

# Dasam Granth

## The Real Issues

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## Acknowledgement

*This paper is published in order to project briefly to the English knowing public the sensitive problem of 'Dasam Granth' in the right historical perspective. We avail this opportunity to express our indebtedness to Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi, who has done pioneering scientific research on the subject of the authorship of Dasam Granth and published it in Gurmukhi as 'Dasam Granth Karitartav.'*

## THE PROBLEM OF DASAM GRANTH

The controversy that has come to surround the so-called Dasam Granth is in the main a by-product of two wrong and baseless assumptions. The first one is that Guru Gobind Singh is himself the author of the entire material incorporated in the available 'Dasam Granth'; the second is that this volume constitutes one single integrated granth, designed and worked out with a view to serve some set purpose or plan. We hope to show in this paper that there is no logical or historical basis whatsoever for linking the name of the Dasam (Tenth) Guru with this Granth; and that it is, in fact, not one granth but a haphazard collection of heterogeneous material and granths. Hence, the very title of Dasam Granth becomes a misnomer.

In order to maintain a distinction between the different aspects of the subject discussed here, we have divided this paper into four sections. In the first two sections is discussed our main theme, i.e. the two wrong assumptions referred to above; the third section deals with sundry hypotheses, of secondary importance, advanced to support the said assumptions; and finally, we come to the question as to what the problem of 'Dasam Granth' really is.

### SECTION I

## No Link with Dasam Guru

### 1. The Historical Validity of Available Testimony

The only historical source-material relevant to Dasam Granth is Sikh literature, and it is highly significant that the contemporary or near-contemporary Sikh literature of the period of Guru Gobind Singh (e.g. 'Sri Gur Sobha'; 'Parchian Sewa Das'; 'Koer Singh's 'Gur Bilas Patshahi Das') does not mention 'Dasam Granth' at all. Not only that, it makes no mention of any other like literature of that period under any

other title either.

It is only in the Sikh literature of the post-Guru period that one comes across a few indirect and sketchy references to some compositions supposed to belong to the Guru period. These documents are: (a) 'Bansawlinama Dasan Patshahian Ka' by Kesar Singh Chhibber (A.D. 1779); and (b) 'Mehma Parkash (Kavita)' by Sarup Das Bhalla (A.D. 1800). Besides these two documents, there are three others which directly or indirectly refer to 'Dasam Granth', but which belong to a very late period. These are: (c) 'Guru Partap Suraj' of Bhai Santokh Singh (A.D. 1843); (d) 'Panth Parkash' of Gyani Gyan Singh (A.D. 1874-1878); (e) 'Mahan Kosh' of Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha (A.D. 1930). All the latter three documents (c,d,e) are of not much historical value for our purpose, since these belong to a much later period, and fail to indicate the original sources of their information on substantial points. At best, these can be used only as secondary supportive evidence, on minor points, along with primary evidence, if it is available. Our task is, therefore, limited to assessing the historical validity of the first two documents.

#### (a) Bansawlinama

From the historiographical point of view, Chhibber's Bansawlinama is saddled with serious drawbacks.

First, Chhibber's account cannot be regarded as direct evidence, since he completed his work in A.D. 1779, i.e. 71 years after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh and 45 years after the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh. Nor does he cite any authority for the information he gives. His account depends on hearsay, as he himself pointedly admits at several places in his book. As if to emphasise this aspect of his writing, he writes in the very beginning (p. one) of his book that his account is based on his memory of what he had heard.

“ਸੁਨੀ ਸੁਨਾਈ ਬੋਲਕੇ ਜੋਇ ਰਹੀ ਹੈ ਯਾਦ।”

Again, :“That story I had heard, I have incorporated in my book for my own satisfaction.” (p. chacha).

“ਸੋਈ ਕਹਾਨੀ ਸੁਨੀ ਸੁਨਾਈ।  
ਅਪਨੀ ਸਉਕ ਨਾਲਿ ਪੋਥੀ ਹੈ ਬਨਾਈ।”

Chhibber being over seventy years when he finished his work, his memory is likely to be faulty. This is clear from the mistakes he has made, as shown by scholars, in recording some of the dates (Karitartav, pp. 28-29). Still worse, he has assigned wrong places as well as wrong dates to some outstanding events of Sikh history. For example, it is clearly narrated in Bachitar Natak (Apni Katha) how Kirpal (Mahant) partook in the battle of Bhangani with a wooden club (ਕੁਤਕ) as his only weapon (Macauliffe, v, p.39). Similarly, it is one of the land-marks of Sikh history that the forty Sikhs (later known as forty Muktas), who had earlier deserted Guru Gobind Singh, later sacrificed their lives in defending him at Muktsar, and it was here that the cancellation of the 'deed of renunciation of the Guru' (ਬਦਾਵਾ) took place (Macauliffe, v, p.214). But, Chhibber (p.152) relates both the above mentioned events to the battle at Chamkaur.

