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The History and Compilation of the Dasm Granth

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PART II—PHILOSOPHIC WORKS

GURU Gobind Singh's approach to Sikhism has a marked originality and uniqueness in expression while the works of the other Gurus are extremely subjective in nature and synthetic in composition, sometimes so complex that one verse contains innumerable ideas synthesized around the theme of *nām*.

Guru Gobind Singh's works are objective and analytical with only one idea and one theme in one verse. While the other Gurus wrote with the Guru consciousness of Nanak, Guru Gobind Singh, out of utter humility, just addressed himself as poet.

The sole road to God, said Guru Gobind Singh, was through the power and sincerity of love and worship and by the subordination of nature to divine grace.

He preached vehemently against hypocrisy, idolatry and the worship

of personal gods. He believed in the philosophy of the light and the religion of love.

jaṛ taṛ dīā rīā hā phāṭā anāṛīā
To the east and west; where thou seest,
He pervades as supreme love.

Guru Gobind Singh admitted that the source whence all truth proceeds was the incarnate word of the divine *logos*. But his emphasis was on pure, virtuous and disciplined living. Without purity and sincerity of mind no religious life was possible.

At all times Guru Gobind Singh was mystical, eloquent and sublime, evolving in his philosophic works a *gurnat-advait-ism* which so differs from the abstract, metaphysical and dry *advait-ism* of Shankracharya.

JAP SAHIB (MEDITATION ON GOD)

This is the simplest of all Guru Gobind Singh's compositions. The Sikhs sing it every morning and it is also used in the preparation of *amrit*

(nectar of baptism). The theme is set in the first verse:

*ekr echan ar bura jat ar pat nahenj,
rup rang ar rekh bhekh kou kar na sukai
kai.*

*acal mūrat anihaa parkāh anitauj, kahijai
kot indr indrān sāk sākān ganijai*

*tribhavan mēship aur nar asur neti neti ban
tein kahat.*

*tao ānāh nām kathai kavan karam nām
barnat sumat.*

Contour and countenance, caste, class or lineage, He has none.

None can describe His form, figure, shape and semblance whatever;

Immovable and self-poised is His being. Without fear, a luminous light sublime.

The supreme Indra of Indras and King of kings consider Him to be;

He is the sovereign of the three worlds.

The demons, the mortals and the angelic beings,

Nay, even the grass blades in the forests Proclaim Him to be boundless, endless and infinite.

O, who can count all Thy names that are Thy glory!

Through Thy enlightenment I will recount all Thy attributive names.

From here begins the song of the attributive names, not as a dry description or counting of names but as we read: "Salutation to the Immortal One, Salutation to the Merciful....." the whole of our inner being begins to glow with the radiance and vision of His presence. The soul is etherialized into the perfume of devotion. The soul at

first gropes for the recovery of fragment of His vision and feels, in the throbs of an aching the assurance that it is touching the whole essence of the universe. It is one with truth and God.

THE AKAL USTAT

This is one of the best works of Guru Gobind Singh from the 17th as well as the philosophic point of view (discussed in detail in The Review, January 1954). Guru Singh's conception of religion and God is clearly given in it. He vehemently opposed the idea of a chosen people or a blessed nation.

The Arabs of Arabia.

The French of France.

The Kureshis of Kandhar
Meditate on Thee.

In the middle of the Akal Ustat are ten questions: What is the nature of *ātman*? What are sin and virtue? What are *karma* and *dharma*? The 20 verses from 211 to 230 fit properly into some version of the Charitar than in Akal Ustat. The 20 are inconsistent with the development of thought in the Akal Ustat. The 20 to 30 form the daily prayer of the Sikhs. In the Akal Ustat the spiritual kindling vision goes deeper and deeper into the unchanging glory and unconditional self-completeness of God.

THE THIRTY-THREE SWAYYAS

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(PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE)
This is another ambitious work which is incomplete and a major portion of it is unfortunately lost. From a literary point of view it has the same perfection and grandeur of language and style as Akal Ustat. Out of 336 verses 125 form the introduction. At the end of the introduction Guruji gave the plan of the book which was to give the progressive evolution of religion in India in four stages. But first he discussed the four noble ways of life: 1. *raj dharma* (religion through political service); 2. *dān dharma* (religion of charity); 3. *bhog dharma* (religion through the pious life of a householder); 4. *moksa dharma* (religion of salvation). Guruji first gave from the history of ancient India the practice of the religion of charity. The purpose of this great work was to show that the highest religion of man was *nām-dharma* (enlightenment through the word incarnate).

THE THIRTY-THREE SWAYYAS

These were composed immediately after the organization of the Khalsa and can be said to be the first *rāhat-nāmā* or the code of ethics of the Khalsa.

