

SABD GURU TO GRANTH GURU*

Part III. Granth Guru

ARTICLE

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INTRODUCTION

The Granth as Guru has become an established fact in Sikhism and the minds of every Sikh. However, McLeod started the controversy over the declaration of Granth as Guru. (McLeod, 1975) Amid this controversy, McLeod stands firm in his refusal to accept that Guru Gobind Singh declared the Granth as Guru in 1708. He argues that it was a later addition, after the execution of Banda Bahadur, that the Granth was declared a Guru and a cohesive force for the leaderless community. Prof Madanjit Kaur (1988) sharply contradicts this view, who vehemently defends Guru Gobind Singh's declaration of Granth as Guru.

DISCUSSION

Prof Madanjit Kaur (1988) wrote an article entitled, *"The Guru-ship and Succession of Guru Granth"* to justify that Granth is Guru and Guru-ship was bestowed by Guru Gobind Singh in 1708. She stated that this article was written to refute McLeod's statement: *"...tradition which conferred his (Guru Gobind Singh's) personal authority upon the sacred scripture and the corporate Panth may perhaps be a retrospective interpretation, a tradition which owes its origin not to an actual pronouncement of the Guru but to an insistent need for maintaining the Panth's cohesion during the later period."* (McLeod, 1975)

In response to McLeod's contention (McLeod, 1975), Justice Gurdev Singh, Harbans Singh, and Ganda Singh, cited from Grewal (1998); and Madanjit Kaur (1988) and Ganda Singh (1986), have presented compelling historical evidence. This evidence, which includes Guru

ABSTRACT

In Sikh literature, the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs has been accepted as the 'Granth Guru.' However, McLeod refused to accept that Guru Gobind Singh declared 'Granth' as 'Guru' in 1708. He said that after Banda Bahadur, the 'Granth' was declared 'Guru' as a cohesive force. On the other hand, Madanjit Kaur, Ganda Singh, and many other scholars confirmed that Guru Gobind Singh declared 'Granth' as 'Guru' in 1708. Bhai Prahlad Singh, in his Rehitnama, and Kesar Singh Chhibbar, in Bansavalinama, confirmed that the 'Granth' was declared 'Guru.' The critical study of phrase # 808 from Sainapat's Sri Gur Sobha recommends contemplating/deliberating on 'Sabd.'

Gobind Singh's writings and the accounts of his contemporaries, unequivocally supports the claim that Guru Gobind Singh bestowed Guru-ship to the Granth in 1708 CE at the time of his demise.

Nevertheless, when I examined the information (data) given in *Sri Gur Sobha* (Singh (ed.), 1967), *Gurbilas Patshahi 6* (Vedanti, Joginder Singh and Singh, 1998), *Rahit Namay* (Padam, 1986), other historical evidence, and Gurbani, a new picture appeared. Initially, 'Sabd' was accepted as 'Guru,' but later, 'Sabd Guru' was changed to 'Granth Guru,' and then the bestowing of Guru-ship was ritualized.

i) Sri Gur Sobha

Ganda Singh quoted a part of the following phrase from Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha* to show that Guru-ship was bestowed onto the Granth: (Singh (ed.), 1967) (p 52, 14)

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ ਅਜਰ ਜਰੰ ।

ਹਿਰਦੇ ਧਰ ਧਿਆਨੀ ਉਚਰੀ ਬਾਨੀ ਪਦ ਨਿਰਬਾਨੀ ਅਪਰ ਪਰੰ 1 43 ।

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From this phrase, he had interpreted only a portion, ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ, as follows:

"Guru-ship was bestowed onto the Sabd, Eternal and limitless."

Ganda Singh used this phrase to justify that Guru-ship was bestowed onto the Granth. Madanjit Kaur (1988) followed Ganda Singh's interpretation to support her thesis. Moreover, a critical analysis of this phrase shows that Ganda Singh has not paid any attention to the previous stanzas of the above phrase to interpret it correctly. (Singh (ed.), 1967) (p 52) If we investigate the prior stanza of the above phrase # 808, a real interpretation will emerge. The previous stanza is as follows:

ਖਾਲਸ ਖਾਸ ਕਹਾਵੈ ਸੇਈ ਜਾ ਕੈ ਹਿਰਦੈ ਭਰਮ ਨ ਹੋਈ ।

ਭਰਮ ਭੇਖ ਤੇ ਰਹੈ ਨੀਆਰਾ ਸੋ ਖਾਲਸ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹਮਾਰਾ ।808।

Khalis (pure) is one who has no superstitions in his/her mind.