The second major defect in Chhibber's writing is that he often makes statements which, to say the least, are not precise, and which sometimes contribute more towards confusion rather than to clarification even on vital points. For example, after Dhirmal refused to lend the 'Adi Granth' (i.e. the Granth compiled by Guru Arjun) to Guru Gobind Singh, Chhibber writes as under:-

“ਸਾਹਿਬ ਰਸਨੀ ਲਗੇ ਹੋਰ ਉਚਾਰ ਕਰਨ।  
ਸਮੁੰਦਰ ਸਾਗਰ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਰਸਨੀ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਦੀ ਹੋਰੁ ਲਗਾ ਬਣਨ।  
ਸੋ ਬਡਾ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਦਾ ਬਣਿਆ।  
ਇਕਾਨਵੇ ਸਤਰਾਂ ਤਿਸ ਦੀਆਂ ਮੈਂ ਭੀ ਗਣਿਆ। (377)  
ਸਮਤ ਸਤਾਰਾਂ ਸੋ ਅਠਵੇਜੇ ਸੋ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਨਦੀ ਪਵਾਇਆ।  
ਕੋਈ ਕੋਈ ਪਤਰਾ ਤਿਸ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਨੂੰ ਹਥ ਆਇਆ।  
ਅਤੇ ਦੂਜਾ ਗੁੰਥ ਜੀ ਹੋਰ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਉਚਾਰ ਕੀਤਾ।  
ਉਸ ਵਿਚ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੋਰੁ ਇਸ ਵਿਚਿ ਹੋਰੁ ਵਖੋ ਵਖੀ ਕਰਿ ਲੀਤਾ। (378)  
ਇਸ ਵਿਚ ਅਵਤਾਰ ਲੀਲਾ ਲਿਖੀ ਸੀ ਸੰਪੂਰਨ।  
ਉਸ ਵਿਚਿ ਹੋਰ ਅਚਰਜ ਲਿਖ ਲੀਤਾ ਸੀ ਪੂਰਨ।



ਜਿਲਦ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਹੋਈ। (379)  
 ਸਤਿ ਪਤ੍ਰੇ ਲਹੌਰ ਇਕ ਸਿਖ ਪਾਸ ਭੀ ਆਹੇ।  
 ਅਠੂਣੀ ਤਹ ਕੀਤੀ ਬਧੇ ਰੁਮਾਲੇ ਮਾਹੇ।  
 ਇਸ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਦੂਜੇ ਦੀਆਂ ਭੀ ਸੰਚੀਆਂ ਖਿੰਡ ਗਈਆਂ।  
 ਜੁਧ ਲੜਾਈ ਕਰਿ ਕੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਕਿਧਰੇ ਸੋ ਗਈਆਂ।" (380)

(Bansawalinam, p. 135)

"The Master (Guru Gobind Singh) himself started another narration (*Uchar Karan*); 'Samundar Sagar Granth' began taking shape as the Master's (the Guru's) own word; so, it came to be a big volume (granth); I myself counted ninety-one lines of that; (377). In Samat 1758, that granth was got consigned (*pavayia*) into a rivulet (*nadi*);

The Sikhs came to get hold of a few loose sheets of that Granth;

And, the Master (the Guru) composed (*Uchar Keeta*) another granth;

In that and in this the compositions (*bani*) were different; the two were separate; (378).

In this one was incorporated complete Avtar;

In that one was written other more wonderful (material);

Both were not bound volumes; (379).

A Sikh of Lahore, too, had seven loose sheets;

(Those) were folded and wrapped up in a handkerchief;

The packets (*sanchian*) of this second granth, too, got dispersed;

Due to warfare, these were scattered to the winds (380)."

The portion of Chhibber's writing we have reproduced above is very relevant for considering our subject, yet it leads

one no where. Was the 'Samundar Sagar Granth' only Guru Gobind Singh's version of 'Adi Granth'? Or, was it that version plus some other material added to it by the Guru? Or, was it entirely different from the 'Adi Granth'? And, why was this Granth deliberately destroyed by throwing it into a rivulet? Again, what was the identity of the second (dooja) granth? What was that ('ਦੂਜਾ') which was separated from this ('ਇਸ')?

Chhibber's account thus makes confusion worse confounded. First he says that, on refusal by Dhirmal, the Guru started making a new Granth, and then this granth is got thrown into a rivulet. Would the Guru deliberately throw away *Bani* or anything worthwhile? The Guru then starts a new Granth, but that, too, gets scattered due to warfare. The only thing that emerges clearly, from the confusion and self-contradictions in his narration, is that whatever the writings of Guru Gobind Singh and his camp might have been were historically lost, atleast from the point of view of their historical link with the post-Guru period.

## (b) Mehma Parkash (Kavita)

The second document to be considered is Mehma Parkash, which was completed in A.D. 1800, i.e. 21 years after Bansawlinama, and 92 years after the demise of Guru Gobind Singh. Presumably, 'Mehma Parkash' also, like Bansawlinama, relies wholly on unidentified hearsay, for it has not cited any sources, written or unwritten, of the information it gives.

