

Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib (Punjabi (Gurmukhi): ਗੁਰੂ ਗ੍ਰੰਥ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਜੀ (*Gurū Graṁth Sāhib Jī*), Punjabi pronunciation: [gʊɾu grəntʰ səhib], /'gʊɾu: grɑ:nθ sə'hib/) is the central religious scripture of Sikhism, regarded by Sikhs as the final, sovereign and eternal living Guru following the lineage of the ten human Gurus of the religion.^[1] The *Adi Granth*, the first rendition, was compiled by the fifth Sikh Guru, Guru Arjan (1563–1606). Guru Gobind Singh, the tenth Sikh Guru, did not add any of his own hymns; however, he added all 115 hymns of Guru Tegh Bahadur, the ninth Sikh Guru, to the *Adi Granth* and affirmed the text as his successor.^[2] This second rendition became known as *Guru Granth Sahib*.^[3] After Guru Gobind Singh died, Baba Deep Singh and Bhai Mani Singh prepared many copies of the work for distribution.^[4]

The text consists of 1430 *Angs* (pages) and 6,000 *śabads* (line compositions),^{[5][6]} which are poetically rendered and set to a rhythmic ancient north Indian classical form of music.^[7] The bulk of the scripture is classified into thirty-one *rāgas*, with each Granth *rāga* subdivided according to length and author. The hymns in the scripture are arranged primarily by the *rāgas* in which they are read.^[5] The Guru Granth Sahib is written in the Gurmukhī script, in various dialects, including Lahnda (Western Punjabi), Braj Bhasha, Khariboli, Sanskrit, Sindhi, and Persian – often coalesced under the generic title of Sant Bhasha.^[8]

Guru Granth Sahib is predominantly composed by six Sikh Gurus: Guru Nanak, Guru Angad, Guru Amar Das, Guru Ram Das, Guru Arjan, and Guru Teg Bahadur. It also contains the traditions and teachings of fourteen Hindu Bhakti movement *sants* (saints), such as Ramananda, Kabir and Namdev among others, and one Muslim Sufi saint: Sheikh Farid.^{[9][10]}

The vision in the Guru Granth Sahib, states Torkel Brekke, is a society based on divine justice without oppression of any kind.^{[11][12]} While the Granth acknowledges and respects the scriptures of Hinduism and Islam, it does not imply a syncretic bridge between Hinduism and Islam.^[13] It is installed in a Sikh *gurdwara* (temple); many Sikhs bow or prostrate before it on entering the temple.^[14] The Granth is revered as eternal *gurbānī* and the spiritual authority in Sikhism.^[15]

1 History

During the guruship of Guru Nanak, collections of his hymns were compiled and sent to distant Sikh communities for use in morning and evening prayers.^[16] His successor, Guru Angad, began collecting his predecessor's writings. This tradition was continued by the third and fifth gurus as well.

When the fifth guru, Guru Arjan, was collecting the writings of his predecessor, he discovered that pretenders to the guruship were releasing what he considered as forged anthologies of the previous guru's writings and including their own writings alongside them.^[17] In order to prevent spurious scriptures from gaining legitimacy, Guru Arjan began compiling a sacred book for the Sikh community. He finished collecting the religious writings of Guru Ram Das, his immediate predecessor, and convinced Mohan, the son of Guru Amar Das, to give him the collection of the religious writings of the first three gurus.^[17] In addition, he sent disciples to go across the country to find and bring back any previously unknown writings. He also invited members of other religions and contemporary religious writers to submit writings for possible inclusion.^[17] Guru Arjan selected hymns for inclusion into the book, and Bhai Gurdas acted as his scribe.^[18]

While the manuscript was being put together, Akbar, the Mughal Emperor, received a report that the manuscript contained passages vilifying Islam. Therefore, while travelling north, he stopped en route and asked to inspect it.^[19] Baba Buddha and Bhai Gurdas brought him a copy of the manuscript as it then existed. After choosing three random passages to be read, Akbar decided that this report had been false.^[19]

In 1604 Guru Arjan's manuscript was completed and installed at the Harmandir Sahib with Baba Buddha as the first *granthi*, or reader.^[20] Since communities of Sikh disciples were scattered all over northern India, copies of the holy book needed to be made for them.^[19] The sixth, seventh, and eighth gurus did not write religious verses; however, the ninth guru, Guru Tegh Bahadur, did. The tenth guru, Guru Gobind Singh, included Guru Tegh Bahadur's writings into the *Guru Granth Sahib*^[19] but did not include any of his own religious verses in the Guru Granth Sahib.

