

**THE HISTORY AND COMPILATION OF
THE DASM GRANTH**

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Dr. Trilochan Singh, M.A., D.Litt, was a close associate of Bhai Sahib Randhir Singh Ji. He translated several works of Bhai Randhir Singh (at his personal request) – including Jail Chitthian and Amrit Ki Hai. The following 4 articles on The History and Compilation of the Dasm Granth were initially published in The Sikh Review from April through July 1955.

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The History and Compilation of the Dasm Granth

DR. TRILOCHAN SINGH

GURU Gobind Singh's mind was a towering Himalaya of light from whose teeming caverns there flowed a mighty river of songs in whose placid depths he set the reflected image of all the tragedy and bliss of life.

His imagination was a seraph which sounded all depths and measured all heights. It touched the intangible, it saw the invisible, it heard the inaudible and it gave body and shape to the inconceivable. It gathered gems from all mines, gold from all sands, pearls from all seas and songs from every battle of *dharma*.

Guru Gobind Singh bequeathed to mankind a literary, historical and philosophic estate which time cannot destroy. He breathed into the nostrils of the heavenly Muse the breath of a new immortality. He sang of his God and his soul. He sang of creation and the rise and fall of civilization. He sang of the wars of *dharma*, of the heroes of the glorious past of India and of the figurative gods and

goddesses of mythology. He sang of the lovers and martyrs of truth.

The fever of the age, the misery of the people, the degradation of the country and its culture, the mute appeals of the oppressed became the problems of his life which he solved with the pen, the sword, the mind and his godlike spirit.

Guru Gobind Singh's mind was a resistless flood which deluged everything that came into contact with it with glory, strength and spiritual glow. He desired that his Sikhs should develop all sides of their personality. He himself developed on all sides the exuberance of his powers without losing himself in their multiplicity.

MISUNDERSTOOD AND MISINTERPRETTED GENIUS

It is, however, to be regretted that writers on Guru Gobind Singh have been led away by their just admiration for one aspect of his life to an unjust and even ignorant

depreciation of various other equally important aspects of his life.

It becomes impossible for some devout Sikhs to understand that the Guru who was the creator of the Khalsa and who in many fundamental ways parted radically from Hinduism could write such secular writings as life stories of the *avtars* of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva such as his *Triya Charitar* and *Chandi Chagitar*. It becomes equally difficult for non-Sikh writers to understand that a Guru who has written glowing accounts of Chandi, Lord Krishna, Buddha and the great ascetics Dattatreya and Paras Nath was not a worshipper or a devotee of any of these. While he had a profound respect for these personalities who were gifted with special, divine qualities, he condemned the worship of these heroes and sages of our country as deities and godheads.

There is another class of writers who do not understand Guru Gobind Singh's use of the sword of *dhurma* and the great social and spiritual significance he attached to it. His

autobiography explains the circumstances under which he had to use sword in actual battles. When he was of aggressors, generally numbering more than ten times his men, attacked his home and hearth without rhyme or reason, he had no other way but to resort to the sword. Extreme non-violence at such juncture kept India in slavery century after century.*

Another negative argument, though without much grounds, is that as Guru Gobind Singh was always preoccupied with battles and conflicts with the rulers, how was it he had so much time to write monumental works. Such people should know that out of five Sikh's morning prayers three compositions are by Guru Gobind Singh. Such is the importance he attached to his poetic works.

Guru Gobind Singh was far more conscious of being a poet than a warrior, or a prophet. The title of a prayer composed by him reads: *Bach Benti Chaupai*, which is *The Prayer of the Poet in Ch...*

Metre. In his autobiography, Apni Katha, the chapter describing his birth in the first person is entitled *Ath Kabi Janam Kathnan*.

No ruler in Indian history had as many as 50 poets and innumerable additional writers whose patronage was coveted by emperors like Aurangzeb. If Guru Gobind Singh found time to examine the works of 62 poets, he could easily find time to write profusely. He rewarded two poets with 60,000 *mohars* each for translating some cantos of the *Mahabharata* into Hindi and Panjabi. He never gave even half this much reward to any of his warriors.