In a way, Mehma Parkash is irrelevant to our subject, for it makes no direct reference to 'Dasam Granth' or any other like granth. It does not go beyond telling that a granth entitled 'Vidya Sagar Granth' was compiled at the time of Guru Gobind Singh, and even names some of the poets whose works were included in it. There is no way open to check this account, as this granth is believed to have been lost when Guru Gobind Singh and his party were crossing Sirsa Nadi after the battle of

Anandpur. In any case, no trace of 'Vaidya Sagar Granth' has ever been found. However, Mehma Parkash is helpful in drawing one or two important inferences.

To sum up, the historical testimony, on which one has to depend for unravelling the problem of 'Dasam Granth', is not only meagre but is actually in a mess. Mehma Parkash is mainly irrelevant. All that we are left with is Bansawlinama, confused and unreliable as it is.

## 2. The Historical Identity of 'Dasam Granth'

The first and foremost prerequisite for the historical study of a document is to verify its identity and veracity; for, otherwise, if the foundation becomes questionable, the superstructure built upon it automatically loses its validity. So, let us begin with the history of the origin of the earliest **Birs** (original manuscripts) of 'Dasam Granth'.

### (a) History of the Bir

In his 'Panth Parkash' (A.D. 1871-1875, and later published by Bhasha Vibhag, Punjab, 1970), Gyani Gyan Singh has given credence to four **Birs** (pp. 321-322), and Mahan Kosh, out of these four to only two (p. 616). These Four 'Birs' are:-

First, one associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh; second, one deposited at present in the Gurdwara Moti Bagh, Patiala; third, the Bir in the Dewan Khana, Sangrur; fourth, the volume present in Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Patna.

Dr. Rattan Singh Jaggi is the only scholar who claims to have examined these four **Birs** from the point of view of probing their history and origin. He has examined many other **Birs**, besides the four ones referred to above, but he does not consider them to be very old. (Dasam Granth, Karitartav, p. 91). Hence, we will confine our examination to the four **Birs** listed above.

The first '**Bir**', associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh, was in the custody of Raja Gulab Singh Sethi (Hanuman Raod, New Delhi), when Dr. Jaggi interviewed him on 5.12.1959. According to Raja Gulab Singh, some armyman (*sainik*) happened to get this 'Bir' in the loot when Multan was conquered by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in A.D. 1818. Afterwards, this *sainik* was one of the contingent of 800 men whom the Maharaja sent to Hyderabad (Deccan), and the *sainik* took the 'Bir' along with him. He and his descendants came to settle permanently at Hazur Sahib (Deccan), and the 'Bir' remained with them till Raja Gulab Singh bought it from these descendants in 1944-45 (Karitartav, p. 92).

The original source of the second **Bir** (i.e. of Gurdwara Moti Bagh) is traced by Gyani Gyan Singh to Bhai Sukha Singh, Granthi of Gurdwara, Patna. According to his 'Panth Parkash' (pp. 321-322), Bhai Sukha Singh composed, or compiled, or created (*rachî*) this Bir at Patna in Samat 1832 (A.D. 1775). Afterwards, his son Charat Singh added five leaves to it, imitating the handwriting of Guru Gobind Singh. He claimed these leaves to be in the Guru's own handwriting just for the sake of monetary considerations. From Charat Singh this **Bir** with forged leaves was passed on to Baba Hakim Singh, and from Hakim Singh to Gurdwara Moti Bagh.

One 85 years old Bedi Natha Singh, who claimed to be a descendant of Baba Hakim Singh and was a resident of village Raghu Majra (Patiala), told Dr. Jaggi in Oct. 1959, that it was in fact Nahar Singh who got the **Bir** from Charat Singh, and presented it to Maharaja Ranjit Singh. Ranjit Singh got the **Bir** installed in his private Gurdwara and put Nahar Singh in charge of it. On the death of the Maharaja, Nahar Singh brought the Bir to his home, from where it passed on to Baba Hakim Singh, who was the son-in-law of Nahar Singh's grandson. Baba Hakim Singh presented the Bir to



Maharaja Mahinder Singh of Patiala (A.D. 1862-1876), and the Maharaja got the **Bir** installed in Gurdwara Moti Bagh (Karitartav, p.94). The story has no corroboration whatsoever.

All the information Dr. Jaggi could get about the third important **Bir**, which is in the custody of Gurdwara Dewan Khana, Sangrur, was from granthi Bhai Nandan Singh. He told Dr. Jaggi that this **Bir** was presented to Maharaja Sarup Singh of Jind (A.D. 1837-1864) by a Pathan at Delhi in 1857, when the Maharaja went there to help the British in the Mutiny (Karitartav, p. 95). The **Bir** has no earlier history, nor any story about its time of writing.

The fourth important **Bir** is stored, along with some other **Birs**, in the store-house attached to Gurdwara Janam Asthan, Patna(Bihar). Nobody was able to give any information regarding the history of this or other **Birs** there (Karitartav, p. 97).

