I seek but  
thy Refuge.*

## Bhatt Bhikha

Bhatt Bhikha composed three *stanzas* extolling the Third Guru. It appears that he presented himself at Guru Amar Das's *darbar* at Goindwal. He was the eldest of the Bhattas. His compositions bear out that he inspired his friends and relatives with Guru *bhakti*. In one of his great *Stanzas* the bard sings.



In search of a true saint,  
I vainly wandered about;  
Recluses I encountered many,  
Sweet-tongued no doubt were they;  
For full one year in his search I wandered.  
None of them gave me the solace of spiritual light.  
I heard them talk a lot of high ideals  
But their practice was most disappointing.  
Discarding the Name of God,  
They indulged in worldly ways,  
O, what need I say of them?  
By the Grace of God  
I have found Guru Amardas.  
By Thy will I shall ever abide, O Guru.

## Bhatt Salh

Bhatt Salh sings of the spiritual excellences of Guru Amardas in one *Stanza* and those of the Fourth Master in two *Stanzas*. His theme in all these is that the Third Master attained

the spiritual throne of Guru Nanak by conquering passion and anger, greed and ego.



Wearing the armour of concentration,  
Mounting the steed of knowledge,  
With the bow of righteousness in hand,  
And the arrows of devotion.  
You, O Guru Amardas, thus fought the battle.  
With the lance of Guru's word in your firm grasp,  
You have cut to pieces the evils,  
Of lust, anger, greed, ego and delusion.  
O thou son of Tejbhan, monarch of an honourable lineage,  
The blessings of Guru Nanak, King of Kings, is on Thee.  
Salh proclaims the truth,  
Guru Amardas fighting thus has defeated  
Satanic forces in the battle

## Bhatt Bhalh



Countless are the rain drops from the clouds,  
Countless the vegetation on the earth,  
Countless are the flowers which bloom in spring.  
Unfathomable the depth of the Ocean,  
Countless the waves and ripples of the rivers,  
Countless the ways of the sun and moon,  
With Shiva-like meditation,  
And the divine knowledge of the True Guru,  
One may know all these things; says poet Bhal,  
But your virtues, O Guru, are beyond comprehension  
You alone are your own peer.

A single *stanza* composed by Bhatt Bhal in praise of Guru Amar Das has been included in the *Adi Granth*. It testifies to his greatness as poet with a flawless command of idiom and imagery. He sings of Guru Amar Das's infinite virtues and imperishable greatness.

## Bhatt Nalh

Bhatt Nalh is the author of 12 *stanzas*, glorifying Guru Ram Das. They portray the history and personality of the Guru and also the Sikh's unfaltering faith in the Gurus. Of all the *stanzas*, those of Bhatt Nalh are the most popular because they voice a true devotion to and faith in the Guru. The Bhatt says that the Guru's noble touch can turn all dross into gold and thus bring about a moral transformation and regeneration of mankind. He, therefore, prays to the Guru to be benevolent and kind to him as he always is to his *bhagats*.





When the Guru is on one's side,  
Riches do not add to his greatness.  
When the Guru is on one's side,  
Millions of arms cannot harm him.  
When the Guru is on one's side,  
The divine word illumines the soul,  
Thy servant bard supplicates thus :  
He who meditates on the Name day and night,  
He who contemplates the Name in the heart,  
Is released from the bondage of birth and death.

## Bhatt Gayand

Bhatt Gayand images the greatness of the *Guru Jyoti* and its history in the 13 *swayas* that he composed about Guru Ram Das. He has recounted the history of the *Guru Jyoti* in his poetry.



O Wondrous and Beauteous and Lustrous art thou, O Guru,  
Lotus-eyed, sweet-tongued, embellished with a myriad friendly Hosts,  
yea, Thou indeed art the one whom the mother Yashoda fed with  
rice and the curds.

And when Thou wert at play and the silver bells of thy belt tinkled, thy  
mother was intoxicated with joy: so superb was thy beauty.

And Thou it is who writes with the pen of death, and in whose hands  
is the irresistible 'Command' and whose wisdom even Shiva and  
Brahma seek to cherish in heart.

O True and Ever-abiding art Thou, the Container of *Lakshmi*, the  
Primeval Person : O Wondrous, Beauteous and Lustrous Guru.

## Bhatt Mathura

In his *swayas* Bhatt Mathura has paid tributes to the Fourth and the Fifth Gurus. He says that the greatness of the Guru lies in his love of and meditation on the name of the Creator which symbolises Truth. He is an ocean of God's Name and ever bathes in it like a playful child. Bhatt Mathura discerns the same spirit in all the Gurus from Nanak to Arjan. His *swayas* on Guru Arjan are very popular.



As long as Providence did not favour me,  
So long I wandered restlessly;  
In the dreadful ocean of the dark age  
My helpless soul was sinking,  
Sorrow and remorse never left me.  
Arjan has come as the Saviour of the world.  
My search for the Guru has ended.  
He who contemplates the divine Guru Arjan  
Never is a victim of the tribulations of rebirth.

## Bhatt Balh

Bhatt Balh has composed five *swayas* eulogising Guru Ram Das. He highlights the unbroken continuity of the one unchanging spirit in all the Gurus. And all those who surrender themselves to this spirit are delivered from passion and anger, sorrows and sufferings.



Contemplating the Guru  
All darkness is dispelled.  
Contemplating the Guru  
The Name of God fills the heart day after day.  
Contemplating the Guru  
Desires now burning are assuaged  
Contemplating the Guru  
Occult powers, nine treasures and prosperity are attained;  
Says poet Balh that Guru is Ramdas  
Meeting in the holy congregation  
Let all say : Hail, all hail to the Guru,  
In whose association God is realised

## Bhatt Haribans

Bhatt Haribans composed two *swayas*, bringing out spiritual excellence of the Fifth Guru and the bestowal of *Gurgaddi* on him when the Fourth Master's earthly sojourn came to an end.



When such was the Lord's will, (Guru Ram Das) repaired to the Abode of God,  
And God offered him His throne and seated him there Himself.  
And all the Gods were pleased and proclaimed his Victory.  
And the demons hastened away, for, within them trembled their sinful deeds:  
Yea, whosoever attained to Guru Ram Das was rid of his sins,  
And, this Throne (of Moral Law) and the Canopy (of Grace) passed on to Guru Arjan for redemption of the world.



# Bhai Gurdas

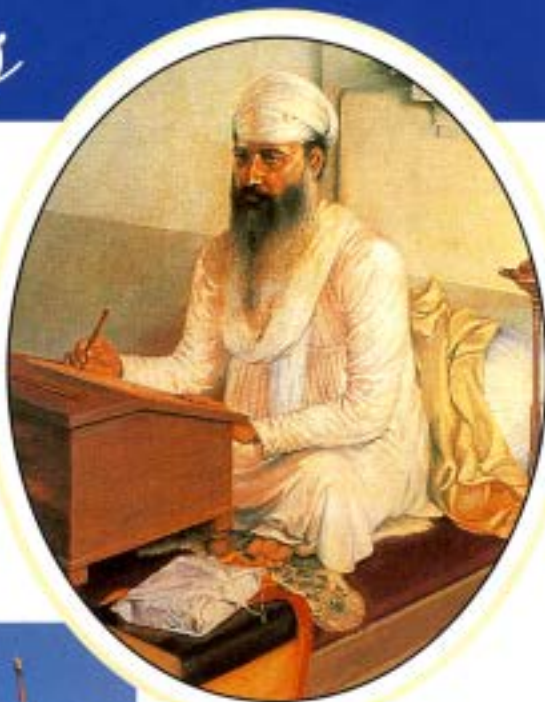
Bhai Gurdas was a leading figure in early Sikhism who enjoyed the patronage of Guru Arjan and under whose supervision Bhai Gurdas inscribed the first copy of the Adi Granth.

He was born at Goindval in 1551, in a Bhalla Khatri family and son of Ishar Das and Bibi Jivani. Bhai Ishar Das was one of Guru Amar Das's cousins and had settled in Goindval soon after the town was founded in 1546. Bhai Gurdas, who was the only child of his parents, had lost his mother when he was only three and his father when he was 12. He spent the early years at Goindval and Sultanpur Lodhi. At Goindval he had the opportunity of listening to many men of knowledge and spiritual attainment who frequently visited the town as it was astride the

Delhi-Lahore road and had become a religious centre of the Sikhs. He later went to Varanasi where he studied Sanskrit and Hindu scriptures. He was initiated into Sikhism by Guru Ram Das in 1579. He thereafter travelled extensively visiting Agra, Lucknow, Varanasi, Burhanpur, Rajasthan, Jammu and the Chamba hills, preaching Guru Nanak's word. After the passing away of Guru Ram Das in 1581, he returned to the Punjab, visited Goindval and thence proceeded to Amritsar to pay his obeisance to Guru Arjan Dev, Guru Ram Das's successor. He made Amritsar his home and through his devotion and love of learning, carved for himself a pre-eminent position among the Guru's disciples. When the Guru decided to compile the *Holy Granth* he chose Bhai Gurdas

as his principal scribe. They worked together on the volume which was completed in 1604. The entire text in the Adi Granth was inscribed by Bhai Gurdas and is preserved with the Sodhis at Kartarpur, in Jalandhar district of the Punjab.

Bhai Gurdas also participated in the *kar seva*, excavation of the sarovar at Amritsar in 1577. It was he who was chosen to recite the Gurus hymns to Emperor Akbar when he visited Kartarpur in 1596-97 on his return from military campaigning. It is said that the Emperor had been incited by Prithi Chand and his supporters against Guru Arjan saying that the hymns that he was planning to compile into a volume had an anti-Muslim tone. As Bhai Gurdas read out verses selected at random, the Emperor was deeply impressed with their spiritual content. When Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Guru



Gurudwara Ramgarh (Amritsar).

decided to construct the *Akal Takht* (Throne of the Timeless Lord) he entrusted the task to the two most revered Sikhs of the time, Bhai Gurdas and Baba Buddha, the latter having been blessed by Guru Nanak himself. Guru Hargobind also appointed him to teach his young son (Guru) Tegh Bahadur the ancient classics. Bhai Gurdas led a batch of Sikhs to Gwalior where Guru Hargobind had been detained in the Gwalior fort by Emperor Jahangir. He was present at weddings of the Guru's sons Baba Gurditta (April 1621) and Baba Suraj Mall (23 April 1629). He offered *ardas* at the passing of Mata Ganga, wife of Guru Arjan in 1621, and at the time of Baba Buddha's passing on 17 November 1631.

Bhai Gurdas was the bulwark of Sikhism for many years, expounder and exemplar of the Sikh way of life. He was a man of wide learning, especially in ancient texts and philosophy and devoted his exceptional talents to preaching the Sikh faith. He composed verse which is valued for its racy style and for vivid exposition of teaching of the Gurus. His poetry, now available in two volumes, in Punjabi *Varan Bhai Gurdas* and in Braj *Kabitt Sarvangiye*, forms part of the accepted Sikh canon and is sung along with *gurbani*, the Guru's word, at holy congregations. Guru Arjan put his seal of approval on this by designating it as the "key" to the Holy Scripture.

Bhai Gurdas, who never married, passed away at Goindval on Bhadon in August 1636.



# Guru Granth Sahib

## The Main Authority of Inter Religious Discourse

One must clearly understand the concept of inter-religious discourse, which means having to imbibe a completely positive attitude towards the qualities and characteristics of different religions.

The main inspirational motives of inter-religious discourse is to have a respect towards the basic principles and tenets of all religions, to be tolerant towards their traditions and to be knowledgeable about their ideals, goals, principles and promises. However, it does not imply, at all, that one should be complacent towards one's own religion. Until we are properly aware of the sanctity, tenets and philosophy of other religions, it will be difficult for us to be tolerant and magnanimous about them. In our day to day lives, we remain not fully aware of the written or oral history and traditions of our own religion - how then can we accept the traditions and concepts of other religions?

The main preceptor of Guru Granth Sahib is Guru Nanak Dev. The later verse contributions have also adopted the norms laid down by this context, mode and manner. Its subject matter is philosophical, ingrained completely in the ethos of Indian spirituality; its mode of expression is not being narrative but descriptive.

The literary discipline of *Guru Granth Sahib* is lyrical. It is very important to understand the concept of lyric in order to fully comprehend the verses of *Guru Granth Sahib*. It has dual concept. Its inherent dualities can be understood in terms of "I-You", "self-other-self" and "speaker-listener". The listener or reader understands the dialogue between these two entities as a third person. The whole of *Guru Granth Sahib* exemplifies this and we can discern these concepts in the verses of *Guru Granth Sahib*.

For example:

- *Come meet me my beloved (Lord)*  
*Without you I stand humbled.*
- *Let somebody come and unite me*  
*With my beloved (Lord)*  
*I shall readily surrender myself to Him.*
- *How can I describe your innumerable qualities O Lord!*  
*Whatever you bless me with, is your Will*  
*I am too ignorant to express anything.*

The spontaneity of dialogue is main feature of the holy hymns, which is prevalent throughout between God and the individual soul and between the deity and the devotee. There is another type of dialogue in *Guru Granth Sahib*, where the real entities converse with each other. One entity asks a question and the other gives the reply. Both these dialogue techniques are very much in *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Nanak is the epitome of Punjabi heritage. There is a transformation from material to spiritual, from physical to metaphysical in his dialogues. Neither the Gurus nor the Saints have differed from the basic principle. The dialogue rendered by Guru is with the self as well as with the other self. These dialogues are about philosophical matters as well as in the form of sermons. The messages delivered by sermons are not directed to anyone in particular. It can benefit the 'self' and 'other self' both. The pilgrimages of Guru Nanak Dev are Omnipresent. He had discussions with various saints and other wise men belonging to different religions. It can be questioned as to why such dialogue is the main technique of holy verse but it is clear that only through dialogue do both sides express their views and the hidden meaning of the text manifests itself. Minds get cleared and the doubts and confusions are removed. Profound meaning of the text makes itself evident in a unique manner. The very beginning of *Guru Granth Sahib* is through a question answer technique:

*How can we understand the Truth?*

*How can the falsehood be dispelled?*

Here the questioner himself provides the answer. This dialogue can be interpreted as being between the speaker and listener. There is the beneficial and healing discourse also in *Guru Granth Sahib* which occurs between the *Sidhas* and Guru Nanak Dev. This is not an ordinary conversation but an eclectic, philosophical one. It is the discourse which is related not only to 'Jogis' or the tenets of the Guru but the entire of universe. *Guru Granth Sahib* is one such scripture which subtly and lucidly explains the basic principles and tenets of other religions.