In 1704 at Damdama Sahib, during a one-year respite from the heavy fighting with Aurengzeb which the Khalsa was engaged in at the time, Guru Gobind Singh and Bhai Mani Singh added the religious compositions of

Guru Tegh Bahadur to Adi Granth to create a definitive version.^[19] The religious verses of Guru Gobind Singh were not included in Guru Granth Sahib, but some of his religious verses are included in the daily prayers of Sikhs.^[19] During this period, Bhai Mani Singh also collected Guru Gobind Singh's writings, as well as his court poets, and included them in a secondary religious volume, today known as the *Dasam Granth Sahib*. *Guru Granth Sahib* is Guru.^[21]

2 Meaning and Role in Sikhism



Guru Granth Sahib

Sikhs consider the *Guru Granth Sahib* to be a spiritual guide not only for Sikhs but for all of humanity; it plays a central role in guiding the Sikh's way of life. Its place in Sikh devotional life is based on two fundamental principles: that the text is the Guru that answers all questions regarding religion and morality can be discovered within it. Its hymns and teachings are called *Gurbani* or "Word of the guru" and sometimes *Guru ki bani* or "Word of Guru". Thus, in Sikh theology, the revealed divine word is written by the past Gurus. Numerous holy men, aside from the Sikh Gurus, are collectively referred to as *Bhagats* or "devotees."

2.1 Elevation of *Adi Granth* to *Guru Granth Sahib*

In 1708 Guru Gobind Singh conferred the title of "Guru of the Sikhs" upon the *Adi Granth*. The event was recorded in a *Bhatt Vahi* (a bard's scroll) by an eyewitness, Narbud Singh,^[22] who was a bard at the Rajput rulers' court associated with gurus. A variety of other documents also attest to this proclamation by the tenth Guru. Thus, despite some aberrations, Sikhs since then have accepted *Guru Granth Sahib*, the sacred book, as their eternal Guru .

3 Composition

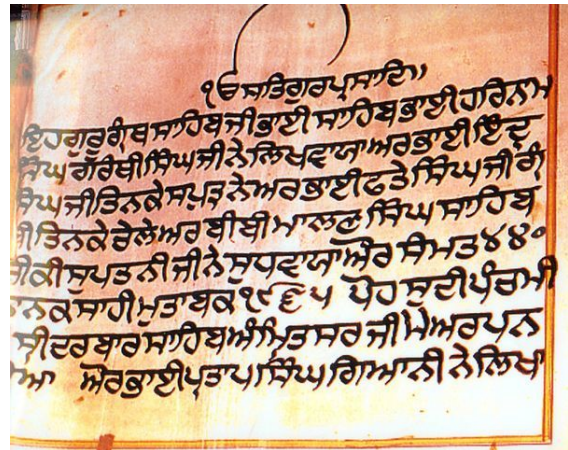
Main articles: Gurmukhī and Sikh music

The entire *Guru Granth Sahib* is written in the Gurmukhī



A composition or Shabad from Guru Granth Sahib

script, which was standardized by Guru Angad Dev in the 16th century . According to Sikh tradition and the *Mahman Prakash*, an early Sikh manuscript, Guru Angad invented the script at the suggestion of Guru Nanak during the lifetime of the founder.^{[23][24]} The word *Gurmukhī* translates to "from the mouth of the Guru". It descended from the *Laṇḍā* scripts and was used from the outset for compiling Sikh scriptures. The Sikhs assign a high degree of sanctity to the Gurmukhī script.^[25] It is the official script for writing Punjabi in the Indian State of Punjab.



