**PREFACE**

The *Dasam Granth*, the Book of the Tenth Guru, is the second most sacred *granth* of the Sikhs. There are three most well-known *birs* (compilations) of this *Granth*, viz. *Bhai Mani Singh wali Bir*, *Patna Sahibji di Misl* and *Sangrur wali Bir*. They are rare manuscripts, too tender and fragile for consultation. There are other manuscripts of the *Granth* found in certain libraries and with certain individuals, but they cannot be considered authentic. There is, further, a large variety of printed versions both lithographic and stereo-typed. Giani Kartar Singh Hitkari mentions nine such versions, some of which are without title pages. It is, therefore, difficult to trace them or give any authenticity to them. One of these is *Sri Dasam Granth Sahib Ji* published by the Khalsa National Agency, Amritsar. But this is out of print. I have, therefore, depended upon *Sri Guru Granth Sahib Ji Dasam Patshahi*, published by Rai Sahib Munshi Gulab Singh & Sons, Lahore *Samvat Sri Guru Nanak 444*. Its manuscript, as indicated on the title page, was prepared by a Sodhak Committee at Akal Takhat, Har Mandir, Amritsar, after consulting thirty-two old manuscripts. Dr. Indu Bhushan Banerjee has, also, consulted it in his work, *Evolution of the Khalsa* (1947). I have myself compared this printed work with *Bhai Mani Singh’s Bir* in possession of S. Gulab Singh Sethi, New Delhi, and found it dependable. I have, therefore, accepted its text for my work.

This *Bir* has 1399 foolscap pages with 19 lines on each page. The total number of verses in it goes up to 17,155. It is a collection of various works dealing with a variety of subjects, viz.:

1. *Japu*, popularly known as *Jap* (*ਮੰਗ੍ਹ*), is a prayer to be read or repeated in the morning, as it continues to be, by pious Sikhs.

2. *Ustat*, commonly known as *Akal Ustat*, is a hymn in praise of the Timeless, to be recited in the morning.

3. *Bachitra Natak Granth*, often known as *Bachitra Natak*, is an incomplete autobiography of Guru Gobind Singh.

4. *Chandi Charitra Ukti Bilas*, popular as *Chandi Charitra Pahila* or *Chandi Charitra Chhota*, describes the exploits of *Chandi*, performed in her wars with demons.

5. *Chandi Charitra* known as *Chandi Charitra Dooja* or *Chandi Charitra Vadda*, treats the same theme in a different metre.

6. *Var Sri Bhagauti Ji Ki*, known as *Chandi di Var*, is a ballad in praise of the goddess Bhagauti, a supplement to the *Chandi Charitras*.

7. *Gian Parbodh Granth* is devoted to the praise of God, with illustrations from ancient legends.

8. *Chaubis Avtar* describes in quatrains and couplets the twenty-four incarnations of *Vishnu*.

9. *Mehdi Mir Badh* is a supplement to the *Chaubis Avtar*.

10. *Brahma Avtar* describes seven incarnations of *Brahma*.

11. *Rudra Avtar* is an account of the two incarnations of *Rudra* i.e. *Shiva*.

12. *Ram Kali Patshahi 10*, widely known as *Shabad Hazare*, is a collection of ten hymns in seven rags.

13. *Sri Mukhibak Swaiya* is a collection of thirty-two hymns. They give an exposition of the divinity and of different religions followed in India.

14. *Jo Kichh Lekhu Likhiyo Bidhna Swaiya*, generally known as *Khalsa di Mahima*, is a poem in a couplet and three stanzas in praise of the *Khalsa*.

15. *Sri Sastra Nam Mula Puran* gives a catalogue and description of the weapons of war.

17. Jafarnamah is a letter in Persian addressed to Aurangzeb.

18. Hikayats, which immediately follow the Jafarnamah, are eleven tales in Persian, similar to those given in the Pakhyan Charitra.