It is clear that *Gurbani* has a definite dialogue with Indian spiritualism and it is through this dialogue that *Gurbani* brings forth its unique characteristics. *Gurbani* is compound in its nature and not a mixture. It takes its shape from Indian



metaphysics but at the same time retains its individuality. It is simultaneously a compound and a unique entity. The main purpose of *Guru Granth Sahib*, with repeated discourse, is to increasingly make things clear. It does not forget the legacy, rather keeps this alive by having discourse on it. *Guru Granth Sahib* is resplendent with such discourses about all Indian religious scriptures, the singular such holy book which concentrates on discourses with other religions and beliefs.

The secular outlook of *Guru Granth Sahib* is clearly there, otherwise how can the inclusion of verses from Baba Sheikh Farid (Sufi Saint), Bhagat Kabir (Weaver), Jaidev (Brahmin), Bhagat Namdev (Chhimba), Bhagat Trilochan (Vaish), Sadna (Butcher), Saint Ravidas (Cobbler), Saint Bheekan (Muselman), Saint Peepa (Raja), Saint Ramanand, Parmanand, Surdas and Bhagat Beni be manifest in *Guru Granth Sahib*.

To respect a philosophy is correct but to synthesise this in one's own is an entirely unique matter. The verses by bhagats have been treated at par with *Gurbani* and respected too in the same manner. *Guru Granth Sahib* is paid obeisance to in its wholeness. The light of knowledge of *Guru Granth Sahib* was made accessible to the world for the first time in 1604. Since then *Guru Granth Sahib* has been regarded as the supreme Holy Book by devotees of Gurus, whether they are Hindus or Sikhs or of any other religion. The destination of ਸੰਸਾਰ ਸਰਬੰਗ resides only with the *Guru Granth* and relies mainly on discourses and the significant thing being that it is positive in its outlook. It is analytical but not critical. Everything has been lucidly stated without any harsh criticisms. Surely even religion has its own outward identity, associated with the particular teachings of that religion. Many a time these norms get alienated from their roots and thus become only a display of false pretences only.

It is at such times that Guru cautions and says:

ਗੁਰੂ ਹਿਰਾਮਨ ਕਉ ਕਰੁ ਲਾਵਹੁ ਭੋਭਰਿ ਭਰਨ ਨ ਜਾਈ ॥  
 ਧੋਤੀ ਟਿਕਾ ਤੈ ਜਪਮਾਲੀ ਧਾਨੁ ਮਲੇਛਾ ਖਾਈ ॥  
 ਅੰਤਰਿ ਪੂਜਾ ਪੜਹਿ ਕਰੇਥਾ ਸੰਜਮੁ ਤੁਰਕਾ ਭਾਈ॥  
 ਛੋਡੀਲੇ ਪਾਖੰਡਾ ॥ ਨਮਿ ਲਇਐ ਜਾਹਿ ਤਰੀਦਾ ॥  
 ਮਿਟੀ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਕੀ ਧੋਤੈ ਪਾਈ ਕੁਮਿਆਰ  
 ਅਤਿ ਭਾਛੇ ਦਿਦਾ ਕੀਆ ਜਲਦੀ ਕਰੇ ਪੁਕਾਰ ॥  
 ਜਲਿ ਜਲਿ ਰੋਵੈ ਧੁਪਤੀ ਝੜਿ ਝੜਿ ਪਵਹਿ ਅੰਗਿਆਰ ॥  
 ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਨਿ ਕਰਤੇ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਕੀਆ ਸੈ ਜਾਣੈ ਕਰਤਾਰੁ ॥

The above verses verify that there is no harshness or severity of tone, rather there is an abundance of knowledge and understanding. The essence of human life has been reduced to its daily chores only and has lost its connections with its source. Composers of the verses have in their inspirational manner, tried to bridge the gap between this

and created such an atmosphere where verification of truth and falsehood can be done:

ਅਖੀ ਤ ਮੀਟਹਿ ਨਾਕ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਠਗਣ ਕਉ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ ॥ ਰਹਾਉ ॥  
 ਅੰਦ ਮੋਤੀ ਨਾਨੁ ਪਕੜਹਿ ਸੂਝੈ ਤਿਨਿ ਲੋਅ ॥  
 ਮਗਰ ਪਾਛੈ ਕਛੁ ਨ ਸੂਝੈ ਦੇਹੁ ਪਦਮੁ ਅਲੋਅ ॥  
 ਖਰੀਆ ਤਾ ਧਰਮੁ ਛੋਡਿਆ ਮਲੇਛ ਭਾਖਿਆ ਗਈ ॥  
 ਸ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਸਭ ਇਕ ਵਰਨ ਹੋਈ ਧਰਮ ਕੀ ਗਤਿ ਰਹੀ ॥

It is clear that these composers do not hold discourse with a particular religious sect, caste, creed or class, rather all this is so clear and unpretentious that reality automatically unfolds itself. A few verses are mentioned here, taken from the verses composed by saints:

(ੳ) ਜੋ ਭੂੰ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੁ ਬ੍ਰਾਹਮਣੀ ਜਾਇਆ ॥  
 ਤਉ ਆਨ ਥਾਨ ਕਾਹੇ ਨਹੀ ਆਇਆ ॥  
 (ਅ) ਜਉ ਹਮ ਥਧੇ ਸੋਹ ਰਾਸ ਹਮ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਥਧਨਿ ਰੁਮ ਥਾਧੇ ॥  
 ਅਪਣੇ ਛੁਟਨ ਕੇ ਜਤਨੁ ਕਰਹੁ ਹਮ ਛੁਟੈ ਰੁਮ ਆਰਾਧੇ ॥  
 (ੲ) ਮੇਰੀ ਥਾਧੀ ਲਗਤੁ ਛਡਾਵੈ ਥਾਧੈ ਲਗਤੁ ਨ ਛੁਟੈ ਮੇਰਿ ॥  
 ਏਕ ਸਮੇ ਮੇ ਕਉ ਗਹਿ ਥਾਧੈ ਤਉ ਭੁਨਿ ਮੇ ਪੈ ਜਵਾਬੁ ਨ ਹੋਇ ॥  
 ਮੈ ਗੁਨਿ ਥੀਧ ਸਗਲ ਕੀ ਜੀਵਨਿ ਮੇਰੀ ਜੀਵਨਿ ਮੇਰੇ ਦਾਸ ॥  
 (ਸ) ਮਾਭਾ ਜੁਨੀ ਪਿਛਾ ਭੀ ਜੁਨਾ ਜੁਨੇ ਹੀ ਫਲ ਲਾਭੋ ॥  
 ਆਵਹਿ ਜੁਨੇ ਜਾਹਿ ਭੀ ਜੁਨੇ ਜੁਨੇ ਮਰਹਿ ਅਭਾਭੋ ॥  
 ਕਹੁ ਪੰਡਿਤ ਸੁਚਾ ਕਵਨ ਠਾਉ ॥ ਜਹਾ ਥੈਸਿ ਹਉ ਭੋਜਨ ਖਾਉ ॥  
 (ਹ) ਹਿੰਦੂ ਤੁਰਕ ਕਹਾ ਤੇ ਆਏ ਕਿਨਿ ਦੇਹ ਰਾਹ ਚਲਾਈ ॥  
 ਦਿਲ ਮਹਿ ਸੋਚਿ ਬਿਚਾਰਿ ਕਵਾਏ ਭਿਸਤ ਦੋਜਕ ਕਿਨਿ ਪਾਈ ॥  
 (ਕ) ਹਿੰਦੂ ਅੰਨ੍ਹ ਤੁਰਕੁ ਕਾਣਾ ॥ ਦੁਹਾ ਤੇ ਗਿਆਨੀ ਸਿਆਣਾ ॥  
 ਹਿੰਦੂ ਪੂਜੈ ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨੁ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥  
 ਨਾਮੋ ਸੋਈ ਸੇਵਿਆ ਜਹ ਦੇਹੁਰਾ ਨ ਮਸੀਤਿ ॥

## Sidh Goshat Dialogue on Shabad

There is a formal discourse also in composition named 'Sidh Goshat' in Ramkali Raag. This exchange of dialogues (discourse) holds a special place among all the religious scriptures of middle ages, the first documented discourse in *Guru Granth Sahib*. Not only that, it enjoys this special position in the entire gamut of Punjabi literature. The values and norms of proper discourse have been established thus. The basis of any discourse is argument. This discourse is between the advocates of two different faiths and both viewpoints have different logic. Guru Nanak Dev while expressing his ideas, rises from subtle to subtlest with his arguments. Thus the most beautiful explanation of the word takes place. No doubt the need to understand *Guru Granth Sahib* as an inter-religious discourse is felt, but since this is the main discourse which occurred between Guru Nanak and the Yogis, it becomes all the more important to understand the intricacies of its subject.

*Adi Granth* began spreading the light of knowledge in 1604 and was formally installed (or proclaimed) as the *Guru Granth Sahib* in 1708. It was at that time the formal word *Guru* (ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ) or *Guru Granth Sahib* was bestowed. The wonderful thing is that the moot question in *Sidh Goshati* is related to *Shabad Guru* or the word *Guru*, which later on was



recognised as Guru by the Sikhs. That is why this *Goshati* or discourse is of primary importance. The *Sidhas* questioned Guru ji thus:

ਕਵਨ ਮੂਲ ਕਵਨ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਲਾ ॥  
 ਤੇਰਾ ਕਵਨ ਗੁਰੂ ਜਿਸ ਕਾ ਤੂੰ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

The Yogi seekers wanted to know of his ideas on the origin of creation. What was the most propitious time to attain this knowledge? It seemed as if the 'Sidhas' were rooted towards the four ashrams of life – *Brahmacharya*, *Grahasht*, *Vanprasth* and *Sanyas*. *Sanyas Ashram* was believed to be the best time for attainment of such knowledge. This third question that *Sidhas* asked was – "Who is your Guru? Whose disciple was he?" Guru ji answered all these four questions in this way:

ਪਵਨ ਅੰਤਰੁ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਮਤਿ ਵੇਲਾ ॥  
 ਸਾਧੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਹੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥

"The creation started with 'life breath' (*Prana*) or air. To attain knowledge, one does not require any pre-appointed place or time. Whenever the true Guru chooses to impart the light of knowledge that is the most propitious time to attain it. *Sabad* (the Word) is my Guru and to sing that with total love and absorption shows my being its disciple".

It is clear that *Sabad* is the primary cause of existence of the whole creation. Not only has Guru Nanak stated this clearly, this fact has been corroborated by other religions as well. More than once have *Sidha* enquired Guru ji about *Shabad*.

ਪ੍ਰਸਨ : ਸੁ ਸਬਦ ਕਾ ਕਹਾ ਵਾਸੁ ਕਈਅਲੇ  
 ਜਿਤੁ ਤਰੀਐ ਭਵਜਲੁ ਸੰਸਾਰੇ ॥  
 ਕੈ ਸਤ ਅੰਗੁਲ ਵਾਈ ਕਰੀਐ  
 ਤਿਸ ਕਹ ਕਵਨ ਅਧਾਰੇ ॥

ਉਤਰ : ਸੁ ਸਬਦ ਕਉ ਨਿਰੰਤਰਿ ਵਾਸੁ  
 ਅਲਖੈ ਜਹ ਦੇਖਾ ਤਰ ਸੋਈ ॥  
 ਪਵਨ ਕਾ ਵਾਸਾ ਸੁੰਨ ਨਿਵਾਸਾ  
 ਅਕਲ ਕਲਾ ਧਰ ਸੋਈ ॥

Very persistently *Sidhas* ask Guru ji: where does *Shabad* (the Word) reside? When we convert the *Shabad* (the Word) at a distance of ten fingers from the lips. Beyond the distance of these ten fingers where is the existence of *Shabad* (the Word)? If we agree that *Shabad* resides in air and air in nothingness, then nothingness cannot be understood logically. Not only this, mind owes its existence to air, then from where does air get its essence of life? Thus questions keep evolving out of questions. In this manner, one question leads to another question and Guru ji analytically sifts all of these. The mind is full of ego – then where does air reside? When mind stops wandering, then where can one find *Shabad*?

"With the Grace of true Guru, this mind resides in its natural abode".

When this mind resides in its natural abode then air is to be found at level of the navel or in the fourth state of consciousness or ਪਰਾ ਬਾਣੀ, the highest form of speech. Again the question: the heart is associated with the body, but when the body is not there, thence is the mind? When the body was not there and the heart which should have been there, was absent then at that time, mind resided in "nothingness" (ਸੁੰਨ) its natural abode, in blissful state. At that time it has become 'One' with the all pervasive universal consciousness (God).

This *Goshati* discourse with such deep and profound philosophy is the first such not only in *Guru Granth Sahib* but also in all Punjabi literature as well. This *Goshati* discourse is associated with *Shabad* (the word), gets so deep at times that it becomes difficult to comprehend. It is incredible that composers of the verses have such expertise, extensive knowledge that they carry on taking out layer after layer of the birth, residence, effect, influence and process of everything which is contained in *Shabad* itself. *Shabad* takes its birth from *Sabad* (the Word) and resides in this.