And that Khalis, who remains free from superstitions and religious garb, is my Satguru.

This indicates that the 'Khalis', free from superstitions and religious garbs, was declared the 'Satguru'. Then, the interpretation of the second part, ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ ਅਜਰ ਜਰੰ । would be different from that given by Ganda Singh:

The Satguru (Khalis, the pure one free from superstitions and religious garbs as discussed above) is above all limits (ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰਾ), who contemplates/deliberates on the Sabd (ਸ਼ਬਦ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ), and who can bear (face) the unbearable difficulties (ਅਜਰ ਜਰੰ)".

In this phrase, it is crystal clear that the 'Khalis' (pure one) is the 'Satguru,' who contemplates on 'Sabd'. Nothing supports that 'Granth is Guru' in the above phrase # 808 as interpreted by Ganda Singh.

The next stanza, ਹਿਰਦੇ ਧਰ ਧਿਆਨੀ ਉਚਰੀ ਬਾਨੀ ਪਦ ਨਿਰਬਾਨੀ ਅਪਰ ਪਰੰ], also explains the characteristics of the Khalis:

"(Khalis is that) who imbibes the Bani in mind and recites the Bani with full concentration; consequently, he attains the status¹ of free from any attachment² (means become Satguru), which cannot be described."

Although Ganda Singh failed to interpret phrase # 808 entirely and adequately, one can still easily find out from Sainapat's phrase # 808 the crucial message of Guru Nanak that has been ignored by many scholars, which is as follows:

The Khalis is free from superstitions and religious garb, and when the Khalis contemplates/deliberates on 'Sabd,' becomes Satguru (True Guru/ perfect teacher of Gurbani).

The other important message is that:

The 'Sabd' is to be contemplated/deliberated by the Khalis to become Satguru.

ii) Rehit Nama of Bhai Nand Lal

Ganda Singh also mentioned that Bhai Nand Lal tells us in his *Rehit Nama* (written in *Magar Sudi 9 Samat 1752* (1695 CE) about 13 years before his demise, Guru Gobind Singh made him understand that the Sabd is the Eternal: (Singh (ed.), 1967)

ਨਿਰਗੁਣ ਸਰਗੁਣ ਗੁਰ-ਸ਼ਬਦ ਹੈ ਤੋਹਿ ਸਮਜਾਇ । ਨੰਦਲਾਲ, ਰਹਿਤਨਾਮਾ । (ਪ 53)

"Made him (Nand Lal) understand that the Transcendent and Immanent Guru is the Sabd."

Nand Lal, *Rehit Nama*.

Guru Gobind Singh was preaching that the Sabd is the Eternal Guru.

Ganda Singh's above inference also supports that after Guru Arjun compiled the Bani into a Granth in 1604, he and the other Sikh Gurus taught Bani from this Granth. It also indicates that the 'Sabd' was the 'Guru' right from the time of Guru Nanak when he declared 'Sabd' as 'Guru' (ਸ਼ਬਦ ਗੁਰੂ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ AGGS, M 1, p 943.

