

Guru Granth Sahib: Repository of the Revealed Word

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SRI GURU GRANTH SAHIB IS THE Repository of the Revealed Word, the Word Divine. It is a unique collection of poetic revelations, communicated by the great God-inspired men and recorded by themselves in this unique and universal scripture of the world.

The extreme veneration, exalted status and unrivalled position of the Scripture in the Sikh way of life and tradition is due to the fact that it, primarily, enshrines the revelations and holy utterances of inspired Gurus, called *Gurbani* in the Sikh parlance.

Gurbani or *Bani* is virtually the Word (*Sbd Shabd*) revealed by God Himself direct to those Prophet-preceptors of the Sikhs who were under His direct commission and who themselves had vouched it thus, as of Divine Origin echoing the Divine Truth:

ਧਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਆਈ ॥ ਤਿਨਿ ਸਗਲੀ ਚਿਤ ਮਿਟਾਈ ॥ ਦਇਆਲ ਪੁਰਖ ਮਿਹਰਵਾਨਾ ॥ ਹਰਿ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਚੁ ਵਖਾਨਾ ॥
[SGGS:628]

The Utterance has come from the Primal Divine Source.
It has annulled all anxiety.
The Compassionate Being has showered His grace.
Nanak proclaims this truth to all.

The Gurus were the proclaimers and revealers of the Word Divine, the Divine Utterance, or the Voice of God, as has been stated by them in so many words:

ਗੁਰ ਮਹਿ ਆਪੁ ਸਮੋਇ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਰਤਾਇਆ ॥ [SGGS:1279]²
God merged His Self in the Guru
through whom He revealed and dispensed His Word.

2. ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਪੁ ਰਖਿਓਨੁ ਕਰਿ ਪਰਗਟੁ ਆਖਿ ਸੁਣਾਇਆ ॥ [SGGS:466]³

The Word that God has lodged in the True Guru,
the True Guru has revealed
and proclaimed that to all.

The disciples of the Guru look upon the words of the True Guru as true and holy for ever:

ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਸਤਿ ਸਤਿ ਕਰਿ ਜਾਣਹੁ ਗੁਰਸਿਖਹੁ ਹਰਿ ਕਰਤਾ ਆਪਿ ਮੁਹੁ ਕਵਾਏ ॥ [SGGS:308]⁵

Believe ye, O Sikhs!
The words of the Guru
to be true, ever true;
As it is the Lord-Creator Himself
Who makes him utter these by his mouth.⁴

And these have been communicated, disseminated and also recorded by the Gurus themselves in this holy Granth:

ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ ਤੈਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ ॥

[SGGS:722]⁶

As I receive the Word from the Lord
so I make it known, O Lalo!

The Sikhs, the disciples of the Guru, believe, therefore, that:

ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਹੈ ਸਬਦਿ ਮਿਲਾਵਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:39]⁷

The Word of the Guru is Divine
and Union with God is attained through this Word.

Not only that. According to its holy compiler-cum-editor, Guru Arjun Dev (1563-1606), their collection in this holy volume is God's own repository:

ਪੋਥੀ ਪਰਮੇਸਰ ਕਾ ਬਾਨੁ ॥ ਸਾਧਸੰਗਿ ਗਾਵਹਿ ਗੁਣ ਗੋਬਿੰਦ ਪੂਰਨ ਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਗਿਆਨੁ ॥ [SGGS:1226]⁸

The Holy Granth is the dwelling place of God,
For, it is the embodiment of the perfect Divine Wisdom.
Whoever shall sing its words of Divine Laudation,
in the holy congregation,
shall acquire it.

Moreover, according to Guru Amar Das (1479-1574), the Third Master:

ਗੁਰਬਾਣੀ ਇਸੁ ਜਗ ਮਹਿ ਚਾਨਣੁ ਕਰਮਿ ਵਸੈ ਮਨਿ ਆਏ ॥

[SGGS:67]⁹

The revealed Word of the Guru
is the Light of the World.
And God's grace descends into human soul by means of it.

Hence the followers of the Sikh faith do not look upon Guru Granth Sahib in the aspect of just a book or a scripture. It is for them the visible form of the Divine Essence, the Supreme Being Himself in the form of His Word of Utterance, as they have been told so clearly –

ਵਾਹੁ ਵਾਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਹੈ ਤਿਸੁ ਜੇਵਡੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਕੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:515]¹⁰

Glory be to the Divine Word
which is the Formless Lord Himself.
There is none other,
nothing else to be reckoned equal to it.

