



## The Glory of the Dasam Granth

Created with the aim of waging a war of righteousness the Dasam Granth is that unique and unforgettable offering to Indian culture which changed the very face of religion, society, infact the very nation. Guru Gobind Singh Ji made an appearance at that crucial point of Indian history when the glory of India had been debased by the bestial cruelties of foreign rulers and its own internal disputes. India, as one country, existed in name only.

In that terrible darkness, the tenth Guru, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji was born at Patna in 1666 AD as the embodiment of incomparable might and glorious spiritual radiance. At that time, religion had got mired in hollow ritualism, myths, superstition and fantasmagoric creations of heaven and hell. True religion had ceased to exist.

Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji had refuted and refused to accept all adynamic, parochial, and inhuman religious practices. In place of these he encouraged religious practices that upheld the universal good and well being. In order to preach and promote this reformation, he did not hesitate in sacrificing all he had. Sri Guru Arjun Dev Ji and Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Ji started the tradition of offering their very lives.

Finally, Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji gave manifestation to his goal for the well being of all humanity in the form of a religious war of righteousness which aimed at destroying the inhuman and cruel administrative system of times. It is through this great achievement that Guru Gobind Singh Ji emerges as one of the greatest Karam yogis in the chronicles of mankind.

Guru Gobind Singh Ji was a magnanimous soul. His vision, creation (the Khalsa) and his literary writing all have a common link that binds them together. He gave expression to the doctrinal ideology of Gurmat through his writings and as a further elaboration and extension of this ideology started a war for the freedom and upliftment of society. Thus devoting himself completely through mind, discourse and deeds Guru Ji totally transformed the very face of society.

With a view to create a society free from exploitation and tyranny, he spelt out his aim - "Dharam yudh ko chao" (Aspiration for a war of Righteousness) in the form of a literary masterpiece. And for the creation of such a society, the complete, ideal human being he envisioned was one who was imbued with absolute faith in the one and only Almighty God. His portrayal of the Khalsa is as follows.

**Jaagat jot japey nis basur  
Ek bina man nek na aaney  
Pooran prem prateet sajey  
Brat gor mari matt bhoor na maney.  
Tirath daan daya tap sanjam  
Ek bina neh ek pachchaney.  
Pooran jot jagey ghat main  
Tab Khalas tahey nakhalas jaaney.**

The complete literary works of Guru Gobind Singh Ji are compiled in the Dasam Granth. These were put together in the present form some time after the guru left this worldly form by Bhai Mani Singh and some other leading sikhs who were always present in the darbar (court) of the Guru and had complete knowledge of his writings. Although the manuscripts of these writings were lost in the River Sirsa, hand written copies of all these important works were collected and compiled in the form of the Dasam Granth, Initially the compilation was referred to as "Bachittar Natak Granth", later it come to be referred to as "Dasvey Patshah da Granth". Today, in short form it is called the 'Dasam Granth'.

A brief description of the various writings in the Dasam Granth follows:

## **JAAP SAHIB**

Jaap Sahib, given place of prominence in the Dasam Granth is the invocation made by the khalsa-a hymn in praise of the omnipotent God. The attributes and qualities of God delineated herein are based on the transcendental nature of God, He who is without attributes as in the ideology of Nirgunwad. While on one hand the form and shape of the Almighty God as portrayed in Gurbani have been further honed and highlighted, on the other hand there is an elaboration and embellishment of it. There is specific purpose behind this literary creation and it has been written in a unique style.

In fact, of all the transcendental literature written in the middle age the Jaap Sahib stands out unique for delineating the humanitarian attributes of God who is without attributes by presenting them in a worldly and universal form. It has proved itself as a cardinal literary piece in all northern Indian literature for its brilliance, sublimity and majesty. The Jaap Sahib has no equal.

The Jaap Sahib has evolved as the product of extensive reflection, cogitation and deliberation through moments of awe and reverence experienced by Guru Gobind Singh Ji. In this creation the various attributes of God almighty have been depicted ö He is without caste, without creed, without community, without religion and he is Îfearlessâ. He is the destroyer of enemies too. This aspect of "the destroyer of evil" proved a great force as it enthused the terror ö stricken multitudes into such an awesome force of might and courage that it could not be suppressed any more.