This was on the *Sidha Goshati*. However the main part of this article relates to inter-religious dialogue which needs some elaboration. It was during the time of Guru Nanak Dev that the rule of Pathans had ended and that of the Mughals began. There was great decline in moral values among the *maulvis* and other leaders of Muslim religion at that time, who were savagely fighting among themselves. Guru Granth Sahib preaches that there should be no false pretence in doing *Namaz* but the devotee should instead adopt a life based on moral values. Such dialogue is directed at the general public.

Guru Nanak advises the people to "build a mosque of mercy and kindness instead of cruelty, have a prayer-mat made of faith, earn their bread through toil and sweat, treat that as the holy Koran, stay away from evil deeds, live contended lives, observe fasts and thus evolve into a true Muslim". Not only this, he states that rather than gazing towards Mecca, they should "do good deeds, consider truth as their vendor, kindness as their prayer and all this as the reciting of *Namaz*: God would certainly acknowledge those prayers".

Apart from the observance of fast and the reciting of *Namaz*, the consenting nod by the mentor is very important. To deprive somebody of his rights is equivalent to the killing of a pig by a Muslim or a cow by a Hindu. The Guru or mentor would bless one if refraining from infringing on other's rights. One cannot attain heaven only by discussing such matters. Liberation can be attained only through truthful living. One cannot prosper through other people's wealth. By indulging in falsehood, one cannot achieve happiness. It is imperative to follow the path of truth.



Kazis enjoy very high status in Islam, but those of that time did not give proper guidance and were prone to bribery and corruption. The reciting of *Namaz* five times a day was also probably just pretence and nothing was gained. In fact, the *Namaz* should be so as to adopt truth, second to earn honourably, third to donate in the name of God, fourth to keep good intentions and fifth to praise God. Along with the recitation of *Namaz*, one should do good deeds thus, to be called a Muslim.

Verses of the *Bani* show four dialogues relating to Islam. The first is associated with the recitation and technique of *Namaz*. The second one preaches on observance of fast and rightful earning. The third dialogue deals with the *Kazis* and how they should conduct themselves, recite all five *Namaz* correctly. The fourth verse stresses on the proper preaching by religious leaders. All these dialogues are not at all critical on the philosophy of Islam, but rather they enjoin the followers as to what norms and values should be adopted and what kind of qualities their leaders should possess. It is clear that all these dialogues point towards the general public. These are not related to leaders but with the actions of religious leaders and their followers.

The universal approach of *Guru Granth Sahib* indicates the upliftment of all humanity. Dialogues clearly indicate the depleting condition of public life and give positive approach to life, guiding both Muslims as well as non-Muslims, significant aspect of which is the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Composers of verses of *Guru Granth Sahib* have repeatedly held dialogue with with the Indian classical religions: falsehood, rituals, pretences had so overpowered people, who then alienated themselves from truth and were steeped with wrong doings, even being considered as desirable objectives. Precepts and practices of the *Sanatan* religion had taken a great hold upon the people. The sensitive perception of composers of the *Granth Sahib* in holding dialogue with them all is related with ritualistic practices prevalent in society. Taking holy dips had become common among the *Sanatan* followers who laid stress more on such cleansing of the body rather than purifying of the soul. Followers of every religion have certain norms and ethics as their guiding principles in life, and believers of *Sanatan* religion wear a sacred thread, believing that the body is thus purified.

On asceticism, it is stated that many renounced the world and started living in jungles and eating herbs and plants. They wore saffron clothes and considered them as *Sanyasis*. However the fact is that a true *Sanyasi* "is one who is always seeking the path of knowledge". Such pretentious people crave worldly pleasures, do not enjoy their family lives, nor become real renunciators. In reality, such people just wither their lives away. The emphasis in *Guru Granth Sahib* is on

right and honest ways of livelihood and an outward rejection of such as those who are involved in corrupt practices.

People continue with caste bias, which is akin to the spreading of poison. Human qualities and life have suffered greatly from such caste divisions. God has created everybody as equal, it is only man that has devised such an evil caste system which is self destructive.

In fact, those who stress upon such false pretences are really themselves in bondage but also force others also to accept it. Such people do not know the true pathway, but are lauded as sages: a major blot on such society!

In the Brahmnical society, it has been a ritual to clean the kitchen with cow dung. However, a person becomes impure if within that circumscribed area, he is touched by a "lower caste" person. This is falsehood personified.

Medieval society was patriarchal and women were badly exploited, their gender becoming synonymous with 'being the exploited ones'. If woman is so bad why then is mankind dependent on her upkeep and well-being? It is women who give birth to a man. His family life starts only after getting married to a woman. She is the primary unit of society without which the family and society cannot function. Moreover, society, which places kings at the highest pedestal, are borne by women. How then can the person with such supreme qualities be considered as wicked? A powerful voice was raised by *Guru Nanak*, the lone such amongst all the saints and sages of *Bhakti* movement.

*Guru Granth Sahib* repeatedly holds dialogue on the different aspects of customs and traditions prevalent in society, a composite work which includes the verses of all the *Gurus* and numerous saints and sages. This universally holy book awakens every sect, caste and religion without discrimination. Each question is answered systematically and logically.

Besides *Sulha Gosati*, *Guru Granth Sahib* includes another composition named *Dukhni Omkar*. *Guru Amar Das* has composed a *Patti* in *Raga Asa*. Here *Guruji* holds dialogue with teachers who are preaching to their students. The teacher has an vital role in educational institutions. *Guruji* holds dialogue with him, as well as with his mind. *Guru Sahib* was opposed to ego and false pride and favoured a life of true action.

*Guru Granth Sahib* has certain compositions in the genre of folk poetry, which create very beautiful dialogues. For example *Var Sat*, has been composed by *Guru Amar Das* and *Bhagat Kabir* concerning the superstitions associated with *Vars*. *Guru Granth Sahib* has also verses relation to *Thiti*. The first *Thiti* has been written by *Guru Nanak Dev* in *Raga*



*Bilawal*. The second one composed by Kabir ji. People had certain superstitions related to *Sar var* and they had particular beliefs with *Thitis*. These verses hold dialogue with the teachings and philosophies of the *Sanatan* religion and so guide humanity towards taking the rightful path. This dialogue is full of abstract entities and is noteworthy in that all teachers of various sects like *Pandhas*, *Kazis*, *Pandits* and *Mullas* have been classified as equals. These are mainly conceptual, the composers trying to clear the mind of such religious leaders of all the cobwebs and instead laying stress on rightful actions and techniques for the attainment of knowledge. There is a well understood dialogue concerning non-vegetarianism, and this has been put into proper perspective.

Guru Nanak Dev's style is not only dialogue but is dramatic as well. Most of the times he resorts to the technique of dialogue but sometimes he uses dramatic technique too. His theories of his life prove this such as the story of offering water to Sun, the story of cooking meat during solar eclipse in Kurukshetra and others.

Whenever Guru ji holds a dialogue he goes to the depth of a problem. The subject gets more and more subtle and at times, beyond comprehension of any ordinary person. "Man's very existence is through flesh. It is through his parents that man is conceived and takes birth. From his birth, he receives mother's milk through flesh. The mouth, tongue everything is made up of flesh. When he grows, he marries a person made of flesh and bring home his wife and the same flesh gives birth to flesh : daughters, sons are formed through flesh. Only fools fight over flesh (meat), little realising that when *Hom Yagya* is performed, it is the flesh which has been sacrificed and offered at the *Yagya*. If meat is 'evil' then how can the '*Hom Yagya*' be pious?"

"We have all been conceived and are borne from flesh and we are all made of flesh". Addressing the *Pandha* (teacher), Guru ji asks him as to how could he talk so cleverly when he lacks the true knowledge. Guru ji makes *Pandha* aware of the fact that he (*Pandha*) does not know the origin of flesh. It comes out of water. All the edible things take birth from water, how far is it right to hate flesh?

The composers of verses have held multifacet dialogue with Yogis. They have often discussed about their *Mudras*, *khat-Bhekh*. I wanted to write about this topic in detail but we have already discussed about it extensively in *Sadh Goshati*. For the time being I am refraining from a formal discussion about yoga philosophy, so that this article should not get too lengthy.

This is another discourse which relates itself to the Jain religion. The composers of verses generally follow the

following procedure for discourse. Firstly, they try to understand the mode and technique of a religion, then they try to comprehend the basic tenets and beliefs associated with it, and then they finally present their point of view. The point worth noting here is that none of the composers has negated the basic philosophy of any religion. The primary reason for it is that there is one God – the pathway to achieve Him may be through *bhakti*, karma or knowledge. Those who follow the path of *bhakti*, express it through their hearts. They worship the God residing in their hearts. This higher state of self-surrender manifests itself in love and thus steeped in it, they attain God by being one with the supreme consciousness. The ultimate goal of Jain religion is to reach it through the pathway of discipline. The composers have initiated a dialogue about the philosophy of Jainism but remarked upon such rigorous discipline of life and the living in unhygienic conditions.

The composer's main stress is on the actions (*such karam*). The practice of customs and traditions by Hindus neither apply the techniques of Yoga and nor of the Shiv worshippers and so cannot hope to achieve God. Guru Arjan Dev says: *ਜੈਤ ਮਾਰਗ ਸੰਨਮ ਅਤਿ ਸਾਧਨ*. Guru ji has not negated the path of frugal living and strict religious discipline followed by Jain people rather he considers them as *Hath Dharmis* (those who follow discipline of the strictest kind). Guru ji stresses the recitation of God's name only. Guru Nanak Dev has disapproved of the life of penance and the Fifth Guru has very plainly stressed upon importance of the Divine Name.

Having the discerning eye, the composers are able to distinguish between the right and the wrong in very balanced way. We must keep in mind that the composers have talked about those abstract entities or concepts which had been abused by society. They highlight these through explanation of the concepts. Being the pioneer of the unity of India, *Guru Granth Sahib* initiates a dialogue with the whole of Indian Metaphysics and spirituality which includes every aspect of contemporary political-religious life.



**Dr Mohinder Kaur Gill**

Former Principal Mata Sundri College, New Delhi



## Naam and Value-System of

# Guru Granth Sahib

Though my field is Islamic Studies, I have always been interested in the study of other religions. This interest led me to create in the Indian Institute of Islamic Studies (which took the form of Hamdard University in 1989) a Department of Comparative Religion where over the years a great deal of interaction took place between the Muslim and Sikh scholars. They could see how close the teachings of these two religions are. It is only when one embarks on a serious understanding of the scriptures of others that one realises that all religions have the same goal, the same ideals and, in a sense, the same teachings. Since all religions are socio-historically conditioned, differences are bound to occur. The problem is that very often these differences are highlighted and the essential teachings and cardinal principles are relegated to the background.

I have been studying books on Sikhism for half a century and have been fascinated by writings of the many great Sikh intellectuals. Peerless are the Tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh, and Bhai Nana Lal 'Goya'. Guru Gobind Singh's *Jap Sahib* is a beautiful composition on invocations. When it was being translated into English by Mr Surendra Nath, who was then Governor of Punjab, he consulted me regularly to find the exact equivalents of Arabic and Persian equivalents, as in

*Ganeemul Khiraj Hein. Gareebul Nivaz Hein  
Hareeful Shikan Hein, Hirasul Fikan Hein.*

Bhai Nand Lal Goya's first piece in his *Diwan* or collection of poems, which W H McLeod, has called *ghazal*, is in fact a *Hamd* or Praise of God in the manner of the traditional Persian poets. I have read it many times, and each time I read it I derive a new joy. It is clothed in beautiful, simple, effective Persian with a rhythm and cadence all its own. I shall quote:

*hawai-I bandage awurd dar wujud mara  
wagar no dhauq-I chinin amdan nabud mara  
khush ast umr ki dar yad bugarad warna  
chi hasil ast az in gunbad-I kabud mara  
dar an zaman ki niai ba ad mi miram  
bighair yad-i-tu zin zistan chi sud mara  
fida st jan-u-dil-I man ba khak-I mardum-I pak  
har an kasi ki ba suit u ah namud mara  
na bud hich nishan-ha zi asman-u zamin  
ki shauq-I ru-I awurd dar sujud mara*

*Only the longing to worship God has brought  
me into the world;  
But for the joy of offering praise why should I ever come?  
Happy the life of the man who spends  
his days in remembering God;  
Without that remembrance why should we linger,  
under the dome of heaven?  
Without that remembrance life is death,  
remembrance alone can sustain me.  
Without that remembrance all that life offers is  
empty and futile for me.  
All that I am, my heart, my life, I offer in humble abasement.  
Taking the dust from the blessed feet of the  
one who has led me to you.  
No trace of you and I ever seen in heaven  
above or on earth below.  
Until the desire to behold you,  
Lord laid me prostrate in awe and devotion.  
Without the remembrance of God,  
O Goya, how can I even live?  
Grant that deliverance soon may be mine,  
that released I my meet my Beloved.*

*Guru Granth Sahib* is as close to my heart as my own scripture. I have found mirrored in this catalytic and eclectic *Granth* the teachings of my own religion and the teachings of the great Sufis on which I was brought up. The *Guru Granth Sahib* is the distillate of the teachings of the great spiritualists of India belonging to different religious traditions and coming from different parts of India. the *Qur'an*, the *Bible* and the *Granth* all mean 'book'. These are the basic books of guidance for the believers, their *vade-mecum*.

*Guru Granth Sahib* is both the fount of enlightenment (*nur-i-Batin* of the Sufis of spiritual elevation) as well as a *Granth* of social conduct. If I were to dwell on the various facets of this *Granth*. I would need much more time and many papers like this, however, for the present I am dealing briefly.

