

# SABD GURU TO GRANTH GURU

## Part IV. How to Address the Holy Granth of the Sikhs?

ARTICLE

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### INTRODUCTION

Did Guru Arjun give any title to the Holy Scripture compiled by him?

It is not clear from the review of the history of the Holy Scripture if Guru Arjun assigned any title to the Granth at the time of its compilation. However, Bhai Jodh Singh (1968) reported a letter from Bhai Kahn Singh in which Bhai Kahn Singh showed that two titles, 'Pothi' (book, Granth) and 'Guru Babā' (Guru Father), were used at the end of the Table of Contents of the *Kartarpuri Bir*. The exact wordings reported by Bhai Kahn Singh are as follows: ਸੰਮਤ 1661 ਮਿਤੀ ਭਾਦੋਂ ਵਦੀ 1 ਪੋਥੀ ਲਿਖ ਪਹੁੰਚੇ ॥ ਸਾਰੇ ਪਤਰੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬਾ ਦੇ 974 ॥ (*Samat* 1661 dated *Badhon* 1 of the second half, writing of *Pothi* was achieved. Total folios of *Guru Baba* are 974). However, Bhai Jodh Singh gave an entirely different version when he examined the *Kartarpuri Bir*. His version is as follows: ਸੰਮਤ 1661 ਮਿਤੀ ਭਾਦੋਰਿ ਵਦੀ ਇਕਮ 1 ਪੋਥੀ ਲਿਖਿ ਪੁਚੇ। (there are differences in some spelling also) (*Samat* 1661 dated *Badhon* first 1 of the second half, writing of *Pothi* achieved). He further says that these words were at the beginning of the Table of Contents rather than at the end, as reported by Bhai Kahn Singh. Moreover, he (J. Singh, 1968) categorically refuted Bhai Kahn Singh's statement, "Total folios of *Guru Baba* are 974," by saying that these words were not found written in the Table of Contents or anywhere else in the *Kartarpuri Bir*.

It is strange that two well-known scholars made two different observations about the Table of Contents of

### ABSTRACT

The Sikh and non-Sikh writers are not unanimous on any standardized title of the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. Current titles used are *Baba*, *Guru Baba*, *Guru Granth*, *Guru Granth Sahib*, *Sri Guru Granth*, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, and *Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*. Part IV tries to discover the most appropriate and standardized title for the Sikh Holy Scripture.

the same *Bir* (volume). Who is right? It is just possible that both may be right, and they might have examined two different *Birs* offered by the custodians of the *Kartarpuri Bir* since they have many copies of the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs.

Anyhow, without going into further discussion on this entry and its date of compilation, it will suffice to say that at least two titles, e.g., *Pothi* and *Guru Baba*, of the Holy Scriptures of the Sikhs were in its Table of Contents at least in one of the *Birs* at *Kartarpur*.

When Professor Sahib Singh (1987) wrote a book, *Aad Bir Baray*, and gave another title, 'Aad Bir' to this *Pothi*. I cannot figure out in what context he used the adjective 'Aad' for this '*Bir*' compiled by Guru Arjun. Since then, almost all scholars have taken 'Aad Bir' as the '*First Bir*' prepared by Guru Arjun.

Although the titles '*Pothi*' and '*Guru Babā*' are in the Table of Contents of *Kartarpuri Bir(s)*, some Sikh scholars have assigned their own titles. Now, the most prevalent titles found in the old and contemporary Sikh literature are as follows:

1. "*Pothi*" and "*Guru Baba*" in the Table of Contents in one of the *Birs* at *Kartarpur*.
2. Some Sikhs use names like, *Baba Ji*, *Guru Baba Ji*,

*Baba Ji Di Bir, Guru Babay Di Bir*, verbally.

