

EDITORIAL

QUADRICENTENNIAL OF COMPILATION OF THE AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB

It was about 400 years ago (1604 CE) when Guru Arjan, the Fifth Guru, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, received the *Bani* (words) of the first four Gurus and of some Bhagats, Sufis, and *Sants* (saints), from his father, Guru Amardas, the Fourth Guru, according to Dr Sahib Singh [5]. His research indicates that Guru Nanak recorded his Bani in a book that he always kept with him. Guru Nanak handed over this book to Guru Angad and Guru Angad added his Bani and handed it over to Guru Amardas who added his Bani and handed it over to Guru Ramdas who also added his Bani before handing it over to Guru Arjan. Guru Arjan added his own Bani and the *Swayiae* (praises / laudations / eulogies) of the first five Gurus, composed by *Bhatts* (bards). After arranging the whole collected Bani into different sections and sub-sections and according to the *Raags* (musical modes) he handed it over to Bhai Gurdas for copying into a *Pothi* (book). It is my imagination that while compiling the Bani to give it a form of Pothi, Guru Arjan declared this Pothi as *Parnesar* (the Guru, the Enlightener) as indicated in his following verse:

pQl¹ prmsr² k ॥ Qwni³]

siD⁴ silg⁵ gwih⁶ gx⁷ gibl⁸ plrn bhm⁹ igAwni¹⁰]

AGGS, M 5, P 1226 [1].

"The Pothi¹ (book)¹ is equated³ to the Enlightener². (Because from this Pothi) the noble people⁴ in a congregation⁵ sing / discuss⁶ the attributes⁷ and the wisdom¹⁰ about the Almighty^{8, 9}."

Therefore, this Pothi became the *Parnesar* / the Guru / the Enlightener for the Sikhs since the time of its compilation. Henceforth teachings of the Sikh Gurus and other saints were preached by Guru Arjan himself and by all the other five Sikh Gurus from this Pothi [4, 6]. However, Guru Teg Bahadur also wrote some Bani and that was incorporated by the 10th Guru, Gobind Singh, in this Pothi around 1705 CE [3]. Since the Pothi was declared *Parnesar* / Guru / Enlightener, therefore, all the teachings were carried on from this Pothi by Guru Arjan and the other Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak. Thus, this Pothi was the Guru since the time of its compilation in 1604 CE. From 1604 CE this Pothi remained Guru beside the succeeding five Sikh Gurus in person till 1708 CE when Guru Gobind Singh declared at the time of his demise that there will be no more Guru in person except this Pothi.

Title of the Pothi

Neither Guru Arjan, who compiled this Pothi, nor any other Sikh Guru has assigned any particular title to this Pothi; therefore, different scholars and the Sikhs at large are addressing it with different titles. The irony is that every Sikh scholar has his own preference to assign it his own title. The Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) uses "*Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib*" as a title for the printed Pothi. Many Sikh scholars use the title "*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*" while other use "*Guru Granth Sahib*" or "*Guru Granth*". It was apparent from the papers distributed on the following conference held at Amritsar on February 25-29, 2001 that every scholar used different title for the Pothi. The irony is that in the title of the first conference held at Amritsar Pothi was entitled as '*Sri Guru Granth Sahib*' but that title is different than that (*Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib*) used by the SGPC for the Pothi printed by them. It indicates that there is no agreement amongst the Sikh scholars on one title of this Pothi, although it is the most sacred and holy Granth for the Sikhs.

The most appropriate title, *Aad Guru Granth Sahib* (AGGS), was assigned after researching lot of literature. It is very similar to that assigned by the SGPC except that 'Sri' has been eliminated because 'Sri' becomes redundant when 'Aad' is used before 'Guru'. This issue has already been discussed at length [2]. It is requested to all the scholars on Gurbani and Sikhism to use this title for uniformity.

The year 2004 will witness the Quadrcentennial Celebration of Compilation of the AGGS at Amritsar, which will fall on September 1, 2004 according to the Nanakshahi Calendar. This is very important event in Sikh history and it is also the time to make the Sikh realize that they have to return to their roots, i.e. the basic philosophy promulgated by Guru Nanak, since they have drifted away from the roots and have fallen back into ritualism and superstitions. The philosophy promulgated by Guru Nanak was strengthened and preached by all the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak. Nanak's philosophy has been anglicized as the '**Nanakian Philosophy**'. Nanakian Philosophy has been enshrined in the AGGS along with the philosophy of Bhagats, Sufis, and Sants and

the praises of the first five Gurus, composed by the Bhattas.

In connection with the celebration of the Quadricentennial of Compilation of the AGGS, the first Conference, *International Conference 2001 on Sri Guru Granth Sahib (World's First Interfaith Scripture)* was held at the Guru Nanak Dev University (GNDU), Amritsar on February 25-28, 2001. There were nearly two dozens of foreign scholar/participants from nine countries and four continents, who participated in this conference and many of them presented papers. There were about 30 speakers from India and hundreds of other participants. For more information on this conference read in **News & Views** in this issue (pp 43-44).

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THIS CONFERENCE

There were many lessons to be learned from this conference as a guidance to hold the future conferences on the Quadricentennial Celebration.

1. Attendance

This conference was well attended by the foreign and local speakers and participants. It is said that the Vice Chancellor of the GNDU made it sure that it is attended by most of the teachers and students of the university as well as of all the affiliated colleges. A great enthusiasm among the participants to take active part in the discussion was noticed when group discussions were arranged to formulate statements on certain topics.