Scholars and students of theology and philosophy know that both these disciplines have generated, especially in the West, an intense debate which questions all the basic beliefs that religious people in the East subscribe to. The



German philosopher, Nietzsche, initiated 'God is dead' theology resulting in a great deal of philosophising about religion. Philosophers are now caught in a debate about the reality itself. The increasing quantum of literature on the subject coming out of the West is clear evidence of doubt and scepticism about everything. Just a few months back, two titles appeared which sow doubt in our minds about the reality of the world and even on our perceptual consciousness and experience that we think we have. In *Is the Visual World a Grand Illusion*, a number of philosophers and psychologists try to show that our consciousness of the reality is false consciousness. The other title is *Realism and Anti-Realism*, in which famous scholars, like Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault, Richard Rorty, Thomas Kuhn, hold that most of what we think is real is no more than human conceptual schemes and beliefs. The eminent physically handicapped physicist of Cambridge University, Prof. Stephen Hawking, has even gone to the extent of saying that even God does not know where He is at a given time. The principle of uncertainty, propounded by Heisenberg has thrown all the beliefs of people overboard.

In such a state of flux where nothing looks certain, where should human mind have its moorings? Without moorings, mankind will be like a ship without anchor buffeted by the waves of doubt and uncertainty on the high seas of pure rational thinking. It is this doubt, scepticism and uncertainty that has been the cause for the loss of mental peace and has brought millions of people, who had deserted their religion, back to their faith. It is this situation which is luring the people to turn to religious scriptures. A large number of people in the United States have converted to Sikhism and in other countries, even if people have not converted to Sikhism, they have developed an interest in the study of the *Guru Granth Sahib* with great emphasis on *Ek Onkar*, which is very close to Islam, as is Judaism, another monotheistic religion. Christianity is also a monotheistic religion, but its monotheism, pure and clear in the beginning, was later on diluted by the Doctrine of Trinity. Monotheism was also the basic concept in Hinduism from the *Rig Veda* onwards. But later on, like Christianity, it was diluted and gave birth to various philosophical schools, such as "non-dualist, modified non-dualist, or frankly dualist, all claiming to be based upon an interpreting the true meaning of the Upanishads". It was Sankara (8th century AD) who showed that the divine alone is real and all sufferings and separations are due to *maya* or illusion. It was Baba Guru Nanak (1469-1539), who preached monotheism forcefully. In his well-known poem 'Nanak', in *Bang-e-Dara*, Iqbal acknowledged this contribution of Baba Guru Nanak:

*The nation paid no heed to the message of Gautam,  
Failed to value this unique pearl  
Alas, the unfortunate, remained cut off from the Voice of Truth  
Just as the tree is unaware of deliciousness of the fruit  
He brought out the secret of existence while India was proudly  
Steeped in its contemplative discourse.  
It was the land which remained unlighted by the candle of Truth.  
A land which failed to harness the waters of mercy.  
Alas! For the shudras, India is an abode of grief, bereft of  
The milk of human kindness.  
The Brahman is happy with wine of egoism.  
The candle of Gautam is burning bright in alien lands.  
The pantheon shown once again after a long time.  
With the light of Abraham.  
Once more the cry of "one God" arose in Puna  
And India was shaken from its sleep by a Perfect Man.*

The Qur'an expounds in order to bring all religions onto a single platform, a minimum agenda is required and that agenda is believe in One God.

*Say: "O People of the Book! Come  
To common terms as between us and you:  
That we worship none but God;  
That we associate no partners with Him;  
That we erect not, from among ourselves,  
Lords and patrons other than God".*

*Qur'an 3:64*

Belief in *One God* is fundamental to both Islam and Sikhism. It is from God that everything flows: the creation, our knowledge of things, our perception of right and wrong, our value systems. Rationalists may engage themselves in proving or disproving the existence of God. Religious people stand by their beliefs which their religions have given them. A Muslim is told to recognise God without proof, and proofs require rational scrutiny. But too much rationality can cloud our vision. The famous Urdu poet, Akbar Allahabadi, who was a judge and a critic of modern Western thought and culture, wrote three beautiful couplets criticising the total dependence on reason:

*falsafi ko baith ke andar Khuda milta nahin  
dor ko suljha raha hair aur sira milta nahin*

The philosopher will fail to discover God through arguments. He is playing with a ball of badly intertwined thread looking for the ends.

*sadyon falsafa ki chunan our chunin rahi  
lekin khuda ki bat jahan thi wahin rahi*



For centuries, the philosophers raised 'ifs' and 'buts'.  
But the belief in God remained firmly entrenched.

And now a very beautiful couplet by the same poet:

*Nur-i-'irfan' aql ke parde men pinhan ho gaya  
Hosh men ana hijab-e-ru-a janan ho gaya*

The light of divine knowledge has been dimmed by the blaze of reasoning. Rational understanding is a veil that conceals God. While philosophers, theologians, scientists have applied their rational tools to the existence of God and the nature of God, the spiritualists have very different tools to know God. The great Sufi poet, Maulana Jalal al-Din Rumi, spoke of five higher senses over and above the five sense we have:

*There are five more senses apart from the five ones we know  
The former are like gold and the latter like copper.*

Both Islam and Sikhism realise that God, being Infinite, cannot be seen. He can be understood only through his innumerable attributes. These are called *Nam* in Sikhism and *al-asma al-husna* or beautiful names of God, in the Qu'ran. In both the religions, each attribute represents a particular aspect of God, like love, kindness, justice, etc. Constant repetition of these names by the believers helps in imbibing those divine qualities. Psychoanalysts have recognised it as 'auto-suggestion'. The Muslims are told to imbibe in themselves the Attributes of God. My Sikh brothers are also told to do the same by the Sikh scriptures. If the Muslims have the books of *adhkar* (invoking God by his Attributes), the Sikhs have *Jap Sahib* – a beautiful hymn of invocation which I have seen being recited by many Sikh brothers in a state of almost total ecstasy. By repeating the *Nam*, a Sikh seeks to rise higher spirituality, and like the Sufi, seeks *wisal* or union with God.

*For the Guru teaches the disciple repetition of God's Nam;  
This practice annihilates his ego;*

*Then he practices meditation on the Divine attributes  
and intones God's Name,*

*This intonation with love brings about his assimilation  
with the super-self.*

*In this state, Gurmukh need no yogic formalism for  
inspiration, only vivid perception of God's proximity  
procures fulfilment,*

*Nanak says the Gurmukh thus becomes omniscient.*

Having shown the importance of *Nam*, I now turn to the value system. It is now the argument of sociologists like Raymond Boudon and philosophers that no value is a permanent value. Boudon argues that all values change

from time to time and from place to place as new situations arise. In a way he is right. Most values do change, but there are certain values which are permanent. Were is not so, it would have been futile to hold any belief in a value-system. W. Owen Cole and Pritam Singh Sambhi have noted that "value systems are based on beliefs, but the moral issues which religions address in their scriptures often reflect the relationship of external principles to particular historical and social circumstances". The value-system that is common to Islam and Sikhism comprises permanent values which will hold water as long as the human race does not disappear from the face of the earth. Some of these values are truth, justice, righteousness, compassion, non-violence (physical, verbal, or emotional like ill-will). The list is long, but all those values are there in the value-system which helps a man to ascend to higher levels whether mental or spiritual.

We are living in a world where all the time we are confronted with the mechanistic and materialistic view of existence. Spiritual values are sidelined. It is for our religions to re-orient our minds. Unless we develop a new *Weltanschauung* or worldview as was explained at length by the Sikh Gurus, by Islam and other spirit-centered religions, mankind will be in for a great deal of suffering. Instead of *santokh* which the Sikh Gurus tried to bring in, we will have *dukha* which Buddha tried hard to root out.

The vision that the higher religions offer is both vertical and horizontal. In our spiritual ascent, and the desire of ultimate union with God, we cannot forget mankind on earth. 'Man is the measure of all things' is an old saying of the Greek philosophers. The progress of religions will be measured by the service they render to humanity by removing social evils and enabling the people to live happily in a peaceful society.

Guru Granth Sahib, through its many beautiful and moving *shabads*, urges the people to eschew evil and to work for the spiritual, social and even economic upliftment of the human society Guru Nanak said:

*Ghali khai kichhu hathahon de  
Nanak rahu pachanahi sei.*

"Nanak, he has found the way to God, who earns with the sweat of his brow and gives to others."



Syed Ausif Ali  
Hamdard University, New Delhi



## Illustrated copies of the

# Adi Granth and

The *Adi Granth*, a work of divine hands and the holiest of the holy in the Sikh faith, enshrined later as the Guru of the *Panth* and revered forever, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is central to the shaping of Sikh society, guiding and inspiring it in perpetuity. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* embodies the Gurus' vision of the Supreme and at the same time provides guidance on how to live life so as to earn His pleasure and to merge with Him in inseparable unity. To a Sikh, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* is the ultimate incarnate and in this Sacred Book he finds the fulfilment of all his aspirations, both temporal and the transcendental. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, the nucleus of Sikh thought and faith, is an entity containing wisdom beyond time, incessantly effecting sectarian unit and the uniformity of Sikhs as a distinct community.

The Sikh *Panth* began with the hymns of Guru Nanak. The devotional songs of *Sufi* and *Vaishnava* saints and poets were its early leaves. A simple thing as it was, Baba sang hymns and the commune repeated. This turned into devotional congregations. The believing minds met and sang a verse (known as *Shabad* in the Sikh tradition) and conjointly commemorated **His** name (the *Naam*). His attributes and His great benefaction. Thus, the devotional song came to be the most potent vessel of the *Panth*.

Guru Nanak was a great poet and a born singer. The song and a melodious voice were his sole possessions. And, after He emerged from his vision, what else could he offer but his beautifully rendered songs! But his song was different. It manifested **Him**, the Formless. Nanak knew **Him** not, except **His Naam**, but he caught the *Naam* never to let it go. In **His Naam** there **He** was, and in his song there was **His Naam** and thus **He Himself**. Nanak said, *Naam* is the ladder, climb it and reach the Highest of the High. Thus, Nanak's path was the simple path of *Naam-simran*. Music was its vehicle and breath and song its outer frame.





# Sri Guru Granth Sahib

In Collection of the National Museum at New Delhi



The opening page of an illuminated Sri Guru Granth Sahib. This finely calligraphed manuscript has 673 folios of which 40 are illuminated.



In *Naam-simaran* alone was He realised. More lips, too shallow, could not be the vehicle of *Naam-simaran*. Nanak, hence, favoured song, as song went deeper into the being. Song, or *Shabad*, emerged thus, not as **His** vehicle but rather as **His** manifest form. *Jaka hirdaye sudda hai, khoj sabad mein ley*, that is, "such beings as have a pure heart may discover **Him** in the *Shabad*," was a very early realisation in the *Panth*. **He** resides in *Shabad*. Hence, to Nanak's followers, *Shabad* was the Ultimate, the *Shabad* as it emerged from the Guru's lips, or from the lips of a *bhagata*, poet or saint.

*Shabad*, being Guru's word, his own or sung under his sanction, comprised *Gurbani*.

By the time of the Fifth Guru Arjan Dev, the volume of the *Gurbani* had considerably expanded. All his predecessors had largely contributed to it. The following too had spread far and wide and, as such, the *Gurbani* travelled orally from one voice to the other or in the shape of *potlis* and other written instruments. Guru Arjan, who undertook to consolidate the *Panth*, decided to first have the genuine body of *Gurbani*, as in the tradition of Nanak,



A folio of Sri Guru Granth Sahib depicting the Ten Sikh Gurus in lotus petals. Dated 1839.



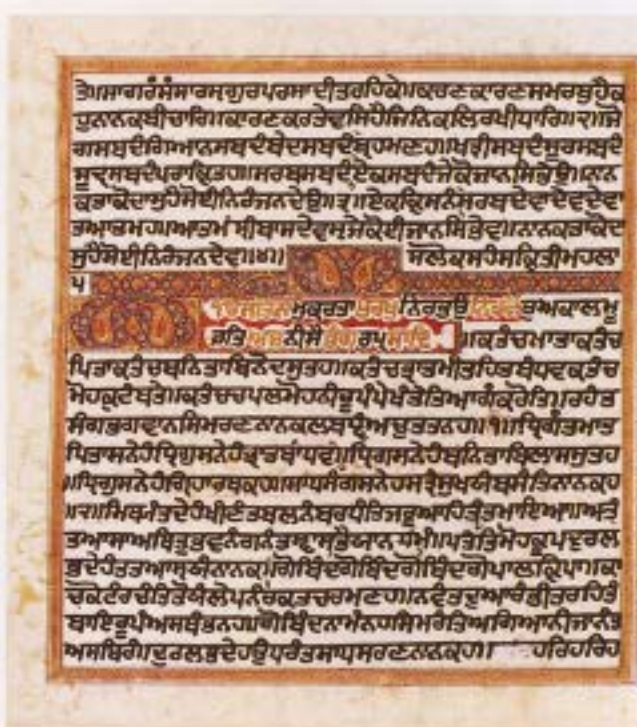
Gurbani alone was the authentic statement of Him, the Karta-Purakh.

The task of acquiring *pothis* in which Bani had been preserved had its own difficulties for they who had them in their possession were not always willing to part with them. What prevailed in folk tradition or in mass memory was either very little known or scattered far and wide, usually at remote distances. Although teams of collectors and scribes were always alert to rush to where a word of Gurbani was known to exist, yet they did not always

languages originally used by them, Persian, Urdu, Sanskrit, Brijhasha and others, were retained. Their script alone was changed to Gurmukhi, and justly, for Nanak's disciples had known them only from Guru Mukh, the mouth of the Guru. The overtones of Islam, Vaishnavism and Sufism that flavoured the original verses were not disturbed. The Granth so compiled was named the *Adi Granth*. The Holy Book was completed by August, 1604. After its completion it was ceremoniously installed with great veneration at the Harimandir Sahib in Amritsar.



Folio no. 372. All the folios in this Sri Guru Granth Sahib are numbered and decorated with painted borders.



Another folio of the same manuscript, dated 1839.