3. Professor Sahib Singh was the first to use the new title '*Aad Bir*' for *Kartpuri Bir*.
4. Some scholars changed the spellings of the *Aad Bir* into *Adi Granth* in English.
5. Then some scholars dropped the adjective *Aad (Adi)*, replaced it with *Guru*, and named it *Guru Granth* for the *Bir*, sanctified as 'Guru' by *Guru Gobind Singh* in 1708.
6. Then some devout Sikh scholars started adding prefixes and suffixes in the title of the 'Granth' as follows:
  - a. *Guru Granth*
  - b. *Guru Granth Sahib*,
  - c. *Sri Guru Granth*,
  - d. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*,
  - e. *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*,
  - f. *Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* (This title has been used for the last 48 years for all the Granth printed by *Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)*, Amritsar,
  - g. The Institute for Understanding Sikhism has adopted the title '*Aad Guru Granth Sahib*' by dropping '*Sri*' and '*Ji*' from the title used by the SGPC. This title has been used in papers published in a journal, *UNDERSTANDING SIKHISM—The Research Journal*, for the last 25 years.

When I used '*Aad Guru Granth Sahib*' in my messages for the Sikh Diaspora (SD) Discussion Group, there was a great hue and cry from some members against the use of '*Aad*.' The irony is that none of the critics even cared to investigate the title of the Holy Granth published by the SGPC, Amritsar, before criticizing me. The inquiry has confirmed that the SGPC has been using the title '*AAD SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB JI*' since 1976. Interestingly, none of these critics have criticized the SGPC against the use of '*Aad*' in the title of the Holy Granth during the last 48 years. However, I found that Dr IJ Singh [Sikh Diaspora Discussion Group] has criticized the SGPC for using this title, saying that it is imprecise and misleading: "The volume compiled by *Guru Arjan* may be called the first resension\*, or *Aad(i) Granth* or the *Pothee Sahib*, and some few people do so. (To me, the word *Aad(i)* literally means the first.) Most Sikhs do not distinguish this volume from the definitive *Guru Granth* that came later. I think the distinction is important because the two versions are not identical;

the *Guru Granth* has significant additional entries, specifically the writings of *Guru Tegh Bahadur*. I think my argument would carry weight even if there were minimal difference between the two. This does not mean that Sikhs should have less reverence for one than the other. Keep in mind that better than 90 percent of the *Guru Granth* is in the *Aad(i) Granth*. I know that the *Guru Granth* published by the *Shiromini Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC)* carries this moniker, and I would argue that it is imprecise and even misleading to use the term "*Aad(i) Granth*" for the *Guru Granth Sahib*. Why? Because this implies a second revision, yet to come. Even to think of a second revised version of the *Guru Granth* would indeed be heresy."

The meaning of ਆਦਿ (*Aad*) as "first and foremost" is the most appropriate prefix for the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. It remains "Aad" (first and foremost) Granth even after the addition of 116 Bani of *Guru Teg Bahadur* in 1705 or even after the declaration of the Granth as 'Guru' by *Guru Gobind Singh*.

Reasons for dropping 'Sri' and 'Ji' from the SGPC's Title '*Sri*' has been dropped from the title because it is redundant to use it after '*Aad*.' Sikh theologians and Sikh scholars are so much under the influence of ancient Indian philosophy and *Bipreets* (ਬਿਪਰੀਤ— customs contrary to Nanakian philosophy) that they can't see beyond it. *Bhai Kahn Singh* (1981) has reported that 'Sri' is a sect of Vaishnavism in which the main deity of worship is *Lakshmi*. *Swami Ramanuj* was the preacher of this sect. Most probably, the adjective '*Sri*' has been added before almost everything connected with the Sikhs and their Gurus, either innocently by the Sikh scholars under the influence of Vaishnavism or intentionally by the *Biprans* with certain objectives. Accordingly, if we want to pay the highest respect to the Granth, then we must use 'Sri' at least 108 times.

It appears that the influence of Vaishnavism and *Biprans* is still so strong that some contemporary scholars and theologians are still popularizing '*Sri*' by eliminating the important adjective, '*Aad*':

- Sri Guru Granth Sahib Darpan* by Prof. S. Singh (1972),
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (English Version) by Dr. G. Singh (1987),
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (English version) by Dr. Talib (1988),
- Sri Guru Granth Sahib* (English & Punjabi Translation) by M. Singh (1962), etc.

Similarly, the *Granth* published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC), Amritsar, has also added 'Sri' before Guru in its title as *Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*; however, credit goes to the SGPC for retaining the 'Aad' in the title.

