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Guru Granth Sahib – The only Sikh canon

Dr. Jasbir Singh Mann, California

The author arguably cites credible citations to Dasam Granth proponents and presents evidence doubting the veracity of the currently prevailing edition of Dasam Granth and concludes that the only venerable Granth for the Sikhs is Guru Granth Sahib. In retrospect the “Khalsa Panth” undoubtedly is the only Sikh entity that is collectively authorized to make and accept any change based upon the doctrines enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib acceptable to the Guru Panth as proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh.



On October 6th, 1708 A.D., the tenth Guru, Guru Gobind Singh ji passed on the succession of Guruship to Guru Granth Sahib and said “The Guru's spirit will henceforth be in the Granth and the khalsa. Where the Granth is with any five Sikhs representing the Khalsa Panth, there will be Guru”. Sikh religion is an integrated faith with unity of thought bestowed upon us by Guru Nanak Dev ji through nine successive Gurus whose teachings are embodied in Guru Granth Sahib. Guru Gobind Singh made the Panth distinctive by introducing the ideology of corporate Guruship while maintaining the principles of ‘Shabad Guru’. The perceptive Guruship continues the spiritually transformed role of Gurus in human form to one Guru Granth, Guru Panth and homogeneous Maryada. This unique ideology makes Sikhism a practical and universal modern religion.

However, his ideological inception and codification of Guru Granth Sahib as the only Sikh canon has come under scrutiny since the introduction of Dasam Granth. Dasam Granth's origin, authorship and message have been actively debated, for last 200 years, not only by Sikh and non-Sikh scholars, but also theologians, Sikh spiritual leaders and the entire Sikh Panth as well. Amongst the Sikh community, the issues pertaining the Dasam Granth have lead to a divide and established two clear points of view: one that of its unconditional acceptance and the other of total rejection. Disagreeing with both, the author presents evidence to initiate a Gurmat-based transparent and independent inquiry into the context, historical and textual evidence through academic parameters to draw a conclusion acceptable to the whole Guru Panth.

Evidence shows that individual Granths like Chritro Pakhyan, Chaubis Avtar, and various compositions like Bachittar Natak (with fourteen Cantos) were available individually. But, compilation of all these together by insertion of sachi Bani and some other writings of the tenth Guru (*Pathshahi Dasm*) and other similar Chhands, which were popular in Sikh usage in Gutkas or oral remembrance of Sikh families, into one

heterogeneous *Bir: Desmi Patshahi Da Granth* without any sanctification by Guru Gobind Singh Ji seems to have been carried out by individuals with nefarious intent. Literature pertaining to religion or otherwise must be evaluated in reference to History. The mystified appearance of the *Bir* becomes further cloudy when historical sources attest to the fact that Charles Wilkin wrote in his account: to translate at some future period the Granth he saw, in Hindoove with many Sanskrit words, in 1781 A.D., at Patna "which appeared later". This *Bir* categorized as MSS D5 Punjabi/Colebrook HT in British library, appeared on the scene in later part of 18th century. Henry Colebrooke, an attorney and administrator in Calcutta procured *Dasmi Patshahi Granth* in Gurumukhi (BL MSS Punjabi 5D) whose title page read as *Nanak Panthi Kabhya* in Devnagri with notation at the top in Devnagri: *Dasmi Patshahi Ka Granth*. Historical testimony also proves that Henry Colebrooke never came to Punjab to look for this Granth.



Further academic exploration of the 18th century history reveals that several Indian, Persian and over thirty European sources are devoid of the Dasam Granth. Its existence was first published in early 19th century literature by none other than the British. In 1810 A.D., the title "*Dasmi Patshahi Da Granth*" was first reported by Malcolm in his book "sketch of the Sikhs". By 1895, such Granths, first as thirty-two hand written *Birs* with variable pattern of compositions, and then later six printed versions of such *Birs*, surfaced in Sikh institutions in Punjab. The basic dilemma for Sikh Panth is "Which is the original authentic *Bir* of Dasam Granth compiled and authenticated by the tenth Guru or compiled by Bhai Mani Singh that matches all contents and arrangement as noted in the *Bir* presently in circulation as *Dasam Granth*? Where is the original *Bir* or Granth, does it actually exist?" Sodhak committee who edited and published the current Dasam Granth in 1900-1902 A.D., failed to respond to this basic question.

Historical, textual and academic analysis of various available Dasam Granth *Birs* or manuscripts, clearly leads to evidentiary and comprehensible truth that there was no *Bir* or Granth, or manuscript of *Dasmi Patshahi Da Granth* or *Bachittar Natak Granth* that matched the contents of current Dasam Granth as corrected in 1895-1896 and first published by Sodhak committee in 1897. It has satisfactorily been refuted that Dasam Granth was nonexistent in Punjab prior to late 18th century. Dasm Granth can neither be traced nor attributed to Bhai Mani Singh Ji or Baba Dip Singh Ji, or to Guru Gobind Singh Ji. The presently published Dasam Granth, which has been available since 1897, is a heterogeneous Granth and appears to be created and compiled in the late 18th century under the guidance of Nirmala Atma Ram at Calcutta and promoted by Mahants: Nawal and Dayal Singh, and Granthi Sukha Singh at Patna by transliterating a Hindoove language manuscript "*Nanak Panthi Kabya*" to Gurmukhi Granth, "*Dasmi Patshahi Ka Granth*" presently located in British Library London cataloged as MSS D5 Punjabi. They inserted into it "Nitnem Banis", "first paragraph of Ardas" and "some other writings of *Patshahi Dasmi* and other similar Saloks" which were popular in Sikh usage (Gutkas or oral remembrance of Sikh families) into this Granth to lend credibility. Interestingly, Henry Colebrooke never came to Punjab to look for this *Granth*. Patna was an important city of Bengal state under British influence. Therefore, it appears that Henry Colebrooke assisted in creating, compiling and researching this Granth and