*The end part of the handwritten *Adi Granth*, by Pratap Singh Giani, on the first floor of Harmandir Sahib*

Gurus considered divine worship through music the best means of attaining that state of bliss - *vismad* - which resulted in communion with the God.*Guru Granth Sahib* is divided by musical settings or *ragas*^[26] into 1,430 pages known as *Angs* (limbs) in Sikh tradition. It can be categorized into two sections:

1. Introductory section consisting of the *Mul Mantar*, *Japji* and *Sohila*, composed by *Guru Nanak*;
2. Compositions of Sikh gurus, followed by those of

the *bhagats* who know only God, collected according to the chronology of *ragas* or musical settings. (see below).

The word *raga* refers to the “color”^[27] and, more specifically, the emotion or mood produced by a combination or sequence of pitches.^[28] A *raga* is composed of a series of melodic motifs, based upon a definite scale or mode of the seven Swara psalmizations,^[29] that provide a basic structure around which the musician performs. Some *ragas* may be associated with times of the day and year.^[26] There are 31 *ragas* in the Sikh system, divided into 14 *ragas* and 17 *raginis* (minor or less definite *ragas*). Within the *raga* division, the songs are arranged in order of the Sikh gurus and Sikh *bhagats* with whom they are associated.

The *ragas* are, in order: Sri, Manjh, Gauri, Asa, Gujri, Devagandhari, Bihagara, Wadahans, Sorath, Dhanasri, Jaitsri, Todi, Bairari, Tilang, Suhi, Bilaval, Gond (Gaund), Ramkali, Nut-Narayan, Mali-Gaura, Maru, Tukhari, Kedara, Bhairav (Bhairo), Basant, Sarang, Malar, Kanra, Kalyan, Prabhati and Jaijawanti. In addition there are 22 compositions of *Vars* (traditional ballads). Nine of these have specific tunes, and the rest can be sung to any tune.^[26]

Ragas such as *Megh (raga)*, *Hindol (raga)* which were jubilant tone or *ragas* such as *Jog (raga)*, *deepak* etc. which were melancholy were not selected for these compositions.^[30]

4 Contributors

Main article: Writers of Guru Granth Sahib

Following is a list of contributors whose hymns are present in Guru Granth Sahib:

- Guru Nanak Dev
- Guru Angad Dev
- Guru Amar Das
- Guru Ram Das
- Guru Arjan Dev
- Guru Tegh Bahadur
- Bhagat Kabir
- Bhagat Ravidas
- Bhagat Namdev
- Bhagat Beni
- Bhagat Bhikhan

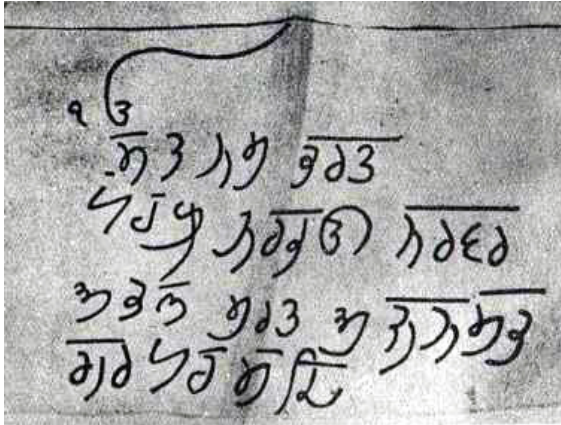


Map showing birthplace of various contributors of Guru Granth Sahib

- Bhagat Dhanna
- Bhagat Jayadeva
- Bhagat Parmanand
- Bhagat Pipa
- Ramananda
- Bhagat Sadhana
- Bhagat Sain
- Surdas
- Bhagat Trilochan
- Baba Sundar ji
- Bhai Mardana
- Fariduddin Ganjshakar
- Balvand Rai
- Bhatt Kalshar
- Bhatt Balh
- Bhatt Bhalh
- Bhatt Bhika
- Bhatt Gayand
- Bhatt Harbans
- Bhatt Jalap