Part II). Then '*Pothi*' was declared as the place where one can find the attributes of *Parmeshar* (the Highest God) by Guru Arjun (ਪੇਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਥਾਨੁ || AGGS, M 5, p 1226.) at the time of compilation of the Granth in 1604. Although Sikh Gurus were simultaneously present in the bodily form along with the 'Sabd Guru,' they taught that the 'Sabd' is 'Guru.'

iii) 'Sabd Guru' Changed to 'Granth Guru'

Rehit Nama Bhai Prahlaad Singh

Despite the above information available in *Sri Gur Sobha* and *Gurbilas Patshahi* 6 that 'Sabd' was the 'Guru,' Madanjit Kaur (1988) and Ganda Singh (Ganda Singh, 1985) have accepted the following statement of

Bhai Prahlad Singh as accurate without testing its authenticity with the Nanakian philosophy:

ਅਕਾਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਸਿਉਂ, ਪ੍ਰਗਟ ਚਲਾਯੋ ਪੰਥ ।

ਸਭ ਸਿਖਨ ਕੇ ਬਚਨ ਹੈ, ਗੁਰੂ ਮਾਨੀਅਹੁ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ । 30 ।

(*Rehit Nama* Bhai Prahlad Singh.)

With the order of the Eternal Entity (God), Panth was established.

All the Sikhs are hereby ordained to obey the Granth as the Guru.

In the same *Rehit Nama* Bhai Prahlad Singh has declared 'Khalsa as Guru' and 'Khalsa as the Body of the Guru' in the following phrase: (Padam, 1986) (Anonomous (n.d.)

ਗੁਰੂ ਖਾਲਸਾ ਮਾਨੀਅਹਿ ਪਰਗਟ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੀ ਦੇਹ ।

ਝੇ ਸਿਖ ਮੇ ਮਿਲਬੈ ਚਹਿਹ ਖੇਜ ਇਨਹੁ ਮਹਿ ਲੇਹੁ । 24 ।

Accept the Khalsa as Guru and Khalsa as the body of the Guru.

Those who want to meet me search in the Khalsa.

According to Bhai Prahlad Singh, there are two Gurus: 'Khalsa Guru' and 'Granth Guru'.

It is important to know the differences between 'Khalis' used by Sainapat in *Sri Gur Bilas* and 'Khalsa' used by Bhai Prahlad Singh:

Bhagat Kabir has used 'Khalsay' in the context of 'Pure' as follows:

ਕਹੁ ਕਬੀਰ ਜਨ ਭਏ ਖਾਲਸੇ ਪ੍ਰੇਮ ਭਗਤਿ ਜਿਹ ਜਾਨੀ ॥ AGGS,

Kabir, p. 655.

Kabir says: *Those who have realized the devotion of God become Khalsay (Pure ones).*

Note: *Khalsay* (Pure ones) is not the plural of 'Khalsa.'

It appears that Sainapat has used 'Khalis' in the same context as 'Pure' in his book, *Sri Gur Sobha* (in phrase # 808), as used by Bhagat Kabir. But the word 'Khalsa' used by Bhai Prahlad Singh is different than that of 'Khalis' and its plural form (*Khalsay*) used by Sainapat and Bhagat Kabir, respectively. The word 'Khalsa' has its roots in Persian and Arabic language, which means the land or the property that belongs to the king. In some, *Hukm Namay*, Guru Hargobind, and Guru Gobind Singh have used 'Khalsa' for their *Sangat* (congregation) of Hindus and Muslims. (Ganda Singh, 1985) It means the *Sangat* (congregation) was addressed as 'Khalsa' before initiating 'Khalsa' in 1699. After that, this *Sangat* comprising Amritdhari

Sikhs, non-Amritdhari Sikhs, Hindus, and Muslims who accepted Guru Gobind Singh as their Guru were also called as 'My Khalsa.'

iv. Bansawalinama

Kesar Singh Chhibber completed *Bansavalinama* in 1770 CE, 62 years after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. Kesar Singh's ancestors had been in the service of Guru Gobind Singh as *diwans*. He claims to have seen and consulted in his early days a *vehi* (account book) of the 'House of the Guru.' The tenth chapter of *Bansavalinama* deals with the life of Guru Gobind Singh. In stanzas 678-683, the author mentions the death of the Guru and his last commandment in reply to the question of the Sikhs: *The Granth is the guru, you hold the garment (seek the protection) of the Timeless God* (ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ ਲੜ ਪਕਰਹੁ ਅਕਾਲ 679) ਓਸ stated by Madanjit Kaur (1988) and Ganda Singh (1986).