titling it as “*Dasmi Patshah Ka Granth*” after procuring it from Nirmalas - Atma Ram at Calcutta and the Mahants of Patna where Charles Wilkin went earlier in 1781. Henry Colebrooke then deposited the Granth in British Library where Charles Wilkin was a librarian.



The British in early 1800s enjoyed the fast declining fortunes of Mughals at Delhi. But it was short lived because of the rising strength of the Sikhs in the North. The British were acutely aware that the driving force of the Sikhs energy and strength was through their unflinching and firm belief in Guru Granth Sahib. They intentionally and ingeniously assisted in creating, compiling and promoting “*Dasmi Patshahi Ka Granth*” to gain entry into Punjab, for geographical expansion and to serve missionary

needs. Malcolm assisted in the transplantation of this Granth in Gurdwaras in Punjab through the Nirmalas and Shahids in order to create confusion and division amongst the Sikhs and achieve British Political and Missionary Goals. On comparison and in lieu of the afore mentioned findings, one can assert that the currently published Dasam Granth is in fact a copy of the Colebrooke Bir (MSS D5 Punjabi). Also, the present Dasam Granth, corrected and published by the Sodhak Committee with minor variations, is identical to the Colebrook Dasam Granth *Bir* (MSS D5 Punjabi).

Therefore, the authenticity of the presently published Dasam Granth by the Sodhak Committee needs thorough research and analysis.

There is no evidence available that Guru Gobind Singh wrote, authenticated or sanctified any *Dasami Patshahi Da Granth* in his own hands as was done by him in the case of *Damdami* version of Guru Granth Sahib in 1706 and 1708 and similar to Guru Arjan Dev in the case of *Aad Granth* in 1604. The framing of the Rehat Maryada in 1927-1946 was a monumental task. There were several Rehat Maryadas prevailing at that time. The best of the practical life of Sikhs over generations, oral history and written sources available were taken into consideration. All sources confirmed the Sikh concept of Guru Panth and Guru Granth. The *Bani* of Guru Granth Sahib was the sole canon to accept or reject any idea, concept or suggestion. Dasam Granth, therefore has no recognition in Sikh Rahat Maryada and the 1925 Sikh Gurudwara Act. The Banis of the tenth Guru that have been accepted in the Sikh Rahat Maryada which and sanctified by Guru Panth (1927-1945) are final and unquestionable: Jaap Sahib, ten Swayyas (Swarg Sudu Waley 21-30 Akal Ustat), Benti Chaupai up to Dushat dokh tay, 1st Pauri of Ardas, Dohra and Swayyas in Rehras (as sanctioned in Rehat Maryada). Additionally other compositions including Akal Ustat (except Chhand 201-230), Khalsa Mehma, thirty three Swayyas, Shabad Hazarey and Zafarnamah can be accepted as Banis /writings of the tenth Guru since their interpretation matches with the ideology, content and message of Guru Granth Sahib.



Undisputedly, the “Khalsa Panth” is the only Sikh entity that is collectively authorized to make and accept any change based upon the doctrines enshrined in Guru Granth Sahib acceptable to the Guru Panth as proclaimed by Guru Gobind Singh. It is pertinent to note that in 1880, Giani Gian Singh wrote in *Panth Parkash* that “The Granth that is known as that of the tenth Guru; there was no *Bir* of this Granth during the time of the Guru. *Banis* remained separated here and there”. In 1931, Bhai Kahn Singh Nabha wrote in *Mahan Kosh* that an “ignorant and manmauji” has written many *Birs* of Dasam Granth. He lamented that no Guru’s Premi has so far tried to carry out any corrective remedy”. Dr. Balbir Singh in 1967 concluded that that detailed inquiry and research needs to be done into all aspects of Dasam Granth and stressed the need for systematic effort in this direction. Recently, Jathedar of Akal Takht Sahib, on 31 January 2008 stated that the “Dasam Granth is an important historical literary Granth of the Sikh Panth but it cannot be treated at par with Guru Granth Sahib as Guru Gobind Singh bestowed Gur-Gaddi only to Guru Granth Sahib. Therefore, the parkash of Dasam Granth cannot be done parallel to Guru Granth Sahib.” It is sensible for the entire Sikh Panth to accept the truth that Guru Gobind Singh ji ordered the Sikhs to accept Guru Granth Sahib as the only living Guru after his demise which has been adequately documented in all contemporary and near-contemporary Indian, Persian and European sources. The tenth Guru did not sanction or give sanctification to any Granth other than Guru Granth Sahib. The Sikh nation has only One Granth - Guru Granth Sahib.

Note: The views expressed in this article are that of the author for details of evidence click on http://www.globalsikhstudies.net/r_link/dasam.htm

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