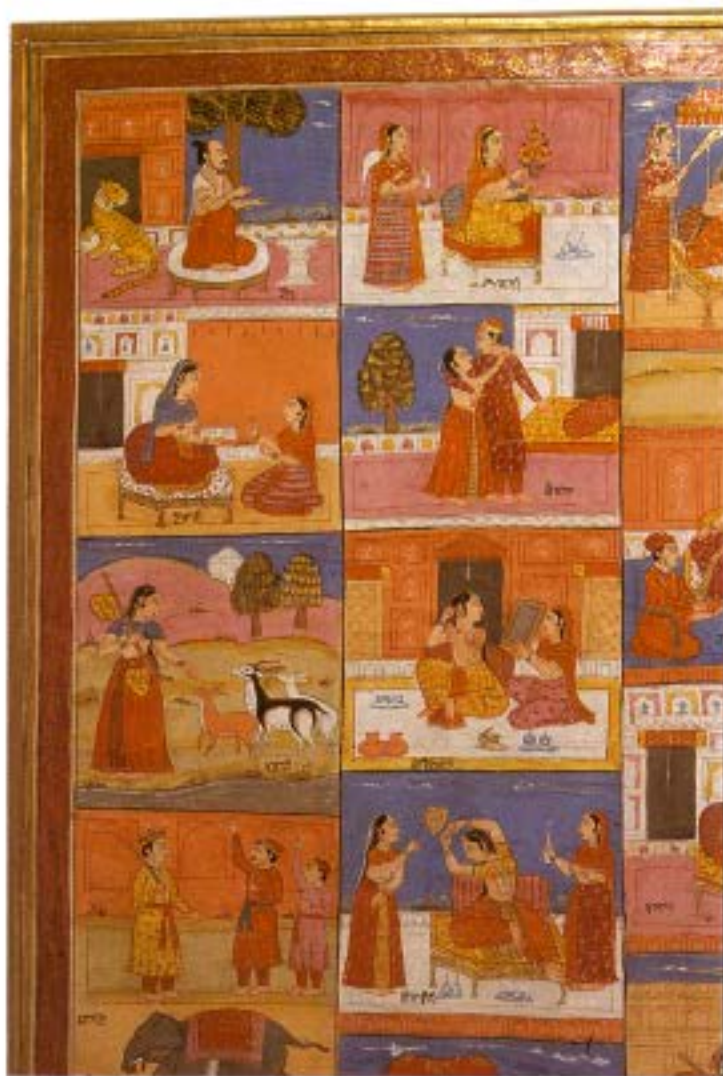
succeed. For collecting Bani from Baba Mohanji, the eldest son of Guru Amardas, Guru Arjan Dev had to personally visit him after he initially refused to part with it. Guru Arjan, collecting his entire spiritual strength, sang a melody praising Baba Mohanji, the holder of Gurus' immortal legacy and metaphorically as Mohan, the Lord. Baba Mohanji finally relented. The *pothis* were carried to Amritsar in a palanquin with great respect.

Mata Ganga, Guru's spouse, was custodian of the collected Bani. Guru Arjan, after he scrutinised each *Sabad*, dictated the final version to Bhai Gurdas, who with a fine hand served as scribe. In the process, purity of language, correctness of theme and the pith of each verse were rigorously discovered. The script used was Gurmukhi. The *Shabad* of Gurus were in local dialects, which were retained as such. But, for the *Sabad* of other saints and poets the

The Bani as contained in the *Adi Granth* was not a mere textual thing. The music of the *Adi Granth* swells with irresistible mystique and is full of surprises. Guru Arjan mainly used 31 raags and 30 mixed raag-forms usually prevailing in classical Indian music tradition. Some *raags* were in ballad form. Guru Arjan left these to be sung in their traditional folk form but in specified *raags*. Some others were, however, set to the prescribed modes.

The first copy scribed by Bhai Gurdas, affixed with Guru Arjan's seal of authority, the *Mundavani* contained in its 974 leaves of 12" x 8" size, the poetry of the first five Gurus, including Guru Arjan himself, fifteen Vaishnava and Sufi saints and poets and a few *raags* and verses of the minstrels. The Book was divided into chapters under the headings of different raags within the chapters. The *Shabads* were arranged in the order of succession of the Gurus and the





A folio of Sri Guru Granth Sahib depicting ragas and raginis, Sikh-Kashmir mixed style, dated 1839.

verses included thereafter. The entire Book was paginated and its index was prepared with the opening words of each *Shabad*, evidencing great methodicity,

Faith, philosophy and ethical values, with community life, music, poetic excellence, humanism and love constitute the very being, the body and the soul of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*. Initially, copies of the *Adi Granth* were plain text. The preference, later shifted from plain to illuminated bordered pages; this was some 50-60 years after the *Adi Granth* came into being. This is clearly evidenced by a 1666-dated copy of the Holy Book available at the Patiala Archives. This copy not only has some illustrated folios but its prefacing folio also has inscribed on it the *Mool Mantra* in Guru Tegh Bahadar's own hand. Its illumination is much in the Quranic fashion. A number of such illuminated copies of the *Adi Granth* from the 18th and 19th centuries, mostly in *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* forms, have been reported by various sources.

The National Museum at New Delhi, too, has collections of a variety of illuminated copies of the Holy Book. There are two illustrated copies which is very significant, for the practice of illustrating *Sri Guru Granth Sahib* was not much in preference. It indicates that, however scanty, the practice of illustrating the Sacred Book had begun by at least late 18th century, as these copies must be from the late 18th or early 19th century. One of these copies is small in size whereas the other one is larger, in 51x54.5cm. folio size and dated to 1839. This highly expansive and hence ambitious large size copy of the Holy *Granth* seems to have been prepared by one Sodhi Bhan Singh who has been shown worshipping divinities in one of the prefacing folios. The date of the completion of this copy of the Holy Book coincides with the date of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's death, as recorded in another folio-samvat 1896 [1839 AD] *var sudi purnima Ranjit Singh Sakha joti-jot samane*. Obviously, it is either Sodhi Bhan Singh's dedication of the Holy *Granth* to the memory of Maharaja Ranjit Singh or he got this copy prepared for gifting to the Maharaja. A similar copy with prefacing folios illustrated alike, is in possession of the Bhayee Sahib of Bagrian, near Nabha in the Punjab. Initially in 1959, the National Museum was able to acquire five of its illustrated loose folios. Then in 1961, an entire copy of the Holy Book was purchased from Sardarni Fateh Singh of Delhi. This entire *Guru Granth Sahib* has 944 folios and all the pages are profusely painted in gold, red, yellow, green and orange. Invariably these pages are decorated with a geometrical design border and the *Mool Mantra* is painted with gold letters in the beginning of almost every *Shabad*.

One of these folios depicts the zodiac with its twelve astronomical divisions, represented here by a twelve-petalled lotus, ten painted with the figures of the ten Gurus with their families. The circle created in the centre by the circumference of the petals contains the figure of its patron Sodhi Bhan Singh. Two others, one attached with the bound copy of the Holy Book, and the other one of those five folios, depicts 31 *raags*, the musical modes, which is an essential and integral part of *Gurbani*. The fourth folio depicts God's cosmic form, very much a Sikh concept of the Supreme, the *Akal, Karta Purukh*, the All-doing, All-creating Timeless One who reveals in all forms and pervades them all.

**Dr. Daljeet Kaur**

Curator-in-Charge, Dept. of Paintings  
National Museum, New Delhi



# People of the Book

Nanak, who lived in the culturally diverse Punjab of the fifteenth century, "disappeared" for three days while bathing in a river and was thought to have drowned. On the third day he reappeared. He had been in communion with the Supreme Being.

It is said that for a whole day after his emergence from the river Bein, Guru Nanak sat silently in deep meditation. "There is no Hindu, there is no Muslim" are the first words he spoke. This statement should not be misinterpreted; Guru Nanak was not making a value judgment about, nor refuting, the religious life of the Hindus and Muslims of his day. He was pointing to the oneness of the Transcendent that translates into the oneness and equality of humanity. Nor did Guru Nanak's statement propose religious uniformity. He was not asking people to abandon their faith and adopt another, but stressing the fundamental, common truth underlying the diverse faiths and systems of belief. His insight was to become the philosophical and ethical foundation for his Sikhs, his "followers".

*This was a simple announcement, and yet a significant one in the context of India of his day. To a society torn by conflict, he brought a vision of common humanity – a vision which transcended all barriers of creed and caste, race and country.*

Guru Nanak was born on 15 April 1469 in Talwandi, a small village in present day Pakistan. His father, Kalyan Chand of the Bedi clan of Khatri, was the village accountant for the local Muslim landlord. His mother, Tripta, was well known as a pious and gentle lady. Nanak was named after his older sister Nanaki. From an early age, Nanak was

opposed to rituals and to the caste system. Inclined towards the life of the spirit, he lost interest in the rigid discipline of formal schooling. His father, no doubt upset, sent Nanak to graze cattle. Soon the village of Talwandi was buzzing with miraculous accounts of Nanak the herdsman which are

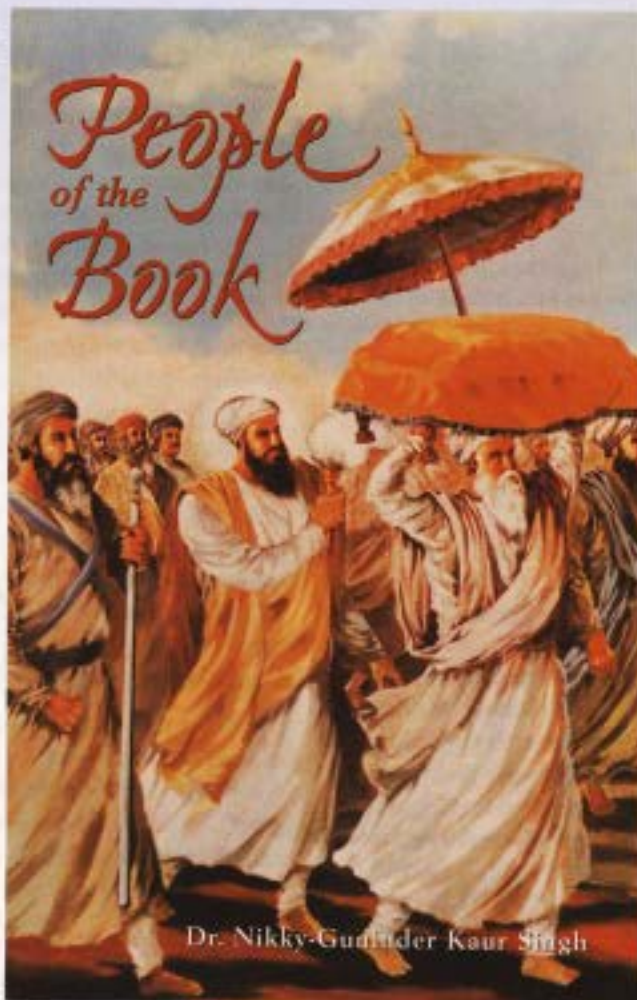
recorded in the *janamsakhis*, the accounts of his time and life, and which include a description of his revelation at the age of twenty-eight while bathing in the river Bein:

As the Primal Being willed, Nanak the devotee was ushered into the Divine Presence. Then a cup filled with amrit (nectar) was given him with the command, "Nanak, this is the cup of Name-adoration (*naam piala*). Drink it ... I am with you and I do bless and exalt you. Whoever remembers you will have my favour. Go, rejoice, in My Name and reach others to do so ... I have bestowed upon you the gift of My Name, let this be your calling." Nanak offered his salutations and stood up.

The genesis of the Sikh religion is traced to this epiphany in which Nanak had profound insight into the existence as well as into the nature of the transcendent. He received "the cup of Name", that is, he heard the divine Command, held the cup,

savoured its ambrosial contents and recognised the absolute Truth. To drink the ambrosia of the Name is to imbibe the sapiential quality of knowledge received from the Divine. Guru Nanak's experience was at once sensuous and metaphysical

The vision of the Ultimate Oneness marked the beginning of Guru Nanak's mission. He was charged to deliver the message bequeathed to him through the vision, a message which essentially entails discerning and rejoicing in the



Dr. Nikky-Gurinder Kaur Singh



infinite and singular reality beyond the fragmented parts and particles. Guru Nanak celebrated the favour of receiving the Name through a song of praise; and song was to be the medium of his divine inspiration for ever after.

All of Guru Nanak's teaching is set forth in verse. His genius was best expressed in the poetical attitude. No other way would have been adequate to the range and depth of his mood – his fervent longing for the Infinite, his joy and wonder at the beauty and vastness of His creation, his tender love for his fellowmen, his moral speculation and his concern at the suppression and exaction to which the people in his day were subject. His compositions reveal an abounding imagination and a subtle aesthetic sensitivity.

Whatever he said, and however he said it, Nanak acknowledged that it was divinely inspired. "As the Word comes to me, that is how I deliver it". This poetic mode was to be the starting point of the Sikh scripture, the *Guru Granth*.

For twenty-four years after his revelation, Guru Nanak travelled throughout India and beyond spreading the divine Word. He was accompanied during most of his travels by his Muslim companion, Mardana, who played on the rebec while Guru Nanak sang songs of intense love for the Divine One. The dress he wore as he set out on his journeys combined elements of Hindu and Muslim wear, a mixture which was symbolic of his common message for all peoples. Recognising and accepting the religious plurality in which he lived, he freely mixed with the exponents of different traditions. Throughout his life, he continued to preach for a common humanity which, to his way of thinking, transcended all racial, social, religious and gender barriers and which he wished people of all faiths to perceive and cherish. During his extensive travels throughout India, he visited places of worship belonging to various religious traditions – Hindu temples, Muslim mosques, Buddhist viharas, and Sufi khanqahs – and attended their fairs and festivals. In the *Guru Granth* we come across evidence that he met with yogis, Sufis, and naths. When he met Muslims, he adjured them to be faithful to the teaching of their faith; when he met Hindus, he urged them to abide by the tenets of their own tradition. The essential and eternal truth which lay beyond all externals and particularisms was the core of Guru Nanak's vision of the Transcendent One.