According to Guru Angad Dev (1504-1552), their Second Prophet-preceptor.

ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਬਾਣੀ ਤਤੁ ਵਖਾਣੀ ਗਿਆਨ ਧਿਆਨ ਵਿਚਿ ਆਈ ॥ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਆਖੀ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਜਾਤੀ ਸੁਰਤੀ ਕਰਮਿ ਧਿਆਈ ॥
[SGGS:1243]¹¹

The ambrosial Word of the Master
that expounds the Divine Essence,
has descended through enlightenment and meditation.
The God-oriented have uttered this and realised this;

and the enlightened have meditated on it
by the grace of God.

The Ten Gurus are the Spiritual Masters, the Prophet-preceptors of the Sikhs. Their *Shabad* for them is the Word Divine and their *Bani* is the Holy Utterance, as stated by their Fourth Master, Guru Ram Das (1534-1581), as below, in the Holy Granth itself, while equating and identifying it with the Guru himself:

ਬਾਣੀ ਗੁਰੂ ਗੁਰੂ ਹੈ ਬਾਣੀ ਵਿਚਿ ਬਾਣੀ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤੁ ਸਾਰੇ ॥ ਗੁਰੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਕਹੈ ਸੇਵਕੁ ਜਨ ਮਾਨੈ ਪਰਤਾਪਿ ਗੁਰੂ ਨਿਸਤਾਰੇ ॥
[SGGS:982]¹²

The Word is the manifest-Spirit of the Guru
and the Guru is immanent in the Word All nectars are contained in the
Word.
If the disciple obeys what the Word says,
the Guru becomes manifest and saves him.

ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਬਚਨੁ ਬਚਨੁ ਹੈ ਸਤਿਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਧਰੁ ਮੁਕਤਿ ਜਨਾਵੈਗੇ ॥ [SGGS:1309]¹³

The Holy Guru is the Holy Word.
And the Holy Word is the Holy Guru himself
who shall lead one to the way of salvation.

Not only that. For the Sikhs, according to their Founder, *Shabad* (the revealed Word) is the real Guru, not any individual or his body:

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਪੀਰਾ ਗਹਿਰੁ ਰੀਝੀਰਾ ॥ [SGGS:635]¹⁴

The Word is the true Preceptor
and Guide of great profundity.

ਸਬਦੁ ਗੁਰੁ ਸੁਰਤਿ ਧੁਨਿ ਚੇਲਾ ॥ [SGGS:943]¹⁵

The Word is the Guru
and the Mind which attunes to it
is the disciple

As the Holy Granth contains such revealing statements made and recorded by the Sikh Gurus themselves, it is the repository of their sacred word and holy Utterances. It is regarded by the Sikhs, therefore, as the continuing manifestation, the embodiment, in visible form, of the mystic personality of their Ten Divine Masters.

Indeed the blessed founder of our faith, Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539), has described these Words and Utterances to be the 'Ksm kl bwxl' (Lord's Own Word) and 'bwxl mhW purK kl' (Word of the Supreme Being):

ਇਹੁ ਬਾਣੀ ਮਹਾ ਪੁਰਖ ਕੀ ਨਿਜ ਘਰਿ ਵਾਸਾ ਹੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:935]¹⁶

This Word is of the Supreme Being
It enables the self to abide in its true home.

Speaking as witness to revelation, he has also stated in verses such as the following:

ਤਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਹਣੁ ਜਾ ਤੁਝੈ ਕਹਾਇਆ ॥

[SGGS:566]¹⁷

I spoke only when you, O God,
inspired me to speak.

ਹਉ ਆਪਹੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਨ ਜਾਣਦਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਸਭੁ ਹੁਕਮਾਉ ਜੀਉ ॥

[SGGS:763]¹⁸

I know not myself what to say.
I have communicated only the command of God.