When the war clouds loomed heavily over Anandpur he asked those poets who could not handle the sword to leave. On their departure they were profusely garlanded, taken in procession on elephants, given rich gifts and presents. Above all they were given a salute of guns. According to a poet, the neighbouring *rajās* on hearing the salute were terror-stricken and thought that Guru Gobind Singh was preparing an attack with unprecedented might.

While education was compulsory, military training was optional. Yet in that atmosphere the inspiration to become a poet was so great that

labourers working in the stables took part in poetry contests. The military training was entrusted to some of the greatest military geniuses of the time. Among them were Guru Gobind Singh's maternal uncle Kirpal Chand, who was also the Guru's teacher from childhood, and five sons of Bibi Viro (daughter of Guru Har Gobind) named Sango Shah, Jit Mal, Gulab Chand, Ganga Ram and Mahri Chand. Each of these warriors was given a command of 500 to 800 soldiers. Sango Shah was the Commander-in-Chief in the battle of Bhangani when he fell a martyr on the twelfth day of fighting, Guru Gobind Singh took the command in his own hands. The younger generation took arms so very eagerly that the poet Hir said, "A child *singh* learns the use of the sword long before he learns to tie his turban."

While all other misunderstandings will become clear in their proper places, one misunderstanding created by the self-styled puritans called the *dharmias* must be cleared here. They tried to prove that most of the *Dasm Granth* was written by the poets Ram and Shyam, names which occur in one or two compositions in the *Dasm Granth*. There is more than sufficient internal and external evidence in every composition to show that all

*Muhsein Fani, Guru Har Gobind's contemporary, declared that "both Guru Har Gobind and Guru Gobind Singh did not use the sword out of anger on any occasion. The wars they fought were communal; they were fought against the Hindu *rajās* and the Moghul armies. In his armies were Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs." Even Mahatma Gandhi, writing in his article, "The Doctrine of Non-Violence," said: "I do believe that when there is only a choice between cowardice and violence I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner remain a helpless victim to her own dishonour."

the writings in the Dasam Granth were the works of Guru Gobind Singh. As we discuss each composition we will explain the purpose of each work and also give internal proofs of its authenticity.

The names Ram and Shyam are used in some places as pen names. Actually speaking, they were not pen names but poetic translations of Guruji's names. Guruji's name Gobind is an attributive name of God; so also are Ram and Shyam. In Sikh theology the three words *govind*, *rām* and *kyām* mean the same thing as the following quotations from the Guru Granth prove:

kyām sunder taj nīd kīn āi

Guru Arjan: Sūhi

kyām sunder taj ān jo cāhil jioh kubi tan jok

Surdas: Sarang

govind govind govind kur guni nidhān

govind govind govind jap mukh ujā pardhān

Guru Ram Das: Var Kanra

rām rām kirtan gāe

rām rām rām sadā schāe

Guru Arjan: Rag Gond

In all the above quotations from the Guru Granth the words *rām*, *kyām*

and *govind* mean the same thing so also do they in the Dasam Granth where they stand for Guru Gobind Singh. That is why two or some all three of these names occur in same composition.*

This practice of writing a synonym for the proper noun in the Dasam Granth applies not only to his name but to many other names. In the Dasam Granth, Guru Gobind Singh writes *Notra Trung* for *Notra Devi*, *Satdrav* for *Satluj*, *Das* for *Anandpur*, *Shah Sangram* for *Sango Shah*, and *Madra-desh* for *Punjab*.

Even in our own times Bhai Vir Singh's maternal uncle Hazara Singh wrote his name Hari while his father Dr. G. Singh wrote his name Charan. Sardar Dharma Anant Singh in his book *Plato and the True Enlightenment of Soul*, writes the name of Attar Singh as *Mrigindus Atrus*.

So Ram, Shyam and Govind are synonymous names of Guru Gobind Singh.