Bachitra Natak, Chandi Charitra Ukti Bilas, Chandi Charitra II, Chaubis Avar, Mehdi Mir Badih, Brahma Avar and Rudra Avar may all be included in the Bachitra Natak Granth. While Bachitra Natak is the title of Guru Gobind Singh's autobiography, the stories of the Chaubis and other Avars, and Chandi Charitra Ukti Bilas and Chandi Charitra II constitute the other part of the Granth. This is suggested by the same concluding remark repeated at the end of each one of these: Iti Sri Bachitra Natak Granthe........... samapatamastu subhamastu etc.

The Granth provides an excellent evidence of the influence exerted by the Hindu theology, mythology, philosophy, history and literature in the life and activities of Guru Gobind Singh. The accounts relating to the mythical heroes of the Purans deal with the glorification of arms with the object of awakening heroic sentiment in the Sikhs, thereby encouraging them to fight against political cruelty and oppression. According to Bhai Sher Singh, 'Ad-Granth began the process of esoteric rendering, but authenticated versions of connected myths were not added thereto, as it was then not considered necessary. Guru Gobind Singh Ji compiled a sister volume to fulfill this need, and in order to give such a stirring form to old inspiring myths as may awaken the slumbering Indian masses in a manner in which the Guru's ingenious pen alone could have accomplished'. Dasam Granth, as such, serves as a monumental reference book of all the classical allusions found in the Guru Granth Sahib. It has, therefore, a very important place in the Sikh literature and theology.

The whole of the Granth is in verse, with a large variety of stylistic devices. From the point of view of theme, the various works it includes may be broadly classified into subjective and objective poetry. The devotional works like the Jap, Akal Ustat, Benti Chaupai, Shabad Hazare, etc., come under subjective poetry. A very good specimen of subjective poetry is the verse (shabad) composed in the forest of Machhiwara.

The narrative compositions are Bachitra Natak, Chaubis Avar, Mehdi Mir Badih, Brahma Avar, Rudra Avar, Khalse di Mahima, Hikayats, Sutra Nam Mala, Chandi Charitras, Chandi di Var, Gian Parbodh, and Pakhyan Charitra. These may be said to come under objective poetry.

The Granth reveals an elaborate use of figures of speech. Its variety of apt and numerous metres, coupled with some strikingly original ones, and its forceful diction are unique in the literature of the Panjab.

The Granth is composed in more than one language. Jafarnamah and Hikayats are in Persian; Jap, Akal Ustat, Bachitra Natak, Chaubis Avar, Brahma Avar, Rudra Avar, Sri Mukhibak Swayias and Pakhyan Charitra are in Braj; Chandi di Var is in Lehndi Panjabi—the western dialect of the Punjab, while the hymn like Mitra Piare mu...... is in the Central Panjabi. The script, however, of all the works is Gurmukhi.

The people in the Panjab found it difficult to understand Braj, a dialect of Hindi, in which most of the works are composed, whereas non-Panjabis could not have access to it because of the provincial character of Gurmukhi script of the Granth. Consequently, this led almost to a total eclipse of the whole Granth so far as its literary contribution was concerned. An eminent scholar like Dr. Motan Singh Diwana puts it rather pungently when he says: 'The historians of Hindi literature have deliberately insulted his (Guru Gobind Singh's) genius by either ignoring him or including not more than a dozen lines from him, misquoted and selected from amongst the comparatively unimportant parts of his works.' It is, no doubt, true to some extent that the poetry of the Dasam Granth has been briefly or insufficiently taken notice of by the historians of Hindi literature like Shiv Singh Sengar, Mrs. Bandhu, Grebner, Tasse, Shukla, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, while others like Shyam Sundar Dass have taken no notice of it at all. But the charge of ignoring it deliberately is rather unfair. The real cause of this neglect has, however, been a different one.