These versions about the history of the four **Birs** are just cock and bull stories. How did a valuable document, such as the **Bir** associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh, come to be in Multan in A.D. 1818, when the place was, at that time, far away from the centres of Sikh culture or political power? Similarly, how did the **Bir** at present at Sangrur, come to be in possession of a Pathan (and not a Sikh) in far off Delhi in A.D. 1857? Apart from this, these stories about the history of the four **Birs** can by no means be regarded as reliable historical evidence.

What is very significant is that these stories, relating to the history of two important **Birs**, begin with, in the case of the first one with the conquest of Multan in 1818, and in the case of the Third **Bir** with the Mutiny of 1857. As Bhai Mani Singh was martyred in A.D. 1734, the supposed compilation of Dasam Granth by him could not have been completed later than that

period. This leaves a time-gap of atleast 84 years and 123 years between the time of the sudden discovery, at odd places, of the first and third **Birs** respectively, and the period of Bhai Mani Singh. How is it that these documents, which the Sikh society should have valued, had they been genuine, remained unknown or unnoticed for so long, especially during the Sikh period. In any case, there is no historical evidence available to trace the 'missing links.'

#### (b) Historicity of 'Dasam Granth'

As already indicated, there is no mention of 'Dasam Granth', or any other like granth, in the contemporary or near-contemporary Sikh literature of the period of Guru Gobind Singh. Chhibber is the first and the only writer of the earlier post-Guru period who states in his Bansawlinama (p. 136) that two granths ('Samundsagar Granth' and another granth, which he names as 'Dooja Granth'), were composed or compiled in the Guru's period.

In the first place, none of the above said granths is named as 'Dasam granth' or by any other title associated with the word 'Dasam'. But, leaving this technicality aside, what is important is that there is no historical testimony for linking these granths with 'Dasam Granth'. For, Chhibber himself says that both these writings were lost; one was got thrown away and the other became scattered during the battles.

Chhibber is the only writer of the earlier post-Guru period to aver that Bhai Mani Singh got collected in the year Samat 1782 (i.e. A.D. 1725) the material of 'Avtar Leela Granth' (and not of Dasam Granth) that had been scattered due to warfare. How far this statement is correct or not, will be seen later. What is significant for our argument here is that the 'Avtar Leela Granth' can by no means be taken to be identical with 'Dasam Granth'.

From the point of view of the affinity of subject-matter, only compositions, such as 'Apni Katha', both the 'Chandi Charitars', 'Chaubis Avtar', 'Brahmavtar', and 'Rudravtar', can be regarded as parts of 'Avtar Leela'. Further, 'Avtar Leela' compositions form part and parcel of one distinct granth named as 'Bachitar Natak', for the termination of each of these compositions is marked by the sentence: "*iti sri Bachitar Natak Granth.....Samaptam*" (Karitartav, p.32). In addition to 'Samaptam', the word 'iti', according to Mahan Kosh (p. 127), is also indicative of closure (ਸਮਾਪਤ ਬੋਧਕ). That makes it doubly clear that this sentence does mean the termination of the concerned chapter or part of 'Bachitar Natak Granth'.

As against this, 'Dasam Granth' includes, besides hymns in praise of Avtars and Devis, many other compositions (e.g. 'Gyan Parbodh'; 'Charitro pakhyan', 'Haqaits', 'Zafarnama') which have no subject-wise relationship with stories of Avtars. This conclusion is further supported by the fact that compositions other than those of 'Avtar Leela', do not claim at all to be parts of 'Bachitar Natak Granth'. Some of these compositions have their own different concluding sentences (and not '*iti sri Bachitar Naak Granth.....Samaptam*') marking their completion. For example, 'Charitropakhayan', which constitutes a substantial portion of 'Dasam Granth' (580 pages out of the total 1428), terminates with the sentence: "*iti sri Charitropakhayan triya charitro....samapat*", and 'Gyan Parbodh' terminates with the sentence: "*sri Gyan Parbodh pothi dutia jag samaptam*". This makes it clear that Avtar Leela (which is a part and parcel of 'Bachitar Natak Granth') and 'Dasam Granth' are not identical granths.

Chhibber further states that Bhai Mani Singh came across some loose sheets (ਪੜ੍ਹੇ) written in the Guru's own hand writing ('Khas Dastkhati patre'), and he got

more 'bani' written in consonance, or along, with\* (ਬਰੋਬਰ) that of these sheets.