From the point of view of diction and style too it is a matchless piece of writing. The vocabulary used and the connotations suggested by these words have lent it a universalism that makes it significant and meaningful for people of all religions. This is why people of varied religious backgrounds have accepted it and even today read it with great devotion. Indeed, the quintessential message of gurbani is not limited to followers of any one religion but hold true for people of all religions. This is why it is said to have a universal appeal. Infact, this universalism is not limited to the message only. It also holds true for the language or diction. Because for gurbani every language is pure, every word is sacred.

Another outstanding feature of the Jaap Sahib is the beautiful and amazing manner in which worship and might merge together. Might or power by itself is blind. When it gets bound to worship instead of becoming the destroyer of mankind it becomes the destroyer of evil. These writings encourage the saint-soldier to participate in war as the metre and rhyme scheme, full of alliteration and rhythm is set to martial moves. At the same time care has been taken that all moral values and norms of society are upheld while fighting evil.

## **AKAAL USTAT**

The second piece of writing included in the Dasam Granth is called the Akaal Ustat. Herein a major myth has been removed and proved wrong by Sri Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The false belief that some people by virtue of belonging to a particular religion, region, history, culture, colour or creed are superior to others is

strongly refuted. Instead, he has very clearly and firmly stated that all human beings are one.

In this literary work the various forms of God as perceived by man are described and the spiritual, the philosophical and the social beliefs have been clearly elucidated.

In the Akaal Ustat, the Almighty God has been described in all his glory by making use of metaphysical references and the masterful use of imagery. The extended similes and comparisons are so lucid and clear that the reader gets riveted to what he is reading.

At various points, in this composition Guru ji has spoken out against the caste system. Perhaps no other writer has so boldly and fearlessly negated caste distinctions, the name of Guru Gobind Singh Ji will always stand out in history for this courageous and bold attack on the caste system.

On the whole, the picture of God that emerges through the Akaal Ustat is complete-He is the Perfect, Ommipotent, Omniscient Lord who treats kings and papers, elephants and ants alike. He is All Pervading. He is the Creator, The Preserver and the Destroyer. Instead of getting caught up in petty trivialities of life, one should reach out to this All-benevolent God in pure love so as to gain spiritual insight into the reality of God.

## **BACHITTAR NATAK**

The third creation to be compiled in the Dasam Granth is the Bachittar Natak. As evident from the editorial notes at the end of the Chandi Charitra, Chaubees Avatars and Upavatar, they are all a part of Bachittar Natak Obviously then the Bachittar Natak is not only an autobiographical narrative of the protagonist but it also includes the biographies of the great protagonists who emerged on the world screen over the past many ages. However, the literary piece entitled the Bachittar Natak that features in the Dasam Granth is purely an autobiographical piece which highlights incidents related to Guru Gobind Singh Ji. Only 32 years of his life are accounted for here in. Some references to his previous birth also exist.

As per the requirements of the times and the society, God is portrayed not only as benevolent, loving and beautiful but also awe-inspiring; fearsome and powerful. In order to inspire a fearful and cowardly society to deeds of glory and might it was necessary that the source of inspiration for them, the power they upheld as the ideal should be all powerful. Only then could the people who cowered with fear against tyrannical forces could rise and face the foe undaunted.

Although the writing is entitled Bachittar Natak it is not by any stretch of imagination a drama since it doesnât use any of the literary devices usually employed in drama writing. However, it does employ the use of dialogues and verse form. In fact the aim of writing this piece was to delineate the courage, the strength and the might of Guru Gobind Singh Ji against the backdrop of a world stage.

## **CHANDI CHARITRA**

The Chandi Charitra follows and in fact is a part of the Bachittar Natak. The aim of writing this piece was to inspire the common man to rise up against the tyrannical rulers of the time and to fight and sacrifice all they had for their freedom. He invokes the blessings of the Almighty God thus.

**Deh Shive bar mohe ihe.  
Shubh karman tey kabhoo na taron.**

This composition is in the form sawaiye-an Indian metre of one and a quarter line. The mood is essentially forceful and fierce. The descriptions of the battles have been brought out beautifully through the use of

similes and metaphors. The battle scenes are a true portrayal of the strategies and maneuvers of warfare as practiced in the times. The style is lucid and clear leading to a vivid and true presentation of the theatre of war. Although based on the Durga Saptashati of the Markandey Puran, the writings have an independent form and style giving them an identity of their own.

