

EDITORIAL

QUADRICENTENNIAL OF COMPILATION AND INSTALLATION (PARKASH DIVAS) OF AAD GURU GRANTH SAHIB

The Aad Guru Granth Sahib (AGGS) [1] is highly respected holy book of the Sikhs, however, the history of its compilation is very confusing. It is a pity that the Sikh authority and the Sikh scholars have failed to represent real picture about the compilation of the AGGS during the last 400 years. The Sikh literature is full of unauthentic and illogical stories about the compilation of the AGGS. Therefore, the contemporary scholars from Western world as well as at home are formulating different types of theories based on information available in such literature on this issue without testing with Gurbani, science and logic – the touchstones of truth. Dhillon [2] has summarized the views on this issue of some scholars as follows:

1. The history of the text of the *Adi Granth*, as it stands today, is quite obscure.
2. Before taking the scribal form the hymns of the Sikh Gurus have been in circulation through oral or musical tradition.
3. The text of the *Adi Granth* that we have in its present form lacks in originality.
4. The Bani of Guru Nanak Dev and his immediate successors has been revised in the final version.
5. Guru Arjan Dev has frequently modified his own hymns.
6. The *Mul-Mantra* found in its present form has undergone a series of changes.
7. A considerable number of genuine hymns of the Sikh Gurus have been left outside the *Adi Granth*.
8. The writings of the *Bhagats* have been in and out of the Sikh scriptures due to secular motives.

On the other hand some scholars have written a lot to disagree with the above views, which are not acceptable by the scholars who raised the above issues. It is quite apparent that a lot of research still is necessary to discover the true history of compilation of the AGGS by the scrupulous scholars, having *babaek budhi* (discriminating intellect). The so-called authority on Sikhism, Gurdwara Management Committees, Sikh Institutes and Sikh scholars in general are busy in celebration of Quadricentennial of Compilation and Installation (*Parkas Divas*) of the Aad Guru Granth

Sahib (AGGS) all over the world but none of them is working on this issue. The Gurdwaras are busy in reciting as many *Akhand Paaths* as possible and taking the AGGS out on the road in big processions and are spending several thousands of dollars in security and management. Some Sikh Institutions are spending several thousands of dollars on holding the conferences but not paying any attention to find out the real history of compilation of the AGGS and what type of philosophy is there in the AGGS of which they are celebrating the Quadricentennial of its compilation.

In my opinion the study conducted by Prof Sahib Singh [4] as reported in his book, *Aad Bir Baray*, makes a lot of sense regarding the history of compilation of the AGGS. My construction of history of compilation of the AGGS is based on the information given by Prof Sahib Singh [4] and my own analysis of the information available from the old Sikh history and application of logic. It is explained briefly as follows for the time being till a real history is discovered:

Guru Nanak used to write his own Bani in a *Pothi* (notebook). However, some have reported that somebody else wrote his Bani. They are trying to undermine the natural intellectual instinct of Guru Nanak. From the information available in Sikh history and *Janam Sakhis* (stories about the life of Guru Nanak) it is envisaged that as soon as Guru Nanak realized some philosophical idea he immediately put it down in words (*Sabd*) in Punjabi, the language spoken by the people of the Punjab, in a *Pothi*. This is based on the fact that it is not possible that as soon as an idea comes in someone's mind and there is always another person present to write it down for him. Such unique ideas if not written down on their realization are usually lost.

Guru Nanak had been visiting seers of other religions like, Brahmins, *Sidhs*, *Jogis*, and heads of many religious institutions and organization and discussed with them his philosophical ideas from this *Pothi*. Wherever he went he took his *Pothi* with him and continued to discuss with as many seers throughout the South East Asia as possible. He convinced them that his philosophy has universal acceptability so disseminate this philosophy and renounce the wrong

concepts and ancient philosophy for creation of one universal (religious) order in the world.

Finally Guru Nanak settled at Kartarpur, near Lahore (now in Pakistan) and continued to discuss and preach his philosophy from this *Pothi*.

At the time of his departure from this world Guru Nanak handed over this *Pothi* to his disciple Lehna to whom he named as Angad (part of Guru Nanak) since he was his very close disciple and had learned and understood his philosophy completely. Before starting to disseminate Nanakian philosophy embodied in his Bani he accepted the fact that he cannot teach to those who have Nanak as their Guru:

ਤਿਨ ਕਉ ਕਿਆ ਉਪਦੈਸੀਐ ਜਿਨ ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ^੧ ॥

AGGS, M 2, p 150.

What instructions can be imparted to them, who have Guru Nanak as their Guru¹."

This indicated that Guru Angad accepted Nanak as his Guru and continued to disseminate his philosophy embodied in his Bani from that *Pothi*. Similarly, all other Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, have accepted Nanak as their Guru in their own Bani.

Guru Angad interpreted the Bani of Guru Nanak in his own Bani to strengthen the Nanakian philosophy embodied in the Bani of Guru Nanak. Then he added his Bani in that *Pothi* while keeping the Bani of Guru Nanak intact in its original form.