On the other hand, it is encouraging to note a trend to eliminate the use of 'Sri' since the adjective 'Sri' used with Guru is inappropriate as it is a very commonly used title to address even a common man in India as 'Mr.' is used in the Western world. It is unfortunate that they have also eliminated 'Aad,' the most important and appropriate title for the Holy Granth. For example, Mehboob (1988) used the title '*Guru Granth Sahib*' without 'Sri' throughout his book *Sehjae Rachio Khalsa*. Kohli (1991) did not use 'Sri' in the title of his book, *Sikhism and Guru Granth Sahib*. Taran Singh (n.d.) did not use 'Sri' for the title of his book, *Guru Granth Ratnavali*, published by the Punjabi University, Patiala. Although G. Singh (1987) used 'Sri' for the title of his four volumes of *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*; he used *Guru Granth Sahib* without 'Sri' at the bottom of every alternate page in all four volumes. It is a good trend that 'Sri' has already been accepted as a redundant adjective and has been dropped by some scholars.

Therefore, considering the above discussion, the adjective 'Sri' after 'Aad' in the title is redundant because of the above facts. Similarly, the suffix 'Ji' added by the SGPC at the end of the title is redundant since '*Sahib*' has already been used as a suffix.

The suffix '*Sahib*' is more important than '*Ji*' because it has been used to address God in the *Gurbani* as reported by Bhai Kahn Singh (1981):

ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿਉ ਮਨੁ ਮਾਨਿਆ ਦੇ ਸਾਚੁ ਅਧਾਰੁ ॥੨॥ Asa M 1;

ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸੇਤੀ ਹੁਕਮੁ ਨ ਚਲੈ ਕਰੀ ਬਣੈ ਅਰਦਾਸਿ ॥ Asa M 2.

Dr I J Singh [Personal communication] suggested the following: '*Sahib*' is an honorific title based on Indian culture and could be translated as 'Sir' or 'Exalted' depending upon usage, much as '*Sri*' stands loosely for Mr. I agree with you that '*Sri*' has no place in the title of *Guru Granth* but nor does '*Sahib*'. Nevertheless, '*Sahib*' has been retained in the title by the SGPC as well as by me, not because it means 'Sir,' but as a metaphoric word for the God in the *Gurbani* as ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ ॥ (AGGS, M 1, p 350) and as reported above by Bhai Kahn Singh (1981).

It is also apparent from Part III that Guru Gobind Singh, in his commandments in *Bansavalinama*, did not use 'Sri' before 'Guru' or 'Granth'; however, he used 'Sahib' as a suffix for the 'Granth.' Therefore, the standardized title, AAD GURU GRANTH SHAIB, is almost the same as (AAD *SRI*/GURU GRANTH SHAIB *Ji*) which has been used for all the *Birs* published by the SGPC, Amritsar, and by all other publishers for the last 48 years except that '*SRI*' and '*Ji*,' being redundant, have been dropped from the title. Therefore, it is suggested that the SGPC modify the title to 'Aad Guru Granth Sahib' in future Granth publications so that scholars consistently use its right title. It should be abbreviated as AGGS.

### CONCLUSIONS

The Sikh and non-Sikh writers are not unanimous on any standardized title of the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs. *Baba* and *Guru Baba* were originally used for the *pothi* compiled by Guru Arjun in 1604. Later Prof. Sahib Singh addressed the Granth as the *Aad Granth* (spelled as *Adi Granth* by Western Scholars). After that *Guru Granth*, *Guru Granth Sahib*, *Sri Guru Granth*, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib*, and *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji* became popular. A title, *Aad Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji*, for the Sikh Scripture has been used for the Granth printed by the Shiromani Committee, Amritsar, for the last 48 years. However, '*Sri*' before '*Guru*' and '*Ji*' after '*Sahib*' are redundant.

Therefore, the most appropriate and standardized title for the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs is '*Aad Guru Granth Sahib*,' abbreviated as *AGGS*. '*Aad*' means 'first and foremost,' and '*Guru*' means that which removes ignorance and enlightens, as explained in Parts I and III. *The Aad Guru Granth* means 'The First and the Foremost Granth,' which removes ignorance and enlightens. Granth is Guru, ipso facto, the 'Sabd Guru' sits in it.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful to Bhai Sahib Harbans Lal, PhD for inspiring and motivating me to write a series of articles from my book, *Sabd Guru to Granth Guru: The In-depth Study*, 2003, for *The Sikh Review*.

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