“ਖਾਸ ਦਸਖਤੀ ਪੜ੍ਹੇ ਲਿਖੇ ਹਥਿ ਆਏ।  
ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਪੜ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਬਰੋਬਰ ਨਾਲਿ ਸਭ ਬਾਣੀ ਹੋਰ ਲਈ ਲਿਖਾਇ।”

(Bansawlinama, p. 136)

We will discuss the alleged role of Bhai Mani Singh hereafter, and deal with the 'Khas Dastkhati Patre' in the third section. What we are concerned with here is that Chhibber's style of writing confuses rather than clarifies the issues. Which of the granths written, according to him, in the Guru's period, 'Avtar Leela Granth' or 'dooja Granth', was given shape to, if ever, as 'Dasam Granth', or was joined together with 'Adi Granth'? Or, was it the material got written by Bhai Mani Singh with respect to the 'Khas Patras' which was joined with 'Adi Granth'? In that case, it could not be acceptable at all to the Sikhs, then or now, as that would imply a status for Bhai Mani Singh equal to that of the Gurus. And Bhai Mani Singh must have been aware that such a step on his part would render his position as head-priest of the Golden Temple untenable. Chhibber's statement is, therefore, not only not helpful, it is actually misleading.

Hence, the historicity of Dasam Granth upto this point of time remains enveloped in confusion. The tangible fact is that it is only in A.D. 1944-45, when the *Bir* associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh comes to the surface, that we become sure of its existence; and, there is no historical testimony to show that this *Bir* is, in fact, that Granth which Bhai Mani Singh is supposed to have compiled. As it has been seen, the origin of this *Bir* and its subsequent history are unknown except for the story dished out by its present custodian.



### 3. Bhai Mani Singh's Role

Apart from the fact that Chhibber wrote his *Bansawlinama* 45 years after the martyrdom of Bhai Mani Singh, and that his account, as he himself admits, is based on hearsay, there are other reasons for doubting the credibility of the account regarding the role Bhai Mani Singh is supposed to have played in compiling the so-called 'Dasam Granth' or 'Dasme Patshah ka Granth'.

Chhibber writes that Bhai Mani Singh engaged the services of several Sikhs for collecting the scattered material of 'Avtar Leela', so it must have been a topic of common talk among Sikhs. Even otherwise, the creation of 'Dasme Patshah Ka Granth' should have been a very important land-mark for the Sikh society. Then, why did it come to the notice of Chhibber alone and not to that of other Sikh historians right up to the time of Bhai Santokh Singh, author of *Gurpartap Suraj* (A.D. 1843). It could not be an inadvertent omission, for Sarup Das Bhalla, atleast, is very much alive to the significance of Sikh literature. He wrote his 'Mehma Parkash (Kavita)' 21 years after *Bansawlinama* was completed, and devotes some space to the narration of 'Vidya Sagar Granth', but does not mention at all 'Dasam Granth' or any other granth of the post-Guru period.

Secondly, while other manuscripts, supposed to be compiled by Bhai Mani Singh and listed by Ashok Singh in his 'Hath Likhtan Dee Soochi' (e.g. 'Sikhan dee Bhakat Mala', period 17th Century Bikrami, and 'Janam Sakhi Guru Nanak Dev Jee'. Samat 1778 Bikrami) were throughout well known and preserved in the Sikh society, how could the Bir associated with Bhai Mani Singh's name remain hidden or ignored till it was purchased by Gulab Singh in 1944-45.

Thirdly, Chhibber writes (p. 136) that when some Sikhs requested Guru Gobind Singh in Samat 1755 to allow them to join together the two granths (i.e. 'Adi Granth' and the Granth

of the Tenth Guru) into one volume, not only the Guru refused, but made it quite clear that 'Adi Granth' was the Guru Granth and his own was just his play; hence the two must remain separate.

Finally, Dasam Granth is such a haphazard collection of heterogeneous material that its compilation gives no credit to Bhai Mani Singh or to any sagacious person having a purpose or plan in mind.

### 4. No Link with Dasam Guru

One fact that clearly emerges even in this mass of confusion is that there is no historical basis, whatsoever, for linking the name of Guru Gobind Singh with 'Dasam Granth'. *Bansawlinama* is our only source of information, and even this work pin-points two facts. That whatever literature was produced in the Guru's period was either deliberately destroyed by throwing it into a rivulet, or was scattered due to warfare. And, as both the granths were not bound ("ਜਿਲਦ ਦੁਹਾਂ ਦੀ ਨਹੀਂ ਸੀ ਹੋਈ", p. 135), their contents were scattered either as loose sheets (ਪੜ੍ਹੇ) or as small packets (ਸੰਚੀਆਂ) of sheets. The extent to which the material of these granths got scattered is indicated by the statement that only stray remaining leaves of 'Samund Sagar Granth' came into the hands of the Sikhs

("ਕੋਈ ਕੋਈ ਪੜ੍ਹਾ ਤਿਸ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਜੀ ਸਿਖਾਂ ਹਥਿ ਆਇਆ।")

and that seven loose sheets (ਪੜ੍ਹੇ) of 'Dooja Granth' came to be in the possession of a Sikh in far-off Lahore (p. 135).

Now, what is the historical credibility of the material so lost or widely scattered in tit bits? What the subject-matters of the widely dispersed different portions pertained to, and who were their authors? Who were their custodians, and who collected from them? The answers to all such queries can be anybody's guess. And an important relevant fact that cannot be overlooked in this connection is that 'Dasam Granth'



contains, compiled together in one volume, an assortment of heterogenous subjects.