*In the Guru Granth the name Gobind is written both as *Govind* and *Gobind*. But in Guru Gobind Singh's writings it always occurs with "h" as *Gohind*. Guru Gobind Singh spent most of his life in the area of the Punjab where the words with "v" are pronounced "h." Guru Gobind Singh used "h" in his writings. He writes *bade bade* for *vade vade*; *maru bojia* for *maru vajia*; *abigat* for *avagat* for Vishnu; *bern* for *vorn*, and innumerable other cases. So Guruji preferred to write his name as *Gohind* not as *Govind*.

COMPILATION OF THE DASAM GRANTH

(A) PHILOSOPHIC WORKS
(Literature of divine wisdom)

- 1. Jap ... 199 verses
- 2. Akal Ustat ... 271 verses
- 3. Gyan Prabodh (Incomplete) ... 336 verses
- 4. Tho Swayyas ... 33 verses
- 5. Devotional Lyrics ... 39 verses

(a) Pre-Aryan

- 1. Chandi Charitar (1st Hindi version) ... 233 verses
- 2. Durga di Var (Panjabi version) ... 55 verses

- 1. Introduction (Kal ji ki Ustat) ... 101 verses
- 2. Apni Katha (Autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh) ... 370 verses
- 3. Chandi Charitar (2nd Hindi version) ... 262 verses
- 4. Avtars of Vishnu (The story of Krishna, Rama, Buddha and others) ... 4365 verses

(b) Aryan
Bachitar
Natak

- 5. Mehdi ... 11 verses
- 6. Avtars of Brahma (The story of Balmik Vyas, Kalidas, etc.) ... 323 verses
- 7. Avtars of Rudra (The story of Dattatreya, Paras Nath and Machinder) ... 856 verses

(c) On Sex
Psychology

- 1. Triya Charitar (in Hindi) Pakhyān ... 7,555 verses
- 2. Hakayats (in Persian) ... 757 verses

(d) Dictionary

- 1. Shashtra Nam Mala Puran ... 1,318 verses

(e) Epistle

- 1. Zafarnama (Letter to Aurangzeb) ... 111 verses

Total number of verses in Dasam Granth ... 17,195 verses

Romanized copy of Bhai Mani Singh's
letter to Mata Sundri Ji

ik onkār akāl sakhāe

pūj māṭā ji de carnān par manī singh kī dandaut bandā. lahorō
namācār vācā ke idhar ūon par sūḍā sarir vīyū kā adhk vikārī hoe
gaeḥ hai-suaṣṭ nāhī hoeḥ. tūp kī kalā de bār sunī. par māndar kī
sēḍā meḥ koi ḍak nāhī. des vic khāṣe dā bai chat gaeḥ hai.
singh parbatān babānān vic jāe base hain. malechoḥ kī des meḥ dohī
hai. basī meḥ bālak jurā istrī salāmat nāhī. much much kar mārde
hain. gurū darohī bī unā. de saṅg mil gae hain. haṇḍāṭīe mil kar
mukbarī karde hain. sobī cok choḍ gae hain. mutadī bhāg gae hain.
sāḍe par abī to akāl kī rachā hai. kal kī khabar nāhī. sāhilān de
hukam afal hain. binod singh de putrele dā hukam eat hoe gaeḥ hai.
pothīān jo jhāḍā singh hāth bhejī thī unān vic sāhibān de 303 caritar
upkhyān dī pothī jo hai so sikhān singh māi mahat vic deḥo jī. nām
māṭā kī pothī dī khabar abī mill nāhī. karīnāḍetar pūrbārādh to milā
utrārādh nāhī. je milā aṣī bhej deḥoge. des vic gogā hai ke bandā
bandhan mukat hoe bhāg gaeḥ hai. sāhib bāhuḥī karan ge. toḷā par
sonā sāhibjāde kī gharnī ke ṭhūkhan laī gurū kī khaḍḍūr se bhejī hai
17 rajatpan bī jhāḍā singh se bhar pāncḥ. 5 rajatpan ise loḍā dā is
nūā badrakā bī hai. is se uph jāḥoḥ ge. mutadīān ne hīḷḷ nāhī dī
jo deḥde tūh baḍe bahir se huḍḍī karī bhejde. acāḍe sarir dī rachī
rahī tūh kuḥr de mahine ḥoḥoge. milī saikākh 22. daskhal manīsingh
gurū cak bingā. juāb porī māi

now further is that on coming here my
body has been suffering from acute wind-
ailment and my health has been deteriora-
ting. I meditated on the songs of healing
thrice. But there has been no slackness
in the service of the Golden Temple.