The third piece of writing associated with the portrayal of Chandi is called Chandi di Vaar. Written in fifty-five stanzas, this is the only composition this is in Punjabi. The first stanza of Chandi di Vaar forms the introductory part of the ardaas, the Sikh prayer.

### **Pritham bhagouti simar key Guru Nanak layin dhyay....**

Following the invocation, this composition highlights the major events and incidents about Chandi as mentioned in the ancient writings. The remaining portion is a description of war. Since it is written in such a clear style and deals with matters related to war it appeals strongly to soldiers and warriors. In the ancient times literature of this kind was read during the wars to enthuse the warriors to heights of glory and heroism even today the same tradition prevails.

The main reason for writing about Chandi so many times was that Guru Gobind Singh Ji wanted to affect a sea change in the mental make up of the society, to enthuse and encourage them for the war of Righteousness that he planned to undertake. Thus Chandi the embodiment of might in the female form was described in all her majesty and glory, her strength and might. And as expected through his inspirational writings the Guru was able to transform the character of the multitudes totally. At the same time, he agrandised the image of the mother placing it on a pedestal unequalled by any.

### **GYAN PRABODH**

This composition has two main divisions. The first part is devoted to the praise of the Almighty God, He who is all prevading, Omniscient and Omnipotent. His various attributes, His might, magnanimity and his greatness are the subject of this part of Gyan Prabodh. The entire description follows the tradition of gurbani and elucidates the main ideas that are presented within it.

The second part is in the form of a dialogue in which the soul questions God about that super power whose radiance and glory is unending. The answers are all within. He is without differences of caste, creed, religion. For Him friend and foe are alike.

Then the soul asks about the four dharmas in answer the four dharmas are elaborated upon. These are Raj dharma, Daan dharma, Bhog dharma and Mokh dharma. Giving examples from the lives of great personalities as mentioned in the various scriptures about Daan Dharam have been explained to the soul. The writing also is a source of knowledge and wisdom since in it we find elucidated the various kinds of Yagnas that were performed and how they were performed. This information is very significant since no other source of information regarding these exists. This is an incomplete piece of writing because the three other dharmas mentioned have not been elaborated upon.

### **CHOUBEES AVATAR**

This is a very important literary piece. In this the stories of twenty-three Avatars of lord Vishnu have been included. These are Machch, Kachch, Nar, Narain, Mohini, Varaha, Narsingha, Baman, Parasram, Brahma, Rudra, Jalandhar, Bisan, Sheshmai, Arihant, Dev, Manu Raja, Dhanantar, Sooraj, Chandra, Ram Krishan, Nar (Arjan), Budh and Nehkalanki. Of these, Krishnavatar is the longest followed by Ramavatar and then Nehkalanki avatar. While some of the facts included are as per the scriptures, the writer has also used his

own imagination to further elaborate on the facts.

At the beginning, Guru Gobind Singh Ji has clearly stated his aim for writing this literary piece. In this God has been referred to as the source and fountain head from which all avatars have come forth. Whenever the earth gets weighed down by evil and sin, God sends down lord Vishnu as an avatar. But even the avatars fall prey to their inflated ego hence face the displeasure of God who then sends another avatar. Each of these avatars is an expert at martial arts and strategies. It is this aspect of their personalities that is of utmost significance to the Guru.

## **UP AVATAR**

This composition follows Chaubees Avatar. It begins by narrating the incidents and experiences of Brahma. But in this too there is the Îfallâ because of an inflated ego and excessive pride. At Godâs behest Brahma wrote the Vedas, but fell a victim to vanity. For this he was sent down on earth and it took him ages to rise again in the estimation of God. Finally, when he was successful in pleasing God, he was told that he would have to go down to earth and take the form of seven avatars. These were Balmik, Kashyap, Shukra, Brahaspati, Vyas, Sastrodharak and Kalidasa.

There are no such references in any of the existing scriptures. This composition is the outcome of Guru Gobind Singh Jiâs imagination.

The references to Brahma are followed by two avatars of Rudra-Dattatreya and Parasnath. Rudra too fell prey to conceit and suffered for it like Brahma. Similarly he had to take on the form of two avatars to redeem his mistake.

On reading these episodes one finds that the various avatars can be categorized under three heads. Shastradhari or those who took up arms and fought for right, Shaastradhari or those who on the strength of their knowledge fought for right and Kalyankari-these who transformed the world through their good deeds. Thus, whichever form they took, the fight was against the evil forces. The most important point that emerges on reading these compositions is that Guru Ji has not given undue and excessive importance to any avatar. He clearly states and believes that though an avatar has a divine spark in him, he is not God. Actually Guru Ji wanted to dispel the false belief that there can be different Gods. He wanted the people to understand that there is only One God.