The rich but simple style of his teaching drew people from different religious, cultural and social backgrounds. Wherever Guru Nanak went, people began to follow him, calling themselves *Sikhs*, a Punjabi word which means "disciple". It can be traced to the Sanskrit *shishya* and the Pali *sekka*. Bhai Gurdas (1551-1636), the first Sikh historian and theologian, viewed this new faith as "a needle which sews materials that are ripped asunder, bringing harmony to the torn and conflicting groups".

At the end of his travels, Guru Nanak settled in Kartarpur, a village in the Punjab that he had founded on the right bank

of the river Ravi. A community of disciples grew around him here. It was not a monastic order of any kind, but a fellowship of men and women engaged in the ordinary occupations of life. Guru Nanak established two important Sikh institutions: those of *sangat* and *langar*. *Sangat* is the holy congregation where men and women sit together to recite praises of the Divine; *langar* is the community refectory where men and women irrespective of caste and creed, eat a common meal. Both have been potent factors in fostering the values of equality, fellowship and humility, and in affirming a new and dynamic sense of "family".

A further crucial development was the appointment of a successor. Before he passed away in 1539, Guru Nanak announced that his disciple Lehna was henceforth to be named "Angad", literally "part of his own body". This phenomenon is that now the writ of Angad ran instead of Nanak's; for, the Light was same, the Way the same, only the body had changed." Bhai Gurdas depicts it as one flame lighting another. For the Sikhs this process was repeated successively until the Tenth Guru, Gobind Singh, ended the line of personal Guruship and made the *Granth* the Guru eternal. We learn from Bhai Gurdas that Guru Nanak carried a manuscript of his poetry under his arm, perhaps foreseeing the need for a scripture for the growing Sikh community. When Angad succeeded Guru Nanak, he inherited this record and also composed metaphysical poetry of his own. For him, the divine Word had an aesthetic as well as an epistemological value: "It is ambrosia, it is the essence of all, it emerges from deep knowledge and intense concentration". Thus, while heightening and refining the senses, poetry also reveals the essence of existence itself. Guru Angad added his poetry to that of Guru Nanak's collection, and signed it too with the name "Nanak". It was Guru Angad who developed the Gurmukhi script in which the *Guru Granth* was to be written.

As the succession of Guruship passed on, so did the verse of one Guru to the next. Each valued and nurtured the literary compositions also under the pseudonym "Nanak", he would pass on the poetic legacy to the next. Guru Nanak was cherished as the founder of something new and different, and they felt that they were simply continuing his message.

## Compilation of the Guru Granth

In 1603, Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, took upon himself the compilation of the *Granth*. Guru Arjan had two reasons for taking up this physically and intellectually demanding task. First, he realised that the community needed a text that would encapsulate the Sikh worldview – a *Granth* (book) for the *Panth* (community). The fellowship of Sikhs had increased and spread, calling for a common message for its spiritual and moral life. Guru Arjan himself had travelled widely. There had been a famine in the Punjab, so the Guru travelled from village to village, helping people sink wells and undertake other works of public welfare. As a consequence



many more people were drawn into the Sikh fold. There was thus an urgency for the revelation coming from Guru Nanak and his successors to be crystallised. Second, there was the problem of "counterfeit" works. Guru Ram Das, the Fourth Guru, had bypassed his older sons and appointed Arjan to the Guruship, causing a rift with Pirthi Chand, his eldest son. Pirthi and his gifted son Meharban began to compose sacred poetry under the name of Nanak. To fix the seal on the sacred Word and to preserve it for posterity Guru Arjan began to codify the Sikh literary legacy into an authorised volume.

Bhai Gurudas was called upon. Guru Arjan and he retreated to a serene and picturesque spot in the thick forest outside Amritsar and started work. Today, this site in the southern part of the city is marked by a shrine called Ramsar. There was a vast amount of poetic material; selections had to be made from the works of all the preceding four Gurus, as well as Guru Arjan's own superb and extensive body of poetry. Furthermore, whatever was in harmony with the Sikh Gurus, even the sayings of the Hindu or Muslim saints, was also to be included. Finally, what was genuinely composed by the Gurus had to be sifted from what was incorrectly attributed to them. With literary finesse and scholarly precision, Guru Arjan acted as compiler and editor while Bhai Gurudas was the amanuensis using the Gurmukhi script of Punjabi.

The organisation of the poetry was musical. Apart from a few hymns, the entire collection is organised into thirty-one sections, each section containing poems in one melodic scale (*raag*). These raags appear in the following order: *Sri, Majh, Gauri, Asa, Gujri, Devgandhari, Bihagara, Vadahans, Sorath, Dhanasri, Jaitsri, Todi, Bairari, Tilang, Suhi, Bilaval, Gaund, Ramkali, Nut-Narayan, Mali Gaura, Maru, Tukhari, Kedara, Bhairi, Basant, Sarang, Malar, Kanra, Kalyan, Prabhat, and Jaijwanti*. Each measure has its particular characteristic, its timing and season. For instance, the first, *Sri*, meaning "supreme", is one of the parent measures from which the others are derived. It is compared to the philosopher's stone, supreme among other stones, which transforms baser metals into gold. It is sung in the evening, when darkness takes over. In content too, it expresses the darkness of ignorance and superstition in which Guru Nanak's society was enfolded. Seasonally, the measure *Sri* is associated with extreme heat and cold, indicating an intensity of emotion. The poets in this measure are heard expressing their ardent yearning for the Divine.

Within each of these thirty-one sections, the poetry of the Gurus was organised in the order of their succession. We know that all the Gurus signed their compositions with the name of Nanak to show that they were continuing his work. This was a little confusing, of course, so at the top of each work Guru Arjan wrote *Mahalla* 1 if the poem was written by the First Guru, *Mahalla* 2 if it was written by the Second Guru, and so on. *Mahalla* means "body", and it indicates that the

Gurus are different bodies of the one spirit of Nanak which they all share. So a poem by a particular Guru will be titled first by the name of the *raag* to which it is sung (this may or may not include the word "*raag*"), then by the *mahalla* number. There may also be an actual title to the poetry as for example with *Sodar Rag Asa Mahalla* 1. *Sodar* means "Gate" and is the title, *Asa* is the *raag*, and *Mahalla* 1 indicates it is the composition of Guru Nanak.

These poems by the first five Gurus were followed by those of numerous Hindu and Muslim saints.

The completion of the Granth was an occasion of great celebration. Later Sikh history compares the festivities with those of a wedding. Huge quantities of *karah prashad*, the Sikh sacred food (made of sugar, butter, water and flour), were distributed. Sikhs travelled for miles to witness the colourful procession that would bear the sacred volume to Harimandir, the temple at Amritsar, a special place for Sikh worship, which was the inspiration of Amar Das, the Third Guru. Work on the Harimandir had begun under Ram Das, the Fourth Guru, in 1577. A structure of great architectural beauty, the shrine was completed in Guru Arjan's period, in 1601, only three years before the completion of the *Guru Granth*. The Harimandir came to be known as the *Golden Temple* after the Sikh Maharajah Ranjit Singh had it reconstructed and plated with gold. On 16 August 1604 the *Guru Granth* was ceremoniously installed in the inner sanctuary of the Harimandir. Bhai Buddha, the surviving elderly and venerable Sikh devotee of Guru Nanak, actually carried it on his head while Guru Arjan walked behind holding the whisk over it in homage. Musicians played hymns from the sacred text. Bhai Buddha opened the Granth with reverence to obtain the divine command (*hukum*) from it; Guru Arjan stood in attendance behind. At dusk, the Granth was taken to a specially built chamber. There it was placed on a pedestal while Guru Arjan slept on the floor by its side. Such was the veneration shown to the Granth by the Gurus themselves. The original copy of the sacred book is preserved to this day at Kartarpur, a town near Jalandhar founded by Guru Arjan.

## The founding of the Khalsa and Apotheosis of the Guru Granth

By Guru Arjan's time, therefore, the Sikhs had received both a sacred space and a sacred text. These were both important in moulding Sikh self-consciousness. The Harimandir provided a central place for gathering and worship. The Granth gave the Sikh message a concrete form. It not only became their spiritual and religious guide but also shaped their intellectual and cultural environment. These were significant events crystallisation of the Sikh faith.

As the Sikh faith began to solidify and the Sikhs grew in number, the Muslim rulers of India became very concerned. Guru Arjan was imprisoned by the Governor of the Punjab.



In 1606 he was executed. The martyrdom of the Fifth Guru generated a strong impulse of resistance and inaugurated a new era of militarism. Instead of the rosary and other saintly emblems, his son Guru Hargobind, the Sixth Guru, wore a warrior's equipment for the ceremonies of succession. He put on two swords: one was declared the symbol of his spiritual (*piri*) and other of his temporal (*miri*) investiture, emphasising how in the Sikh faith the worldly and the other-worldly are not separate.

This act of combining *miri* and *piri* in two swords marked an important development in the evolution of the Sikh community – the development in the evolution of the Sikh community, the development of a martial spirit. Since peaceful resistance to oppression had proved abortive, the Guru recognised recourse to the sword as a lawful alternative. He raised a small armed band of Sikhs and sent out messages that disciples in the future should come with gifts of horses and weapons. In 1609, to defend the town of Amritsar, he built a fortress called the *Loh Garh* "Iron Fort". Another symbol of temporal authority instituted by Guru Hargobind was the Akal Takht (the Throne of the Timeless One) in front of the Harimandir. The Harimandir was for prayer, the Akal Takht for the conduct of the community's secular affairs.

But it was the martyrdom of Guru Tegh Bahadur (the Ninth Guru) in Delhi that finally consolidated the martial aspect of Sikhism. This Sikh Guru challenged the policy of the Muslim rulers of converting Hindus by force, and for this defence of religious freedom he was executed in 1675. His son and successor, Guru Gobind Singh, the Tenth Guru, though only nine years of age then, provided vigorous leadership to the Sikhs. His first task was to infuse new spirit among his people.

Guru Gobind Singh fulfilled his aspiration for religious freedom in 1699 by proclaiming the Khalsa, the Order of the Pure. It was a casteless and self-abnegating body of Sikhs ready to take up arms to fight against oppression. The day was Vaisakhi, New Year's Day in the north Indian calendar. The town was Anandpur in the Shivalik hills. Chanting verses from the Guru Granth, Guru Gobind Singh began the new initiation into the Khalsa by churning water, poured into a steel bowl, with a double-edged sword. His wife, Mata Sahib Kaur, came forward and dropped sugar crystals into the vessel. Sweetness through the feminine hand was thus mingled with the alchemy of iron.

The occasion marked a dramatic departure from the past. The five to whom the rites of initiation were administered by Guru Gobind Singh were given the surname of Singh, meaning "lion" and endowed with the Five Ks. These were *kesha* or uncut hair, *kangha*, a comb tucked into the kesha to keep it tidy in contrast with the recluses who kept it matted as a token of their having renounced the world; *kara*, a steel bracelet symbolising strength and unity; *kachha*, short

breeches worn by the soldiers of that time; and *kirpan*, a sword. Their rebirth into the new order represented the annihilation of their family (caste) lineage, of their confinement to a hereditary occupation, of all their earlier beliefs and creeds, and of the rituals they had so far observed. They were enjoined to help the weak and fight the oppressor. Guru Gobind Singh reiterated the First Sikh Guru's message to have faith in the One, and consider all human beings equal, irrespective of caste and religion. In Guru Gobind Singh's words:

*I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, rising above all differences of religion as now practised. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different duties laid down for them in their scriptures, abandon them altogether, and adopting the way of mutual help and cooperation, mix freely with one another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay homage to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage which are considered to be holy in the Hindu religion, or worship the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga, but all should cherish faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let each of the four castes receive my baptism of the double-edged sword, eat out of the same vessel, and feel no aloofness from, or contempt for one another.*

Guru Nanak's vision to affirm and celebrate the oneness of Ultimate Reality and the oneness of humanity was given practical form by Guru Gobind Singh. His verse "recognise the single caste of humanity" is very popular in modern times and is recited by Sikhs in India and abroad. The initiation through steel was open to both men and women. Women were also to wear the five emblems of the Khalsa. As men received the surname Singh, women received the surname Kaur, signifying "princess", and they retained this name whether single or married. Thus the patriarchal structure of society was modified. Men and women no longer traced their lineage of occupation to the "father"; as "Singh" and "Kaur" both became equal partners in the new family of Sikhism.

Shortly before he passed away, Guru Gobind Singh made a momentous decision. On 6 October, 1708 he asked his disciples to bring the Granth to him. In a manner reminiscent of Guru Nanak's appointment of Angad as his successor, Guru Gobind Singh placed a coin and a coconut before the Granth and bowed his head in veneration before it. He told the gathered community that it was his commandment that henceforth they acknowledge the Granth in his place. The Granth was thus apotheosised as the Guru. Personal guruship came to an end. Succession now passed to Guru Granth in perpetuity. Sikhs were not to perceive Guru in any other form. The Word alone was to be the Guru Eternal. From that day on, the Sikhs in their daily supplications, morning and evening, recite: "Acknowledge the Guru Granth as the visible body of the Gurus". The Guru Granth is thus revered as both the physical body of the Gurus and the metaphysical corpus of their poetry.



## The Guru Granth in daily life

The Guru Granth has been the continuing spiritual and historical authority for Sikhs as well as a primary source for their literary inspiration. Through their scripture, Sikhs have been able to observe their faith more fully and more vividly. The community's ideals, institutions and rituals have derived their meaning from the Guru Granth. In the words of the eminent Sikh scholar Harbans Singh, "the physical presence of the Guru Granth and its sublime poetry have constituted the twin regulative principles for the psyche of the Sikhs and their conduct".