His spiritual successors, Guru Amar Das and Guru Arjun Dev, for instance, have also vouchsafed for the same, stating that –

ਜਿਉ ਬੋਲਾਏ ਤਿਉ ਬੋਲੀਐ ਜਾ ਆਪਿ ਬੁਲਾਏ ਸੋਇ ॥

[SGGS:39]

I speak as and when he makes me speak. (Sri Rag: Guru Amar Das)

ਜਿਉ ਬੁਲਾਵਹੁ ਤਿਉ ਨਾਨਕ ਦਾਸ ਬੋਲੈ ॥

[SGGS:292]

As God inspires
so does Nanak, His servant, speakes. (R. *Gauri*, Guru Arjun Dev, p. 292)

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬੋਲੈ ਹਰਿ ਹਰਿ ਬਾਣੀ ॥ [SGGS:739]

Nanak utters only God's own Words (R. *Suhi*, Guru Arjun Dev)

Believing these, therefore, as the Revealed Words, the Words of the Divine Origin; and the Holy Volume that enshrines them as the medium and record of the Revelation, thus descended from God through the Gurus, the Sikhs look upon it as the embodiment of the Word of God as well as of the holy spirit, 'the visible body,' and the 'living presence' of their Gurus, "who are regarded as only one Person, the light of the first Guru's soul having been transmitted to each of his successors in turn".^{18A}

Sikhs have been enjoined to do so by their Tenth Master, Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708), whose last commandment they chant the world over, as follows, asserting this belief, collectively and loudly, on the conclusion of their daily individual and congregational, morning and evening supplication, called *Ardas*:

**AwigAw Bel Akwl kl¹⁹ qbY clwXo pMQ [
siB is~Kn kau hukm hY, gurU mwnla gMRQ [
gurU gMRQ jl mwnIE, pRgt gurW kl dyh [²⁰
jo pRB ko imlbo chY, Koj Sbd mY lyh [²¹**

As commanded by the Timeless One,
I promulgated the Order of Khalsa.
All Sikhs are hereby commanded
to own the Granth as their Guru.
Venerate and obey Guru Granth Sahib
as the Manifest Body of the holy Gurus.

They who wish to meet the Lord
should seek Him in the Word enshrined in it...

Hence, says Duncan Greenlees, the celebrated author of the *World Gospel Series*: “*The Guru Granth is the Guru’s Own Book through which the Guru speaks to His disciples from age to age. Thus it is called Gurbani, the Guru’s Voice. He who attentively reads, sings or listens to its hymns is brought into direct personal contact with the Guru who is, in a very real sense, ‘incarnate’ in these hymns.... The true Sikh sees in his Granth not merely a book written by his Guru, but he was taught by that very Guru to see himself in it, and in its words to find the life-giving teaching of the Guru’s utterance.*” “Since he has commanded him, as above, to “acknowledge Granth Sahib as the visible body of the Gurus”, he reverse it “as both the physical body of the Gurus and the metaphysical corpus of their poetry, that is, their Divinely inspired utterances.”



References

1. Guru Arjun Dev, *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Sorath, p. 628. Amritsar-1604.
2. Guru Nanak Dev, *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Malar, p. 1279.
3. Ibid, Rag Asa, p. 466.
4. That is, speaks through the Guru’s Word.
5. Guru Ram Das, ibid, Rag Gauri, p. 308.
6. Guru Nanak Dev, ibid, Rag Tilang, p. 722.
7. Guru Amar Das, ibid, Rag Siri, p. 39.
8. Guru Arjun Dev, ibid, Rag Sarang, p. 1226.
9. Guru Amar Das, ibid, Rag Siri, p. 67.
10. Guru Amar Das, ibid, Rag Gujri, p. 515.
11. Guru Angad Dev, ibid, Rag Sarang, p. 1243.
12. Guru Ram Das, ibid, Rag Nat Narayan, p. 982. Alternative rendering: “The Revelation is the Guru and the Guru is the Revelation... Whosoever shall accept the Revelation of the Guru, shall behold the Guru himself.” S. Kapur Singh – *Parasanaprasna*, op. cit., p. 171. Amritsar-1989.
13. Guru Ram Das, *Guru Granth Sahib*, Rag Kanra, p. 1310.
14. Guru Nanak Dev, Rag Sorath, p. 635.
15. Ibid, Rag Ramkali, p. 943.
16. Guru Nanak Dev, *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., Rag Ramkali, *Dakhni Oankar*, st. 40, p. 935.
17. Ibid, Rag Wadhans, p. 566.
18. Ibid, Rag Suhi, p. 763.
- 18-A. Macauliffe, *The Sikh Religion*, Vol. I, Preface, p. xvi.
19. That is, God, the Immortal Lord.
20. Alternative renderings: (i). ‘As the Person Visible of the Gurus’. (ii). ‘As the embodiment of the Spirit of the Gurus’.
21. Alternative rendering: ‘Shall discover Him in the Word, manifested in the Holy Granth’.
22. That very Guru to see himself in it, and in its words to find the life-giving teaching of the Guru’s utterance.