

Sri Guru Granth Sahib - A Symbol of Secularism

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Sab Sikhān ko hukam hai guru manyo granth
(Every Sikh, this is His will, accept Guru Granth as your only Guru - Guru Gobind Singh)

**“Baanee Guru Guru hai baanee
Vich baanee Amrit saare
Gurbani kahai sewak jan maanai
Partakh Guru nistaare” (982)**

(Guru's holy word is the true Guru and the Guru is the embodiment of the holy word. In the holy word is contained the nectar. If the attendant puts faith in what the Guru says then manifestly the Guru saves him)

Sri Guru Granth Sahib, the holy Sikh Scripture, was bestowed the status of Guru by Guru Gobind Singh in the year 1708, at Takht Sachkhand Hazur Sahib, at Nanded in Maharashtra. This holy book was first compiled and edited by Guru Arjan Dev, the fifth Guru, in 1604. Guru Granth Sahib is distinct and unique, as it contains the spiritual hymns and verses not only of the Sikh Gurus, but also of enlightened persons of other castes and religions, including the Mohammedans. The Sikhs regard the Holy Granth as a living Guru and bow before it to seek guidance for their problems - both spiritual and temporal.



The holy hymns are believed to be God's own commands conveyed by His own order through the Sikh Gurus and various spiritualists, who were dedicated to the only 'One' unfathomable Lord.

With unflinching faith, they meditate on His name at every breath, maintaining their sublimity and service for all. They refrain from any sort of idol worship and rituals.

The task of collecting these scriptures, particularly of the *Bhagats* was extremely difficult, because the basic principle of worship of only one God was like the touch-stone test. This task

was commenced by Guru Nanak, who strictly maintained the principles of "Fatherhood of God and universal brotherhood of mankind." His preaching was so frank and simple that he was welcomed and carefully listened to, wherever he went during his four hazardous travels called *Udasis*. His verses had a magical effect, which he would sing to the strings of *Rabab* (the rebeck) of Mardana.

Guru Nanak would write in a note book (referred to as the *pothi* by the historians), each and every verse, which he recited:

**Hao aappah bol na jaandaa,
Mai kahiaa sabh hukmaa-o jeeo (763)**

(I myself do not know how to speak, whatever I have uttered is as the Lord has ordained)

Back to his village Kartarpur, after his *Udasis* (travels), he returned to plough his fields and also preached at mornings and evenings in a small prayer hall.



Bhai Lehna succeeded him as Guru Angad, whom, before merging with the Divine Light, Guru Nanak handed over his book of spiritual verses. Guru Angad also wrote the holy hymns, which were similarly, passed on to his successor, the third Guru Amar Das. Undoubtedly, Guru Nanak's holy spirit, which prevailed in the second Guru, shone in the third Guru as well. The third Guru in turn, composed quite a number of spiritual hymns regularly, at his Goindwal congregation center and arranged for the recording of the same with due care. The next successor, Ram Das, whose 'selfless service' had pleased Guru Amar Das, was sent by the third Master, to set up a new congregational center with a bathing tank (*Sarovar*), some 30 miles North of Goindwal on the land, which Emperor Akbar had given to Bibi Bhani, daughter of Guru Amar Das and the wife of Ram Das. Initially the place was called *Guru Ka Chak* or *Ramdaspur* and later named Amritsar.

A prayer hall was soon ready while the work on the *Sarovar* was on and Guru Amar Das visited to oversee the progress occasionally. It was here, that *Bhai Jetha* was installed as the fourth Guru Ramdas. Earlier, in Goindwal, Guru Amar Das had



handed over to his trustworthy son, Mohan Ji, all the holy scriptures collected thus far (Properly arranged under his own supervision, in small volumes called *pothies*). Besides the writings of the three Gurus, this collection also contained the verses by 19 saints and sages including Kabir, Farid, Ravidas, Namdev etc., collected by the Gurus.



Along with the construction of the *Sarovar* at Amritsar, Guru Ram Das preached in the mornings and evenings, to the *Sangat*, in the make shift temple. His own holy verses, which he used to sing were being recorded and safeguarded by his son, Arjan Dev, who succeeded him as the fifth Guru.