The shrine which houses the Guru Granth is called a gurdwara, literally, a door (dwara) to ultimate enlightenment (guru). But many Sikhs keep the holy volume in their homes, paying full respect by keeping it in a separate room, on a pedestal, draped in silks. Whether in homes or in gurdwaras, the holy book is ceremoniously read in the morning and in the evening. It is also present at special gatherings such as weddings, name-giving ceremonies, birthdays, commemorations and house-blessing events. In such functions, it is carried onto the lawns or verandahs or drawing-rooms and paid the utmost homage. Wherever the Book is kept or heard, that space is revered by the Sikhs. A line in the Guru Granth says that paradise is where the holy verses are recited. The Word embodied in the Guru Granth is present and resonates within our own bodies.

The Guru Granth is set at the very centre of the gurdwaras. These vary in scale, for a gurdwara in a tiny village can be small, and they vary in style, for a gurdwara in India could be different from one in America. But even from a distance any gurdwara can be identified by the yellow triangular flag, flying overhead and carrying the emblem of the Sikh Khalsa (*nishaan sahib*). The emblem of the Khalsa is an upright double-edged sword set in a circle, which in turn is encircled by a curved sword on either side. This also appears on the walls, windows and doors of the gurdwara.

The traditional gurdwaras can also be recognised by their white domes and minarets taking one's eyes towards infinite skies. They have a large courtyard which provides an immediate feeling of expansiveness. There is a pool within this and the combination of transparent waters extending horizontally and the diaphanous designs in marble going vertically creates a calm and holistic effect. A walkway goes around the pool, and devotees are seen bathing in the water, sitting on the edge saying prayers, and circumambulating in a contemplative mood. Gurdwaras have four doors, an architectural statement that they welcome people from all four corners. There is no womb-like chamber or altar to which only the chosen are admitted. There are no sculptures or images incarnating deity in any form. The congregation can gather inside or outside, it does not really matter. There are

not chairs and the entire congregation sits on large mats spread on the floors. At the centre, of course, is the Guru Granth. With its metaphysical poetry in sensuous imagery leading the self to the Ultimate Reality beyond, it is readily present to all people from the four directions.

Just as the words of the Guru Granth are not static, in the same way the geometric designs on the gurdwara floors and the floral designs on its walls of marble and stone are not closures either. Abstraction, symmetry, rhythm and repetition are essential characteristics of Sikh architecture. Abstract patterns make possible a passage into another world beyond the senses. Symmetric designs serenely emerging from a multiplicity of intricate details create a surging sentiment of tranquillity. The black and white marble slabs upon which the devotees walk are repeated rhythmically. So are the stylised flowers and birds and arabesques and lattice-work on the walls and sides. The structure itself repeats its arches and domes, pillars and kiosks, windows and storeys. Amongst the unending repetitions that one walks upon, touches on the sides, sees on the building, the melodious Word is heard. The rhythmic repetitions create a dynamic movement for the senses and imagination. Together they are impelled onwards. Any feeling of uneasiness gives way to harmony; doubts and dualities begin to dissolve; the ignorant psyche is inspired to discover its essential spark. Through its finite structures the gurdwara creates an energetic movement towards the infinite Transcendent.

Whether publicly in the gurdwaras or privately at home, Sikhs bow in front of their Book with their heads covered and shoes removed. They stand in front of it in homage, or sit on the floor while the Guru Granth is always placed on a higher platform. Amidst joyous recitations, the Guru Granth is opened at dawn. This opening ceremony is called *prakash karna*, literally "making the light manifest". Any Sikh may perform *prakash*; in Sikh homes, the duty often rotates among family members, and, in gurdwaras, among the congregation. The Book is draped in rich silks and brocades. It is placed on quilted mats, and supported by three cushions, one under each side and one in the centre. A canopy hangs over it for protection, and a whisk is waved over it as a sign of respect. Those present stand humbly in front of it and recite *Ardas*, a prayer of supplication. The Guru Granth is then opened at random, and the passage at the top of the left-hand page is read aloud. This passage is called *wak* or *hukam*, the message or order for the day.

After dusk, the Guru Granth is closed. The closing ritual is called *sukhasan*, which means "to sit comfortably". Again, *Ardas* is said and *wak* taken. With recitations of evening prayers, the book is ceremoniously closed.



# Sri Guru Granth Sahib



## An Art Exhibition 2004

Watercolours by Pritpal Singh

*"In this vessel you will find three things: truth, peace and contemplation; in this too, the nectar that is the Name of the Master, which is the uplifter of all mankind."* Thus Guru Arjan Dev summed up contents of the Guru Granth Sahib in the last hymn, before writing the *finis*.

Art and Religion—the link is not new but dates back many centuries, creating masterpieces in the consequent co-relation. In more recent times the legendary artist Sardar Sobha Singh etched the Sikh Gurus into our collective consciousness.

The *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Art Exhibition 2004*, held at the Government Museum & Arts Gallery at Chandigarh in March, showcased how artists perceive and reflect religion today, actually commemorating 400 years of "Prakash Utsav" of the Adi Granth. The exhibition depicted the eternal transcendental wisdom. This initiative was taken by *By Design- Art & Architecture* which has worked on numerous Gurudwara Sahib projects the world over. The three day exhibition was inaugurated on 26 March 2004.

Guru Granth Sahib! How does an artist express the inexpressible? This is awesome indeed, much beyond an ordinary human being's immediate visualisation. Here one is not dealing with the representation of the Sri Guru Granth Sahib just as a book, however sacred. The creativity of the artist must portray the essence and spirit of its contents. Only then does it surpass pedestrian art.

The 37 works by 32 artists on this holy subject did not tread the oft beaten track. Not only do artists dabble in various mediums but also execute it in different styles. The works ranged from soft watercolors, bright (vibrant) oil paints, fine lines of pen and ink to the raw application of charcoal and graphical three-dimensional effects. From realistic to abstract, each work refreshingly rises above mundane illustrations. As this spiritual journey progressed, the essence of Sikh culture and the colours of the Khalsa came to life: ecstatic *kesri*, electric blue generously showered with heavenly hues of gold and vibrant colours of the earth. Meditation, cycle of life, time, destiny and effort, *amritvela*, God within, et al from the abstract to the definitive, the artists experimented with freedom.



The three-member jury, of Birender Singh Malhans, Bhai Sikandar Singh of Bagrian and Romesh Malhotra evaluated the entries in terms of creativity in expression and artistic merit.

Pritpal Singh, who shared the "Excellence Award" with Neenu Vij, reminds us through his watercolors expression "Dhur di baani ayee....". The great Baani which brings enlightenment amidst darkness is well depicted through yellow hues. Similar thoughts are expressed in Sonal A. Singh's alluring work(which gained the commendation award)



Acrylic on canvas - Sonal A. Singh.

where once again the "Prakash" or the light of knowledge, spreading out far and wide, is only too evident. Admits Sonal, "the experience of working on this magnanimous subject has inspired me to paint many more canvases."

The centrality of the Harmandir Sahib, in Sikh thought, is the focus of Neenu's work. The melodious recitation of the



Mixed media - Neenu Vij.

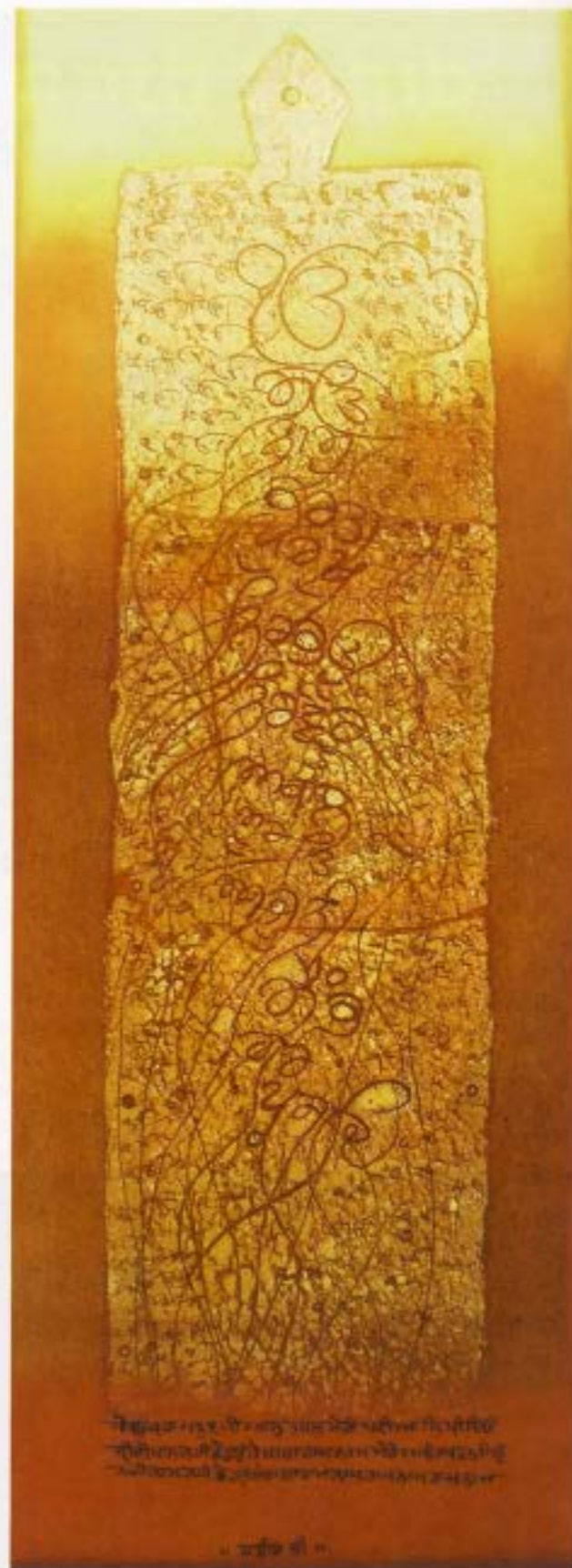
Baani reverberating in the serene environs leaves an imprint on the contemplating mind.

Interestingly, not all the artists were of the Sikh faith, an indicator of the fact that the message of Guru Nanak has great universal appeal. The perception of this sacred Granth, of Ranjita Bhattacharya, comes alive in her creation, which illustrates the names of the 6 Sikh Gurus, 15 Bhagats and 17 Bhatts whose compositions are contained in the Sri Guru Granth Sahib. The originality of her creative thought is



Watercolour - Ranjita Bhattacharya.





Mixed media: lipi paintings by Siddharth.





Pen & Ink - Gagandeep Singh.



Collage - Ripudaman Singh.

rendered in a contemporary style, so different and original from the commonplace.

Siddharth, well known for his use of vibrant natural colours, which he produces himself from various vegetable and mineral pigments, displayed his works in the "Special Invitee" section. His calligraphic rendering of the "Mool Mantra", is the beginning of a mystical journey. In his own words, "I experience the essence that sings songs to the tune of bliss and grace, nor sad nor happy, dancing on a thin thread": *Ananda paeyae meri mayae, Satguru main paya.*

Gagan, whose creativity is one of its kind, infused the exhibition with an element of thought. His works, mainly in pen and ink are the outpouring of his emotions. A soul in abstract, a Sikh being represented, immune to others, but one with himself. With his kirpan, immersed in Bani, the Sikh has no desire to be recognised. So many fine dots, the form unclear, yet they had their own elements.

Then there was this painting, bright colours, so many of them so many that I was overjoyed. It was the Gurdwara Keshgarh Sahib, during Baisakhi celebrations.

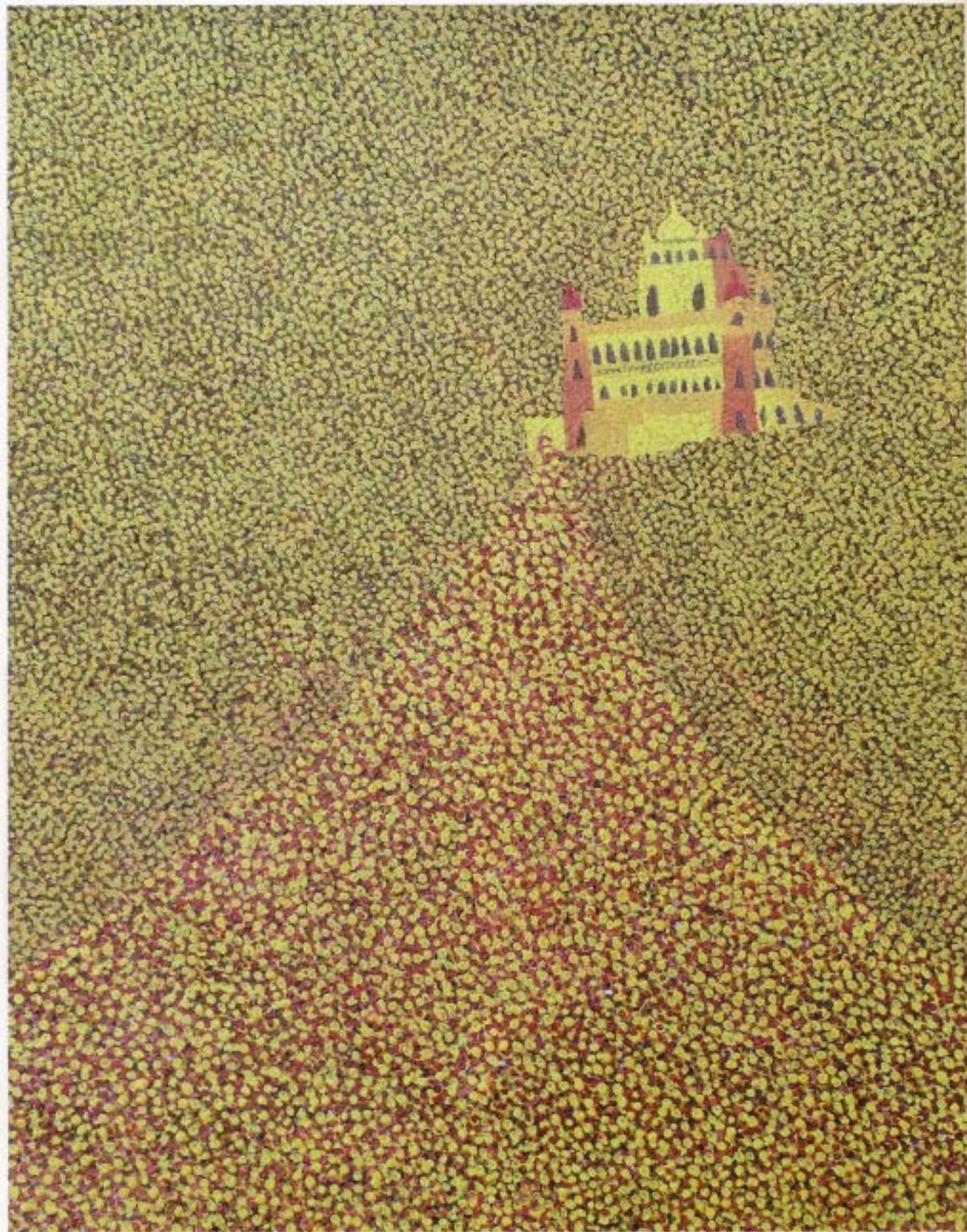
The enthusiasm with which the artists participated is much worth appreciating. The overpowering emotions of the central theme also inspired works by people other than professional artists. Ripudaman Singh, a student of geography in Punjab University, pens *Bani* tracing the map of the five rivers of the Punjab. It strongly conveys the ethos and gives full expression to the centrality of the message of the Guru Granth Sahib.