2. Discussion

Unfortunately no discussion was allowed for most of the papers presented because of shortage of time. It is so in almost every conference on Sikhism. It is a pity that a scholar takes months to prepare a well-documented and researched article and he/she does not get a chance to discuss with the participants for further improvement before the paper is submitted for publication in the proceedings. Without discussion no conference can be considered a success and no goal can be achieved because finally the proceedings of the conference, containing diversified views on almost all the topics presented in the conference, are printed.

It is mentioned in the Nanakian Philosophy that proper understanding of Sabd (topic) can only be achieved through discussion/deliberation.

sB5yapir gr sbdiblcirij AGGS, M 1, P 904.

"Deliberation / discussion on the Sabd is the highest deeds of all."

Nanakian Philosophy about the importance of deliberation /discussion to understand the subject is equally applicable on all other subjects and other religions. This important feature of the AGGS on which the conference was held was ignored in this conference when the papers were presented.

3. Organization

It was only a few days before the conference that various departments of the host university (GNDU) came to know that this important conference was being held in their university. Program of conference was distributed only to a few on the day of inauguration. On special request I was able to procure one. The beautiful brochures about the announcement of the conference were also kept secret that too was obtained on request after two days of the conference. However, lodging, food and general hospitality for the invited speakers were excellent.

4. Audiovisual Aids

There was no provision of audiovisual aid by the university. It was Dr Kulbir Singh Thind from USA who brought his own computer and power point to demonstrate his CD on Gurbani and his presentation. Dr Bhai Harbans Lal, the Chairman of the Organization Committee, used Dr Thind's power point to present his paper. I had to procure the overhead projector through a personal friend from the university to project slides of my paper. I have noticed that usually no audiovisual aids are provided at Sikh Conferences. Many Sikh scholars prefer to read their papers rather than to present their papers with audiovisual aids, the modern techniques to put forward their views effectively.

It is worth praising and mentioning here that one session was held at the DAV College for Women. Their reception and hospitality extended to the participants before the session, decoration of the auditorium and provision of every type of audiovisual aid (slide projector, overhead projector, power point, movie projectors, sound system, etc.) were excellent. It was unfortunate that no speaker from this session used any of these facilities. However, the in charge of the audiovisual aids showed best slide show with power point about the AGGS, Harmander Sahib, important places and buildings of Amritsar while the participants were waiting to start the session. The GNDU and the Khalsa College and other Sikh Institutes should learn a lesson from their sister Institute, DAV College for Women for organizing future conferences.

5. Title of the Conference

The title of the conference contained the following statement in parenthesis:

(World's First Interfaith Scripture)

A very reputed Sikh scholar during his remarks as the Chairperson of the session objected and denounced that this statement (**World's First Interfaith Scripture**) instead of reporting about the session's papers. Since no time for discussion is allowed on the remarks of the Chairperson, so nobody from the participants could discuss or refute his statement. In this respect the Keynote Address by Dr Bhai Harbans Lal in this issue (pp 6-13) is worth reading.

I presented my paper in which I tried to explain that the AGGS is the world's first sacred interfaith scriptures. Read this article in this issue (pp 14-20). There is another article on 'Sufism' (pp 22-23) and still another note on 'Bhagat, Guru, and Satguru' (p 35) in this issue that lead us to support the fact that AGGS is an interfaith Scriptures. Well-documented comments, supported with authentic references, on these three articles are solicited for reaching a definite conclusion. Your critical comments and suggestions should reach the Editor-in-Chief before the end of November 2001 for their inclusion in the following issue of January-June 2002.

6. Inaugural Sabd

The conference was inaugurated with a Sabd (*De Shiva bar mohe eihe, subh karman tai kabon na taron...*) from Dasam Granth, whereas the conference was on the AGGS. One of the foreign delegates pointed out that it was not an appropriate Sabd. Recitation of a Sabd from the AGGS should have been more appropriate for this occasion. When we were at the Punjabi University, Patiala a Sabd (*Vidya vichari tan par upkaari...*) from the AGGS was recited. It was the most appropriate Sabd that conveyed the message of the AGGS to the delegates.

7. System of Referencing the Bani from the Aad Guru Granth Sahib

There is another irony that there is no standardized system of referencing the Bani from the AGGS. This was also evident from the papers distributed at the above conference that every scholar was using his/her own system of referencing Bani that was entirely different than that of the others. Even some authors used two or three different systems in one paper. A standardized system of referencing the Bani from the AGGS was designed before the publication of this research journal was started. It was devised after very careful study and consultation with a number of research scholars. Details on referencing of Bani from the AGGS are given in the first issue of this journal [2]. Now this system is used very strictly in the UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM- The Research

Journal. The editors of other journals and all the scholars on Gurbani and Sikhism are requested to follow this system of referencing the Bani from the AGGS for uniformity in academic works.

8. Originality and Uniqueness of the Nanakian Philosophy

It is already very common in some books and articles on Sikhism that it is a syncretic religion, i.e. combination of Hinduism and Islam. Moreover, the Arya Samajists in the past had tried to amalgamate Sikhism into Hinduism and the Singh Sabha saved it then. Now the *Rashtriya Swamsewak Sang* (the Hindu RSS) and the *Rashtriya Sikh Sangat* (Sikh RSS) are doing the same thing. During this conference some speakers were trying to depict that the AGGS has borrowed extensively the religious terms, God's names and philosophy from Vedas, and other Hindu religious books. Therefore, the philosophy in the AGGS is very close to that of Hinduism or an improved version of Hinduism. No participant noticed that how some scholars we trying to belittle the Nanakian Philosophy. Then I had to say in my Chairperson's remarks that the Sikh scholars have to watch very carefully during such conferences on celebration of the Quadricentennial of Compilation of the AGGS for the next three years that no scholar is allowed to undermine the originality and uniqueness of Nanakian Philosophy, and uniqueness, distinct identity and independent nature of Sikhism among the world religions.

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