Finally, when different pen-names like Ram, Shyam, etc. are given specifying the authorship of particular compositions of 'Dasam Granth', why assume at all that Guru Gobind Singh was the author of the entire Granth? And, if the Bani, which Bhai Mani Singh is said to have got written in consonance with the 'Khas Dastkhat Patras' on his own initiative, was also incorporated in the Granth supposed to have been compiled at that time, it becomes unnecessary to argue further that the entire Granth was not Guru's own creation. But, can it be entertained that Bhai Mani Singh would mislead the Sikhs about the **Bani** of the Guru?

Another vital factor which snaps the link, sought to be forged between 'Dasam Granth' and Guru Gobind Singh, is that there is no historical basis for tracing the available **Birs** of 'Dasam Granth' to their origins. It has been shown that the origin, subsequent history, and even presence, of the four old **Birs** of 'Dasam Granth', especially of the one associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh, were unknown for more than two hundred years after their alleged compilation. Even today their history is untraced and is supported only by the oral stories of their custodians. History cannot be based on cock and bull stories of the custodians of a document. This fact, by itself, indicates that actually no granth, such as 'Dasam Granth', was compiled in Bhai Mani Singh's time.

## SECTION II

### Not One Granth

It does not require much reasoning to prove that 'Dasam Granth' is not a unitary granth. It is a haphazard collection of heterogenous material and granths, as is obvious from the following facts taken from the text itself.

1. 'Bachitar Natak' incorporated in 'Dasam Granth' has 14 chapters or parts, and each of these chapters or parts terminates with the sentence: "**iti Bachitar Natak Granthe.... samaptam**". This means that either there were separate 14 compositions entitled 'Bachitar Natak' or, more probably, these 14 chapters formed part and parcel of one 'Bachitar Natak Granth'. In any case, the concluding sentence ("**iti Bachitar Natak Granthe .... samaptam**") makes it clear that 'Bachitar Natak Granth' is a distinctly separate granth from other compositions in 'Dasam Granth' whose concluding sentences are either different from that of 'Bachitar Natak', or they do not refer to any termination of the concerned composition at all. Obviously, subject-wise these 14 chapters have no relation with other parts of the Granth.

For example, 'Charitropakhyan' terminates with the sentence: "**iti sri charitar pakhyane triya charitro.... samaptam**"; and 'Gyan Parbodh' closes with the sentence: "**Sri Gyan Parbodh pothi dutia jag samaptam**". Thus, 'Gyan Parbodh' is definitely an independent pothi, i.e. a separate book. And Zafarnama included in Dasam Granth is a copy of the historic letter of Guru Gobind Singh to Aurangzeb. Consequently, 'Dasam Granth' is not a granth, with a unified message or objective. It is not designed with some purpose or plan in mind, but is a mere collection of heterogenous materials and granths.

## 2. Charitropakhyan

There are two available but separate old manuscripts of Charitropakhyan. One is with Ashok Singh bearing the date Samat 1753 (A.D. 1696), and the other is in the Panjab University Library, Chandigarh, bearing the date Samat 1780, i.e. A.D. 1723 (Hathlikhtan dee Soochi, part one, p. 326, and part two, p. 214). It is obvious that Charitropakhyan already existed as an independent granth before Bhai Mani Singh even came to Amritsar. Moreover, the authors of both these manuscripts are specified as Ram, Syam, etc.

### 3. Ideological Disparity

From the point of view of ideological affinity, it is even more obvious that the contents of 'Dasam Granth' are irreconcilable, and could not have been authorised by one person, much less by the Guru. What common ground there can be between, on the one hand, the highly spiritual and ethical *bani* of Jap, Akal Ustat and Swayyas, etc., and, on the other, compositions like Charitropakhyan and Hakayats? Also, the praise lavished on Hindu Avatars and goddess Chandi, and on their exploits, directly contradicts Guru Gobind Singh's own Bani included in Dasam Granth.

"He (God) made millions of Indars and Bawans;

He created and destroyed Brahmas and Shivs"

(from "Akal Ustat"; Macauliffe, V, p. 262).

"How many millions of worms like Krishan,

He created, built, fashioned, again destroyed and created."

(Ibid, p. 278)

"Thou hast millions of times repeated the names of Krishan and Vishnu, and fully meditated on Ram Chander and the Prophet;

Thou hast repeated Brahma's name and established Shiv in thy heart, but none of them will save thee."

(From "Vichitar Natak"; Macauliffe, V, p. 288)

"Some say that Ram is God; some say Krishan; some in their hearts accept the incarnations as God;

But I have forgotten all vain religion and know in my heart that the Creator is the only God."

(From 'Tetee Swayas'; Macauliffe, V, p.328).