*jāgat jot jāpai nis bāsar, ek binā man
naik na mānai*

Inspired with the fire of life.

Awake with the perpetual song of His name day and night.

Believing no other but the one and only God.

Having no faith in the worship of tombs, idols and temple images.

Completely lost in His beauty and infinite love.

Absolutely discarding the lifeless beliefs in holy baths, alms giving, penances and austerities.

Such a child of light, fully enlightened and a perfect figure of love, is the Khalsa.

THE LYRICS

These are short, popular poems which throw great light on Guru Gobind Singh's opinions on *yoga*, *sanyāsa* and the religion of love. The most notable songs are two and both of them have a historical significance. After the battle of Chamkaur when he lost all four of his sons and he was without any company, shelter or succour, this optimist sang:

Far, far better are the love-lit straw beds of the Beloved

Than the life of the palaces,

Which, without Thee, O Beloved, are incessantly burning funeral pyres.

The other song was sung when Pundit Kesho Dutt, a great scholar, asked Guru Gobind Singh why he was almost deliberately giving all charity, gifts, wealth, honour and power to his Sikhs who were mostly low-caste people while he was ignoring the

pur and higher castes. The Guru in his usual passionate fervour replied:

judh jite in hi ki kripā ar

All battles against tyranny have I fought
with the loving grace of these people.
I have been able to spread great gifts only
through them.

All evil and injury have I escaped
Because the love of these people of
undying faith was my sole protection.
My home and heart are full with the joy
and glory which they have given;

It is through their efforts and help I have
gained great knowledge and acquired
wide experience;

It is with the help of these common people
that I have always defeated my
enemies.

For them was I born;
Through them have I attained glory
and greatness;
Without them and without their loving
support,

What am I!
There are millions of creatures like me
on earth.

Here is the champion of the cause of the common people whose humility and intense consciousness of the vitality of the common people was remarkable. No Marxist has ever sung such a song of the people as Guru Gobind Singh wrote 150 years before Marx was born and 60 years before the world ever heard of Rousseau and Voltaire. So strong was his faith in what is now known as democratic ideals that even when

military dictatorship was expected and even necessary he left, to Dr. Sinha, "the care of the flow as his army not to a single person but to the whole community. He placed his faith in the collective wisdom of the community and not the devotion of a favourite disciple."

THE CHANDI CHARITARS

Chandi or Durga is a pre-diet. During the 12th and 13th centuries there was a great contact between Durga worshippers and followers of the Krishna cult, clear from the lives of Chandi and Jaidev. Then there was a compromise. The Aryan Hindus accepted her as a diety. The Chandi is in a number of Purans, particularly Markande Puran, Bhagwat and Padma Puran. There are three versions of Chandi Charitar. Besides a short version in the Natak Granth. These versions are traditions from three different Purans.

1. First Chandi Charitar, 55 verses, translated most probably from Padam Puran.

2. Second Chandi Charitar, 266 verses, mention is made at the end that it is translated from Markande Puran. It forms part of the Bhai Natak Granth.

3. Third version Durga-di-var, 55 verses, translated most probably from Devi Bhagwat.

The Chandi Charitars have become more popular than other secular works by Guru Gobind Singh because they are the shortest compositions in the Dasam Granth and are available in all brief selections in complete form. All the other selections are bulky. These are the only writings available in Panjabi and the Panjabi version is written in a very popular form of poetry called the *vār*.

There are three grievous misunderstandings about which a great deal of fuss has been made by those who used every false argument trying to prove that Guru Gobind Singh was a worshipper of Durga and he derived all his strength for fighting from her and not from the one unmanifested God as is believed by the Sikhs.

While the motive for creating the misunderstanding is one and the same, the misunderstandings about Guru Gobind Singh's conception of Durga are three:

1. In one place Guru Gobind Singh wrote, "I bow to the *bhagauti*," and *bhagauti*, some say, means Chandi or Durga. So it is implied that Guru Gobind Singh meditated on Durga.

2. At the end of all these three Chandi Charitars is written what we call the *mahātams* or the powers that can be attained by reciting the writings. This implies that the Sikhs should recite the Chandi Charitar to attain those powers.

3. The third misunderstanding is created by distorted histories which were mostly written in the 18th century, about 100 years after the death of Guru Gobind Singh. These histories carry the invented story that in the 1698 A. D., *Samvat* 1755, Guru Gobind Singh actually worshipped Durga with elaborate ceremonies asking for courage and power to fight the enemy.

These three views about Guru Gobind Singh have become so popular that even those who know nothing much about Guru Gobind Singh can talk loudly and emphatically about these things.