The Khalsa has lost its hold in the
Punjab and the Sikhs are retreating to
the forests and mountain. The whole of
the Punjab is under the sway of the
despots. Even in the villages the life of
the young men and women is not safe.
They are hunted and killed mercilessly.
The enemies of the Guru have joined hands
with them. The *hāṇḍāṭiyās* (followers of
an impostor *guru*) are spying on the Sikhs
and are betraying them to the enemies.
Almost everyone has left Amritsar. The
clerks and accountants have fled.

So far the Almighty has protected me.
I cannot say what may happen tomorrow.
The Master's words will come to pass.
Binod Singh's grandson has passed away.
Among the books I sent there is a volume
of 303 Triya Charitar Upakhyān written
by the master. Please give that volume
to Nihan Singh who lives in the interior
of the city. So far I have not been able
to trace Shashtra Nam Mala Puran. I have
found the first part of Krishna Avtar but
not the second part. If I get it I will
send it.

There is a rumour here that Banda
has made good his escape. May the Lord
protect him. Guru Angad's family at

Khaur has sent five *tolas* of gold for your
adopted son's bride.* Please recover
seventeen rupees from Jhanda Singh. I
gave him five rupees to meet the expenses
of the journey. He has some bad habits
and he will squander the money.

The accountants have not as yet given
me the accounts, otherwise I would have
sent a *hundi* from the big city (Lahore).
If my health improves I shall come some
time in October or November.

Baisakh 22.

Sd/ Mani Singh

Please reply in the bamboo stick.

The letter reveals the following
facts:

1. Such secular works as Krishna
Avtar, Triya Charitar and Shastar
Nam Mala Puran were written by
Guru Gobind Singh and not by any
other poet.

2. The Sikh historians are mis-
taken when they believe that Bhai
Mani Singh took charge of the Golden
Temple in 1722. This letter, written
five months after Babā Banda's arrest
and two months before his execution,
shows that Bhai Mani Singh was
there much earlier, probably in 1713
or 1714.

3. Finding the Akal Ustat incom-
plete, Mr. Macauliffe said that "there

*Mata Sundri saw a young boy who in features resembled her eldest son Ajit Singh so much that she
adopted him much against the wishes and advice of Bhai Mani Singh and desired that all relatives and
Sikhs should treat him as her son. She even arranged his marriage as poor compensation for her deeply
cherished desire to have seen the marriage of Ajit Singh, who fell a martyr in the battle of Chamkaur.
This adopted son proved so hopeless that he had to be publicly disowned. He even discarded the Sikh
faith under the threats of the Muslim rulers. Later he was involved in a crime and as punishment was
tied to the tail of an elephant and met a terrible death.

is an obvious defect in the arrangement of the composition." There is, as a matter of fact, no defect. Mr. Macauliffe did not know the works were collected after strenuous efforts and more than what is there was not available until then.

Bhai Mani Singh completed the compilation in 1734, four years before he himself became a victim of the Moghul tyranny and his body was cut joint by joint.

Some of the prominent Sikhs such as Baba Binod Singh (mentioned in the letter and probably staying at that time with Bhai Mani Singh), Baba Gurbakhsh Singh and Sukha Singh prepared their own copies from the compiled copy. I have not seen the copies prepared by Baba Gurbakhsh Singh and Bhai Mani Singh but if a search is made I think they can still be found.