### 4. Subject Matter

From the point of view of subject matter, 'Dasam Granth' is a hotch potch of heterogeneous topics. Japu, Akal Ustat, Shabad Hazare and Swayas are devoted to the praise of God; Bachitar Nanak, as its very title implies, is a collection of dramas; 'Chandi Charitars' and 'Var Sri Bhagavati Je Kee' concern exclusively the goddess Chandi and her exploits; 'Gyan Parbodh' is both philosophical and moral; 'Khalsa Mehma' is in praise of the Khalsa and 'Shastar Mala' enumerates and praises various weapons; 'Charitropakhyan' and 'Hakhyats' reveal the viles of women; finally 'Zafarnama' is a copy of Guru Gobind's letter to Aurangzeb.

It is apparent that what has held 'Dasam Granth' together is not any identity of the subject matter of its constituents, but the mere facts that it came to be a single volume at some stage and the word 'Dasam' came to be associated with its title. How and when it came to be associated is not clear, as the title 'Dasam' was never bestowed or acknowledged formally. In fact, the title has varied from 'Bachitar Natak' to 'Dasme Patshah Ka Granth' to 'Dasam Granth'. And how arbitrarily the variation has occurred is indicated by the fact that a publisher has published it very recently under the title 'Dasam Sri Guru Granth Sahib'.

### 5. Arrangement

From the point of view of the arrangement of subjects within the volume, 'Dasam Granth' is not only a collection of unrelated subjects but it is also a very haphazardly arranged collection. Devotional 'Japu' and 'Akal Ustat' are followed by 'Bachitar Natak' (Apni Katha), and then come compositions concerning Chandi. In between the large compositions regarding goddess Chandi and Hindu Avatars, is inserted 'Gyan Parbodh' a philosophical and moral piece. Avatar worship is followed by devotional Shabad Hazare and Swayas, to be



list of the contents of 'Dasam Granth', from which it is inferred that the entire growth is the creation of the Guru.

The weakest point regarding these 'Khas Patras' is that no testimony is given to establish the credibility of these 'Patras' being in Guru's own handwriting. In the first place, the number of 'Patras', purporting to be the same, is, in some cases, more than one. Secondly, the 'Patras', purporting to be the same, are found at different places. Dr. Jaggi, who has taken great pains in comparing various documents, writings, the shape of letters, etc., and has devoted 24 pages (Karitartav, pp. 113-137) to discussing this question, comes to the conclusion that internal and external evidence, as well as scientific and comparative study of these 'Khas Dastkhati Patras', reveal that these are not in Guru Gobind Singh's own handwriting.

#### SECTION IV

### What the Problem Really is ?

In this paper, we have concentrated on two themes. First, that there is no historical basis for linking 'Dasam Granth' with the name of Guru Gobind Singh. Secondly, 'Dasam Granth' is in reality not one granth but a collection of heterogeneous materials and granths.

The real problem, therefore, that remains to be solved is as to how, when, and by whom the available earliest pre-eminent *Birs* of 'Dasam Granth' came to be compiled as single volumes ? What makes the solution of this problem very difficult is the mysterious origin of 'Dasam Granth' itself and the subsequent dubious history of its earliest *Birs*. And how unusual mere coincidence it would be that the forged letter of Bhai Mani Singh and the *Bir* associated with his name came to the surface within a very short interval between A.D. 1929 - 1944. In these circumstances, all we can do is to point out to some circumstantial evidence and leave it to the scholar or

the reader to draw his own conclusions.

1. Bhai Mani Singh came to Amritsar in Samat 1782 (Bansawalinama, p. 135), when he was appointed as head-priest of the Golden Temple, and remained most of the time there, busy in discharging his responsibility, till he was arrested and martyred in A.D. 1734. Therefore, the centre of activity for compiling 'Dasam Granth' or any other such granth, could only be around Amritsar. But, the origin of none of the four pre-eminent *Birs* has ever been even indirectly traced to that centre. Two of these *Birs* (one located at Janam Asthan, Patna and other at Gurdwara Moti Bagh, Patiala) are traced only to the Gurdwara at Patna, and the other two to Multan and Delhi. None of these four *Birs* has any earlier history than that.
2. Gyani Gyan Singh writes in the 'Panth Parkash' (A.D. 1874-1878) :

“ਸੁਖਾ ਸਿੰਘ ਗ੍ਰੰਥੀ ਔਰ।  
ਰਚੀ ਬੀੜ ਪਟਨੇ ਮੈਂ ਗੌਰ।  
ਅਠਾਰਾਂ ਸੌ ਬੱਤੀ ਮਾਂਹੈ।

ਪੁਨਾ ਚੜਤ ਸਿੰਘ ਤਾਂਕੇ ਪੂਤ।  
ਅਖਰ ਦਸਮ ਗੁਰੂ ਸਮਸੂਤ।  
ਕਰ ਕੇ ਪਾਂਚ ਪਤਰੇ ਔਰ।  
ਗੁਰ ਤਰਫੋਂ ਲਿਖ ਪਾਏ ਗੌਰ।  
ਔਰੋਂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਕਈ ਉਨ ਲਿਖੇ।  
ਅਖਰ ਗੁਰ ਸਮ ਹੈ ਹਮ ਪਿਖੇ।  
ਦਸਖਤ ਦਸਮ ਗੁਰੂ ਕੇ ਕਹਿਕੇ।  
ਕੀਮਤ ਲਈ ਚੋਗਨੀ ਚਹਿਕੇ।”