Guru Arjan, while still a little boy, was blessed by Guru Amar Das thus:

Dohita Baani Ka Bohitha

(Grandson, the Gurbani yacht)

Guru Arjan was a born poet, a talented musician and had knowledge of most of the contemporary languages. His sweetly composed numbers were reverently sung by the Sikhs. Soon after, he took up the task of compiling the holy scriptures of the *Pothies* into one voluminous book (the *Adi Granth*), for which task he had to personally go to Goindwal, where with all the reverence, he approached *Baba Mohan Ji* and obtained the valued scriptural treasure, which *Baba Ji* would not trust to hand over to anyone else.

Back in Amritsar Guru Arjan Dev camped at Gurdwara Ramsar. After adding the Gurbani of the fourth Guru and his own, he summoned Bhai Gurdas, a devout Sikh and a noted scholar, who was highly conversant in Sanskrit and other Indian languages, to write on his dictation, the great treasure of the *pothies* in a very systematic order. Lots of holy persons, spiritual scholars and the popularly known 12 *Bhatts* (the bards), whose verses were also included by the Guru, became regular visitors of Amritsar.

Guru Arjan Dev started this noble project in 1601 and having completed the same in 1604, the *Adi Granth* was brought with respectfulness to the newly built beautiful hall of Harmandir. Baba Buddha, one of the most respected Sikhs of Guru Nanak's times was appointed as the first *Granthi* (Priest) to read out the spiritual command (*Hukamnama*). The Guru himself attributed so much respect to the Granth Sahib that he never sat or slept at a place higher than its seat (*Sukh Aasan*). The Sikhs followed the suit with great reverence.

All the *Gurbani* compositions are in perfect poetic numbers and musical melodies (*Raagas*) in Guru Granth Sahib. They were and are still sung by the learned singers, at the particular timings, seasons and occasions in the Gurdwaras as well as other religious congregations. Spiritually blissful, they are capable of creating state of ecstasy. There are lessons also for living in a harmonious environment with others. There are no trifle stories or fairy tales or fanatic regulations of rituals etc. in its 1430 pages.

The *Adi Granth* was recompiled by Guru Gobind Singh in 1704 at Sabo-ki-Talwandi (*Damdama Sahib*) in order to incorporate the verses composed by the ninth Guru, Teg Bahadur, which he did so efficiently that the order set by the fifth Master was not disturbed. Before he merged with the Divine Light, on 3 October, 1708, Guru Gobind Singh bestowed the Guruship to the final volume and emphatically ordained:

Guru Granth Ji Maneyo Pragat Guran Ki Deh

(Reckon Guru Granth Sahib as the visible living



incarnation of the Gurus).

Obeying this command, the Sikhs consider any controversy on this order, as sacrilege. There is no way anyone would make any addition or subtraction what so ever.

The General Set up

1. There is a data index to guide the reader through the page of all the contents, indicating the *raagas* and the initial verse of each *raaga*.

2. The *Mool Mantra* (the basic creed)

Ik onkaar satnaam kartaa purkh nirbhau nirvair akaal moorat ajooni saibh'ng gurprasad (1)

(God is one, Truth is His name, He is the creator, fearless, without enmity, The immortal, Self illumined and is obtainable by the grace of Guru).

This prelude, which defines the unfathomable God, has been repeated at the beginning of every new *Raaga* (Melody) also.

3. The foremost scripture which we get is *Japji* composed by Guru Nanak in 38 stanzas (*Pauries*). There is one *Shaloka* (epilogue) at the beginning and another at the end. Reciting *Japji* as our initial prayer, every morning, it gives us realization of the great truths about God, the various universes, and realms and



4. The next two hymns-sets, named *Rebraas* and *Sobila*, are the *Nitnem* hymns (daily prayers) we recite in the evening and at night before sleep, respectively. Our spiritual guides have added some more hymns to these *baanies*.

5. The chapters of holy scriptures thereafter are the ones sung in different *Raagas*. Foremost, is *Sri Raag*, very sweet to the strings of Mardana's *Rabab*. People, who gathered around Nanak, listened to the *Baani* and were so enthralled that they became his disciples.

6. Verses in the same *Raaga*, composed by the second, third, fourth and ninth Gurus follow one by one. By ending all of their hymns with the word 'Nanak' they attributed their verses to the Master Nanak's benediction, which reflect identical thoughts and similar blissful messages of communion with the Lord spouse. There is not an iota of egotism or duality. But the feelings of humility and affection are apparent throughout, even though the verses are noted in separate stanzas.