1. There are two distinctly different words even in the original Sanskrit Puranas from where the Chandi Charitars have been translated. These are *bhagauti* and *Bhagvati*. Throughout the Markande Puran, Padam Puran, Devi Bhagwat and Vishnu Puran, these two words occur frequently and everywhere *Bhagvati* means Durga and *bhagauti* means

sword. Nowhere in these Purans is the word *bhagauti* used to mean Durga. Everywhere, throughout the Puranic literature, *bhagauti* means the sword and nowhere does it mean Durga.*

In the whole of Dasm Granth the word *bhagauti* occurs in two lines in the text which are:

(1) *pritham bhagauti simar kai gurū nānak
laiñ dhyaē*

Remembering the supreme sword first,
meditate on Guru Nanak.

(2) *lai bhagauti durg tūh vajrāgan bhāri*

Durga caught hold of the *bhagauti*
(sword) which glimmered like a flashing
flame.

These are the only two lines in the whole of Dasm Granth in which the word *bhagauti* occurs and by no stretch of the imagination can it be interpreted as Durga.

The name of Durga occurs in the Dasm Granth over 120 times and innumerable popular names for Durga are repeatedly used such as Chandī, Chandika, Bhavani, Durga, Mahamai, Devi, Ambaka, Jambhha, Mundardani, etc.

Guru Gobind Singh gave many new attributive names to God as the wielder of the sword of *dharma*, and the sword became for him the

righteous spirit of God in which ingrained his deep rooted faith in ultimate victory of good over evil. Those names are: *Asdhuj* (one who has the sword on His banner), *Aspān* (wielder of the sword), *Aspān* (the sword in hand) and *Kharag* (with the sword in hand). Other words which occur signifying sword-spirit of *dharma* are *khag*, *teori*, *as*, *kirpān*, *sarbloh* (all-steel), *mahā loh* (great steel) and *bhagauti*.

2. The second point of confusion is about some lines occurring at the end of Chandī Charitar giving fruit of reciting the Chandī. These lines are:

a. First Chandī Charitar:

"For whatever purpose a person reads this life of Chandī, it shall definitely be granted to him."

b. Second Chandī Charitar:

"Even if a foolish person reads this life of Chandī, immense wealth will be bestowed on him. If a coward reads he will be able to fight most bravely. If a *yogi* reads it he will attain *siddhi* and if a student reads it he will attain knowledge."

c. Third Panjabi version

ki var:

"He who recites Durga's life will take birth again."

All these are not the opinions of Guru Gobind Singh. They are

*Rishi Markande gives over 108 names to Durga in his Markande Puran but does not mention any of them.

opinions of the writers of the original which Guru Gobind Singh faithfully translated. To dissociate himself and his ideal from it, Guru Gobind Singh either added a short introduction or an epilogue to each of these versions of Chandī. Guru Gobind Singh's opinions, giving his own faith were:

(a) In the First Chandī Charitar he said:

*Jeh sirū har mohe chhai, subh karman te
kabhūn nu taro,
na daro ur so jah jāe taro, niscari kar apni
jil'karo,
ar sikh hau apne hi man kau eh lalac hau
gun tau uero,
jab av ki audh nidān banai at hi ran mai tob
jūjh maro.*

Give me this power, O Almighty:
From righteous deeds I may never refrain,
Fearlessly may I fight all the battles
of life,

Full confidence may I ever have
In asserting my moral victories,
May my supreme ambition and learning be
To sing of Thy glory and victory.
When this mortal life comes to a close
May I die with the joy and courage of a
martyr.

(b) The second Chandī Charitar is a part of the Bachiter Natak Granth. The Bachiter Natak has a collective introduction in which Guru Gobind Singh repeatedly wrote that he did not believe in the worship of gods and goddesses. In verses 92 and 93 Guruji said, "It is through

Thy power, O God, that Durga destroyed the demons like Sambh, Nisumbh, Dhumer and Lochan, Chand and Mund. It is through Thy power, O God, that Rama destroyed Ravana." And he concludes, "Aise so sālīb pāe kahā parvāh rahi ch dās tihūro—With such a supreme One as my Lord, what care I, Thy servant, for anything or anyone?"

In the next stanza Guruji commented on the *avātārs* and goddesses who were instrumental in killing all these and said, "Kāhe ko kūr karē tapasū inki kou kaudi ke kām na aihai—Why indulge ye in the futile worship of these deities? Their worship is not worth a *kaudi* (one-twentieth of a penny)."

(c) The third Panjabi version has a long introduction, a part which forms the national prayer. In it the Guru invoked the grace and blessings of God and the nine Gurus.