The irony is that both these scholars, Madanjit Kaur and Ganda Singh, have ignored to mention that Kesar Singh Chhibber also reported that "*The Guru is Khalsa, the Khalsa is Guru*" (ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਖਾਲਸਾ, ਖਾਲਸਾ ਹੈ ਗੁਰੂ।) and "*Accept the command of Granth Sahib but discover the value of the command by researching the Sabd.*" (ਆਗਿਆ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ, ਕਰਨੀ ਸਬਦ ਦੀ ਖੋਜਨਾ । 680 ।)

v) Ritualism Introduced

As soon as the 'Sabd Guru' was changed to the 'Granth Guru,' ritualism was introduced. Koer Singh, the author of *Gurbilas Patshahi 10*, explicitly states that Guru Gobind Singh discontinued the lineage of family or personal Guruship and did not appoint anyone to succeed him as Guru. (K. Singh, 1968) The author records that the Guru addressed his Sikhs before his demise and instructed them that there would be no successor to him, the *Sarbat Sangat* (the whole congregation), and the Khalsa should deem Sri Guru Granth Sahib as Supreme. Koer Singh further states that with five *paise* and coconut in his hand, the Guru paid homage to the Holy Granth and declared his succession as the Guru, as asserted by Madanjit Kaur (1988) and Ganda Singh (1986).

Harbans Singh reported the latest discovery of Giani Garja Singh (1907-1977) from *Bhatt Vehi Talauda Parganah Jind*, confirming the above information in the old writings. (H. Singh, 1986) Guru Gobind Singh asked Bhai Daya Singh on Wednesday, *Shukla chaouth* of the month of *Kartik*, 1765 BK (October 6, 1708) fetch Sri Granth Sahib. The Guru

placed five *paise* and a coconut and bowed his head before it. He said to the *Sangat*: "It is my commandment: Own Sri Granthji in my place. He who acknowledges it will obtain his reward. The Guru will rescue him. Know this as the truth."

After changing the 'Sabd Guru' to 'Granth Guru,' it was further changed to 'Visible Body of the Guru' and 'Darshan Guru.' Consequently, the Sikhs started to pay more attention to ritualistic aspects of the 'Granth Guru' than to deliberating on the philosophy of the 'Sabd Guru.'

CONCLUSIONS

In Sikh literature, the Holy Scripture of the Sikhs has been accepted as the 'Granth Guru.' However, McLeod refused to accept that Guru Gobind Singh declared 'Granth' as 'Guru' in 1708. He said the Granth was declared 'Guru' after Banda Bahadur as a cohesive force. On the other hand, Madanjit Kaur, Ganda Singh, and many other scholars confirmed that Guru Gobind Singh declared 'Granth' as 'Guru' in 1708. The critical study of phrase # 808 from Sainapat's *Sri Gur Sobha* indicates that Ganda Singh misinterpreted this phrase to declare 'Granth' as 'Guru.' Manjit Kaur quoted it in her article without verification. Bhai Prahlad Singh, in his *Rehitnama*, and Kesar Singh Chhibbar, in *Bansavalinama*, confirmed that the 'Granth' was declared 'Guru.'

Giani Garja Singh (1907-1977) from *Bhatt Vehi Talauda Parganah Jind* said that Guru Gobind Singh ritualistically sanctified 'Granth' as 'Guru.' Steadily, 'Granth Guru' became 'Visible Body of the Guru' and 'Darshan Guru.' Consequently, 'Granth Guru' became an idol for worshipping rather than studying the 'Sabd Guru' declared by Guru Nanak.

Phrase # 808 ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਹਮਾਰਾ ਅਪਰ ਅਪਾਰਾ ਸ਼ਬਦ ਬਿਚਾਰਾ ਅਜਰ ਜਰੰ | in Sainapat's *Gur Sobha*, when critically interpreted, indicates the recommendation is to contemplate/deliberate 'Sabd.'

The 'Granth' can be called 'Guru' ipso facto, as 'Sabd Guru' has been assimilated into the 'Granth.' The 'Guru' used as an adjective for the 'Granth' means the 'Granth,' which contains 'Sabd Guru,' removes ignorance and enlightens the mind, as explained in Part I.

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