After the hymns of the Gurus, the hymns of Kabir, Farid, Ravidas, Namdev etc. sung to the same melody (*Sri Raag*) are recorded in the same order.



also truths about ourselves. The *Shaloka* in the beginning is:

Aad sach jugaad sach hai bhee sach Nanak hosee bhee sach (1)

(The Lord was True in the primal beginning, True through all ages, is True here and now, and True will be forever).

The last *Shaloka* is:

Pawan Guru paani pitaa, maataa dharat mahat (8)

(The Air is the Teacher, Water the Father, Earth the Great Mother).

The very same order of editing the subsequent *Raagas* and scriptures of our Gurus and the saints has been maintained throughout. Thus we have a total of 31 *Raagas* on 1430 pages.

The *Raagas* are *Sri Raag*, *Maajb*, *Gaurbi*, *Assa*, *Goojri*, *Devgandbari*, *Behaagra*, *Wadhans*, *Sorath*, *Dhamaasri*, *Jaitsri*, *Todi*, *Bairaari*, *Tilang*, *Soohi*, *Bilaawal*, *Gaund*, *Raamkali*, *Nattnaraain*, *Maligaura*, *Maaroo*, *Tukbaari*, *Kaidara*, *Bhairav*, *Basant*, *Saarang*, *Malbaar*, *Kaanra*, *Kalyan*, *Parbhati* and *Jai-Jaiwanti*.

The various contributions of the *Shalokas* of the Gurus are: Guru Nanak 974, Guru Angad 62, Guru Amardas 907, Guru Ramdas 635, Guru Arjan 2,218 and



Guru Tegh Bahadur 115 (total 4,911 *Shabads/Shalokas* etc.). Of the 20 Saints and / or *Bhagats*, Kabir 541, Farid 134, Namdev 60, Ravidas 41, Dhanna 3, Bainsi 3, Bheekhan 2, Jaidev 2, Parmanand, Ramanand, Peepa, Sain, Sadna, Soordas, Mardana - one each. Sunder 6, Tarlochan 4, Bhatt 123, Satta and Balwand 8 (Total 931 *Shabads* etc.) and *Raagmala* one composition.

At the end, after *Shaloka Mehla 9* is Guru Arjan's concluding hymns, *Mundhaavani Mehla 5* (*Mundana* or *Mudran* means 'closing hymn'):

Thaal vich tin-n wastoo pa-ee-o satt santokh veechaaro (1429)

(In the salver are lying three things; truth, contentment and contemplation)

and

Tera keeta jaato naahi (1429)



(I cannot at all realize, what you have done for me, O Lord.) Guru Granth Sahib is authentic in all respects: Guru Arjan's strict system of compilation is highly infringing proof. Each composition of every author is carefully numbered for its verses and topic and each set of every chapter is also reckoned, for the total hymns and for the topic etc. Thus there is no way by which one can add, take-away or disturb the set up of

compositions. For this reason, the scriptures of Guru Granth Sahib stay unique, authentic and preserved, beyond any doubt. Guru Ram Dass, the fourth Guru proclaimed:

Baane guru guru hai baanee vich baani amrit saare,

Gurbaanee kahai sewak jan maanai partakh guru nistaare (982)

(Guru's holy word is the true Guru and the Guru is the embodiment of the holy word. In the holy word is contained the nectar. If the attendant puts faith in what the Guru says then manifestly the Guru saves him.)

What Guru Ram Das said, proved true and the tenth Guru gave the verdict to the Sikhs at the time of his merging with the Divine Light that Guru Granth Sahib will henceforth be the Guru of the Sikhs and all the Sikhs will bow before Guru Granth Sahib and not before any living Guru. The teachings included in this *Granth* explain that monotheism does not mean defecation of God, which leads individual to resort to idol worship or such other practices with a view to attaining his favor in a manner that would mean the negation of the established order of the universe, which in the word of Guru Angad is the dwelling place of Almighty Himself. So this way the unity of God implied the sanctification of all relative existence.

This is how the teachings enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib reject ascetism, celibacy, austerities, ritualism and formalism in totality.

Thus Guru Granth Sahib includes the contributions from Gurus, Saints and *Bhagats* of various religions which evolve the spirit of secularism in the society.