## **PHUTKAL RACHNAWAN**

(OTHER COMPOSITIONS)

There are three compositions that feature herein-Shabad Hazaarey, Sawaiye and Khalsa Mahima.

### **1) SHABAD HAZAAREY**

These are composed in nine different ragas and are in the style of the Bishanpadas. In these Guru Ji has given expression to his philosophical and spiritual beliefs. He has negated the ritualism associated with yoga, belief in the Avatars and sensuality and inspired people to move on the path of truth and goodness. Alongwith these is included a Khayal Patshahi 10 which is believed to be written by Guru Gobind Singh Ji while he was in the jungles of Machhiwara.

### **2) SAWAIYE**

These are thirty-three in all. Apart from describing the form of the Khalsa, these describe God in a style very similar to that employed in the Akaal Ustat. God as described here is above the limiting descriptions

of the Vedas and the puranas. He is Omniscient, Omnipotent, the Sublime, The Transcendent, the Supreme Being. He is the Creator, Without hate, Without fear, Beyond time, Not incarnated, Self-existent, the Enlightener. He always takes care of his followers. In these compositions, the false hoods of people who masquerade as saints have been exposed.

### **3) KHALSA MAHIMA**

This has four verses. It delineates the glory that is associated with the Khalsa. Guru Ji explains the role of the Khalsa to the priests who had come to perform a yagna. He says that it is only through the Khalsa that all achievements have been possible for him.

### **SHASTRA NAAM MALA**

More in the form of a dictionary in verse, this composition includes the description of the various weapons used in warfare. There is no similar writing in existence and it stands out unique for its presentation and theme. While on the one hand the various well-known ancient personalities who used these weapons have been referred to, on the other the way in which these weapons are used in the contemporary period is also highlighted.

### **CHARITROPAKHIYAN**

This composition highlights the various faces of woman. While the positive roles played by woman as a wife, as a mother, as a soldier are outlined, the negative aspect of some women who stoop to lowly activities has also been brought out.

It begins by elucidating the extreme bravery and courage of Devi Bhagwati and highlights her various deeds of glory. This is followed by the various positive ways in which women contribute to the welfare of their families in particular and society in general. The examples are drawn from the Mahabharata, Puranas, Brihat Katha, Katha Sahitya Saagar, Alif Laila, Ayaarey Dayish and other contemporary literature. On reading about the various characters included in this composition one also gets an insight into the culture, tradition and values of the society and region of which they are a part.

Thus, through the given examples, Guru Ji has formulated a very strong value system for the reader, laying down rules to be upheld and followed by both men and women so that a society free from all mortal sins may be formed.

### **ZAFARNAMA**

This is a historic document sent by guru Gobind Singh Ji to Aurangzeb. It was written in the year 1706 AD while Guru Ji was at village Kangad in Malwa and sent to the emperor through Bhai Daya Singh and Bhai Mani Singh. Beginning with the customary invocation to God, the Guru addresses the emperor. Herein he has voiced his protest and displeasure about the manner in which the emperor's generals had broken their pact and attacked the Guru's army when they were leaving Anandpur Sahib. The surprise attack caused the Guru's army great damage. He very daringly addresses the emperor about the breach of faith, and blamed the emperor for this failure and refers to his extreme fanaticism as being wrong.

The extreme courage that has been displayed by the Guru in addressing the emperor and rebuking him for the wrongs done by him are a proof of his valour and bravery. It was only a great karmyogi like Guru Gobind Singh who could address this issue with such daring. The letter had such a great affect on Aurangzeb that he realized his mistake and felt such a great remorse that his death followed soon after.

## **HIDAYATAN**

There are eleven hidayatan or pieces of advice included in the Dasam Granth. These are written in Persian and in the style of the Charitropakhyan and Upakhyan. Beginning with an invocation each composition ends on a note of request asking for Gods blessings.

Thus it is clear that the compositions in the Dasam Granth were created with the sole aim of promoting truth. It is through these writings that Guru Gobind Singh Ji performed the miraculous transformation of people who had lost all courage and become timid and fearful into lion-hearted warriors who would stand undaunted in the face of any challenge.