The Awards presentation ceremony.

Overall, a two-fold aim was achieved. One, artists were encouraged to bring forth their creativity in this unique theme. Secondly, a stimuli for mass appreciation and understanding within society towards Sikh art was generated. The thought which remained long after the exhibition was over that while the idea of expression of the artists came through, but this was just only a first step: a wonderful journey beckons ahead.





*Oil on canvas - Gagandeep Singh.*



# Transcreation of Sri Guru Granth Sahib

By Kartar Singh Duggal - Volume I

Sri Guru Granth Sahib is an outstanding religious scripture in the world. It is a unique confluence of a large number of diverse spiritual streams, and subsumes as well as synthesises many different faith traditions that have diverse cultural and philosophical moorings. Besides the Sikh Gurus, its authors also include some Muslim Sufis, Hindu Bhaktas, (a majority of whom hail from the 'low castes'), and a number of Court Singers of the Gurus belonging to diverse religious denominations. Thus, it becomes a unique pluralistic religious scripture. No wonder then, that in spite of its voluminous size (1430 pages), it has attracted many scholars to undertake its translation.

Trumpp as well as Macauliffe made the first attempts at the translation of substantial portions of the Granth into English. It is generally believed that while the former could not fully empathise with the spirit of this holy book, the latter over-relied on the Bhai Tradition of exposition. When Dr Gopal Singh brought out the first complete translation of the text of this Granth, it was hailed as a remarkable feat of labour and scholarship. A few years later, Gurbachan Singh Talib and Manmohan Singh also brought out their complete translations. The former was welcomed for its elegant diction, the latter was found useful for knowing exact literal connotations. Principal Teja Singh, another stalwart of Sikh learning, also started his translation, which appeared very promising, but destiny denied him the opportunity to complete it. While they all served some function or another, none of them was completely satisfying to one who wanted to enjoy both the formal as well as the spiritual aspects of the Granth.

The entire Granth has a uniformly exquisite style. It consists of elegantly rhymed verse with a great variety of meters, set to the classical Indian musical system, itself somewhat modified by the Gurus. There is consummation of every verse form with the *Raag* as well as the thematic content. Thus, a unique harmony has been woven into its pluralistic substance. While the Gurus have not

promulgated a formal philosophical system of their own, they have given enough indication that some such system has been subsumed under their compositions. That is why, even when they employ a traditionally prevalent philosophical term, it does not, necessarily, connote in the Gurus' works what it does elsewhere. All this makes translation of this work a rather difficult undertaking.

If Kartar Singh Duggal has ventured to try his pen for this purpose, obviously he has not found the existing translations completely satisfying. One can empathise with his uneasiness. Some translators have stuck to a word for word translation, which can convey the literal sense all right, but fails to unfold the figurative implications and the mystical import of the original. Other translations have chosen to employ archaic linguistic expression that irk the modern reader. Some have made contrived efforts at poeticising the prose translation. That often makes it abstruse, sometimes, even jarring. Since all the translations are in prose, they fail to convey the aesthetic elegance of the language and the superb musical and lyrical qualities of the original.

Dr. Duggal's literary credentials are impeccable. He is a literary stalwart of Punjab. His versatility in the use of various genres is well known. Even in his prose, his sensitivity to rhythm and rhyme is quite patent. His scholarship of works in the relevant spiritual traditions is evident from his previous, shorter, works on Bulleh Shah and Kabir. He is therefore justified in considering himself equipped enough to accept the challenge of rendering this holy book into English.

He has, however, chosen to *transcreate* rather than to translate the book. Transcreation is far more difficult an undertaking than translation. It involves imbibing the spirit of the original text fully and recreating it as a new work, providing a form and idiom that enables the reader to enjoy the recreated work with almost the same satisfaction as is obtainable from the original. It is an uphill task. Puran Singh



has been the only writer before Kartar Singh Duggal, who gave us excellent samples of transcreation on portions of Gurbani and other pieces of Punjabi literature. Dr. Duggal will necessarily have to measure his transcreational skill with his.

I have spent much time in perusing the first volume of Dr. Duggal's transcreation and not only enjoyed it but also benefitted from it. His diction is simple and free from archaic expressions; so it is easily understood. Contrary to the practice of many translators (such, for instance, as Swami Rama), Dr. Duggal does not employ protracted digressions of explain refractory concepts. Some scholars may not find this completely satisfying, but the alternative is either laborious footnoting or expansive explications within the text. Dr. Duggal has chosen to refrain from both these. That makes for smoother reading. At places, the particular connotation of a line, term or concept that Dr. Duggal has accepted may well be at variance with a connotation that is more popular with scholars, but one can be sure that Dr. Duggal would have sufficient personal justification for it.

His transcreated version of Sri Guru Granth Sahib provides both formal and substantial satisfaction which is generally consonant, but nowhere far removed from that, one derives from the original. One often comes across passages of outstanding lyrical beauty, with natural poise, smooth rhyming and fidelity to the original. Here is a random example:

*If the True Guru is kind  
What you ask, you achieve.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
You never comes to grief.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
No pain comes your way.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
You cherish every day.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
There is no fear of death.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
You have peace and mirth.  
If the True Guru is kind,  
You have the nine treasures.  
If the True Guru is kind,*

*It's merging with Truth without measure. (p.393)*

Here is another example:

*What harm can cold do to the fire,  
Or night to the sun?  
The dark night can stop not the moon.  
Air and water, of caste, make fun.  
The earth is bothered not for what is offered to it.  
It has every thing already got.  
Says Nanak, that honour is welcome  
If it is bestowed by the Lord. (p.355)*

In general, the transcreation has been able to provide the quality of recitation that approaches the original in many places.

However, Dr. Duggal has, in places shown a bit of over-concern for rhyme. That makes it appear as somewhat of a forced effort in many places. Here is one such example:

*Those who remember and meditate on You,  
They lead a peaceful life in the world.  
They attain liberation and salvation,  
Those who dwell on You.  
Their nose of death is uncurled.  
Those who remember You are free from fear.  
All their fears are no more heard.  
Those who slave and serve my Lord,  
With my Master's divinity they get merged.  
Many a time blessed are those who remember the Lord.  
Nanak is sacrifice to them in deed and word. (p.25)*

In the above passage 'uncurled' appears to be a constrained rhyme. The same way, addition of 'in deed and world' at the end of the last line has been necessitated by the need of the rhyme scheme. The same can be said about the line 'All their fears are no more heard'. That became necessary for rhyming it with 'Lord', 'merged' and word. Otherwise, it seems superfluous and not even necessitated by the original. Parenthetically, the word 'slave' in the seventh line does not give the intended meaning. The use of this term as a verb is rather tricky. One slaves *at* or *over* some job. One does not say, 'slave a person' unless one intends to mean 'enslave' rather than to 'serve as a slave'. Fortunately, such passages are extremely infrequent in this work.

Notwithstanding these few lapses, which are not unlikely to happen in a work of such magnitude, this work has come out to be quite outstanding and makes a remarkable transcreational addition to the many translations already available.

*Dr. Jaswant Singh Neki*



# Sada Suhagan

Raag Aassa, Ghar 7 Mahalla 5

ੴ ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ॥ ਰਾਗੁ ਆਸਾ ਘਰੁ ੭ ਮਹਲਾ ੫॥ ਲਾਲੁ ਚੋਲਨਾ  
ਤੈ ਤਨਿ ਸੋਹਿਆ॥ ਸੁਰਿਜਨ ਭਾਨੀ ਤਾਂ ਮਨੁ ਮੋਹਿਆ॥ ੧॥ ਕਵਨ ਬਨੀ ਰੀ  
ਤੇਰੀ ਲਾਲੀ॥ ਕਵਨ ਰੰਗਿ ਤੂੰ ਭਈ ਗੁਲਾਲੀ॥ ੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ॥ ਤੁਮ ਹੀ  
ਸੁੰਦਰਿ ਤੁਮਹਿ ਸੁਹਾਗੁ॥ ਤੁਮ ਘਰਿ ਲਾਲਨੁ ਤੁਮ ਘਰਿ ਭਾਗੁ॥ ੨॥  
ਤੂੰ ਸਤਵੀਤੀ ਤੂੰ ਪਰਧਾਨਿ॥ ਤੂੰ ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਭਾਨੀ ਤੁਹੀ ਸੁਰਗਿਆਨਿ॥ ੩॥  
ਪ੍ਰੀਤਮ ਭਾਨੀ ਤਾਂ ਰੰਗਿ ਗੁਲਾਲ॥ ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੁਭਦ੍ਰਿਸਟਿ ਨਿਹਾਲ॥ ੪॥  
ਸੁਨਿ ਰੀ ਸਖੀ ਇਹ ਹਮਰੀ ਘਾਲ॥ ਪ੍ਰਭ ਆਪਿ ਸੀਗਾਰਿ ਸਵਾਰਨਹਾਰ॥  
੧॥ ਰਹਾਉ ਦੂਜਾ॥

The red gown looks beautiful on you  
Your Lord is pleased, His heart is enticed  
What makes you so aglow?  
Whose love has made you bloom? (pause)  
You are so beautiful, you are the happy bride  
In your home is the beloved and  
In your home is good fortune  
You are pure and chaste,

You are the most distinguished  
You are pleasing to Your Beloved,  
You have sublime understanding.  
I am pleasing to my Beloved and so I am aglow  
Sayeth Nanak, His Grace has blessed me  
Listen, O friend my effort is just this  
Only He Himself adorns and beautifies.  
(pause second)

SGGS p.384

My *simran* increases  
Day by day  
The *ras* of *Naam*  
Flows through my veins.

My days and nights  
Are filled with *Naam*  
I am in bliss  
I am at peace.

There are no words  
To express gratitude  
Serene silence  
Jewels this bond.

Friends want to know  
The secret to this bliss  
They feel the serenity  
Emanating from me.

How can I tell them  
That it is not I  
But You, my Guru  
That holds the key.  
You held my hand  
And showed me the way

And when I faltered  
You still stayed.  
Your *Hukam* was crystal clear:  
Keep *Naam* in your heart  
Hold steadfast to *Dharam*  
Go about your daily life.

As *Naam* immersed  
My heart became pure  
Every thought, word and deed  
Aligned effortlessly to *Dharam*.

I kept walking  
In this blissful way  
With no expectations  
I felt blessed.

Somewhere along the way  
My ego fell  
The I within me  
Mysteriously disappeared.

*Naam* filled every pore  
*Naam* became my core.  
Deep within my soul  
I felt the *Ik Onkar*.

*Ik Onkar*  
The Divine energy  
That permeates everywhere  
That resides in all.

*Gur Shabad*  
Rests in my being  
Divine energy  
Warms my forehead.

I hear whispers in the air  
I hear oceans sing  
I hear the pain of Mother Earth  
I hear the Unspoken Word.

*Sada Suhagan*  
Is how I feel  
*Sat, Santhok, Dharam, Dya*  
Is my *shingar*.

My days and nights  
Are spent in this bliss  
This is the secret  
To eternal bliss.

Inni Kaur





## ***Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan***

Bhai Vir Singh Marg, Gole Market, New Delhi 110001, Phone: 011-23363510/Fax: 011-23744347 E-mail: bvssindia@yahoo.com

# **Essay Competition**

## **Guru Granth Sahib Quadricentennial Celebrations**

Essays are invited from scholars in different parts of India and abroad on the themes:

- \* **Guru Granth Sahib and Unity of Minds**
- \* **Guru Granth Sahib and Vision of the Ultimate**
- \* **Guru Granth Sahib and Social Justice**
- \* **Guru Granth Sahib and Importance of amrit vela (ambrosial hour)**
- \* **Relevance of Guru Granth Sahib in the Twenty First Century**

While prizes of Rs.25,000/-, Rs.15,000/-, Rs.11,000/- will be awarded to those adjudged First, Second and Third respectively, participation certificates and recognition will be given to all those participating in this Competition.

Essays in typed form not exceeding 1500 words in English, Punjabi or Hindi, should be sent by Speed Post/Courier to the **Hony General Secretary, Bhai Vir Singh Sahitya Sadan, Bhai Vir Singh Marg, Gole Market, New Delhi 110001**, latest by 30 September 2004. Essays will be read by a committee of experts and winner of prizes will be informed about the decision of the jury by mid-November, 2004. Winners would be invited to Delhi for receiving the prizes on 5 December, 2004 during Bhai Vir Singh's birthday celebration. Awards to those who are unable to come and receive them personally, will be sent by post.

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