This system of interpretation of Bani of Guru Nanak and strengthening of Nanakian philosophy continued by the next Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak till Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru to the House of Nanak, received it. When Guru Arjan opened and examined this *Pothi* (inherited treasure) from his father, Guru Ram Das, he exclaimed it in astonishment as follows:

ਪੀਉ ਦਾਦੇ ਕਾ ਖੋਲਿ ਡਿਠਾ ਖਜਾਨਾ ॥ ਤਾ ਮੇਰੈ ਮਨਿ ਭਇਆ ਨਿਧਾਨਾ ॥

ਰਤਨ ਲਾਲ ਜਾ ਕਾ ਕਛੂ ਨ ਮੋਲੁ ॥ ਭਰੇ ਭੰਡਾਰ ਅਖੁਟ ਅਤੋਲੁ ॥

ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥

ਕਹੁ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸੁ ਮਸਤਕਿ ਲੇਖੁ ਲਿਖਾਇ ॥

ਸੁ ਏਤੁ ਖਜਾਨੈ ਲਇਆ ਰਲਾਇ ॥

AGGS, M 5, p 186.

As the inherited treasure (Gurbani) of our ancestors (Gurus) was opened and viewed, then the mind was illumined with Treasure (Gurbani). Compared to this treasure the jewels and rubies have no value. The chest is full of inexhaustible and immeasurable treasure (Gurbani). Let us utilize it together, and dispense (disseminate) it amongst other, O'Brothers. The

Treasure (Gurbani) will not be exhausted instead it would multiply manifold. Nanak says whosoever has the Grace of the Almighty will be a shareholder of this Treasure (Gurbani).

Keeping in view the phrase, ਖਾਵਹਿ ਖਰਚਹਿ ਰਲਿ ਮਿਲਿ ਭਾਈ ॥ ਤੋਟਿ ਨ ਆਵੈ ਵਧਦੇ ਜਾਈ ॥, Guru Arjan thought to bind this inherited treasure (Bani of Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, and of his own along with the Bani of Bhagats and also the *Swayiae* (eulogies of Sikh Gurus) of Bhatts) into a *Pothi* (Granth) so that this Granth is made available to everybody for dissemination of philosophy of Guru Nanak to the humanity.

Since the 'Sabd' was declared as the 'Guru' by Guru Nanak, therefore, the *Pothi* (Book/Granth), in which the 'Sabd' of Gurus was incorporated, was equated to as *Parmeshar* (Enlightener/Guru) by Guru Arjan some time before its compilation in 1604 CE as is indicated in his following stanza:

ਪੋਥੀ^੧ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ^੨ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ^੩ ॥

ਸਾਧ ਸੰਗਿ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ਰਹਾਉ॥

AGGS, M 5, P 1226.

The pothi¹ is equated³ to the Enlightener/Guru².

(From which) the noble people discuss (sing) the attributes of God and deliberate on the wisdom (philosophy) of God in the congregation.

Declaration of Granth as the Guru

It means, the day in 1604 CE the Granth was compiled it was equated to the Guru (ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ) because of the fact that 'Sabd' was already called as 'Guru' by Guru Nanak in the very beginning of his teachings as is evident from the discourse with the *Sidhs* (ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ AGGS, M 1, p 943.). Since then preaching of *Sabd* (Nanakian philosophy) was carried on from this *Pothi* (Granth) by Guru Arjan himself and by all other Gurus who succeeded to the House of Nanak thereafter. That view has been expressed in Bani of the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak and also in the early Sikh writings, i.e. *Sri Gur Sobha* [3] and *Gurbilas Patshahi* 6 [6]. Therefore, the Granth is 'Guru' ipso facto the 'Sabd Guru' is enshrined in it.

Addition of Bani of Ninth Guru, Teg Bahadur, some time during 1705 CE by Guru Gobind Singh does not make any difference in the basic Nanakian philosophy embodied in the Bani of Guru Nanak since the Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur also interprets and strengthens the Nanakian philosophy as does the Bani of other four Gurus whose Bani is incorporated in the AGGS. Therefore, the Granth, declared as *Parmeshar* (Guru) by

Guru Arjan in 1604, remains the same Guru after the addition of Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur.

The Granth compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604 is usually called as 'Aad Granth' (erroneously spelled as *Adi Granth*) by many scholars and the Granth in which Guru Gobind Singh added the Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur is called 'Guru Granth' and 'Aad' is dropped. In fact the Granth compiled by Guru Arjan in 1604 should be called the 'Aad Guru Granth Sahib' and it remains 'Aad' (Eternal— Unchangeable in its philosophy) even after the addition of Bani of Guru Teg Bahadur and it also remains 'Guru' since it was declared '*Parmeshar* (Guru)' by Guru Arjan in 1604. Therefore, the most appropriate title for the Granth of 1604 and for the present form of Granth is 'Aad Guru Granth Sahib'.

A brief history of transformation of 'Sabd' to 'Sabd Guru' to 'Granth Guru' has been traced out in new book, **SABD GURU TO GRANTH GURU – An In-depth Study**. The information given in this book will also be helpful to discover the true story about the compilation of Aad Guru Granth Sahib. This booklet will be released on September 1, 2004 the day of celebration of Quadracentennial of Compilation and Installation (*Parkash Divas*) of the Aad Guru Granth Sahib.

Dr Taran Singh [5] has indicated that the Sikh Gurus

who succeeded to the House of Nanak were the first who interpreted Bani of Guru Nanak in their own Bani. Their interpretation of Bani of Guru Nanak is considered the most accurate as compared to all other such interpretations found in the Sikh literature. This aspect of interpretation of Bani of Guru Nanak by the Sikh Gurus, who succeeded to the House of Nanak, will be explored more in details in another article or book, which will be also a great asset to resolve some of the doubts created by some scholars in the history of compilation of the AGGS.

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