"In (Samat) 1832 (A.D. 1775) Sukha Singh granthi compiled (ਰਚੀ) a Bir at Patna .... Then, his son Charat Singh, imitating the handwriting of the Guru (Gobind Singh), added five more sheets on his own, and claimed

these to be Guru's. He wrote several other granths (of which I have myself seen some) imitating the handwriting of the Guru. By claiming these to be Guru's own writings, he charged many times more."

(pp. 321-322, Bhasha Vibhag edition).

How far this account is correct, we cannot vouchsafe, but one thing is clear that 'Dasam Granth' has been meddled with and for monetary considerations. Dr. Sethi bought the *Bir* associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh, and the Second Bir came to Moti Bagh travelling a similar route. Also, there is no doubt that the four *Birs* differ in their contents as well as in the arrangement of their contents (Karitartav p. 92), which fact cannot but further cast a shadow on their authenticity.

3. It is a habit with forgers to claim that the author of the concerned writing is some renowned figure. Many instances of this can be found even in old Punjabi manuscripts. For example, the authorship of 'Bhagwat Ikadas Skund' (beginning with '*Ik Onkar Satgur Parsad*' and dated 1692 Bikrmi) is ascribed to Rishi Bias (Hatahlikhtan dee Soochi, Part one, p.120). Similarly, the authorship of 'Sarv Loh Parkash', 'Prem Anbodh Pothi', and 'Prem Sumarg Granth' (which are not included in Dasam Granth) is ascribed to Guru Gobind Singh (Hathlikhatan dee Soochi, Part 1, pp. 329-335).
4. All the four pre-eminent *Birs* of 'Dasam Granth' came to the surface, for the first time, after Sukha Singh compiled his version of it in Samat 1832 (A.D. 1775), and his son, Charat Singh, converted the dissemination of the *Birs* into a business.

## Appendix

### Bhai Mani Singh's Letter

The so-called letter of Bhai Mani Singh to Mataji is a document which has been given importance by some scholars for the purpose of connecting the compilation of 'Dasam Granth' with the name of Bhai Mani Singh. This letter claims to record the rumour of Banda having escaped from custody, who was arrested and executed in 1716 A.D. History records that he was neither arrested earlier nor escaped custody.

Dr. Rattan Singh, in his 'Karitartav Dasam Granth', has given solid reasons for suspecting it to be a fictitious document. The shape of letters and the liberal use of Bindi of the Gurmukhi script in Bhai Mani Singh's alleged letter are quite different from the other writings of his period. Also, in writing this letter, a metallic nib appears to have been used, which was not available at that time in India (for details, see 'Karitartav', pp. 38-45). Above all, in all the Gurmukhi prose writings of that period (e.g. the Hukamnamas of Guru Gobind Singh and Banda), words constituting a single sentence were joined together without leaving blank spaces in between them. That this classical method of writing Gurmukhi was in vogue right upto A.D. 1867, is shown by a copy of the newspaper 'Akhbar Sri Darbar Sahib' published in that year (Karitartav, pp.39-45). For our purpose, this fact alone is enough to clinch the issue that the old style of writing Gurmukhi is to be found, without exception, in all the available early manuscripts (e.g. 'Sikhan dee Bhakatmal'; 'Janamsakhi Bhai Mani Singh jee kee'; and the claimed manuscript *Bir* of Dasam Granth itself) associated with the name of Bhai Mani Singh and listed in 'Punjabi Hathlikhtan dee Soochi' by Ashok Singh.

Now, the words in the sentences of Bhai Mani Singh's so-called letter are clearly not joined together and are definitely separated by blank spaces in between them (Karitartav,



photostat copy on p. 48), as it is done in the modern style of writing Gurmukhi. This one-time drastic innovation, solely in Bhai Mani Singh's letter, is in glaring contrast to all other writings associated with his name, or even to other writings of his period or of the period that followed him closely.

We cannot, therefore, escape the inference that this letter was a forged one. Gyani Harnam Singh Balbh claims to have secured it from 'some old Sikh family' of Delhi in 1929, without specifying that family ("ਪ੍ਰਾਚੀਨ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਿੱਖ ਘਰਾਣੇ" Karitartav, p.39). The earlier history of the letter is also unknown. And the doubts and suspicions regarding this letter are further compounded by the strange conduct of its custodian, who gave a photostat copy of it to Dr. Jaggi, but did not comply with his repeated requests to show him the original document (Karitartav, p.40). He, thereby, deprived Dr. Jaggi of an opportunity to have a look at the condition of the original paper used in order to form a probable estimate of its age. It is apparently an attempt to hide what is not genuine.