*taihi durgā sāj kai daitā dā nās karēyā,
taiho hi bal rām lai nāl bānā dehsir ghātā,
taiho hi bal kritan lai kōne kesī pakāñ
gīrāyā.*

*baḍe baḍe muni devte kai jug tini tan tārā,
kini terā aūt na pāyā.*

It is Thou who created Durga and had the demons destroyed,

From Thee derived Rama all the strength to kill the ten-headed Ravana.

From Thee derived Krishna all his strength to catch Kans by the hair and dash him to the ground.

Great seers and sages in all ages strained
hard in penance to know Thee.
None, none has attained Thy end.

In these short prologues and epilogues Guru Gobind Singh made his own opinion about Durga quite clear. He took these figures simply as historical persons of note and nothing else.

3. The third question is, did Guru Gobind Singh actually worship Durga for strength before the creation of the Khalsa in 1698? This story was introduced to some partially unreliable records in order to distort or discredit the great creation of the Khalsa which in its dramatic way of imparting the spiritual powers and responsibility of the Guru to the people was historically unique.

By this time Guru Gobind Singh had fought about eight or nine of his major and minor battles. If he had managed to fight all the severe battles without invoking Chandī so far, where was the necessity of invoking the strength of Chandī for one or two more battles? How was it that Guru Har Gobind fought all his battles without even thinking of Chandī?

Even the places where Guru Gobind Singh rested for a while became sacred to the Sikhs and were worshipped by them. How is it that no Sikh, not even stray individuals,

ever pay homage to Durga nor they ever worship her? In the Zafarnama, which was written six years later, Guru Gobind Singh called himself an idol breaker.

In 1698 a Muslim reporter Aurangzeb's who witnessed creation of the Khalsa quoted speech of Guru Gobind Singh in despatch to Aurangzeb as follows:

"Let all embrace one creed obliterate the differences of religion, the four Hindu castes who have different rules of guidance abandon them all, as the one form of adoration and be brothers. Let no one deem his superior to another. Let no one pay to the Ganges and other places pilgrimage which are spoken of reverence in the Shastras or incarnations such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma and Durga but believe in Nanak and other Gurus. Let men of castes receive my baptism, eat out of dish and feel no disgust or contempt another."

In none of his philosophic compositions did he invoke Durga, nor he invoke the goddess when wrote his letters to Aurangzeb. Everywhere it is the invocation of God as protector of the good through sword of *dharma*.

The Durga worship story is all placed in history in Baisakh 1755 *Samvat*. We learn from Dasam Granth that Guru Gobind

completed his Ramayan (Life of Lord Rama which forms a part of Bachiter Natak Granth) in Baisakh 1755. The epilogue which he wrote to this Ramayan in this very month in which he is alleged to have worshipped Durga is as follows:

*piē gāhe jab te turve, tab te kou nāikh tare
nāhi āneo,
rām rahim purān kūrān, anek kahāi mut
ek nā māneo,
simrit bistar bed zabai bahu līhē kahāi
ham ek nā jāneo
sri ospān kripā tūnri kar māi nā kahē
sāh tōhē bhāhāneo
Lārā: nūgāl duār kau chād kai gāhe tūhāro
duār
hūāke gāhe kī lāj as gobind dās tūhār.*

Ever since I took refuge at Thy feet,
O God,

I have brought no other god under the
eye of my faith.

Ram and Rahim are various deities of
the Puran and Quran.

They describe the One so differently,
But I believe in none, I have faith in none
but Thee, O God.

The Vedas, Shastras and Simritis give
various forms of worship;
I believe in none and I have faith in none
of them.

O Glorious Weilder of the sword of *dharma*,
It is only through Thy grace I have been
able to write all this.

dhāra: After leaving all other doors, O God,
I have come to Thy door.

O make me Thine for having once
called me Thine O God.
I, Gobind, am just a humble servant
of Thine.

These verses express the thoughts and the moods, the faith, the philosophy and the spiritual ideal to which he was inwardly attached in the very month in which he is alleged to have worshipped Durga. By comparing Guru Gobind Singh's translation with the original in Sanskrit written by Rishi Markandē I have noticed that Guru Gobind Singh has deliberately excluded those chapters which give the list of *siddhis*, psychic powers, that can be attained by reciting it. The *siddhis* range from the cure of leprosy, smallpox and snake bite to the power of defeating the enemy.

He translated these lives of Durga in the literary language of those times to reveal Durga in the true light. He was pained to see that millions of Bengalis and Biharis worshipped Durga and yet they were timid and weak. The idea of fighting *dharam-yudh*, the battles of righteousness, had disappeared from their consciousness. The worship of Durga had degenerated into a worship of a low type of psychic powers.