

# An Insight into format of Guru Granth Sahib

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*By an extraordinary coincidence, our generation has been divinely privileged to celebrate the 300<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh (1966), the 500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Nanak (1969), the 300<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of the Khalsa (1999), the 500<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary of Guru Angad (March 2004) as also the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first installation of Guru Granth Sahib (September 2004) at Amritsar. - S.S.K*

It is believed that God speaks to us whenever we need Him, only the recipient has to be perceptive enough to understand the message.

The Sikhs believe that the true inspirer of Guru Granth Sahib is God Himself. Indeed He revealed his words to the Sikh Gurus who in turn conveyed the message to the people at large through Guru -*Shabad*.

Guru Arjun selected compositions of fifteen Indian saints or Bhagats, 11 Bhats (or poets) and four other devotees to whom God revealed His word and whose compositions were in line with the Sikh theology. He included these hymns with the hymns of the Sikh Gurus and put them together as an anthology arranged according to classical ragas or musical measures.

The script of Guru Granth Sahib is called Gurmukhi. However, the languages used in the sacred poetry vary extensively. It is due to the basic reason that Guru Nanak travelled almost every known corner of south and west Asia, viz., Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Tibet, China, Afghanistan and Middle East. Many of his hymns have the stamp of local dialects, of the places he visited, i.e., Arabic, Farsi (Persian), Sindhi, Multani, Lehndi, Hindi, etc. Guru Arjun's compositions likewise have effect of these languages.

The holy saints or Bhagats had diverse domiciles, which is invariably reflected in their songs and hymns. Thus their compositions have flavour of Marathi, Bengali, Braj, Persian and other Indian dialects.

However, most compositions of Guru Angad, Amar Das and Guru Ram Das are in standard Panjabi. Guru Tegh Bahadur's compositions are a mixture of Panjabi and Braj. In addition to the above languages, many hymns are composed in *Sant Bhasha*, which was a mixture of many languages and was used by wanderingsaints to compose their hymns.

The subject matter of Guru Granth Sahib include inter alia, God, His curriculum vitae, His domicile and methods of His realisation, the meaning and modes of worship, the methods used for God manifestation, the Sikh law, ethics and rules of living a truthful life, the theory of Creation, various theological concepts, the human and divine relationships and their significance, theory of karma and God's Grace, the life after death, trial and judgment, heaven and hells, theory of transmigration, the deliverance or Mukti, the destination – *Sach Khand*, the route to Sach Khand through the inroads of *dharam khand*, *gyan khand*, *saram khand* and *karam khand* and the objectives of life.

Most of the compositions in Guru Granth Sahib are composed in musical measures. Where the basic theory of music classifies music measures into Ragas, Raginis etc. Guru Granth Sahib has made no such distinction in listing ragas. It has used word Raga for all of them.

A Raga is a particular set of seven *svars*, or a selection of them, in their natural, sharp and soft forms, whose inter-relationship and sequence are governed by strict rules. Each raga has its own emotional character, and is associated with a particular time of the day and a particular period of a season. The ragas facilitate 'Mood' variation through the seasons and the time of the day.