I have seen the copy prepared by Baba Binod Singh which contains 28 pages written in Guru Gobind Singh's own hand. Binod Singh's descendants presented this copy of the Dasm Granth to Maharaja Ranjit Singh's *durbār* and they received Rs. 125/- per month as a gift for it. It then came to the Patiala *durbār*

and until 1917 the descendants, Baba Binod Singh were getting Rs. 25/- per month.

Baba Binod Singh was a direct descendent of Baba Dasu, son of Guru Angad. Baba Binod Singh was also one of the five apostles and whose guidance Banda Bahadur was supposed to work at the instruction of Guru Gobind Singh. So a copy prepared by Baba Binod Singh is an authentic and direct copy of the originally compiled version by Bhai Mani Singh. This Dasm Granth is present in the Moti Bagh Patiala, and I had an opportunity to study it in detail some time ago.

Six years after the compilation of the book and two years after the death of Bhai Mani Singh a dispute arose among the scholars as to whether such philosophic writings of the Jap and Akal Ustat should run side by side with secular writings or whether they should be kept in separate volumes. Such scholars maintained that it was not proper to discuss writings like *Triya Osh* in the *gurdvārās*. No one, of course, doubted that the works were of Guru Gobind Singh. The matter was decided in a strange way*

Bhai Mehtab Singh and Bhai Sukha Singh who were there said that if they succeeded in killing Massan Ranghar who was occupying Amritsar and using the Golden Temple as a pleasure house the Dasm Granth should remain intact. If, however, they died in the attempt, the books of the Dasm Granth should be separated. Fortune most strangely favoured keeping the Dasm Granth in one volume.

According to Macauliffe the name of Dasm Granth was given to the collection much later. This is not correct. The title of Binod Singh's collections and of other older recensions is Dasm Patshah ka Granth, which means the same thing as Dasm Granth, Work of the Tenth Guru.

In 1896 leaders of the Singh Sabha movement found that copies of the Dasm Granth began to differ in the spelling of words. As the copyists knew only Panjabi and not Hindi and Persian they made many mistakes in writing these languages. So a committee of scholars was appointed which prepared an edition to be printed for the first time. They collected some 32 old texts of the Dasm Granth, but they unfortunately left the proof reading to the printers Messrs. Gulab Singh & Sons who in printing have made countless errors which even

distort the meaning of the original. Either the scholars who prepared this or the publishers have made two grievous errors.

1. They have written on the title page "Sri Guru Granth Sahib Dasm Patshahi" which seems to be a distortion of Dasm Patshahi ka Granth which is found on most of the old recensions. This Granth was not installed as a *guru* so it is wrong to call it *Guru Granth*.

2. The first verse of the 33 *swayās*: *jāgūt jal jāpāi nis bāsar*, has been omitted.

What is to be noted is that all the eminent scholars of the Singh Sabha movement accepted the whole of the Dasm Granth as the work of Guru Gobind Singh.

In 1915 there arose an assumedly puritan school of thought at Bhasaur under Babu Teja Singh, a retired overseer, a good organizer but with a hopelessly shallow intellect. He and a few of his hired *gyānis* not only started a campaign against Dasm Granth but even compiled a *Guru Granth* of their own excluding the works of Kabir and other *bhagts*. He even changed the mass prayer of the Sikhs. As a reformist, in the beginning he gathered some support but when he stooped to flagrant abuse of history and facts he was condemned

*To belittle the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh some people invented the story that he was cut into parts and given to the Sikhs for dividing the *Guru Granth* into parts authorwise. It was Bhai Mani Singh who wrote the version of *Guru Granth Sahib* as dictated by Guru Gobind Singh. Bhai Mani Singh would never have allowed to be cut up to undo it. The fact that Bhai Mani Singh was in favour of having even Dasm Granth in one volume disproves this theory.

a proclamation from the Akal Takht and his activities were declared most un-Sikh-like.

This school has died an inevitable death and no Sikh scholar of importance believes that any part of Dasm

Granth was written by Guru Gobind Singh's poets. The genius of the mind, the art style of one poet is visible in the whole of Dasam Granth. That genius and style is of Guru Gobind Singh and no other.

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