- Bhatt Kirat
- Bhatt Mathura
- Bhatt Nalh
- Bhatt Salh

5 Sanctity among Sikhs



The Mool Mantar in the handwriting of Guru Har Rai

Main article: [Guru Har Rai § Ram Rai](#)

No one can change or alter any of the writings of the Sikh gurus written in the *Adi Granth*. This includes sentences, words, structure, grammar, and meanings. Following the example of the gurus themselves, Sikhs observe total sanctity of the text of *Guru Granth Sahib*. Guru Har Rai, for example, disowned one of his sons, Ram Rai, because he had attempted to alter the wording of a hymn by Guru Nanak.^[31] Guru Har Rai had sent Ram Rai to Delhi in order to explain *Gurbani* to the Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb. To please the Emperor he altered the wording of a hymn, which was reported to the guru. Displeased with his son, the guru disowned him and forbade his Sikhs to associate with him or his descendants.

5.1 Translations

A partial English translation of *Guru Granth Sahib* by Ernest Trumpp was published in 1877. The work was for use by Christian missionaries, and received extremely negative feedback from Sikhs.^[32] Max Arthur Macauliffe also partially translated the text for inclusion in his six-volume *The Sikh Religion*, published by Oxford University Press in 1909. His translations are closer to the Sikhs' own interpretation of the book, and were received well by them.^[33]

The first complete English translation of *Guru Granth Sahib*, by Gopal Singh, was published in 1960. A revised

version published in 1978 removed the obsolete English words like “thee” and “thou”. In 1962, an eight-volume translation into English and Punjabi by Manmohan Singh was published by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee. In the 2000s, a translation by Sant Singh Khalsa (referred to as the “Khalsa Consensus Translation”) became popular through its inclusion on major Sikhism-related websites.^[34]

5.2 Recitation



A Granthi reciting from Guru Granth Sahib

Guru Granth Sahib is always the focal point in any Gurdwara, being placed in the centre on a raised platform known as a *Takht* (throne), while the congregation of devotees sits on the floor and bow before the Guru as a sign of respect. Guru Granth Sahib is given the greatest respect and honour. Sikhs cover their heads and remove their shoes while in the presence of this sacred text. Guru Granth Sahib is normally carried on the head and as a sign of respect, never touched with unwashed hands or put on the floor.^[35] It is attended with all signs of royalty, with a canopy placed over it. A *chaur sahib* is waved above the book. Peacock-feather fans were waved over royal or saintly beings as a mark of great spiritual or temporal status; this was later replaced by the modern Chaur sahib.

The Guru Granth Sahib is taken care of by a Granthi, who is responsible for reciting from the sacred text and leading Sikh prayers. The Granthi also acts as caretaker for the Guru Granth Sahib, keeping the holy book covered in clean cloths, known as *rumala*, to protect from heat, dust, pollution, etc. The Guru Granth Sahib rests on a *manji sahib* under a *rumala* until brought out again.^[35]

6 Printing

The printing of Guru Granth Sahib is done by the official religious body of Sikhs based in Amritsar. Great care is taken while making printed copies and a strict code of

conduct is observed during the task of printing.^[36] Before the late nineteenth century, only handwritten copies were prepared. The first printed copy of the Guru Granth Sahib was made in 1864. Since the early 20th century, it has been printed in a standard edition of 1430 Angs. Any copies of Guru Granth Sahib deemed unfit to be read from are cremated, with a ceremony similar to that for cremating a deceased person. Such cremating is called Agan Bheta. Guru Granth Sahib is currently printed in an authorized printing press in the basement of the Gurudwara Ramsar in Amritsar; misprints and set-up sheets, and printer's waste with any of its sacred text on, are cremated at Goindval.^[37]

Punjab Digital Library, in collaboration with the Nanakshahi Trust, began digitization of the centuries-old manuscripts in 2003.

7 References

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8 External links

- Panjab Digital Library
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- Khoj Gurbani, a platform incorporating several translations

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