Gurmukhi script was originally adopted by the Sikh Gurus to record their compositions in it. Compositions of the non-Sikhs were, however, written in Persian or Devnagari script. Because of the alleged sectarian
character of the script, it was not adopted by others. It was, therefore, believed that all compositions in Gurmukhi script, related to Sikh religion, theology and history. The Dasam Granth was accordingly treated as such. Being in Gurmukhi script, its contents remained obscure to the students and scholars of Hindi. Nor did the Sikh scholars themselves take pains to examine the text critically or appreciate its literary values. It was only recently that the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee, Amritsar, brought out Devnagari transliterations of the Jap, the Akal Ustat and the Bachitra Natak. It is, however, hoped that the Hindi knowing people would now come forth to appreciate the literary wealth of the Dasam Granth. The reasons for the obscurity of the Granth have, therefore, been in the main, the provincial character of the script, the paucity of Braj scholars in the Punjab and the text being continuous and lacking in spacing between words.

My objective in taking up the study of this Granth is to revive and re-orientate the study of it by attempting a dispassionate estimate of its literary values. In my study of the Granth, I have tried to deal with its authorship, its poetic background, a brief critical study of its works, its thought value and art value, its stylistic features and finally its place in Hindi literature.

My approach to the Granth is primarily oriental, though, of course, here and there I have followed western standards of literary criticism.

In order to give those who are interested in a deeper study of this Granth, an opportunity of first-hand acquaintance with the authorship, thought and art of the poetry of the Dasam Granth, I have given quotations liberally in the footnotes in Devnagari script, closely and faithfully following the original text, as far as possible. The texts in the appendix are extracts from the Krisanavtar, Gian Parbodh and Pakhyan Charitra, which serve to illustrate discussions on pages 83, 92, 112, 150-165, 228-230, and 306. These are the traditional forms of poetry attempted in the Dasam Granth besides many others some of which have already come in their proper contexts. The need for a ready reference to these texts for the proper evaluation and critical analysis of thought and art contained therein, has obliged me to put them as such. In giving references, I have used figures in brackets to indicate verses and figures without brackets to indicate page-numbers.

Here and there some repetitions may be noticed in the language, thought, treatment and quotations of passages. These are unavoidable as they arise in discussions in different relevant contexts and serve as good illustrations.

As is well-known, transliteration of words, sounds and symbols with correctness and consistency in a foreign language is difficult. Scholars have adopted diacritical marks to bring an exact representation of texts. Others, however, have used corresponding syllables instead to meet the same end. I could not use the diacritical marks in the representation of words and textual quotations for want of facilities in the press. I have therefore followed the latter method i.e. without the diacritical marks. Accordingly, I have used the following characters for the Hindi transliteration of the text and other Hindi and Sanskrit words:

(a) a for अ 
(b) ch for च

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I have, however, deviated from the above system in the following cases:

(a) Rasa, Guna, etc., for Ras, Gun, etc.
(b) Ram for Rama.
(c) Conventional spellings of some words like 'Lila' have been kept intact.

(d) The forms of spellings used in the translations and texts of certain authors have also been preserved.

For a faithful representation of the text, the spellings of words are in conformity with the spellings in the original—Gurmukhi script—which vary not only among themselves in the case of a single word but also from their spellings in Hindi frequently, even on the same page.

I have consulted and frequently quoted translation in English of *Sri Mukhibak Swaiya* by Principal Jodh Singh; of the *Jap* and ten swaiyas in the *Akal Ustat* and *Shabad Hazare* by S. Brijindar Singh; of various texts by Macauliffe given in *The Sikh Religion*, and the translations by Dr. Mohan Singh Diwana, Dr. Trilochan Singh, Sardar Khushwant Singh and Prof. Teja Singh, etc. At times these writers have translated the same passage differently. I have adopted the translation which has appealed to me the most in a particular context. In other cases, I myself have attempted the translation in English of different pieces of the *Dasam Granth* and also have tried to improve upon the existing English translations here and there where I felt the real spirit was not brought out. My acknowledgments, however, are due to the scholars on whose translations I have drawn with gratitude.

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